

Limits and challenges to the local integration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela who relocated during the Covid-19 pandemic

Summary of the first round of data collection for the research organized by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and conducted by CEDEPLAR and the IPEAD Foundation from Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)¹

MAIN FINDINGS

- Results from the first round of data collection show strong support for expanding the relocation strategy for the Venezuelan population living in shelters in Roraima – 76% of population say they would like to leave and 59% have already registered to relocate out of Roraima, a Brazilian state that borders Venezuela and is the point of entry for most Venezuelans.
- The outcomes have been positive for the Venezuelans who have relocated. The unemployment rate for relocated Venezuelans is 17.8% compared to 30.8% for Venezuelans still living in shelters in Roraima. School enrolment is also higher among relocated households: 68% of relocated children are enrolled in school compared to 41% for children not relocated.
- Relocated Venezuelans are potentially earning higher wages. The average income of Venezuelans living in non-bordering states and working is BRL 1,325, slightly higher than the minimum wage in Brazil and around half the income of the Brazilian population. But Venezuelans who remain in shelters in Roraima are earning average incomes of BRL 595, lower than the minimum wage and almost three times lower than the average income of the population residing in Roraima.
- Women, both relocated and not relocated, are more likely than men to be unemployed or underemployed. Women, particularly black women, also earn a lower average income than men. These gender dimensions must be taken into account when formulating policies targeting the Venezuelan population and during policy dialogues on the protection of women's rights and other potentially marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ population.
- Venezuelans who participated in the relocation strategy have higher education levels, are more proficient in Portuguese, and more likely to be male. These findings may point to some selectiveness of the target population and may hold implications for labour market insertion policies.

The relocation strategy is a main pillar of the Brazilian government's response to the humanitarian emergency resulting from the forced displacement of Venezuelans. The strategy is implemented through *Operação Acolhida* (Operation Welcome) and involves dozens of civil society organizations and UN agencies, including UNHCR, UN Women and UNFPA. From April 2018 to September 2021, more than 60,700 Venezuelans residing in temporary shelters in Roraima have been relocated to more than 730 municipalities throughout different regions of Brazil.

The experience of hosting and integrating the Venezuelan population represents an important milestone in the migration policy of Brazil, for which research is critical to informing this and future policies. This research aims to investigate the results observed for the beneficiaries of the relocation strategy during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific areas of focus include access to labour markets, income generation and vulnerabilities linked to socioeconomic self-reliance, access to social protection services especially in education and health, and the specific vulnerabilities that women and children face.

The research also covers a sample of the population that remain sheltered in Roraima and uses data from the

¹ This report results from first of two rounds of data collection to the research "*Limits and challenges to the local integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants relocated during the Covid-19 pandemic*", managed by UNHCR, UN Women and UNFPA and carried out by IPEAD Foundation and the technical team of the Regional Development and Planning Center (CEDEPLAR/UFMG), UFRR and PUC Minas.

National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) for purposes of comparative analysis with the host population.

METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative in nature with data collection planned across two distinct rounds using a probabilistic sample approach. The first round collected data for 1,000 beneficiaries of the relocation strategy between March 2021 and April 2021, stratified according to the modality of relocation and the geographic region of destination. Additionally, 295 Venezuelans that remain in shelters in Roraima were included as a comparison group. The four modalities of relocation are: i) institutional, ii) social, (iii) family reunification, and iv) employment based. The destination regions were grouped by: i) South, ii) Southeast, and, iii) Other regions - Northeast, Center-West and North (excluding Roraima).

The results in this summary reflect the first round of data collection. A second round is planned to start in November 2021. The interviews were carried out by telephone with individuals over 18 years old at the date of the interview and the data collected were post-stratified by sex and age group.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Among the Venezuelan beneficiaries of the relocation strategy, men represent 52% and women 48%, with little variation across destination regions. Women are under-represented in the employment-based modality (30%) and make up the majority (54%) who relocate through family reunification. For the population that remain in shelters in Roraima, there is greater representation of women than men (54% versus 46%).

Among the relocated population, most of them live with a spouse or partner in the same household (68%) and have at least one child (81%). In comparison, the proportion of the sheltered population in Roraima living with a spouse is slightly lower (62%) and a higher share of people have children (91%). The total fertility rate among relocated Venezuelan women is 2.16 children, higher than the rate of 1.76 observed among Brazilian women.

The Venezuelan population who relocated with children make up 94% of relocations through the institutional modality and 76% relocations through the employment-based modality, indicating expected variation in family composition for groups prioritized in each of the modalities.

Female beneficiaries of the relocation strategy have on average 1.54 children, a rate that is significantly higher than relocated men (0.99) but lower when compared to the general average for women remaining sheltered in Roraima (1.98). Overall beneficiaries of the institutional modality also presented an average of co-resident dependents higher than the average among those relocated (1.76). As for Venezuelan children under the age of 18 living in Brazil as co-residents, 17% of relocated children were born in Brazil compared to 14% of the sheltered population remaining in Roraima.

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Most beneficiaries of the relocation strategy (68%) said they understood Portuguese well or perfectly, though more women than men indicated difficulty in understanding (35% versus 28%). It is noteworthy that in the Southeast region, the participation of those who do not understand Portuguese (5%) is higher than in other regions and higher than the population average (2%). In striking contrast, the vast majority the population remaining sheltered in Roraima have some difficulty in understanding (65%), regardless of gender.

EDUCATION LEVEL AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The relocated Venezuelan population has on average higher levels of completed education than the Brazilian population aged 18 years or older, according to microdata from PNAD, the Brazil National Household Sample Survey. While only 30% of Brazilians have complete or incomplete secondary education, 61% of Venezuelan beneficiaries have complete or incomplete secondary education. The percentage of adults with higher education is slightly higher on average among Brazilians (18%) and relocated Venezuelan (15%): for the Venezuelan population, women have a slightly higher share (17%) than men (13%).

Among the Venezuelan population remaining in Roraima, data points to lower levels of education for both sexes. Additionally, a lower share of men have completed higher education when compared to women (2.4% versus 10.2%).

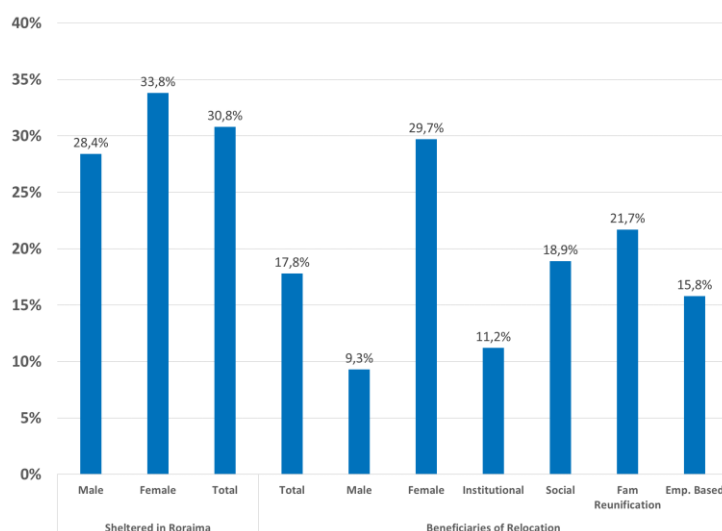
Among the relocated Venezuelans, there are differences in their educational profiles depending on the region of destination and relocation modality. Of the Venezuelans who relocated to the Southeast, 19% completed higher education compared to 10% of those who relocated to the Center-West, Northeast, and North (excluding Roraima). About 20% of Venezuelans who relocated through the institutional modality had higher education. People with higher education represent a greater proportion of those who relocated through the employment-based modality (26%), which is expected since this group relocated to pursue better job opportunities.

Regarding children under 18 years of age and co-residents in Brazil, 68% of the relocated beneficiaries were enrolled at school. Among the population remaining in Roraima, just 41% were enrolled at school or daycare.

LABOUR AND INCOME GENERATION

Even though the relocated Venezuelan population are relatively homogeneous from the point of view of their legal status, their experiences of labour market insertion is varied depending on their gender, destination region and modality of relocation.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate for sheltered in Roraima and relocated Venezuelans, by region and modality



The pattern of differences by sex is reflected in terms of unemployment, both for the beneficiaries of relocation strategy and the population remaining in Roraima. While the mean rate of unemployment for the total relocated population is 18%, it is almost 30% for women compared to just 9% for men.

Likewise, the unemployment rate of the Venezuelan population living in Roraima is 31%, with women facing a higher unemployment rate (34%) than men (28%) (Figure 1).

Among the relocated Venezuelan population who are employed, the majority of them (68%) work in the private sector and informal employment among the group is relatively low (15%). However, there are significant differences between the sexes: almost twice as many women (22%) are informally employed compared to men (11%). Among the

unemployed population, the average time with no work after relocation is almost two months longer for women (7.7 months) than for men (6.0 months).

When looking at the monthly individual income, relocated Venezuelans who are employed are at a disadvantage with respect to salary levels, making around half the income of the Brazilian population. The average monthly income of relocated and employed Venezuelans is BRL 1,325, slightly higher than the minimum wage in Brazil in 2021. But that of relocated and employed Venezuelan women is just BRL 1,043. When disaggregated by race or ethnicity, the disparity in average income jumps to BRL 1,592 for white men compared to BRL 1,042 for black women. In terms of average household per capita income, that of relocated Venezuelan households is BRL 602, which is considerably low compared to the national figure of BRL 1,380.

The situation is even more disheartening among the Venezuelan population who remain sheltered in Roraima, whose average monthly income from their main job is BRL 594. Further, there is a gap between the sexes: women earn BRL 550 while the men earn BRL 628. In comparison, the salary level of the host community residing in Roraima is almost three times higher than that of the sheltered Venezuelan population. The difference is higher at the household per capita income level: 10 times higher than that of the sheltered population.

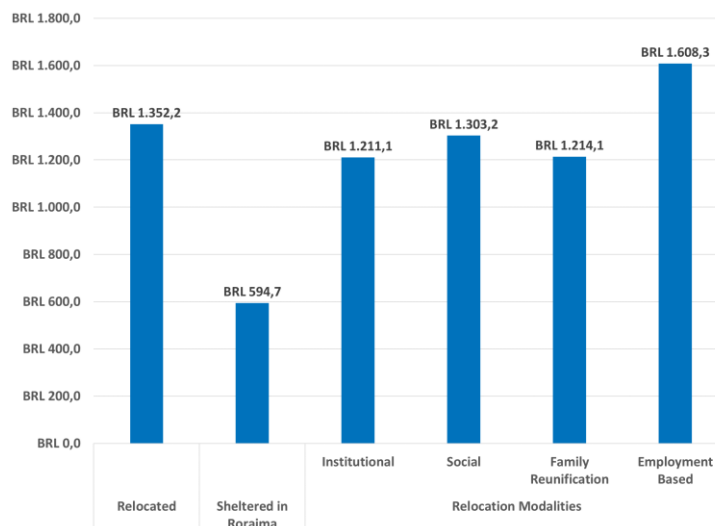
In terms of income from the main job, Venezuelans relocated through the institutional and family reunification modalities have the lowest mean incomes of BRL 1,211 and BRL 1,214, respectively, while people relocated by the employment-based modality have the highest mean income (BRL 1,608) of all the modalities (Figure 2).

In terms of labour market indicators by region, the differences analyzed are small except for labour informality and monthly mean income. Informality among relocated Venezuelans is slightly higher in the South (17%). Monthly mean income from ones' main job is lower in the North, Northeast and Center-West regions (BRL 1,155). There are no significant differences in the mean income across different educational levels for the relocated population.

Among relocated Venezuelans, the absolute majority live in rented properties (94%) and the average size of households is 4.2 people, whereas the Brazilian average is 3.3 people.

In addition, 34% of the relocated population and almost 82% of the sheltered population remaining in Roraima report not having a bank account in Brazil. Among women, the percentage with a bank account is far lower in both populations (56% among relocated population and 15% among sheltered population).

Figure 2: Income for sheltered people in Roraima and relocated Venezuelans, by modality



COVID-19 AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Health-related questions incorporated into the survey looked at COVID-19 infection rates and access to services and supplies including for sexual and reproductive health. Regarding COVID-19 infection, 15% of relocated Venezuelans indicated a past infection, compared to 7% of those who remained sheltered in Roraima. For reference, the proportion of the population infected with the coronavirus in Brazil is around 10%², with 21.5 million total accumulated cases as of October 2021. The proportion of people tested was slightly higher among sheltered people (78%) than among those relocated (75%).

Prenatal care coverage for families is relatively high among both relocated families and those who remain sheltered in Roraima. The mothers of 88% of relocated Venezuelan children and 85% of children sheltered in Roraima reported receiving prenatal care. Regarding the intention of pregnancy, among relocated women who arrived in Brazil with children, 38% wanted to get pregnant at the time of the survey, while 34% wanted to wait a little longer and 28% had no intention of becoming pregnant. This draws attention to the need for family planning services, access to contraceptive methods and maternal health services for refugee and migrant women in Brazil.

It was observed that the vast majority of the Venezuelan population in Brazil has documentation for the Unified Health System (SUS), a public and universal service. There is no significant difference by sex and between the relocated and non-relocated populations. In relation to being registered and applying to social assistance services (*Cadastro Único* or CRAS), the data reveal that half of relocated beneficiaries are not registered and for those individuals who remain sheltered in Roraima, this percentage is even lower (37%).

DIFFICULTIES IN THE RELOCATION PROCESS

In the area of housing, Venezuelans relocated through the employment-based modality are more likely to report having difficulties (17%) and there are no significant differences between the sexes. The main difficulties mentioned include the cost of rent, the lack of local support and location/distance.

For difficulties related to employment, 29% indicated having difficulties and there is significant difference by sex. Almost a third of women report difficulties in accessing and remaining in the labour market, compared to just over a quarter of men. The regional difference is also clear, in that Venezuelans who relocated to the Center-West, Northeast and North regions (excluding Roraima) find it much more difficult to enter and remain in the job market than those who relocated to the Southeast region.

Across all relocation modalities, a similar proportion (29%) reported difficulties in accessing and staying in the

labour market. Among the main difficulties cited are the lack of support for finding a job, dismissals due to the pandemic, non-payment of work performed and difficulties in finding a job vacancy matching personal experiences and background.

SENTIMENTS REGARDING THE FUTURE

The research also sought to assess the interest of among the Venezuelan population to stay in Brazil over the long term. The overwhelming majority of both the relocated population (96%) and those who remain sheltered in Roraima (99%) intend to remain in Brazil. Three-fourths of those relocated are optimistic that the future will be better than the present for asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants in Brazil.

Among people living in shelters in Roraima, 76% are interested in moving to another location in Brazil, with slightly more men than women indicating so. Around 59% have already registered to participate in the relocation strategy. In this sense, data reveals there is great potential for expanding the voluntary relocation strategy among the Venezuelan population who remain sheltered in Roraima.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICIES

The data made available through this research helps to fill an existing gap in information regarding the socioeconomic conditions of Venezuelans after they leave Roraima through the relocation strategy.

In general, looking at just the first round of data collected, the evidence points to the need for planning medium and long-term public policies that support the process of local integration and continuous socioeconomic inclusion for the Venezuelan population in Brazil. The data corroborates the importance of emphasizing an integration policy based on territorial dispersion, as a large share of the Venezuelan population has expressed interest in benefiting from the voluntary relocation strategy.

The analysis leaves no doubt that sex, race and ethnicity lead to structural inequalities experienced by Venezuelans before, during and after the relocation process, and these differences must be addressed by policies. It is expected that the second round of data collection will enable more detailed sub-group analysis of both the comparison group that remain sheltered in Roraima and the relocated population.

Among factors to take into consideration in the second round of data collection include the length of time since relocation and seasonality of the year. More nuanced recommendations will also be formulated with the inclusion of qualitative information from representatives of the different institutions supporting various stages of each modality of the relocation strategy. In particular, the identification of bottlenecks will be prioritized as will a more targeted set of recommendations for policies and initiatives. The findings from the second round of data collection and key informant interviews will be provided in the next report expected by February 2022.

Notes and References:

1. For further information, please see: <http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/snas/painel-interiorizacao/>
2. https://gsprod.saude.gov.br/extensions/covid-19_html/covid-19_html.html (accessed on the 6th of October 2021)