



Barriers to the Integration of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees in Colombia: Policy Lessons from the Migration Pulse Survey



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Executive summary

According to the Colombian Office of Immigration, more than 2.48 million migrants and refugees from Venezuela have arrived in Colombia, making it the region's main destination. The integration of this population group has become a central challenge and opportunity for public policy in the medium term, to mitigate the impacts and maximize the benefits of this phenomenon. Previous studies have shown that migrants have less access to healthcare and education services, as well as greater barriers to obtaining formal employment. However, the mechanisms or factors associated with these barriers have not been explored fully, partly due to a lack of information.

This study explores and identifies the factors that enhance or reduce barriers to accessing opportunities. Based on data from the Migration Pulse (MP) survey—the first nationally representative survey of the Venezuelan migrants in Colombia implemented in 2021 and 2022. The analysis finds that access to information, contact networks, and documents for migratory status regularization play an important role in facilitating access to services and improving this group's employability. For example, only one third of migrants and refugees have access to healthcare, and most of them access this system under a subsidized regime. The lack of information on how to access these services is an important element behind non-affiliation. In addition, regular migrants with the corresponding documentation have an average salary that is 20% higher than the rest, in addition to greater access to healthcare.

The results also show that the Venezuelan population faces multiple and reinforcing barriers that make designing effective policies more complex. Based on the construction of a multidimensional index, the study consolidates information on the following barriers: institutional, specifically related to lack of documentation or lack of means to access registration processes; networks and social capital; perceptions; and access to information. Barriers related to lack of access to documentation (and the multiple barriers combined) are associated with lower employment probabilities, lower income, and a higher incidence of informality, as well as less access to healthcare and education services. The incidence of barriers—especially institutional and perception barriers—is higher for women and young people. This implies that policies aimed at facilitating administrative and regularization processes could have relevant effects on this population's welfare.

Thus, the findings show the interrelationship between integration policies and their complementarity, such as those related to healthcare access and the regularization process. They also show the importance of ensuring coordination between national and local policies in terms of regional needs, given the diversity of contexts in Colombia the migrant and refugee populations are involved in.

Introduction

Migratory flows bring about profound economic, social, political, and cultural effects. As such, the impact of migration on host communities is highlighted and explored by academia and policy makers. Although initially much of the academic research focused on studying the effect of migration on labor markets (Borjas, 2003; Dustmann et al., 2017; Ottaviano & Peri, 2018), more recent studies explore other dimensions such as the effects of migration on local prices (Rozo & Sviastchi, 2021), public services such as healthcare and education (Cortés, 2008; Balkan & Tumen, 2016; Tanaka, Farre & Ortega, 2018; Bratsberg & Raaum, 2012; Ibáñez et al., 2021), and political behaviors (Dustmann et al., 2017; Tabellini, 2020; Rozo & Vargas, 2021). Other studies indicate that migration flows have positive long-term effects on economic growth (Droller, 2016; Tabellini, 2020; Sequeira et al., 2020; Alvarez et al., 2022). However, in the short term, there may be both costs and benefits associated with migration for host communities. From a public policy perspective, this challenges the ability of national and local governments to create channels to integrate and include migrants and refugees, facilitating access not only to the labor market, but also to basic services, which leads to funding pressures for targeted programs.

The exodus of Venezuelans is one of the largest migratory processes in recent decades. There are around 7 million migrants and refugees, of which about 2 and a half million have settled in Colombia—the region’s main destination (in the remainder of this study, we will use the concept of migrants to refer to the group of migrants, refugees, and returnees from Venezuela).¹ This migration is unprecedented in the global south. Several studies focused on understanding the impact Venezuelan migration has on the labor market in Colombia show that increased migration is associated with variations in the main labor market indicators, improving migrants’ employability conditions through remuneration and formality, as well as the incidence of poverty (Caruso et al., 2019; Bonilla-Mejía et al., 2020; Santamaria, 2020; Rozo & Vargas 2021; Lombardo et al., 2022, Lebow, 2022). The effects of regularization policies on labor issues for Colombians have also been evaluated and were found to be generally insignificant (Bahar et al., 2021). However, migrant welfare increased (Ibáñez et al., 2022) and economic inequality decreased (Lombardo et al., 2022). The World Bank (2018) recognizes that, despite negative short-term impacts, the implementation of policies to facilitate migrants’ economic integration—such as the regularization process—has the potential to accelerate the long-term positive effects that migrants could have on economic growth. In this sense, it is important to understand that the factors behind the main quality of life indicators act as catalysts of the migrant integration process, while barriers hinder their economic and social integration.

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the Venezuelan migrant population in Colombia based on the analysis of information from the Migration Pulse (MP) survey. The MP survey is a nationally representative survey of the Venezuelan migrant population collected between 2021 and 2022 by DANE. It is a survey that seeks to meet the need for information on migration and complement the public policy analyses based on other instruments. It is a measurement that has focused on Venezuelan migrants in Colombia with a longitudinal structure, studying and exploring factors related to the migration process and analyzing migrants’ living conditions and their access to services that facilitate their economic and social assimilation. The

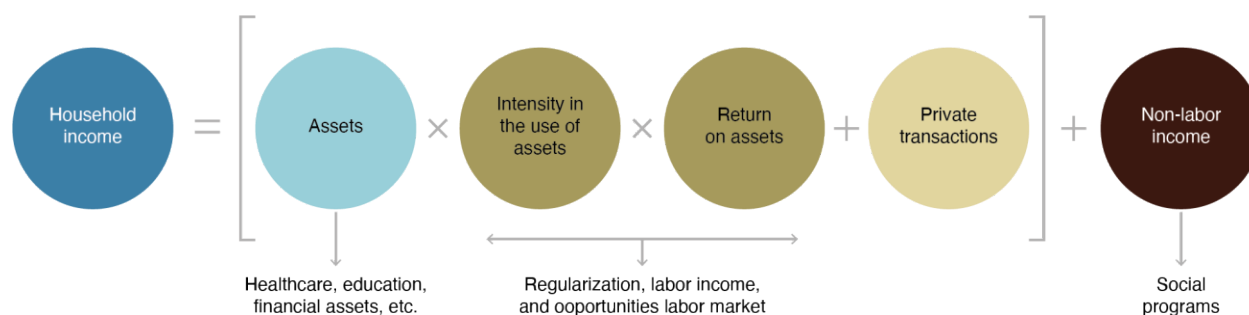
¹ <https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes>

MP survey was created with support from the *Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement* initiative created by the World Bank Group and UNHCR (JDC), which seeks to meet the need for information on migration and compile relevant data as a public resource to promote a greater understanding of migration at a global level. This information can help organizations and institutions working with migrant and refugee populations to implement evidence-based planning.

The MP survey contributes to a series of initiatives that seek to consolidate information for monitoring and analyzing the main variables of migrants' welfare and quality of life. Among these initiatives is the 2022 Survey of Living Conditions (Encovi) of Venezuelans, which describes the profile of Venezuelan migrants in the region and presents results on reasons for migration, migration status, and employment status. In terms of information consolidation, the following is also important: the National Planning Department (DNP)'s Colombian Observatory for Venezuelan Migration (OMV), which is responsible for the Multidimensional Index of Socioeconomic Integration of the migrant population, and the national statistics office (DANE)'s Migration Statistics Viewer.⁵ The latter combines information from the MP survey with administrative records from the Colombian Office of Immigration and the National Training Service (SENA), among others, to give an overview of patterns found in the migration process as well as the situation of discrimination and regularization. Other initiatives related to these aspects are the Universidad del Rosario's Venezuela Observatory and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which recently developed the Great National Survey on migration, the Interregional Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V)—which reaches 17 countries in the region—and the Venezuela Migration project.

Although a broad analysis of migrants' access to services and their labor situation is possible using different sources, the MP survey provides detailed information that allows us to address the factors behind these dimensions of analysis. For example, exploring reasons for low levels of healthcare affiliation, identifying the role of information as a determinant in access to services and the regularization process, or identifying the role of networks as a mechanism for labor intermediation. Therefore, this study seeks a more in-depth analysis of these aspects of quality of life and the labor market, and also seeks to identify barriers to access to services and barriers for migrants under an asset-based conceptual framework (Attanasio & Székely, 1999; Carter & Barrett, 2006). The starting point of this approach is that the income generating capacity of individuals and households depends on their accumulation of assets and capital and the possibility of generating returns through their use. That is, households use human capital, access to physical capital, and other assets to generate returns in the form of income. Based on this approach, the factors that favor both the accumulation and use of assets in the Venezuelan migrant population are identified, and spaces for public policy action are identified to facilitate access and resolve possible barriers that limit households' ability to improve their living conditions. For example, in this framework, the regularization program emerges as a factor that facilitates job placement and, therefore, determines the use and return on human capital (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Asset-based approach to analyze living conditions



Source: Prepared internally based on Attanasio and Székely (1999) and Carter and Barrett (2006).

This study is organized into six additional sections in which diagnostic and contextual statistics are presented in the following dimensions: (i) migrant profile and experience of the migration process; (ii) assets: human capital and financial inclusion; (iii) labor market: participation and returns; (iv) barriers to human capital accumulation and productive participation in the labor market; and finally, (v) implications for public policy.

These sections seek to characterize the migrant population in terms of their capacity to accumulate and use assets, their ability to obtain returns on human capital, and their potential to create sources of income. It is worth noting that these dimensions are determinants of the integration process, which in turn has positive impacts on migration with regard to capital accumulation, productivity, and long-term growth.

The analyses provide us with some relevant insights for public policy discussions:

1. The regularization process has enormous potential for job placement. Regular migrants with the corresponding documentation have better employment conditions, even in comparison with Colombian returnees. On the other hand, those who still do not have a regular status or face barriers linked to lack of documentation, have lower employment probabilities, lower income, and a higher incidence of informality, as well as less access to healthcare and education services.
2. There is greater access to financial services⁸ compared to the pre-pandemic period, but there is still room to promote financial inclusion policies.
3. Social networks are one of the main sources of information used by migrants.
4. There are bottlenecks for migrants in the process of accessing healthcare and education services. This is partly associated with the lack of information on how to access these services.
5. There is a very high unemployment rate among migrants, which, coupled with a reduction in the proportion of student migrants, seems to suggest a potential loss in human capital accumulation with long-term productivity implications. This is reflected in lower incomes for migrant households, with a high dependence on labor income, which is affected by the higher incidence of informality and little access to other sources of income.

These findings imply reflections for public policy not only in the national context, but also at the regional and local levels. In particular, multilevel coordination of local policies with national-level programs—the regularization program, for example—can play a key role. This coordination could strengthen migrant coverage capacity through complementary mechanisms that reinforce the circulation of information and migrants’ interaction with public institutions and access to services. The latter requires coordination with local governments, since they are responsible for establishing the conditions for the provision of healthcare and education services and other local programs. In addition, considering the profound regional differences observed in healthcare affiliation or regularization program progress, actions can be prioritized to improve these services.

What is the Migration Pulse survey?

The Migration Pulse (MP) survey collects information that is complementary to the Integrated Household Survey (GEIH) of the Venezuelan migrant population aged 15 years and older in Colombia. The information collected seeks to characterize reasons for migration, characteristics of the migration process, access to employment, expectations, as well as other aspects. The sample consists of 4,000 households with at least one migrant member identified in the GEIH.

The sampling frame for the MP survey are the Venezuelan migrants identified in the 2021 GEIH. The MP survey aims to constitute a longitudinal database in four rounds, enabling labor market variables for the Venezuelan population to be tracked. Since tracking these variables is difficult, each round establishes a replacement mechanism based on respondents from the new 2018 GEIH Reform.² The MP survey is done over the phone and was led by DANE, in coordination with the World Bank and the Universidad del Rosario. Table 1 presents the number of observations and the survey collection period, and also shows the percentage of people who continued in the following rounds.

Table 1. Features of the Migration Pulse survey Rounds 1-4

Round	Number of observations	Collection period	Percentage of people who continue in the round
1	7,996	July-August 2021	100%
2	7,633	October-November 2021	78.5% (5,995)
3	6,744	January-February 2022	67.9% (4,578)
4	8,394	March-May 2022	43% (3,662)

Source: Prepared internally based on information from DANE.

The MP survey collects information on the following topics: (i) characteristics of migration (conditions of household members in Venezuela before migrating); (ii) the migration process; (iii)

² The 2018 GEIH Reform refers to GEIH implementation, updating the 2018 Geostatistical Framework with the results of the most recent population and housing census. In addition, it considers the intersectionality approach within its representativeness: farmers (campesinos), LGBTI, and people with disabilities.

¹⁰ <https://www.acnur.org/es/datos-basicos.html>

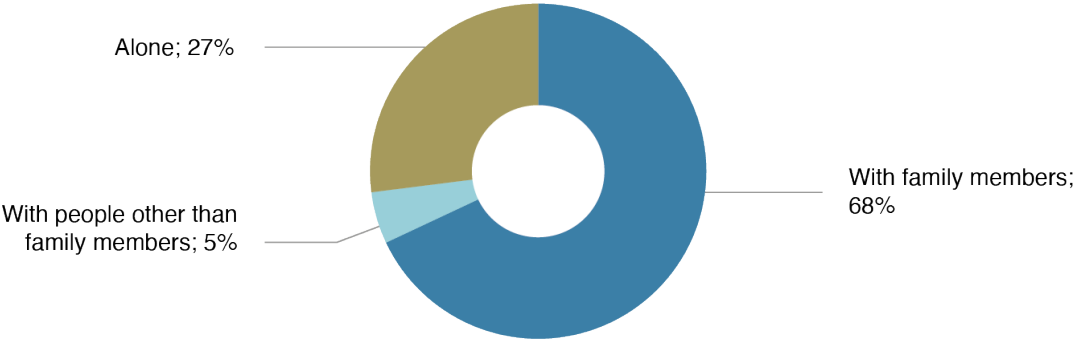
participation in the labor market; (iv) sources of income and remittances; (v) support networks; and (vi) patterns and imaginaries. Other topics explored in some of the rounds were: violence, birth control and menstruation, the household situation in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, and satisfaction with and access to information on different goods and services. Although the survey targeted people 15 years of age and older, during the fourth round, the topic of education was added for those households with at least one person of school age. Among the respondents, 3,662 people (43%) participated throughout the four rounds of the MP survey (Table 1). For each round, new respondents were contacted for the first time in order to maintain the sample size. In order to provide a deeper analysis, the results presented below include the different rounds of the MP survey and the questions asked in each round.

Profiles and migration process

Migration flows generate not only financial, but also psychological and emotional costs for migrants (World Bank Group, 2018), which impact how they adapt to the destination country. Despite the proximity between Colombia and Venezuela, the migration process has caused ruptures in migrants' social dynamics. In particular, as the economic situation in Venezuela worsened, households made decisions for some members to migrate, thus changing the allocation of occupations within the household. In June 2022, it was estimated that approximately 4.6 million¹⁰ Venezuelans are categorized as refugees and displaced persons abroad, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Colombia—because of its geographic position, the fact that it speaks the same language as Venezuela, and because of its commitment to migrants—is currently receiving the most Venezuelan migrants in the world, according to figures from the R4V platform. This is an aspect that is usually difficult to measure, given that migration studies usually consider household surveys in the destination country that contain detailed information on the labor market situation and households' living conditions. However, these instruments do not include information on the conditions regarding transit to the destination country and how households reorganize themselves to cope with the migration process. This information is available in the MP survey, which allows us to identify factors that determine Venezuelans' assimilation process in Colombia.

According to the information collected in the MP survey, most migrants report having traveled to Colombia with other members of their family (68%), while 27% migrated alone (see Figure 2). This pattern changed with the deterioration of Venezuela's economic conditions and the increase in migration flow, since, in the early stages (prior to 2017), there was a higher incidence of migration of the nuclear family.

Figure 2. Who did you travel with from Venezuela?



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

In particular, Table 2 shows that 41.5% of migrants before 2017 traveled with their spouse, while for recent migrants (between 2020 and 2021), this percentage is 30.3%. This implies that the migration process has involved the separation of family groups, which to some extent have been reunited in recent years. This is consistent with the fact that 33.9% of migrants between 2020 and 2021 report that their spouses migrated before them. In short, this suggests that heads of household migrated first in order to accumulate income that would allow the rest of the household to migrate.

Table 2. Spouse's migration status

Period	2017 or earlier	2018-2019	2020-2021	Total
Migrated with you	41.5%	31.3%	30.3%	34.0%
Migrated before you	9.9%	22.7%	33.9%	20.6%
Migrated after you	29.3%	22.0%	17.1%	23.4%
Currently in Venezuela	2.3%	3.0%	5.2%	3.1%
Met partner in Colombia	14.9%	18.1%	10.3%	16.3%
Currently in Venezuela, but has plans to come to Colombia	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Currently in Venezuela and does not have plans to come to Colombia	0.6%	1.4%	1.5%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

These figures contrast with reports of the main reasons for migration. According to the data collected in the MP survey, most of the reasons are economic (92.1%), with family reunification being the third most important factor (15.8%), after reasons related to security in Venezuela. This information provides evidence that the migration process has had social and economic costs for migrant households, which could represent significant losses in the accumulation of human capital, dissaving, and a loss of assets to cover the costs of mobilization. Evidence of migrants' level of vulnerability can be seen in the changes in the type of transportation used to reach Colombia, with 8.1% of migrants traveling on foot in 2019, as opposed to 4.6% in 2017.

Likewise, the migrant population is equally distributed in terms of gender, is young compared to the non-migrant Colombian population, and for the most part, has completed secondary education (71% of the Venezuelan migrant population has secondary education or higher, while 54% of the Colombian population does) (see Figures 3-5).

Figure 3. Composition of the migrant population, by sex.

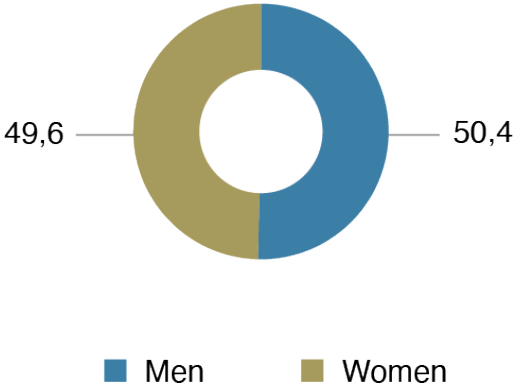


Figure 4. Distribution of the migrant population, by age group.

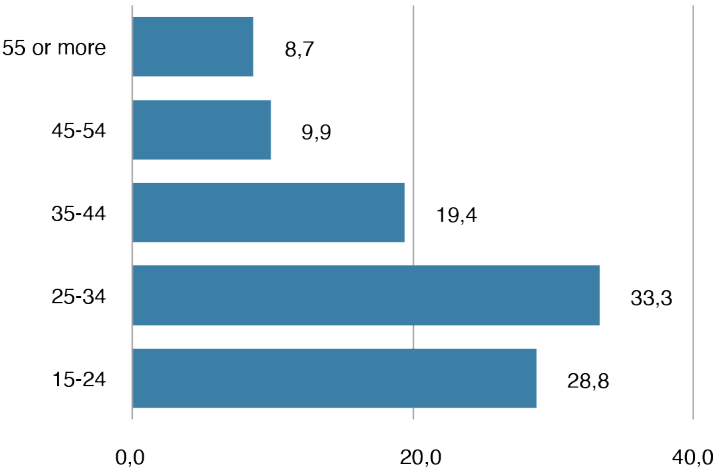
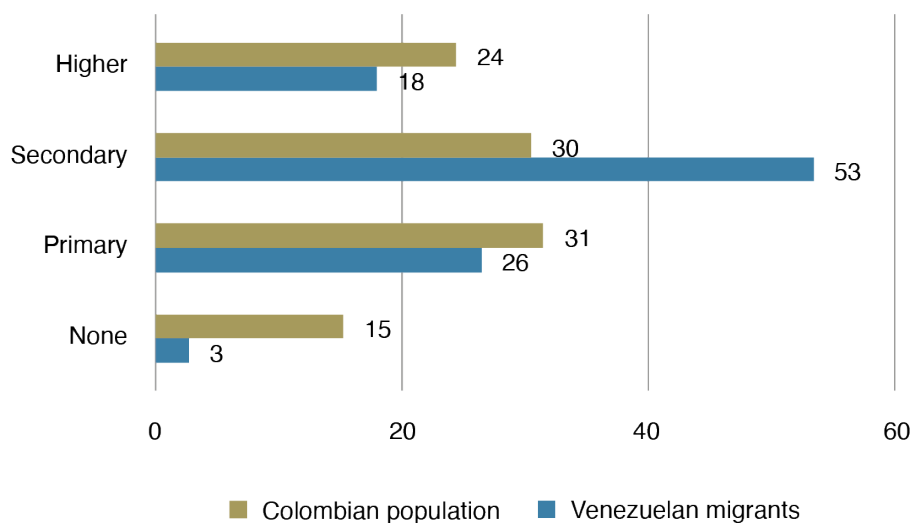


Figure 5. Level of schooling of the migrant and Colombian population.



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

Assets: human capital formation and financial inclusion

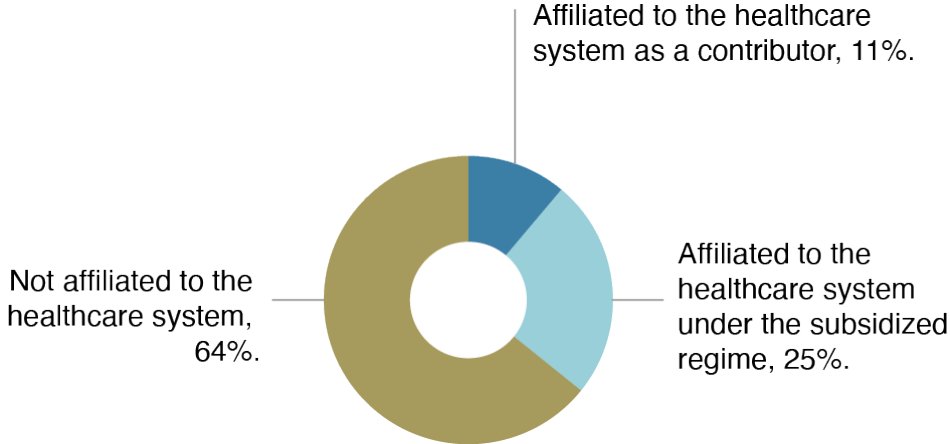
Among the main challenges of migrant integration policies is facilitating access to basic social services such as healthcare and education. Analyzing the level of access and identifying the main barriers are important inputs to guide public policy. According to the MP survey, a high percentage of migrants do not have access to essential services. In particular, 64% of the migrant population does not have access to healthcare services, and 28% of school-aged children and youth do not attend an educational institution (see Figure 6 and Figure 8).

A closer look at the migrant population's access to healthcare services shows that the subsidized health system is how most migrants access these services, maintaining a 2 to 1 ratio between the subsidized and contributory regimes. This is mainly associated with high levels of informality among the migrant population. As migrants achieve formal job placement, both migrants and their beneficiaries would naturally have access to healthcare services through the contributory regime. However, in regard to the regularization process, migrants can access the subsidized regime by registering with Sisbén.³ When disaggregating the healthcare affiliation status according to the ID registered in the MP survey, half of regular migrants with a Special Stay Permit (PEP by its initials in Spanish) or Temporary Protection Permit (PPT by its initials in Spanish) are affiliated which accounts for a higher proportion than the irregular population that reported being affiliated, but lower than the population using a Colombian citizenship card as their ID, as is the case for Colombian returnees (Figure 7).⁴

³ <https://www.minsalud.gov.co/proteccionsocial/Paginas/afiliacion-al-sistema-de-seguridad-social-en-salud-de-extranjeros-y-colombianos-retornados.aspx>

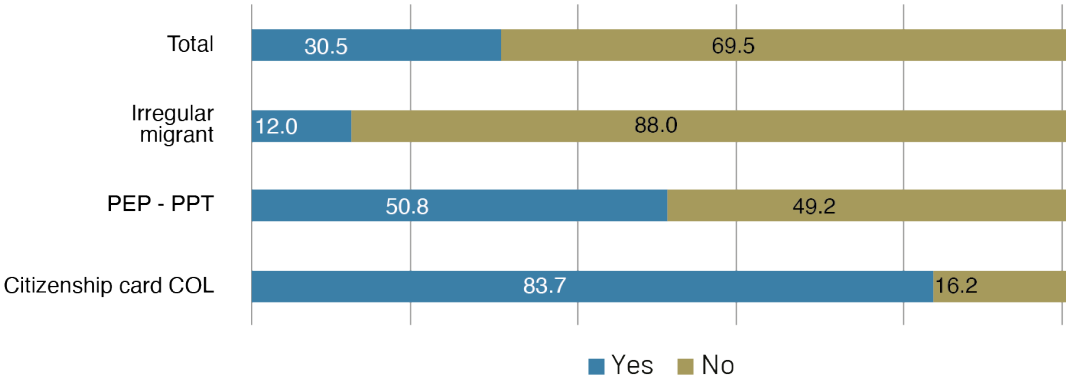
⁴ The irregular migrant population applying for refugee status with an SC-2 who are allowed to join the subsidized social security system.

Figure 6. Affiliation to the healthcare system



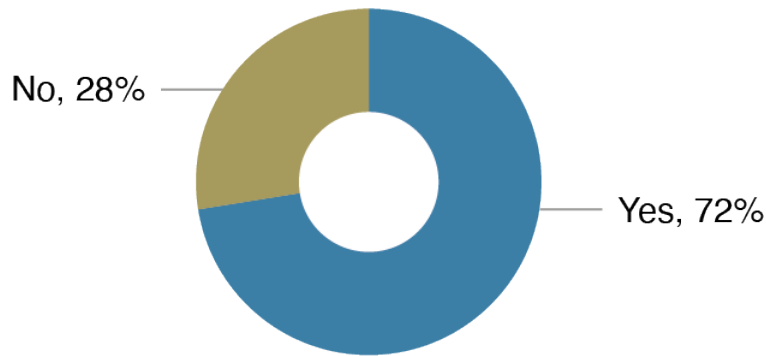
Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 4 of the MP survey.

Figure 7. Are you affiliated to the healthcare system? By migrants' ID type



Source: Calculations based on Round 2 of the MP survey.

Figure 8. Do children and adolescents attend an educational institution?

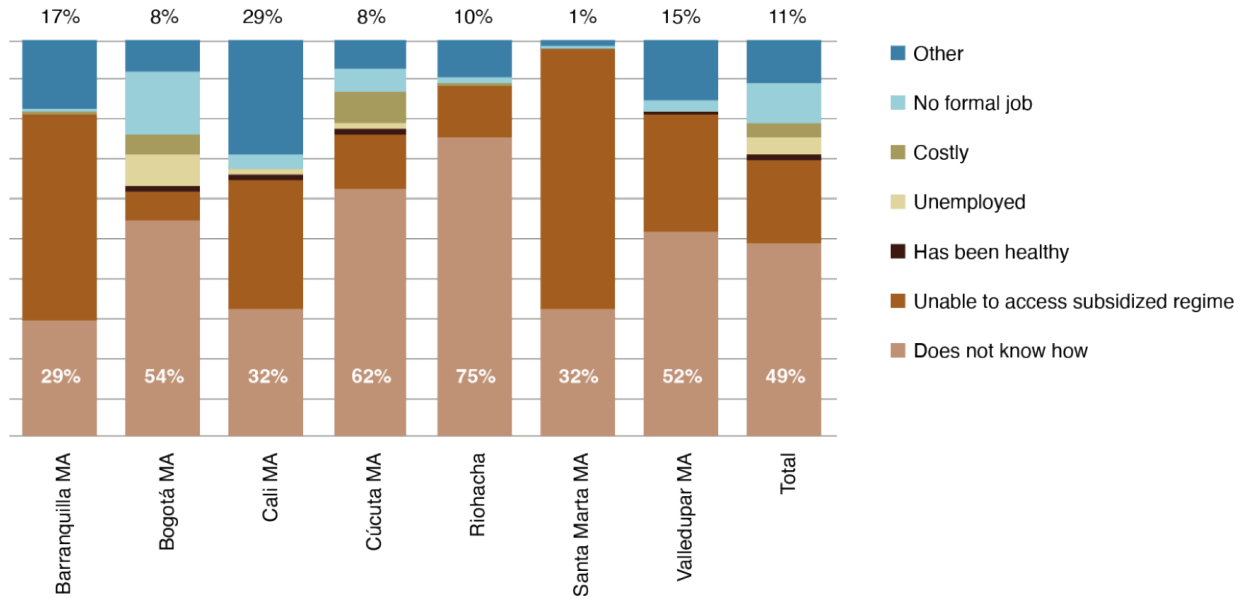


Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 4 of the MP survey.

The predominance of the subsidized regime as a means of access to healthcare services reveals the importance of social programs and the subsidized regime for the migrant population and how knowing about how to access the services affects participation. According to the MP survey, the main reason why the migrant population is not affiliated is due to lack of knowledge and not being able to access the subsidized service.

Figure 9 exposes the frequency of response of the reasons and presents the regional differences at the beginning of 2022 in terms of access to healthcare services, which may result from the absence of formal employment opportunities and the visibility and implementation of local policies in certain regions of the country in light of a general lack of knowledge. They highlight the differences, for example, between the population in Cúcuta and other parts of the country. Figure 10 shows that the migrant population is generally unaware of how to access various services. Half of migrants have not received information on services, and 1 in 4 migrants have received information on education, work, healthcare, and—to a lesser extent—housing.

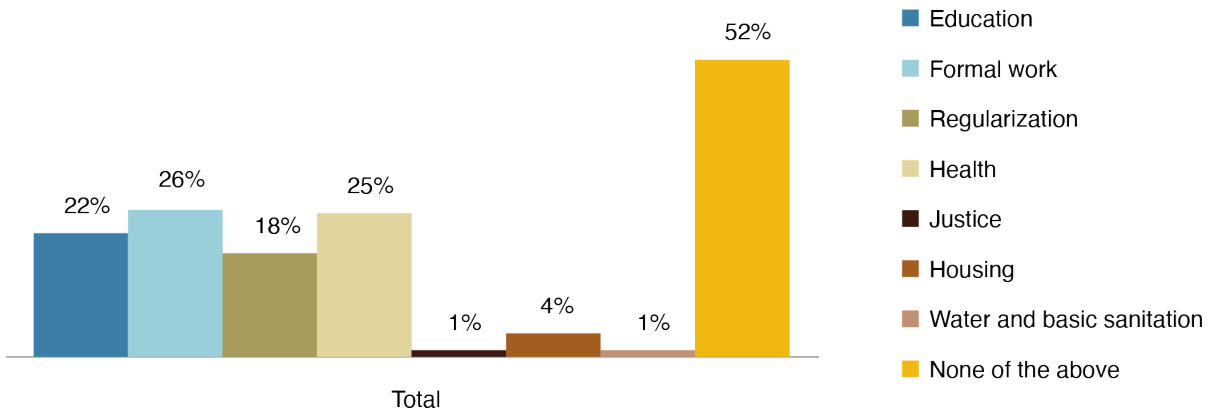
Figure 9. Why are you not affiliated to the healthcare system?



Source: Calculations based on Round 4 of the MP survey.

Note: The selection of metropolitan areas is given by sample representation in the MP survey.

Figure 10. In the last 12 months, have you received information on how to access the following services?



Source: Calculations based on Round 4 of the MP survey.

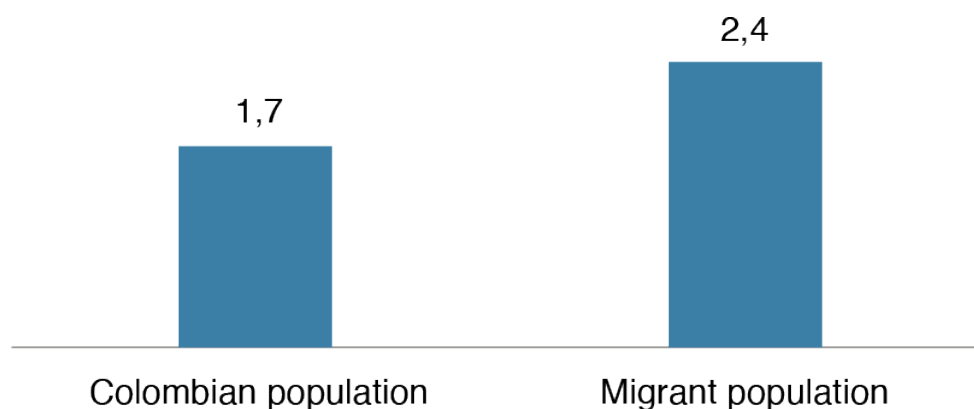
According to the GEIH, by 2021, Venezuelan migrants' housing conditions did not show significant differences in terms of household services between migrants and the rest of the population, as well as structural aspects of housing. However, shortcomings related to critical household overcrowding and Internet service access have been identified, as shown in Table 3. The ratio of people per room is higher for the migrant population than for the Colombian non-migrant population: 2.4 people per room vs. 1.7 people per room (see Figure 11. Number of people per room).

Table 3. Housing conditions for the Venezuelan migrant population and the Colombian non-migrant population: rural - urban areas

Households without the following services:								
% of households	Inadequate wall material	Inadequate flooring material	Electricity	Gas	Sewage	Garbage collection	Water	Internet
Urban area								
COL	1.5%	1.3%	0.1%	16.6%	5.4%	0.7%	1.4%	38.7%
VEN	2.0%	1.3%	0.1%	23.8%	6.0%	0.8%	1.8%	51.8%
Total	1.5%	1.3%	0.1%	17.0%	5.4%	0.7%	1.4%	39.4%
Rural area								
COL	17.1%	18.2%	4.9%	86.8%	85.7%	69.1%	46.0%	84.7%
VEN	15.8%	20.1%	8.5%	79.7%	74.1%	57.8%	48.5%	82.5%
Total	17.0%	18.3%	5.0%	86.6%	85.4%	68.7%	46.1%	84.6%

Source: Calculations prepared internally based on the 2021 GEIH. A migrant household is defined as a household with at least one Venezuelan migrant.

Figure 11. Number of people per room



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on the 2021 GEIH. A migrant household is defined as a household with at least one Venezuelan migrant.

Another crucial aspect to analyze in the migrant population corresponds to their financial inclusion, which is related to the possession of financial services, an asset that facilitates income and consumption cycles (Banco de la República, 2015). In the aftermath of the pandemic, a greater proportion of the migrant population switched to having an account with a financial institution or digital wallet. This increase was especially driven by an increase in the number of people with an account in a financial institution in Bogotá (see Figure 12 and Figure 13). Even so, this percentage is lower than that reported for Colombia, since in 2021, 59.7% of people aged 15 and over had an account in a financial entity. (The Global Findex Database).

Figure 12. Before COVID-19, did you have an account with a financial institution?

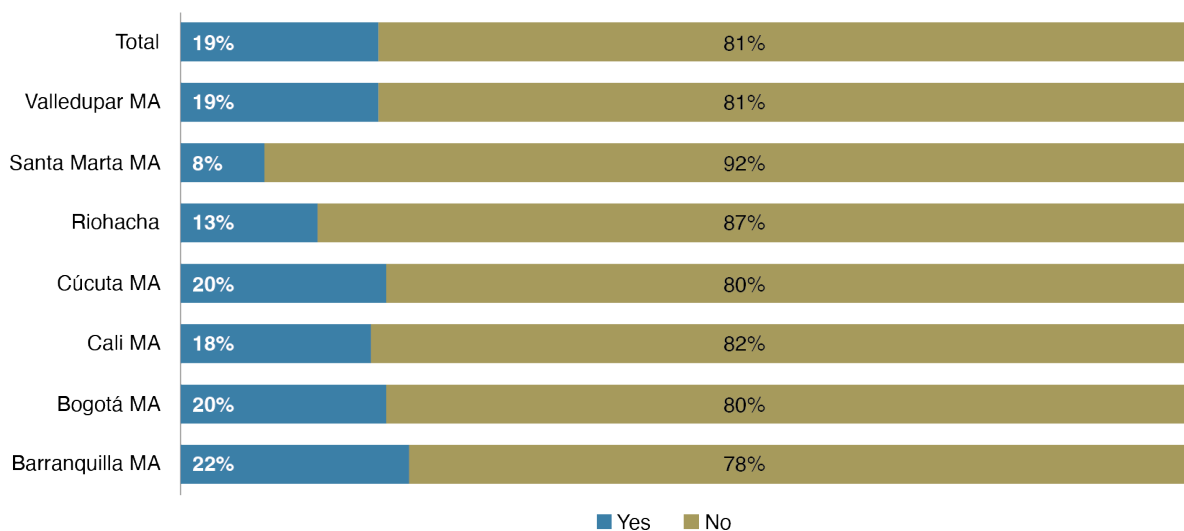
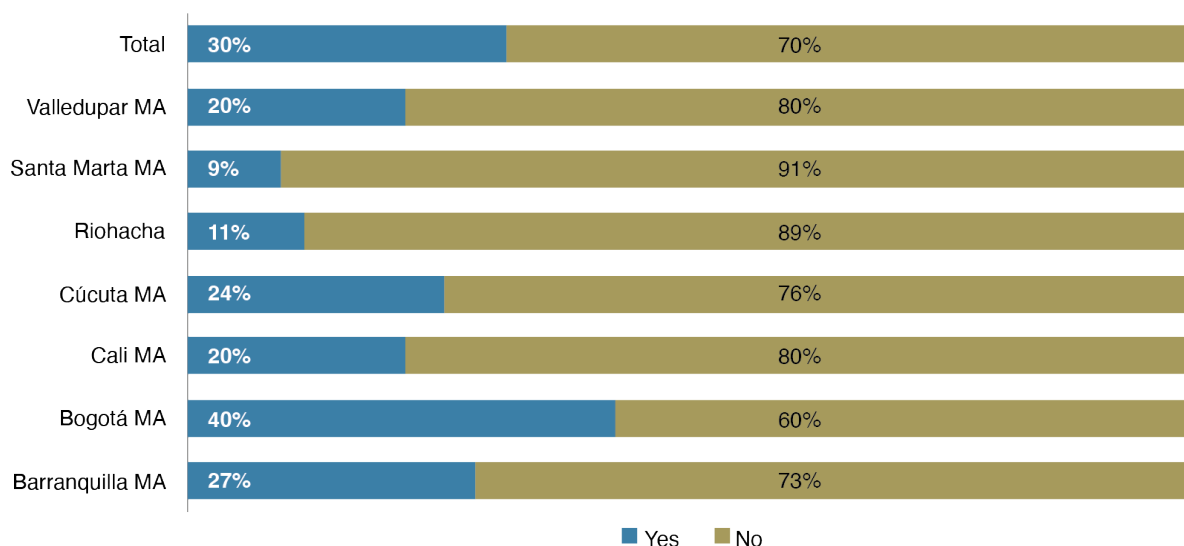


Figure 13. Do you currently have an account with a financial institution?



Source: Calculations based on Round 2 of the MP survey.

Note: The selection of metropolitan areas is given by sample representation in the MP survey.

Labor market: participation and returns

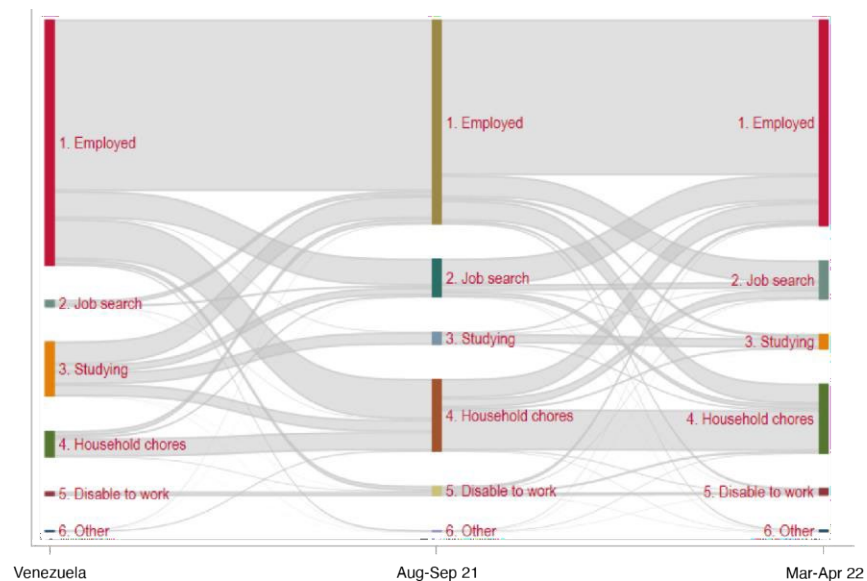
Venezuelan migrants report that the main reason for migration is to improve their economic conditions (92.1%). In this sense, migrants seek opportunities to generate income in the labor market. Their level of job placement depends on the level of human capital or the possibility of promoting entrepreneurship through accumulated resources. This has been reflected in the labor

participation rates of Venezuelans in Colombia.

Based on an analysis of transitions between migrants' main occupation in Venezuela and their main occupation in Colombia, there are three relevant observations. First, there is a significant reduction in the proportion of Venezuelans who are studying, which implies a potential loss of human capital in the medium term. Second, there is a significant increase in the proportion of Venezuelans looking for work, which is consistent with the increase in labor participation and the higher opportunity cost of engaging in income-generating activities.

Finally, there is an increase in the proportion of migrants dedicated to housework, which is related to a reorganization of household chores. In other words, as households reunify and lose their support network in Venezuela, a greater demand for care falls on the members of the household, which forces a greater division in the use of time. In particular, when considering the population between 15 and 24 years of age, 15% are studying in Colombia, while 58% were studying in Venezuela. Similarly, only 8% of migrants in Venezuela were dedicated to housework, while in Colombia the figure reaches 21%. In aggregate, a lower employment rate is observed with respect to the situation in Venezuela, with small variations over time (see Figure 14) when comparing Rounds 1 and 4 of the MP survey. In this comparison, the significant flows between unemployment status, dedication to housework, and employment status stand out.

Figure 14. Transitions from their main occupation in Venezuela, August-September 2021, and March-April 2022



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

Job placement is one of the main challenges from a public policy perspective. A general review of the main labor market indicators shows that migrants have higher unemployment rates, and on average, those who obtain employment face lower levels of quality and higher rates of informality. The latter is reflected in lower wages and higher rates of informality, which also affects inclusion in social security systems. These unfavorable outcomes for migrants have been mitigated by the Colombian government's regularization program—one of the most far-reaching amnesty programs for a developing country (Ibáñez et al., 2022). This program, which seeks to facilitate

social and economic integration, has been developed in different stages. Based on the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV), which provides census information on the migrant population, the Special Stay Permit (PEP) was configured and was issued from 2018 to 2021. However, during its early phases, the PEP could only be accessed by Venezuelans with a stamped passport.⁵ As of 2021, this changed to the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT), which grants the benefit of regularization for 10 years. This policy is one of the main efforts to include the migrant population, including efforts to reach those in remote areas, with potential effects on the quality of employment and migrants' income generation capacity. Around 2.8 million people have been registered, revealing significant progress since the collection of MP data.

From the MP survey data, it is possible to identify migrants with permission to stay and, therefore, make comparisons of their labor situation based on evidence that suggests the relevance of potential policies. If we disaggregate migrants into three groups—returnees, migrants with permits, and the rest—we see that the regularization program has been an effective mechanism to facilitate access to employment. In particular, regular migrants have a higher total income and higher hourly income than other migrants (see Table 4). In fact, regular migrants' total labor income is close to the average income for Colombians, and above the minimum wage in Colombia. Irregular migrants have a 26% higher income, which is related to greater job placement in the formal labor market, where the return on human capital is valued.

From a regression exercise that seeks to identify factors associated with migrants' labor income, regular migrants have an income 4.9% higher than returnees, while for irregular migrants, labor income is up to 23% lower on average. Increasing returns on the level of education are also observed (see Appendix, Table A1).

Table 4. Labor market indicators for different migrant groups*

Indicator	Colombian population	Migrants		
		Returnees	Migrants with Permit (PEP or PPT)	Other migrants
Average hours worked per week	45	51	52.4	51.2
Monthly salary	\$1,110,730	\$869,619	\$1,061,460	\$839,047
Hourly income	\$23,140.22	\$18,117.07	\$21,229.19	\$17,480.15
Written contract (%)	68%	23%	23%	18%
Verbal contract (%)	32%	77%	77%	82%
Makes contribution to pension funds (%)	39%	19%	25%	5%
Wants to change jobs	23%	37%	44%	38%

Note: Calculations are based on the GEIH done in January-February 2022 for the Colombian non-migrant population, and Round 3 of the MP survey for the migrant population. *Calculations are based on the 2021 GEIH, considering the period of identification of the migrant population in Round 2 of the MP survey.

In other employment status variables, such as having a written contract and pension contributions, regular migrants have better conditions. The informal status of irregular migrants is particularly

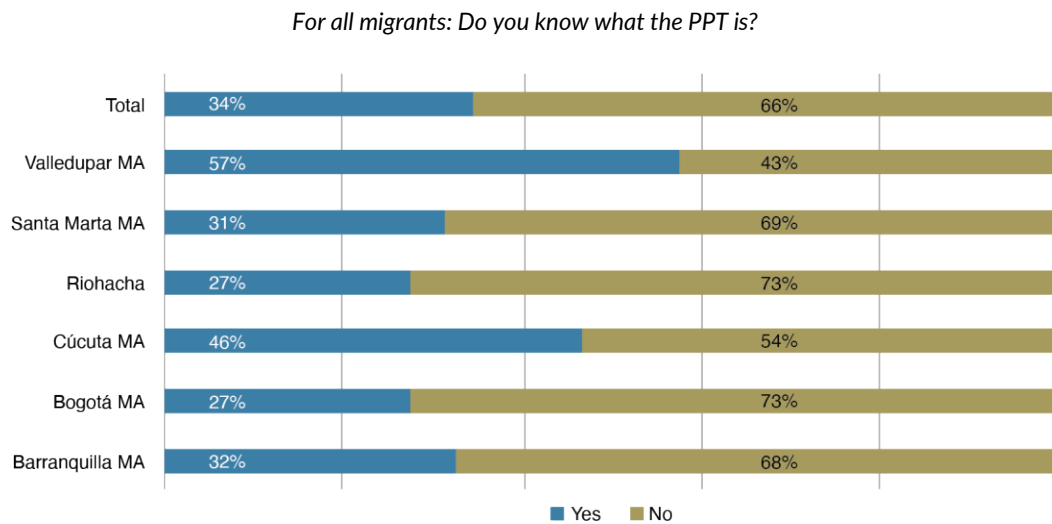
⁵ Decree 5797 of 2017, Resolution 740 of 2018, Decree 1288 of 2018. The Complementary Special Stay Permit (PECP) by means of Resolution 3548 of 2019 and the Special Stay Permit for the Promotion of Formalization (PEPFF) by means of Decree 117 of 2020 were designed.

noteworthy, as only 5% contribute to a pension fund. In contrast to these findings, a higher proportion of migrants with permits report a desire to change jobs. This may be related to greater job placement possibilities offered by the permits, which increases labor market returns.

Despite the evident importance of the PPT for job placement and improvement in employment conditions, as of 2021, there is ample room for growth. According to the data in the MP survey, 66% of the migrants surveyed in 2021 were aware of the permits, though with marked regional differences (see Figure 15). The results for Cúcuta, a city with a high proportion of migrants, stood out. Migrants who were not aware of the PPT are young, with low levels of education, and also did not register in the RAMV or apply for a RAMV-PEP at the time. However, between July and August 2021, the willingness to apply for the PPT was over 88% of migrants who were aware of it. After almost a year, effective implementation among migrants is slightly lower, with compliance in Cali and Riohacha, and a greater lag in Valledupar and Barranquilla.

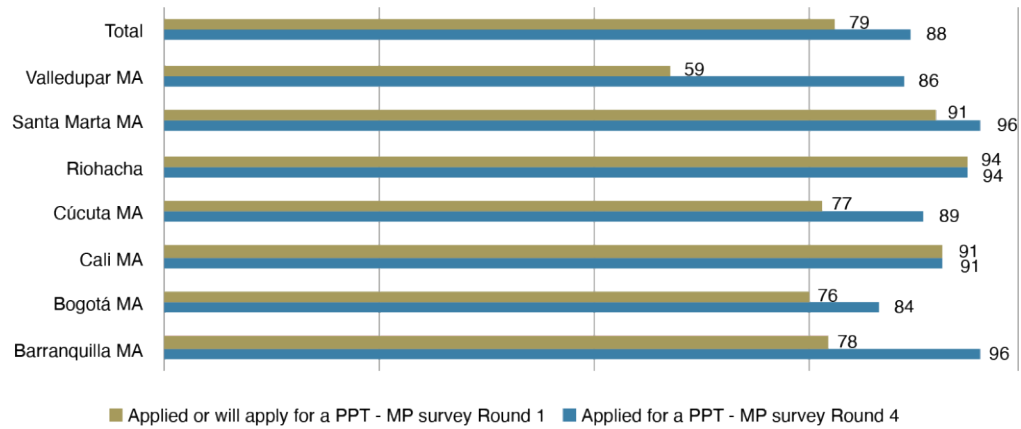
An important aspect that can improve knowledge about the PPT is to consider migrants' communication channels. The MP survey shows that social networks are the main driver of information. This could imply that the digital divide or access to the internet may be key to increasing knowledge about stay permits, and at the same time allows for the identification of possible channels that allow interaction between migrants and public institutions.

Figure 15. Knowledge of PPT by region



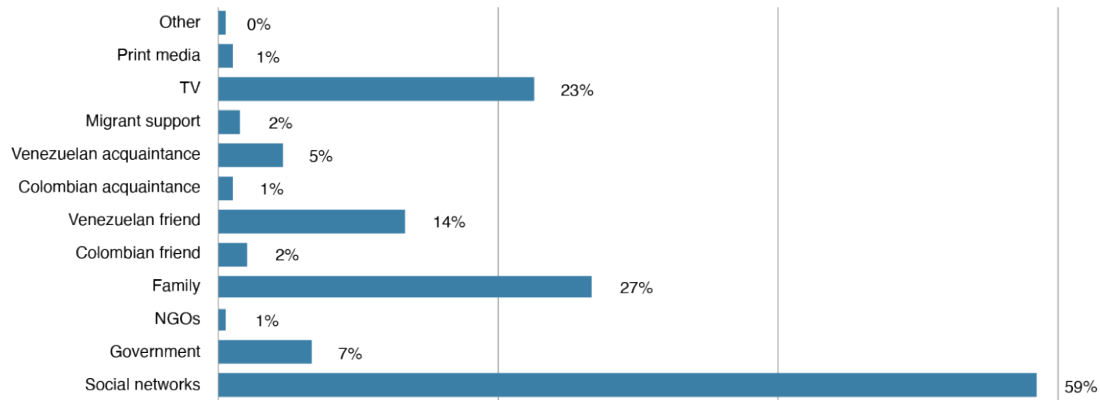
Note: The selection of metropolitan areas is given by sample representation in the MP survey.

Percentage of the migrant population that applied or would apply for the PPT in Round 1 of the MP survey, and percentage of the migrant population that applied for a PPT in Round 4 of the MP survey.



Note: The selection of metropolitan areas is given by sample representation in the MP survey.

Media consulted for PPT information



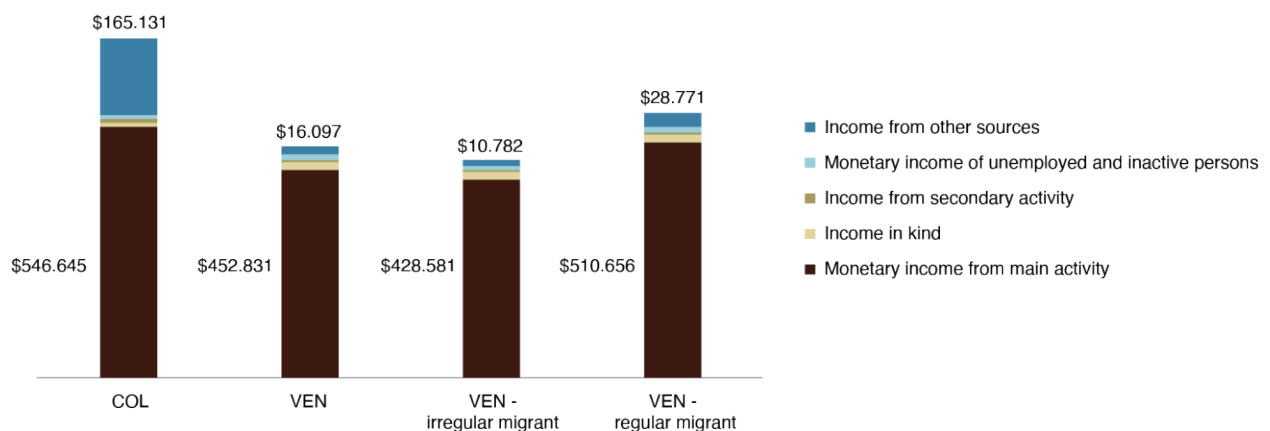
Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

A crucial element that determines the return on migrants' human capital in the Colombian labor market is the validation of academic degrees to improve appropriate job placement in the labor market. The MP survey data show that 93% of migrants have not validated their degrees, arguing lack of documentation and ignorance of the procedure, among other reasons, and highlighting the importance of the flow of information to promote integration.

The findings described so far show that there are gaps in access to services such as health and education, which represent barriers to the accumulation of human capital, in addition to limitations in access to quality employment, which has been mitigated by the regularization policy. These results are reflected in a lower income generating capacity and migrants' high degree of dependence on labor income. Approximately half of the migrants only received aid money from their work activities, and 39% did not receive any aid (Figure 17). This is evidence of migrants' vulnerability and the limited access they have to income-generating opportunities in Colombia beyond the labor market.

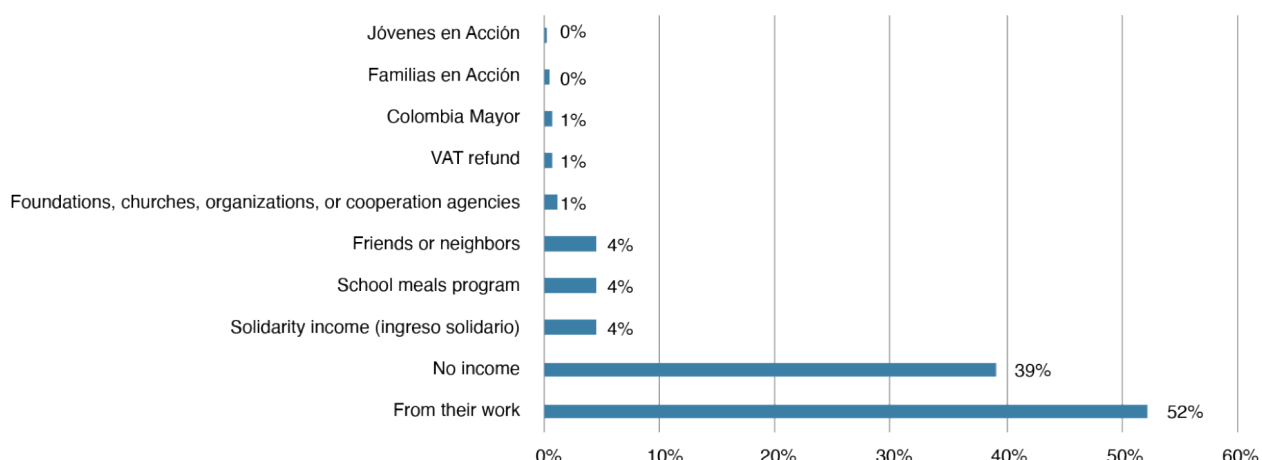
While for a Colombian household, labor income is equivalent to about 75% of the total income received, it accounts for close to 90% of migrants' income (see Figure 16). In addition, other sources of income including income from transfers and social programs are less than 5% among migrant households. However, there is a significant difference between regular and irregular migrants, which is in line with the scope of the PPT and includes access to different institutional services through a regularization process. It is important to note that access to the main social programs such as Familias en Acción or Jóvenes en Acción presents access restrictions to migrants, which did not occur with the Ingreso Solidario program set up during the pandemic (ended December 2022) and which had a markedly higher coverage than other institutional aid (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Average monthly income according to migratory status and possession of and ID to work.



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 2 of the MP survey. Income information from the GEIH and 2018 GEIH Reform for the year 2021.

Figure 17. In the last month did you receive any money (aid)?



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 1 of the MP survey.

Barriers to human capital accumulation and productive participation in the labor market

In order to explore barriers from a multidimensional perspective, a weighted index of barriers that migrants might face during the integration process is constructed using information from the MP survey, mapping the following four dimensions: 1) institutional, 2) networks and social capital, 3) perceptions, and 4) access to information. The barriers were defined on the basis of questions associated with the mechanisms or attributes that limit access to services to promote the accumulation and generation of returns on household assets and capital. Table 5 presents the elements that make up each of the proposed dimensions and that operate as *proxy* variables of effective barriers to access resources or returns related to household assets. All questions used to calculate the dimensions are equally important, therefore, equal weights are assigned within each dimension. Then, the dimensions are aggregated using equal weights as well.

Table 5. Index of barriers to the integration of the Venezuelan migrant population

Dimension	Question	Variable name
Institutional (25%)	To find a job, he/she has been required to provide documents he/she does not have.	ins.doc
	He/she did not apply for the PPT due to lack of access to a virtual or physical means of registration.	ins.acc
Networks and social capital (25%)	He/she did not have any contacts in Colombia prior to travel.	red.con
	He/she did not receive any information to help him/her adapt to life in Colombia.	red.ada
	In the last month, he/she did not participate in any activities or groups.	red.act
Perceptions and attitudes (25%)	In finding a job, he/she has experienced discrimination because of his/her nationality.	per.dis
	He/she does not feel identified with Colombian culture (response levels 1 and 2).	per.cul
	He/she feels discriminated against by the Colombian society (response levels 4 and 5).	perdis2

	He/she does not feel (completely) integrated into Colombian society.	per.int
Information (25%)	To find a job, he/she had no knowledge of where to look for a job.	inf.emp
	In the last 12 months, he/she did not receive any information to access services.	inf.ser
	He/she did not apply for a PPT due to lack of information.	inf.ppt

Source: Prepared internally.

The diversity and complexity of the factors that can act as barriers to access to services or factors that facilitate the generation of household income lead to the heterogeneity of these barriers at the household level. For example, households with greater access to information technologies are less prone to institutional or information barriers. Migrants that have been in Colombia for a longer period of time showed higher levels of cultural integration, which facilitate access to the labor market. When comparing the average incidence of each of the barriers with the incidence for different population groups, these heterogeneities become evident. Table 6 shows the difference of each group with respect to the average incidence of each item considered when measuring the barriers. In general, there is a higher incidence of barriers for women and young people—mainly institutional and perception barriers. In addition, education and time spent in Colombia appear to be factors that mitigate access barriers.

Table 6. Index of barriers to the integration of the Venezuelan migrant population

Indicator	Men	Women	Young people (<29)	Adults	Less higher education	Higher education	Fewer than 2 children	More than 2 children	Household of less than 4 members	Household of more than 4 members	Arrived before 2019	Arrived in or after 2019
ins.doc												
ins.acc												
red.con												
red.ada												
red.act												
per.dis												
per.cul												
perdis2												
per.int												
inf.emp												
inf.ser												
inf.ppt												

Source: Prepared internally. Boxes marked in green indicate below-average incidence, while those in red indicate above-average incidence. The intensity of the color indicates the distance from the average incidence.

The accumulation and return on assets owned by the household depend mainly on access to essential healthcare and education services and the level of job placement, as a mediator for income generation. Each of the proposed dimensions is related to these variables in different ways.

To understand the association between each of the barriers and the migrant population's opportunities to generate income (access to employment, level of labor income, *proxy* measures of informality such as affiliation to the social security system, job position, and access to healthcare and education services), regression models are estimated. Using the longitudinal component of the MP survey and its integration with the GEIH, these outcome variables are

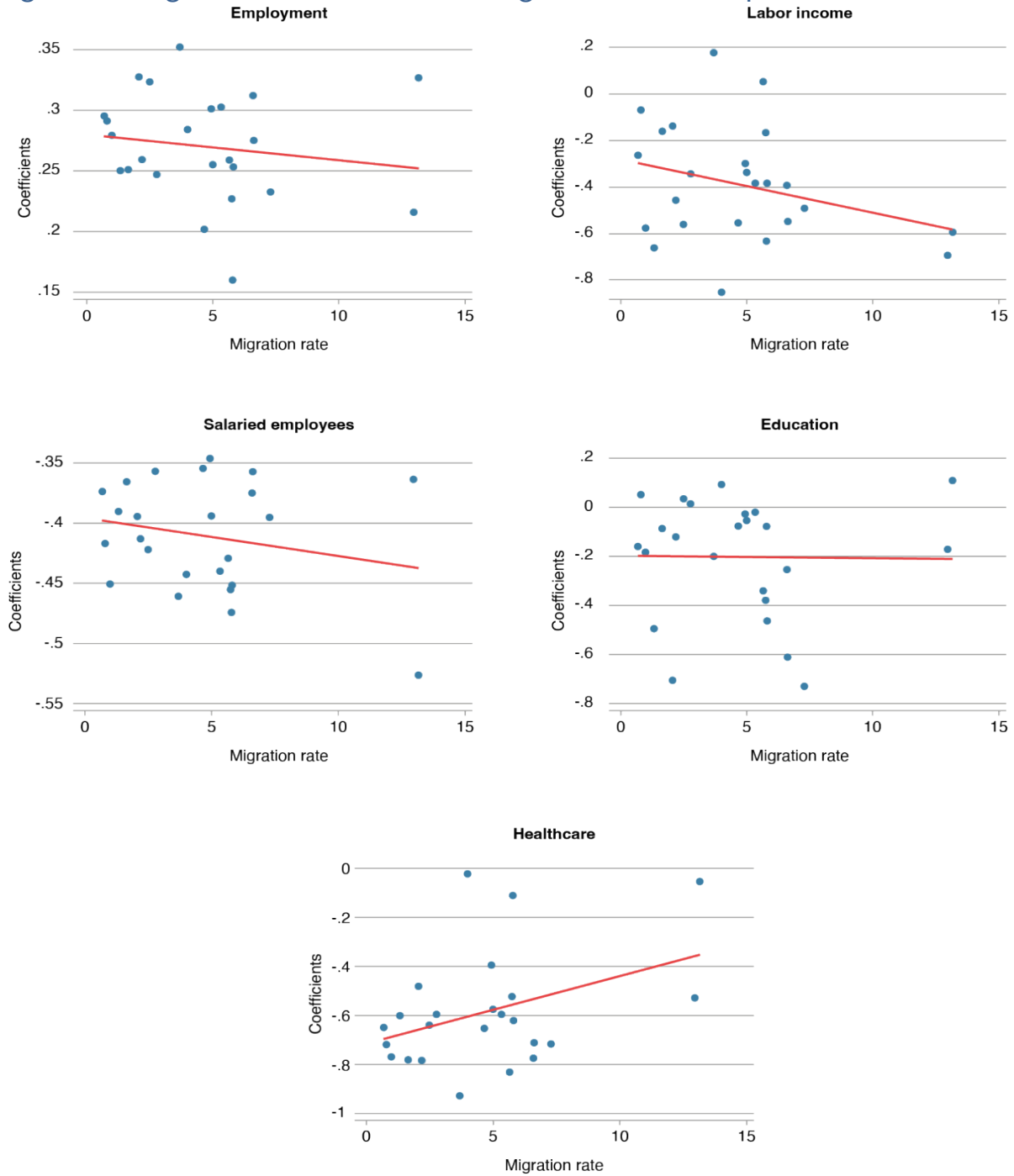
measured in both information sources.⁶ The results of the estimates are shown in the appendix (Tables A2-A6).

Estimates show that, in general, job placement and access to healthcare and education services are strongly related to the barriers faced by migrants. With respect to job placement, the GEIH measurements, which precede the MP survey barrier indicator report, show that barriers—especially institutional ones—limit the attainment of quality employment, in particular a formal or salaried job. This is also reflected in a negative relationship between the incidence of barriers and household income. These same conclusions can be drawn from the results obtained in the MP survey with respect to the possibility of having a salaried job and earning a higher income. In the latter case, the barriers associated with networks and social capital are relevant in determining the possibility of having a salaried job, while perceptions are important in determining labor income.

Another relevant aspect of the results corresponds to the migrant population's reallocation in the labor market despite the presence of barriers. The results suggest that the presence of barriers as a kind of *crowding-out* effect towards self-employment, which is associated with lower quality, less formality, and lower income. Finally, with respect to access to social services, measured as the migrant population's access to education and healthcare, the estimates show that institutional barriers are significant and have the greatest impact in limiting access. In addition, perception-related barriers also contribute to explaining the lack of access to such services.

⁶ When the GEIH information was collected, it was before barriers had been measured. Barriers are measured and associated with questions from various MP survey rounds. Therefore, the set of people who participated in all four rounds is used, which corresponds to 3,662 people.

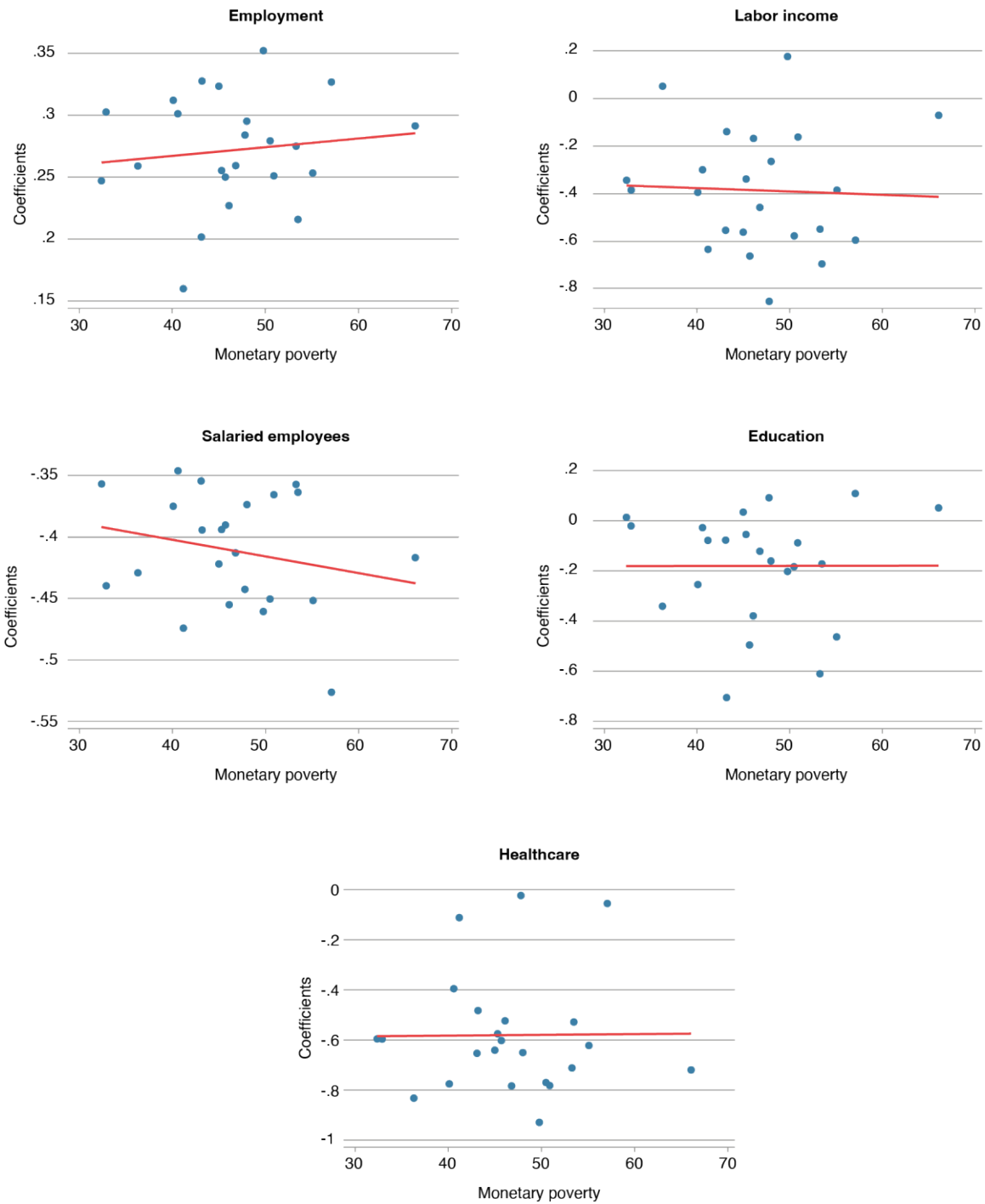
Figure 18. Regional coefficients of the migration rate on dependent variables



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on information from the MP survey.

These results imply that difficulties in accessing institutional services, the absence of networks, the difficulty of accessing information and perceptions about integration in Colombia are determinants of households' ability to generate income and accumulate assets. These results can be exacerbated by contextual variables that operate as catalysts for these barriers. For example, labor markets that receive more migrants make it more difficult for integration mechanisms to be effective and, therefore, barriers have higher levels of association with access to employment, healthcare, and education. In order to provide evidence in this line, we estimate linear mixed models that allow us to estimate variant coefficients in a particular dimension, which in this case corresponds to the regional level. When relating the estimated coefficients to levels of poverty and migration at the regional level, the barriers tend to exacerbate their magnitude as determinants of access, especially to the labor market (Figure 18 and Figure 19), in contexts with high levels of poverty—which increases the demand for services by the general population—and high levels of migration. For example, having a salaried job indicates that a variation of the barrier index from zero to one (which represents a comparison between a scenario without barriers) and another where they are active (all are included), reduces the probability of having a salaried job by between 35 and 55 percentage points. The results highlight the importance of barriers in reducing the generation of labor income, as well as the probability of having a salaried job and the probability of being employed.

Figure 19. Regional monetary poverty coefficients with respect to dependent variables



Source: Calculations prepared internally based on information from the MP survey.

Implications for public policy

The implementation of policies to facilitate migrants' assimilation continues to be one of the most relevant issues on the public agenda for the coming years. The results of this study show an analysis of migrants' access to essential services such as healthcare and education, and the relevance of the labor market as a mechanism for capitalizing household assets. In addition, just as the analyses reveal the multidimensionality of the barriers faced by migrants and refugees, the policy package must be multidimensional and multisectoral, recognizing the complementarity between policies related to this population.

The study contributes to policy formulation by providing evidence on the impacts of migrant population regularization, offering information on their profiles—including their level of education and work experience—their needs and expectations, and the barriers they face to economic and social integration.

Based on the results of the MP survey, the paper yields six lessons that could inform public policy:

- 1. Migrant regularization can maximize their contribution to the economy as well as improve their quality of life.** Regularization favors decisions over longer time horizons that can positively influence the accumulation of human capital and construction of networks and social capital. All of these factors are determinants of long-term household welfare. In Colombia, significant progress has been made in this regard through efforts to regularize migration status, which, as the study shows, facilitates greater access to services and better quality jobs (see also Urbina et al., 2023). This process also opens the door for designing integration programs focused on migration, such as employability and job placement programs (particularly to fill labor supply gaps in certain occupations and regions of the Colombian market) or support programs for higher education, both with short- and long-term impacts on household income. These programs must consider that certain groups of migrants, particularly young people and women, face greater barriers to accessing employment and services. As the study shows, they also face greater barriers, mainly related to documentation and perceptions. This recommendation is in line with other research (Caruso et al., 2019; Bonilla-Mejía et al., 2020; Ibáñez et al., 2022). Reinforcing the regularization program is crucial in order to generate resilience in migrant households (Urbina et al., 2023) and reduce the incidence of informality (Di Porto et al., 2018).
- 2. Investing in informative actions can help reduce gaps in access to services and raise greater awareness of the access opportunities offered by regularization programs.** Characterizing this type of information barriers in migrant population participation in various programs is consistent with findings from studies that explore the determinants of participation in social programs, as discussed by Heckman and Smith (2004). Along these lines, in different contexts it has been shown that interventions to improve information available to migrants facilitate moving to better jobs (Shrestha & Yang, 2019) and induce changes in migrants' perceptions and behavior (Tjaden et al., 2018; Cham & Trauner, 2023). In Colombia, interventions that

increase access to information can maximize their impact by targeting the information media most used by migrants. As this study shows, social networks are the main source of information for this population. These interventions could provide lessons from less successful interventions in the use of digital platforms to reach vulnerable populations (Moya, Roza & Urbina, 2023) and from efforts to share relevant information using accessible language with the migrant population through social networks (WFP, 2023). By complementing these means, there is room to increase efforts in the area of access and use of information through open platforms, as well as the alignment of these exercises with the country's information needs.

3. **Continue to invest in combating discrimination and xenophobia.** This study shows how migrants' perceptions of being discriminated against or failing to achieve social integration can limit their economic opportunities and integration. For example, as measured in this study, perceptions related to feelings of discrimination and lack of integration with Colombian culture and society are important in determining labor income and access to healthcare and education. There are successful interventions in terms of improving the host population's positive perceptions of the migrant population. These interventions are usually focused on providing information or evoking emotions. For example, in Colombia, initiatives that raise awareness about the situation Venezuelan migrants are facing in their country of origin or the potential risks they face on their journey seem to have a positive impact on Colombian perceptions. In fact, Colombians who watched a documentary about the Venezuelan border crossing and Colombians who experienced the life of Venezuelans through an online game showed higher levels of altruism and better attitudes towards migrants than those who neither watched the documentary nor played the game (Rodríguez & Rozo, 2021). Likewise, results from a combined sample of nine countries in Latin America and the Caribbean show that both an informative video and an emotion-provoking video improve locals' perceptions. The informational video was found to have a greater impact; however, it is short-lived (IDB, 2019).
4. **Targeted local policies that are coordinated with the national government** and focused on the needs of the Colombian and migrant populations in each region can close the gaps more effectively. As the study shows, there are profound regional differences in several dimensions, such as regularization program progress and healthcare affiliation. In addition, institutional factors, access to networks, the role of perceptions, and access to information are expressed differently across the territory. This heterogeneity could lead to more informed, focused efforts. This is in line with the World Bank report (2018), which calls for focusing the response spatially, to promote the inclusion and deployment of local policies aimed at or that include the migrant population through their planning instruments (territorial development plans, ten-year plans, etc.), as well as their coordination with different levels of government. These regional differences are also evident in the 2021 results of the Multidimensional Index of Socioeconomic Integration of the Venezuelan Migrant Population (IMI) in territorial institutional strengthening.
5. **Address host community needs.** Multiple studies (World Bank, 2017; World Bank, 2018) emphasize the need to not only address the impacts related to the migration process, but also

the pre-existing needs of the local population, mitigating potential negative impacts and maximizing benefits for the host communities. Thus, in line with the aforementioned policies that are focused on the local level, the needs of the migrant population and the host communities must be taken into account.

6. **Finally, evidence-based policymaking also requires strengthening the data collection processes and monitoring continuously the migrant population's integration process in specific areas such as employment, security, and access to services.** The MP survey this study is based on is a valuable instrument that should continue to be integrated into the country's regular data collection processes led by DANE. Given its survey nature, it has disadvantages including in the level of geographic disaggregation it can reach. As such, other sources of data, including administrative data sources about the migrant population, should continue to be collected and strengthened.

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Appendix

Table A1. Determinants of income of the Venezuelan migrant population

	Income (log)
Regular migrant	-.237***
Irregular migrant	.0489*
Male	.430***
Experience	.050***
Experience squared	-.0001***
Cúcuta MA	-0.002
Santa Marta MA	-.063***
Valledupar MA	-.064***
Riohacha	-.265***
Bogotá MA	.285***
Barranquilla MA	.313***
Cali MA	.225***
Head of household [HH = 1].	.107***
Education [Secondary =1]	.415***
Education [Technical or associate's degree =1]	.792***
Education [University =1]	1.320***
Education [Postgraduate =1]	2.010***
Household size	-.0172***
Constant	1.764***

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Calculations prepared internally based on Round 3 of the MP survey, January-February 2022. The survey's target population is composed of Colombian returnees, regular migrants, and irregular migrants. For the purposes of the regression, the omitted variable corresponds to the first category. The income variable is in logarithm.

Table A2. Barriers for the integration of Venezuelan migrants to labor market participation according to the GEIH (exante): employment, salaried, self-employed, and formally employed.

	Empl yed	Empl yed	Salaried employee	Salaried employee	Self- employe d	Self- employe d	Forma l	Forma l
B. Institutional	0.073 0** (0.029)		-0.1232*** (0.039)		0.1304*** (0.039)		- 0.119 6*** (0.023)	
B. Networks and social capital	0.120 4*** (0.030)		-0.0693* (0.038)		0.0481 (0.039)		0.038 3* (0.023)	
B. Perceptions	0.036 9 (0.053)		-0.0947 (0.070)		0.0727 (0.071)		- 0.054 4 (0.042)	
B. Information	- 0.004 8 (0.037)		-0.0106 (0.049)		0.0164 (0.050)		- 0.021 1 (0.029)	
Aggregate barrier index		0.280 1*** (0.065)		-0.3138*** (0.084)		0.2886*** (0.085)		- 0.145 9*** (0.050)
Constant	0.666 6*** (0.039)	0.672 5*** (0.038)	0.5773*** (0.054)	0.5817*** (0.052)	0.4011*** (0.055)	0.3899*** (0.053)	0.187 3*** (0.032)	0.208 3*** (0.031)
Observations	3,662	3,662	2,339	2,339	2,339	2,339	2,339	2,339
R-squared	0.190	0.188	0.096	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.087	0.078

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: The data representing the dependent variable that comes from the GEIH correspond to the time at which the migrant population participated in said survey in 2021. The observations correspond to those who participated in all rounds of MP surveys. The following were used as controls: sex, experience, experience squared, head of household, level of schooling, household size, and categorical variables by department. Formal employment is defined as employment that makes contributions to pension funds.

Table A3. Barriers to the integration of Venezuelan migrants in labor market participation according to the GEIH (ex ante): unemployed, inactive, and household income

	Unemployed	Unemployed	Inactive	Inactive	Household income (log)	Household income (log)
B. Institutional	0.0869*** (0.020)		-0.1449*** (0.027)		-0.2110*** (0.074)	
B. Networks and social capital	-0.0875*** (0.021)		-0.0427 (0.027)		0.0889 (0.073)	
B. Perceptions	0.0497 (0.037)		-0.0689 (0.049)		-0.0950 (0.132)	
B. Information	0.0449* (0.026)		-0.0266 (0.034)		-0.0180 (0.092)	
Aggregate barrier index		0.0525 (0.045)		-0.3077*** (0.060)		-0.2056 (0.160)
Constant	0.0898*** (0.027)	0.0661** (0.026)	0.2492*** (0.036)	0.2644*** (0.035)	13.5125*** (0.101)	13.5515*** (0.098)
Observations	3,662	3,662	3,662	3,662	2,302	2,302
R-squared	0.027	0.017	0.175	0.173	0.159	0.156

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: The data representing the dependent variable that comes from the GEIH correspond to the time at which the migrant population participated in said survey in 2021. The observations correspond to those who participated in all rounds of MP surveys. The following were used as controls: sex, experience, experience squared, head of household, level of schooling, household size, and categorical variables by department. The household income variable is transformed into logarithm.

Table A4. Barriers for the integration of Venezuelan migrants to labor market participation according to the MP (contemporary): employed, unemployed, and salaried workers.

	Employed	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Salaried employee	Salaried employee
B. Institutional	0.1008*** (0.031)		0.0998*** (0.020)		-0.2018*** (0.041)	
B. Networks and social capital	0.0281 (0.031)		-0.0308 (0.021)		-0.0881** (0.041)	
B. Perceptions	0.0714 (0.056)		0.0228 (0.037)		-0.0489 (0.075)	
B. Information	0.0732* (0.039)		0.0370 (0.026)		-0.0672 (0.053)	
Aggregate barrier index		0.2661*** (0.068)		0.1322*** (0.045)		-0.4786*** (0.091)
Constant	0.6944*** (0.041)	0.6833*** (0.040)	0.1052*** (0.027)	0.0830*** (0.026)	0.8474*** (0.058)	0.8743*** (0.056)
Observations	3,662	3,662	3,662	3,662	2,048	2,048
R-squared	0.163	0.162	0.025	0.020	0.163	0.160

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Note: The data representing the dependent variable that comes from the GEIH correspond to the time at which the migrant population participated in said survey in 2021. The number of observations is limited to people who participated in all rounds of the MP survey. The following were used as controls: sex, experience, experience squared, head of household, level of schooling, household size, and categorical variables by department.

Table A5. Barriers to the integration of Venezuelan migrants in labor market participation according to the MP (contemporary): self-employed and labor income

	Self-employed	Self-employed	Labor income (log)	Labor income (log)
B. Institutional	0.2264*** (0.041)		-0.1660*** (0.055)	
B. Networks and social capital	0.0821** (0.041)		-0.0508 (0.055)	
B. Perceptions	0.0493 (0.075)		-0.2632*** (0.099)	
B. Information	0.0552 (0.053)		-0.1651** (0.072)	
Aggregate barrier index		0.4952*** (0.091)		-0.5408*** (0.122)
Constant	0.1408** (0.058)	0.1089* (0.057)	(13.7858). (0.078)	13.7847*** (0.076)
Observations	2,048	2,048	1,728	1,728
R-squared	0.167	0.163	0.186	0.184

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Data representing the dependent variable from Round 3 of the MP survey, January-February 2022. The observations correspond to people who participated in all rounds of the MP survey. The following were used as controls: sex, experience, experience squared, head of household, level of schooling, household size, and categorical variables by department. The labor income variable is transformed into logarithm.

Table A6. Barriers to integration of Venezuelan migrants in access to education and health services according to the MP survey (contemporary).

	Access to education	Access to education	Access to healthcare	Access to healthcare
B. Institutional	-0.0669*** (0.024)		-0.3169*** (0.032)	
B. Networks and social capital	-0.0166 (0.024)		-0.0065 (0.032)	
B. Perceptions	-0.1008** (0.044)		-0.1488*** (0.057)	
B. Information	-0.0254 (0.031)		0.0085 (0.040)	
Aggregate barrier index		-0.1799*** (0.053)		-0.4954*** (0.070)
Constant	0.8988*** (0.032)	0.8988*** (0.030)	0.4936*** (0.042)	0.5335*** (0.041)
Observations	2,913	2,913	3,662	3,662
R-squared	0.067	0.065	0.123	0.108

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Data representing the dependent variable are from Round 3 of the MP survey, January-February 2022. The number of observations is limited to people who participated in all rounds of the MP survey. The observations correspond to those who participated in all rounds of MP surveys. The following were used as controls: sex, experience, experience squared, head of household, level of schooling, household size, and categorical variables by department.