

# 1. GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN IN VENEZUELA

As of 5 November 2020, there were 4,6 million refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela) living in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> Since 2017, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has conducted surveys in 16 host countries and inside Venezuela with mobile and stationary populations, at border crossings, along migratory routes, and in those areas with a high concentration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Although this data is not representative,<sup>2</sup> it is possible to conduct a gender analysis of human mobility from Venezuela. To respond in a dignified, appropriate and safe manner to the human mobility crisis, the needs, skills and opportunities of various affected groups, such as women, must be analysed.<sup>3</sup> In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the conditions of access to services and the guarantee of women's rights,<sup>4</sup> which is why it is essential to have a disaggregated analysis of data collected through the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

This paper, which is the first in a series of four,<sup>5</sup> presents and analyses information collected by DTM in 2019, focusing on their basic demographic characteristics.

## Key points:

- Forty-nine per cent of respondents identified as female, 51 per cent as male and 0.15 per cent in the "other" category (do not identify themselves as female nor male).
- The majority of Venezuelan migrant and refugee women were aged 18-34 (66%).
- Six percent of the women interviewed were pregnant and of this group 88 percent were between 18-34 years old.
- Forty-two percent of the women interviewed reported having no regular migration status and 24 percent reported having a temporary visa.
- Thirty-four percent of women interviewed reported travelling alone of which 67 percent were aged 18-34.

## IN 2019, WOMEN MADE UP ALMOST HALF OF VENEZUELA'S MIGRANT AND REFUGEE POPULATION.

Among the respondents, 49 per cent identified themselves as female and 51 per cent as male (Graph 1). Less than one per cent (0.15%) of the respondents identified themselves in the category of "other" which may correspond to people who do not necessarily identify with the category of female nor male. According to official figures from the Great Integrated Household Survey in Colombia, the country with the country hosting the largest number of Venezuelans, in 2018 the share of women was 47.6 per cent, in 2019 it was 48.7 per cent and in 2020 it was 50.2 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

This pattern indicates that the proportion of women migrants and refugees from Venezuela has been increasing since the beginning of the migration crisis and could be explained by the fact that men migrated first and then women and their families joined them.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this pattern highlights the process of feminisation of migrations<sup>8</sup> and, therefore, the need to work to reduce risk factors that increase the vulnerabilities of migrant and refugee girls and women. This includes promoting women's access to decent employment and health and addressing their role as the almost exclusive providers of paid and unpaid domestic work,<sup>9</sup> among other factors of gender inequality.

1 See: <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform>

2 The sample is not representative, i.e. it does not necessarily have the same characteristics as the entire Venezuelan population; this does not mean that it does not allow for a solid analysis of gender characteristics.

3 The DTM does not collect data from girls and young women under the age of 18, only the questions about respondents' relatives.

4 See: IOM, UNHCR, UN WOMEN (2020) Migrant and Refugee Women in the Context of COVID-19. p.1.

5 The other three documents have information on education, health and protection, and gender-based violence (GBV).

6 See: <https://migravenezuela.com/web/articulo/cuantos-son-y-donde-están-los-venezolanos-en-colombia-/1636>

[https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/fichas/empleo/ingles/GEIH\\_DANE\\_04.pdf](https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/fichas/empleo/ingles/GEIH_DANE_04.pdf)

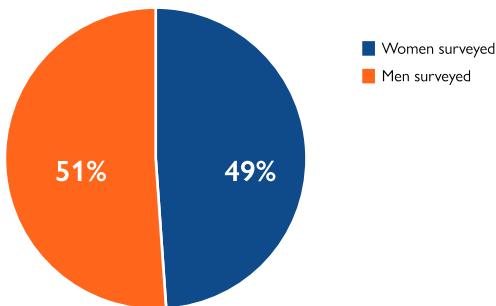
7 UNDP and R4V, "Reinventarse sobre la marcha: Mujeres refugiadas y migrantes de Venezuela. Un estudio sobre condiciones y acceso a medios de vida en Colombia, Ecuador y Perú", 2020, p. 41.

8 UN WOMEN, "Género en marcha: Trabajando el nexo migración-desarrollo desde una perspectiva de género", Dominican Republic, 2014, p. 39. See in: [https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/RESOURCES\\_LIBRARY/Resources\\_Centre/Genero%20en%20marcha-ManualJan2015.pdf](https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/RESOURCES_LIBRARY/Resources_Centre/Genero%20en%20marcha-ManualJan2015.pdf)

9 Women account for 73.4 per cent of all domestic workers who are international migrants. See: <https://www.unwomen.org/es/news/in-focus/women-refugees-and-migrants#notes>

GRAPH 1

**Percentage of female migrants and refugees vs. male migrants and refugees<sup>10</sup>**



**MOST OF THE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN WERE YOUNG WOMEN OF PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE AGE**

In terms of age, women between the ages of 18 and 24 account for 28 per cent of the total population, 38 per cent for women between 25 and 34, 19 per cent between 35 and 44 and 10 per cent between 45 and 54. Only five per cent of women are aged 55 and over. These findings indicate that the majority of women interviewed are of reproductive and productive age. Therefore, their access to sexual and reproductive health services and their involvement in educational and technical projects, as well as access to decent work, free from sexual harassment and labour exploitation, is essential. In addition, it is a priority to promote their training in the right to a life free of violence and access to services for the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV). It is important to note that, even if they only make up 5 per cent, women over 55 are at heightened risk of being affected by COVID-19, so health conditions must be prioritised.

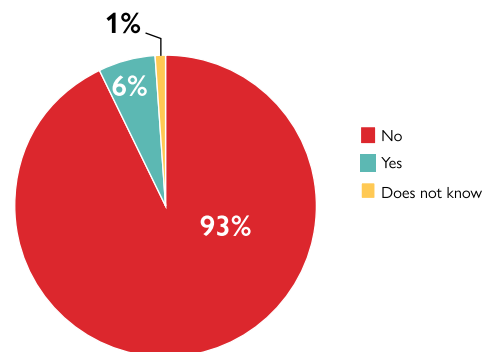
**MOST OF THE PREGNANT WOMEN WERE YOUNG WOMEN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS AND EXPOSED TO DISCRIMINATION**

Six per cent of the women interviewed responded that they were pregnant at the time of the interview (Graph 2). Eighty-eight per cent of these women were between 18 and 34 years old (Figure 3). Although the percentage of pregnant women is only 6 per cent, in some places a discriminatory perception has been found against pregnant women from Venezuela. In these contexts health care providers "mistreat them with phrases such as 'they come to take advantage of our resources

and then they go back"<sup>11</sup> and where public opinion has been formed in a way that identifies them with the idea that they come to have children. An example of such discriminatory discourse is the one created in Colombia with the phrase "Stop giving birth"<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, these figures demonstrate the importance of providing effective and dignified sexual and reproductive health services for young women, including contraception, prenatal and maternal health services that do not victimise or discriminate against them because they are Venezuelan, young and female.

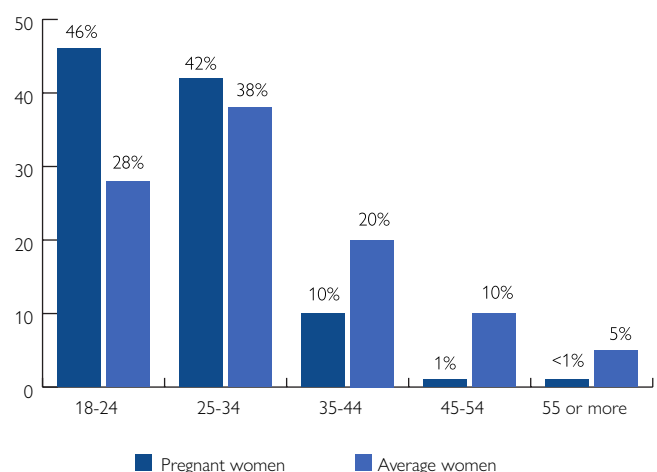
GRAPH 2

**Women that reported being pregnant (percentage)<sup>13</sup>**



GRAPH 3

**Women who reported being pregnant by age group**



<sup>10</sup> In all the figures we are always referring to the Venezuelan migrants and refugees interviewed.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://cerosetenta.uniandes.edu.co/para-las-venezolanas-el-embarazo-es-una-encrucijada/>

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://migravenezuela.com/web/articulo/historias-de-migrantes-venezolanas-embarazadas-que-se-encuentran-en-colombia-1666>

<sup>13</sup> The use of the word "average women" refers to the average of the responses given by Venezuelan migrant and refugee women.

## GENDER IMPACTS ON WOMEN WITHOUT REGULAR MIGRATION STATUS

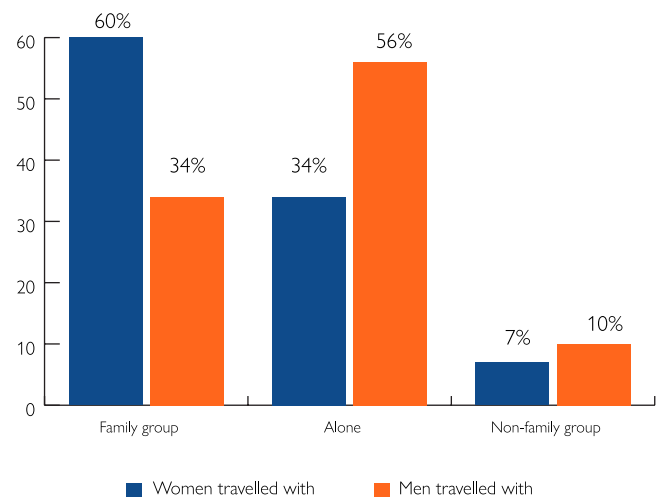
Forty-two per cent of the women interviewed reported that they had regular migration status and 24 per cent reported that they had a temporary visa. The lack of stability in migration status is a recognised risk factor for increased GBV,<sup>14</sup> labour and sexual exploitation and in general for not being able to demand the guarantee of their rights. This could be due to women's fear of seeking health services and/or protection authorities when experiencing GBV, which in turn can increase the risk of femicide due to underreporting. This situation also means that women are unaware that they can access different services provided by countries specifically for the migrant and refugee population.

## GENDER IMPACTS ON WOMEN TRAVELLING ALONE

Additionally, while the majority of people travelling alone are men, more precisely 56 per cent, there is a relatively high percentage of women, 34 per cent, travelling alone, without family or friends (Graph 4). Most of them, 67 per cent, were between 18 and 34 years old, 63 per cent were single and 48 per cent reported that their highest level of education was high school (Graphs 5, 6 and 7). The fact that men were more likely to travel alone could be explained by the fact that women, because of their social and cultural roles and due to the specific risks they may face during the journey, prefer to travel with family members or acquaintances. However, it is important to note the fact that almost a third of women choose to travel alone, which can partly be attributed to the existence of a level of autonomy.<sup>15</sup> While this is a positive finding, the majority are young women without higher education may increase their exposure to sexual harassment in different settings, sex trafficking, survival sex, and lack of support networks if they experience these and other types of violence.<sup>16</sup>

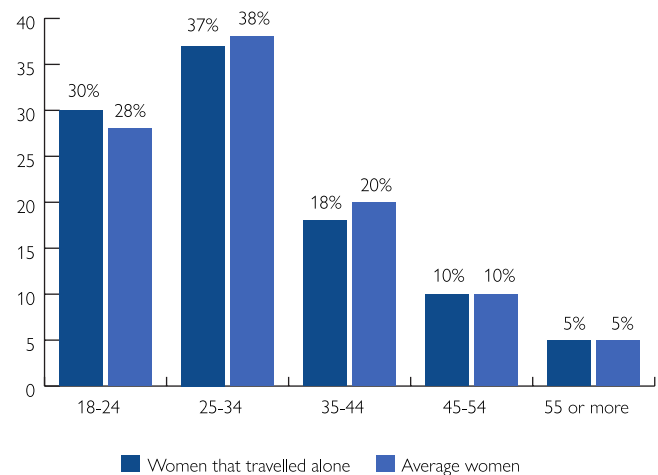
GRAPH 4

Travel groups by sex (percentage)



GRAPH 5

Women who reported travelling alone by age group



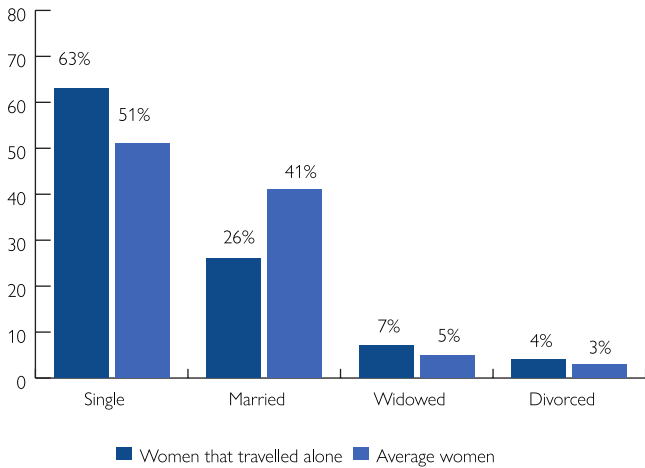
14 Op. Cit. n. 4, p. 1.

15 Op. Cit., n. 8, p. 39.

16 Op. Cit. n. 7, p. 60 and see: <https://www.unfpa.org/es/news/salud-y-proteccion-mujeres-1-de-las-fronteras-para-las-mujeres-venezolanas>

GRAPH 6

**Women who reported travelling alone by marital status**



**METHODOLOGY:**

The database used in this report was compiled by IOM DTM teams in 11 countries that host refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Latin America and the Caribbean to better understand their movements, profiles and needs. Assessments were conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay. The teams conducted surveys with moving and stationary populations both at border crossings and along migratory routes as well as locations with a high concentration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, collecting disaggregated information including: demographics, education, labour profile and livelihoods, monitoring of mobility and routes, assessment of location, protection, health, needs and vulnerabilities. The surveys have a common and harmonised methodology, which allows the information to be used at the country level, to inform response and operations, but also gives a sub-regional view of the Venezuelan migration phenomenon. In most of the sample countries, IOM teams collected data through convenience sampling and surveys were administered face-to-face by trained enumerators.

GRAPH 7

**Women who reported travelling alone by highest level of education completed**

