

Access to information for Venezuelan refugees and migrants before and during the journey

Information is fundamental for refugees and migrants to evaluate their options before and during their migration journey, choose a destination, estimate costs and determine the safest and most accessible mean of transport and route. How do they gather information before and during the journey? What kind of information do they have access to and what are the gaps? Which sources of information are the most used and which are the most trusted?

This snapshot offers an analysis on access to information among Venezuelan refugees and migrants interviewed in Colombia and Peru. It aims to contribute towards a solid evidence base to inform targeted responses on the ground, as well as advocacy efforts related to the situation of refugees and migrants in the country.

Key findings

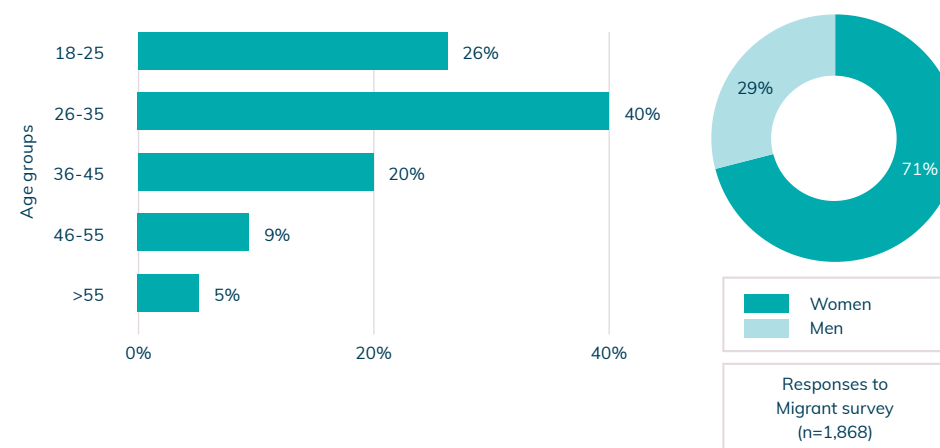
- **Almost three-quarters (71%)** of the surveyed refugees and migrants **consulted information** on routes, destinations, costs and/or risks **before starting their journey**.
- Respondents gathered information **from close personal connections such as** friends and family, **and by personal means of communication** (face to face conversations, phone calls, chats).
- A greater proportion of **respondents in Peru** had a **functional phone** and **better access to information during the journey** than in Colombia.
- Use of **institutional sources of information** was **very rarely reported** either **before or during the journey**.
- The **information most needed by respondents and not received was about general conditions and safety during the journey**.
- Respondents also reported a **lack of information on rights** and **procedures regarding migration and asylum**. Authorities and humanitarian organizations offer some information on both topics in Colombia and Peru but do not seem to adequately reach migrants and refugees.

Profiles

The analysis is based on 1,868 surveys conducted in Colombia and Peru between February and July 2021, partially by face-to-face interview (34%) and partially by phone (66%). 67% of the surveys were conducted in Colombia, in Barranquilla, Bogota, Cucuta and Riohacha; the other 33% were conducted in Peru, in Arequipa and Lima.

71% of respondents were women and 29% were men. Respondents were more frequently aged between 26 and 35 (40%) and the average age of the sample was 33 years (see Figure 1).

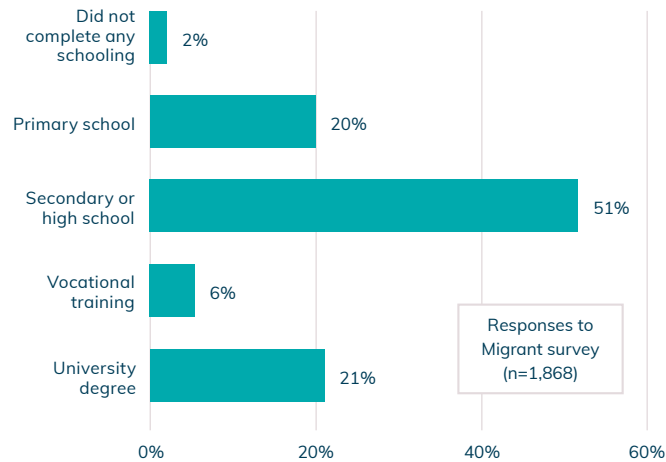
Figure 1. Sex and age ranges



The highest level of education completed for most respondents was secondary or high school (51% of all respondents), followed by university degree (21%) and primary school (20%). 2% of the sample did not complete any schooling (see Figure 2).

Venezuelan refugees and migrants surveyed in Peru have a higher level of education than those interviewed in Colombia. There are statistically significant differences¹ between the two countries of interview: 21% of respondents in Colombia completed primary school versus 16% in Peru. The proportion of respondents who completed a university degree is higher in Peru than in Colombia: 26% versus 19%.

Figure 2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?



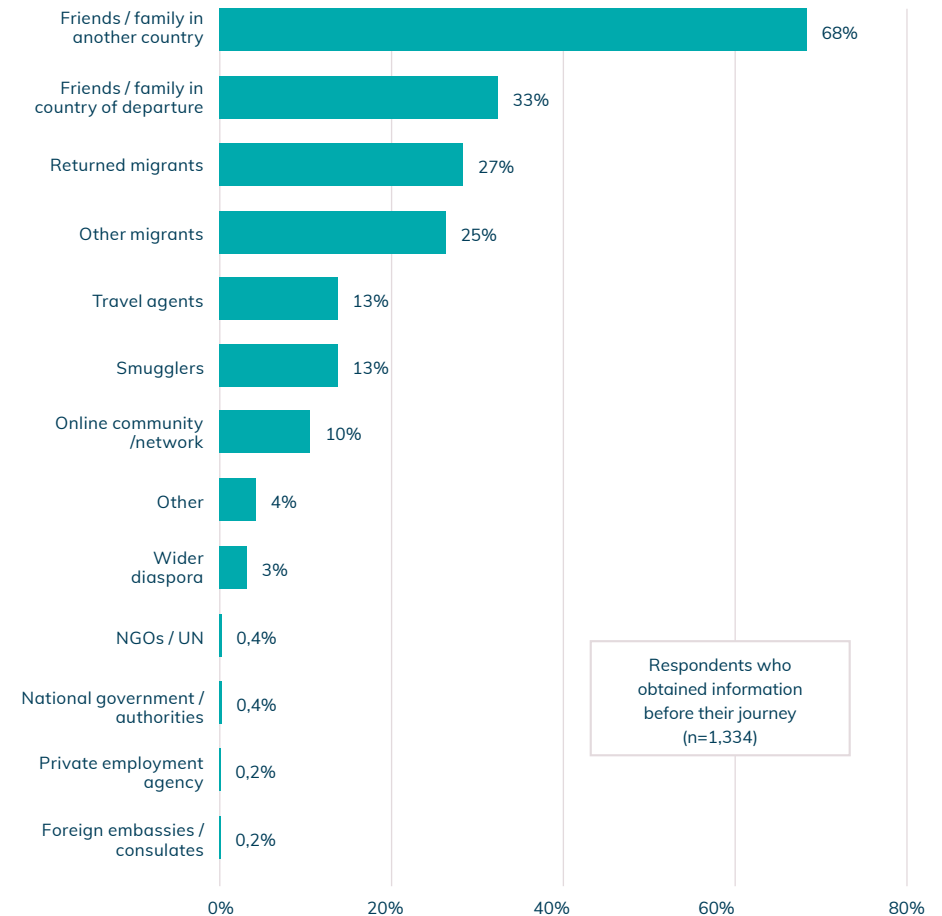
71% of respondents had accessed information before starting their journey

71% of all respondents reported that they gathered information before starting the journey. There was no significant difference in the share of respondents who had access to information before the journey between countries of interview.

For respondents who did obtain information before leaving Venezuela (n=1,334), information was mainly gathered from personal connections, such as friends and family in another country (68%) or friends or family in the country of departure (33%). This was followed by returned migrants (27%) and other migrants (25%). National institutions, UN agencies and NGOs were hardly ever reported as sources of information (see Figure 3).

¹ Significant differences identified throughout this analysis were found through z-tests at the 0.05 level of significance.

Figure 3. What were your sources of information about routes, destinations, costs, risks, etc. before your journey?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

Statistically significant differences² in the use of information sources indicate that respondents in Peru were more likely than those in Colombia to have contacted friends or family in the countries of transit or destination to gather information before departing (81% vs. 62%), while respondents in Colombia were more likely to have obtained information from friends or family in the country of origin (43% vs. 11%), returned migrants (37% vs. 6%), other migrants (32% vs. 11%), and smugglers (17% vs. 7%).

² Significant differences identified throughout this analysis were found through z-tests at the 0.05 level of significance.

According to 4Mi enumerators, prior to starting their journey most respondents in Peru had a relative or friend already settled in the country of destination who helped them plan their journey and prepare their arrival, looking for a job or accommodation for them. Friends or family in the country of destination were also an important source of information for respondents in Colombia. Migrating to Colombia from Venezuela is however considered easier and a significant proportion of Venezuelans periodically travel back and forth between the two countries, thus many believe it requires less preparation and/or information.³ Pendular migrants, together with returnees, are considered as a valuable source of information for those who are planning to migrate from Venezuela to Colombia since they know the routes, the cost of the journey and the living conditions at destination.

The means most commonly used to obtain information before the journey were in-person conversations (55%, 738/1,334), phone calls (54%, 717/1,334) and social media or messaging apps (51%, 675/1,334). This is consistent with previously mentioned findings indicating personal connections as the main source of information. Media more frequently used by institutional sources, such as street advertising (12%, 154/1,334), traditional media such as TV, radio or newspapers (10%, 136/1,334), and websites (10%, 127/1,334) were used much less frequently, in line with institutional sources of information being virtually absent.

Respondents in Peru more frequently accessed information during the journey

62% of respondents stated having obtained information about routes, destination, costs and possible risks during their journey (n=1,154). Access to information during the trip does show statistically significant differences⁴ between countries: 59% of respondents interviewed in Colombia obtained information during the journey, while the percentage reaches 67% of respondents in Peru.

“I knew nothing, I didn’t look for information, I went where the people who gave me a ride took me”.

24-year-old woman in Colombia

³ Runrun.es (2020): [Migración pendular: Con un pie adentro y otro afuera](#)

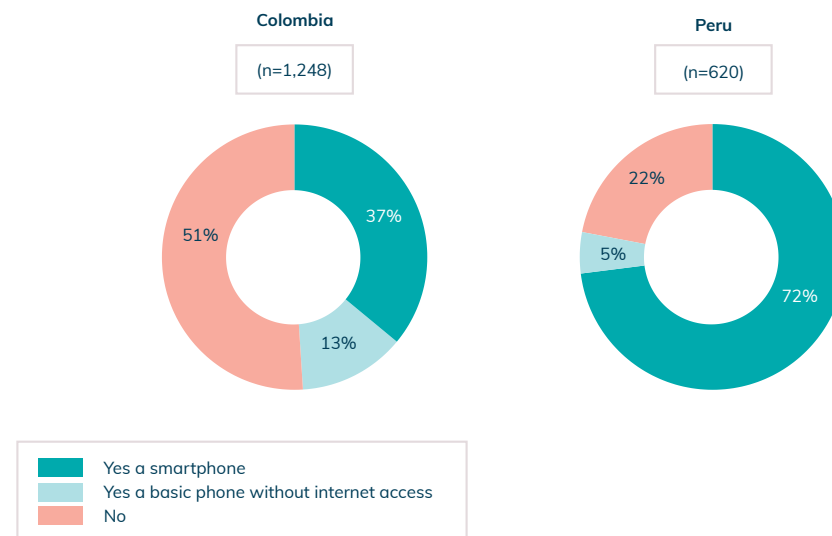
⁴ Significant differences identified throughout this analysis were found through z-tests at the 0.05 level of significance

This difference can be explained by the fact that the longer journey to Peru, across three borders, increases the chances of accessing information but also the need for it. Access to information was also easier for respondents in Peru due to their better access to technology: 77% of respondents in Peru had access to functional phones during their journey versus 50% of respondents in Colombia (see Figure 4). According to additional information shared by 4Mi enumerators in Peru and Colombia, this difference could come from the fact that many Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Peru could retain their phone rather than selling it to pay for the journey.

“I traveled alone, I had to sell all my things. I sold my bed, my TV, my phone, I sold my anime collection and I managed to gather 30 dollars”.

18-year-old man in Colombia

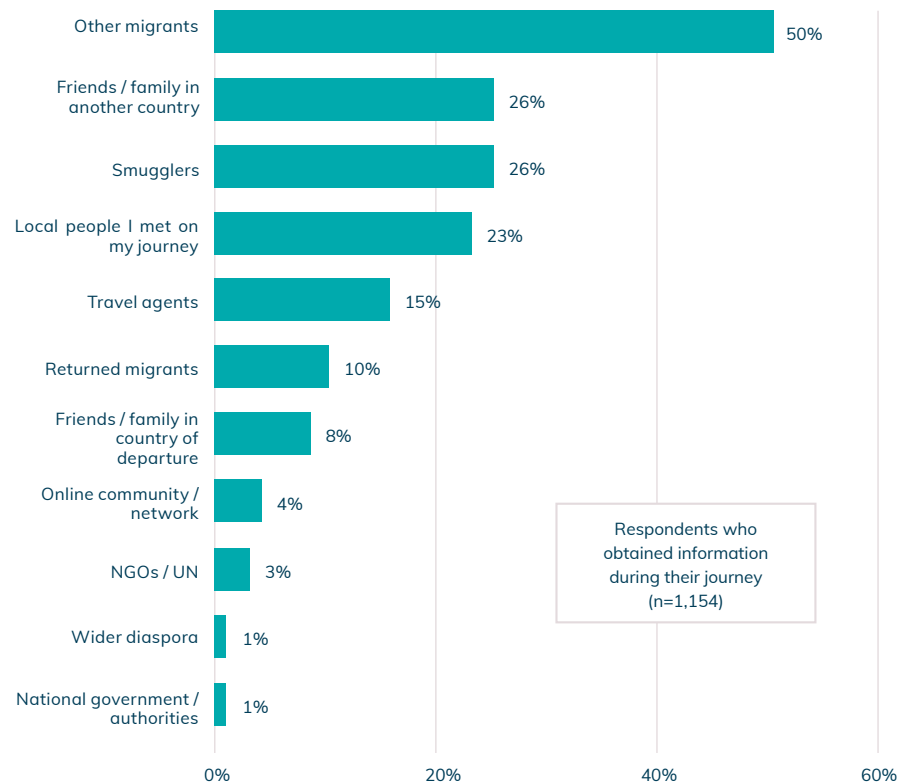
Figure 4. Did you have access to a functional phone during your journey?



Other people on the move were the main source of information during the journey

For those who received information during their journey, other refugees and migrants were the main source of information (50%), followed by friends or family in another country (26%), smugglers (26%), and local people they met during their journey (23%). Institutional sources such as humanitarian organizations and authorities mandated to protect people and provide information were rarely consulted (3% and 1% respectively, see Figure 5).

Figure 5. What were your sources of information about routes, destinations, costs, risks, etc. during your journey?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

“My journey was difficult. I traveled alone. I felt bad because I did not gather information before leaving. I acquired it during the journey from other people who had already migrated.”

19-year-old woman in Peru

Institutional sources were rarely reported due, among other things, to the partial disconnect between the information they provide and the information that respondents are looking for to continue their journey. According to both 4Mi data and additional info shared by enumerators, respondents are mostly interested in obtaining information on the conditions of the journey in general, as well as safety and security along the journey, information that is usually not provided by official sources or NGOs (see Figure 6). Both authorities and humanitarian organizations mainly share information on assistance programs and on how to access rights and regularization in the country where they operate.

The perceived reliability of sources was also a relevant factor. Friends and family in another country were reported as the most reliable source of information overall (by 41% of respondents who obtained information). Other refugees and migrants were mentioned by only 11% of respondents who obtained information. NGOs/UN and national government/authorities were reported as the most reliable sources of information by an extremely small proportion of the sample (3% and 1%, respectively).

As for the means of accessing information during the journey, respondents mainly obtained it through in-person contact (86%). Other means such as phone calls (22%, 250/1,154), social media or messaging apps (18%), street advertising (13%), traditional media such as TV, radio or newspapers (6%) and websites (5%) were consulted less frequently.

As more respondents in Peru have access to a smartphone during the journey, they were more inclined to use virtual media such as phone calls (31%) and social media or messaging apps (36%) to obtain information than respondents in Colombia (17% and 8%, respectively).

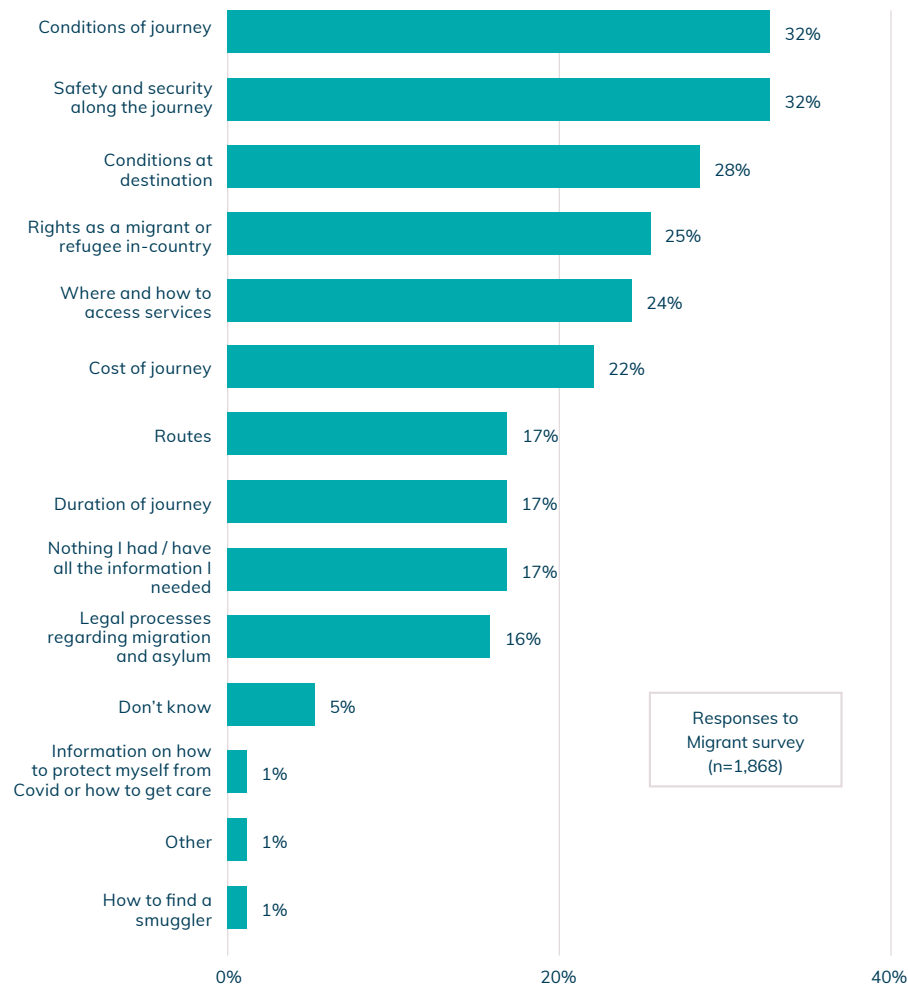
Conditions and safety along journey as the most useful information that respondents did not receive

When asked “what information would have been most useful that you did not receive?”, 32% of all respondents indicated “information on conditions of journey in general” and “safety and security along the journey”, while 28% reported “conditions at destination” (see Figure 6 in the following page).

These results indicate that respondents did not have adequate knowledge of the dangers they would face during the journey or the difficulties of settling in the country of destination, despite of the fact that most of them had access to information before migrating.

Information on the condition of the journey is especially important for people on the move who just left Venezuela.⁵ In the Colombian department of Norte de Santander, authorities and NGOs collaborate to offer information on the weather, road conditions and routes to those migrating on foot (the so-called “caminantes”), but Colombian authorities have called upon humanitarian actors to strengthen their efforts in this direction as they are not sufficiently reaching people on the move.⁶

Figure 6. What information would have been most useful that you did not receive?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

5 GIFMM (2018): [Plan de Respuesta Frontera Venezuela](#)

6 Cancillería de Colombia (2018): [En puesto de mando unificado. Gerencia de Frontera con Venezuela y Cancillería evaluaron la atención humanitaria ofrecida a 'caminantes' en Norte de Santander](#)

Respondents also reported a gap in information on rights as migrants or refugees and on legal procedures regarding migration and asylum (mentioned by 25% of all respondents). This is in line with one of the findings of the first protection monitoring report prepared by DRC in 2021.⁷ 81% of the respondents who gave these answers had an irregular status or did not have legal documents to stay in the country at the time of the interview. This information gap is likely due at least in part to the lack of use of authorities and humanitarian organizations as sources, as this is precisely the kind of information they provide. According to 4Mi enumerators, another reason behind this disconnect between the type of information that NGOs provide and the respondents' unsatisfied information needs is the fact that many of them, upon having a first contact with an NGO, focus on immediate humanitarian assistance (food, cash) rather than types of assistance that they perceive as less urgent, such as legal advice. Finally, many NGOs provide information through hotlines or email, but respondents told 4Mi enumerators that such channels are often jammed, or they receive no reply, or they do not have regular access to a phone or the internet.

To respond to this need to strengthen the knowledge on rights and legal procedures, in Peru various NGOs have created a digital platform called *Veninformado*, which provides information on immigration and refugee law, entrepreneurship, mental health and other procedures to settle in Peru. The platform also offers access to a team of professionals who attend to people who require advice.⁸

⁷ The DRC protection monitoring identifies protection gaps, incidents and human rights violations. DRC (2021) [Informe trimestrial - monitoreo de protección \(Enero-Marzo 2021\)](#)

⁸ [Veninformado](#)



4Mi data collection

[4Mi](#) is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for refugees and migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi

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