

Venezuelan refugees and migrants: Assistance needed and received during the COVID-19 pandemic

This snapshot focuses on the impact that the current COVID-19 pandemic has had on the journey and daily life of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Peru and Colombia. It aims to contribute towards building a solid evidence base to inform targeted responses on the ground, as well as advocacy efforts related to the situation of refugees and migrants during the coronavirus pandemic.

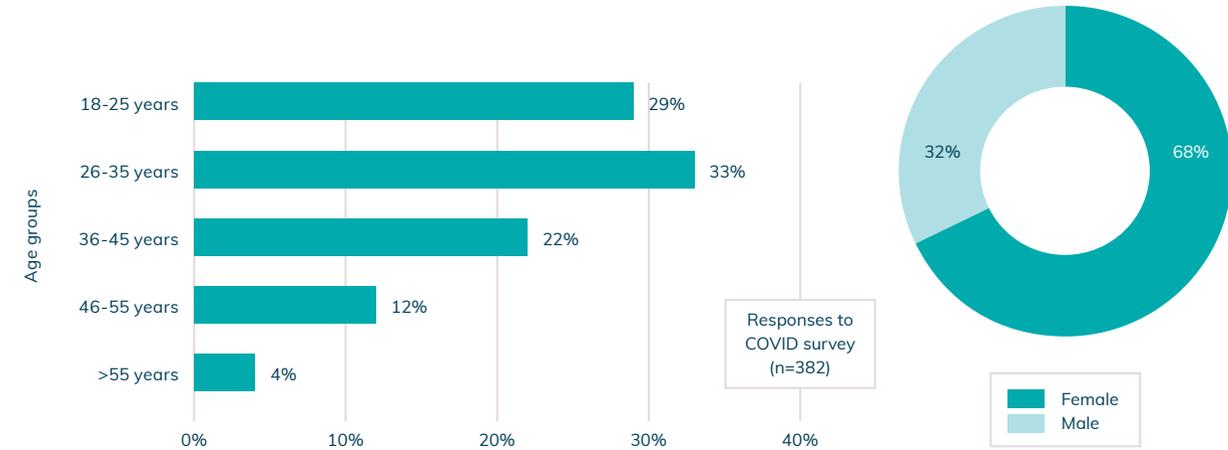
Recommendations

- Increase basic humanitarian assistance and cash assistance to vulnerable refugees and migrants, to avoid negative coping mechanisms due to loss of income.
- Strengthen coordination among assistance providers in order to expand the reach of assistance programs.
- Disseminate information to increase Venezuelan refugees' and migrants' awareness of existing assistance programs and how to access them.

Profiles

The analysis is based on 382 interviews conducted between 6 April and 7 May 2020: 292 in Colombia and 90 in Peru. 68% of respondents were women and 32% men. The average age was 33.7 years.

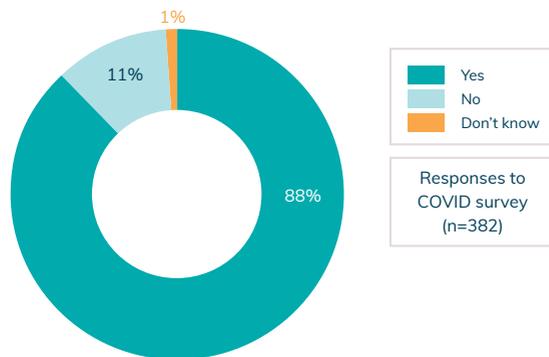
Figure 1. Age range and sex



Basic humanitarian assistance and cash as most frequently indicated needs

As Figure 2 shows, 88% of respondents reported needing extra help since the outbreak began. This trend is higher among respondents in Colombia (91%) than in Peru (81%).

Figure 2. Additional assistance needs



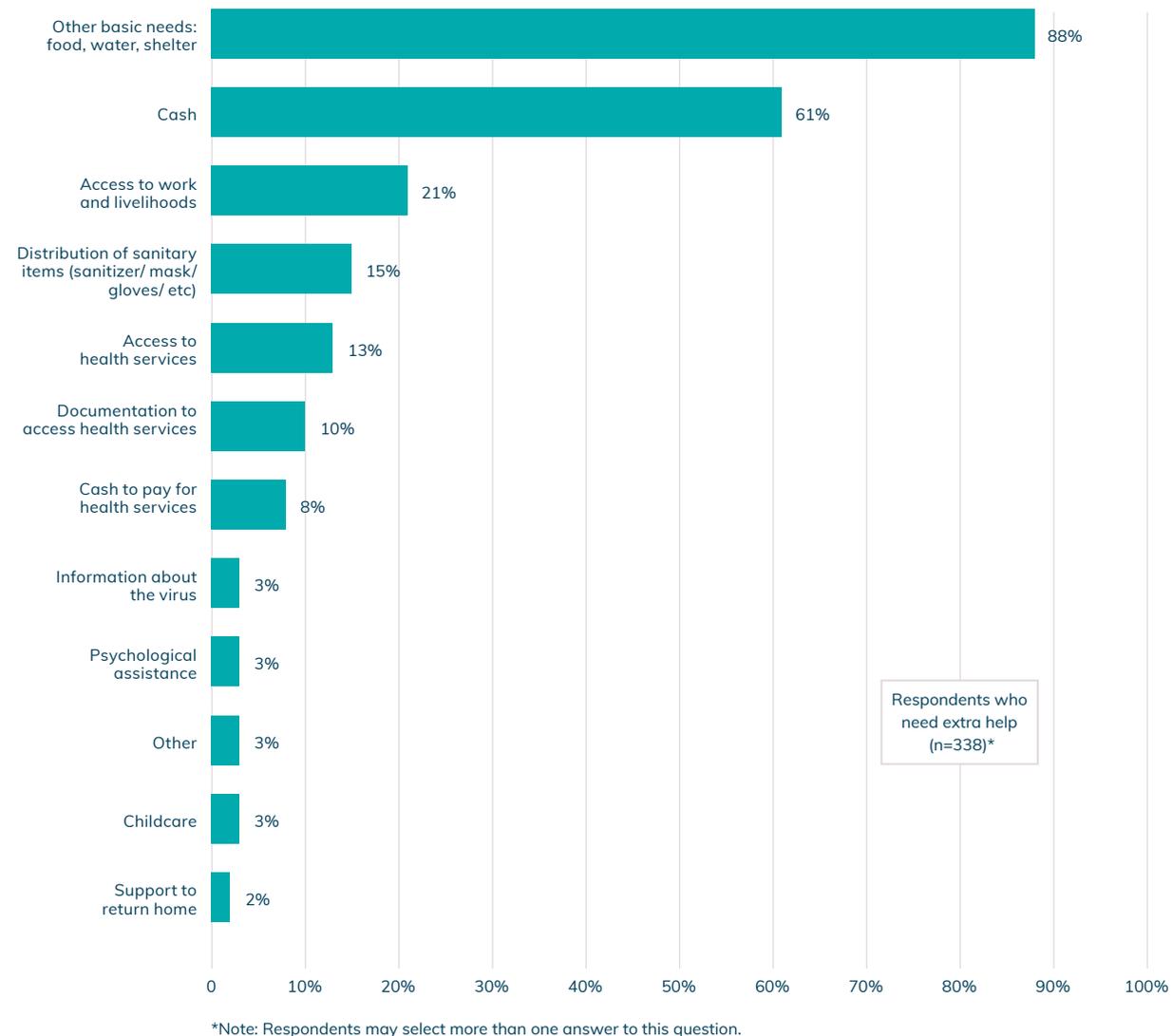
When asked about the type of additional assistance that they need, most respondents (88%) indicated basic needs such as food, water and shelter (see Figure 3). This is in line with the consequences of loss of income identified in our previous snapshot¹. At the same time, 61% of those interviewed indicated the necessity of receiving cash assistance (respondents can select multiple options). Only 21% stated needing access to work and livelihoods – a reflection of the very low likelihood that Venezuelan refugees and migrants can generate income during mandatory self-isolation.

Fewer respondents reported health-related needs: 15% of those interviewed reported needing access to sanitary items to protect themselves from COVID-19, and 13% indicated needing help to access health services. One explanation for this might be that, as recently reported to MMC LAC by key informants, Venezuelan refugees and migrants are much more worried about covering their day-to-day basic needs than they are about contracting the virus.

Only 2% of those interviewed for the survey expressed a need for support to return home.

¹ MMC (2020) [Impact of COVID-19 on Venezuelan refugees and migrants](#).

Figure 3. What kind of extra help?

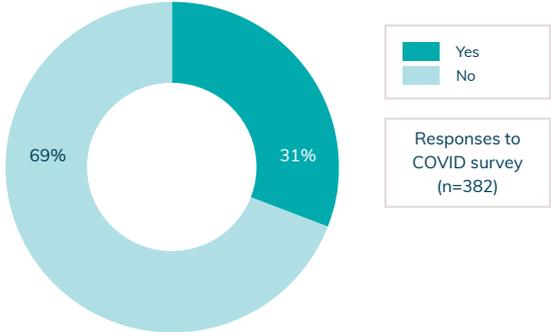


37% of respondents said they did not know who they would go to in order to request assistance, indicating a strong lack of knowledge regarding available assistance programs among Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Only one-third of respondents received additional assistance since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak

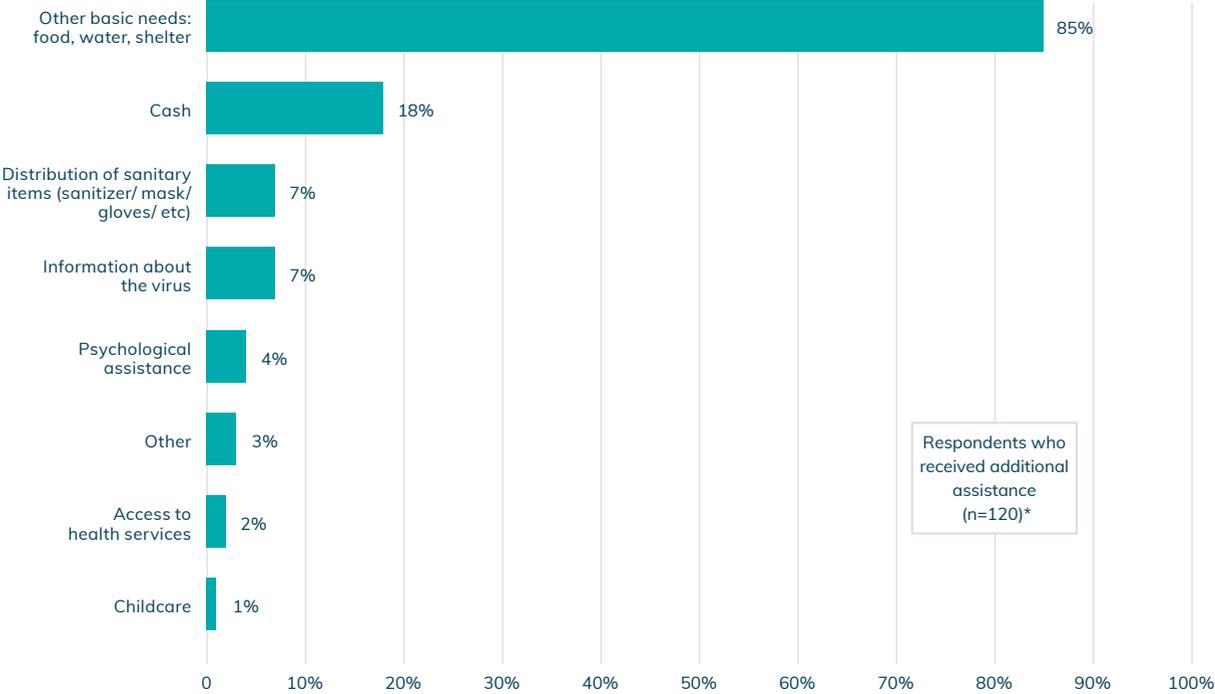
Only 31% of respondents said they received any additional assistance since the coronavirus crisis began (see Figure 4). It must be noted that a proportion of the respondents were referred to 4Mi by NGOs providing assistance. Therefore, the percentage of Venezuelans who are receiving additional support among the general refugee and migrant population is probably lower.

Figure 4. Additional assistance received



The type of assistance provided was mostly support to cover basic needs such as food, water and shelter (indicated by 85% of those who received additional assistance – see Figure 5). Additional cash assistance was the second most commonly reported type of assistance received, although at a much lower rate (18% of respondents who received additional support since the COVID-19 outbreak began). Distribution of sanitary items and information about COVID-19 were both reported by 7% of respondents who received additional assistance, while only 2% received assistance in order to get access to health services.

Figure 5. What assistance was that?



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

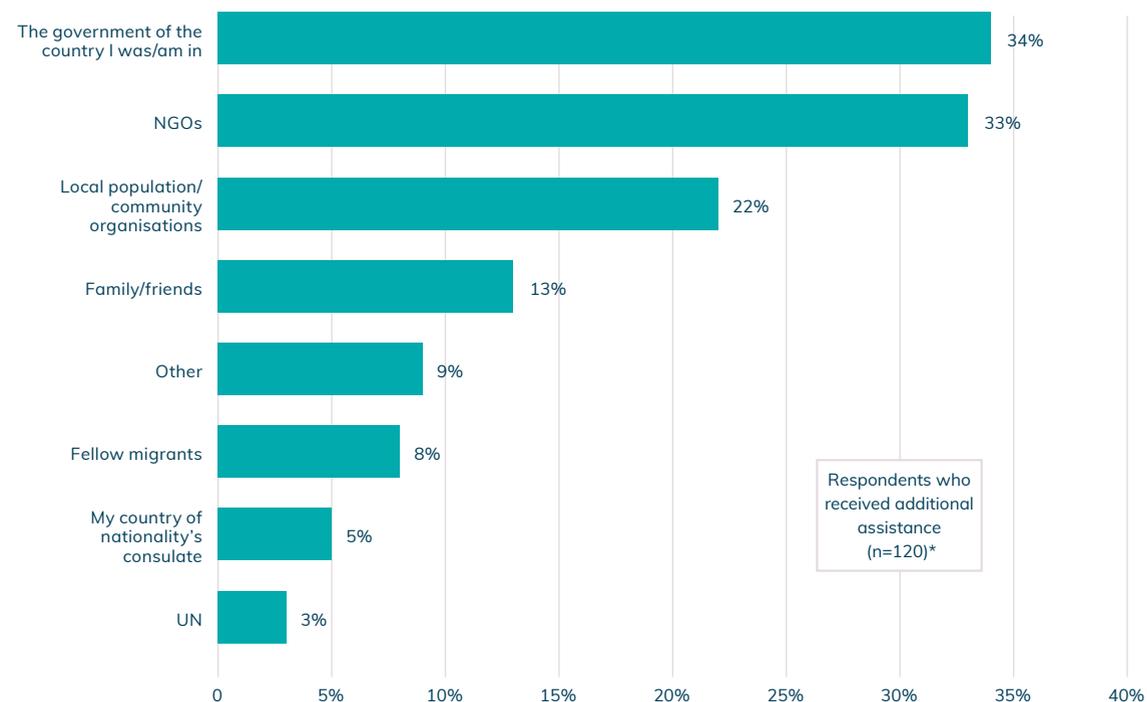
While basic humanitarian assistance matches the necessity most frequently reported by respondents, answers to the survey indicate a strong unmet need for cash assistance and livelihood opportunities.

Authorities and NGOs as main assistance providers in the COVID-19 crisis

Among those respondents who did receive additional assistance since the Covid-19 outbreak began, 34% reported having received it from the authorities of the country of interview, while 33% were assisted by NGOs (see Figure 6). As previously mentioned, there is potential bias in this data since a proportion of respondents were referred to 4Mi from NGOs providing assistance.

The third category of assistance providers that was most frequently indicated included both the local population of the country of interview and community-based organizations (22% of those who received additional assistance).

Figure 6. Who did you receive it from?



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

Respondents who received additional assistance (n=120)*

Family or friends and fellow migrants accounted for 13% and 8% of those who received additional assistance, respectively.

Answers to this question varied significantly between the two countries of interview: while in Colombia 38 of the 87 respondents who received additional assistance since the beginning of the outbreak indicated the government as assistance provider, in Peru this number was down to 3 out of 33. This might possibly indicate a more proactive role of Colombian local and/or national authorities in responding to the needs of refugees and migrants, compared to Peru. At the same time, for 19 of those 33 who received assistance in Peru, the provider was an NGO – against 21 out of 87 in Colombia.



The [Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative](https://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi) (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. Normally, the recruitment of respondents and interviews take place face-to-face. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection has been suspended in all countries.

MMC has responded to the COVID-19 crisis by changing the data it collects and the way it collects it. Respondents are recruited through a number of remote or third-party mechanisms; sampling is through a mixture of purposive and snowball approaches. A new survey focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants, and the surveys are administered by telephone, by the 4Mi monitors in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia and Latin America. Findings derived from the surveyed sample should not be used to make inferences about the total population of refugees and migrants, as the sample is not representative. The switch to remote recruitment and data collection results in additional potential bias and risks, which cannot be completely avoided. Further measures have been put in place to check and – to the extent possible – control for bias and to protect personal data. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi