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Comuna 13, Medellin, Colombia.

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About this report

This city report presents the work carried out by the Mixed Migration Centre and the Mayors Migration Council (shortened to MMC², given the matching acronyms) in Medellín, as part of a pilot of the 4Mi Cities project.

In close partnership with city governments at the frontline of migrant reception and inclusion, 4Mi Cities collected data on the needs, assets, and aspirations of urban migrants and refugees as they interact with local policies and services in three Latin American cities (Barranquilla, Medellín, and Mexico City). Data collected will be used by city governments involved in the project, as well as humanitarian and development actors, to improve their current migration policies and responses at city level.

The research methods, data sources and analysis structure are aligned across the project cities, to allow comparisons between the specific situation of refugees and migrants across locations. The other reports can be found here:

[4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration - Barranquilla City report](#)

[4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration - Mexico City report](#)

The 4Mi Cities pilot project in Latin America and the Caribbean was supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The views expressed herein should however not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Responsibility for the content of this report lies entirely with the Mixed Migration Centre and the Mayors Migration Council

About the Mixed Migration Centre

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of six regional hubs (Asia, East Africa & Yemen, Europe, North Africa, West Africa and Latin America & Caribbean) and a central unit in Geneva. It is a leading source of independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The Mixed Migration Centre aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. Its overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The Mixed Migration Centre is part of, and governed by, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures its work is grounded in operational reality, the Mixed Migration Centre acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the Mixed Migration Centre does not necessarily reflect the position of DRC.

For more information on the Mixed Migration Centre visit the website: www.mixedmigration.org

About the Mayors Migration Council

The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) is a mayor-led organization that helps cities shape national and international action on migration and displacement. Its mission is to ensure that global responses to pressing challenges—from pandemics to the climate crisis—both reflect and address realities on the ground for the benefit of migrants, displaced persons, and the communities that receive them.

To fulfil its vision, the Mayors Migration Council secures cities' formal access and representation to national, regional, and international policy deliberations; builds cities' diplomatic, advocacy, and communications skills so they can effectively influence decisions; unlocks technical and financial resources to cities so they can deliver better outcomes on the ground; and helps cities implement local solutions efficiently and at scale to accelerate global commitments.

Created by mayors for mayors, the Mayors Migration Council is a nimble team of political advisors and urban practitioners led by a Leadership Board composed of the mayors of Amman, Bristol, Freetown, Kampala, Los Angeles, Milan, Montreal, and Zürich. It is managed as a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and operate with the institutional support of Open Society Foundations, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Robert Bosch Stiftung, in addition to other project-based donors.

For more information on the Mayors Migration Council visit their website: www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org



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List of acronyms

| | |
|--------------|---|
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council |
| ETPV | Temporary Protection Status (Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Venezolanos) |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| GIFMM | Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (Grupo Interagencial para Flujos Migratorios Mixtos) |
| IO | International organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

Figures, tables and boxes

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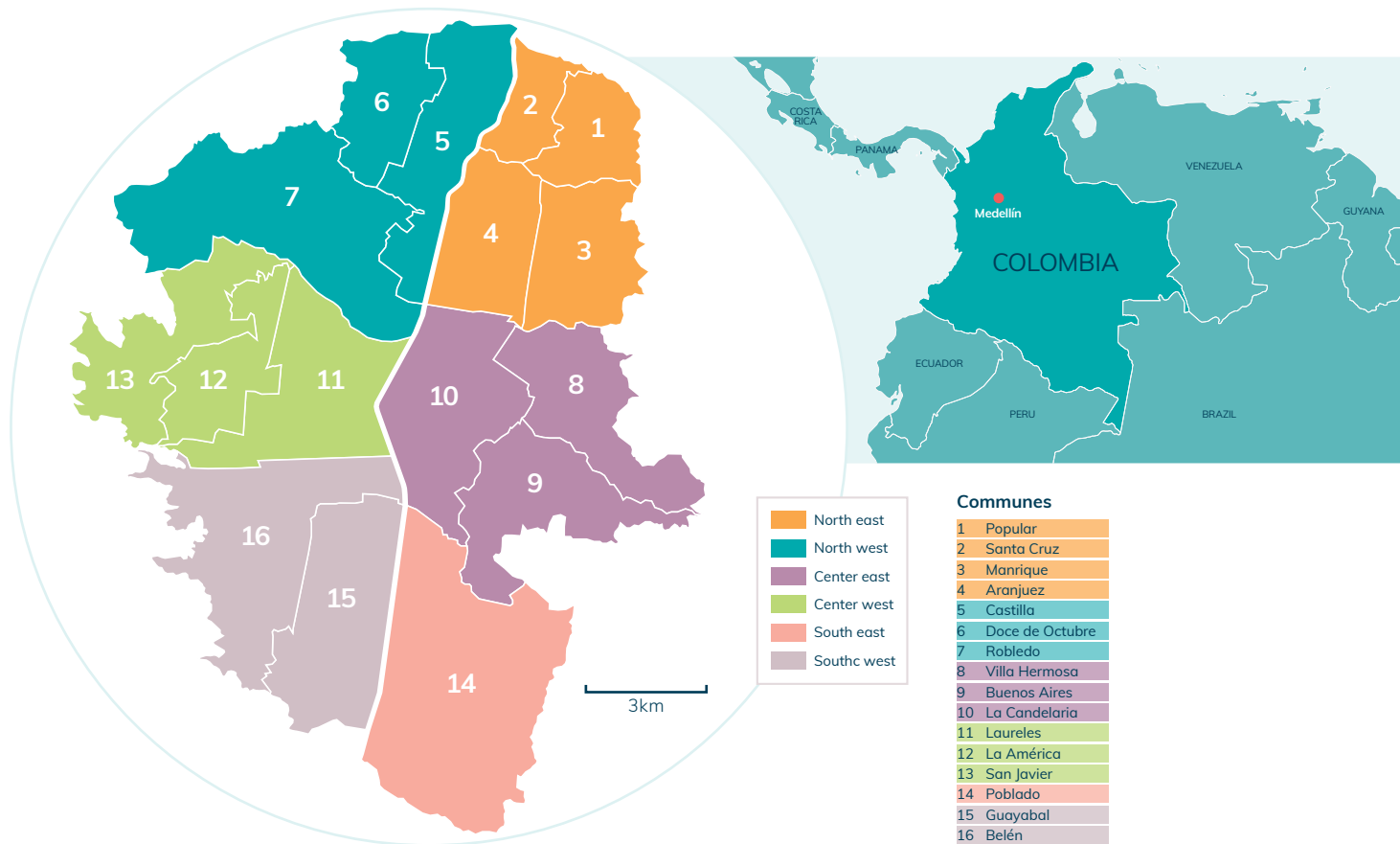
Summary and key findings

This report aims to fill information gaps on the experience of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Medellín. It is based on survey data, focus group discussions, and secondary sources. After a short introduction on the city's mixed migration dynamics and the local responses to these movements, the report presents the main findings of the project. The report concludes by specifying the implications of the findings for policy and programming and elevating the city's uptake of the evidence and their commitments on policy and programming for refugees and migrants.

Key findings from the surveys administered in Medellín include:

- 1. Medellín is a home away from home.** Even though more than half of respondents consider that their life as migrants in Medellín has been harder than expected, 82% intend to stay in Medellín. Many Venezuelans consider Medellín to be more welcoming to refugees and migrants than other previous destinations (almost half of the respondents stopped in another Colombian city before arriving in Medellín). The city has offered both respondents and their households better food (51%), better access to education (48%), and better access to healthcare (38%) compared to their country of origin. Although perceived discrimination against Venezuelans is high, respondents stated having good relations with the local population in their neighbourhood (81%) and where they work (80%).
- 2. Despite feeling at home to some extent, the refugee and migrant population tends not to engage with authorities within the city.** This leads to limited access to justice (of those respondents who were victims of a crime or attempted crime, only 29% filed a complaint); a low sense of community (only 9% of respondents felt like they belong to a community); and a low level of participation and civic engagement in local decision-making processes (77% of respondents do not participate in decision-making processes at either the neighbourhood or the city level).
- 3. Access to livelihoods remains a challenge.** Only 28% of respondents considered Medellín to provide adequate employment opportunities. Respondents are more often engaged in street vending, which is a very precarious income generating activity. In addition, many respondents say their occupation in Medellín housework, which does not provide them an income.
- 4. Most respondents (78%) could access healthcare when needed, but many had to do it through emergency services.** Mental health and specific services for people with disabilities are especially difficult to access for migrants and refugees. 85% of respondents who mentioned having a person with a disability in their household have not been able to access specialized services. As for mental health services, only 4% reported having had access, against 68% having experienced symptoms of mental ill-health since they arrived in the city.
- 5. Access to long-term integration support remains a major gap.** Assistance provided by humanitarian organizations is designed to provide sporadic and emergency response: half of respondents have received assistance since they arrived in Medellín, primarily food (36%), housing support (35%), cash transfers (18%), and medical care (22%). Orientation on employment and/or training, and guidance on their rights as refugees and migrants are very limited: only 3% of respondents had access to employment and/or training programmes and 1% received information on their rights.

Figure 1. Map of Medellín



Source: Sepúlveda-Murillo, Fabio & Chica-Olmo, Jorge & Soto, Norelly. (2019). [Spatial Variability Analysis of Quality of Life and Its Determinants: A Case Study of Medellín, Colombia](#). Social Indicators Research.

About the 4Mi Cities project

Localized data and analysis on migration is often limited, hampering city government decisions and policy development. The Mixed Migration Centre and the Mayors Migration Council (shortened to MMC², given the matching acronyms), working in close partnership with three city governments (Medellín and Barranquilla in Colombia, and Mexico City), designed and implemented a pilot data collection project called 4Mi Cities. MMC² developed and applied a new 4Mi toolkit to find out specifically about refugees' and migrants' urban experience in a way that can support improved policy and service provision at the city level.

What is 4Mi?

Set up in 2014, 4Mi is a unique network of field enumerators situated along frequently used mixed migration routes and in major migratory hubs. It aims to offer a regular, standardized, quantitative and globalized, system of collecting primary data on mixed migration. 4Mi predominantly uses a closed question survey to invite respondents to anonymously self-report on a wide range of issues, which results in extensive data relating to individual profiles, migration drivers, means and conditions of movement, the smuggling economy, aspirations and destination choices. 4Mi data allows MMC and its partners to inform migration policies, debates, and protection responses for people on the move through the production of high-quality quantitative analysis grounded in evidence.

Like many other urban centres, the three cities included in this pilot – Barranquilla, Medellín, and Mexico City – all host refugee and migrant populations. Whether they represent an intended, or final, destination or not, they offer economic opportunities, access to services, and a diaspora community, but at the same time, barriers such as xenophobia and lack of knowledge regarding available services and programmes persist. In addition, access to services is often tied to a regular immigration status, which can be difficult to obtain. Access to livelihoods can also be a challenge, along with housing. City governments have made efforts to meet refugees' and migrants' needs by developing policies, and designing assistance programmes, but gaps persist.

4Mi Cities aims to build evidence to better inform local responses to mixed migration in cities and create a strong case for national and international legal, fiscal and policy frameworks that enable cities to adequately provide necessary services to refugee and migrant populations. The data collected will be used by city governments involved in the project, as well as humanitarian and development actors, to improve their current migration policies and responses at city level.

Figure 2. 4Mi Cities project locations



1. Methodology

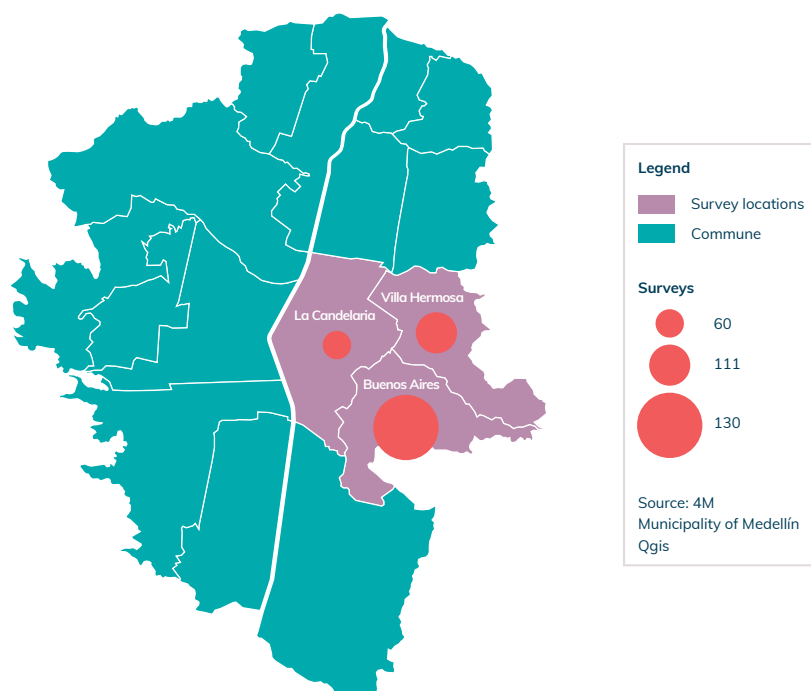
The research questions that the 4Mi Cities project set out to answer are:

1. What are the profiles of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Medellín?
2. What are the reasons behind their decision to choose Medellín as a destination?
3. What are the protection risks and challenges they face in the city?
4. What are the opportunities that refugees and migrants encounter?
5. What access do they have to services in the city?
6. Are refugees and migrants satisfied with their decision to migrate to Medellín and what are their future intentions?

The 4Mi Cities project took a mixed-methods approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research as well as several consultation and validation workshops. The pilot of the project in Medellín was conducted between June and October 2021 and was based on the following activities:

- **Urban context analysis**, largely based on secondary sources and a limited number of key informant interviews with city government staff.
- **Three focus groups** with: i) male refugees and migrants; ii) female refugees and migrants; iii) LGBTI refugees and migrants.
- **Three workshops with mixed migration actors**. Experts from the public and private sector, IO, NGO, and UN agencies participated in: i) a mapping workshop to determine key locations where the target population lives and gathers and to identify sites for data collection; ii) a survey workshop to ensure that the information to be collected by the project would fill gaps and meet the needs of local actors; and iii) a validation workshop to discuss results with city government staff and other local actors.
- **301 interviews with refugees and migrants** in the south-eastern part of Medellín, conducted by 10 4Mi Cities enumerators at three prioritized data collection sites:¹ Comuna² 8 – Villa Hermosa (neighbourhood Llanaditas); Comuna 9 – Buenos Aires³; and Comuna 10 – La Candelaria (neighbourhood Boston and Prado Centro, tenements – inquilinatos).⁴

Figure 3. 4Mi Cities' sample distribution



1 With the data gathered from the mapping workshops, city government staff prioritized the three data collection sites based on: i) lack of local presence by authorities and NGO; ii) and information gaps regarding the refugee and migrant population.

2 The city of Medellín is divided into 16 comunas, which are local-administrative subdivisions.

3 Data was collected in the following neighborhoods: 8 de Marzo, Buenos Aires, Jesús, La Milagrosa and Pablo Escobar.

4 The sample size was distributed in the following way: Comuna 8 (111 surveys), Comuna 9 (130 surveys) and Comuna 10 (60 surveys).

The 4Mi Cities survey covered six main themes relating to the research questions: i. demographic and migration profile; ii. housing; iii. Access to services (healthcare, mental health, education, and early childcare); iv. livelihood opportunities and challenges; v. protection risks and access to justice; and vi. life in the city (interactions with the local population, with city government and NGOs, access to public places and transportation, among other topics). The closed-question survey of 95 questions was answered only by Venezuelan refugees and migrants (18 years and older) who had been residing in Medellín - for more than three months and less than five years at the time of the interview. The surveys were complemented by the focus group discussions, which covered the same topics with particular population groups (men, women, LGBTI persons).

Several limitations to the data are worth noting. As the 4Mi Cities sampling process was not randomized and three specific data collection sites were prioritized, the survey responses are not representative of the entire refugee and migrant population in the city of Medellín. Additionally, the responses of participants in the 4Mi Cities survey cannot be independently verified, and there may be response bias. Nonetheless, the findings from the survey can provide important insights into the life of refugees and migrants in Medellín. Informed consent and anonymity were communicated clearly with participants before, during, and after the surveys.

The next section of the report will present the context overview, based on the secondary data review and key informant interviews. The report then presents analysis of the survey and focus group discussion results, according to the themes in the research questions.

2. Context overview

2.1 Migration dynamics in Medellín

Medellín is the capital of the Department of Antioquia, in the northwest of Colombia. It is the second most populous city in the country with more than 2.5 million inhabitants⁵ and stands out as Colombia's financial, industrial, commercial, and service centre.⁶

Medellín has witnessed the social disruption caused by the Colombian armed conflict since the mid-twentieth century, when the city became one of the main destinations of internal displacement in the country.⁷ Intra-urban displacement also occurs within Medellín itself. Between January and September 2020 alone, the *Alcaldía de Medellín* (City of Medellín) assisted 6,098 victims of internal displacement, 52% of whom were women.⁸

Although it is not a border city, since 2015 Medellín has become one of the main destinations of mixed migration flows⁹ from Venezuela into Colombia. According to the country's national migration authority, of all cities in Colombia, by August 2021, Medellín hosted the second largest population of refugees and migrants.¹⁰ Under-registration of refugees and migrants in Colombia is common, due to their entry into the country through irregular routes, and therefore the total number of Venezuelans living in Medellín is likely higher.¹¹

Although not the subject of this report, migration flows from Venezuela also include Colombian nationals returning to their country of origin.

5 Medellín Cómo Vamos (2021) [Informe de Calidad de Vida de Medellín, 2016-2019](#), p. 17.

6 Medellín Cómo Vamos (s/f) [Así es Medellín](#).

7 Sanchez, B.E. (2013) [Una ciudad desgarrada: desplazamiento forzado en Medellín, Colombia](#).

8 Secretaría de Inclusión Social Familia y Derechos Humanos (2020) [Dinámicas de desplazamiento forzado en Medellín: Análisis 2020](#).

9 "Mixed migration refers to cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have different legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly and wholly or partially assisted by migrant smugglers." Source: [Mixed Migration Centre](#).

10 Official figures estimate that 56.4 % of the total migrant and refugee population has an irregular status, see Migración Colombia (2021) [Distribución de Venezolanos en Colombia corte a 31 de agosto de 2021](#).

11 R4V. Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela (2021) [Cifras clave](#).

2.2 Local response to migration

Colombian national authorities define the overall guidelines for the registration and regularization of migrants and allocate economic resources from the national budget to local authorities. City governments perform administrative functions and decide the allocation of the resources to programmes and services.

That said, several decision-making processes are still centralized in the national government, limiting the ability of cities to expand the supply of services in the local context. For example, resources to finance education and healthcare services are distributed first to the corresponding Ministries and other national government agencies, and later to local authorities, based on the registration of Venezuelan citizens with the National Registry and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cancillería) in each city. However, there is a lack of information on refugees and migrants who live in each local-administrative subdivision (comuna) or neighbourhood. Under-registration of migrants and refugees due to their irregular status also hinders the ability of local authorities to request and receive the necessary resources and adequately address the needs of this population. And limited local autonomy often leads the city government to focus on aiding on a case-by-case basis, rather than developing or strengthening public policies or programmes.

The local government structure in Medellín is centralized in the Mayor's Office (the city government). The implementation of government policies and programmes is carried out under the direction of different Secretariats. The Secretariat in charge of coordinating the response to migration is the Secretariat for Social Inclusion, Family, and Human Rights ("Secretaría de Inclusión Social, Familia y Derechos Humanos"). This is the municipal entity that develops, coordinates, and implements strategies and public policies aimed at the promotion, protection, and guarantee of the rights of the different population groups.

Medellín's development plan (*Plan de Desarrollo Medellín Futuro 2020-2023*)¹² aims to create a migration management programme (Territorial Alliances for Migration Management, Alianzas Territoriales para la Gestión de la Migración Poblacional) which fosters coordination between different city government entities and cooperation with civil society organizations, and provides a comprehensive response to refugees' and migrants' needs in the city. The local development plan proposes two specific migration-related indicators: the adoption of a public policy on migration, and the number of refugees and migrants who benefit from this policy.¹³

The current local administration of Medellín (2020-2023) has established a series of policies, strategic plans and actions that benefit refugees and migrants. Most are social programmes that pre-existed large-scale Venezuelan migration and were originally targeted at vulnerable Colombian citizens but have since been expanded to also benefit refugees and migrants. These programmes, however, are only available to those with a regular immigration status in the country, except for temporary shelters which are accessible for those in irregular status as well, if urgently needed.

Additional programmes tailored specifically to the refugee and migrant population are being developed. For instance, based on the experience of the Centre for Assistance to Victims – in charge of assisting internally displaced persons within the city – Medellín is currently planning on opening a reception centre for refugees and migrants. Medellín is also a grantee of the Global Cities Fund, described below.

Housing assistance programme

Medellín is a recipient of the Global Cities Fund, the Mayors Migration Council's response to the unmet needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people in the face of pressing global challenges. Medellín's project expands an existing housing assistance programme (three months of paid accommodation) to benefit 270 migrant and displaced families, amounting to approximately 800 people, while improving their access to the city's broader suite of social services

12 Alcaldía de Medellín (2020) [Plan de Desarrollo Medellín Futuro 2020-2023](#).

13 [Ibid.](#) p. 453.

From the civil society side, the Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) aims at coordinating the actions of humanitarian and development organizations in response to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Colombian returnees, and the host population, in collaboration with the authorities. This entity is co-led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and comprises 20 members at the departmental level, including United Nations (UN) agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and members of the Red Cross Movement. The city government and some community leaders, representing the host population as well as refugees and migrants, also participate in the meetings of the Antioquia GIFMM.¹⁴

3. Profile of 4Mi Cities respondents

3.1 Survey respondents

301 refugees and migrants were interviewed for this project: 46% of respondents were men, 53% were women, and 1% self-identified as another gender. The majority of respondents were 25-44 years old (59%), had completed secondary education (56%) and had irregular immigration status (65%). Almost half (44%) of respondents mentioned being part of an unmarried couple and 37% were single.

Survey data also includes some information regarding the respondent's household. The average household consisted of 4.3 people; in total the survey gathered data on 1,302 people. Most household members were between 18 and 34 years old and 88% were Venezuelan, while the remaining 11% were Colombian. 81% of households included at least one child and the average number of children per household was two.

12% of the respondents were single heads of household with children (12%). 45% of respondents mentioned their household had at least one person with specific needs, including breastfeeding women (20%), and people with disabilities (11%).

3.2 Focus group discussion participants

26 refugees and migrants participated in the FGDs and most were between 18 and 59 years of age. The distribution of respondents' nationalities, age group, type of residence permit, and time of residence in Medellín was as follows:

Table 1. Focus group discussion overview

| Focus group | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|-----|-------|---------------|
| Target population | Men | Women | LGBTI persons |
| Number of participants: | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| Age group | | | |
| 18-59 years of age | 6 | 10 | 8 |
| 60+ years of age | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Length of residence in Medellín | | | |
| Between 3 and 6 months | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Between 1 and 2 years | 3 | 10 | 1 |
| Between 3 and 5 years | 4 | 0 | 4 |

¹⁴ Response for Venezuelans – R4V – Platform (2021) [GIFMM Antioquia – Colombia](#).

4. Results: Life in Medellín¹⁵

Medellín is often not the first destination option for Venezuelan refugees and migrants: 46% of respondents stopped in another Colombian city before arriving in Medellín. According to FGD participants, most refugees and migrants stopped first in Bogotá or cities along the Caribbean coast of Colombia.

Presence of family or friends and employment opportunities are the main **factors for choosing Medellín as a destination**. As for the main drivers that led them to leave Venezuela, respondents often mentioned more than one reason:¹⁶ around 95% of respondents reported economic reasons, followed by access to services (47%) and violence and insecurity (26%). None of the respondents mentioned leaving their country of origin because of natural disasters or environmental factors.

[Medellín] “offers us the opportunity to feel free, to express who we are and what we can do.”
FGD participant, LGBTI Focus Group

Most respondents considered that Medellín has offered something to them and their families, especially those who had been in the city for longer: Only 11% of respondents consider that the city has not offered them anything, most of them new arrivals. Qualitative data also indicates that Medellín offered LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants the chance of feeling free to be themselves.

4.1 Documentation and regularization

65% of respondents did not have a residence permit at the time of interview, and this constitutes a barrier to job security, housing and access to public services. Similarly, **around three-fourths of respondents reported that all the children in their household are undocumented** and 9% declared that only some children in their household have a permit.

Of those without a residence permit, 62% had already applied for one – the Temporary Protection Status (ETPV, for its Spanish acronym)¹⁷, while 30% wanted to apply but did not have the necessary information. Data indicates that young Venezuelans, particularly those aged 18 to 24, along with refugees and migrants who arrived within the last six months, are the most misinformed about the ETPV as they more often have incorrect information on the permit. FGD participants also corroborated this finding, by stating they do not understand the different phase of the application process.

Lack of information and disinterest are the main **reasons why most Venezuelans in Medellín have not applied for asylum (international protection)**.

4.2 Livelihoods

There are strong differences between the respondents' occupation in the country of origin and occupation in Medellín. Data indicates that more respondents are dedicated to taking care of the home (from 7% to 19%) and street vending (from 4% to 21%), or unemployed (from 1% to 13%) in Medellín. Disaggregated data show that unemployment is higher among older respondents (age of 64 and older).

¹⁵ For more information, please consult Appendix 1, which includes a profile of 4Mi Cities' respondents, data disaggregation and more results.

¹⁶ The survey question concerning migration drivers is a multiple-choice question, and respondents can provide more than one answer.

¹⁷ In February 2021, the Colombian government launched the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) with the intention of offering a long-term permit to Venezuelans who entered the country prior to January 31st, 2021 and those who intend to enter the country within the next two years who meet certain requirements. The ETPV is valid for 10 years. Cancillería de Colombia (2021) [Abecé del Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Migrantes Venezolanos](#).

Lack of proper documentation¹⁸ (83%), lack of employment opportunities (56%), and discrimination based on age and nationality (36%), are the **main barriers to accessing decent employment and starting up a business.** According to FGD participants, **employers' difficulties verifying references and employment history are also a barrier to accessing employment opportunities.**

Job dissatisfaction and employment insecurity are high among respondents: only 28% of respondents are satisfied with their current occupation, while 10% would like to study, 14% would like to work in a job related to their studies and 23% would like to have their own business. Disaggregated data indicates that job satisfaction is higher among respondents who work for an employer, while 50% of street vendors working for themselves would like to have another job, no matter in what field. Additionally, one-quarter of respondents would like to study, especially female respondents and those between 18 and 24 years old. Regarding job security, only 22% of respondents have formal contracts with their employers.

Financial anxiety and stress are high among respondents. 40% of respondents' households rely on just one person earning an income. 39% of respondents report that household income is *never* enough to cover their basic needs, while 49% of respondents can cover the household's basic needs *sometimes*. Disaggregated data indicates that only 24% of respondents who are employed always cover the needs of the household, and this percentage goes down to 10% among self-employed respondents.

Household coping strategies for lack of financial resources include reducing payments on less urgent expenses such as utilities, rent and clothes (51%), reducing food portions for all household members (48%), prioritizing food security for the most vulnerable members of the household (40%), and borrowing money mostly from neighbours and friends (38%). Begging is common among respondents who work as street vendors and single-person households, when they do not meet the household's basic needs.

Access to savings is limited. 69% of respondents are unable to save after covering their household's basic needs. Additionally, 78% of respondents' households do not have access to financial services, while only 21% of respondents have a bank account.

4.3 Access to public services

The enrolment rate in early childhood education and care is limited, particularly among new arrivals and respondents living in comuna 10 (La Candelaria): 43% of respondents say their children 0-5 years of age are enrolled in a day care centre or a local/national government-run children centre (through the *Buen Comienzo* programme across the city), and 26% say their children do not have access to childcare, preventing parents from both working, according to additional qualitative data. The main reasons for lack of access to childcare options relate to the lack of documentation (24%), available places (18%), financial resources (18%), and new-born day care options (18%).¹⁹ Qualitative data also indicates that childcare centres sometimes require the child's records of growth and development data upon entry, which are often not in the parents' possession.

The school enrolment rate of children over 5 is also low, once again especially among new arrivals and respondents living in comuna 10 (La Candelaria): one-third of respondents with children over 5 years old mentioned their children are not attending school and 8% of households interviewed report that only some of the children attend. The main reasons for not enrolling include insufficient school places (55%), lack of documentation (43%), and lack of information on how to register the children (14%). According to qualitative data, schools are also requiring students to show proof of health insurance as a requirement for admission.

Most respondents mainly accessed healthcare services through a public health centre/hospital and had used emergency services as the only option available to them. **Access to health services for Venezuelan refugees and migrants with a disability is also a challenge:** 85% of respondents with a disabled family member reported that they have not had access to adequate services.

¹⁸ Includes basic identity documents, temporary/permanent residence permit, school transcripts, apostilled diplomas/certificates, ect.

¹⁹ Multiple-choice question.

Access to adequate care for mental health is very low despite the needs. 68% of respondents have experienced adverse mental health symptoms (depression, anxiety, stress, mood swings) since arriving in Medellín, but only 4% received professional support. The majority seeks help from family members or friends, while 23% have not sought out any support. FGD participants mentioned a specific, additional mental health impact for people above 50 years of age when they are not able to contribute to household income.

Access to the internet is limited, obstructing access to online information, tools and services and preventing migrants and refugees from keeping in touch with family: 20% of respondents do not have regular access to internet at home, and 42% only have access sometimes. Disaggregated data indicate that street vendors are the group of respondents with the least access to the internet, together with respondents living in *comuna* 8 (Villa Hermosa).

4.4 Housing

New arrivals are more prone to living in overcrowded conditions compared to refugees and migrants who have spent a longer period in Medellín. Of those respondents who have been living in Medellín for less than a year, 58% mentioned there being only one room exclusively for sleeping in their accommodation, which is low for the number of persons in the household. According to qualitative data, many Venezuelan refugees and migrants live with relatives/friends upon arrival in Medellín until they can afford to move out on their own or find housing through referrals.

Average tenure security: 75% of respondents pay for their housing monthly (versus more precarious arrangements such as daily payment), securing tenure to some extent. 73% of respondents have an informal lease agreement (verbal).

Different locations pose different housing challenges: while half of respondents experienced no barriers to housing, disaggregated data by data collection site indicates specific barriers at each location. Lack of resources is a common barrier in finding living arrangements in *comuna* 10 (La Candelaria); lack of guarantor is a frequent obstacle in *comuna* 9 (Buenos Aires). Respondents in *comuna* 8 (Villa Hermosa) apparently face fewer obstacles than those residing in other areas.

Qualitative data indicates that refugees and migrants living in comuna 10 (tenements) do not have access to adequate housing conditions, including utilities. The proportion of respondents who share a bathroom with other families is higher in *comuna* 10 (25%) compared to the other data collection sites (10% and 19% in *comuna* 9 and 8, respectively).

4.5 Protection risks and access to justice

Medellín tends not to be a safe place for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. One-third of respondents had been victim of a crime or an attempted crime (56% of respondents do not know of refugees and migrants who have faced protection risks while in the city). Among the most frequently mentioned protection risks are **non-physical violence (harassment), theft and labour exploitation/forced labour. Of those who were victim of a crime or an attempted crime, only 29% filed a complaint.** This was mainly done at a police station, followed by the community action board (*Junta de Acción Comunal*²⁰). Most did not file a complaint, because of mistrust in the police/institutions (47%), lack of knowledge about procedures for refugees and migrants by officials (24%), fear of being detained/deported (18%), and discrimination (16%). According to qualitative data, most Venezuelans mistrust authorities in general after their experience of interactions with Venezuelan authorities.

Locations where **protection risks** are most likely to occur include **the street/public places** (69%), **the workplace** (32%) and the **community/neighbourhood** (24%). Perceived perpetrators of incidents include strangers/local population (69%), co-workers/employers (23%), criminal groups (17%) and other Venezuelan refugees and migrants (10%).

20 A Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC) is a neighbourhood association, a civic non-profit organization whose members are the inhabitants of a neighbourhood working collectively to solve the most pressing issues of their community. JACs are independent from the city government and self-funded through community-based activities. Their existence is widespread in Colombian cities, and they act as a sort of intermediary between the local population and the city government.

4.6 Coexistence, security and participation

Perceived discrimination against refugees and migrants is relatively high: 39% of respondents have felt discriminated against, mainly because of their nationality. The places where they most perceived discrimination included the street/public places, the workplace, and the community/neighbourhood: the same places where protection risks are most present. **At the same time, respondents mentioned good relations with the local (Colombian) population in their neighbourhood and where they work.** Around 80% of respondents claim to have good or very good relations with the local population, as well as with their co-workers. Relations with the local population are better among older respondents (between 45 and 64 years). FGD participants emphasised better relations with the local population in Medellín compared to other places they had stayed in Colombia. LGBTI participants reported not feeling discriminated by the local population based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, but not getting along so well with other refugees and migrants.

80% of respondents **feel safe where they live**, but their sense of belonging to a community is low: only 9% of respondents feel part of a community in Medellín. **Engagement in local decision-making processes is low:** 77% of respondents consider their opinion is not considered in discussions about their neighbourhood or the city, because they do not participate in them.

4.7 Local actors supporting refugees and migrants

Half of the respondents had received some sort of assistance since arriving in Medellín, but mostly short term: primarily food (36%), assistance to find and afford housing (35%), cash transfers (18%), and medical care (22%). Disaggregated data indicate that food and cash transfers were mostly received by respondents who have been living in the city for more than two years, while housing assistance is more frequent among new arrivals. **The offer of services and programmes for refugees' and migrants' long-term inclusion is limited:** only 3% had access to employment and/or training programmes, 1% to guidance on human rights or legal aid assistance.

The **assistance received by respondents** was **mostly provided by government institutions** (47%), **followed by NGOs** (35%), **and UN agencies** (18%). However, assistance from government institutions is more common among refugees and migrants who arrived in the last six months. According to additional qualitative data, in many cases, beneficiaries do not fully understand which institution/organization provided the aid, or if it was government or non-government funded, despite corporate branding and the provision of information.

Even though half of respondents had received assistance, knowledge of assistance programmes for refugees and migrants in the city was low, irrespective of how long they have been living in the city: 71% of respondents had never heard of government programmes aimed at assisting refugees and migrants; 36% had knowledge of programmes from IOs, or NGOs. Only 21% had heard of city government programmes. According to qualitative data, the disconnect between the reception of assistance and the awareness of support programmes is due to, among other things, the fact that the assistance provided is sporadic and, for this reason, beneficiaries do not relate it to the existence of a broader programme.

5. Conclusions

The 4Mi Cities project has shown the value of data collection at the city level in partnership with local stakeholders, and the potential of including data collection and analysis as an integral part of the policy and programming process. In Medellín, data collection and analysis has shown that refugees and migrants lack awareness of and access to the city government, its staff, and its services. It has also indicated what refugees and migrants consider to be their priority needs, as well as specific obstacles to accessing services.

Finding a decent source of livelihood is a major challenge for refugees and migrants, as lack of proper documentation and discrimination often prevent them from being hired and creating their own business. For those who do manage to find a job, informality and exploitation cause uncertainty and leaves refugees and migrants unable to adequately cover their needs. Refugees and migrants also face obstacles in accessing education mainly due to the limited availability of spots in schools and the frequent requests for documents that are impossible for them to produce. Access to healthcare is equally difficult, the main barriers in this case are irregular status and the lack of specialized services for disability- and mental health-related needs. Finally, in the case of housing, verbal contracts, limited financial resources and difficulties in finding a guarantor expose refugees and migrants to losing their accommodation and finding a new one, with the risk of finding themselves homeless.

The identification of specific needs and gaps has enabled the city government, as well as other stakeholders, to draw up tailored policies and programmes that should be both more efficient and more effective, as the next section shows.

6. Evidence uptake

By working in close partnership with city governments and other local actors throughout the project's cycle, MMC² ensured that 4Mi Cities produced relevant and useful city-level data and analysis. It has produced information on the extent to which refugees and migrants are integrated in Medellín and the main barriers they face in accessing services, in contexts as different as informal settlements versus the local integration center, which can guide the city government to develop and strengthen local policies. Detailed information on the needs and priorities of refugees and migrants in the city, be it in areas with limited institutional presence or on topics that are often not prioritized in emergency response, can also support humanitarian and development organizations in adjusting and consolidating their programming.

The city government of Medellín has identified concrete next steps based on the knowledge produced by 4Mi Cities and plans to:

- Expand the strategy for temporary accommodation of migrants, refugees, returnees and host populations with the support of the Global Cities Fund.
- Develop a city government-wide strategy which centralizes the city government's offering to migrants and refugees that relies on both internal coordination between different secretariats and external coordination with local and international humanitarian and development actors while connecting to migrant and displaced communities physical and online access points. The strategy will include a specific focus on livelihood opportunities and access to education.
- Raise awareness of city services specifically for migrant and refugee communities while ensuring that city secretariats reduce barriers to access, leveraging the 123 Social Line²¹ and other communication channels to better understand gaps in services.
- Involve refugee and migrant associations in local decision-making processes, including allowing their participation in Community Action Boards.

21 123 Social is a hotline in Medellín, managed by the Secretariat for Social Inclusion, Family and Human Rights, that residents of the city can call to report human rights violations and/or emergency assistance needs including partner or family violence, loss of housing, food insecurity and depression. Callers receive information and advice and can be referred to specialized services.



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Dhaka.

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org and follow us at @Mixed_Migration

