

Longitudinal Survey of Forced Migrant Children from Venezuela

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VenRePs-Kids



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Longitudinal Survey of Forced Migrant Children from Venezuela - VenRePs-Kids¹

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Forced displacement is a global development issue. It is estimated that by early 2021, there were more than 110 million displaced people, of whom 41% are children under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2023). Displaced children experience trauma related to leaving their homes, the migration process, and arriving to unfamiliar places where they have uncertain rights and may face discrimination. All of these events and the support they receive in host communities will have significant consequences in the lives of these children. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the challenges faced by this population and how to efficiently support them to prevent them from becoming a lost generation for the world.

One of the main obstacles to progress in this field is the lack of longitudinal data and information on the human development status of children.

The VenRePs-Kids Survey

Our team developed the Longitudinal Survey of Forced Migrant Children (VenRePs-Kids) to contribute in this direction. VenRePs-Kids is a longitudinal study that includes 3,100 participants, both Venezuelan and Colombian children, living in Medellín, the second city in Colombia with the highest flow of Venezuelan migration. The

first wave of the survey was conducted in 2022 and focused on two distinct groups of children:

Colombian children and adolescents aged 5 and 17 years.

Venezuelan migrant children and adolescents aged 5 and 17 years who arrived in Colombia between 2016 and 2020.

The survey is intended to understand:

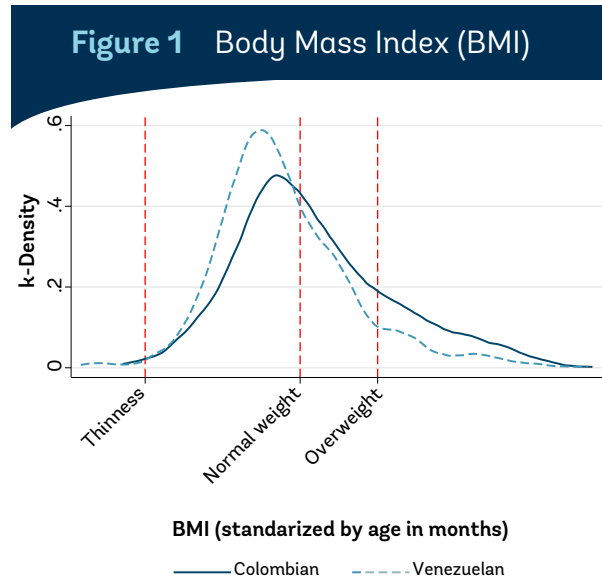
- What are the development gaps between displaced and local children?
- How do these gaps change in terms of access to different public services?

To answer these questions, the survey collects information on access to services, cognitive and socioemotional development, mental and physical health, and child labor.

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Summary of Main Findings: Wave 1

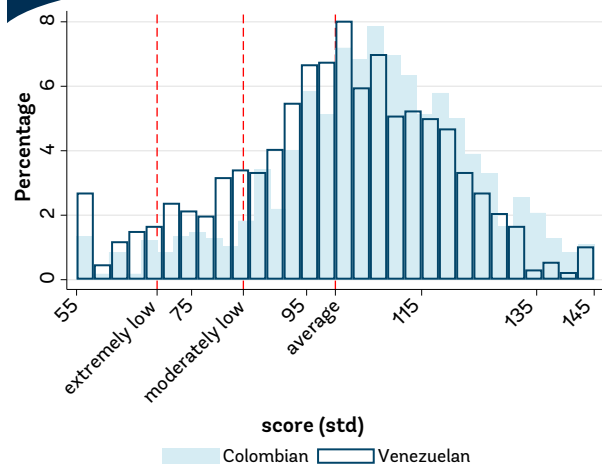
There are substantial gaps in physical health between Venezuelan and Colombian children. On average, Venezuelan children have a lower body mass index (BMI) than Colombian children (see Figure 1). Moreover, the average Venezuelan child has a BMI 0.35 standard deviations below her normal specific age-sex range defined by the World Health Organization.



Notes: Standardized body mass index for Venezuelan and Colombian samples. Standardization by sex-age groups following the World Health Organization guidelines.

There are relevant gaps in cognitive development. Compared to Colombian children, Venezuelan children obtain lower scores on the vocabulary assessment test (see Figure 2). On average, Colombian children are at the 61st percentile of the test distribution. In contrast, Venezuelans score 11.4 percentile points lower, placing them in the 50th percentile of the overall test distribution.

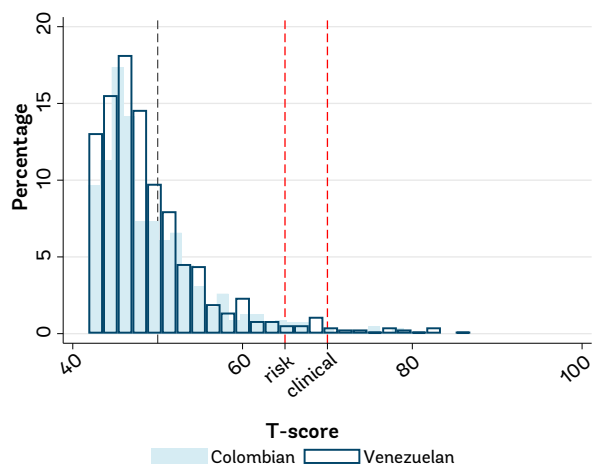
Figure 2 Vocabulary Assessment Test (Peabody)



Notes: Distribution of the Peabody vocabulary test scores by nationality. Higher scores denote a better outcome. The overall average age-specific standard score is 100.

There are no systematic differences in mental health outcomes between Venezuelan and Colombian children. Contrary to what we expected, we did not find significant differences in mental health (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Trauma Symptoms of Children (5-10 y.o)



Notes: Distribution of Trauma Symptoms Check List (TSCYC) total score (PST-TOT). This score reflects the total amount of posttraumatic reexperiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal symptoms observed in the child by her main caregiver. Higher scores denote a worse outcome.

We identified gaps and differential access to public services between Venezuelan and Colombian children and adolescents (see Figure 4). Venezuelan children and adolescents have lower school enrollment and health insurance rates than Colombians. On average, a higher proportion

of migrants were enrolled in school the year before migrating, compared to 2022. Also, Venezuelan children and adolescents had higher health insurance rates in the year before migration compared to their rates in 2022.

Figure 4 Access to Public Services

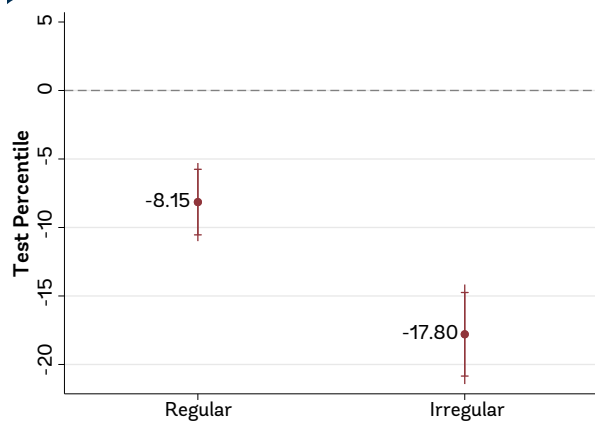
Categories	Colombian 2022	Pre-migration	Venezuelan 2022
School Enrollment			
Children	0.96	0.56	0.74
Adolescents	0.94	0.98	0.74
Health Insurance			
Children	0.92	0.57	0.38
Adolescents	0.89	0.57	0.4
Regular Status			
Children	No Data	No Data	0.64
Adolescents	No Data	No Data	0.71
Total Children	814		737
Total Adolescents			640

Notes: Share of children and adolescents in the sample that are enrolled in school, have access to health insurance and have a regular migratory status. The second column shows the shares in 2022 of the Colombian sample. The third and fourth columns show the shares before migration occurred and in 2022 of the Venezuelan sample respectively.

The gaps in well-being outcomes decrease when categorizing Venezuelan children in their access to public services and migratory status. On average, Venezuelan children score 17.8 percentile points below Colombian children. This difference decreases when comparing the sample of Colombian children with the sample of Venezuelan children in a regular migratory situation. Venezuelan children with a regular migratory status score 8.15 percentiles below their Colombian peers, which implies a gap reduction of 9.65 percentiles in the test distribution. In contrast, Venezuelan children without a regular migratory status score 17.6 percentile points below Colombian children. This pattern of differences in migratory status persists when analyzing the differences in cognitive development for girls, boys, and adolescents separately (see Figure 5).

These results are similar when analyzing different measures of development and when categorizing Venezuelan children in their access to health and educational services. Venezuelan children who have a regular migratory status or have access to public services (health and education) experience improved cognitive, non-cognitive, and mental health outcomes compared to Venezuelan children without access to these services. Their outcomes are more similar to those of Colombian children and adolescents.

Figure 5 Vocabulary Test: by migratory status



Notes: Red dots denote the average difference in the percentile scored by Venezuelan children with and without regular migratory status with respect to the average percentile scored by Colombian children. Red lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

Second Survey Wave

The second wave of the longitudinal survey was collected between October and December 2023.

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References

UNHCR (2023). Venezuela Situation - Operational update #1. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100078>