



Reducing discriminatory practices in ongoing efforts to promote social cohesion and migrant and refugee rights

● Cultural Pluralism

Ecuador is a culturally pluralistic and ethnically diverse country with a strong sense of national identity and regional solidarity. Over recent decades, the government has introduced a variety of measures to encourage greater social cohesion and inter-cultural understanding. Despite the country's multicultural roots, however, discrimination remains a widespread challenge. The problem permeates the workplace as well as domestic and civic settings. Common grounds for discrimination include race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexuality.

● Xenophobia: misplaced sentiment

This new phenomenon is primarily directed towards the migrant and refugee Venezuelan community. Anti-foreigner sentiments are not characteristic of Ecuador, which has historically been very open to migrants and refugees. Indeed, the Human Mobility Act of 2017 grants some of the strongest legal protections in the whole region to migrants and asylum seekers. The problem lies in the sheer volume of Venezuelan migrants. Some 400,000 individuals have settled in the country since 2015. This is pushing the natural hospitality of Ecuadorians to the limit, most notably in regions with dense Venezuelan populations, such as Guayas, Manabí, and Pichincha.

● Employment & Social Services

Discrimination towards Venezuelan migrants is heavily influenced by competition for jobs and resources. Recent migrants are perceived as taking employment from Ecuadorians, especially the young and low-skilled. Aggregate figures show this not to be the case, although it may prove true to a limited extent in areas densely populated by migrants. The fact that many Venezuelan migrants are compelled to work in the informal sector increases their vulnerability to discriminatory practices, such as low pay and unfair working hours. Similarly, migrants from Venezuela are blamed for bringing additional pressure to bear on Ecuador's public services and the social assistance system. While it is true that these are under strain, this is primarily due to the country's ongoing economic downturn, not extra demand from migrants.

● Generalized Discrimination

Much of the discrimination faced by Venezuelans in Ecuador mirrors the experience of vulnerable citizens in the host community. For instance, the vast majority of working women in Ecuador struggle for equal pay, regardless of their nationality. Likewise, the children of low-income migrants and Ecuadorians are similarly vulnerable to under-age working and school absenteeism. On occasion, public officials are not fully aware of the rights and legal protections available to Venezuelan migrants and thus deny them services to which they are entitled. In such cases, the act of discrimination might best be described as unintentional.

● Steps Forward

Ecuador's main challenge with respect to discrimination is to enforce the strong provisions that already exist in its legal code. Success here will benefit all vulnerable members of Ecuadorian society, be they nationals or migrants. Priority recommendations include:

- Encouraging businesses to implement policies and programs that promote positive behavior towards all women
- Raising awareness in society to ensure that the rights of children and adolescents are respected
- Strengthening trust between citizens and state institutions

Additional measures are required to address particular forms of discrimination experienced only by migrants. These need to combine responses to specific bureaucratic hurdles as well as wider cultural divisions.

- Continuing free and non-discriminatory access to health services
- Monitoring the infrastructure capacity of social services
- Continued awareness-raising efforts focused on public education campaigns to prevent xenophobia
- Promoting cultural integration between migrant and refugees and host communities

Challenges and opportunities of Venezuelan migration in Ecuador

Ecuador has provided a "humanitarian corridor"

for **1.15** million Venezuelans since 2015,

400 000 of whom have chosen to settle.



Unfortunate timing

The **exodus** of Venezuelans from their **homeland** initially coincided with an **economic downturn** caused by the 2014 drop in global **oil prices** and now unfolds in the **recessionary pressures of Covid-19**, resulting in high **unemployment** and pressure on public services.

Despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, the economic impact of Venezuelan migration equates to less than

-1%

Ecuador's **GDP**



Discriminatory practices

A variety of different groups in Ecuador report experiencing **discrimination**, although rates are **generally higher** for Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

4 out of **10** Venezuelan report suffering a **discriminatory incident** in the last three months.

40,6%

compared to for Ecuadorians

6,5%

90%

of cases, **migrants and refugees cite** their nationality as the reason.



Social Cohesion

Despite **similarities** in **language** and **culture**, work is required to build **mutual understanding** between **migrant/refugee** and **host communities**.

66%

2/3

of Ecuadorians think their values differ from those of Venezuelans,

Ecuadorians

2,6%

Venezuelans

28%

65%

Venezuelans in mobility feel more discriminated on the street

Ecuadorians report **higher levels** of discrimination in their neighborhoods.

26%

in the case of women

39%

2/5

of Venezuelans agree.

56%

More than half of Ecuadorians believe Venezuelans in mobility are responsible for a rise in crime (despite no such rise occurring).

1 in **10**

female Venezuelan adolescents feel discriminated against because of their nationality, leading many to drop out of school.

