

As Good as it Sounds?

The Regularization and Economic Integration of Venezuelan Migrants  
in Colombia

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# Abstract

The regularization of forcibly displaced migrants is promoted by NGOs and intergovernmental organizations as a good practice in migration policy. Regularization of forcibly displaced migrants increases their protection, facilitates their access to necessary services, increases their resiliency, and provides access to the formal labor market. Furthermore, providing forced migrants the right to work reduces migrant's reliance on humanitarian assistance. Colombia's efforts to regularize Venezuelan migrants have been widely praised. However, its regularization efforts did not reach as many migrants as anticipated, and few Venezuelan migrants work in the formal labor market. This thesis examines why a number of eligible Venezuelans did not apply for regularization and the extent to which regularization has facilitated Venezuelan migrants' economic integration. This research demonstrates implementation challenges were the greatest factor impeding migrants' regularization. Disinterest in regularization and the priority of meeting basic needs are also recognized as factors influencing regularization efforts. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that while regularization improved the economic integration of Venezuelans with a regular status, a number of barriers remain. The largest barriers relate to implementation challenges of regularization policies and barriers that result from a segmented labor market.

Keywords: Regularization Policies, Economic Integration of Migrants, Forced Migration, Venezuelan Migrants, Labor Market Access

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# List of Abbreviations

DANE - El Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (The National Administrative Department of Statistics)

ETPV - Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Venezolanos (Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans)

IOM - International Organization for Migration

NGO - Nongovernmental organization

PEP - Permiso Especial de Permanencia (Special Stay Permit)

RAMV - El Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos (The Administrative Register for Venezuelan Migrants)

RAMV-PEP - the third round of PEP

TPS - Temporary Protected Status

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Problem and Aim

“Work is the means to integration, independence and development.” (Andrés, 2022)<sup>1</sup>

There are more forcibly displaced people in the world than ever before (UNHCR, no date). In 2021, more than 84 million people were forcibly displaced globally (ibid). In addition, about 76 percent of the global refugee population is in a protracted refugee situation which means they “have been in exile for at least five consecutive years in a given host country” (UNHCR, 2021, p. 20). The average length of displacement for refugees is twenty years (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2021). Furthermore, over eighty-five percent of forcibly displaced people are living in developing countries (Bahar, Ibáñez and Rozo, 2021, p. 1). Since World War II, the main approach to refugee crises has been to treat them as humanitarian crises and to aim to provide for refugees’ basic needs (Betts *et al.*, 2017). As these crises continue over years, the humanitarian approach is increasingly contested and regarded as unsustainable. The crises lose funding support over time and the humanitarian approach fails “to nurture the capabilities of refugees” (ibid, p. 6). Betts *et al.* (2017) argue the best solution to protracted refugee situations would be to address the underlying causes such as state fragility, authoritarian regimes, and resolving conflicts. However, they note there is often a lack of political will to intervene in the ways that would be necessary. Therefore, they acknowledge the most practical response to be a development approach to refugee crises centered on providing refugees the right to work and freedom of movement within the host country.

Clemens, Huang, and Graham (2018) state granting refugees formal labor market access provides refugees workplace protections and greater security. They explain that formal labor market access is linked to decreasing negative coping mechanisms, such as child labor or child marriage, and increasing refugees’ resiliency. They also state granting refugees formal labor market access can also benefit the host society by creating new employment opportunities, increasing government revenue as refugees pay taxes, and creating positive effects throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> This quote comes from the data collected for this thesis. The quote is my own translation from Spanish.

economy from increases in refugees' consumer spending. However, they explain that many developing countries limit refugees' right to work due to fear that an increase in competition for employment will decrease the wages and increase unemployment of the host country's nationals. They provide examples of how formal labor market access is limited by costly work permit fees, geographical restrictions, sectoral restrictions, requirements that the employer request a work permit on behalf of a refugee, limits to how many refugees an employer may hire, and so on. While many states limit refugees labor market access for the aforementioned reasons, the majority of studies find granting refugees formal labor market access makes a very small negative impact to the host country nationals or none at all (ibid). Nonetheless, many refugees in developing countries are not granted work permits, or the barriers to work are so high, that few participate in the formal labor market (ibid; Zetter and Ruaudel, 2018).

One method of providing internationally displaced people the legal opportunity to work is through regularization policies. Regularization policies are state policies that provide irregular migrants in a country the opportunity to "authorise their immigration status with the state" (Bauer, 2021, p. 4498). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines irregular migration as the "[m]ovement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination" ('Key Migration Terms', 2022). Conversely, the IOM defines regular migration as the "[m]igration that occurs in compliance with the laws of the country of origin, transit and destination" (ibid). The aim of this thesis is to investigate how regularization policies impact the economic integration of internationally displaced people. To explore this, I have selected the case of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia.

## 1.2 Case Selection and Research Questions

In 2020, Venezuelans were the second largest group of internationally displaced people (UNHCR, 2021, p. 3). The largest group of internationally displaced people were Syrian nationals (ibid). The Venezuelan migrant crisis began in 2015 and is now a protracted migrant situation. Furthermore, the Venezuelan migrant crisis is severely underfunded compared to similar migrant crises (Bahar and Dooley, 2021). For example, in 2020 Syrian refugees received \$20.8 billion dollars in assistance, while Venezuelan migrants only received \$1.4 billion dollars in assistance.

Per capita, that equates to \$3,150 dollars per Syrian refugee and \$265 dollars per Venezuelan migrant in 2020 (ibid). With no end to the Venezuelan migration crisis in sight, long-term sustainable solutions are required to improve the well-being of Venezuelan migrants across Latin America.

Colombia hosts about 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants, more than any other country (*Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis*, 2022). Despite little funding from the global community, Colombia has welcomed Venezuelan refugees (Castañeda, 2020). In July of 2017, the Colombian government instituted a regularization policy with the creation of a temporary permit called the Permiso Especial de Permanencia (the Special Stay Permit, or PEP for its Spanish acronym) (Selee *et al.*, 2019). Since then, there were several rounds of PEP in a continuous effort to regularize the status of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Each round of PEP was only open to Venezuelans already in Colombia and was subject to several other requirements (ibid). PEP allowed Venezuelan migrants to receive temporary legal status, the right to work, and access to social protection benefits such as healthcare and social security (Selee and Bolter, 2020). PEP was valid for two years and could be renewed. There was no cost associated with the permit (ibid).

Colombia's efforts to regularize Venezuelan migrants has been admired by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as regularization decreases the migrants' vulnerability and allows migrants to contribute to the host society's economy (UNHCR, 2020). However, the results of PEP have not lived up to the Colombian government's expectations as many did not apply and remain without status (Palomares, 2020). In particular, during the third round of PEP, called the RAMV-PEP, many eligible migrants did not apply for the permit (Selee and Bolter, 2022). The third round of PEP will herein be referred to as the RAMV-PEP. The RAMV-PEP was unique among the rounds of PEP as it allowed thousands of Venezuelans who had entered Colombia irregularly an opportunity to regularize their status. Nonetheless, it is estimated that about 59 percent of Venezuelan migrants remain irregular despite opportunities to apply for PEP (Del Real, 2022, p. 2). Finally, of those with PEP, only about 14 percent work in the formal labor market (UNHCR, 2020). In creating PEP, the Colombian government attempted to construct a sustainable response to the crisis. Therefore, it is of interest to understand why the policy did not live up to expectations. The low levels of Venezuelan formal employment and the significant number of Venezuelan migrants that did not apply for the RAMV-PEP raises questions concerning the policy's effectiveness and benefits to Venezuelans.



Therefore, this thesis will address the following research questions:

1. Why did a significant number of Venezuelans who were eligible for RAMV-PEP, not apply for it?
2. To what extent has PEP facilitated the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia?

The majority of research on regularization policies in general has focused on the US and Europe (Bauer, 2021). However, as previously mentioned, the majority of forcibly displaced people live outside these areas. For this reason, Colombia is an interesting case study of regularization policies' impact on economic integration of internationally displaced people.

### 1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized in six chapters. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 provides the necessary contextual information for the reader to understand this thesis. The background covers the situation in Venezuela that caused mass displacement, an explanation of the PEP policies, and a discussion on integration. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework drawing upon implementation theory and labor market segmentation theory to understand the opportunities and constraints migrants' encounter. Chapter 4 provides the thesis' methodology. The data is provided and analyzed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 is primarily divided in two sections, each focusing on one of the research questions. The first half of the chapter is dedicated to PEP as a regularization policy. The second half of the chapter explains the state of Venezuelan migrants' economic integration and how PEP has impacted this. The chapter ends by providing details on the current state of regularization of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Venezuelan Political Economic Situation

To understand the Venezuelan migrant crisis, it is important to understand the political economic situation in Venezuela which led to mass displacement. Venezuela's economy became dependent upon oil after its discovery (Cheatham, Roy and Cara Labrador, 2021). Then during the 2000's, democratically elected President Chavez expanded the power of the presidency, chipping away at the country's democracy and paving the way for an authoritarian regime (ibid). In 2014, the Venezuelan economy was still dependent upon oil exports. When the price of oil plummeted from \$100 a barrel to less than \$30 between 2014 and 2016, the Venezuelan economy was deeply affected (ibid). When the government implemented price controls to stabilize the economy, many businesses became unprofitable and were forced to close (BBC, 2021). In addition, the government created changes to foreign currency exchange that made basic goods unaffordable for many Venezuelans. US sanctions on Venezuelan oil further decreased the government's revenue. This resulted in a humanitarian crisis marked by hyperinflation, frequent power outages, and shortages of basic goods including food and medicine (ibid). Furthermore, the 2018 presidential election remains highly contested. During the campaign process several candidates were barred from running and others were jailed (ibid). The election results announced President Maduro had been reelected for a second term. Shortly after, his political opponent, Mr. Guaidó, declared himself Venezuela's true president. Political tensions remain high, and the economic crisis has made purchasing basic goods unaffordable for many. In response to the political economic crisis, over five million Venezuelans have left the country (ibid).

A note on terminology, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees states, "A refugee, according to the Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 1951, p. 3). The majority Venezuelans displaced by the crisis in Venezuela do not neatly fit the definition of a refugee. As the majority of Venezuelans in Colombia have not been recognized as refugees, and therefore not granted the legal status and benefits that come with it, this thesis will refer to

displaced Venezuelans as migrants. Nonetheless, this thesis draws upon refugee studies in recognition that Venezuelan migrants are in a refugee-like situation.

## 2.2 The PEP Policies

It is also necessary to understand the basics of the PEP policies in order to understand their implementation and effect on Venezuelan migrants' lives. Since 2017, there were a total of seven rounds of PEP. The requirements for PEP rounds 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 included having entered Colombia at an official crossing point with a passport (Del Real, 2022). The fifth round was open to Venezuelans living in Colombia with a formal offer of employment, whether they had entered the country regularly or irregularly. Finally, the third round, RAMV-PEP, was open to migrants who had entered Colombia irregularly and participated in a government census (ibid). The census was called El Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos (The Administrative Register for Venezuelan Migrants, or RAMV for its Spanish acronym). The RAMV was a massive census of irregular Venezuelans in the country that was conducted between April and June 2019 (Selee and Bolter, 2022). Migrants who were registered in the RAMV were later able to apply for the third round of PEP. The RAMV-PEP was unique among the PEP policies as it offered a large number of irregular Venezuelan migrants an opportunity to regularize their status (ibid).

The concept of liminal legality is useful in understanding the PEP policies. The term *liminal legality* was coined by Cecilia Menjivar to describe the United States' Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program and how its benefits are inherently limited (Del Real, 2022). Characteristics of liminal legality include providing a temporary legal status, no path to permanent residency or citizenship through these programs, and finally the programs' continuation is dependent upon decisions of the executive branch and therefore uncertain. In 2016, Colombia deemed its prior national immigration law from 1920 unconstitutional on the basis of eugenics requirements. Since then, Colombia has not passed new immigration legislation due to lack of funding and political will (ibid). Instead, Colombian immigration has been managed by Colombia's executive branch through a number of resolutions and directives. Consequently, policies like PEP can be changed or revoked by the executive branch with no input from the Colombian Congress (ibid). Consequently, those with statuses such as TPS and PEP are in a fragile position.

According to Del Real (2022) there are several important differences between TPS and PEP. First, PEP is free to apply for and the application is much simpler than that for TPS. The PEP

application was completed online and often the migrants received a printable residency card immediately after completing the application. Secondly, Colombian public discourse is largely pro-immigration. Finally, Colombia maintains little immigration enforcement (ibid). In general, South American countries place little emphasis on expulsion of irregular migrants (Bauer, 2021). As several South American states transitioned from periods of dictatorship to democracies in the 2000's, their migration policies shifted from a focus on securitization and the criminalization of migrants, to a human rights-based approach (ibid). Despite these important differences, Del Real asserts PEP only provides liminal legality.

## 2.3 Integration of Forcibly Displaced Migrants

UNHCR states that third country resettlement, integration, or voluntary repatriation are the three possible options available to refugees (Kuhlman, 1991). For Venezuelan migrants, integration in neighboring countries is the most widely available option at this time. There is no universally accepted definition of integration. Bucken-Knapp, Omanović, and Špehar (2020, p. 5) provide a helpful, though vague, description of integration “as a process intended to enable the migrant to achieve an equal footing with the ‘native’ population in terms of functioning in society”. They state integration is widely recognized as multidimensional. It is discussed in terms of various dimensions including social, political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and so on. Furthermore, they explain integration is often acknowledged as a two-way process, as both immigrants and the host society must put in effort and adapt. While integration is discussed in various dimensions, these dimensions cannot be neatly compartmentalized as different aspects overlap and influence outcomes in other dimensions (OECD and Europäische Union, 2018; Brell, Dustmann and Preston, 2020). However, for the sake of limiting the scope to be manageable with the time allotted, this thesis will focus on the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants. Herein, economic integration refers to the economic integration of migrants in a host society, as opposed to the integration of states’ economies.

Tom Kuhlman (1991) created a comprehensive definition of integration. In regard to economic integration, his definition highlights several important factors; principally, adequate participation in the economy and employment that allows migrants to use their skills, is in line with their cultural values, and allows them to maintain a standard of living that is acceptable for the context. Therefore, economic integration addresses employment, working conditions, living

standards, financial inclusion and so on. Economic integration is a key aspect of integration as the right to work is essential for reducing refugees' vulnerability, and “enhancing resilience and enabling a dignified life” (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2018, p. 4). Despite recognition that the right to work is important for refugees’ welfare from the academic community, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations (ibid; Bahar, Dooley and Huang, 2018; Osborn and Patrick, 2021; Yayboke *et al.*, 2021; Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2021); most states hosting refugees limit their access to the labor market for fear that it will harm the host population by increasing competition, bringing down wages, and increasing the host population’s unemployment rate (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2018).

Stakanov (2016, p. 85) states this assumption that refugees decrease wages, increase unemployment, and increase the cost of public expenditures due to an increase in social welfare spending is “largely unconfirmed”. Most research demonstrates that policies increasing refugees’ labor market access have little to no effect on the employment of the host population (Clemens, Huang and Graham, 2018), and a study on Colombia found no significant effects for the host population thus far (Bahar, Ibáñez and Rozo, 2021). Zetter (2012) acknowledges the limited amount of macro-economic studies on the impact of refugees in host countries and suggests the effects of an influx of a new labor force when refugees arrive in a country is complex. Zetter states the situation can lead to benefits for some and unfavorable circumstances for others. He explains that an influx of refugees can benefit members of the host population such as farmers, businessmen, or those who own property who may see an increase in demand for their products or services. However, low skilled workers may see an increase in competition for employment (ibid; Puerto Gomez, Christensen and Yehdego Araya, 2010).

Clemens, Huang, and Graham (2018) identified five contextual factors that impact the outcome of granting refugees access to the formal labor market. First, is the current extent of labor market access. In some contexts, refugees are already involved in the host country’s informal labor market, while in others their economic activity is mostly restricted to refugee camps. Secondly, the skill and demographic profile of refugees and the extent to which they complement or substitute the host population. If the refugees are complementary, they are bringing in new skills that can increase innovation. When refugees and the host population have similar skills, there is a greater chance for competition in employment. Thirdly, the size and composition of the informal market, and therefore the degree to which refugees are already

incorporated in the market system. States with a large informal market are less likely to see an impact of granting refugees the right to work because many were already working informally and will continue to work informally. Fourth, the geographic location and concentration of refugees. When refugees are heavily concentrated in one location, there may be less employment opportunities and more competition with the local population. Additionally, when refugees are in rural areas, they may have less employment opportunities. Finally, the policy decisions by the host government can “facilitate positive outcomes and avoid or mitigate costs” (ibid, p.16).

In addition, the success of economic integration for refugees is linked to having legal status. Studies demonstrate that legal status is “the single best indicator of long-term social and economic integration” (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 117). However, there is limited information on how temporary legal status impacts long-term social and economic integration. The studies conducted thus far analyzed Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals in the United States. They found that temporary status did improve “economic outcomes and psychological well-being, particularly after periods of irregular status, but not as much as permanent status offered to similar cohorts” (ibid, p. 117). While the U.S. is a very different context than Colombia, the idea that temporary status provides limited benefits for integration, is of importance to consider in the Colombian context.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

Different migration theories attribute varying levels of agency to migrants. Neoclassical theory, also known as push and pull theory, is criticized for assuming migrants have perfect knowledge of their options and complete agency over their situation which allows them to make a rational decision (Castles and Miller, 2009). Neoclassical theories are also criticized for failing to recognize systems of power (Boyd, 1989). Conversely, systems that rank migrants from voluntary migrant to forced migrant are criticized for oversimplifying the situation and depicting forced migrants as having no agency (Khosravi, 2011). Khosravi argues “in most reactive/forced migratory situations, people have more choice and elements of agency than migration theory allows”, there is always some room for choice “which is formed, of course, by age, class, and gender” (ibid, p. 13). With this in mind, this thesis draws upon implementation theory and labor market segmentation theory to understand how Venezuelan migrants’ opportunities and decisions

are influenced by the political economic context in Colombia. Implementation theory analyzes the execution of a policy to understand its outcome. Labor market segmentation theory describes a division within the labor market and how people's employment opportunities are shaped by these distinct markets.

### 3.1 Implementation Theory

Implementation is defined as “the carrying out of a basic policy decision” (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983, p. 20). Implementation theory analyzes the “who, how and why policy is put into effect” (Schofield, 2001, p. 245). Implementation is often considered part of the policy making process as it is able to influence and shape the policy it sets out to execute (Dye, 1998; Hill and Hupe, 2014). Implementers are tasked with translating laws and decrees “into operational rules and regulations”, this process involves implementers making decisions which shape the policy and its outcomes (Dye, 1998, p. 330). Two common approaches to implementation studies are the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach.

The top-down approach assumes a linear and rational model of public policy (Schofield, 2001; Buse, Mays and Walt, 2012). It focuses on the central government or policy making body, and then analyzes how decisions are filtered down (Buse, Mays and Walt, 2012). Hence, the origin of its name. Furthermore, the top-down approach is mostly concerned with the extent to which a policy succeeded by achieving its stated goals (Sabatier, 1986). Mazmanian and Sabatier developed a top-down framework and identified six conditions necessary for effective implementation: clear and consistent objectives; adequate causal theory, a structure that enables enhancing compliance of implementing officials; committed and skillful implementing officials; political support of interest groups and sovereigns; and changes in socio-economic conditions do not substantially undermine political support or causal theory (ibid). Others emphasize variables such as adequate time and resources; strong communication and coordination between implementing actors; implementers comprehension of and willingness to implement the policy; and a direct relationship between the policy's cause and effect (Hill and Hupe, 2014).

In contrast, the bottom-up approach focuses on local level actors in the implementation process and emphasizes that these local implementers have an active role that allows them to shape policy outcomes (Buse, Mays and Walt, 2012). The bottom-up approach focuses on the networks of those involved in policy implementation and the larger issue the policy attempts to

impact, rather than focusing on measuring the outcome of the policy (Schofield, 2001). Lipsky, an influential scholar of the bottom-up approach, emphasizes the influence of those delivering public services and coined the term street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats describe those delivering public services “who have some discretion in how they apply the objectives and principles of policies handed down to them” (Buse, Mays and Walt, 2012, p. 129). Lipsky (1983, p. xii) argues “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the public policies they carry out”. He states that street-level bureaucrats deal with various pressures, particularly inadequate resources and time required to meet the demands made of them. They therefore establish routines and coping strategies in response to these pressures which shape the policy outcome (Hill and Hupe, 2014). The bottom-up approach is a particularly useful theory when there are a number of actors involved in implementation, potentially both private and public (Sabatier, 1986). It is also useful if one is interested in the differences between local implementations (ibid).

A critique of the bottom-up approach is that it pays insufficient attention to the central policy maker and the policy itself. On the contrary, a critique of the top-down approach is that it does not adequately address “the messiness of policy making, behavioural complexity, goal ambiguity and contradiction” (Schofield, 2001, p. 251). Sabatier (1986) argues the two approaches can be combined. He states a synthesis of the approaches would analyze a variety of actors, both private and public, in order to understand their concerns and strategies, as done in the bottom-up approach. In addition, a synthesis would adopt the top-down approach’s concern with the socio-economic conditions in which the policy implementation takes place and the legal instruments which “constrain behavior” (ibid, p. 39) Overall, implementation theories are useful when analyzing how policies are executed and what influences their outcome.

## 3.2 Labor Market Segmentation Theory

The political economy of a particular context is a large factor contributing to employment opportunities and constraints. Labor market segmentation theory describes “the historical process whereby political economic forces encourage the division of the labor market into separate submarkets, or segments, distinguished by different labor market characteristics and behavioral rules” (Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 1973, p. 359). Labor market segmentation theory suggests



the labor market is primarily divided between the primary and secondary markets. The primary market generally consists of higher wages, skilled jobs, stability, and safe working conditions. The secondary market typically consists of lower wages, unskilled labor, a high turnover rate, little opportunity for advancement, and lack of social protections (ibid). In addition, secondary labor market jobs are often occupied by minorities, women, and youth (Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 1973). These groups of people are overrepresented in the secondary market because historically “society has tolerated implicit and explicit discrimination against these groups” (Gordon, 1972, p. 78). In addition, “[t]hese groups are least likely to identify with more advantaged groups and to develop a class consciousness about their relatively “oppressed” working conditions” (ibid). This makes them the ideal groups for employers to hire in undesirable secondary market positions. As secondary labor market jobs tend to be low skilled, employers are not concerned with maintaining their workers because they are easily replaceable (Harrison and Sum, 1979). The low wages and poor working conditions in the secondary labor market discourages job stability as workers are not attached to their jobs, and therefore discourages unionization. In contrast, the clear promotion structure and rules governing acceptable behavior in the workplace in the primary labor market encourages workers to stay with their employer (ibid). Overall, the theory of labor market segmentation addresses systemic issues that constrict the employment opportunities of groups of people.

Reich, Gordon, and Edwards (1973, p. 360) argue “segmentation arose during the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism” as corporations actively sought to divide the workforce in order to exert more power over them. As firms grew in the 19th century and began bringing together many people with similar roles, the owners of production created divisions between workers through hierarchical job structures and by fostering institutional racism and sexism to prevent worker solidarity (Harrison and Sum, 1979). Therefore, decreasing unionization and increasing employer’s control over their workforce. Reich, Gordon, and Edwards (1973, p. 362) state “[e]mployers quite consciously exploited race, ethnic, and sex antagonisms in order to undercut unionism and break strikes”. They explain that companies hired racial minorities to replace their regular, white, workforce during strikes as a tactic to end strikes. At the same time, certain positions were deemed female positions in order to decrease unionization as women were less likely to lead unionization efforts. This was accompanied by the introduction of hierarchical job structures, which included imposing education and skills qualifications for many roles (ibid).

This limits which opportunities are available to people and reduces the ability to change roles. Essentially, education requirements serve as another way to create divisions in the labor force and prevent worker solidarity (Gordon, 1972).

The aim of these tactics was to limit employees' collective consciousness and power so companies could continue imposing business strategies that were beneficial to them, primarily by keeping their production costs low. While some critics of the theory assume it implies a "nefarious capitalist conspiracy", Mary Stevenson argues that "overt collusion between capitalists is not necessary for labor market segmentation to occur" (1978 cited in Harrison and Sum, 1979, p. 696). She demonstrates that price discipline, the setting of standard prices between different companies, occurred without overt collusion which would have transgressed antitrust laws. She states capitalists realized it was in their own benefit to have stable prices and followed each other's prices in an unspoken agreement. As David M. Gordon (1972, p. 80) states, "it has not always been necessary for capitalists to conspire in order to perceive their common interests and pursue them".

Labor market segmentation theory was later applied to migration studies as a response to criticism that push-pull theories disregarded institutional factors (Castles and Miller, 2009). In relation to migration, the theory suggests that international migration is driven by the demand of labor, both high and low skilled labor. It further states that migration is shaped by "structural factors in modern capitalist economies" such as "the demand for low-skilled labour that is easy to control and exploit (such as undocumented workers)" (ibid, p.25). Therefore, in addition to women, minorities, and youth; irregular migration status impact's one's likelihood of working in the secondary labor market. Overall, labor market segmentation theory states "that people's chances of getting jobs depend not only on their human capital (i.e. their education and skills) but also on gender, race, ethnicity and legal status" (ibid, p. 239). In closing, labor market segmentation theory is useful for understanding the varying characteristics between the primary and secondary labor markets, and the systemic barriers that limit entry in the primary market for certain groups of people.

It is worth noting, the secondary labor market is not synonymous with the informal sector. First and foremost, the informal sector is a vague term with many definitions. Informal sector definitions vary from being based on firm size, the inclusion of unpaid work, contributions to social protections and more (Mondragón-Vélez *et al.*, 2010). The International Labour Organization states a position is informal if the "employment relationship is, in law or in practice,

not subject to labour legislation, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits (advance notice of dismissal, severances of pay, paid annual or sick leave, etc.)” (ILO, 2003, p. 2). Based on this definition of informality and the description of Venezuelans’ informal work in Colombia presented in the data, in this thesis informal jobs are generally considered secondary labor market jobs.

To conclude the theoretical framework, this thesis draws upon implementation theory and labor market segmentation theory to analyze how systemic factors influence Venezuelan migrants’ regularization decisions and economic integration. In particular, implementation theory is useful in analyzing how the execution of PEP resulted in the outcome it did. Whereas labor market segmentation theory is useful in understanding how the political economy influences migrants’ opportunities or lack thereof.

## 4 Methodology

As this thesis examines the reasons for or impediments to regularization and regularization’s impact on economic integration, a qualitative approach was necessary. Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate method as it allows space for teasing out the complex situation. The following chapter will discuss the research design, data gathering methods, sampling, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations.

### 4.1 Research Design

To explore the aim of the impact of regularization policies on economic integration, I decided to do a case study of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Case studies are useful in understanding unique occurrences of the phenomenon to be studied (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). This case is interesting as Colombia’s openness to the Venezuelan migrants is relatively unique on a global scale of how host countries treat forcibly displaced migrants. In addition, a qualitative research design was most appropriate as this thesis aims to understand why migrants did not take advantage of an opportunity to regularize their immigration status and how regularization has impacted migrants’ economic integration. Qualitative research is useful in understanding the “the whys and hows of human behavior, opinion, and experience” as it is effective in obtaining detailed descriptions and observations (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013,

p. 2). Qualitative research is used to identify, explore, describe, or explain a phenomenon. In this research, qualitative methods allowed for identifying barriers to regularization and economic integration, and how this impacts Venezuelan migrants' situation in Colombia overall.

As the research was exploratory, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate means of gathering data. Semi-structured interviews begin with a list of questions prepared by the interviewer; however, they allow for flexibility within the interview. For example, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to change the order of the interview questions which allows for a more natural flow of conversation (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to pose follow up questions when the interviewee provides an interesting or unexpected answer (ibid). I choose to interview professionals working with Venezuelan migrants or on the topic of economic integration. I choose to interview professionals over the migrants themselves due to easier access and ethical considerations that are discussed further below. Professionals could speak to both the experiences of individual migrants they'd met, as well as structural issues they've observed during their work. Their ability to speak to the patterns they witness and structural issues provided for more generalization of the issues. The interview questions were informed by the theory and background literature. The interview guide was structured by beginning with questions related to economic integration in general and then moving on towards the PEP policies.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to semi-structured interviews, I relied upon a number of recently published scholarly articles and reports from reputable NGOs and government agencies to provide further information. Several of these articles and reports received detailed information on RAMV participants and PEP holders from Migración Colombia, the Colombian agency in charge of monitoring and implementing migration control. These articles and reports published data and statistics that were not otherwise public information. In addition, several of the articles and reports conducted surveys that reached many Venezuelan migrants or businesses in Colombia and provided information on the thoughts and perspectives of migrants and potential employers. These articles were used to provide contextual information, as well as information that I compared with the data collected in the semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom as this was the most feasible option. Online interviews are a good option for reaching people in other countries

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for the interview guide

(Bryman, 2012). In the case of this thesis, online interviewing allowed me to easily interview people in various parts of Colombia and one participant outside of Colombia. When conducting online interviews, it is important to consider whether the interviewees are knowledgeable of and comfortable with technology and online communication (Mason, 2017). As I interviewed professionals whose positions require using technology regularly, the use of technology for interviews was not considered a barrier to interviewees' participation. As with in person interviews, the location of an online interview matters. However, with online interviews the interviewer has less influence over where the interviewee is located and less knowledge of the possible distractions around them (Bryman, 2012; Mason, 2017). In addition, differences in time zone, weather, culture, and more influence the interview. While you cannot change these factors, it is important to be aware of them and how they may be influencing your interview. Another challenge of online interviews is that the interviewer receives less feedback on how the interview is proceeding in comparison to in person interviews, as you receive less non-verbal cues (Mason, 2017). Again, this is part of the nature of online interviewing and my strategy was to be aware of these challenges and mitigate them to the greatest extent possible mainly by being flexible with interview times to accommodate interviewees' preferences.

## 4.2 Sampling and Data Analysis

I selected a purposive sampling strategy in order to reach participants who are knowledgeable on the subject from a variety of perspectives. Purposive sampling is particularly useful under limited resources as it allows one to select participants that hold the most information and are the most relevant (Etikan, Abubakar Musa and Sunusi Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling is also beneficial as it allows one to purposely sample a diverse group of professionals (Mason, 2017). As PEP and economic integration deal with a number of topics including regularization, economic opportunity, and social-political context; I wanted to hear from professionals working on the topic from a variety of angles. In the end, the interviewees for this thesis ranged from professionals in the legal field, human rights, humanitarian assistance, economic integration, and labor and employment.

I began the sampling process by reaching out to those in my network to seek connections with professionals working with Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. At the same time, I contacted relevant staff at organizations and agencies I had no personal contact to. I set the qualifications

that the organization or agency was working with Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and on an economic, legal, or humanitarian assistance basis. Therefore, several organizations whose mission is limited and outside the scope were not contacted. For example, organizations whose mission is dedicated to childhood education were not contacted. Once I began conducting interviews, I also relied upon snowballing to reach more participants. Snowballing is an effective strategy when researching difficult to reach groups or when other means of sampling have provided an insufficient number of respondents (Noy, 2008). Snowballing proved to be very useful as many of those I originally contacted did not reply. Receiving introductions to new contacts through snowballing formed a connection and people were more likely to speak with me. In total, I conducted eleven interviews.

When communicating with potential participants I provided them the option to conduct the interview in either English or Spanish. In total, four interviews were conducted in English and seven were conducted in Spanish.<sup>3</sup> As a native English speaker and non-native Spanish speaker, I found the interviews in English slightly easier to conduct. Nonetheless, the Spanish language interviews went smoothly, and interviewees were willing to explain colloquial terms I was unfamiliar with. Conducting interviews in Spanish was vital as it allowed me to reach more interview participants and a greater diversity of participants.

As PEP is a national policy, I did not limit the sampling to a specific region. In the end eight participants were from the capital region, Bogotá. One interviewee is based in Baranquilla, another in Barrancabermeja, and one participant lived outside of Colombia. The participant living outside of Colombia is the manager of a regional program that includes Colombia. I was informed by others at the organization that they would be the most relevant person to speak with. This interviewee provided interesting information on legal aspects and challenges for regularization in Colombia; however, could not speak to topics such as xenophobia in Colombia as they do not live there. Regarding the nationality of the interviewees, two interviewees are Colombian-Venezuelans who experienced moving to Colombia from Venezuela. One interviewee is Venezuelan and previously had PEP. These interviewees brought additional insights by being able to share from their personal experiences, and comparing Venezuelan and Colombian culture. Besides the interviewee living outside of Colombia, the remaining interview participants are Colombian.

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes from the Spanish language interviews used in this thesis are my own translation.

After the completion of each interview, I listened to the recordings and took extensive notes. I chose to take notes from the interviews rather than full transcripts as I was not analyzing the manner of speech, but rather the content of the interviews. Note taking over transcription was also easier in the case of the Spanish language interviews, as transcribing and translating each interview word for word would have been time consuming. For important phrases, direct quotes were written down. The interviews were then analyzed through qualitative content analysis as it allows for both inductive and deductive analysis (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Qualitative content analysis is a systematic method for synthesizing and quantifying data (ibid). This is done by creating categories that describe the data and allow for an organized comparison. As the interview questions were informed by theory and relevant literature, I began the process with an idea of several categories. While working through the interview analysis I determined additional categories. I coded the data manually. After coding several interviews, I was satisfied with the codes created. I then reread the interview notes of the first interviews I coded to confirm I had applied all the codes necessary and consistently. From there, I coded the remaining interviews.

### 4.3 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

Ethical considerations include “questions about risk, harm, privacy, and sensitivity in materials you might access, or methods you might use” (Mason, 2017, p. 90). Principle ethical considerations for this thesis included deciding who to include in the sample and how to conduct the interviews. Mason (2017) suggests considering the ethics of both who you include in your sample, and who you exclude. After deliberating these issues, I chose to conduct interviews with professionals in the field of migration, rather than the migrants themselves. While interviewing migrants would have added another layer of depth to this thesis, I believe it was not worth the potential harm to participants. Bryman (2012, p. 135) states “[h]arm can entail a number of facets: physical harm; harm to participants’ development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and ‘inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts’”. I was concerned speaking to irregular migrants could cause them stress or retraumatization. Some argue excluding vulnerable populations from research to minimize risk to the population results in silencing them (Israel, 2015, p. 127). This is a valid concern, however, speaking to people who have experienced trauma carries a risk of retraumatization (ibid). As a master’s student without psychological training nor partnership with mental health professionals in Colombia, I believe the risk of retraumatization to a vulnerable

group, such as migrants who lack legal status, is great. Therefore, I decided it was more appropriate to interview professionals who are familiar with the situation, than the migrants themselves.

Another important ethical consideration concerns how to gain informed consent from research participants (Mason, 2017). After introductions during the interviews, interview participants were informed that the content of the interview was for the sole purpose of this thesis; they have the right to not answer any question they choose or end the interview at any point; and their identity would be kept as anonymous as possible. The terms of anonymity included not mentioning the names of participants or the organization they work for. Please note, throughout the analysis interview participants are identified by pseudonyms. Participants were then asked if they had any questions. If they had no questions, I asked participants to provide verbal consent if they agreed to the aforementioned terms. Verbal consent was also obtained to record the conversations with the guarantee that recordings would be deleted at the end of the thesis process. Verbal consent was sought over written consent to make the process as simple and quick as possible for participants. Additionally, I believed verbal consent was sufficient as the majority of professionals interviewed have previously participated in research, either as a researcher or participant, and were familiar with the nature of qualitative interviews.

Positionality is another aspect that is of importance to social science research. Positionality is often described through the insider - outsider continuum, where an insider is described as someone with familiarity or intimate knowledge of the topic or context, and vice versa for the outsider. A researcher can begin to identify their positionality by assessing their relation to the subject, the research participants, and the research context (Holmes, 2020). While I had previous knowledge of and experience with migration and integration, in this particular context I recognize I lean more towards outsider. Several interview participants were intrigued that an “outsider” was interested in the topic and asked what inspired me to do this research. Though I was perceived as an outsider, all interviewees were open and willing to share their insights. During the research, I was aware of my limited knowledge of Colombian culture and social context and used the interviews as an opportunity to learn more in relation to how this impacts regularization and economic integration.



## 4.4 Limitations

One limitation of this study is the small sample size. I would have liked to interview more professionals; however, due to limited time this was not possible. I am pleased I was able to speak to the diverse group of professionals I did, as it provided information beyond what was available from secondary sources. In addition, it is recognized that qualitative studies generally have smaller sample sizes as they do not aim to make statistically significant generalizations (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). Furthermore, the final few interviews did not provide new information. Therefore, I believe I received enough details from the interviews to identify the main issues and challenges of the situation.

Another limitation stemmed from the challenge of connecting with professionals who had been in Colombia and working in this field when PEP was enacted. A professional contact informed me that there is a lot of turnover in these organizations, with some staff moving from one country to another, or to different positions within the same organization. While PEP was a recent policy, enacted from 2017 through 2020, I was surprised by the difficulty in connecting with staff who were working in the field during that time. As a result, a few of the interview participants began their roles in the later stages of PEP or after the program was completed and could not answer questions specific to the RAMV-PEP. These interviews were still beneficial, particularly in describing the challenges of economic integration for Venezuelan migrants and the context in Colombia. However, it limited the number of interviewees who could answer certain questions.

## 5 Analysis

While my conclusions to the research questions are intertwined to a certain extent, I will begin by answering the first research question, *why did a significant number of Venezuelans who were eligible for RAMV-PEP, not apply for it?* I will then address the second research question, *to what extent has PEP facilitated the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia?* I have selected this order as the second question's answer is impacted by the regularization processes of PEP. Understanding who did not participate in the PEP regularization processes helps understand the economic integration of the Venezuelan migrants. Information

from relevant publications is interwoven with the data from the interviews to provide a fuller portrayal of the situation.

## 5.1 Regularization: Challenges and Choices

The following chapter will address the regularization of Venezuelan migrants and will focus primarily on the RAMV-PEP. This round of PEP was distinct as it allowed thousands of Venezuelans who had entered Colombia irregularly to transition to regular status. Additionally, this round of PEP benefited the most people; it concluded in the regularization of status of 281,770 migrants (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 120). An eligibility requirement of the RAMV-PEP was having participated in the RAMV census. Of key interest is that while 89 percent of the RAMV census participants stated they plan to remain in Colombia long term, only 64 percent of the census respondents actually applied for the RAMV-PEP (Bahar, Ibáñez and Roza, 2021, pp. 4–5). This section of the analysis explores what could have caused this discrepancy. The interviews presented factors related to the implementation of PEP to be the greatest factors affecting people’s decision and/or ability to apply for PEP. More specifically, the interviews revealed migrant’s lacked knowledge of the processes involved in regularization. Interviewees also mentioned the priority of meeting basic needs over participating in regularization procedures and a disinterest in regularization as impacting migrants’ decision and/or ability to apply for PEP.

### 5.1.1 Implementation of RAMV-PEP: A Top-Down Perspective

#### 5.1.1.1 Legal Status of Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia

By choosing to provide Venezuelan migrants status through several PEP policies over other means of legal protection, implementers and beneficiaries were faced with an ad hoc strategy which was difficult to discern. UNHCR, the United Nations agency that deals with refugees and displaced people, was created after the Second World War to assist displaced Europeans. In recognition of the complexity of conflict and forced displacement which can result in the displacement of people who do not meet the legal definition of a refugee, UNHCR has since expanded its original mandate to include “people who are forcibly displaced and in ‘refugee-like situations’” (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 116). The crisis in Venezuela is one of these unclear

situations and there is a debate as to whether those fleeing should be considered refugees according to the 1951 Convention. Nonetheless by the end of 2020, out of the millions of Venezuelans in Colombia, only 771 were legally recognized as refugees (Del Real, 2022, p. 6).

In addition to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, several Latin American countries, including Colombia, signed the non-binding Cartagena Declaration in 1984. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration defines “a refugee as someone who was fleeing their country for reasons of ‘generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order’” (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 116). Essentially, the Cartagena Declaration expanded the definition of a refugee in the region to address those fleeing conflict and violence after recognition that the 1951 Convention on Refugees definition was not sufficient for the types of displacement occurring in the region (‘Summary Conclusions on the interpretation of the extended refugee definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration’, 2014). Despite arguments that many displaced Venezuelans should be considered refugees under the 1951 Convention and that even more should be considered refugees under the Cartagena Declaration, the government of Colombia chose to introduce new protection measures (Selee and Bolter, 2022).

Selee and Bolter (2022) argue that Colombia chose to implement temporary protections for Venezuelans because of a weak asylum system and political concerns. First, they explain that Colombia’s asylum system was not equipped to handle a large volume of applications. Typically, asylum procedures require reviewing each individual application, necessitating the time and resources to do so. From the thesis interviews, Joaquín shared this view and expressed that the Colombian government was unprepared for the amount and type of migration it received from Venezuela. He stated Venezuelan migrants are distinct from people immigrating for purely economic reasons. As Joaquín summarized, this is a humanitarian crisis and Colombia did not have adequate systems in place to manage it. Furthermore, Selee and Bolter (2022) explain that while Colombia could have granted asylum on a mass scale, this may have created political issues. Colombia is still recovering from an internal conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The conflict ended with the 2016 Peace Accords; however, millions of Colombians remain internally displaced as a result of the conflict (ibid). They state that as refugee status grants specific rights and benefits, providing asylum to Venezuelans on a massive scale could have upset displaced Colombians who may have felt their needs were being overlooked. Due to these

constraints, Selee and Bolter reason Colombia chose to create temporary protected statuses in the form of PEP. In addition, they explain that PEP integrates Venezuelan migrants into the existing Colombian healthcare, education, and employment systems. This differs from many other programs for refugees which provide services targeted for refugees (ibid).

Commenting on the multiple rounds of PEP during a thesis interview, Daniela stated that it felt like the national government lacked a long-term strategy. There were seven versions of PEP, each with their own requirements, and implemented in a short time frame. Daniela commented that this created confusion for the general population. The government could have created a longer-term permit from the beginning of the crisis. However, they likely chose to create shorter term permits for the same reasons as above: a lack of capacity and political concerns. From a top-down implementation perspective, the ad hoc approach to the migrant situation seems to have made it difficult for implementers and the beneficiaries to comprehend the various PEP policies. The ever-changing policies created challenges for implementing officials who were aiming to communicate the policy's objectives and procedures with the migrants. Therefore, resulting in the migrants' lack of knowledge on the PEP policies and processes which is explained in further detail in the remainder of this chapter.

#### 5.1.1.2 Implementation of RAMV Census

As eligibility for the RAMV-PEP was dependent on having participated in the RAMV census, it is important to recognize a few of the limitations of the RAMV that impacted who participated. These challenges are best viewed through a top-down approach to implementation. Based on Mazmanian and Sabatier's framework, the challenges can be classified as issues in causal theory and the commitment and skill of the implementing officials. The first issue is that the census was conducted in person and only about 35 percent of municipalities had registration points (Bahar, Ibáñez and Rozo, 2021, p. 6). The registration points were mainly along the Colombian-Venezuelan border and in areas with a large concentration of migrants. Venezuelan migrants in rural areas or the Western part of Colombia were less likely to participate due to proximity of registration points. Secondly, registration in the RAMV required proof of Venezuelan citizenship. Due to the political economic crisis in Venezuela, it has become a challenge to obtain an official ID and some migrants lack any form of identification (ibid, p. 4).

Thirdly, as brought up by most interviewees, migrants' distrust of the RAMV process or the government in general led to migrants deciding not to participate in the census. Importantly,

when the RAMV was conducted there was no clear benefit to participating. The census was voluntary and the eligibility for RAMV-PEP was not announced until after the RAMV was concluded (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 119). The announcement to include irregular migrants registered in the RAMV in PEP came from President Manuel Santos just days before he left office in July 2018 (Bahar, Ibáñez and Rozo, 2021, p. 2). The causal theory that migrants would be interested in regularization status is not inherently wrong; however, the assumption that migrants would be interested and willing to participate in a census when there was no clear advantage to them, is debatable. As several interviewees explained, migrants were worried the information they provided the government during the census could be used to deport them or would be shared with the Venezuelan government. Isabel shared that even organizations assisting migrants had some level of distrust in the RAMV as the benefit of the census to migrants was unclear at the time. Organizations had to decide whether or not to promote the process to the migrants they work with. Joaquín also shared that at the beginning of the RAMV process, migration police were present at the registration points. He believed this impacted people's fear of the process. He clarified, the government later realized this was not the best method of conducting the census and worked with UNHCR, IOM, and NGOs to readjust their strategy. A few surveys have since been conducted with migrants who had and had not registered in the RAMV. While fear of potential consequences prevented some from registering, participants of a survey by Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 56) stated this as their reason for not participating in the census only 6.6 percent of the time. Similarly in a survey conducted with regular and irregular Venezuelan migrants by the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), fear of the consequences was one of the least stated reasons for not participating in the RAMV (DANE, 2021, p. 45). However, those who are fearful of providing information to the government via a census may also be afraid to provide their details for a survey. Therefore, it is possible such surveys underrepresent the amount of fear and hesitation migrants had around the RAMV.

The fourth limitation of the RAMV, mentioned by Joaquín, is that some migrants did not believe it was worth losing a day of work to register in the census; again, because the benefit of participating in the RAMV was unclear to migrants at the time. If the full purpose of the census had been clear from the beginning, it is possible more migrants would have made it a priority to participate even if that required taking time off work. In the Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 56) survey,

14.57 percent of participants cited “was working” as the reason for not registering. The survey by DANE (2021, p. 45) found inability to register in RAMV due to work to be the second most cited reason of those who were in Colombia. However, it was cited far less than not knowing about the RAMV at the time.

Finally, the migrants’ lack of knowledge on the RAMV process demonstrates issues in the implementing officials’ abilities to effectively communicate their plans and the policy objective with the intended beneficiaries. Liliana shared that she learned of the RAMV through a migrant benefiting from her organization’s services. If not all organizations whose mission it is to assist migrants were informed of the census, one can assume migrants lacked information as well. In both the surveys conducted by Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 56) and DANE (2021, p. 45), not knowing about the RAMV was the most common reason for not registering. No interviewees mentioned migrants having a complete lack of knowledge of the census; however, this could be because migrants receiving services from the organizations the interviewees work for were more likely to learn of the RAMV via their connection to the organization. That said, Carlos explained that even of those who were aware of the RAMV’s existence, there remained confusion as to how to participate in the process and where the registration points were located.

In all, several interviewees mentioned the first issues of the RAMV-PEP began during the RAMV census stage. They discussed how migrants’ lack of trust of the government and lack of knowledge of the RAMV led to underrepresentation of irregular Venezuelans in the census. As stated above, these challenges are best described through a top-down implementation approach. The political decision to only announce the benefit associated with the RAMV after its completion was likely made to prevent a large inflow of new migrants. However, it made for a poor causal theory as with an unclear benefit to participation, migrants opted out of the voluntary census. Alternately, the ineffective communication with migrants appears to be driven by administrative and technical challenges that resulted in a struggle to have accurate information about the census and the process communicated to those they were aiming to reach. The RAMV “was advertised on social media, in local newspapers, and through local refugee organizations” (Ibáñez *et al.*, 2022, p. 11). However, according to information from the aforementioned surveys, this campaign failed to reach a number of Venezuelan migrants. Overall, these factors led to an inaccurate census. Furthermore, those who did not participate in the census were later unable to

participate in the RAMV-PEP and their employment options remained limited to the informal labor market.

#### 5.1.1.3 Migrants' Lack of Knowledge of RAMV-PEP

When the RAMV-PEP was implemented after the completion of the census, interviewees identified several factors they believe impacted its application rate. These factors are migrants lacking the necessary documents to participate in regularization, challenges accessing the technology required to complete the application, and the spread of misinformation. Within these factors there is a common thread that migrants' lacked knowledge of the RAMV-PEP application process.

Meeting the documentation requirements for regularization was the most frequently mentioned challenge to regularization processes made by interviewees. Due to the political economic crisis in Venezuela, obtaining official documents, such as passports, has become difficult and expensive. Furthermore, Isabel explained that some migrants' Venezuelan national identity cards have physically deteriorated. She explained the Venezuelan national identity card is printed on paper and then laminated in plastic, as opposed to being printed on a hard plastic. When these documents are wet, which can easily occur when one is fleeing Venezuela on foot, the documents can be ruined. Therefore, each time a new regularization policy was enacted, including RAMV-PEP, there were migrants who lacked the required documents to prove their Venezuelan nationality and complete the regularization process. Venezuelan migrants were asked to provide proof of Venezuelan nationality when registering in the RAMV census. Those who lacked proof of their Venezuelan nationality were ineligible from participating in the RAMV census. Once again, those who did not, or could not, participate in the RAMV census, were unable to participate in the RAMV-PEP later on.

In addition to proving one's Venezuelan nationality, each round of PEP was only open to migrants who were physically present in Colombia during a certain period of time. Once again, proving their physical presence in Colombia could be difficult, particularly with informal living arrangements that are not established with a contract. While the Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 56) survey has a low response rate from RAMV registered migrants who did *not* apply for RAMV-PEP, it is interesting that the two most frequently cited reasons for not applying for RAMV-PEP were having lost their RAMV registration and lack of a passport. Those who lost their RAMV

registration may have not considered the document important when they received it as there was no indication at the time that it would be necessary to have in the future. Once again, this relates to a poor causal theory. Secondly, while migrants could prove their Venezuelan nationality through a variety of documents, those citing a lack of a passport may have been unaware that other forms of proof of nationality were accepted. This further emphasizes the aforementioned lack of knowledge migrants had on the process. The interviews and reports demonstrate that the lack of proper documents and lack of knowledge about required documents, was a barrier to regularization through RAMV-PEP.

Access to technology is another barrier in PEP regularization processes and one interviewee felt was not sufficiently mitigated during the implementation process. In order to apply for RAMV-PEP, migrants needed to complete an application online. Andrés and Daniela raised concerns that migrants without access to the internet are not being included in regularization procedures. Lack of access to the internet can be as simple as living in a rural area with poor internet connection, explained Andrés. He also expressed that a migrant may have access, but if they have no knowledge of using a computer or smartphone, how can they be expected to complete this application online? Bahar, Ibáñez and Rozo (2021) also noted lack of internet access as a barrier to participation in regularization processes. They provide the example of migrants who were in transit from one location to another, or who were homeless, as likely having greater difficulties accessing the internet for the RAMV-PEP application.

Daniela shared that technology was also observed as a challenge for migrants with smartphones, as having access to a speedy and stable internet connection can be a challenge. Completing the application took time as there were many questions that needed to be answered for each family member. Therefore, the lack of a stable internet connection could make the process difficult to complete. Joaquín shared that there were offices and organizations that could provide assistance during the application process, but one needed to know where to go and such information was not always clear. Yet again, the lack of knowledge migrants had on the process was a result of the implementation process and impacted who applied for the RAMV-PEP. In the Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 56) survey, 3.23 percent of respondents replied that lack of access to the internet was the reason they did not apply for RAMV-PEP. Again, the number of respondents to the Ibáñez et al. survey who were in the RAMV but did *not* apply for RAMV-PEP was very small. That access to the internet was mentioned as a barrier validates the information presented



by the interviewees, however to what extent this was a barrier for migrants is difficult to assess with the available information.

The final implementation challenge with RAMV-PEP concerns misinformation and fraud. Rumors and scams around the PEP regularization procedures were mentioned by several of the interviewees. Isabel stated there is a great deal of misinformation on regularization processes circulating in the migrant community. She shared that for PEP and other forms of regularization, there are rumors that you have to pay to regularize your status. Other rumors circulated that partaking in these processes would lead to deportation, which further spread fear in the community. In addition to these rumors, Isabel and Daniela identified an issue with scams. Scammers provide migrants assistance filling out the application for a fee. If the migrant does not pay the fee, the scammer will withhold any further information on their application which prevents them from continuing the process or receiving their PEP document. Leo stated that accurate information on PEP regularization was available through government outlets; however, he acknowledged that misinformation spread within migrant networks and on social media. Leo provided the example of social leaders who claim to be working with NGOs or UN agencies, who then share false information. The prevalence of misinformation again alludes to an unsuccessful information campaign by PEP implementers.

### 5.1.2 Priority of Basic Needs and Disinterest in Regularization

Implementation theory, and particularly the top-down approach, highlighted many of the challenges with RAMV-PEP regularization. However, implementation theory does not account for two themes mentioned by interviewees, the prioritization of meeting basic needs and a disinterest in regularization.

A few interviewees mentioned that migrants who were working informally and struggling to earn enough each day to survive did not have the time to dedicate to regularization procedures. Daniela shared that migrants with less financial resources often live in a *pagado diario*, this is a room they rent which must be paid daily. As RAMV required physically visiting a registration point, this often meant not working for a day and losing any potential income otherwise earned. Those desiring or requiring assistance to complete the RAMV-PEP application would most often also need to take time off of work to do so. In discussing some migrants' priorities to meet their basic needs, Joaquín shared how he was constantly checking for updates from Migración

Colombia because it is his job, however “[migrants] are working to survive, their priorities are to survive, to subsist, not to be sitting at a computer all the day”. He explained these regularization processes take time and effort on the part of the migrant, and how those prioritizing meeting basic needs may miss out on regularization.

Finally, interviewees highlighted that some migrants did not see the benefit of applying for regular status. These appear to be migrants who had been living in Colombia for some time and were managing; therefore, they did not see the benefit of having a regular status. Andrés also explained that some migrants equated PEP with a work permit. Therefore, some who were already working, although informally, saw no need to acquire PEP. The interviewees who mentioned disinterest in regularization agreed that this seemed to be a minority of migrants' reasons for not applying for regular status; however, it was a narrative they heard from migrants. In their study, Ibáñez et al. (2022, p. 12-13) found those who participated in the RAMV and did *not* apply for RAMV-PEP had stronger social networks than those who *did* apply for RAMV-PEP. They concluded that those with strong social networks felt sufficiently supported, and therefore felt they did not need RAMV-PEP. Interestingly, the lack of interest in regularization functions in an opposite way as the priority of basic needs. Those struggling to meet basic needs may have been interested in regularization, but felt they did not have the time to dedicate to it. While those uninterested in regularization seem to have had their needs met and felt they were in a sufficiently stable situation, so they did not identify a benefit in regularization.

### 5.1.3 Impediments to Regularization Outcomes

The previous section on regularization examined why a number of migrants who were eligible for the RAMV-PEP did not apply for it in order to gain understanding of migrant's perception of PEP and how that may impact economic integration. It should be acknowledged that one possible reason as to why migrants did not apply to the RAMV-PEP is that they could have left Colombia for other states in Latin America or elsewhere. In their study, Ibáñez et al. (2022) concluded that many migrants registered in the RAMV, who did not apply for RAMV-PEP, moved due to their low response rate in the survey conducted. However, I am not satisfied this represents the entire discrepancy between those who stated they were interested in staying in Colombia long term in the RAMV and those who applied for RAMV-PEP.

The data revealed implementation challenges to be the greatest factor affecting who applied for RAMV-PEP. However, implementation theory failed to account for migrants' prioritization of basic needs and disinterest in regularization which were also noted as impacting regularization efforts by interviewees. A recurring theme throughout the aforementioned implementation challenges was migrants' lack of knowledge of regularization processes. This included migrants' complete lack of awareness of the RAMV, as well as a lack of knowledge on how to complete the RAMV-PEP, where to go for assistance, and that the application was free of charge. Information was clearly posted on government websites and government social media accounts; however, as Daniela noted, it appears these channels of communication are not popular with migrants. The DANE (2021, p. 54) survey asked migrants where they receive information on citizenship, residency, and the new regularization permit. The most common responses were, from social media (60.4%), relatives (27.6%), television (23.1%), and Venezuelan friends (15.2 %). The spread of inaccurate information among social media, relatives, and friends is easy to imagine if information was shared in these circles without being checked against official government communications. Again, these issues in migrants' lack of knowledge on PEP are best viewed under a top-down approach to implementation studies with issues arising from the implementing officials' ability to connect with the intended beneficiaries.

Del Real (2022) discovered similar results concerning migrants' lack of knowledge around PEP regularization. In her study on liminal legality, she found that most irregular migrants were either unaware of or were unable to participate in the RAMV-PEP. For example, some of the irregular interview participants were unaware that entering Colombia with a Border Mobility Card (an official document that allows temporary entry into Colombia) disqualifies them from eligibility in most rounds of PEP. In addition, Del Real found that PEP's liminal legality nature results in migrants with PEP feeling secure in their position, while under further examination many migrants lack knowledge on the legal options available and procedures required to maintain a regular status through temporary regularization procedures. These findings demonstrate migrants' lack of knowledge on PEP policies and procedures. As interviewees in the thesis interviews stated, accurate information was always available through government statements and information channels. However, it appears this information did not always reach the migrants. Understanding that most eligible migrants who did not apply for RAMV-PEP did not do so due to issues in implementation, rather than choosing not to for reasons outside of capability, is important. Those

who remained irregular after the RAMV-PEP would remain limited to positions in the informal labor market. Overall, the interviews demonstrated that most migrants are interested in regularization. Regularization benefits migrants by providing them the ability to legally reside in Colombia and additionally provides access to the formal labor market. As presented by several reports, only a small percentage of those with PEP work in the formal labor market. The remainder of the analysis addresses the barriers to formal employment and economic integration.

## 5.2 Labor Market Access and Economic Integration

The following section utilizes implementation theory and labor market segmentation theory in order to illuminate the barriers to the migrants' economic integration. Several interviewees mentioned the lack of a regular status as the number one barrier to economic integration, as without a regular status the types of employment and programs available to migrants are severely limited. As migrants keep arriving, each regularization process benefits some, but leaves out others, particularly those who arrive after the regularization policy announcement. According to the interviews, the inability to obtain a regular status exposes one to vulnerable employment positions characterized by lower salaries, not being paid what they are owed, or long work days that violate Colombian labor laws. However, to state the obvious, the ability to work formally through policies such as PEP does not guarantee employment. Of Venezuelan migrants with PEP, only a small percentage work in the formal labor market. The following section of the analysis uncovers barriers to formal employment and economic integration in order to address the question, *to what extent has PEP facilitated the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia?*

### 5.2.1 Implementation of PEP: A Bottom-Up Perspective

While the implementation challenges concerning PEP as a regularization process are best understood through a top-down approach, understanding implementation of PEP as it relates to economic integration is best viewed through the bottom-up approach. The many demands placed on local implementers' time and resources resulted in inconsistent acceptance of PEP documentation and policy implementation. The bottom-up approach maintains that local actors have a great deal of influence in how policy is enacted, and therefore shapes the policy

outcomes. The bottom-up approach is useful for understanding how diverse actors, including both public and private actors, influence the implementation of public policy.

While Colombian law states PEP guarantees access to certain rights and services, in practice, accessing these has been a challenge. Camilia stated, “there is a kind of disarticulation between the effort made by the Colombian state and the response of more local institutions”. Carlos explained that while most countries' migration policies are handled by the Ministry of the Interior, in Colombia, migration policy is handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to him, this distinction, as well as Colombia’s history as a country of emigration, resulted in most other ministries lacking migration related policies before the arrival of Venezuelan migrants. Therefore, Carlos explained, when Venezuelan migrants began arriving in large numbers in 2015, many of the ministries were ill prepared to handle the influx of migrants. The term, street-level bureaucrats, is used to describe those who deliver public services and influence policy based on how they implement it. From a bottom-up approach, the lack of preparedness and new demands placed on street-level bureaucrats resulted in distinct coping strategies and decisions which in turn influenced the policy outcome. In the case of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, migrants encounter a number of bureaucratic barriers at the local level. Daniela explained that sometimes migrants are told they need to be registered in one system before they can access services in another system, this leads to confusion and delays in accessing services. As another example, while migrants with PEP are eligible for free courses and training programs at the Colombian National Training Service, the online portal where people register for courses was not updated to accept PEP in the system (Farné and Ríos, 2022). Therefore, migrants with PEP were de facto unable to register and participate.

Daniela shared that in other cases the employees at the public institutions were misinformed and falsely stated a migrant is ineligible for a service. Isabel and Daniela shared that these procedural confusions create challenges for accessing public services. Andrés described this as the result of the state’s failure to properly train all state employees. A frequently mentioned example of the disconnect between what policies state and local implementation was the case of education for children. The Colombian government has stated that all children, regardless of migration status, have a right to education. However, several interviewees shared that some schools lack the capacity to accept new students or do not understand their obligations, and have been turning families away. Arranging childcare is key to their parents’ ability to

participate in the formal labor market, particularly for women as will be explained further in the section Barriers Rooted in Social Identities. To summarize, the bottom-up approach and the concept of street-level bureaucrats is applicable to the situation of migration policy implementation in Colombia. Due to a lack of migration policies before the Venezuelan migrant crisis, many public institutions were unprepared to deal with it. This led to confusion among street-level bureaucrats and inconsistent implementation.

Similarly to how street-level bureaucrats created their own strategies as they attempted to manage multiple demands with limited resources and therefore shaped the policy outcome, employers and financial institutions influenced implementation through lack of information on PEP or the reluctance to accept PEP. On the part of employers, Liliana shared that many do not understand what paperwork is required to hire Venezuelan migrants, how to determine if a migrant is legally allowed to work, and what the process is for hiring migrants with PEP. Small and medium enterprises are responsible for 67 percent of Colombian employment (OECD, 2020, p. 4). Furthermore, micro enterprises, defined as companies with less than 10 employees, constitute 92.7 percent of the enterprises in Colombia (ibid). As Carlos explained, many small and medium enterprises in Colombia do not have a human resources team or the time available to dedicate to learning about hiring Venezuelans legally. Therefore, it is easier for them to hire a Colombian whose documentation they are used to processing and they already understand. A survey of Colombian businesses found the greatest barrier to Venezuelan migrants' integration in Colombian companies was the lack of institutional articulation (USAID *et al.*, 2021, pp. 11–12). By institutional articulation, the report means employers felt local institutions were not carrying out PEP implementation in a coordinated manner with the central government. As well as that employers lack information on the migration phenomenon as it relates to business. Businesses requested more information from government authorities on channels for hiring Venezuelan migrants and information about the Venezuelan population including their educational experiences and capacities (ibid). According to the report there appears to be willingness to hire Venezuelan migrants; however, private institutions lack the knowledge of how to do so and how migrants skills can be incorporated into their business.

Financial institutions were also frequently mentioned as inconsistently implementing PEP policy and being reluctant to accept PEP documentation. Government decrees clearly state PEP is an acceptable form of identification for financial institutions; however, Joaquín stated there

seems to be a lack of willingness to accept it. Migrants are regularly told they need another form of identification along with PEP in order to open a bank account, despite statements to the contrary from government agencies including Migración Colombia and the Financial Superintendency of Colombia. Joaquín highlighted, “it is also dependent on the official who attends you, sometimes in general a bank said no, but it turns out that you arrived at the bank and the person who attended you was understanding. I think it has to do a lot with attitudes and behaviors, because there was no lack of information”. The difficulties accessing financial institutions impacts economic integration as it complicates salary payments in the formal labor market and access to loans for entrepreneurial activity. Mateo stated, “If the government declares something, and this goes for all sectors in the country, with banks and with private companies, the government has to guarantee these policies and guarantee access for these people. That is what is missing”. In conclusion, while street-level bureaucrats refer specifically to those providing public services, a very similar phenomenon was observed among the employees of private institutions. Due to coping with the new demands of implementing PEP and related migration policies, private institutions inconsistently executed policy. PEP is clearly articulated by the government as a valid form of identity for any activity requiring identification within Colombia. However, the implementation by both public servants and those at private institutions has limited the economic integration of migrants with PEP.

## 5.2.2 A Segmented Labor Market

This section addresses a variety of barriers Venezuelan migrants encounter in economic integration through the lens of a segmented labor market. It begins by addressing the Colombian context and impact of the large informal economy on migrants’ employment options. Next, it describes barriers to education and work experience validation. Then it describes how several subgroups of migrants encounter barriers related to their social identity. Finally, social tensions and cultural differences are examined.

### 5.2.2.1 Impact of the Informal Economy

Colombia has a large informal economy which impacts migrants’ ability to find employment. The large informal economy facilitates access to employment for those who lack the ability to work legally. There are only a few short-term refugee camps in Colombia

(*INFOBAE*, 2017). The majority of Venezuelan migrants have settled alongside Colombians across the country (*ibid*). When displaced people live among the local population and there is a large informal economy, granting displaced people work permits is expected to have little impact as the migrants are often already employed informally (Clemens, Huang and Graham, 2018; Selee and Bolter, 2022). Conversely, a large informal economy creates challenges for those who seek formal employment. About 48 to 63 percent of Colombians work informally (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 121). Migrants in Colombia work informally at a higher rate than Colombian workers. In 2018, it was estimated that “77 per cent of employed Venezuelans in Colombia were working informally, while 48 per cent of the native born were” (*ibid*, p.125). Camila addressed the topic of a large informal economy and stated it is already difficult for university educated Colombians to find a well-paid position. Therefore, migrants searching for formal employment are dealing with many of the same issues as Colombians. However, she added, “I think there is a structural problem in the country, cultural as well, that makes it more difficult for migrants”. The cultural challenges will be addressed further in the section Social Tensions and Cultural Differences.

In interview discussions regarding whether Venezuelan migrants desire to work formally, there was understandably a variety of opinions. Some migrants earn more working informally than they would working a formal job that pays minimum wage. Mateo shared a story of a migrant working informally who earns twice the minimum wage cleaning car windows. The migrant has been clearing car windows in the same location for years, has become familiar in the area, and attracts many customers. While this example may be an exception, it demonstrates that it is possible to earn more from working informally. In addition, Liliana shared that some migrants state they prefer to work informally as it allows them to be in control of their schedule, which is especially appreciated by those with childcare responsibilities. While labor market segmentation is often used to describe the barriers to mobility between jobs and the reinforcement of class structures, Molano, Espinel, and Arias (2020) relied on the theory to hypothesize Venezuelan migrants are choosing to remain in informal positions due to the flexibility it provides them. They suggest that “due to the pressure to satisfy basic needs in the short-run, Venezuelan workers have accepted payments and working conditions that Colombians with similar skills have not taken” (*ibid*, p.118). For migrants who balance earning an income with childcare responsibilities or those who have not yet arrived at their final destination; the



flexibility and ease with which they may enter and leave the secondary labor market may be beneficial. Working informally can be precarious as the worker receives no social protection benefits and the employer has a distinct power advantage over the employee. However, some may prefer working informally due to the flexibility and control over their employment situation it provides.

Furthermore, there are those who would rather work informally and keep everything they earn, than work formally and have to pay taxes, shared Isabel. Additionally, much in the same way that losing a day of work to participate in regularization procedures can impact whether a migrant has a place to sleep that night, forgoing work to increase one's capacities is not always an option. For migrants who are struggling financially, every cent matters. Carlos and Liliana explained that while there are free formation programs available to regular migrants, not all can afford to be unemployed for the duration of a formation program. Formation programs can last between two and twelve months, and some would be unable to meet their basic needs if they forgo employment during that time. Valentina emphasized migrants' remaining basic needs and stated, "there is this myth that most Venezuelan migrants have coped with everything they should cope with by now and like they should have been integrated, and I think that is a big myth. There are a lot of remaining basic needs". Generally, Venezuelans live further below the poverty line than Colombians. On average Venezuelan households earn 455.000 pesos (about 111 USD) per month per capita, while Colombian households earn 767.000 pesos (about 187 USD) per month per capita (Fundación ANDI *et al.*, 2020, p. 28). Furthermore, the majority of Venezuelans earn less than the minimum monthly wage (*ibid*).

A few interviewees shared that highly educated Venezuelan migrants were those that most often desire and seek out formal employment. They desire the stability, benefits, and higher salary they were accustomed to in Venezuela. Unfortunately, there are challenges with education and work experience validation that hinder professional Venezuelans ability to secure formal employment of the same type they were accustomed to. Overall, Venezuelan migrants' decisions and opportunities to work formally or informally are complicated. There are some who choose to work informally, despite their work being classified as unstable because the flexibility suits their needs. At the same time, there are many whose employment options are limited to the informal market. One example is migrants who are struggling to meet basic needs and accept informal jobs because they are easier to access. Those who are struggling financially do not have the time

available to dedicate to increasing their capacities or searching for formal employment. Additional barriers to formal employment are described in the remainder of this chapter.

#### 5.2.2.2 Validation of Work Experience and Educational Credentials

For Venezuelan migrants with regular status and the right to work, one of the greatest barriers to formal employment is the validation of their academic credentials and work experience. Segmented labor market theory describes the historical introduction of education credentials and job hierarchies as a tactic used by employers to create divisions in the workforce, prevent class consciousness between groups, and maintain more control in employer-employee relationships. According to the theory, this contributed to the division between the primary and secondary labor markets and greater barriers in transitioning from a position in the secondary labor market to one in the primary labor market. The DANE (2021, p. 71) survey of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia reported that of survey participants with a technical, university, or postgraduate degree, 92.9 percent had *not* validated their professional degree in Colombia. In regards to validating work experience, Carlos and Elena explained that one challenge is the inability to confirm work experience with previous employers due to the closure of many companies in Venezuela as a result of the economic crisis. Over the last twenty years, 60 percent of Venezuelan private companies have closed and thousands closed due to the economic crisis in recent years (Guanipa D'Erizans, 2019). Similarly, Elena added that those who were self-employed in Venezuela often lack the ability to verify their work experience. The Colombian National Training Service provides a free service for those with regular status that allows people to have their knowledge and competencies certified. Elena explained this decreased the issues concerning validation of work experience, but has not eliminated the issue. She stated that a certification of skills and knowledge is not viewed as the equivalent as a validation of work experience by employers, and whether a certification of skills will be sufficient for a position depends on the industry. Furthermore, she believes the opportunity for certification of skills is not widely known among Colombians or migrants.

In the case of validating educational credentials, the process is long and expensive. It costs about “160 USD for an undergraduate degree and 182 USD for a graduate degree”, and the process can take up to two years (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 125). The Colombian Ministry of Education is making efforts to reduce this burden by updating an online application system and

aiming to reduce the timeframe to eight to nine months, however challenges remain (ibid). The process requires retaining an apostille for their credential documents from the country where the education was acquired (in this case, often Venezuela). Then the documents need to be submitted for validation in Colombia. It is now possible to receive an apostille at the Venezuelan consulate in Colombia. Elena shared that this has eased the requirements to a certain extent, however the cost of the process is still a great barrier. Finally, even after completing all the steps, Colombia may not be able to validate all experience. Thirty percent of those applying for educational credentials verification in 2018 were denied (Selee and Bolter, 2022, p. 125). Camila described her own experience with degree validation in Colombia where after completing the process, only her Bachelor's degree was validated. Her Master's degree and years of work experience were not recognized for various reasons. Carlos described his experience meeting a Venezuelan migrant selling coffee on the street and learning the migrant had fifteen years of experience as an engineer in the petroleum industry in Venezuela. The migrant was unaware of job seeker programs within the Ministry of Labor or how to validate his credentials. In the end, the migrant was able to have his work experience validated, but not his professional degree due to issues with validation on the Venezuelan side of the process. These examples demonstrate the difficulty in having work experience and educational credentials verified.

Furthermore, certain degrees, such as medicine and law, are not viewed equivalently in Colombia. Professionals from those fields who wish to continue in the same type of position would often need to complete university studies in Colombia. Carlos stated the arduous process of degree validation is why many highly educated Venezuelan migrants have left Colombia and continued to states where their credentials are accepted. He stated, the "regulations do not correspond to the needs of the migrants". Carlos provided Chile as an example of a state that is more accommodating to Venezuelan migrants with university and technical degrees. He explained that Chile expedites the validation of foreign degree requests for Venezuelan migrants. In addition, he stated that Chile allows Venezuelan doctors to practice medicine in Chile if they are willing to go to an area in need of medical practitioners. In contrast, Carlos explained that the Colombian medical association has been resistant to allowing Venezuelan doctors to practice as doctors. As a result, Carlos explained, many Venezuelan physicians who remain in Colombia work as nurses. Overall, interviewees shared that many educated migrants in Colombia are overqualified for the positions they hold. The employment limitations for Venezuelan migrants

created by skills and educational requirements are a result of labor market segmentation. In this case, it remains unclear whether rigid workforce qualifications are being used to protect positions in the primary market for Colombian nationals or is rather an effect of established policies in an inflexible system. Either way, the result is a large group of people are pushed towards positions they are overqualified for or towards positions in the informal market.

### 5.2.2.3 Barriers Rooted in Social Identities

Labor market segmentation theory states that minorities, women, young adults, and undocumented migrants are often pushed to positions in the secondary labor market due to discrimination. The interviews revealed that in the case of Venezuelan migrants; women, older migrants, and young adults are more likely to be in secondary labor market positions due to discrimination and policies that create employment barriers.

The majority of interviewees stated female migrants in particular have a difficult time securing employment, both formally and informally. Several of the challenges facing female migrants are challenges they share with Colombian women, while several are particular to Venezuelan migrant women. Several interviewees stated that in both Colombian and Venezuelan culture, family caring responsibilities fall predominantly on women and how this serves as a barrier to employment. A report on the labor dynamics of Venezuelan women in Colombia found 94 percent of Venezuelan women in Colombia report domestic or childcare responsibilities at home, compared to 63 percent of Venezuelan migrant men (Farné and Ríos, 2022, pp. 1–2). Where men and women share these household duties, women spend more than double the amount of time on these duties than their partners (*ibid*). Interviewees explained how this impacts both employers willingness to hire women and the type of employment women can accept. Daniela stated employers are hesitant to hire women, particularly mothers or young women, as they fear women will frequently request time off to care for their children or family members. Family caring responsibilities also limit women's employment options. For single women with children, the cost and arrangement of childcare can be an impediment to their ability to accept employment. Liliana stressed that migrant women who do not have the monetary resources to pay childcare costs before they receive their first paycheck may refuse offers of formal employment as formal jobs typically do not accommodate bringing a child to work with you. Liliana clarified the initial costs associated with starting a job also include ungendered

costs, such as the cost of transportation. However, she emphasized arranging childcare as a particularly large barrier to formal employment for women.

As a result of these factors, interviewees shared that Venezuelan migrant women tend to work informal jobs in the service sector. Interviewees shared that many are waitresses, domestic cleaners, street vendors, or self-employed in the beauty industry. These positions provide them the flexibility to care for their family when necessary. However, Valentina stated that these positions are unstable and increase one's vulnerability to exploitation. She provided the example of migrant women who sell food or other goods on the street. Women who lack the financial resources to buy the product inputs will receive an informal loan from an individual, and organizations have noted how these arrangements can lead to sexual exploitation. Joaquín and Liliana also described the hypersexualization of Venezuelan women as a challenge particular to Venezuelan women. They explained there is a stereotype that many Venezuelan migrant women are sex workers and a stigma associated with this. Liliana stated this affects hiring processes as potential employers do not want to hire someone they assume to be a sex worker for fear this will cause issues within the company. The assumption that Venezuelan women are sex workers also increases their risk of gender-based violence in all types of employment situations (Farné and Ríos, 2022). Overall, Farné and Ríos (2022) found Venezuelan women in Colombia are in more precarious positions, work more hours, earn less, and deal with unfavorable work conditions more than Venezuelan men and Colombian women. Labor market segmentation theorists describe a process where employers deliberately seeded division based on factors including race and gender, as well as academic qualifications, to maintain control over their labor force. In this view, the stigma against Venezuelan women based on their childcare responsibilities and the stereotype that Venezuelan women are sex workers, enables employers to pay Venezuelan women less and provide them with less favorable working conditions.

Besides women, both young adults and older migrants were mentioned as groups facing particular barriers to employment. Older migrants were identified as having a difficult time finding formal employment by Liliana. While labor market segmentation theory does not state older people have difficulties finding work in the primary labor market, in Colombia there is discrimination against hiring older migrants in the formal labor market as a way for employers to maintain control over their labor force. Liliana explained that in order to receive a pension in Colombia, a person must have worked a certain amount of years in the formal labor market and

have contributed to the pension system during these years. To protect workers who are close to retirement and ensure more people reach the required number of years contributing to the pension system, Colombian law has made it more difficult to dismiss people past a certain age if they are missing three years or less to be able to receive a pension (*El Espectador*, 2020). Employees who meet these qualifications cannot be fired without “just cause” and those whose contracts are terminated may contest their termination in the courts (ibid). Liliana explained this leads to discrimination against older migrants in the hiring process in the formal labor market. Employers assume a recent immigrant is lacking many years in the pension system, and are therefore less likely to hire them in an effort to avoid a situation where they cannot fire the employee should they desire to. While the original policy had good intentions of helping those close to retirement secure their pension, an unintended consequence has been discrimination against older migrants attempting to enter the formal labor market.

On the other side of the spectrum, young adults were also mentioned as having difficulties securing employment due to low levels of education which restricts their employment opportunities. Interviewees suggested that younger Venezuelan migrants tend to have lower levels of education and national statistics confirm this to be the case (DANE, 2021, p. 70). Interviewees explained that due to the political economic crisis in Venezuela, many young adults did not complete secondary school or their university studies in Venezuela as they needed to work to provide for themselves and their families. Joaquín explained that in Colombia, primary education consists of grades one through nine and secondary school consists of grades ten and eleven. The minimum amount of education required to enroll in a formation program is completion of secondary school. Formation programs are required for certain positions in construction, restaurants, and bars, for example. Therefore, migrant young adults who have not completed secondary school will not be able to enroll in formation programs and will be barred from certain employment. While there are programs for regular migrants to study at night and finish their secondary education, Daniela noted that from her experience young Venezuelan migrants tend to be a very vulnerable population and they do not see the benefit in finishing their studies. Elena added that while all children, regardless of migration status, are allowed to attend school in Colombia, completion of secondary school is based on an exam and an identity document is required to sit for the exam. Therefore, there are Venezuelan youth who are finishing their schooling in Colombia, but cannot receive their diploma due to a lack of regular

status. Again, they are barred from formation programs and have a more difficult time finding employment. In the end, young Venezuelan migrants encounter challenges securing employment due to qualification requirements that are representative of hierarchical hiring systems in a segmented labor market.

#### 5.2.2.4 Social Tensions and Cultural Differences

When segmented labor market theory was applied to migration studies it was used to explain how migrants, and particularly undocumented migrants, are discriminated against in employment and pushed towards positions in the secondary labor market. This connects with interviewees descriptions of how social tensions and cultural differences between Venezuelans and Colombians are hindering the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants. The first issue is the lack of interaction between Venezuelans and Colombians. Valentina explained that most Venezuelans have settled in urban areas where there is a high concentration of Venezuelans. There are now large neighborhoods where only Venezuelans live. Within their community they are communicative, resourceful, and have developed internal markets. The challenge with these communities, stated Valentina, is how they enforce social tensions between Colombians and Venezuelans and impede integration. While the migrants are very connected to each other, there is a lack of connection to the larger community which could enhance all forms of integration, including economic integration.

Secondly, xenophobia against Venezuelan migrants functions as a barrier to employment and integration. Most interviewees mentioned xenophobia against Venezuelans in Colombia. Valentina described the evolution of xenophobia from her perspective. She stated that at the beginning of the crisis there was a lot of support for the migrants and discourse describing Venezuelans as Colombians' brothers and sisters. When large numbers of Venezuelans began arriving by walking across the border in 2018, the vulnerability of these people was clearer than ever before. She continued by stating that as time goes on there is greater concern over the pressure migrants put on the social system and an increase in discourse connecting security concerns to the increased presence of migrants. Liliana shared a similar narrative and hypothesized that xenophobia was less prevalent at the beginning as people did not anticipate the crisis continuing this for long. Camilia shared her opinion that while xenophobia clearly exists,

in general the opinion of Colombians on regularization processes for Venezuelans seems more positive than negative.

Interviewees connected xenophobia to Venezuelan migrants' difficulties securing employment and their low salaries. The Colombian National Department of Statistics reported that of Venezuelan migrants who reported difficulty securing employment, about 23 percent experienced discrimination based on their nationality as a barrier to employment (Farné and Ríos, 2022, p. 32). Valentina discussed a preference among Colombian employers to employ Colombians. Farné and Ríos (2022) support this view and reported that employers value work experience gained in Colombia more than work experience gained abroad, which discriminates against most immigrants. Isabel described this preference to hire Colombians not as xenophobic, but rather as a patriotism to Colombians. She explained that there are many Colombians dealing with financial hardship, and when an employer has a choice between hiring a Colombian or a Venezuelan, they would prefer to hire a Colombian to help them improve their situation. To Isabel, this is not xenophobia; however, it is discrimination. Valentina shared that while xenophobia creates discrimination against migrants in the hiring process, when migrants are hired, they feel it is because employers can pay them less than Colombian employees. Hiring Venezuelan migrants because they can pay them less needs to be understood as another form of discrimination. Valentina described that she witnessed among Venezuelan migrants an overwhelming acceptance of the fact that they would continue to earn less than Colombian employees. She continued to explain the danger of this becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as she believes employers will continue offering migrants low salaries as long as migrants continue to expect and accept them.

Another source of social tension between Colombians and Venezuelans is competition for aid. Valentina described a clear increase in the presence of international organizations and NGOs in Colombia since the Venezuelan migrant crisis began. However, Colombians have been dealing with internal issues including armed conflict and internal displacement for years. As Colombians who were victims of these issues witness the growing presence of international assistance for the migrants, they may be considering why the migrants receive more benefits and assistance than them. Indeed, this has added to the tensions between Colombians and Venezuelan migrants. Valentina continued by explaining that while the local population has also benefited from the presence of these organizations and the assistance they provide, there is a sense among



Colombians that the Venezuelan migrant crisis is more important than the internal conflict as programs for Venezuelan migrants receive more funding and attention from international donors. Carlos explained that in 2016, job fairs specifically for Venezuelan migrants were organized. Not surprisingly, this sparked dissatisfaction among the Colombian population, as they considered that this put them at a disadvantage in their pursuit of job opportunities. Since then, programs have become more open to include migrants, returned Colombians, and Colombians in need. Nonetheless, due to requirements from international donors, the programs tend to assist Venezuelan migrants more. Furthermore, there continues to be a division in programming and response for internally displaced people and the Venezuelan migrants. For example, Valentina explained that within the humanitarian sector in Colombia there are two separate platforms for coordination for displaced people, one for the Venezuelan migrants and one for internally displaced people. While there are valid reasons for separating the responses, it may also contribute to social tensions as it impacts this perception that Venezuelans receive more assistance at the expense of Colombians.

In addition to social tensions hindering the integration of Venezuelan migrants, several interviewees described cultural differences as a challenge impacting employment opportunities. Camilia explained, “Venezuelan culture is very different, yes they share the same language and many other things with Colombia, but there are differences in how they act”. She continued by describing what she has observed as a lack of understanding between the two groups. She stated, Venezuelans seem uninformed of the history of Colombia’s long internal conflict and its impact on Colombian society today. Meanwhile, Colombians do not understand the state of anarchy now present in Venezuela and how this has eroded social norms. Camilia provided the example that Colombians tend to view Venezuelans as rough and prone to shouting, but these tend to be cultural differences in behavior. A report on the labor inclusion of migrants in Colombia also found cultural differences to be a barrier to labor inclusion. The report states that cultural differences impact hiring selection and can cause tensions within the workplace when a Venezuelan migrant is hired (Fundación ANDI *et al.*, 2020). The report provided the example that some Venezuelan migrants demonstrate characteristics that are viewed as rude, aggressive, or haughty to Colombians and how these cultural differences create issues in the workplace. These cultural misunderstandings contribute to the negative perception of Venezuelans and the reluctance among employers to hire them.

Another cultural barrier to finding formal employment are the differences between the Venezuelan and Colombian labor markets. This has a greater impact on finding positions in the formal labor market. Several interviewees stated that migrants' lack knowledge of the Colombian labor market. They stated migrants are not familiar with the types of employment contracts available in Colombia, which benefits one receives from various types of work contracts, how the pension system functions in Colombia and so on. The aforementioned report also found that many migrants are confused or overwhelmed during the selection process due to lack of knowledge on Colombian labor laws concerning topics such as minimum wage, types of contracts, expected work hours, and the social security system (Fundación ANDI *et al.*, 2020). The lack of understanding of the Colombia labor market creates barriers to securing work in the formal labor market.

Social tensions, xenophobia, and cultural differences have marginalized Venezuelan migrants. This creates barriers to employment and also a reason for differential treatment of Venezuelans compared to Colombian nationals when they are hired. One example of this is that employers are able to pay Venezuelans less than they would Colombians. Xenophobia and social tensions by some employers, limits Venezuelans' opportunities and they become more willing to accept any employment they are offered. Once again, the segmented labor market theory is about divisions within the workforce that prevent unionization, enable employers to keep salaries low, and enable employers to take advantage of other strategies that increase their profits. The divisions between Colombians and Venezuelans that are a result of the context has created separate segments of the population that are treated differently in the workforce. This limits Venezuelan's opportunities and often pushes them towards positions that would be considered secondary labor market jobs.

### 5.2.3 Economic Integration Outcomes of PEP

The regularization of Venezuelan migrants through PEP sought to increase their integration and improve their living conditions through several means, including opening access to the formal labor market. As demonstrated, there are many challenges and barriers to the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and particularly to their inclusion in the formal labor market. PEP is notable as it did provide a regular status and sense of security to many Venezuelans. Furthermore, while most PEP recipients remained working in the informal market, two studies

provide information suggesting PEP facilitated the economic integration of even those who remained working informally (DANE, 2021; Ibáñez *et al.*, 2022). While only 14 percent of those with PEP are working formally (UNHCR, 2020), 52.3 percent of respondents in a national survey stated having PEP has helped them find work (DANE, 2021, p. 50). This implies that employers may be more willing to hire migrants with PEP, even if they plan to informally hire the migrant. Ibáñez *et al.* (2022) found that those with PEP experienced increased consumption, increased income, improved mental and physical health, increased rates of registration in Colombian social services, and increased participation in financial systems compared to irregular Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. As other studies have concluded, Ibáñez *et al.* recognize the majority of PEP holders did not change from informal employment to formal employment. Due to the level of increased wellbeing they observed among PEP recipients compared to non-PEP recipients, Ibáñez *et al.* suggest migrants with PEP who remained working informally still benefited from PEP by using it to increase their negotiation power to increase their salary and receive better labor conditions. The idea is supported by the fact that those with PEP changed sectors more often relative to non-PEP Venezuelans, arguably because their employment opportunities increased and they were in search of better jobs (*ibid*). Clemens, Huang, and Graham (2018) agree that increasing the labor market access of refugees can benefit those that work in the informal sector by decreasing fear of retribution, therefore increasing their bargaining power and choice of employer. In all, regularization and opening labor market access is believed to empower regular migrants in the employment negotiation process, whether or not they seek formal employment.

As the formal labor market is regulated and provides access to benefits such as paid sick leave and a pension, it will always include a level of security that is missing in the informal market. However, the statistics provided by DANE (2021) and Ibáñez *et al.* (2022) suggest it is possible for regularization to improve migrants' economic situation even if they remain working informally. Of course, certain professions, such as medicine, are heavily regulated and will remain limited to the formal labor market. Therefore, economic integration as defined by Kuhlman, which includes refugees' ability to use their skills, is limited as long as barriers to entry in the formal labor market remain, particularly that of education and work experience validation. In the end, PEP is noteworthy as it benefited Venezuelans in a variety of ways including providing them a regular status, opening access to social services, and creating access to the formal labor market. Further

efforts to economic integration will require dismantling the barriers identified, with attention to how social and economic integration are intertwined.

In February 2021, the Colombian government announced the end of PEP and the beginning of a new regularization policy called the Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Venezolanos (Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans, or ETPV for its Spanish acronym). Much like PEP, ETPV is free to apply for and provides regular status, the ability to work legally, and the ability to apply for social welfare benefits (Del Real, 2022). The main difference is that ETPV is valid for ten years, while PEP was valid for two years. ETPV is not a path to permanent residency or Colombian citizenship (ibid). It does provide Venezuelan migrants with more time to find a solution to permanent residency. However, pathways to permanent residency have more requirements than the temporary permits, are complicated, and costly (ibid). Therefore, ETPV is another regularization process that only provides liminal legality. Furthermore, to be eligible for ETPV, Venezuelans must already have PEP, prove they were in Colombia before January 31st, 2021, or have entered regularly with a passport between May 29, 2021, and May 28, 2023 (ibid). Assuming Venezuelan migrants continue entering Colombia irregularly, as has been the case, over time there will be many who are left out of the regularization process and remain irregular.

Thus far, 2,191,110 migrants have completed the first step of the ETPV application process (Migración Colombia, no date)<sup>4</sup>. This reveals that previous estimates on the number of Venezuelans in Colombia were low. ETPV has already been approved for more than double the number of Venezuelan migrants than that of all PEP rounds combined, and ETPV continues to accept applications (ibid). Camila believes the increased number of those participating in ETPV versus PEP is partly thanks to a better information campaign. However, ETPV is demonstrating similar conundrums to what occurred during the RAMV-PEP process. First, not all migrants who begin the ETPV process, finish it. In January 2022, 34 percent of migrants missed their ETPV biometrics appointment (Correa, 2022). In addition, there is an increasing number of migrants who do not collect the permit at the end of the process (ibid). In the thesis interviews, Daniela noted that some Venezuelans with PEP do not understand that they must apply for ETPV in order to remain in regular status. They are confused as to why they would need to apply for a new permit and provide their details to the government again. Additionally, Valentina noted

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<sup>4</sup> This is the number of Venezuelans who have completed the first step in the ETPV process, the RUMV questionnaire, as of May 11, 2022.

organizations are witnessing ETPV scams just as they did with PEP. A number of challenges and barriers this thesis identified during the RAMV-PEP process may also be impacting the ETPV process. This may include migrants' lack of accurate knowledge on the process, prioritization of meeting basic needs, the spread of misinformation, and fraud. In addition, Carlos mentioned the ETPV process is slow. The process takes several months and in the time migrants are waiting for news on their application, many remain in irregular status. He believes that speeding up the ETPV process would improve Venezuelan migrants' integration in Colombia. Finally, as we saw with PEP, regularizing migrants is only the first step to economic integration. Improving the economic integration of migrants is complex and a never-ending effort.

When discussing what is coming next for organizations and programs assisting Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, several interviewees mentioned there has been a growing shift away from humanitarian assistance programming towards development programming. There was consensus that this trend has been noticeable in the last two years, and they expect it to continue. Interviewees explained that as the crisis has been ongoing for years now, both organizations and donors are acknowledging a need to address long term challenges and long-term displacement. As Leo stated, “we are seeing Venezuelans now who have been living in Colombia since, say 2010, and they need a different kind of assistance”. Daniela shared that the city of Bogotá will be opening a new migrant center dedicated to the social and economic integration of Venezuelan migrants. At the new center migrants will be able to attend job orientations, education orientations, participate in cultural activities, and so on. The previously existing migrant center which focuses on immediate needs assistance will remain open. Another interviewee mentioned the World Food Program is developing an economic integration plan in close collaboration with the government. The government's rollout of ETPV with its ten-year validity period provided recognition that Venezuelan migrants will continue to live in Colombia for some time. Organizations' efforts to place greater emphasis on livelihoods and integration programming also recognizes the likelihood that Venezuelans' displacement will continue for years and the changing nature of Venezuelans' needs.

## 6 Conclusion

There is increasing interest and movement to find long-term sustainable solutions to internationally forcibly displaced migrant crises. Regularization and opening access to the formal

labor market are considered key aspects of a sustainable solution. Through PEP, Colombia introduced a regularization policy that provided access to the formal labor market, as well as other benefits. However, its regularization efforts did not reach as many migrants as anticipated, and few Venezuelan migrants work in the formal labor market. This thesis examined why a number of eligible Venezuelans migrants did not apply for the RAMV-PEP. As well as how regularization has influenced the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. The analysis drew upon implementation theory and segmented labor market theory to identify the barriers Venezuelan migrants encounter towards economic integration.

The data revealed implementation challenges of the RAMV-PEP as the greatest impediment to the regularization of Venezuelan migrants. The causal theory that migrants would be interested in participating in a government census when there was no clear benefit to them at the time, resulted in migrants later missing out on the opportunity to apply for RAMV-PEP. A lack of documents necessary for regularization, challenges accessing or using technology to complete the application, misinformation, and fraud were also identified as barriers to regularization. A theme throughout all these barriers were migrants' lack of knowledge of the application process and procedures. As several interviewees explained, factual information was available via government websites and outlets. Therefore, the issue was not a lack of published information, but rather the means of communication. As demonstrated, further research is needed to identify the most effective modes of communication with Venezuelan migrants in Colombia in order to minimize these challenges. The remaining two reasons migrants did not participate in regularization were their inability to participate in regularization processes due to prioritizing basic needs and a disinterest in obtaining regular status because they did not see a benefit to regularization.

The research also identified a number of barriers to the economic integration of Venezuelan migrants due to the implementation of PEP and challenges rooted in a segmented labor market. The inconsistent implementation of PEP policies by street-level bureaucrats and private institutions impeded Venezuelans access to services, employment, and financial institutions. The segmented labor market was identified in the numerous barriers to formal employment facing Venezuelan migrants. Colombia's large informal economy provides work opportunities to irregular migrants; however, it also makes accessing the formal labor market much more difficult. Challenges related to validating education and work experience create large obstacles for migrants

who desire working the formal labor market. Discrimination against women, young adults, and older migrants create barriers to employment, and particularly formal employment. Xenophobia and cultural differences create biases in the labor market that either result in Venezuelans not receiving job opportunities or employers taking advantage of Venezuelans by hiring them for a low wage. While few with PEP work in the formal labor market, many with PEP have still benefited from an easier time finding employment, increased wages, increased consumption, increased use of financial institutions, and better health. Presumably, PEP provided them with more negotiation power to improve their working conditions and salary even in the informal labor market. As Colombia moves from PEP to ETPV, further research will be necessary to understand the ETPV's regularization challenges. In addition, it would be interesting to see future research compare whether the longer validity period of the ETPV, compared to PEP, has an effect on the economic integration of Venezuelans migrants in Colombia.

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# Appendix

## Interview Guide

### Intro

1. To begin, could you state your role and briefly describe your current position?

### General Integration

2. In your professional experience, do you find Venezuelan migrants are interested in working in the formal labor market? Why or why not?
3. What are the main challenges for migrants seeking formal employment?
5. Do certain groups of Venezuelan migrants have a harder time finding employment, whether formal or informal? (For example, Afro-Venezuelans, women, older people, etc.)
6. How are highly educated Venezuelans adapting to the Colombian labor market?
7. How do the labor markets in Colombia and Venezuela differ?
8. What have you observed as the public opinion towards the various efforts to regularize the status of Venezuelan migrants, including PEP and the ETPV? Has public opinion remained the same or changed over time?
9. Have you observed a shift from humanitarian assistance to more long term and sustainable assistance efforts? If so, what has been the impact so far?

### RAMV and PEP

10. Based on your professional experience, why did those applying for PEP do so? (Were they most interested in a particular benefit of PEP or are they interested in the whole package?)
11. When the RAMV census was initially rolled out, how was it perceived among the Venezuelan migrants and NGO community?
12. How accessible and clear was information regarding the application processes for PEP?

### Looking Forward

13. What was done differently between how the PEP and the ETPV were conducted? Why do you think the ETPV has been more successful thus far?
14. What do you believe should be done next to improve Venezuelan migrants' economic integration?

## **Conclusion**

15. Do you have anything you would like to add?