

N°20 POLICY NOTES

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO: HOW TO CONSOLIDATE THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTIVE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY MIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Summary

Over the last few years, migration landscape in Latin America and the Caribbean has changed significantly. While in 2010 there were an estimated of 28.5 million migrants in the region, in 2022 it is estimated that more than 43 million Latin American and Caribbean people were living outside their countries of origin, with a quarter of this total residing in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021)⁴. Furthermore, the current global displacement crisis, the largest in the history of the Americas, is marked by more than 7.7 million Venezuelan migrants who have left their country, with 85% of that population having settled in another country in the region (R4V, n. d.)⁵. Twenty percent of Venezuelan migrant population are young people between 15 and 24 years of age and 51% is made up of female migrants. This poses a challenge for both governments and societies across Latin American and the Caribbean, most of which have experienced large emigration flows rather than immigration.

In this scenario, socioeconomic integration of the foreign population that has come to live in Latin American and Caribbean countries has become a priority in the political and development agenda at the national and territorial level in the last five years. Therefore, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is leveraging its knowledge and experience in promoting development,

as well as its view on governance, inclusive economic growth, promotion of human rights, access to justice and climate change, to apply this knowledge in support of both national and local governments, the migrant population and host communities themselves, to accompany them in their response to this new regional reality and enhance the development opportunity that human mobility brings.

Part of this work is reflected in the joint report prepared by UNDP in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), entitled *Where do migrants stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping socioeconomic integration* (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023)⁶, which provides an updated overview of the state of socioeconomic integration of migrant population in 12 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean up to 2021, and compares the results with information corresponding to OECD countries.

As a complementary action to this type of measurement work, this policy note presents the most relevant findings related to the indicators considered in that study, and from there proposes, from a prospective and proactive perspective, policy recommendations for governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure and enhance the contributions of people in conditions of human

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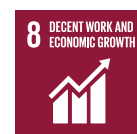
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⁴ IOM, World Migration Report 2022. Available in: publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022.

⁵ Plataforma R4V, Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in the Region - August 2023, available in: www.r4v.info/en.

⁶ IDB, OECD and UNDP (Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme). 2023. What is the situation of migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping socioeconomic integration. Available in: publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf.



mobility to the development of the region. This, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 10 (reduction of inequalities) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

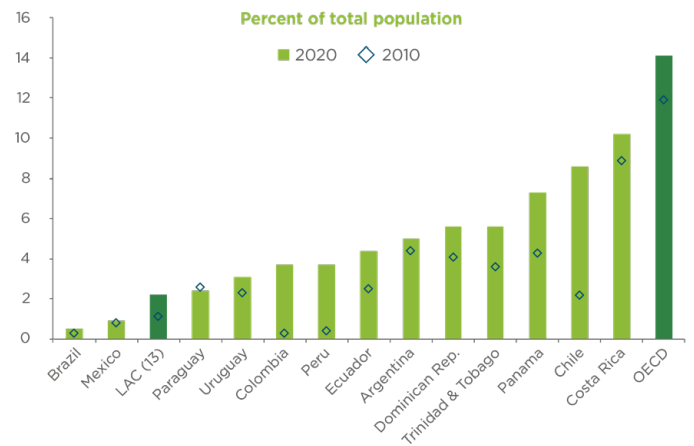
Main findings

- » Latin America and Caribbean governments have made notable strides in adapting their regulatory frameworks and formulating policies to facilitate migrant population integration in the region. However, challenges remain in regularization, social cohesion, education, labor market access and the living conditions of migrant population.
- » The socioeconomic integration process of the migrant population in the region is not very different from that observed in regions such as Europe or the OECD countries. This underscores the significant progress made in a short period of time and demonstrates the resilience and willingness of governments and societies in the region to welcome the foreign population.
- » The joint effort undertaken by IDB, OECD and UNDP establishes a baseline for calculating socioeconomic integration of migrant population in the region. These findings, based on population censuses and household surveys, indicate a clear need for governments to enhance data collection and to include the migrant population in the socio-demographic and economic measurements that are periodically conducted in the region to assess the living conditions of the general population.

1. Overall Context

During the last decades, migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean have shown changes in their patterns, types and destinations. This region, traditionally characterized by the outflow of its population to countries in North America or Europe, now faces a new reality resulting from the displacement crises experienced in Venezuela and Haiti, which has led to an increase in the participation of the foreign population in Latin American and Caribbean countries. It is estimated that in 2022, of the 43 million migrants in the region, nearly 18 million will reside in another Latin American and Caribbean country, a figure that reached 8.3 million in 2010. (McAuliffe y Triandafyllidou, 2021).

Figure 1. Proportion of foreign-born population to total population of Latin American and Caribbean countries (percentages), 2010 and 2020



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Figure 2.2, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

Note: Countries are presented in ascending order according to the percentage of foreign population registered in each country in 2020. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and OECD refers to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

In this context, and considering migrant population’s high propensity to settle permanently in their destination countries, implementing medium- and long-term socioeconomic integration policies and programs becomes essential, along with measures that help mitigate the costs of migration and maximize its benefits. This is particularly pertinent given that human mobility offers a ‘triple-win’ scenario for development: (i) the migrant population gains by improving their quality of life standards; (ii) the territories of origin gain, which benefit from the receipt of remittances and their contribution to the local economy; and, finally, (iii) host societies benefit from receiving labor force willing to contribute to sustainable development of these territories. This triple gain is part of the vision that has been promoted by the UNDP (2020).

In this regard, the joint reports by IDB, OECD and UNDP creates value because, on the one hand, it offers to receiving countries of Latin America and the Caribbean information on indicators that enable them to understand the challenges related to the migrant population’s integration within host societies. On the other hand, it offers inputs for evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, it advocates for South-South cooperation among countries in the region to offer more cohesive state responses to the challenges posed by human mobility.

The following are some relevant findings regarding those indicators most closely related to the socioeconomic integration of the migrant population and some policy recommendations suggested by UNDP.

2. Regularization of migrant population in Latin American and Caribbean countries

The entryway and one of the main tools to facilitate the integration of migrant population into host societies, consists of regularization processes, since foreign population in an irregular situation is more vulnerable because they do not have the possibility of accessing formal employment or social protection systems.

Table 1. Regularization Schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Mexico	Panama	Peru	Trinidad and Tobago	Uruguay
Special permits or amnesties implemented in the last ten years to regularize migrants affected by humanitarian crises	No info.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Humanitarian visas for populations affected by persecution/humanitarian crises	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Only ¹⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Footnote ¹⁷	Yes
Humanitarian visas are free	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	-	Yes ¹²	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Amnesties or special permits are free	-	Yes ¹³	No	Yes	No	No	No	-	No	No	Yes	-
Migrants with humanitarian visas or special permits/amnesties can apply for a residence visa	-	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-

^{16,17} indicates that no information was obtained to make a determination.

Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Table 2.5, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

Note: The hyphen included in some cells of the table indicates that no information was obtained to enable a determination. Regarding humanitarian visas for populations affected by persecution or humanitarian crises, in the Dominican Republic they are only granted to persons with refugee status. In Trinidad and Tobago, in the absence of refugee legislation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) adjudicates asylum applications and monitors refugees and asylum seekers as part of its mandate, in collaboration with the Living Water Community.

During the last decade, in response to the demands of migratory flows in the region, Latin America and the Caribbean countries have adjusted their migration policies. Many have adopted special permits, amnesty processes or humanitarian visa schemes to regularize the migrant population, especially for those coming from Venezuela.

The most recent regularization policies have been enacted in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and the Dominican Republic. Even though these efforts mark clear progress, there are still certain challenges that need to be addressed, which could be tackled through the implementation of the following policy recommendations:

» **Implement regularization processes based on sectoral permits.** Considering the potential saturation of broad regularization for numerous migrants entering a country irregularly, the possibility of implementing sectoral regularization permits for those economic sectors that demand foreign labor or require such labor to become more dynamic could be explored. The Agricultural and Service sectors could promote significant initiatives in this area.

» **Enhance registration and profiling systems.** The registration and profiling of migrant population is the spearhead for developing subsequent areas of socioeconomic integration. Strengthening mechanisms and tools to identify the demographic, sociooccupational and professional profiles of migrants is recommended, as is to including them as group of interest in socio-demographic and economic measurements, such as population censuses and household surveys.

» **Strengthening information systems.** As a complementary step to improve data collection and characterization of migrant population, it is important that governments of the region enhance their information systems on migrant population, not only to identify, among other things, the traceability of access to different services, but also for supporting evidence-based decision-making and the efficient allocation scarce resources.

» **Integrate regularization processes with other socioeconomic integration policies.** Regularization processes should include mechanisms granting migrants, who are already authorized to reside regularly in a country, access to job opportunities in host countries, entrepreneurial options and financial services within the hos countries.

3. Social Cohesion

In order to promote socioeconomic integration of migrant population and ensure their social cohesion in host societies, it is essential to eradicate xenophobia and discrimination, as well as to guarantee the right of migrants to participate in local elections and form associations. Promoting social inclusion of migrant population, as well as peaceful coexistence and recognition of diversity of this population, remains a challenge, especially for countries

that have received a large influx of Venezuelan migrants. Only 4 of the 12 countries covered in the aforementioned analysis prepared by IDB, OECD and UNDP have a specific policy to reduce discrimination against migrant population, namely: Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023, p. 40).

However, most Latin American and Caribbean countries have developed prevention campaigns to raise awareness of the harmful effects of discrimination and xenophobia against migrants and the importance of integrating them into society (this is the case in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay).

On the other hand, the possibility for migrant population to participate in local elections is guaranteed in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago, as long they are in a regular situation. In Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic, foreigners may vote upon acquiring the nationality of these countries. In Chile and Ecuador migrants may exercise the right to vote if they have lived in the country for five years or more. Finally, in 8 of the 12 countries analyzed, migrants have the possibility of organizing and forming trade union organizations.

In this regard, and in order to promote the social cohesion of migrants in the region, the following is suggested:

- » **Strengthen mechanisms for active citizen participation of migrants at the national and territorial levels.** The migrant population must be part of an active citizenship, which also requires participation in public life and affairs at the local and national levels. Given that day-to-day civic issues affect the inhabitants of a territory equally, regardless of their nationality, dialogues on possible solutions to challenges faced by each country or on ways to address them must involve entire population. In practice, this implies promoting participation of migrants in local and community spaces, involving them in discussions such as those on participatory budgets at the local level, and preparing them to play this role.
- » **Provide training in rights and duties for migrant population in order to promote active citizenship.** Opportunities such as those promoted by governments of the region for the migrant population open up the possibility for them to enjoy rights in the national territory. However, access to rights also implies the fulfillment of the duties associated with the social

contract. In this sense, it is necessary to make migrant and refugee population aware of their belonging to the society of the host country, with the rights and duties that this entails.

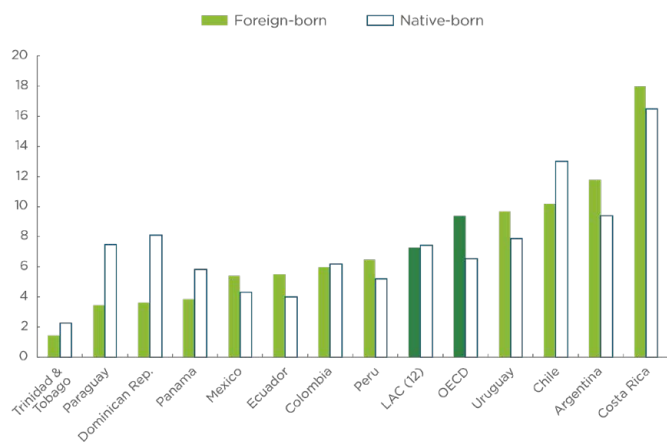
- » **Empower migrants as promoters of their own development.** It is important to manage leadership and personal empowerment programs, in which migrants are made aware that they are promoters of their own development. This exercise can be done through "training of trainers" type tools, which could be implemented by leaders of the migrant population in the host countries and through migrant associations in each national territory.
- » **Enhance migrants' access to justice.** As part of social cohesion, it is essential to implement actions to strengthen conflict management capacities in public institutions in order to improve migrants' access to justice, as well as to adjust procedures available to ensure that this population can access justice mechanisms available in the host countries.

4. Labor Market

One of the main tools for successfully integrating migrant population into host societies and economies is their inclusion in labor markets. Access to labor market not only benefits migrants and their families, but also receiving societies, since their economic productivity increases thanks to new labor force or new sources of business investment. Despite the above, migrant population often faces obstacles that restrict their integration and reduce their possibilities of contributing economically to host societies. These barriers can be found to a greater extent in the following areas:

i) Employment and labor market participation. In general, migrants represent 5% of the employed population in Latin American and Caribbean countries that were the subject of analysis in the joint IDB/OECD/UNDP report, namely: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023). In most of these countries, foreigners (69%) are more likely to be employed and participate in the labor market than native population (66%). Likewise, employment rates of foreign population are close to 70% in Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

Figure 2. Unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 by origin in Latin America and the Caribbean (in percentages), 2021 or most recent year



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Figure 4.3, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

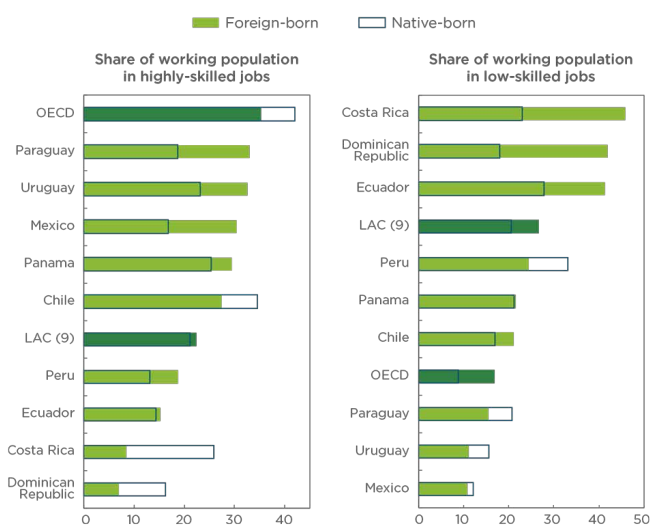
Note: Countries are presented in ascending order according to the proportion of unemployed foreign population. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and OECD refers to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

ii) Unemployment. In most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries with available data, unemployment rates of migrant and native population are similar. In 4 of the 12 countries analyzed (Chile, Panama, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic), unemployment is higher among the native population. On the other hand, in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay, the percentage of people looking for work is slightly higher among the foreign population compared to native population.

iii) Informality. One of the greatest labor concerns in the region is related to working conditions and growing informality in Latin American and Caribbean countries. A person is considered to have an informal job if the employment is not carried out within the framework established by the labor legislation of the country in question, and if it lacks access to social protection and other labor rights and benefits. In this sense, migrants are more likely to work in the informal sector than the native population (52.2% and 44.5%, respectively), which leads them to accept precarious jobs.

In the cases of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic, informality rate of migrant population exceeds 50% and is above the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, more than 50% of native workers in the region have an employment relationship based on a written contract, while this percentage is 43% among migrant workers.

Figure 3. Labor skills of the population aged 15 to 64 by origin in Latin America and the Caribbean (in percentages), 2021 or most recent year



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Figure 4.10, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

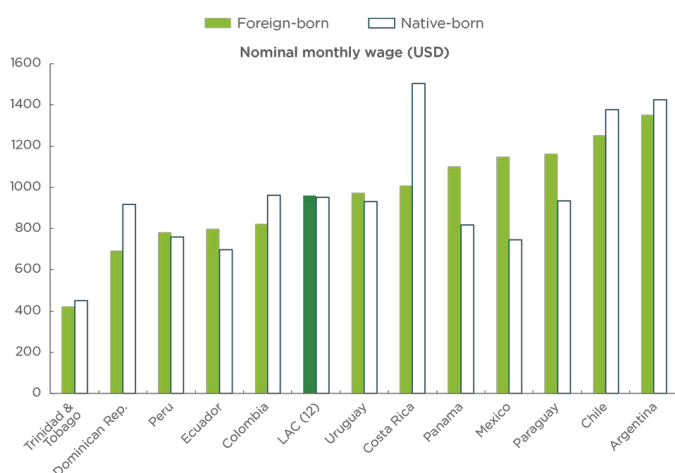
Note: Countries are presented in descending order according to the proportion of foreign workers in high-skilled and low-skilled jobs. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and OECD refers to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

iv) Labor competencies. In the joint report prepared by IDB, OECD and UNDP (2023), labor skills indicator was measured based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). This indicator compares the participation of workers who have low-skilled jobs (i.e., who have occupations that require performing simple and routine tasks and that, in many cases, demand some physical effort) with the participation of workers who obtain highly skilled jobs (e.g., company directors and managers, or professionals and technicians, among others). In five of the countries analyzed -Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay- migrants tend to occupy highly skilled jobs more frequently than the native population. In contrast, in Chile, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, native population is more likely to occupy highly skilled positions than foreigners.

v) Over-qualification. According to the results presented in the report, in nine countries for which information was available, there was a significant difference found between migrant population and native population, which reflects that foreigners are more likely to accept any type of job when they first arrive in the country of destination (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023). In Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, migrant population is more likely to work in jobs that require lower skill levels than their educational level. In Chile, Ecuador, Panama and Peru the rate of over-skilled migrant population corresponds

mostly to foreigners who have arrived less than five years ago, suggesting that migrants are taking the first jobs they find. In Mexico, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic the result is the opposite: native workers tend to be more overqualified for their jobs.

Figure 4. Average nominal monthly wage for the population aged 15 to 64 years by origin in Latin America and the Caribbean (in US dollars), 2021 or Most Recent Year



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), *Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration*, 2023, Figure 4.13, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

Note: Countries are presented in ascending order according to the share of average wages of the foreign population. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean.

» **Salary.** Salaries are generally determined by skill levels and hours worked. In many countries, migrants with higher skill levels or those who work more hours than natives earn higher salaries. In half of the countries analyzed (Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) foreign workers earn higher average salaries than native workers, with an average difference of almost US\$200 per month, in contrast to the remaining six countries (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago), where native workers earn higher salaries than migrants.

In this context and within the framework of the process of integrating migrants into the labor market in host societies, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

» **Strengthen the analysis of occupations and labor market at the national and territorial levels.** This type of action would make it possible to identify, on one hand, the critical occupations in demand in the sectors that are driving the economies of Latin American and Caribbean countries that receive migrants, and on the other hand, the interest of the native population of in these countries in accessing job offers in those sectors, thereby promoting the filling of these

vacancies by migrant workers. This exercise involves generating effective recertification processes for migrant workers' competencies to guarantee their insertion in occupations similar to those they had in their countries of origin.

» **Expanding the inclusion of the migrant population in active employment policies.** Including and facilitating access to policies aimed at increasing employment options for unemployed or laid-off workers is fundamental for fostering migrant integration and promoting their contribution to the development of host countries. This implies ensuring that intermediation, training and certification services; subsidies to labor costs and existing job payroll, and services associated with temporary public employment programs are accessible to and include migrants.

» **Promote job training processes aligned to the actual needs of the labor market.** By identifying the occupations and skills most in demand in both national and territorial labor markets, technical training or skills certification programs tailored for the migrant population can be developed, corresponding to the required profiles, through training institutions. Companies in the host countries could also encourage internal labor mobility processes that encompass both national and foreign workers.

» **Facilitate the participation of migrants in the so-called green economy.** This sectors, expected to significantly contribute to the region's economic growth, is linked to the efficient use of natural resources, the reduction of the carbon footprint and sustainable social inclusion. In this context, it will be crucial to create opportunities and identify capacity building needs in this economic sector through actions such as: i) analyzing the current status of policies for transitioning to a low-carbon economy; ii) identifying and facilitating the transition to natural resource value chains; and iii) mapping key sectors with the potential to create green jobs that can accommodate migrant workers and their host communities.

» **Strengthen joint work between governments and the private sector.** This would ensure, among other benefits, that companies are well-informed and up-to-date on labor laws and new regulations. It would also enable them to understand the demands and concerns of firms regarding the hiring of foreign workers. The UNDP has a program in the area of human rights and business aimed at fostering partnerships between governments and the private sector to achieve poverty reduction, create new decent jobs, and promote inclusive growth. Building on this basis, concrete actions could be devised that integrate the migration perspective with the goal of finding innovative and effective solutions to enhance the employability of this population.

5. Entrepreneurship and financial inclusion

Self-employment or entrepreneurship are other avenues of livelihood for foreigners who wish to integrate economically into the host societies. In Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay, only regular migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, can establish formal businesses. In Latin American and Caribbean countries for which information is available, migrants have the right to open a business under the same conditions as the native population, and this right is embedded in labor codes or migration laws.

With regard to entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, the following policy recommendations could be considered:

» **Promote and strengthen micro-businesses that already exist and have made it through the initial trial period.** This implies promoting growth of existing ventures through financial education, financing aimed at boosting businesses and knowledge transfer between similar businesses. It is also possible to provide support through sponsorship or mentoring to promote already established businesses of national or foreign population; strengthen existing businesses through the provision of productive capital, or facilitate market connection mechanisms through digital tools. UNDP has a widely recognized experience in this type of specific interventions through the initiative En Marcha Digital, which provides guides that offer practical advice and simple tools to, according to the specific needs of each venture, help businesses to reorganize and discover new ways to reach customers.⁷

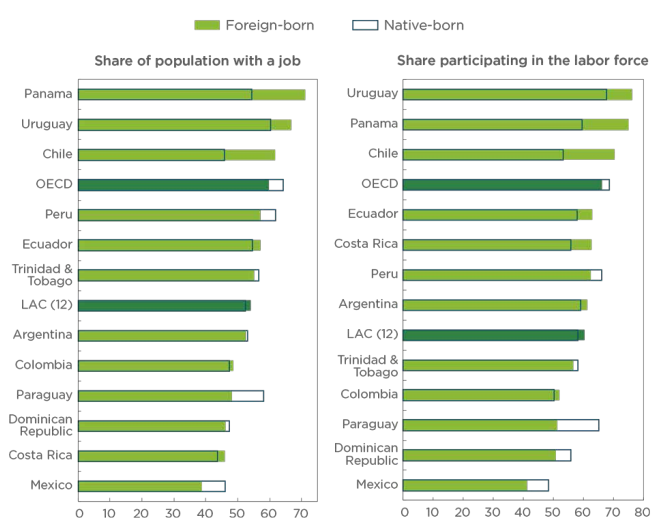
» **Promote solidarity economy models as an alternative to traditional bank financing.** The solidarity economy based on the formation and promotion of worker cooperatives for migrant population (or that link this population with the host community) becomes an interesting option not only to promote savings among members, but also to promote alternative sources of financing to the traditional banking system.

» **Strengthen the possibility of connecting migrant population's enterprises with value chains that can enhance their growth.** Another way to boost existing enterprises is to promote their linkage with value chains of large supermarkets, medium and large companies, and even with online sales platforms. UNDP has experience in this last segment at the global level and could evaluate the implementation of a similar model in the region.

» **Understand the migrant population, their productive potential and their unique characteristics.** In this regard, it is important to promote studies on the financial consumption habits of migrants to explore financial possibilities and potential.

» **Provide opportunities for access to formal credit instruments considering the lack of history.** While this does not mean neglecting established guidelines regarding security and credit history verification, it is crucial to continue exploring possibilities to either make the requirements more flexible or to find alternatives. These should acknowledge the particularities circumstances of the migrant population, thereby allowing them access to credit products in the host countries.

Figure 5. Female employment rate and participation of women aged 15 to 64 in the labor market by origin in Latin American and Caribbean countries (percentages), 2021 or most recent year



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Figure 5.6, publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf

Note: Countries are presented in descending order according to the participation of foreign women in employment and in the labor market, respectively. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and OECD refers to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

6. Gender in the integration of the migrant population

The current trend in global migration is increasing feminization, referring to the growing number of women migrating independently and facing challenges that, in some cases, are greater than those faced by men. It is, therefore, necessary to approach migration processes

⁷ For more information, please visit www.undp.org/sdgvaluechains/digital-in-motion

from a gender perspective, taking in to account the specific needs of migrant women, to promote their empowerment in host societies (UNDP, 2021).

One of the findings from the joint report prepared by IDB, OECD and UNDP (2023) indicates that migrant women in Latin America and the Caribbean tend to have higher educational levels than men. However, an analysis of women's participation in employment and the labor force reveals that it is lower compared to the participation rates of male migrants. This discrepancy results in higher unemployment rates for both migrant and native women compared to men. Considering this context, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

- » **Implement a comprehensive gender approach in actions promoting socioeconomic integration of the migrant population.** This approach should extend beyond merely identifying statistics that illustrate the differences between male and female migrants, it should also contribute to highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the distinct experiences and impacts faced by women in countries of origin, transit, as well as in host countries.
- » **Include LGBTIQ+ migrants in both analyses and initiatives to be implemented.** Addressing migration dynamics with a gender perspective involves not only considering the differences between men and women, but also including perspectives and insights concerning the LGBTIQ+ population. With this understanding and for this purpose, it is important to include variables in the analysis and information gathering processes that enable the identification of individuals from this community, in order to design and implement initiatives to mitigate the barriers they face and address their real needs.
- » **Support gender-sensitive development planning.** Promote gender mainstreaming in strategies and projects aimed at guaranteeing migrant women's access to livelihoods, and make specific adjustments, when necessary, also considering the situation of refugee and displaced women. For this specific case, the Planning Guide: Migrant Women and Livelihoods, developed by UNDP with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), can be a reference (UNDP, 2021).
- » **Complement actions to promote employability for migrant women with initiatives such as the provision and improvement of care systems.** Migrant women are often unable to participate in socioeconomic integration initiatives (e.g., education or training for work or employment) for various reasons, including caring for children or the elderly. Thus, the initiatives to be promoted should ensure that out-of-school children and school-age children, as well as the

elderly, have access to public care. This would enable migrant women to engage in education and job or employment training programs that enhance their integration in the host country.

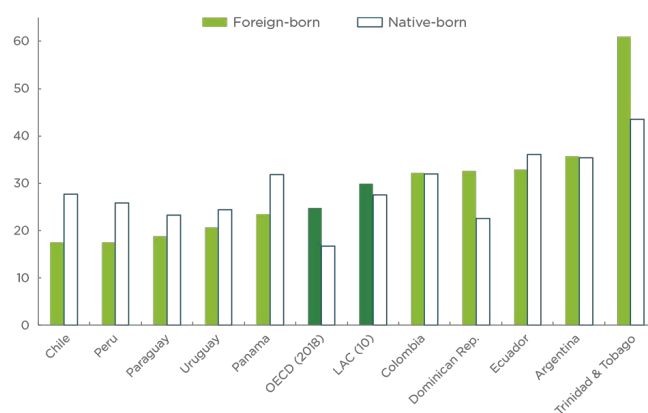
7. Living conditions of the migrants

Access to formal work and education is fundamental in promoting the socioeconomic integration of the migrant population, but these are not the only means to achieve their insertion in the host societies. Other important factors include the income generated and whether it is sufficient for accessing housing, as well as the level of relative poverty experienced by the migrant population and the quality of the housing available to them.

i) Household income. In half of the countries analyzed in the joint report prepared by IDB, OECD and UNDP, the median disposable household income of migrants is higher than the median income of natives (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023). The most notable difference is in Panama, where the income of the migrant population is 76% higher than that of the native population. It is followed by Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. This difference is mainly explained by the higher education levels of migrants, and is also related to the time elapsed since migrants arrived in the host country.

In contrast, in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago, foreigners have household incomes that are up to 20% lower than those of natives. Finally, in Argentina and Ecuador the median household income is similar between the native and migrant populations.

Figure 6. Relative poverty rate of the population aged 15 and over by origin in Latin America and the Caribbean (in percentages), 2021 or most recent year



Source: Inter-American Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations Development Programme (IDB, OECD, and UNDP), Where Do Migrants Stand in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, 2023, Figure 6.4, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/How-Do-Migrants-Fare-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Mapping-Socio-Economic-Integration.pdf>
Note: Countries are presented in ascending order according to the relative poverty rate of the foreign population. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, and OECD refers to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

ii) Relative poverty. Relative poverty is understood as the proportion of individuals living below poverty line. The poverty line used in the joint IDB, OECD and UNDP report was equal to 60% of the median average income for the countries analyzed (IDB, OECD and UNDP, 2023). In ten Latin American and Caribbean countries, nearly 30% of the migrant population and 28% of the native population live in relative poverty. The highest poverty rates among migrants are recorded in Trinidad and Tobago (61%), Argentina (37%), and Colombia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic (the relative poverty rate is 33% in these three countries). The lowest poverty rates are in Chile, Paraguay and Peru, where less than 20% of the migrant population is considered poor.

In addition to the above recommendations, the implementation of which would improve the living conditions of migrants in their host countries in Latin America and the Caribbean by favoring their socioeconomic integration, the following policy actions are also proposed:

- » **Include the migrant population in the social policies each country of the region implements for poverty reduction.** Initiatives aimed at identifying potential participants in social programs, enabling the classification of the population based on their living conditions and income, along with unconditional, direct and periodic cash transfer programs, should include the migrant population, meaning they should be implemented without distinction of nationality. While developing this type of initiative is difficult in middle- and low-income countries such as those in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is essential to initiate dialogue in this matter, especially by promoting the principle of "leaving no one behind".
- » **Monitoring poverty and vulnerability situation of migrants.** Establishing tools and mechanisms for monitoring to highlight and understand the greater or lesser degrees of policies progress for achieving poverty reduction and the socioeconomic integration of the migrant population in the region is of great help to receiving countries, since evidence can contribute to using scarce resources efficiently and to improving campaigns to reduce xenophobia and discrimination in host communities.

8. Findings

i) The governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have been making a great deal of work to adapt their regulatory and public policy frameworks to promote the integration of the migrant population in the region. However, as shown by some indicators, there are still challenges associated with regularization, access to the labor market, entrepreneurship and financial inclusion,

social cohesion and the living conditions of the migrant population. In response, UNDP has formulated a series of policy recommendations that can contribute to the socioeconomic integration of this population.

ii) Regarding the regularization of migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is proposed to improve information systems, strengthen registration and characterization systems for this population, carry out regularization processes through sectoral permits, and integrate these regularization processes with other socioeconomic integration policies.

iii) To strengthen the social cohesion of migrants in the host societies, it is proposed to conduct training actions on rights and duties to promote the active citizenship of the migrant population; also, promote the effective access of migrants to justice; support their empowerment as agents of their own development; and reinforcing mechanisms for citizen participation of migrants at the territorial and national levels.

iv) In response to the participation of the migrant population in the labor markets, it is recommended to expand the coverage of active employment policies; strengthen the analysis of occupations and the labor market at both national and territorial levels; establish job training processes; facilitate the participation of migrants in the green economy; and promote collaboration between governments and the private sector.

v) In promoting entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, the following measures, among others, are suggested: the strengthening existing micro-businesses; promoting solidarity economy models; linking migrant population's enterprises with value chains to enhance their growth; and providing opportunities for access to formal credit.

vi) In terms of gender, it is suggested to implement a comprehensive gender approach in actions aimed at promoting the socioeconomic integration of the migrant population, including LGBTIQ+ migrants.

vii) In order to promote the improvement of the living conditions of migrants, it is essential to intensify the collection of information on this population, with the objective of following up on different indicators that allow measuring their integration, as well as monitoring the conditions of poverty and vulnerability that affect this population.

viii) Finally, the socioeconomic integration of the migrant population should be a top priority on the political, local, and national development agendas of the countries in the region. Therefore, coordinated efforts and the application of a regional response approach are essential to maximize the positive impact of human mobility on sustainable development in the region.

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