

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Facts and Figures: Unprotected in Ecuador

Features of Venezuelan human mobility:

- As of September 2022, approximately [7.1 million Venezuelans have left their country](#).
- Ecuador is the receiving country with the third highest number of Venezuelans in the world, after Colombia and Peru, with [502,214 Venezuelan](#) refugees in the country.
- By the end of 2022, it is expected that there will be [803,000 Venezuelans](#) in Ecuador, 551,000 with Ecuador as their destination and 252,000 in transit.
- Women make up [approximately 50%](#) of the Venezuelan refugees in Ecuador.

General figures on gender-based violence in Ecuador:

- According to figures from the National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC), [65 out of every 100 women](#) in Ecuador have experienced some type of violence during their life.
- According to figures provided to Amnesty International by the Attorney General's Office, between January and August 2022, 19,359 complaints of violence against women were filed in Ecuador.

Figures on gender-based violence against Venezuelan refugee women:

- [72% of the Venezuelan women surveyed](#) by Plan International believed that this population faces some type of gender-based violence in Ecuador.
 - The most common forms of violence are psychological violence in public and private spaces (51%), sexual harassment in the workplace (41%), physical aggression within the home (32%) and income control (10%).
- Signs of under-reporting: The Ecuador Attorney General's Office registered 64 Venezuelan women victims of physical violence, 521 victims of psychological violence and 4 victims of sexual violence between January and August 2022.
- In transit, particularly in the border areas between Colombia and Peru, Venezuelan women face a high risk of being victims of multiple forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.
- The visa requirements for Venezuelans who want to enter Ecuador from August 2019, in addition to the closure of borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022, meant that Venezuelans were forced to enter Ecuadorian territory through irregular crossing points mostly controlled by criminal groups that act with impunity.

Lack of access to migration documents

- The majority of Venezuelan women in Ecuador have an irregular migration status. Only 13.37% of the Venezuelan population has regular status (67,185 people).
- Recognition of refugee status
 - Between 2018 and 2022, 27,889 Venezuelans applied for refugee status in Ecuador. In these years, only 1,100 Venezuelans, 555 of them women, have been recognized as refugees. 18,934 applications have been rejected and 7,855 are still being processed.
 - Of the 1,100 refugees recognized between 2018 and 2022, 1,006 have been recognized under the 1951 Convention definition, 60 under the Cartagena Declaration and 34 were unspecified.

- Alternatives to migratory regularization: VERHU and VIRTE visas
 - In August 2019, the state began to require visas for Venezuelan nationals and established the possibility of granting an exceptional temporary residence visa for humanitarian reasons, also known as VERHU.
 - From 26 August 2019 to 27 July 2022, the Ecuadorian state granted a total of 58,425 VERHU visas to Venezuelans. 29,867 visas were granted to women and 28,558 were granted to men.
 - In June 2022, the government announced a new regularization process for Venezuelans through the granting of the Exceptional Temporary Residence Visa for Venezuelan Citizens (VIRTE).
 - The process once again excludes Venezuelan who entered irregularly after 26 August 2019 and requires payment of a fee of 50 US dollars.

Obstacles for Venezuelan women in accessing protection mechanisms

- Lack of information about existing reporting and protection mechanisms
 - Institutional efforts to spread information lack a focus on refugee women
 - Lack of knowledge of care routes is especially prevalent in places where state institutions with a mandate for handling cases of gender-based violence have less presence, such as the southern border of the country.
 - In Huaquillas, the Domestic Violence Department of the National Police (DEVIF) has only two officers for several districts, the Ombudsman's Office has no permanent staff on the ground and the Attorney General's Office has no staff specialized in gender-based violence.
- Fear and mistrust of the authorities
 - According to [Plan International](#), 71% of Venezuelan women in Ecuador believe that cases of violence against women are not usually reported, compared with 29% who believed that they were. 27% mentioned mistrust of public institutions as one of the main reasons for not reporting.
 - Venezuelan women reported being afraid to approach state institutions to request help or report acts of violence for fear of being fined money they cannot afford to pay, or even being expelled from the country.
 - Not having received information about their rights, many Venezuelan women are unaware that Ecuadorian law allows them to seek protection or file a complaint with the prosecutor's office even if they do not have an identity document.

Shortcomings in the state's response to gender-based violence

- Shortcomings in frontline services to identify and respond to gender-based violence cases, such as the National Police and the health service:
 - Sexist and xenophobic stereotypes by public officials towards Venezuelan women
 - Illegal practices, such as mediation attempts, in cases of violence
 - Lack of human and financial resources
 - According to international standards, Ecuador should have 1,700 shelters for its population. The Human Rights Secretariat has identified the existence of 12 civil society shelters, 4 of which are currently funded by the central government. In 2022, 18.46% of the budget for shelters was cut, leading to the closure of shelters and a reduction in staff.
- Shortcomings in the justice system:
 - Stereotypes towards Venezuelan women
 - Lack of knowledge of applicable regulations, which allow all foreigners to file complaints without restrictions

- Court proceedings that are slow, re-victimizing and costly in practice