

## I. INTRODUCTION

The twin-island State, Trinidad and Tobago, is situated 12 km (7 miles) northeast of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (henceforth referred to as Venezuela) and this close geographic proximity has historically enabled migratory movements. Nevertheless, the sheer magnitude of current flows from Venezuela into Trinidad and Tobago, is unparalleled.

Migration from Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago was traditionally by air routes. However, since 2016 state agencies detected a significant fall-off in entries by air and a corresponding rise in entries by sea. Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of overstayers and by 2018 irregular entries skyrocketed<sup>1</sup>. As a result,

between May and June 2019, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago initiated a Venezuelan Registration Exercise, which authorized Venezuelan nationals in irregular circumstances to work for a period of one year in Trinidad and Tobago, upon successful screening procedures. This led to the registration of 16,523 Venezuelan nationals.

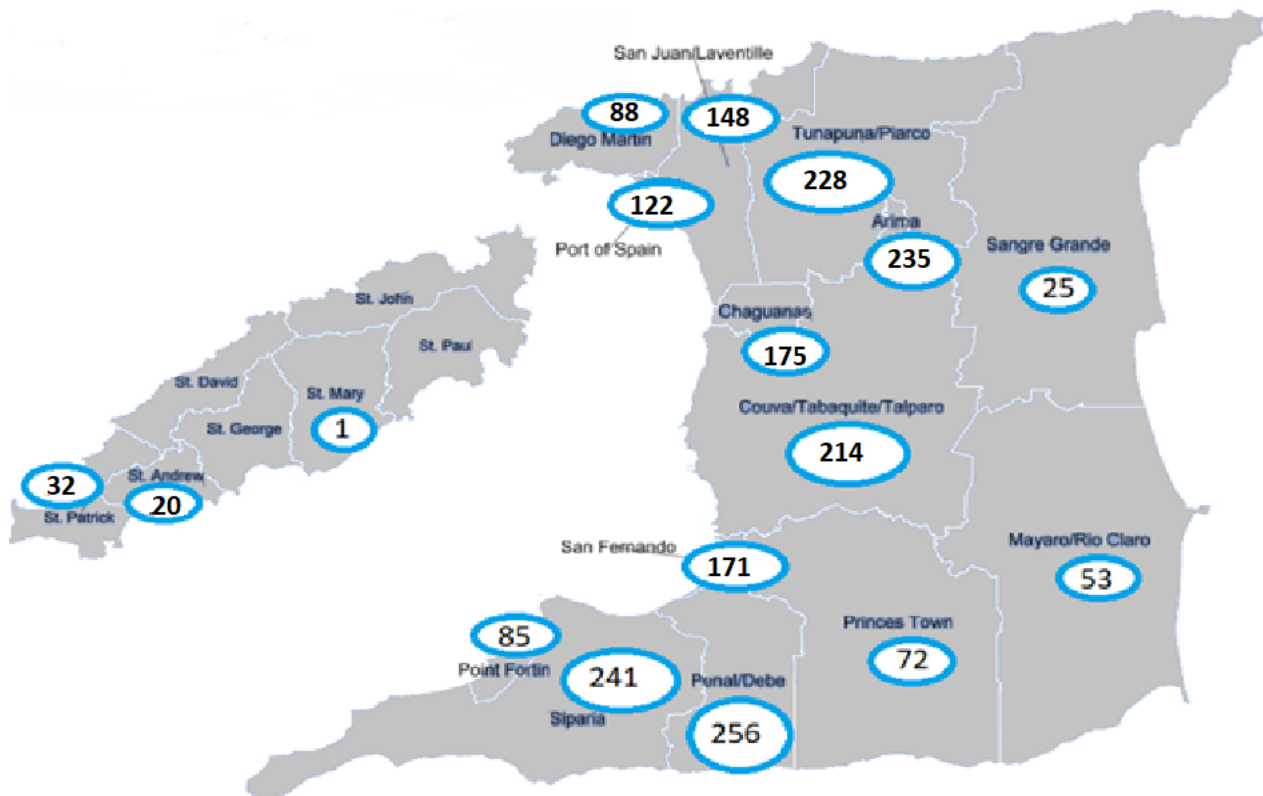
The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) was launched in July 2019 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to maintain periodic monitoring of migrants, as it relates to their profiles, characteristics and socio-economic status. Data gathered through this process informs the locations, evolving needs and vulnerabilities of migrant populations. In total, 2,166 Venezuelan migrants were interviewed mainly in the western areas of both Trinidad and Tobago, as illustrated in Map 1.

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### Map 1 - Number of Surveys by Region

<sup>1</sup> This information was sourced from the Immigration Division, Trinidad and Tobago.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

DTM 2019 employed baseline key informant interviews and individual-level surveys to capture information on a range of key thematic areas. In the first instance, Baseline Interviews were conducted with twenty key informants in Trinidad and Tobago, inclusive of national authorities, non-governmental organizations and some Venezuelan migrants. These interviews were analyzed to guide the selection of communities for the DTM survey exercise as well as to inform preliminary migrant population estimates and migrant profiles.

Information was captured from all Venezuelan migrants, over the age of 18 years, who consented to participate in the interview process.

The sampling strategy utilized in the field was snowball sampling. This technique was deemed to be the most practical approach to access a ‘hard-to-reach’ population, in the absence of a well-informed sampling frame.

A system of referrals was therefore used to contact migrants in various communities. This nonprobability

sampling, however, did impose some limitations on the exercise regarding its representativeness.<sup>2</sup>

Data collection spanned approximately four weeks and was executed by a team of bilingual enumerators, trained in DTM procedures. Accordingly, a survey instrument, which maintained respondent anonymity, was the data collection tool and the individual migrant was the sampling unit.

Furthermore, data capture was facilitated by tablets and the information generated was cleaned, coded and analyzed, using standardized statistical techniques.

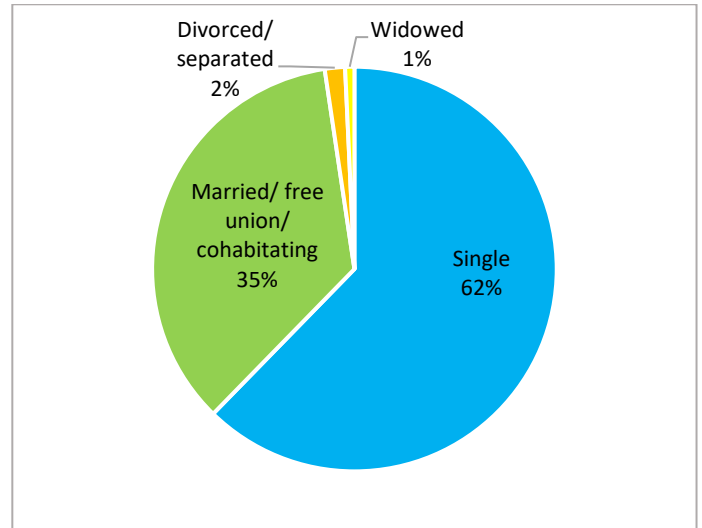
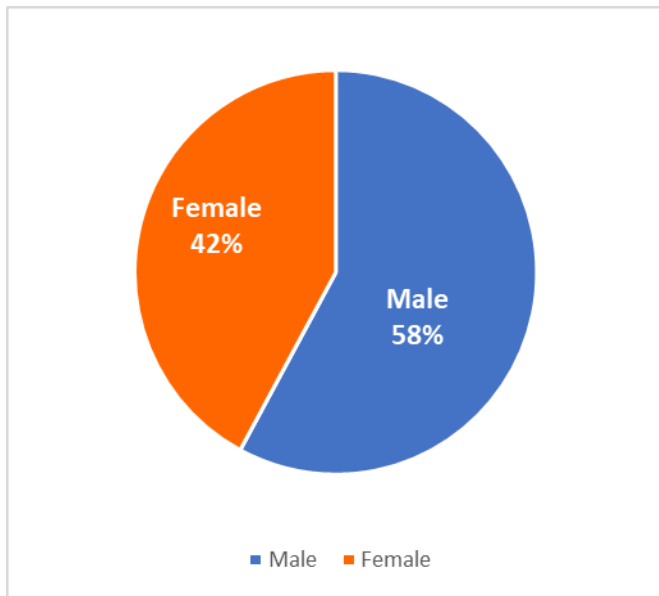
## 3. MIGRANT PROFILES

Migrant profile findings were consistent with information gathered through the baseline interviews, and were comparable to the results of DTM 2018, which highlighted similar trends.

Results revealed there were more male than female respondents, 58% to 42% respectively. The largest group of respondents were aged between 25-29 followed by the 20-24 age group.

<sup>2</sup> Non-probability samples cannot be relied upon to draw conclusions or make inferences on the entire migrant population.

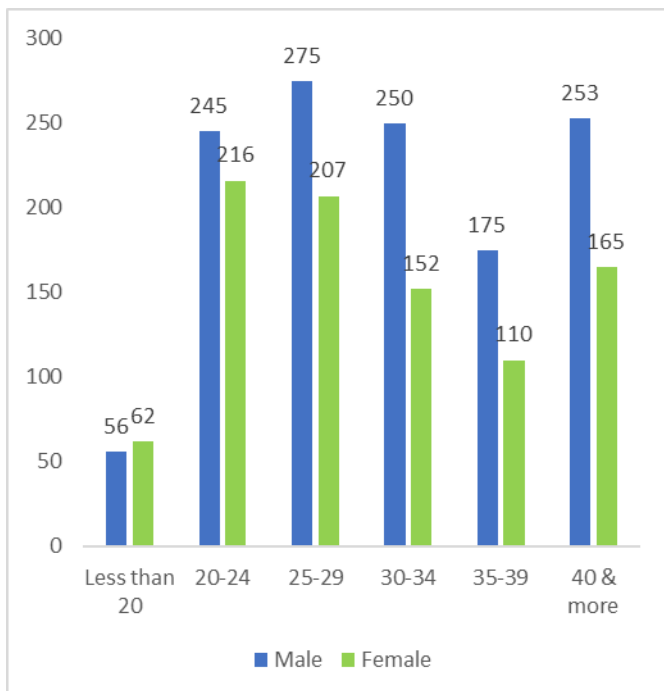
**Graph 1 - Distribution by sex**



Moreover, two thirds of the pregnant women, who were interviewed, were also single. One key informant observed that some women arrived in Trinidad and Tobago pregnant, whereas others become pregnant subsequently.

Aside from this, a significant proportion of the migrants had completed secondary level education, whilst roughly one third of the respondents had completed tertiary level.

**Graph 2- Distribution by sex and age**

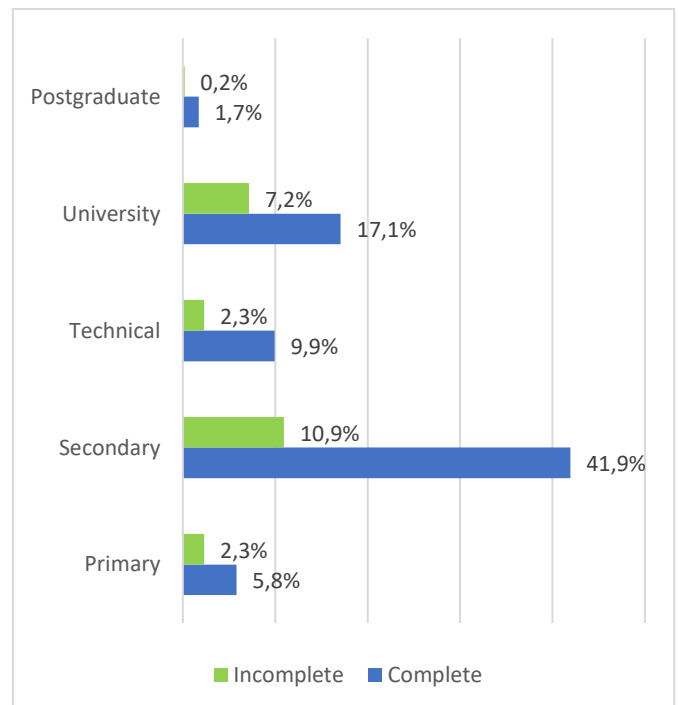


The data also showed that an estimated 6% of the female interviewees were pregnant and a quarter of this population was between 18 and 21 years old.

In addition, there was a prevalence of single migrants, in comparison to those who were married or divorced, a pattern that was also noticed in DTM 2018.

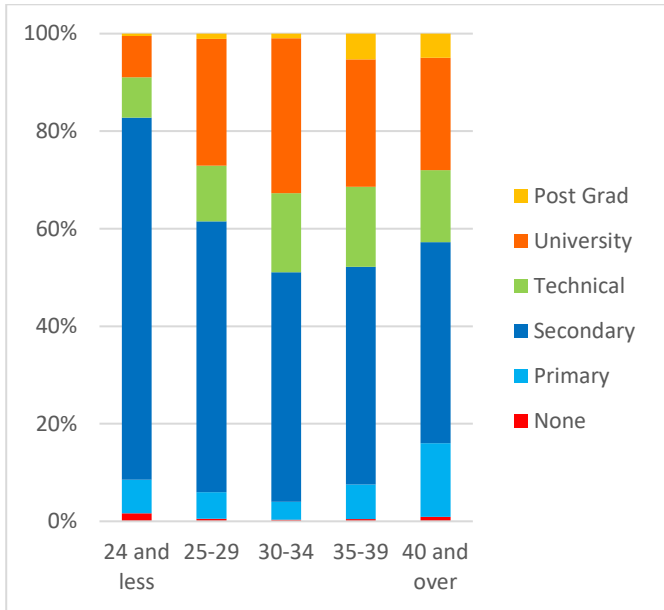
**Graph 3 - Marital Status**

**Graph 4- Education Level**



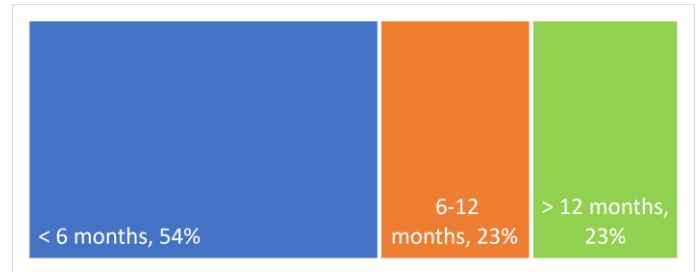
A disaggregation of completed education by age group also highlighted that the 30-34 age group had the highest percentage of university graduates.

**Graph 5- Completed Education by age**



that 54% of respondents had been present in the country for less than six months, while the remaining 46% had been residing there for six months or more.

Graph 6 - Time in Trinidad and Tobago



Approximately 98.5% of the interviewees only had Venezuelan nationality. The most common second nationalities were Trinidadian or Colombian. Several key informants however, identified xenophobia as a challenge for the migrants. This claim was further substantiated by the survey data which revealed 70% of the respondents who felt discriminated against, attributed it to their nationality. This was a 17% rise from 2018 DTM figures.

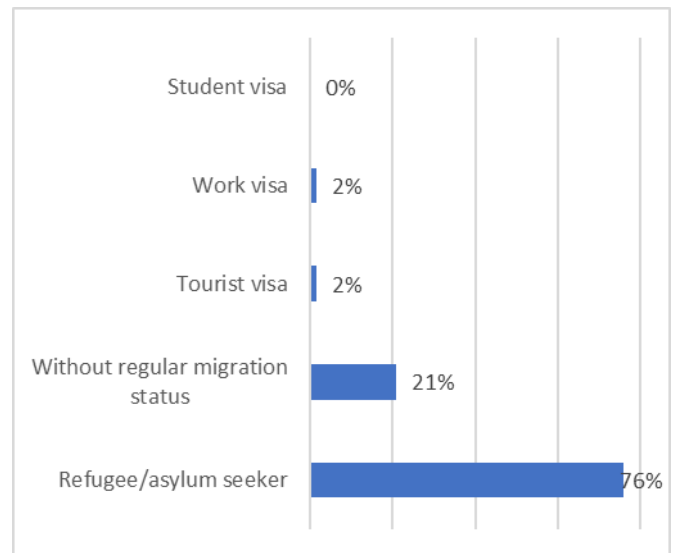
The survey found that 86% of the DTM respondents were registered during the Government registration exercise. It is important to note that this statistic represents approximately 11% of the total number of Venezuelans registered with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Also, the largest category of registrants amongst the DTM respondents were refugees/asylum seekers, as depicted in Graph 7.

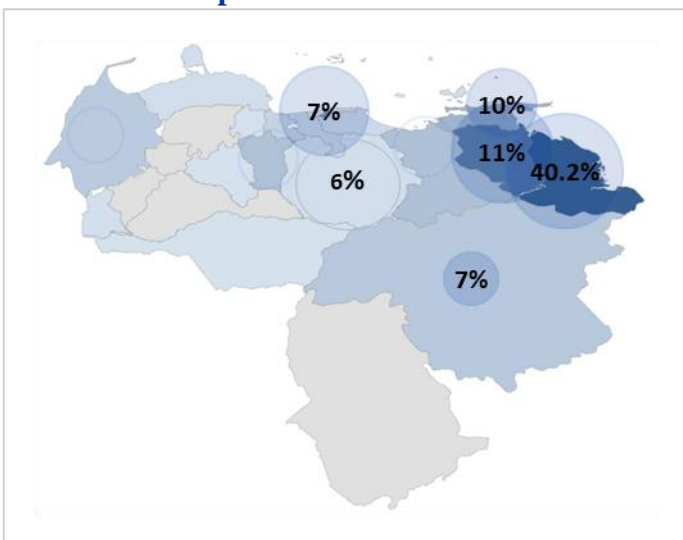
Furthermore, some baseline interviews in Tobago revealed that some persons visited this island for registration purposes and stayed on thereafter.

Most respondents were born in the eastern States of Venezuela, with the highest number of interviewees indicating Delta Amacuro as their state of birth.

Graph 7 – Registration by Status



Map 2 – State of Birth



#### 4. WORK STATUS

The work status of migrants is sometimes affected by their move and as such several respondents encountered notable changes.

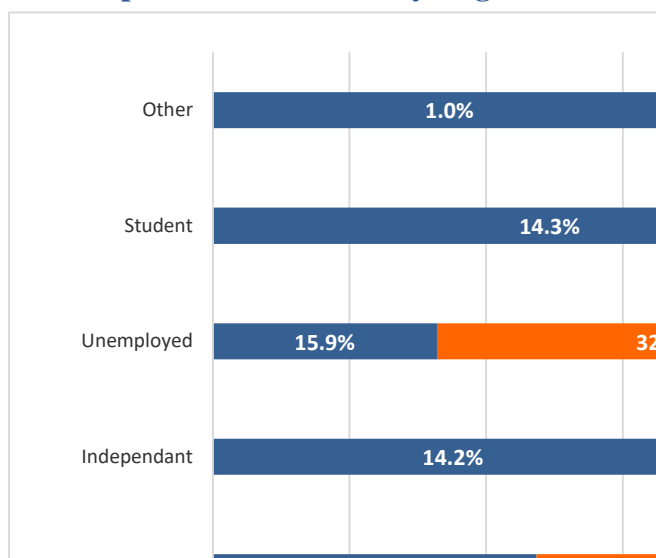
A comparison of the work status of respondents before and after migration confirmed a slight rise in the number of persons employed in the post-migration

With respect to the length of time that these persons have been in Trinidad and Tobago, the findings detailed

period (54.6% before migration and 60.7% after migration). However, there was also a sharp increase in the percentage of unemployed persons as 15.9% of the respondents were reportedly unemployed in Venezuela but this figure climbed to 32.6% after migration to Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, many students discontinued their educational pursuits and were now absorbed largely into the labour market, subsequent to their movement.

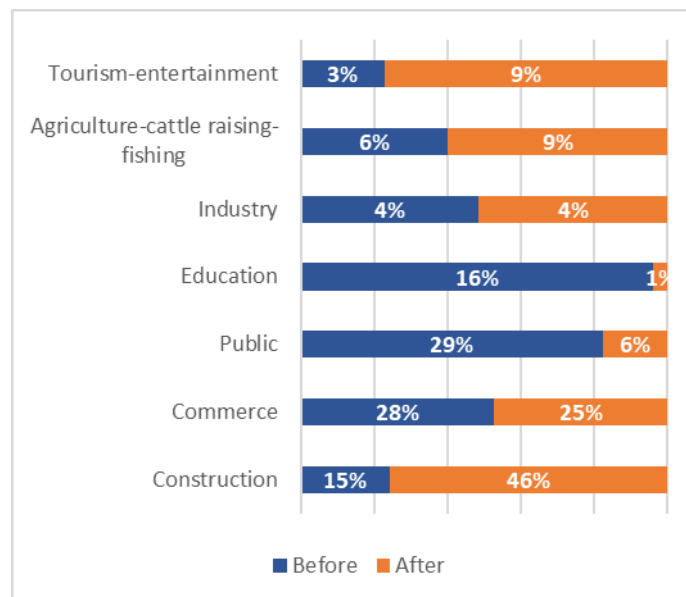
**Graph 8 – Work Status by Migration**



When asked about the sector that they worked in only 16% of the interviewees had continued working in their pre-migration work sectors after their arrival in Trinidad and Tobago.

Furthermore, there was considerable growth in the percentage of respondents presently employed in the construction sector, in comparison to pre-migration figures, a trend that was also identified in the 2018 DTM data.

**Graph 9 – Work Sector**



The data also showed that 60% of the currently employed interviewees work in the informal sector, which was a marked reduction from the 2018 DTM that recorded an informal sector of 90%. This decline may have been impacted by the recently concluded Government registration exercise that enabled legitimate employment options for Venezuelan migrants.

However, 98.6% of respondents working in the informal sector and 76% of those working in the formal sector had not signed a contract and/or had no proof of payment for their services.

An assessment of salaries, either rated hourly or monthly, indicated that 25% of the people working in the formal sector and 30% of those working in the informal sector were underpaid, as they reportedly received less than Trinidad and Tobago’s minimum wages.

Additionally, 26% of the respondents were either not paid or not paid in full for jobs they performed, with the largest number of cases occurring in Trinidad and Tobago, as opposed to any other jurisdiction where they stayed after leaving Venezuela. Most incidents were recorded in construction sector.

Accordingly, the baseline interviews referred to instances of migrant labour exploitation and unfair wages. Yet, some key informants emphasized that the Government registration exercise offered relief to the migrants they interacted with who were previously subjected to workplace intimidation because of their irregular status.

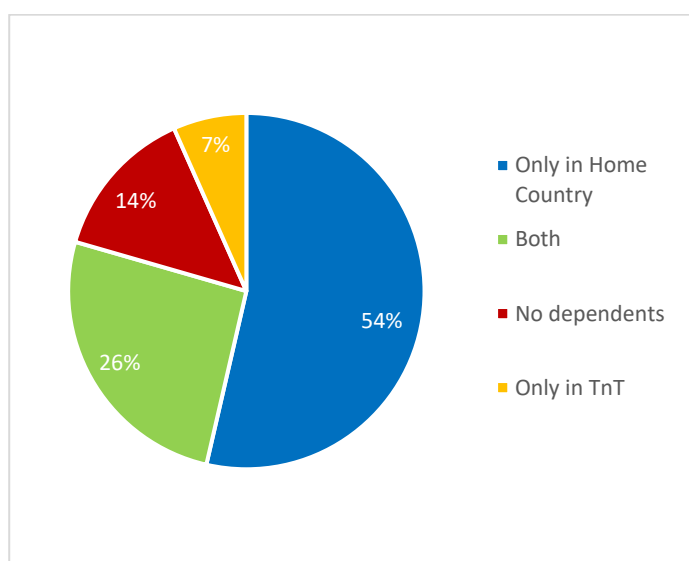
In addition, a small group of respondents stated that they worked against their will and/or were held against

their will. Some also reported that they had witnessed physical and sexual violence, primarily in Trinidad and Tobago, as opposed to any other country.

### 5. DEPENDENTS

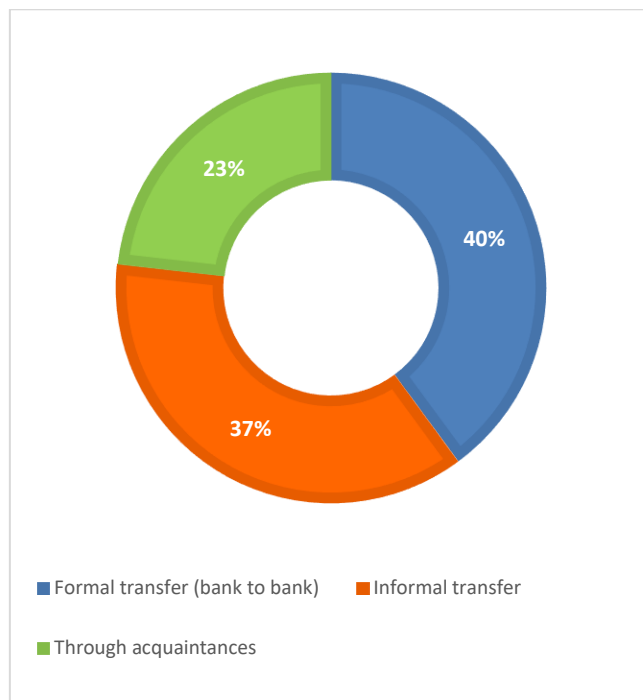
In the case of economic dependents, 7% of the interviewees had dependents in Trinidad and Tobago only whilst 26% had dependents in both Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. Just over half of the respondents however, had dependents in Venezuela only.

**Graph 10 - Dependents by Location**



As a result, 73% of the respondents sent resources to their home country. Of these, 94.7% sent money that was intermittently coupled with food and medicine. It was also noted that formal bank transfer was the most popular means of remitting money, closely followed by informal transfers, as depicted in Graph 11.

**Graph 11 - Means of Remitting Money**

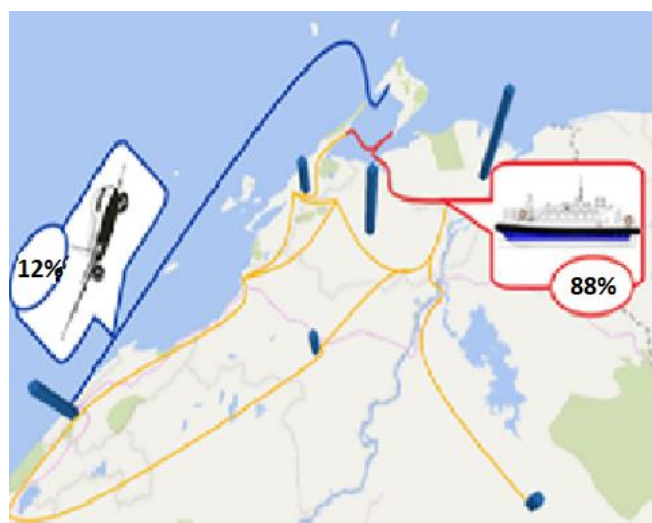


### 6. ROUTES

The actual transit routes of the migrants revealed that 63% began their journey in Tucupita and 88% of all respondents confirmed that their mode of transport to Trinidad was via boat. These two discoveries are also supported by the information captured during the baseline interviews.

A little over a third of the respondents travelled parts of their journey on land with some of them indicating that they used taxis for this transit.

**Map 3 - Routes**

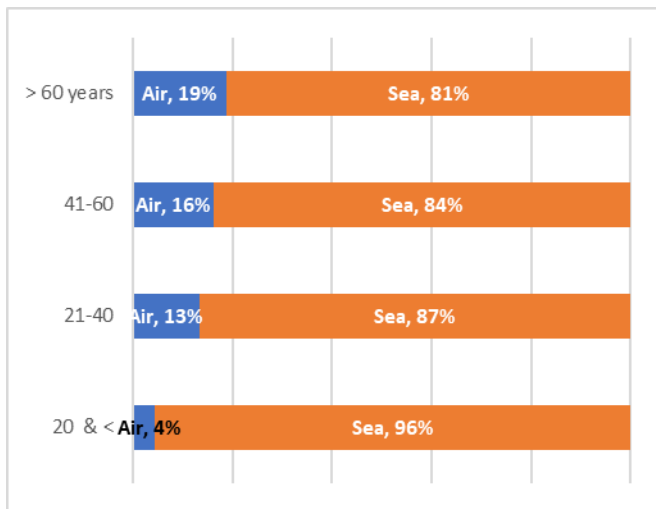


A breakdown of the modes of transportation by age also registered a slight preference for air travel amongst the older age groups, which varied significantly from the



2018 data that showed all the persons 60 and over opted for air travel.

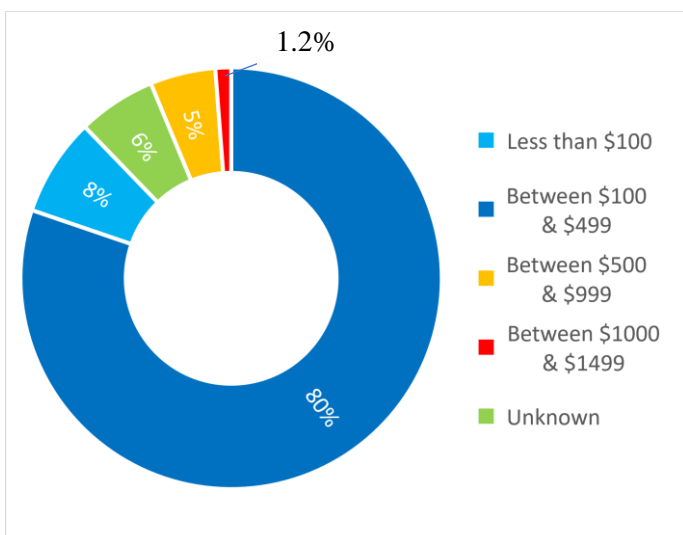
**Graph 12 - Transportation Type by Age**



An examination of travelling companions showed that a little under 50% of the respondents traveled in company of others and 70% of these travelled with their families.

There was also some variation in the cost of these journeys, as it was found that 80% of the interviewees incurred expenses between 100 to 499 US Dollars for their trip and most of these travelers used sea routes. Nevertheless, a few respondents faced significantly higher costs, as 5% of the persons reportedly paid between 500 and 999 US Dollars, whilst 1.2% paid 1000 to 1499 US Dollars. Information from the baseline interviews confirmed the high cost of the travel to Trinidad and Tobago.

**Graph 13 – Cost of Trip**

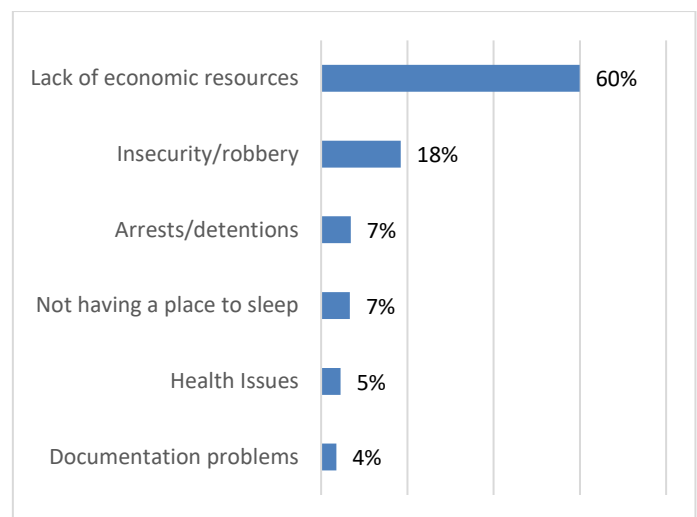


Additionally, 83% of the respondents indicated that they would not advise their routes to others and only 19% had made this trip before.

Unofficial entry points were commonly used to access Trinidad and Tobago, as 70% of the migrants arrived via this option. Therefore, only 29% of the interviewees stated that their passports were officially stamped upon entry, whilst 1% opted not to answer. This information was also evident in the baseline interviews.

Furthermore, regarding the journey itself, 72% of respondents did not report any difficulties during the trip. The most frequently cited difficulty however, amongst the remaining 28%, was a lack of economic resources.

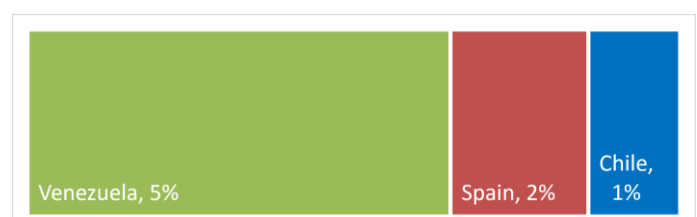
**Graph 14 – Transit Difficulties**



Interviewees were asked about their intended period of stay in Trinidad and Tobago and 77% of the respondents to this question stated that they were uncertain of the length of stay, whilst 8% expressed their intention to stay for more than 12 months and 12% indicated a stay period of 6 to 12 months. A small percentage of the interviewees reported that they intended to stay for less than 6 months.

Nonetheless, 87% of the respondents revealed that Trinidad and Tobago was their final destination country. A few persons, however, identified other final destinations and the main ones are illustrated in Graph 15.

**Graph 15 – Final Destinations**



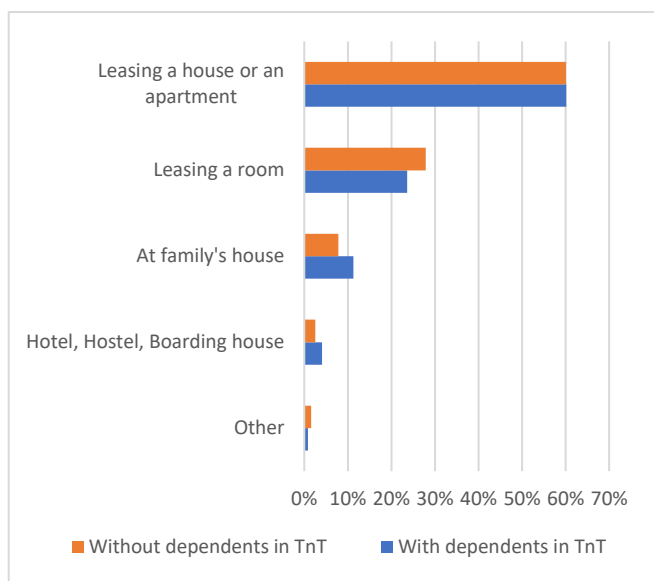
These findings were particularly interesting as some key informants stressed that the Venezuelan migrants do not desire permanent assimilation in Trinidad and Tobago. On the contrary, they regarded their stay as a temporary arrangement until circumstances improved in Venezuela to enable their return.

## 7. ACCOMODATION

In terms of their current housing conditions, 60% of respondents with dependents in Trinidad and Tobago, were renting houses or apartments, whilst almost a quarter of the persons in this category were recorded as renting single rooms.

Correspondingly, 68% of the respondents indicated that they did not have privacy at their selected accommodation.

Graph 16 – Accommodation



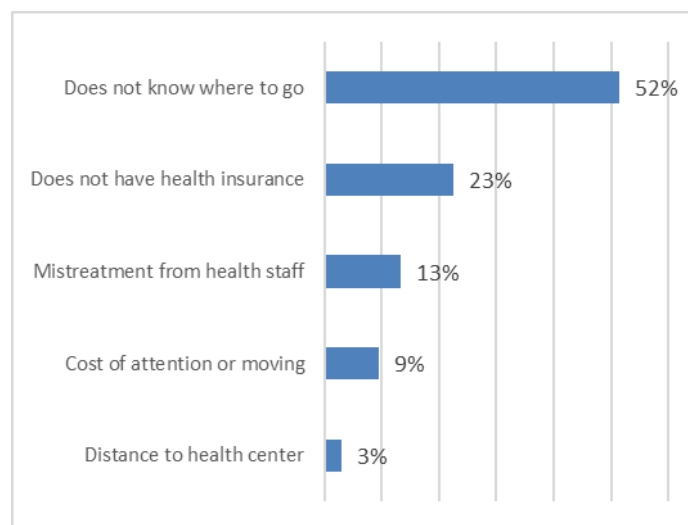
|                                 | With dependents | Without dependents |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Other                           | 0.8%            | 1.6%               |
| Hotel, Hostel, Boarding house   | 4.1%            | 2.5%               |
| At Family's House               | 11.3%           | 7.8%               |
| Leasing a Room                  | 23.7%           | 27.9%              |
| Leasing a House or an Apartment | 60.1%           | 60.1%              |

Some key informants reported that exorbitant rent costs, coupled with an urgent desire to remit huge portions of their earnings to relatives in their home country, have given rise to crowded migrant living arrangements, through which rental costs are shared.

## 8. HEALTH

Health is another core theme of the DTM and 38% of the respondents to the health services question indicated that they had no current need for these services. In contrast, there were some persons who desired these services but encountered difficulties in accessing it, primarily because they did not know where to go, as highlighted in Graph 17.

Graph 17 – Challenges to Health Service Access



Alternatively, migrants who had access to health services generally opted for health centers. However, this choice, may have been influenced by a lack of means, as 81% of all respondents had no health insurance.

Key informants also referred to mobile clinics that were available specifically to assist with the health needs of migrants. Yet, there was no reported use of these facilities amongst the DTM respondents.

The data also showed that 83% of the respondents did not access reproductive and sexual health services. Moreover, 44% of the pregnant mothers were not accessing prenatal services.

Additionally, 85% of the interviewees reported that they did not have any chronic medical conditions, whilst 15% referred to chronic conditions such as: hypertension; asthma; sensory and motor conditions; visual deficiencies; mental health conditions and allergies.

Further to this, some migrants indicated feelings of distress, hopelessness and a lack of interest which may be symptomatic of mental health concerns.

One key informant also cautioned that frustration levels were rising amongst the Venezuelan migrants, as they were desperate to get their families out of Venezuela.



## 9. EDUCATION

The DTM also examined the educational options available to migrant children. More specifically, it was discovered that 62.4% of respondents travelled without children of school age. However, 90% of those with children of school age, stated that their children did not have access to formal education.

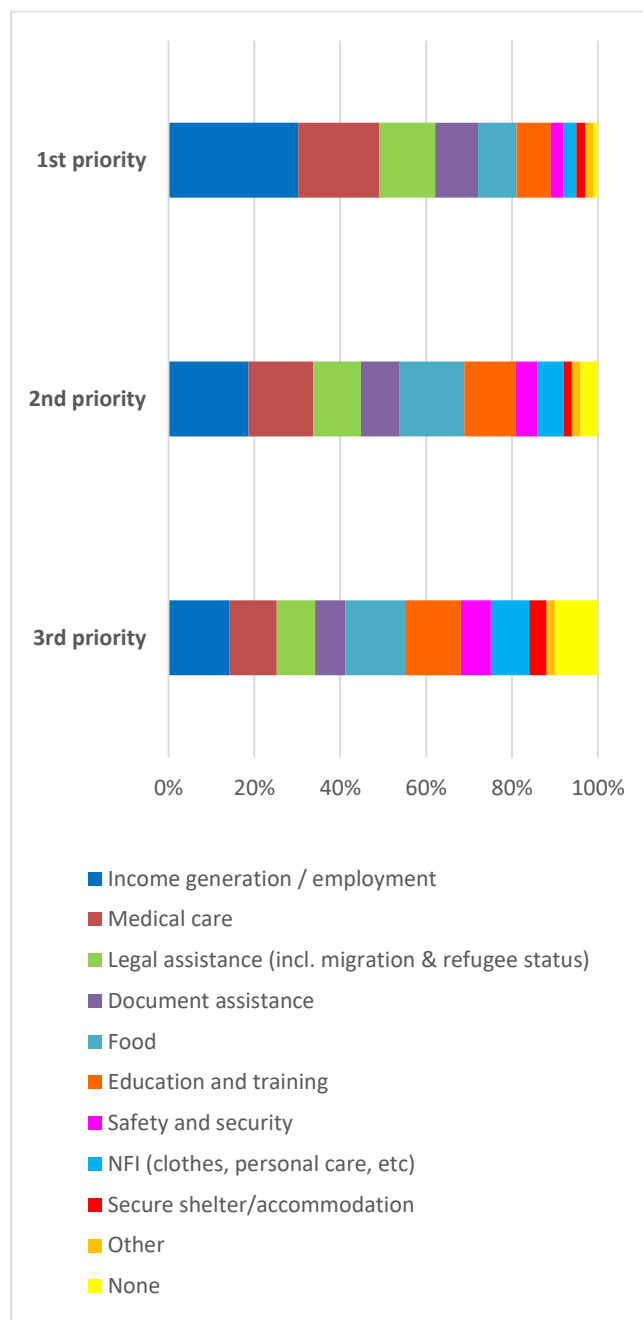
Nevertheless, a few key informants referred to an existing online high school programme in Trinidad and Tobago, for Venezuelan migrant children between the ages 12 to 17, that follows the Venezuelan curriculum.

## 10. NEEDS

Respondents were asked to prioritize their needs and income generation/employment emerged as the first priority need, followed by medical care and legal assistance respectively.

These findings were consistent with the DTM 2018 figures, but it varied compared to the baseline interviews which prioritized shelter, food and work, respectively, as main migrant needs.

**Graph 18 – Prioritized Migrant Needs**



The data also highlighted the following needs of the respondents:

1. Access to Food

24% of respondents were not eating three times a day and 77% of this group did not receive any institutional support.

2. Access to basic services

95% of the respondents had access to both home sanitary services and electricity. However, only 70% of them had access to safe drinking water.

## II. SUMMARY

It is evident, that the need for entry into Trinidad and Tobago is becoming more pressing amongst Venezuelan migrants, as persons are exploring riskier and costlier options, regardless of their age groups.

It was also noted that:

- a large share of their dependents are still resident in Venezuela, which suggests possible family reunification flows.
- the pull factor to the twin-island State persists as jobs remain accessible to the interviewed migrants, although not necessarily within their requisite fields.
- some workers successfully transitioned from the informal to formal sectors, which may have been indicative of the registration process.
  - workplace arrangements and migrant wages, however, must be closely monitored to prevent illegal and unjust practices.
- there were a few instances of persons being held against their will and/or being forced to work against their will, which may point to potential cases of human trafficking.
- the health of the migrants emerged as an area of concern since information on health services options did not reach all the respondents and some of them may be experiencing mental health issues.
- most of the respondents did not access reproductive and sexual health care
- access to formal education for migrant children of school age, and access to basic needs such as food and medicine were all identifiable challenges.
- discrimination claims, based on nationality, rose between 2018 DTM and 2019 DTM.

Thus, there is a vital need for continued review and analysis of the migrant situation in Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that programmatic efforts and policy initiatives are well aligned with existing needs and circumstances.

acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in the meeting of operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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MONITORING MIGRANTS PRESENCE:  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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