

# The Price of Dignity: Migrants' Metaperceptions and Response to Negative Stereotypes

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IPES | Nov. 8, 2024



**Widespread  
anti-immigrant sentiment**



How do migrants respond?

### **How do *migrants' metaperceptions* – their beliefs about how host citizens perceive them – shape their behaviors?**

- How do migrants understand host citizens' (negative) beliefs and attitudes about them?
- How does host bias and stigmatization affect migrants' sense of dignity?
- In what ways do migrants try to change hosts' misperceptions about them? (i.e. counter stereotypes)

## Argument and Contributions

**Argument:** fear of confirming hosts' negative stereotypes will lead migrants to make decisions that may not seem rational (cost-benefit basis) to counteract those stereotypes

**Contribution:** focus on migrants' perspectives and strategies in a non-US/Europe context

**Implication:** possible explanation for the puzzle of why migrants do not make use of aid and welfare services available to them, try to be publicly and politically invisible

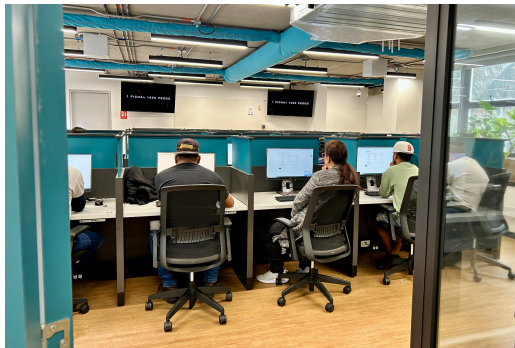
## Context: Venezuelans in Colombia

- Since 2015, nearly 3 million Venezuelans (80% of all Venezuelan migrants) have migrated to Colombia due to a political and economic crisis
- Ethnic, cultural, historical similarities: Spanish, Catholicism, Mestizo race, history of displacement and cross-border exchange
  - But, **Colombians hold mixed/negative views**, including misperceptions, about Venezuelans
- Relatively generous policies: Permiso Especial de Permanencia (PEP/PPT) in 2017 granted legal residency for 2 years, extended in 2021 for 10 years, and access to Sisbén
  - But, **most Venezuelan migrants have not taken advantage of these services despite push by gov't**

## Behavioral Lab Experiments at Universidad del Rosario

- Recruited 290 Colombians and 324 Venezuelans across 16 sessions (40 per session)
- Entered the same waiting room, so they were aware of each other
- 4 Main Games: **Dictator, Ultimatum, Trust, Public Goods**
- **For each game, 3 conditions (x2 rounds):**
  1. No nationality information on partner
  2. Nationality information on receiver
  3. Full information on giver and receiver
- Played with tokens, each token = 1,000 COP. Average earnings between 26,000 to 55,000 COP + showup fee 15,000 pesos, (41,000 COP or 10 USD is minimum daily wage for informal workers)
- Ethical considerations: prevent fears that participation will jeopardize legal status, retraumatization, introducing more bias

# Behavioral Lab Experiments at Universidad del Rosario





## **Countering stereotypes: Venezuelans behave more generously to counter stereotypes that they are lazy/reliant on the state**

**(H1)** In Receiver Info condition, when playing with Colombians, Venezuelans will give slightly more compared to the baseline No Info condition.

**(H2)** In Full Info condition, when playing with Colombians, Venezuelans will give much more compared to the baseline No Info condition.

### **Alternatives:**

Economic rationalism

In-group favoritism

Confirm stereotypes

## Matching Coordination Exercise to Measure Bias and Norms

- A high proportion of Venezuelans (58%) believe that most Colombians perceive them as criminals and as people who take their jobs.
- A low proportion of Venezuelans are aware that most Colombians see them as a burden on public services (45%) and as targets of vote-buying offers (21%)
- More Venezuelan's than Colombians think that Venezuelans should get a formal job/should not use welfare services/should not beg on the street

## Dictator Game - Instructions

You have been randomly assigned the role of the “GIVER”. Your partner in this round will be the “RECEIVER”.

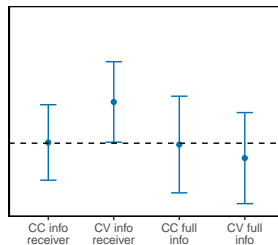
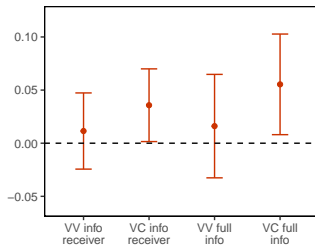
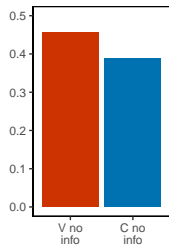
You will start with 10 tokens, the RECEIVER starts with 0 tokens. You can decide how many of your 10 tokens to give to the RECEIVER. You can choose any amount between 0 tokens and 10 tokens.

How many of your 10 tokens do you want to transfer to the RECEIVER?

**[INFO RECEIVER]** You have been randomly assigned the role of the “GIVER”. Your partner in this round will be the “RECEIVER,” who is from [Colombia / Venezuela].

**[FULL INFO]** You have been randomly assigned the role of the “GIVER”. Your partner in this round will be the “RECEIVER,” who is from [Colombia / Venezuela]. The RECEIVER also knows your nationality but nothing else about you.

# Dictator Game - Results: Venezuelans are more generous when playing with Colombians, especially when Colombians know they are Venezuelans



# Trust Game - Results: Venezuelans keep more when both know they are Venezuelans; Colombians show in-group bias

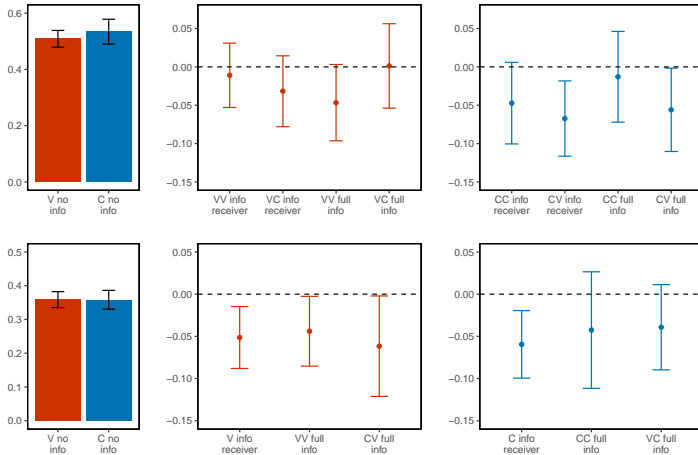
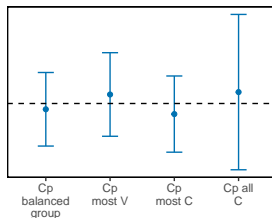
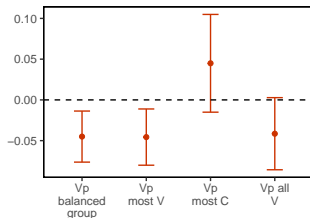
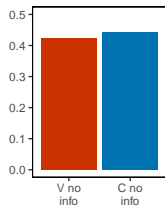


Figure: Givers (top) and Receivers (bottom)

# Public Goods - Results: Venezuelans act more generously when only Venezuelan playing with Colombians

Public Goods Game Coefficient Plot [baseline – VP – CP]



## Summary:

- Some bias against Venezuelans by Colombians (TG)
- Venezuelan migrants are aware of several negative stereotypes that Colombians hold about them (MCG)
- Venezuelans tend to behave more generously when they are knowingly playing with Colombians – “paying a cost for dignity” (DG, PGG)

## Other Analyses:

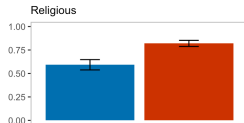
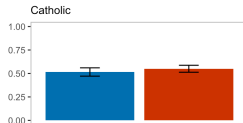
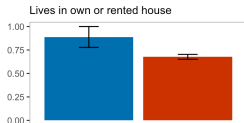
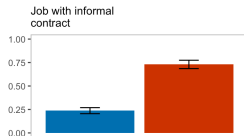
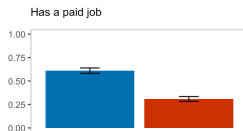
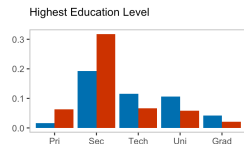
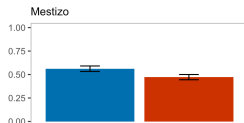
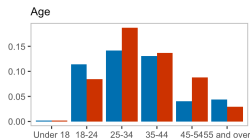
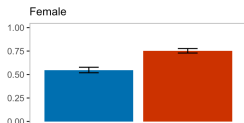
- Moderation analysis by ethnicity, gender, religiosity, immigration attitudes
- Qualitative analysis of short written essays

**Implication:** migrants act in ways to counter stereotypes. In our case, might not sign up for welfare services that they are eligible for, not because of informational gaps, but rather because they do not want to be *perceived* as being on welfare

# Supplementary Info



# Participant Demographics



Colombians  
Venezuelans

# Work-Leisure Tradeoff

**Activity:** Writing exercise

**Instructions:** For Venezuelans – Tell us something about your journey. For Colombians – Tell us something about your impressions or interactions with Venezuelans. (Random incentives: monetary and social benefit)

## Work-Leisure Tradeoff - Results

- Venezuelans and Colombians are equally likely to undertake the writing task ( $p$ -value = 0.85), with 93.8% of Venezuelans and 93.4% of Colombians completing the essays.
- Venezuelans write, on average, 45 more words than Colombians ( $p$ -value = 0.048).
- Groups are unaffected by the monetary or social incentive.