Electoral Effects of Integrating Forced Migrants: Evidence from a Southern Country

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Migration Flows Increase Anti-Immigration Views

► Well documented fact in the Northern Hemisphere
Gerdes and Wadesjo, (2008); Otto and Steinhardt, (2014a); Mendez
and Cutillas, (2014); Harmon, (2017); Halla et al., (2017);
Dustmann et al., (2016); Rozo and Vargas (2021)

► Not so straightforward for the South.
Grossman and Yang-Yang (2022); Rozo and Vargas (2021)

► Specially relevant since 85% of forced migrants are host in
developing countries

Step into the Shoes of a Politician

▶ What would you do when faced with a huge and sudden surge of forced migrants?

▶ *"Of course I want to help Venezuelan migrants, we are all migrants in some way you know? I am just worried about the response from my people. The political backlash could be difficult for my party."*

  Elected Official in Latin America, March 15, 2021

▶ Understanding these effects could facilitate the enactment of more support for refugees.

This Paper: What are the electoral effects of Easing Migrant's Integration in the Global South?

- ▶ Political effects of migration
  Mayda et al., (2016), Tabellini (2019); Alesina and Tabellini (2021); Dustmann et al., (2019)
- ▶ Impacts of migration reforms
  Bahar et al., 2021; Fallah et al., 2019, Bahar et al., 2021; Lombardo et al. 2021; Ibañez et al., 2022
- ▶ Effects of humanitarian interventions on attitudes
  Hainmueller et al., 2015; Baseler et al., 2021

- ▶ **Our contribution**
  - ▶ Electoral impacts of **migration reforms**
  - ▶ Focus on migration reforms w/o direct impacts on hosts
  - ▶ Survey experiment to shed lights on mechanisms
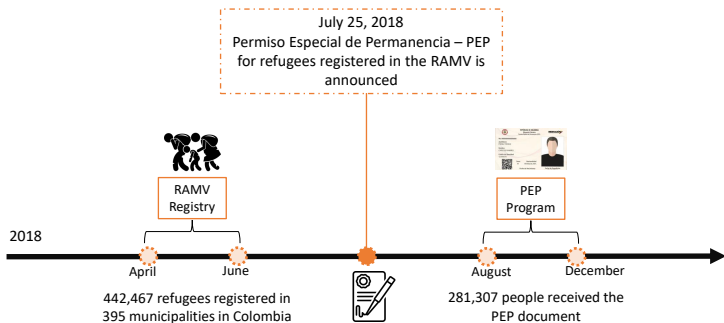
Dynamics of Venezuelan Inflows to Colombia
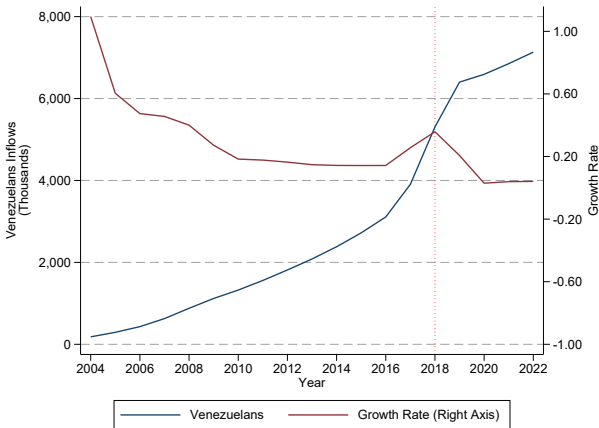
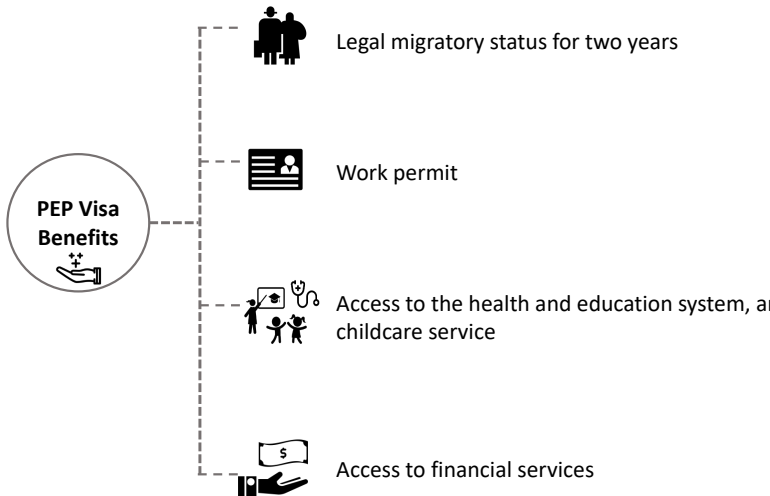**Colombia as main recipient of Venezuelans:**
7.7M Venezuelan migrants globally (as of August 2024) 3M in Colombia
Source: UNHCR

Preview
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Context
○●○

Empirical Strategy
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Results
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Mechanisms
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Conclusion
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Large Regularization in 2018

July 25, 2018
Permiso Especial de Permanencia – PEP
for refugees registered in the RAMV is
announced

RAMV
Registry

PEP
Program

2018

April   June   August   December

442,467 refugees registered in   281,307 people received the
395 municipalities in Colombia   PEP document

Preview
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Context
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Empirical Strategy
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Results
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Mechanisms
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Conclusion
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PEP was a Generous Amnesty

PEP Visa Benefits

Legal migratory status for two years

Work permit

Access to the health and education system, and childcare service

Access to financial services

DiD

- **Migrants "vote with their feet"**

    ⇒ Difference-in-differences in a municipal panel

    - **Temporal variation** ⇒ PEP roll-out in 2018

    - **Cross-sectional variation** ⇒ Program take-up

Main Specification

$$Y_{mdt} = \alpha[\text{PEP}_m \times I(\text{Post 2018})_t] + \sum_{c \epsilon Z}[c_m \times \psi_y] + \gamma_m + \gamma_t + \gamma_{dt} + \epsilon_{mdt} \quad (1)$$

- ▶ m: municipality, d: department, t: election year
- ▶ Y_{mt}: Electoral turnout, % Votes for left-, center-, and right-wing ideologies, electoral competitions
- ▶ C_m: Vector of municipal characteristics (baseline).
- ▶ ψ_t: Election year
- ▶ γ_t: Election-year fixed effects
- ▶ γ_{dt}: Department $\times$ election year fixed effects
- ▶ γ_{md}: Municipality fixed effects

Descriptive statistics - Municipal Baseline Controls

	Year	Average	St. Deviation
Homicide rates (per 100,000 inh.)	2017	10.07	46.91
Number of robberies	2017	200.24	1,218.37
Revenue	2017	49,932.28	218,740.95
Expenditure	2017	49,655.99	220,118.23
Capital Expenditures	2017	42,716.56	188,503.99
Central Government Transfers (SPG)*	2017	19,218.23	62,347.32
SPG in education	2017	7,769.44	41,083.67
SPG in health	2017	6,138.15	15,432.11
SPG in sewage and water	2017	1,298.5	2.304.58
SPG in child nutrition programs	2017	151.73	269.86
SPG in children	2017	133.75	246.87
Rural index (% Rural population)	2017	0.55	0.24
Subsidized Regime Affiliates	2016	14,330.32	86,453.46
Night Light Density	2009	3.85	7.21
Number of Applicants PEP 1 (Aug 2017-Oct 2017)	2017	36.63	293.95
Number of Applicants PEP 2 (Feb 2018-June 2018)	2018	58.3	454.21

Notes: *SPG stands for *Sistema General de Participaciones* and represents the Central Government Transfers to the municipalities. Variables are expressed in millions of Colombian pesos, except for expenditures which are expressed in thousands of Colombian pesos.

Data

1. **PEP take-up**:
   Venezuelans migrants who applied for the PEP program. *Source: Colombian migration authorities.*

2. **Electoral data**:
   Mayoral elections: 6 municipal elections (2000-2019)
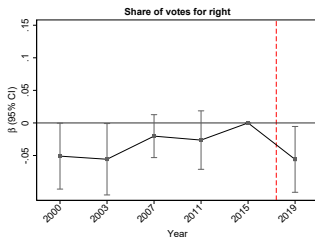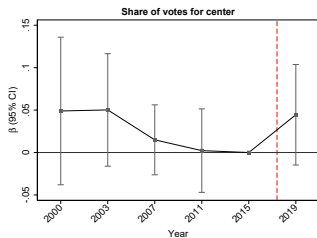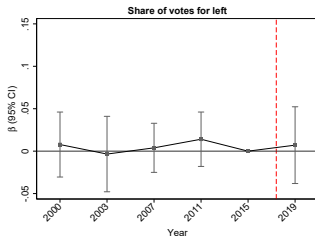   First-Round Presidential Elections: 6 municipal elections (2002-2022)
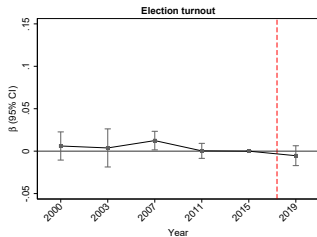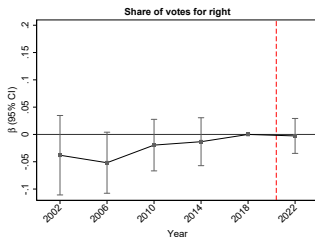   *Source: Colombian Electoral Agency*

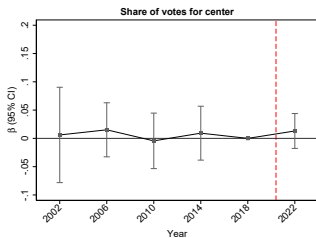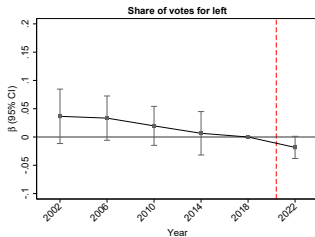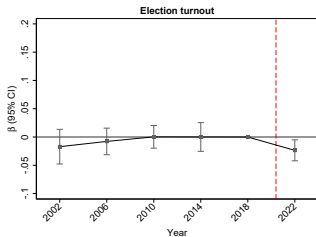3. **Municipal baseline controls**:
   Municipal characteristics before the implementation of PEP
   Source: CEDE, the Ministry of Defense, the National Planning Department, and the Colombian statistics agency.

Parallel Trend Assumption - Mayoral Elections

Parallel Trend Assumption - Presidential Elections

PEP's Impacts on Electoral Outcomes

| | Election Turnout | Share of Votes for | | | Electoral Competition |
| | Turnout | Left | Center | Right | Competition |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A. Mayoral Election - Discrete Treatment Variable					
$I(PEP_m) \times I(Post2018)_t$	-0.006	-0.008	0.015	-0.013	0.007
	(0.003)	(0.019)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.014)
FDR q-values	[0.653]	[1.00]	[1.00]	[1.00]	[1.00]
R-squared	0.853	0.450	0.363	0.422	0.386
Observations	6,174	6,174	6,174	6,174	5,969
Panel B. Mayoral Election - Continuous Treatment Variable					
$PEP_m \times I(Post2018)_t$	-0.004	0.001	0.011	-0.012	0.010
	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.006)
FDR q-values	[0.283]	[0.490]	[0.357]	[0.283]	[0.283]
R-squared	0.853	0.450	0.363	0.422	0.386
Observations	6,174	6,174	6,174	6,174	5,969
Panel C. Presidential Election - Discrete Treatment Variable					
$I(PEP_m) \times I(Post2018)_t$	0.002	-0.009	0.004	-0.001	-0.004
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.013)
FDR q-values	[1.00]	[1.00]	[1.00]	[1.00]	[1.00]
R-squared	0.877	0.898	0.845	0.866	0.682
Observations	6,561	6,561	6,561	6,561	6,549
Panel D. Presidential Election - Continuous Treatment Variable					
$PEP_m \times I(Post2018)_t$	-0.019	-0.038	0.008	0.022	0.050
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.026)
FDR q-values	[0.250]	[0.105]	[0.500]	[0.280]	[0.129]
R-squared	0.877	0.898	0.845	0.866	0.682
Observations	6,561	6,561	6,561	6,561	6,549

▶ No Changes in Electoral Outcomes - Precisely Estimated Zero.

Not a power issue: Electoral Impacts of ETPV program

	Election Turnout	Share of Votes for			Electoral Competition
	(1)	Left (2)	Center (3)	Right (4)	(5)
Panel A. Presidential Elections - Continuous Variable					
$\mathrm{RUMV_d} \times \mathrm{I(Post2018)_t}$	-0.014	-0.047	0.019	0.027	-0.080
	(0.006)	(0.027)	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.040)
FDR q-values	[0.157]	[0.157]	[0.157]	[0.157]	[0.157]
R-squared	0.988	0.959	0.969	0.953	0.879
Observations	198	198	198	198	198
Department FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

▶ ETPV Overview: An expanded version of the PEP, granting Venezuelan migrants who arrived before January 31, 2021, a 10-year permit with the same rights as PEP.

▶ Scale: Six times larger in scope compared to the original PEP program.

Impacts of Migration on Electoral Outcomes

	Election	Share of Votes for		
	Turnout	Left	Center	Right
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A. Mayoral Elections				
Predicted Venezuelan Inflows	0.022*	-0.013*	0.003	0.017*
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.014)	(0.011)
FDR q-values	[0.064]	[0.064]	[0.263]	[0.087]
R-squared	0.797	0.437	0.441	0.484
Observations	4,693	4,693	4,693	4,693
Panel B. Presidential Elections				
Predicted Venezuelan Inflows	0.002	-0.011***	0.003*	0.008***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
FDR R-squared	0.823	0.852	0.942	0.917
Observations	6,768	6,768	6,768	6,768
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Department FE $\times$ Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipal controls $\times$ Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

▶ Migration inflows translate into higher voter turnout and a shift of votes from left-wing to right-wing ideologies.

Other Robustness Tests

1. Functional form specification for the treatment variable:

   $\rightarrow$ Indicator, logarithm, and hyperbolic sine transformation

2. Matching DiD (Parallel trends assumption holds)

3. Potential violation of the parallel trend assumption (Bilinski and Hatfield, 2018)

4. Heterogeneous Treatment Effects (No different impacts in municipalities with lower or higher program take-up)

Exploring Mechanisms

Why do voters show indifference to the PEP program and large
responses to changes in migration inflows?

1. **Lack of Information**

2. **Indifference to arrived migrants**

**We conducted an in-person survey experiment in Bogotá to
shed light on mechanisms**
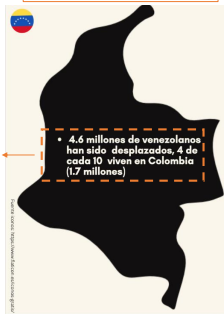
The Experiment

SURVEY EXPERIMENT

- 1,040 Bogotá residents
- 21 years old (18 years old in 2019)

CONTROL GROUP   TREATMENT GROUP

4.6 million Venezuelans have been forcibly displaced and 4 of each 10 live in Colombia (1.7million)

- 4.6 millones de venezolanos han sido desplazados, 4 de cada 10 viven en Colombia (1.7 millones)

- 4.6 millones de venezolanos han sido desplazados, 4 de cada 10 viven en Colombia (1.7 millones)

- 281 mil venezolanos indocumentados han sido legalizados a través del Permiso Especial de Permanencia que les da: permiso de trabajo, acceso a programas sociales (Ej: regimen subsidiado de salud) y acceso al sistema financiero.

281 thousand irregular Venezuelan migrants have been legalized through the Permiso Especial de Permanencia which grants them, a work permit, access to social programs (such as subsidized health regime), and access to financial services.

Successful Randomization

Variable	Control	Treatment	P- value
Age	51.007	49.362	0.106
Male [=1]	0.476	0.526	0.107
Ed: Primary school or less [=1]	0.163	0.172	0.696
Ed: Secondary school or less [=1]	0.364	0.370	0.842
Ed: Tchnician, university or more [=1]	0.473	0.457	0.628
Married or Cohabitating [=1]	0.535	0.526	0.785
Economic Strata: Low [=1]	0.498	0.500	0.953
Economic Strata: Medium [=1]	0.308	0.314	0.833
Economic Strata: High [=1]	0.194	0.186	0.746
Employed [=1]	0.899	0.872	0.293
Labor Contract [=1]	0.404	0.440	0.418
Student [=1]	0.132	0.123	0.686
Political Interest [=1]	0.771	0.743	0.291
Voted in mayoral 2019 elections	0.731	0.717	0.610
Voted in presidential 2022 elections	0.789	0.765	0.349
Join F-Test			0.394
Observations	546	494	1,040

Experiment Results

1. No changes on
   - ▶ Voting intentions
   - ▶ Social capital
   - ▶ Altruism (dictator game)
   - ▶ Attitudes towards migrants

2. Results robust to social desirability bias
   - ▶ List experiment
   - ▶ Social desirability bias scale

Results on Voting Intentions, Social Capital and Altruism

Panel A. Voting Intentions				
	Vote intention in 2023 Mayoral elections	Vote intention in 2026 Presidential elections	–	–
I(Treatment)	-0.024	-0.025	–	–
	(0.023)	(0.023)	–	–
R-squared	0.018	0.013	–	–
Observations	1,040	1,040	–	–
Panel B. Social Capital				
	Positive Reciprocity Index	Negative Reciprocity Index	Altruism	Trust
I(Treatment)	0.019	-0.023	-0.017	-0.036
	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.061)	(0.061)
R-squared	0.029	0.000	0.022	0.013
Observations	1,040	1,040	1,040	1,040
Panel C. Altruism				
	Money will kept by their-self (log)	Money will share with vulnerable Venezuelan (log)	Money will share with vulnerable Colombian (log)	–
I(Treatment)	0.011	-0.024	-0.043	–
	(0.063)	(0.044)	(0.032)	–
R-squared	0.028	0.010	0.017	–
Observations	332	434	796	–

▶ No Changes in Prosocial Behaviors or Voting Intentions.

Results on Attitudes Towards Migrants

	Colombian government has to help Venezuelans	In favor to a law that helps Venezuelans	Venezuelans compete with Colombians jobs
	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Treatment)	0.026	0.025	0.065
	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.061)
R-squared	0.032	0.036	0.007
Observations	1,040	1,040	1,040
Mean values (Control Group)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Venezuelans increase crime	Venezuelans improve Colombian culture	Positive effect of Venezuelans in Colombia
	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Treatment)	-0.066	-0.051	-0.028
	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.031)
R-squared	0.021	0.027	0.027
Observations	1,040	1,040	1,040
Mean values (Control Group)	0.000	0.000	0.566

▶ No Changes in Attitudes Towards Migrants.

▶ Coefficients exceed 2%, ruling out statistical imprecision.

▶ Sample size powered to detect effects of 2

Conclusion

▶ Negligible electoral effects toward the PEP program

▶ Not explained by voter's lack of information

▶ We speculate that voters respond to inflows but not policies that affect migrants after they arrive (if inflows are controlled)

▶ The results are in line with previous work documented that the PEP program not induced to negative effects on labor or crime outcomes

▶ Native's political behaviors are unaffected by policies that easing migrants economic integration in context with a large informal sector and controlled inflows of migrants

Key Policy Recommendations

Promote Regularization Policies:

▶ Evidence shows no adverse effects on native voting behavior.

▶ Policymakers can expand and sustain these initiatives.

▶ These programs support economic and social integration of migrants (Ibáñez et al., 2024).

Complement with Public Communication:

▶ Address concerns about job displacement, crime, and fiscal impacts.

▶ Enhance public awareness to prevent political backlash

Thank you!

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