

Struggles in the journey north: Canada's response to Venezuelan migration

Berti Olinto, CERC Migration

Abstract

Over the last ten years, the community of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum claimants has notably grown in Canada's major and medium-size cities. While at the same time Canada's response to the exodus from Venezuela has focused more on providing financial support to host countries in South America and less on providing culturally focused immigration and settlement options in Canada. As a result, the country has become an 'alternative destination', particularly for those Venezuelans who struggle to settle in the United States and consider Canada as a more 'welcoming' country towards racialized migrants. This research explores perspectives and opinions from Venezuelan immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and leaders from community and nonprofit organizations. Comparisons are also made between pre- and post-pandemic arrivals in terms of their trajectories, and the various decision-making influences, including pull factors, migration routes, service access and their struggle for community engagement. The analysis also sheds light on how Venezuelan migrants navigate the complexities of migration in North America and how they have faced the difficulties of coming from a country that previously had an immigration rather than an emigration history.

Biography

Berti Olinto is a researcher with the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration program (CERC Migration) at Toronto Metropolitan University. His research interests focus on diasporic communities, migrant labour, and media discourses. Berti has conducted research on Venezuelan migration to Canada and the Venezuelan diaspora in North America. He coordinates the Canada's Response to Venezuelan Arrivals Project (CANVAS) at CERC Migration and supports a multidisciplinary team in the project Strengthening the Capacities of Local Authorities in the Reception and Integration of Migrants and Refugees, promoted by the Department of Social Inclusion of the Organization of American States (OAS). He holds a master's in Immigration and Settlement Studies at the Toronto Metropolitan University and a master's in communications studies at The University of London, Goldsmiths College.