

The purpose

What have been the dynamics of internal displacement in Colombia and the main policy lessons that can be drawn from more than 20 years of history?

This document aims to explore these questions by reviewing the paper *Promoting recovery and resilience for internally displaced persons: lessons from Colombia (2022)* written by Ana María Ibáñez, Andrés Moya, and Andrea Velásquez (Part 1). The discussion will be complemented using the PDETs Population Triage developed by the National Statistics Office (DANE) to delve deeper in the contexts of regions that historically have been the most affected by the conflict (Part 2). **It is expected that this discussion about academic research can be used for operational purposes by UNHCR, following an evidence-based approach that enhances the response to the needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).**

Key Messages

1. The legal framework in Colombia is considered one of the most progressive and comprehensive in the world and has made progress in assisting IDPs. However, 62% of IDPs remain vulnerable as of 2021, according to the Victims Unit, which calls for more efforts to be put into overcoming vulnerability, improving the living conditions, and promoting solutions for IDPs.

2. The evidence suggests that internal displacement causes permanent shocks in monetary and non-monetary dimensions, which must be addressed. IDPs, on average, recover only 40% of income and 70% of consumption after a year of being forcibly displaced, contributing to the persistence of vulnerability over time. The permanent shock can be attributed to the loss of support networks, difficulty in finding formal jobs that match their skills, deteriorated mental health due to the violence, increased protection risks and incidents suffered (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

3. Complementary poverty measures (monetary and multidimensional) show that IDPs have historically presented higher poverty rates than the national average, doubling by 2020 (18% of non-IDP households

are affected by multidimensional poverty, compared to 33% of households in regions with large share of IDPs - PDET territories). IDP households also face more deprivations than non-IDP households:

- A larger proportion of IDP households have low educational achievement.
- Educational underachievement and non-attendance are higher for IDP households.
- A larger portion of IDP households lack access to formal employment (no guarantee of social protection or income stability).
- Improving housing conditions, access to clean water sources and adequate sewerage is critical for IDP households, as this dimension has the most significant gaps compared to non-IDPs.

4. Public policies and the response of international organizations should focus on breaking the vicious cycle of the negative impact of forced displacement, as well as the repercussions of different generations.

*The boundaries, names shown, articles reviewed, and the designations used on this document do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Part 1: Overview of the issue and review of the paper

Global Forced Displacement Trends

By 27 October 2022, more than **103 million** people were forcibly displaced, a number that has doubled in the past decade (Global Trends UNHCR, 2023). People were forced to flee because of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order. Among them, **53.2 million are IDPs** (IDMC, 2021), **32.5 million are refugees**, **4.9 million are asylum-seekers** and **5.3 million correspond to other people in need of international protection**, mainly Venezuelan refugees and migrants (UNHCR, 2023). However, as pointed out by Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez (2022), the global refugee crisis is also a crisis of internally displaced persons. **IDPs account for more than 50%** of the total number of forcibly displaced people worldwide. The increase in internal displacement has led governments, international agencies, and donors to focus on developing legal and policy frameworks that seek to provide durable solutions that protect and promote livelihood opportunities for the internally displaced population (Ibáñez, Moya & Velásquez, 2022).

IDPs trends in Colombia

According to the Global Trends, by the end of 2022 Colombia was the second country with the largest internally displaced population in the world. According to the Victims Unit, there are 9,423,138 historical cumulative victims of the armed conflict, with **89% (8,391,662) being victims of forced displacement** (6.8 million still in need of assistance) (accessed March 10, 2023). IDPs in Colombia make up 16.2% of the Colombian

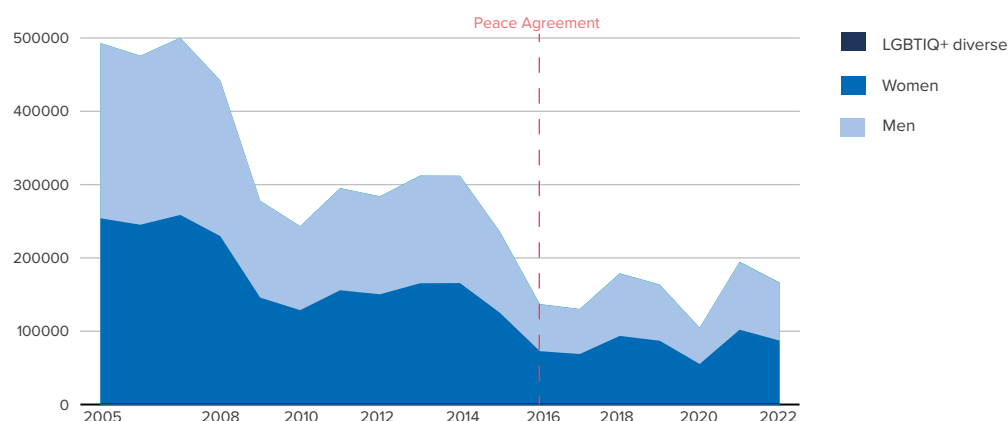
population and 15.7% of IDPs worldwide (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

IDPs include women and men, as well as LGBTIQ+ people. Although there was a decrease in the number of IDPs between 2005 and 2022, with an average of 151,750 IDPs per year after the 2016 Peace Agreement compared to 350,042 before 2016, there was a significant increase in internal displacement between 2020 and 2021 due to the intensification of violence (Figure 1). The power vacuum in areas previously controlled by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has also contributed to the increase.

In an effort to understand the dynamics of internal displacement in Colombia, Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez (2022) provide two conceptual categories:

- **Reactive:** People are forced to flee when they are exposed directly to violence. Multiple sources of violence contribute to this type of forced displacement: threats, homicides, forced disappearances, kidnappings, confrontation between armed groups and massacres. It is the main driver of internal displacement in Colombia, accounting for 87% of all internal displacement since 2004 (Ibáñez, 2008, as cited in, Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).
- **Preventive:** People are forced to flee to avoid victimization that has not yet occurred.

Figure 1 | IDPs in Colombia 2005-2022



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the National Victims Unit, retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes> in December 2022.

What can we say about the consequences of forced displacement in IDPs in Colombia by considering this conceptual framework?

The consequences of forced displacement on IDPs are not homogenous and depend on both socioeconomic and context factors, such as historical violence in some regions of the country. The study highlights three key aspects:

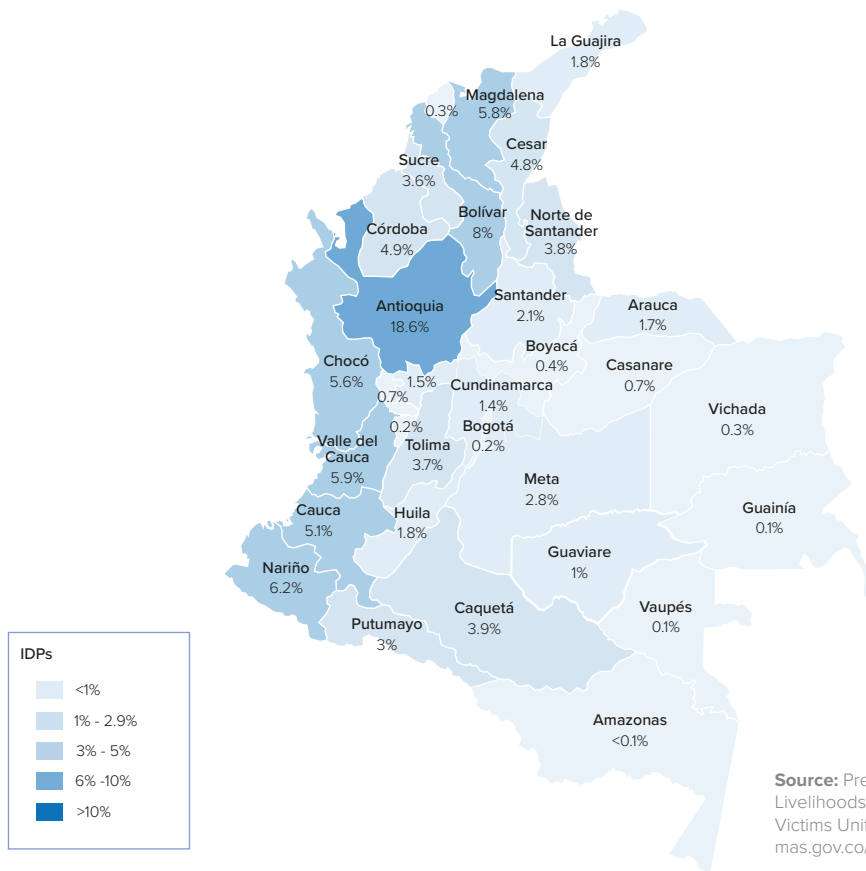
- 1. The negative impact on IDPs well-being is smaller for households who have displaced preventively than those displaced reactively.** Why? One plausible explanation is that these households are better able to prepare when they are forced to flee, allowing them to protect their assets and to reach out to their social networks.
- 2. The decision to flee is made at the household level, therefore most IDPs see displacement as a permanent decision.** Also, in the majority of the cases, all family members move together. Furthermore, half of the time families stay within the same department and in 18% of the cases within the same municipality.
- 3. In contrast to other contexts, internal displacement in Colombia has mostly occurred in small groups**

rather than massively. By 2007, an estimated of 80% of internal displacement occurred by one or a handful of households that settle in the outskirts of urban areas.

Besides, over the past two decades, internal displacement has seen an increase both in terms of the number of affected individuals and its geographical reach. In the 1990s, only 3% of municipalities had experienced forced displacement. However, by 2020, this phenomenon had touched every single municipality (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

Furthermore, approximately 44% of internal forced displacement is concentrated in 5 departments: Antioquia (18.6%), Bolívar (8.0%), Nariño (6.2%), Valle del Cauca (5.9%), and Magdalena (5.8%) (Figure 2). The strategic location of these areas and the confluence of many irregular armed actors (guerillas, paramilitary groups, criminal gangs, among others) that fight for the control of the territory explain their exposure to violence.

Figure 2 | Geographic distribution of forced displacement in Colombia. 1985-2022



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the National Victims Unit, retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes> in December 2022.

High-level demographics of IDPs

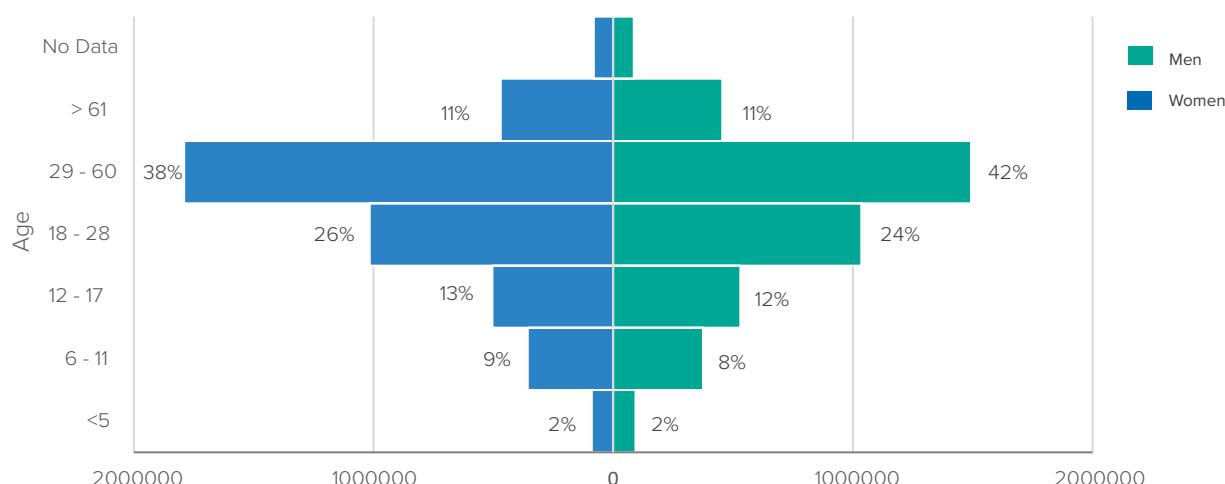
The demographic composition of IDPs shows that both women and men are recognized as victims in similar proportions, with 48.6% being women, 51.4% being men, and 0.1% belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community. (Figure 3).

Moreover, IDPs are primarily of working age, with 7 out of 10 being in this category, and both women and men presenting similar composition. Internal displacement forces people to abandon their livelihoods, mostly agriculture, and reduces their opportunities to utilize their capacities.

The transition from rural to urban areas accelerates the deterioration of their conditions as they are forced to flee to locations in which it is more difficult to find employment (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

Children and older people account for 30% of IDPs, pointing to the need for comprehensive policy frameworks that guarantee their protection. In particular, 2 out of 10 IDPs were aged 18 or below, and 1 out of 10 were older than 60 years (National Victims Unit, 2023).

Figure 3 | Forcibly displaced persons in Colombia. Gender, age.



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the National Victims Unit, retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes> in December 2022.

Other characteristics of IDPs in Colombia

Evidence examining differences between IDPs and other socioeconomic vulnerable groups (urban poor, rural poor and urban homeless) in Colombia suggests that they face similar conditions as these groups. According to Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez (2022), IDP households are large (more than 4 members), have a high proportion of dependents, have female household heads and have

low educational attainment (Table 1). On the other hand, the incidence of internal displacement on ethnic minorities is higher, with a particularly disproportionate impact of the conflict on indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, accounting for 21%, ten percentage points more than the other groups.

Table 1 | Characteristics of IDPs in Colombia

Variable	IDP	Urban poor	Rural poor	Urban homeless
Household size	4.9	4.4	4.7	4.4
Number of children under the age of 14	2.14	1.5	1.9	1.7
Number of individuals aged between 14 and 60	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.4
Number of adults over the age of 60	0.23	0.3	0.3	0.3
Female household head (%)	38	35.7	22.7	37.5
Widow household head (%)	14	10.5	10.2	11.6
Years of education of household head	4.5	5.8	3	4.9
Years of education of other adults over the age of 18	4.3	6.4	3.6	5.4
Households who belong to an ethnic minority	21	9.3	13.6	10.5

Source: Table is taken from: Ibáñez, A. M., Moya, A., & Velásquez, A. (2022). Promoting recovery and resilience for internally displaced persons: lessons from Colombia. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 38(3), p. 602.

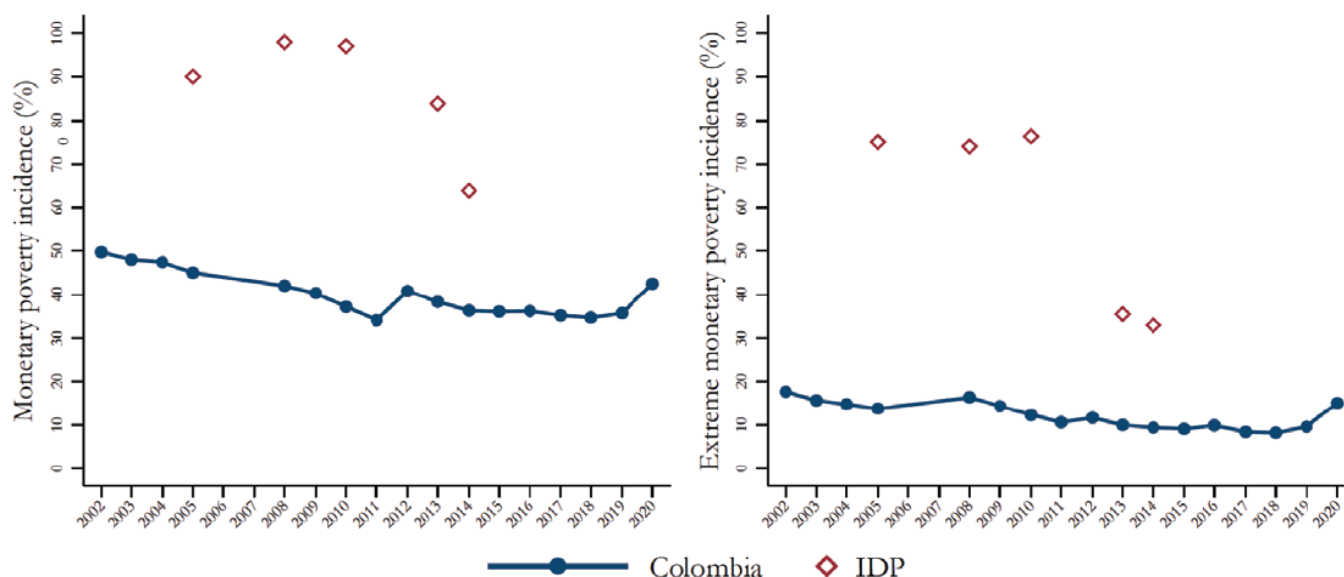
Consequences of Internal Displacement

Poverty

IDPs have historically had high poverty rates, more than doubling the national average before 2013 (when it was at its peak). Despite the lack of recent poverty estimates for IDPs, Ibáñez, Moya & Velásquez (2022) use different sources to illustrate IDP poverty levels in the past (Figure 4). The situation is largely explained by the lack of integration on local and regional value chains, the presence of illicit economies, the absence of the State and violence.

However, the gap has been closing. In 2005, around 9 out of 10 IDPs were poor compared to 5 out of 10 for the national average, while the latest estimate (2014) suggests that it decreased to approximately 6 out of 10 IDPs. This is also true for extreme poverty, which declined from approximately 75% to less than 40% in the period between 2005 to 2014. As highlighted by the authors, the measures adopted by the State (Victims Law, for instance) have contributed to improving the conditions of IDPs, yet there is still much to do¹. More recent estimations from the National Victims Unit (2021) suggest that 62% of IDPs are still vulnerable.

Figure 4 | Poverty and extreme poverty rates- IDPs vs national averages



Notes: Evolution of poverty and extreme poverty rates (% of the population below the national income poverty and extreme poverty line). The continuous lines illustrate national poverty and extreme rates according to official statistics from DANE. The diamonds illustrate the poverty and extreme poverty rates for IDPs as estimated by the following studies. 2005: Deininger *et al.* (2005); 2008: Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia (2008); 2010: Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia (2010); 2013: Contraloría General de la República de Colombia (2015); 2014: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (2015).

Source: Figure is taken from-. Ibáñez, A. M., Moya, A., & Velásquez, A. (2022). Promoting recovery and resilience for internally displaced persons: lessons from Colombia. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 38(3), p. 607. Figure 4 shows the evolution of poverty and extreme poverty rates from 2002 to 2020, comparing the national average vs IDPs. The footnote of Figure 4 shows the sources and official statistical pages of DANE, where the authors obtained the information to construct the graph.

¹ In 2004, the Constitutional Court declared the existence of an Unconstitutional State of Affairs (ECI by its Spanish acronym) in the area of forced displacement, as a consequence of the serious, massive and systematic violation of the fundamental rights of IDPs (Ruling T-025 of 2004). This led to the development of the Victims Law and Land Restitution in 2011, which established measures for attention, assistance and comprehensive reparation to the victims of internal armed conflict. It recognizes the rights of the victims to know the truth, to be repaired for the damage suffered also with physical and psychological support, to receive justice and to ensure the non-repetition of those events. Despite the progress and the normative framework, it has been insufficient to protect and repair IDPs.

Income and consumption shocks after internal displacement

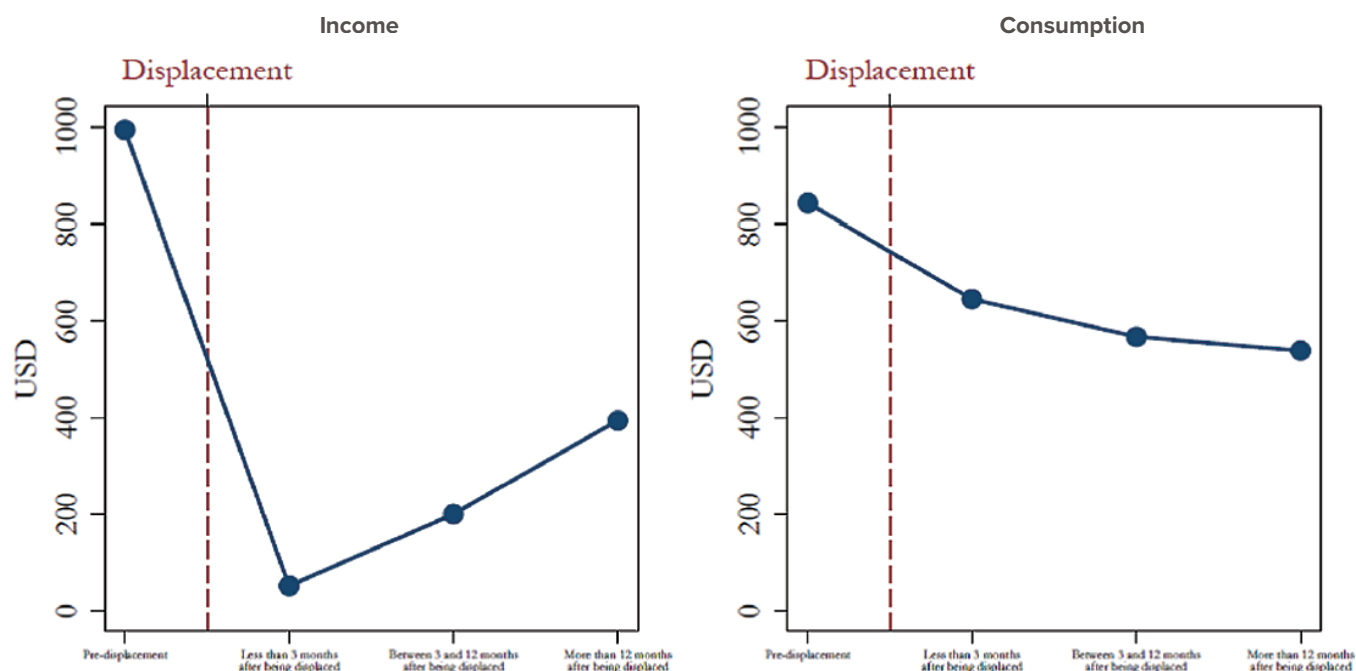
Evidence suggests that the impact of internal displacement on the socio-economic situation of affected populations is a permanent negative shock. IDPs on average recover only 40% of their pre-displacement income, and 70% of pre-displacement consumption after a year of being forcibly displaced. Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez (2022) create the evolution of average annual income and consumption over the first year of internal displacement and estimate the impact of forced internal displacement (Figure 5). Three months after displacement, income losses are equivalent to 95% of pre-displacement income. Consumption is estimated to have less of a shock because IDPs receive humanitarian aid from the state and other organizations.

The permanent shock is partially attributable to the fact that a large proportion of IDPs transition from rural to urban areas during internal displacement, eroding social

capital, disrupting transitional support networks, and increasing exposure to protection risks which often prompts them to resort to dangerous coping strategies (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022). These effects end up affecting their productive capacities due to the skills mismatch, reducing their possibilities to find a job. Moreover, it also affects their mental well-being, hampering their development opportunities (Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

On the other hand, intergenerational analysis shows that violence that leads to internal displacement hinders early childhood development. It increases the likelihood of malnourishment by 18 percentage points. Also, higher levels of childhood trauma affect socioemotional and cognitive development (Becerra, 2014; Ibáñez, Moya and Velásquez, 2022).

Figure 5 | Aggregate income and consumption before and after internal displacement



Source: Figure is taken from- Ibáñez, A. M., Moya, A., & Velásquez, A. (2022). Promoting recovery and resilience for internally displaced persons: lessons from Colombia. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 38(3), p. 607.

Part 2: Multidimensional Poverty Analysis

What else can we learn from more recent estimates and other approaches that try to delve deeper in the living conditions of IDPs?

The lack of updated poverty rates for IDPs led us to explore other sources to understand their living conditions. In an effort to tackle this question, in this section we explore the multidimensional poverty in specific regions of the country called Regional Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET) as these territories are a good proxy to understand the dynamics in conflict-affected zones where internal displacement occurred.

What are the PDET?

PDET are a planning and management instrument implemented by the Colombian government after the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement. It aims to promote economic and social development in regions affected by the armed conflict through the provision of infrastructure, services, and opportunities in order to improve the living conditions of victims and host communities. PDETs include 170 municipalities in 19 departments grouped into 16 subregions (Figure 6). The selection of PDET municipalities is based on a series of prioritized characteristics including historical poverty conditions, impact by the conflict, presence of illicit economies and historical absence of the State. Therefore, we consider PDET regions as good proxies to characterize the living conditions of IDPs because a large share of IDPs live in these municipalities and, according to the Victims Unit, almost 80% of victims are victims of internal forced displacement.

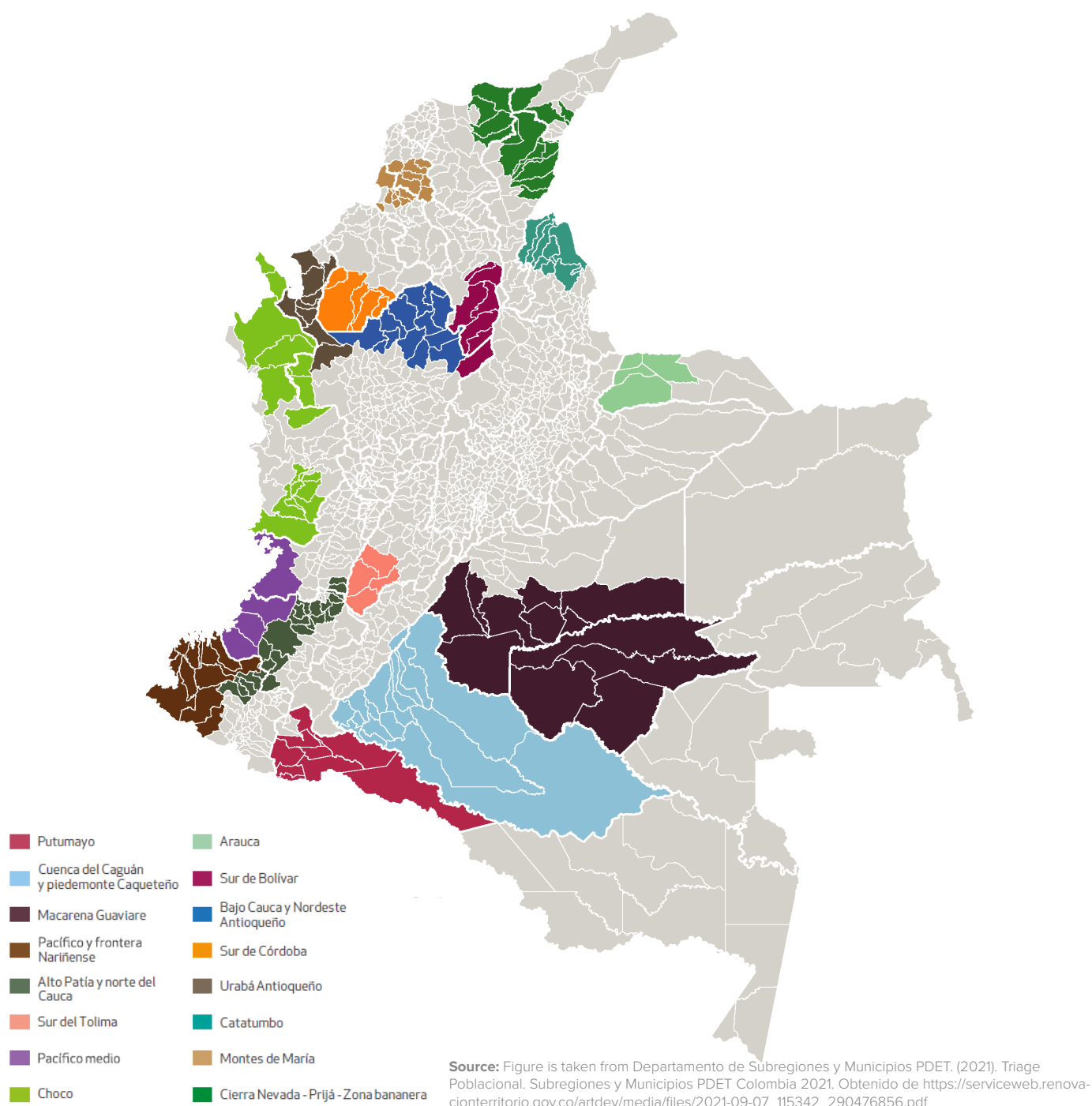
Population Triage

The Population Triage is a tool implemented by the National Statistics Office (DANE) that presents demographic and socioeconomic indicators for national aggregate figures and PDET municipalities. It allows local authorities, policymakers and citizens to have information regarding the characteristics of the population in a comparative manner at the municipal, departmental, and national levels. The primary objective is to provide area-based diagnostics that support (i) the policymaking process and (ii) the creation of strategies to improve the well-being of IDPs and other conflict victims in alignment with the 2030 SDGs Agenda. Likewise, the population triage allows measuring multidimensional poverty in these regions.

Description of the population in PDET regions (DANE, 2021)

- In 2022, in Colombia, there are 51.6 million inhabitants.
- 6.6 million people live in PDET regions, 2.5 million of whom are victims of the conflict (38%).
- The proportion of women and men living in PDET municipalities is the same (50%).
- The proportion of children under 15 years of age living in PDET municipalities is 29%, while the national average is 23%. Specifically, 96% of the PDET municipalities have a higher proportion of population under 15 years of age than the national total.
- In PDET municipalities, 42.9% of the population resides in rural areas, which is significantly higher than the national average of 23.8% living in rural zones.

Figure 6 | Regions in Colombia with high numbers of IDPs that are prioritized for government development programs (PDET) as part of the 2016 Peace Agreement



What is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)?

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a poverty measure that captures the multiple dimensions of poverty and the experience of being poor by determining the deprivation and intensity of deprivation people face in a predefined set of categories. It was developed by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and is designed to complement traditional income-based poverty measures by providing a more nuanced understanding of poverty and the specific deprivations that poor people experience. It is a complementary measure and by no means aims to replace monetary poverty. The MPI is calculated for PDETs in the Population Triage.

Colombia MPI

The MPI in Colombia is developed by the National Planning Department (DNP) and consists of 5 dimensions and 15 variables. According to this measure, a household is considered to be multidimensionally poor if it is deprived in at least one-third (33%) of the indicators. This indicator is constructed with data from the National Quality of Life Survey (ENCV) together with census data.

Figure 7 | MPI – National and aggregate for regions with large share of IDPs. 2018, 2019, 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions based on DANE (2020). Retrieved from: https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/condiciones_vida/pobreza/2018/información-censal/nota-metodologia-censal-pobreza-municipal-2018.pdf

MPI analysis by dimensions- deprivation variables 2020

MPI measure - Aggregate

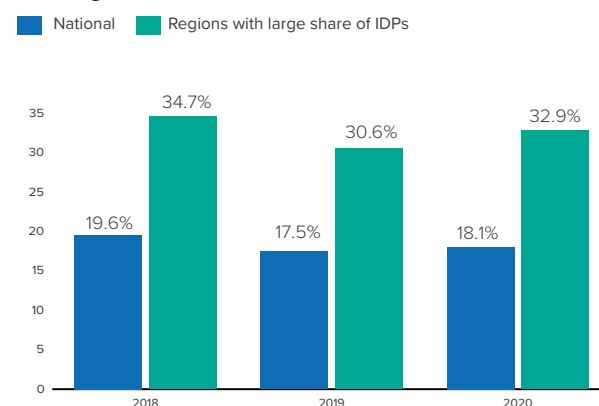
Multidimensional poverty is notably more pronounced in regions with a large share of IDPs, nearly doubling the national average (figure 8). Specifically, while 18% of people experience multidimensional poverty across the entire country, this figure rises to 33% in areas with a large share of IDPs (PDET regions). This discrepancy underscores the enduring impact of historical impoverishment, susceptibility to conflict, and the limited presence of governmental institutions within these territories. Conversely, in regions with a large share of IDPs, the MPI experienced a slight increase of approximately 2 percentage points between 2019 and 2020. However, it's worth noting that this increase remains below the levels recorded in 2018.

Additionally, poverty and scarcity of resources affect the decision-making process, leading to non-optimal decisions in many cases that could end up hindering their development (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013).

What are Colombia's multidimensional poverty rates in each dimension?

The information of the percentage of households deprived per indicator for the 5 dimensions is presented below. The objective is to understand which are the main deprivations of the Colombian population that make up the multidimensional poverty, both at the national level and in the regions with the largest share of IDPs.

Figure 8 | MPI – National and Aggregate for Regions with large share of IDPs. 2018, 2019, 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE, (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020> retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes> in December 2022.

Household Education Conditions

PDET households experience greater deprivation in education, with higher rates of illiteracy (13.7% of households, compared to 8.4% national average) and lower educational attainment (56.8% compared to 42.2%). Deprivation in educational attainment refers to persons aged 15 or older having less than 9 years of education (Figure 9). The situation can be partially explained by the lack of a strong public education system in Colombia, which is even more critical in rural conflict-affected areas (Garcia, Maldonado and Rodríguez, 2022).

Childhood and youth conditions

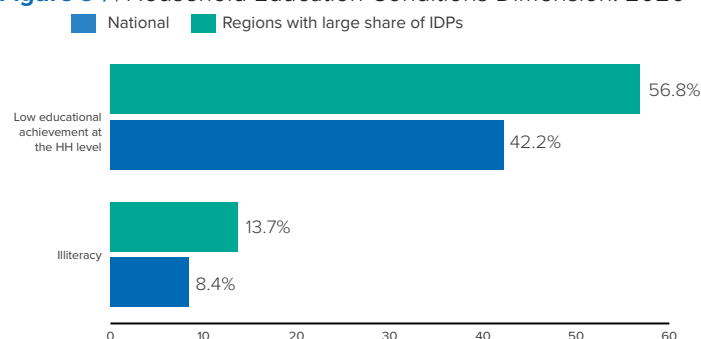
PDET households have double the rate of school absenteeism (non-attendance to school, 29.6%) among children and youth compared to the national average (16.4%). School absenteeism and educational underachievement are the most severe deprivations.

Educational underachievement is defined as households with at least one child between 7 and 17 years of age who is behind in school (number of school years completed is lower than the national norm). The situation is explained by the combination of poverty, conflict, forced recruitment, and lack of protection in these regions, which creates barriers for children and youth to access and attend school. The MPI for all variables in this dimension are higher in regions with a large share of IDPs (Figure 10).

Employment

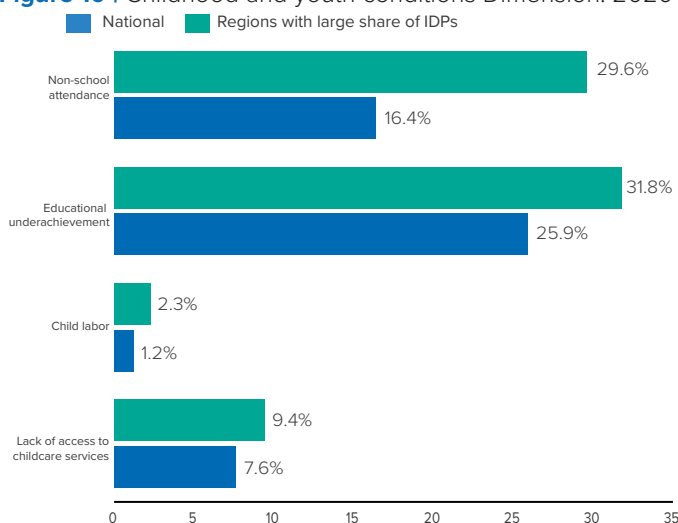
Despite the structural condition of informality in Colombia's labor market, PDET households are even more impacted by informality, lacking both social protection and income stability (Figure 11). 88% of PDET households are lacking formal employment, compared to 74.2% national average. A household is considered deprived in this indicator if at least one employed person is not affiliated to the pension system, which serves as a proxy for informality. Contrary to expectations, the percentage of PDET households lacking stable employment is slightly lower than the national average (12.4% compared to 14.2%). This may be due to the less rigid labor market in PDET areas, where higher levels of informality can lead to fewer barriers in finding a job, but likely of lower quality.

Figure 9 | Household Education Conditions Dimension. 2020



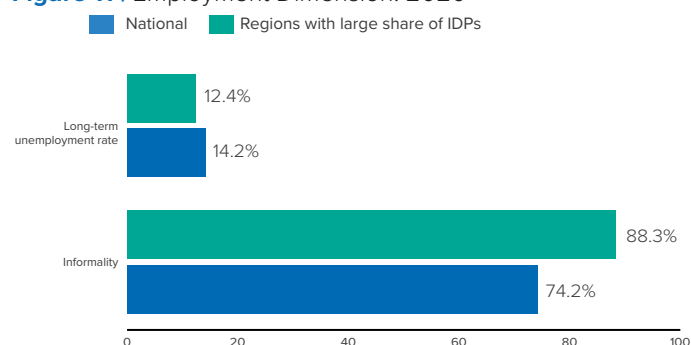
Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE. (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020>

Figure 10 | Childhood and youth conditions Dimension. 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE. (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020>

Figure 11 | Employment Dimension. 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE. (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020>

Health

PDET households face similar deprivations in the health dimension compared to the national aggregate and, overall, perform better than in other dimensions (Figure 12). In particular, the percentage of PDET households without health insurance is 9%, compared to 10% for the national aggregate. In terms of lack of access to health services, the indicator refers to households with at least one person who in the last 30 days had an illness, accident, dental problem, or any other health problem that did not involve hospitalization and who did not go to a practitioner or health institution. Both PDET households and the national aggregate show low levels on the limitations to access to health services (2% to 3%).

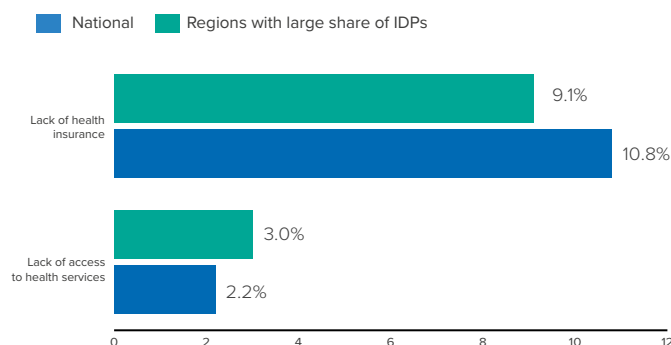
The question about efficiency and quality of the attention still needs to be explored but, generally PDET households benefit from universal coverage.

Public utilities and housing conditions

PDET households face worse housing conditions than the national aggregate, doubling the percentage of households with deprivations in 4 out of 5 indicators. Critical differences are observed for access to sewerage (26.5% vs 10.2%), access to drinking water (27.8% vs 9.7%) and inadequate floors (12.2% vs 6.3%) (Figure 13). Having inadequate access to public utilities, inadequate housing conditions and living in poverty conditions translates into worse socioeconomic outcomes (Chetty, Hendren and Katz, 2016; Chetty and Hendren, 2018).

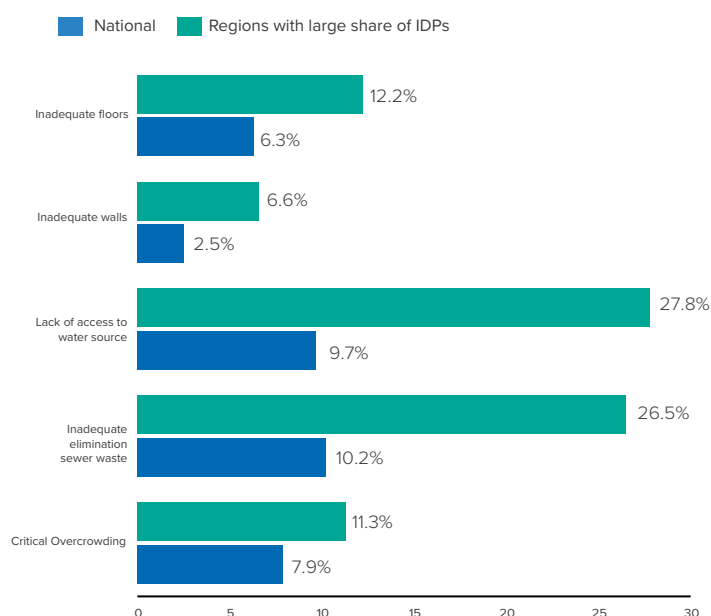
Therefore, it is critical to improve the access to clean water sources, sewerage and adequate housing materials in order to the reduce the protection risks faced by IDPs and to promote their development.

Figure 12 | Health Dimension. 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE. (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020>

Figure 13 | Public utilities and housing Conditions Dimension. 2020



Source: Prepared by the Durable Solutions and Livelihoods Unit (2023). Data from the DANE. (2020). Triage Poblacional. Obtenido de <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/triage-poblacional-territorial-de-colombia-2020>

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