



The Long March of the Venezuelans: Human Security and Migration in Latin America

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1. Introduction

Why is Venezuela, which a decade ago was one of the wealthiest countries in the region, undergoing the largest migration crisis in the hemisphere? The puzzle is even more challenging because:

- There is no civil war or militarized conflict with another nation.
- Venezuela has historically been a destination for migrants.

The research question this study addresses is: What is the role of *human security* in mass migration and what differences may produce in the destination country chosen by the migrants and refugees?

Human Security is defined by how *safe* a person is based on 7 dimensions (see table 2). This concept was originally drafted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) back in 1994. This study has both normative and theoretical implications:

- Normatively: A higher level of human security in a given country will imply that over time it will receive more migrants and refugees.
- Theoretically: Based on previous research on human security focused on its conceptual definition and its measurement (see table 1).

Table 1. Theoretical Expectations of Human Security.

Theory	Assumption	Motivation
Flexibility as a concept Martin and Owen (2014)	Varies depending on the aggregation level of the unit of analysis	Human security is not constrained by countries or regions
Issue saliency Sorj (2005)	Violence and failing institutions could potentially imply mass migrations	Failed states are a major determinant in generating violence
Minimalist approach King and Murray (2001)	Human security is the proportion of life expectancy free of poverty	Poverty is a cause for decreasing human security
Comprehensive approach Hastings (2011)	Results from the combination of economic, environmental and social fabrics	More closely related to the original concept drafted by the UNDP

2. Hypotheses on Human Security and Migration

During a humanitarian crisis and mass migration in a given country it is expected:

- **H1:** *The lower the Human Security index (HSI) score of Venezuela, the higher the migration will be for a given year.*
- **H2:** *Countries with higher Human Security Index (HSI) scores are more likely to receive a higher number of Venezuelan Migration.*
- **H3:** *The higher the number of Venezuelan migration within a receiving country, the lower will be the Human Security Index (HSI) score of that country.*

This study focuses on how human security plays an important role in determining the choice of migrants for destination country and also capturing the understudied dimension of mass migration processes. Additionally it provides empirical foundation at the micro-level for an in-depth measurement of a contested concept like Human Security and implementing an yearly index. By crafting the index, this research runs counter Hastings' (2011) argument that HSI scores must be measured after long periods of time.

3. Data

The case-study of Venezuela from 2009 to 2018 is used in this research in conjunction with a pool of 19 countries that report Venezuelan migration data to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Table 2. Variables employed in the construction of the HSI.

Variable	Dimension	Source
Life Expectancy at Birth	Health	World Health Organization (WHO) (2018)
Percentage of Undernourishment	Food	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2019)
GDP <i>per capita</i>	Economic	World Bank (2019)
CO ₂ emissions <i>per capita</i>	Environmental	World Bank (2019)
Gender Gap	Community	World Economic Forum (WEF) (2018)
Global Peace Index	Personal	Institute for Economics & Peace (2019)
Democracy Score	Political	Freedom House (2019)

The Human Security Index (HSI) is a measurement that ranges from 0 to 1 and results from the average of the standardized values of the seven (7) dimensions from table 2, see figure 1 for a graphical showing of the HSI scores trends for every country in the study from 2009 to 2018.

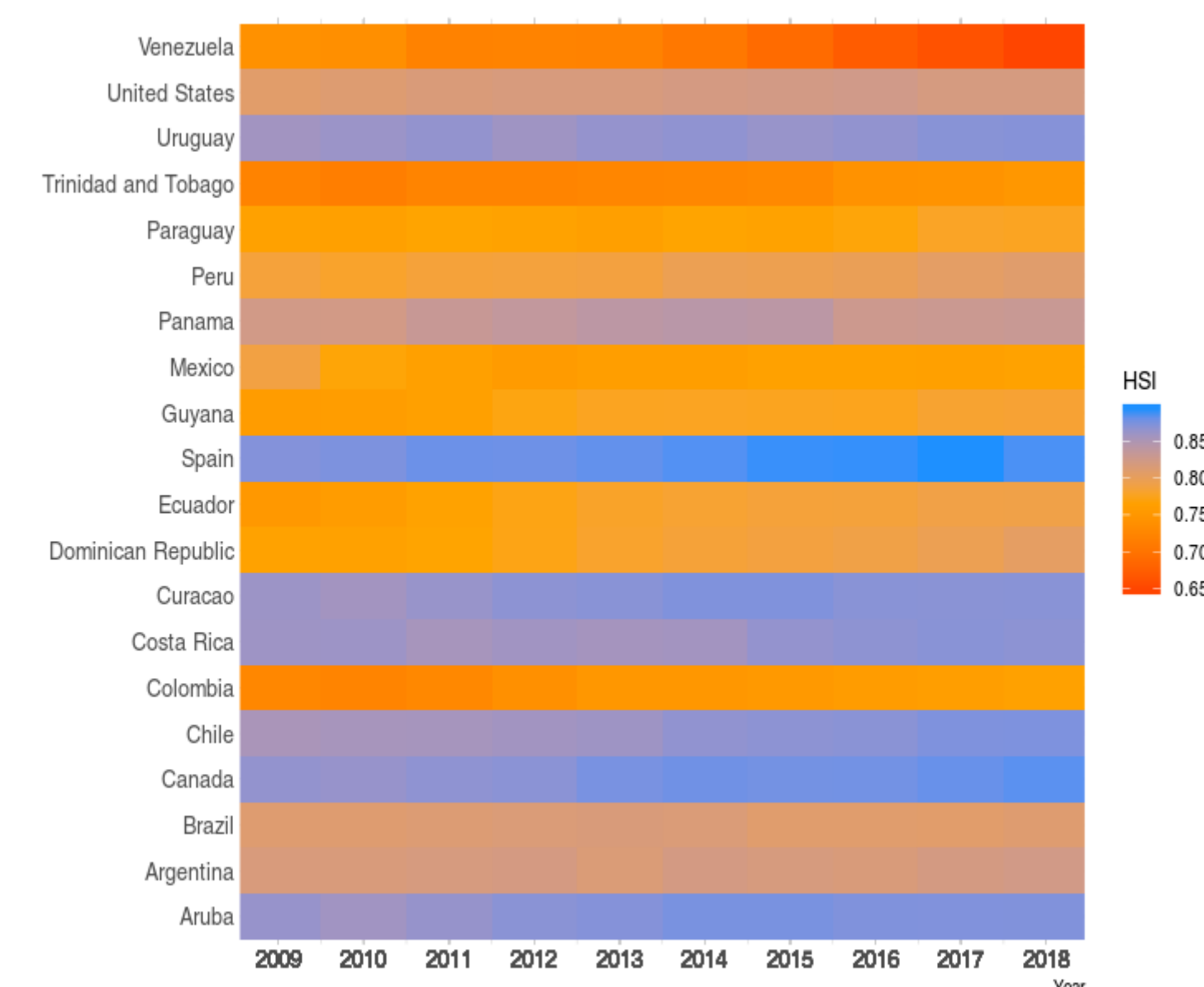


Figure 1. Human Security Index (HSI) scores for the countries in the study from 2009 to 2018.

4. Methods and Results

For this study, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was utilized in order to get causal relation between the difference in a receiving country's HSI and Venezuela's and the size of Venezuelan migration in that country. Figure 1(a) shows how the number of Venezuelan emigrants grew exponentially as its HSI decreased. The OLS regression's results for the model of Venezuelan migration can be seen on figures 2(b) and 2(c). Finally, figure 2(d) shows that the higher the number of Venezuelans in a given country, the higher the impact on that country's HSI, especially on smaller countries from Central America and the Caribbean.

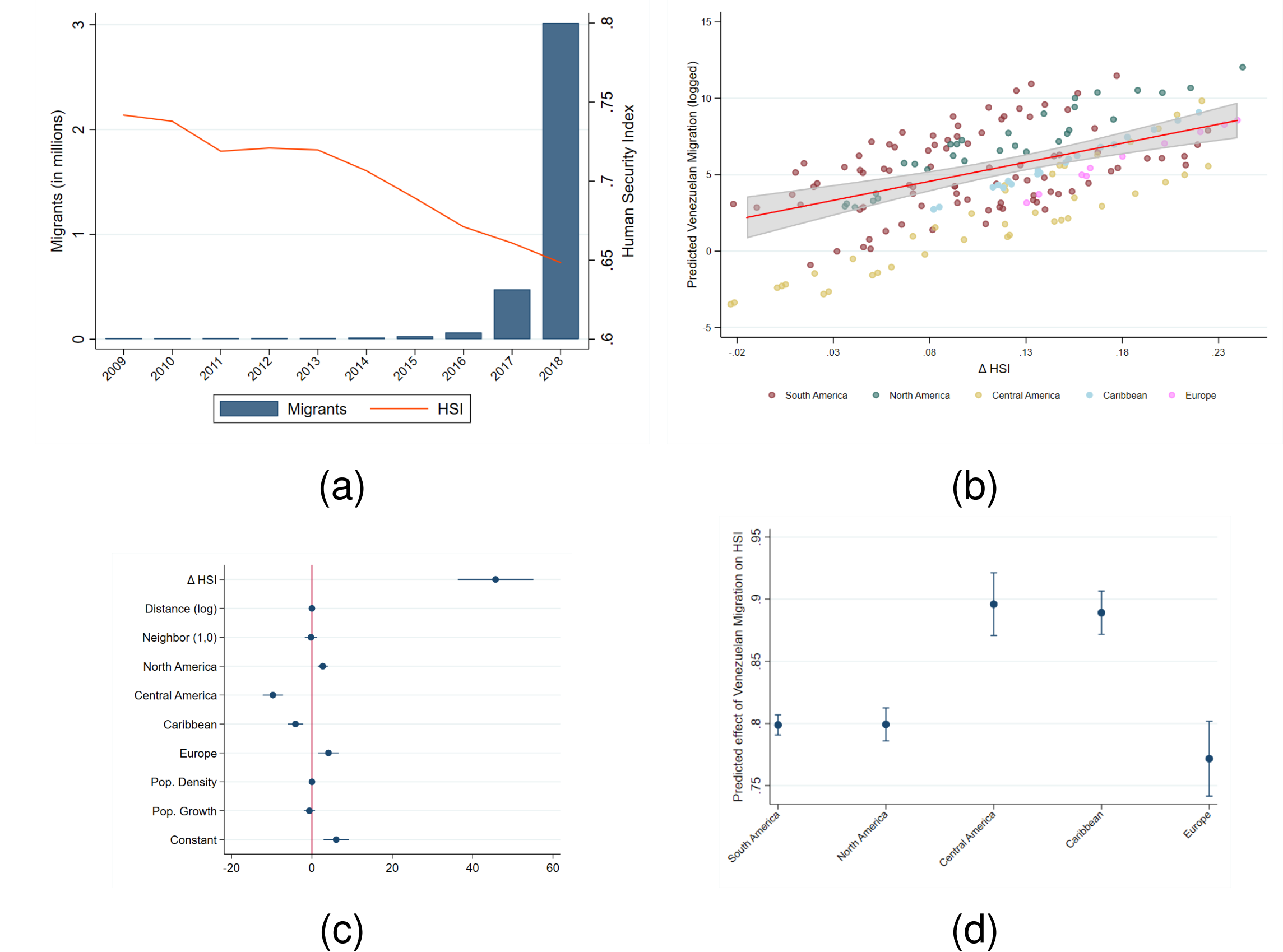


Figure 2. Results for the model of Venezuelan Migration based on the Human Security Index (HSI): (a) Venezuela's HSI versus number of emigrants from 2009 to 2018 (IOM-UNHCR, 2019); (b) Predicted number of Venezuelan migrants per region based on the HSI difference between the receiving country and Venezuela; (c) Effect of the variables on the number of Venezuelan migrants; (d) Predicted effect of the Venezuelan migration on the receiving country's HSI by region.

5. Conclusions

- The HSI can be used as a measurement to assess humanitarian crisis and to identify salient factors that originated it.
- Venezuelan migrants and refugees seek to improve their well-being by intuitively traveling to countries with higher HSI scores.
- Future iterations of this study might look for other variables in order to improve the robustness of the model like bilateral trade and propensity score of second generations expatriates born in Venezuela.

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