

# 2023 IN REVIEW:

VIA remained deeply engaged in our mission to empower individuals and families.





# OUR MISSION

At Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, we aim to build a supportive community for forced migrants. Our mission is to empower individuals with the knowledge and resources needed to secure legal status and create fulfilling lives in the United States. Through advocacy and direct support, we foster resilience and help individuals integrate successfully into their new environment.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) continued its commitment to addressing the urgent needs of forced migrants, asylum seekers, and displaced individuals striving to build new lives in the United States. Our programs spanned vital support areas, from mental health and education to legal assistance and community-building activities, serving thousands across New York City and beyond. VIA's adaptable and inclusive approach, marked by solid partnerships with NGOs, dedicated volunteers, and local supporters, has enabled us to respond effectively to our community's evolving challenges.

Through tailored programs like “Soporte Entre Pares”, community educational initiatives, and an extensive social media presence, we remained deeply engaged in our mission to empower individuals and families. This 2023 report highlights the impact of our initiatives, the resilience of the communities we serve, and our ongoing commitment to advocate for migrants and asylum seekers. We are proud of the progress achieved in 2023, thanks to the collective efforts of our team, volunteers, and allies, and we look forward to continuing this vital work in the coming years.

Photo credit: WES

## WES Economic Inclusion Forum

Niurka Meléndez, director and co-founder of Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) quoted in the WES Annual Report – Pillars of Progress.

“

Take the time to build trust and say, ‘When you are ready, we are here for you.’”

- Niurka Melendez,  
*Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid*

Photo credit: WES

“VIA is a community-based organization focused on supporting newly arrived migrants by understanding their specific needs and challenges. The organization collects detailed demographic information to stay informed about changing immigration policies, ensuring effective and relevant support. Their proactive approach aims to provide high-quality guidance, especially for individuals seeking international protection in the U.S., emphasizing a commitment to precision and compassion.”

— Niurka Meléndez, Co-Director and Co-Founder of VIA



# NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS

IN 2023

95%

IN 2022

92%

IN 2021

35%

In 2023, VIA provided targeted assistance to migrants, with 95% of those served being newly arrived. This reflects an ongoing and substantial increase in new arrivals, consistent with the trend we observed in the previous year.

At VIA, we classify "New Arrivals" as individuals who have entered the United States by crossing the southern border and have been in the country for less than 12 months. This definition allows us to tailor our services to the unique needs and challenges of recent migrants, helping them establish a stable foundation during their first year in the U.S.



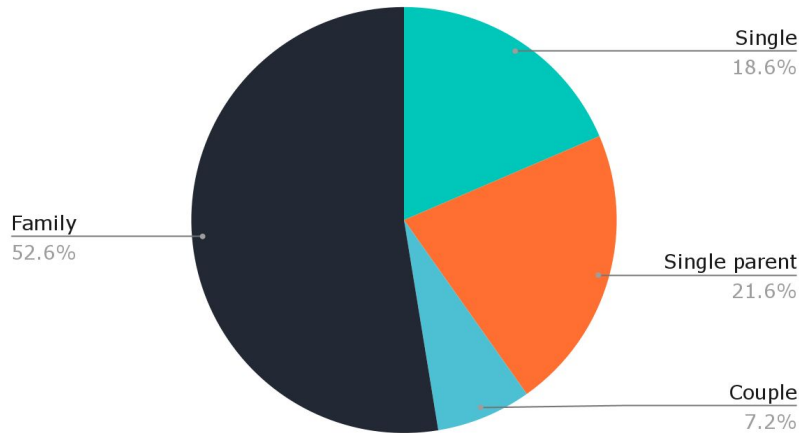


We prioritize the human touch and a vibrant sense of community in all our efforts. Our programs are more than services; they are vital lifelines driven by empathy, resilience, mutual respect, and a profound understanding of the human stories behind every face we encounter.

# DEMOGRAPHY

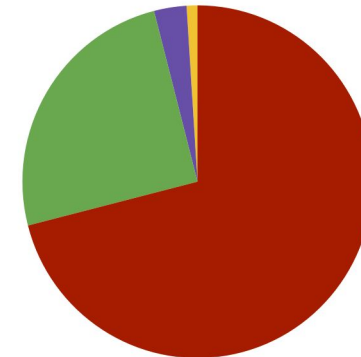
In 2023, VIA supported over 13,000 individuals, with 75% being families or single parents and 71% women aged 25 to 34. This marks a shift from previous years, as our primary beneficiaries are now younger adults and families rather than individuals aged 35 to 50. This evolving demographic enables VIA to refine our programs to address the specific needs of younger families and individuals in our community.

Who did you come to the US with?



Gender

● Women ● Men ● LGBTQI+ ● No answer



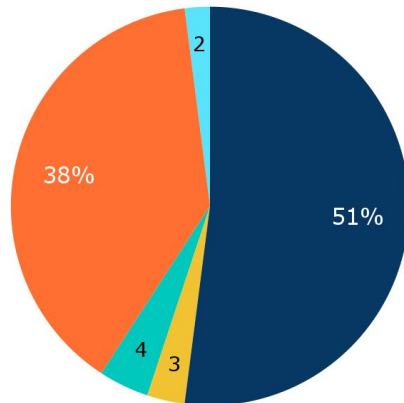


# DEMOGRAPHY

In 2023, survey data revealed that 51% of the newly arrived immigrants we served were residing within New York City's shelter system. The majority of these individuals are located in Manhattan, making up 55.4% of this population, followed by Queens at 25.9%, The Bronx at 9.6%, Brooklyn at 7.9%, and Staten Island at 1.2%. This distribution enables VIA to strategically focus resources where support is most needed, aligning our efforts with the community's geographical realities.

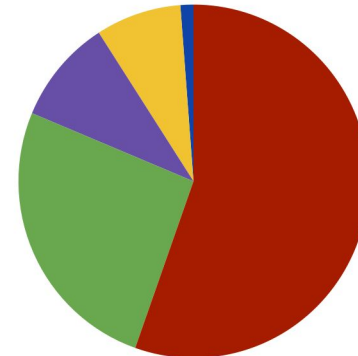
Housing

● Shelter ● With a relative ● With friends ● Renting ● Other



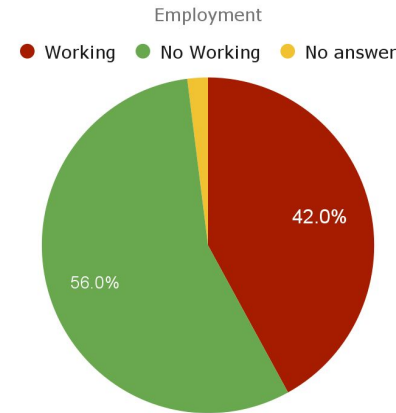
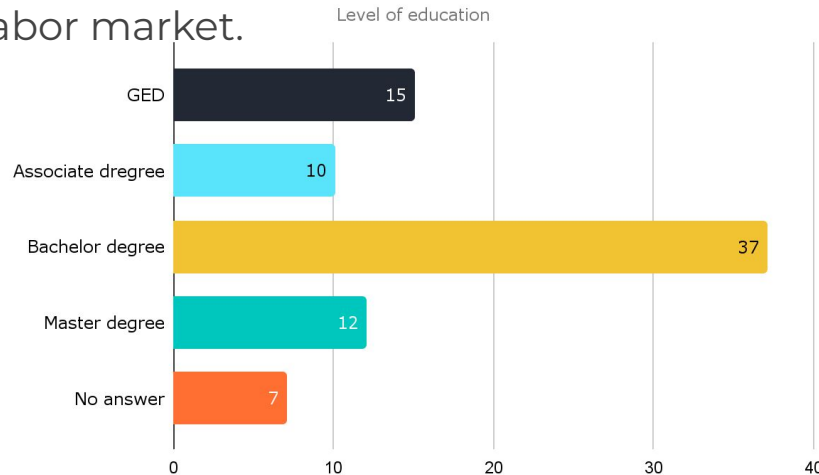
Where in NY do you live?

● Manhattan ● Queens ● The Bronx ● Brooklyn ● Staten Island



# DEMOGRAPHY

In 2023, 59% of the individuals within the community we serve were college-educated immigrants and asylum seekers. Despite their educational qualifications, a significant portion faced challenges in securing employment commensurate with their skills due to their legal status. As a result, many experienced either unemployment or underemployment, reflecting the barriers they encounter in accessing opportunities within the U.S. labor market.



## Country of origin:

It has been truly rewarding to witness the growing diversity within our community. In 2023, we proudly supported migrants from Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Peru, and Venezuela, reflecting the broad spectrum of cultures and backgrounds that we continue to serve. This growth underscores the importance of our work in providing critical resources and assistance to a diverse range of individuals.

“Disinformation is the biggest challenge that we at VIA continue to face. We understand our limitations as a ‘non-lawyer Community-based organization;’ still, we emphasize the importance of timely and accurate guidance. This support is crucial for migrants seeking to regularize their immigration status, as it can significantly impact their future.

At VIA, we believe that education is essential for true empowerment. We aim to equip individuals with the necessary tools to make informed decisions during the complex process of seeking humanitarian protection in the United States. While there are no guarantees of a positive outcome, we strive to empower migrants to take informed and lawful steps in their journey.”

— Héctor Arguinzones, Co-Director and Co-Founder of VIA



CASE IN THE EOIR

**37%**

PENDING ASYLUM

**53%**

GRANTED ASYLUM

**3%**

PENDING TPS

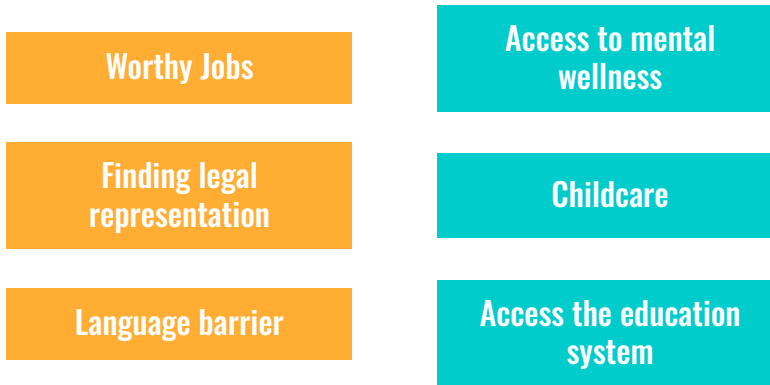
**15%**

TPS APPROVED

**7%**

The impact of misinformation and misconceptions about immigration processes in the U.S. cannot be overstated. It creates significant barriers and challenges for many individuals in our community. In 2023, a number of those we assisted were under the mistaken belief that the paperwork they received upon crossing the U.S. southern border automatically constituted their asylum claim. This misunderstanding left them uncertain about their legal status and unsure of the critical next steps they needed to take, further complicating their path to stability and safety.

# IMMIGRATION STATUS



VIA actively sought input from newly arrived migrants about the challenges they faced throughout 2023, and we received responses from 335 individuals. While many recognize the importance of securing legal representation, health insurance, and English language classes, **the overwhelming majority identified finding a stable, decent job as their top challenge.** This struggle is compounded by their current legal limbo, which hinders their ability to integrate and thrive in the U.S. workforce fully.

## CHALLENGES



Our approach is built on active engagement, not just desk-based analysis. We immerse ourselves in the challenges by visiting shelters, public schools, and local churches, prioritizing being present where help is needed most. Witnessing the realities firsthand empowers us to address the real and urgent needs that inspire our mission.



# EMPOWERING FUTURES

Our community programs are critical in bridging the gap between forced migrants and the resources they need to thrive! **In 2023 alone, we delivered an impressive lineup of 62 legal orientations, 28 engaging webinars, and nine dynamic resource fairs, reaching over 13,000 individuals!**

By connecting them to knowledgeable legal professionals and essential information on asylum, TPS, and other immigration pathways, we empower individuals to navigate complex processes confidently. This network of education and legal support enables forced migrants to move forward with clarity and assurance.

[www.vianyc.org/donate](http://www.vianyc.org/donate)







# EMPOWERING FUTURES

**54**

LEGAL ORIENTATIONS

**28**

WEBINARS

**05**

LEGAL CLINICS

**08**

IN-SITU SHELTER  
ORIENTATIONS

**09**

RESOURCES FAIRS

**11**

PANELS AND ADVOCACY  
EVENTS

Our robust network of educational webinars and legal orientations not only equips forced migrants with essential knowledge but also fosters a sense of security and hope as they navigate their journeys toward a brighter future.

[www.vianyc.org/donate](http://www.vianyc.org/donate)



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

ONLINE  
MEETINGS

21

HOURS  
ONE-ON-ONE  
SESSIONS

24

WEBINARS

10

IN-PERSON  
GATHERINGS

03

VIA's Peer Support Program, "[Soporte Entre Pares](#)," reached hundreds of new migrants this year, creating a safe space where they find both support and strength. Through 21 online sessions, 10 workshops, and three gatherings attended by nearly 150 people, this program is a beacon of hope. We trained 30 community members in Mental Health First Aid and expanded our WhatsApp community to offer 24/7 support for our growing network (grew from 73 participants in 2022 to 117 in 2023.) Our program is inclusive, transcending national borders to reach migrants in need worldwide, serving not only Venezuelans but asylum seekers of all nationalities.

[Read full "Soporte Entre Pares" report here](#)



# LANGUAGE AS A GATEWAY

32

ONLINE LESSONS

18

TUTORING SESSIONS

12

READING AND  
CONVERSATION MEETINGS

VIA work with various partners and volunteers to support individuals who want to improve their language skills, which can open up new opportunities. Partnerships with organizations that offer English classes to asylum seekers, TPS applicants, and migrants in the U.S. make it easier for those at higher proficiency levels to access advanced courses.

A remarkable total of 572 individuals from the community embraced these online sessions, exploring English pronunciation and levels from basic to intermediate, alongside tutoring opportunities for children. The selfless contributions of volunteers enriched the English conversation class, nurturing a spirit of growth and connection.




# CHARITABLE ASSISTANCE

In 2023, our "Dando Una Mano" program successfully served over 100 families, impacting an average of 400 individuals. We made a strategic decision to replace traditional food bags with a focus on proteins, grains, and essential nutritious items, along with hygiene products that support the daily needs of these families. This update was crucial, considering the limitations migrants face in shelters regarding food storage, preparation, and cooking, as well as the various food provisions already available in these facilities. This reflects a significant shift from the scenarios of 2021 and 2022.

[www.vianyc.org/donate](http://www.vianyc.org/donate)







“At VIA, we understand that beyond providing basic assistance, it is essential to inform and guide our community properly to foster true empowerment and development.”  
-Niurka Meléndez, co-founder of VIA

## VIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA AS EDUCATIONAL AND ORIENTATIONAL PLATFORMS:

We have established a dynamic and impactful presence on social media, reaching over one million people in 2023 alone. In Q4, our content connected with 350,000 individuals, while our YouTube channel recorded 90,000 views across 39 informative videos developed in collaboration with trusted partner NGOs. These numbers demonstrate our commitment to delivering timely, accurate, and accessible information through the platforms our community relies on most.

Last 90 Days ▾

Oct 2 - Dec 30

**345,589**

Accounts reached

Views

**96.1K** ↑

>999% more than Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022

Watch time (hours)

**15.4K** ↑

>999% more than Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022

Subscribers

**+1.9K** ↑

>999% more than Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022

## VIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA AS EDUCATIONAL AND ORIENTATIONAL PLATFORMS:

We prioritize high-quality, visually engaging content to capture our audience's attention, presenting essential information in plain language to ensure accessibility. Our daily posts cover a wide range of critical topics, from asylum applications, court hearings, TPS, and parole, to pro se representation, change of address processes, fraud prevention, and humanitarian visas in the U.S. Our strong social media presence is one of our most powerful tools for staying connected with the forced migrant community, meeting them where they are to provide guidance, clarity, and ongoing support.

At VIA, we understand that social media is more than a communication tool—it's an essential lifeline for those navigating complex immigration processes. Our strategy reflects our deep expertise and commitment to leveraging these channels effectively, ensuring that our community has access to the resources and information they need.



In 2023, we proudly received funding to enhance the training of our volunteer team. As a result, VIA now boasts a dedicated, passionate, and resilient volunteer force that is not only committed to our mission but also expertly trained to effectively guide and support the community we serve.





As we reflect on 2023, we celebrate each milestone, story, and connection made possible by Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid. Every program, every piece of guidance, and every supportive hand extended underscores the resilience of those we serve and the collective power of the community. We've built pathways for thousands, empowering new beginnings across borders.

This journey, however, is far from over. With your support, we can continue to stand by these courageous individuals, ensuring they have access to resources and opportunities to build fulfilling lives. Join us in turning hope into action—join this mission. Together, we can transform lives.

[www.vianyc.org/DONATE](http://www.vianyc.org/DONATE)

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## WANT TO BE A PART?

“Contributing your part, a tiny grain of sand in a vast world of need, without underestimating the impact of your actions.”

