Dear Editor

The impact of COVID-19 has placed Peru as one of the counties with the highest contagion and mortality rates in the world. For each million inhabitants, 1,107 cases and 1,051 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported. Among the many measures implemented to combat this, a nation-wide compulsory quarantine was the most severe, paralyzing diverse productive activities with the subsequent loss of employment, and the reduction in the demands of goods and services.

Before this, Peru was already the second country that received the highest number of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the world. Housing 1,043,000 Venezuelan people that abandoned their homes due to a grave economic and social crisis in their country. The socioeconomic conditions of this population, before the COVID-19 pandemic was characterized by precarious jobs, low incomes, overcrowding, and weak access to healthcare services and social programs. Thus, COVID-19 may have worsened their food security.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the socioeconomic situation of the population of refugees and migrants from Venezuela who were living in Metropolitan Lima during March 2021.

In order to determine the levels of food insecurity in the Venezuelan migrant population during the COVID-19 pandemic, an analysis of secondary data of a survey performed by the “Fundación Acción Contra el Hambre” was carried out. The survey used non-probabilistic sampling with telephone interviews during March 2021 due to the limitations imposed by the restrictive measures. Thus, representativeness was limited to the study population. Informed consent was obtained from each included participant. Food insecurity...
(FI) is the condition in which a household or individual loses availability, access and/or use of food, causing hunger and malnutrition; internationally, the frequency of FI is measured through the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)\(^4\). Severity of food insecurity was categorized using the following cut-off points: moderate food insecurity from 4 to 6 points and severe food insecurity 7 or more points on the FIES scale\(^5\). Descriptive statistics were performed in Stata V.14.0 (StataCorp).

The survey included 379 households of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. According to the FIES scale, it was found that, in the last month, 85.6\% of surveyed households had concerns about insufficient food at home due to lack of money, in addition, 65\% of the people surveyed indicated that they had stopped eating healthy and nutritious food due to financial precariousness. Likewise, 84.7\% of those surveyed acknowledged that in the last month they consumed little variety of foods, in addition, 61\% indicated that they stopped having breakfast, lunch or dinner due to lack of resources. Likewise, 80\% of households reported having to eat less due to lack of money and 60\% indicated that some member of the household felt hungry and could not eat due to lack of money. Finally, 12.5\% of Venezuelan households surveyed had a member who could not eat for a whole day due to lack of money. Moderate or severe food insecurity had a frequency of 76.3\%, with 32.8\% of households experiencing severe food insecurity.

Our results are higher than the 63\% prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (11\% severe food insecurity and 52\% moderate food insecurity) for Venezuelan migrants in Peru reported by the World Food Program in February 2021\(^6\). This could be because they applied a shortened version of FIES. Food insecurity among Venezuelan migrants is higher than the 47.8\% moderate or severe food insecurity reported by FAO 2018-2020 in the Peruvian population using the same scale\(^7\). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a higher impact on the Venezuelan migrant population living in Metropolitan Lima.

The worsening of the economic, social, health and nutritional situation in Peru due to the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the food security of the Venezuelan migrant population. Among those living in Metropolitan Lima, 1 in 3 migrant households suffered severe food insecurity during the month prior to the survey and 7 out of 10 migrant households had some level of food insecurity. It is necessary that national and international institutions intensify their efforts to combat food insecurity in this vulnerable population through initiatives such as job banks, seed funds for small businesses, job training, food vouchers, cash transfers, and nutritional education.

**REFERENCES**