

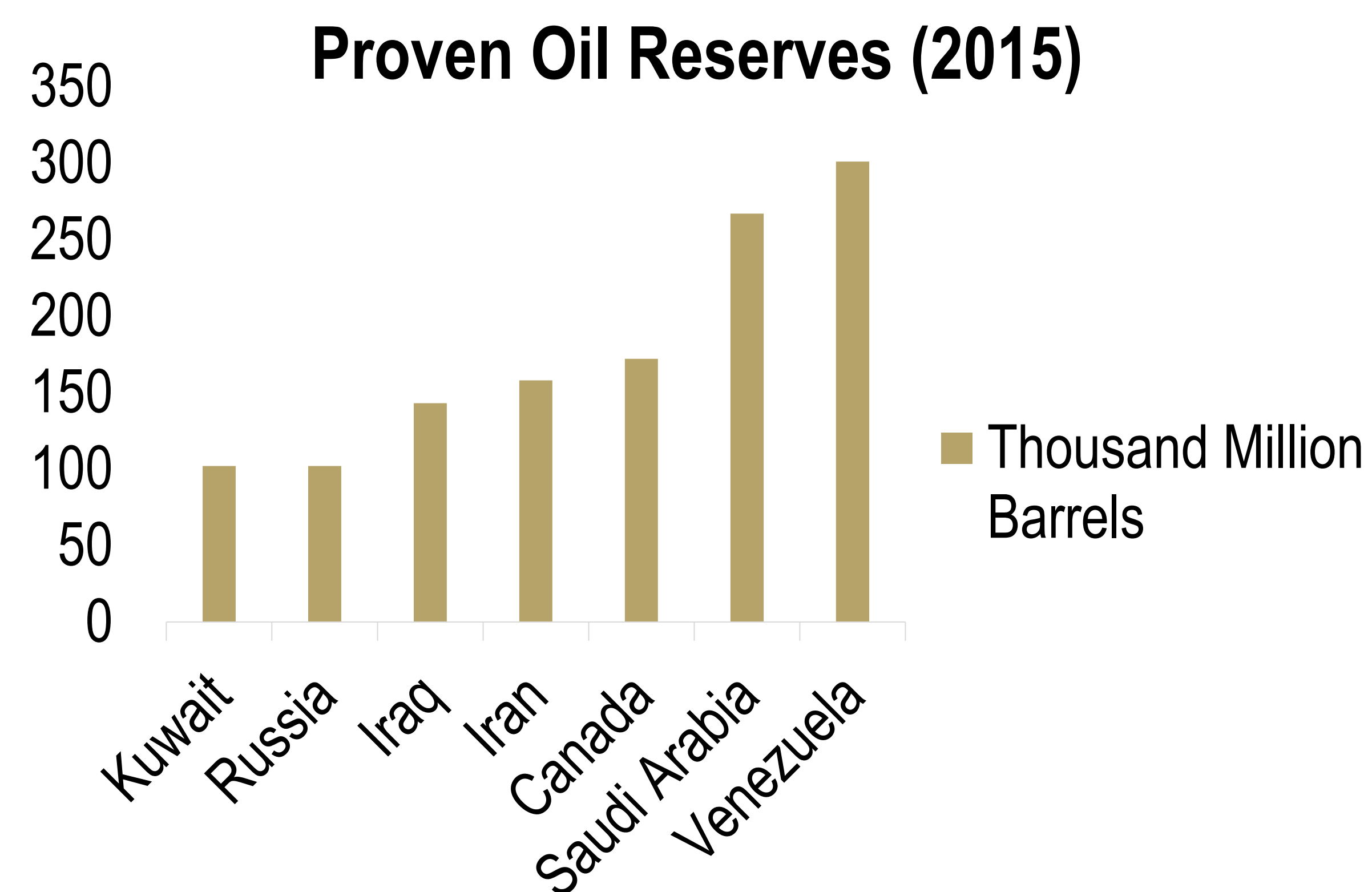
TRACING THE PATH: EXPLORING THE DRIVERS BEHIND VENEZUELAN MIGRATION WAVES

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Venezuela is located on the northern coast of South America, bordered by Colombia and Brazil. With a population of approximately 30 million people, Venezuela is known for its diverse geography, including the Andes Mountains and the Amazon Rainforest. Venezuela is an oil-rich nation, having the largest oil reserves in the world. This oil wealth fueled economic growth throughout the 20th century, making Venezuela one of the wealthiest countries in the world. However, in 1999, Hugo Chávez became President and introduced socialist and communist ideas into the country's policies, marking a significant shift in Venezuela's political and economic landscape.



First Wave: 2003

An oil workers' strike resulted in mass dismissals, with approximately 40% of the workforce of Venezuela's prized oil and gas company losing their jobs. As seen in other refugee crises, the initial exodus was characterized by a brain drain, with many of Venezuela's brightest minds and most affluent individuals seeking opportunities abroad. The departure of businesspeople and oil industry workers with higher levels of education dealt a significant blow to one of the world's largest oil industries.

Second Wave: 2014 – 2018

They successfully shut down the press by prosecuting journalists, harassing regional media, and closing TV and radio stations. They continued to control the private sector through active nationalizations, intimidation, and price controls, and increased repression by confronting protestors with deadly force and giving free rein to violent and armed pro-government groups. All of these factors led to the second wave of migration, which was mainly composed of middle-class and young people leaving to Latin American countries, but particularly to Colombia. It occurred in the aftermath of brutally repressed student protests. This wave peaked in 2017, with approximately 4 million people fleeing the country out of a population of 30 million.

Third Wave: 2019-Present

Latin American countries often struggle to meet the needs of their own populations, making it hard to cope with the sudden influx of immigrants. Unable to build stable lives in these countries, many Venezuelans are forced to emigrate to the U.S. in search of better opportunities. This wave is mostly composed of low-income groups that cannot obtain a visa or buy airline tickets. Many of them lack passports, are disadvantaged educationally, and have poor health due to years of starvation. Compared to the first two waves, their demographics are entirely different.



Facts

- The number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela has surpassed 7 million globally, according to data from governments. - UN Refugee Agency
- Most refugees and migrants from Venezuela arriving in neighboring countries are families with children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with disabilities. - UN Refugee Agency
- Venezuela has the highest prevalence of undernourishment in South America. - 2022 UN Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition.
- Half of all refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot afford three meals a day and lack access to safe and dignified housing. - UN Refugee Agency



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