Mixed Movements Monitoring

July - September 2023

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Key Figures

4,811
Individuals were interviewed during the period from July to September 2023.

39
Nationalities interviewed

48% VENEZUELANS
27% HONDURANS
7% CUBANS
5% ECUADORIANS
Main countries of origin of respondents

GUATEMALA: 1,896
MEXICO: 1,390
COSTA RICA: 613
HONDURAS: 585
PANAMA: 327
Number of interviews per country

56% Men

44% Women

32 years
Average age of respondents

Introduction and scope

In recent years, Central America has witnessed a significant upsurge in mixed movements—a term used to describe the cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons, and migrants (including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations).

With the objective of generating evidence on mixed movements' dynamics in the Americas, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) embarked on a regional monitoring project enabling agencies to better understand trends, profiles and the protection and food security needs of people on the move. Gathering comprehensive data on mixed movements is essential for facilitating evidence-based responses to the protection and assistance needs of individuals on the move. This data not only enables us to address immediate concerns but also plays a pivotal role in sustaining and strengthening our ability to take a leading and active role in diverse forums focused on discussing mixed movements within the United Nations. These forums include significant platforms such as the Issue-Based Coalition on Human Mobility (IBC-HM) and collaborative initiatives with regional governments. This commitment forms an integral component of our dedication to advancing this cause,

Key Findings

1. Multiple interconnected factors continue to drive individuals into situations of human mobility. Among the respondents, 75% left their country of origin due to difficulties in accessing basic rights, while 54% of them cited reasons associated with pervasive violence or having experienced incidents of violence themselves.

2. 3 out of 5 individuals either experienced or witnessed protection incidents along the route (mostly theft, extorsion, fraud or physical threat / assault), underscoring serious concerns regarding the overall protection environment.

3. Individuals exposed to protection incidents continue to be more likely to also face challenges related to food security, and vice versa.

4. Food insecurity remains a significant concern along the route. 85% of respondents adopted food- related coping mechanisms in the last week, e.g., eating less, skipping meals, or going without food for whole days.

5. At the Guatemala-Honduras and Guatemala-Mexico borders, food security has deteriorated compared to the second quarter, with more than half of the respondents (60%) reporting that they consumed just one meal or did not eat at all during the previous day.

6. Among Ecuadorian respondents, 57% indicated a significant decrease in their ability to fulfill their food security needs, with some resorting to consuming only one meal per day or none at all. This represents the most pronounced deterioration when compared to respondents of other nationalities.

ensuring informed and impactful contributions.

This report addresses various pivotal facets of mixed movements, delving into essential considerations such as the motivational and triggering factors prompting individuals to depart from either their country of origin or the host country., the profiles of people engaged in mixed movements, the journey itself (including protection risks and threats), the situation in the current country (such as documentation, access to territory), food security, and the future intentions of individuals. the report provides insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with mixed movements in Central and North America, with the aim of informing policy and guiding effective humanitarian response efforts.

Methodology

As part of UNHCR-WFP ongoing monitoring efforts, the third round of data collection was conducted between July 1st and September 30th, 2023. The questionnaire was applied in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. This round of data collection was specifically concentrated at border points where mixed movements are most prominent. Qualitative research through standardized interviews with key informants and focus group discussions were held in Honduras and Panama. In addition, the monitoring exercise continues to incorporate secondary data, as well as field observations from joint analysis sessions and field observations, particularly from Colombia[1].

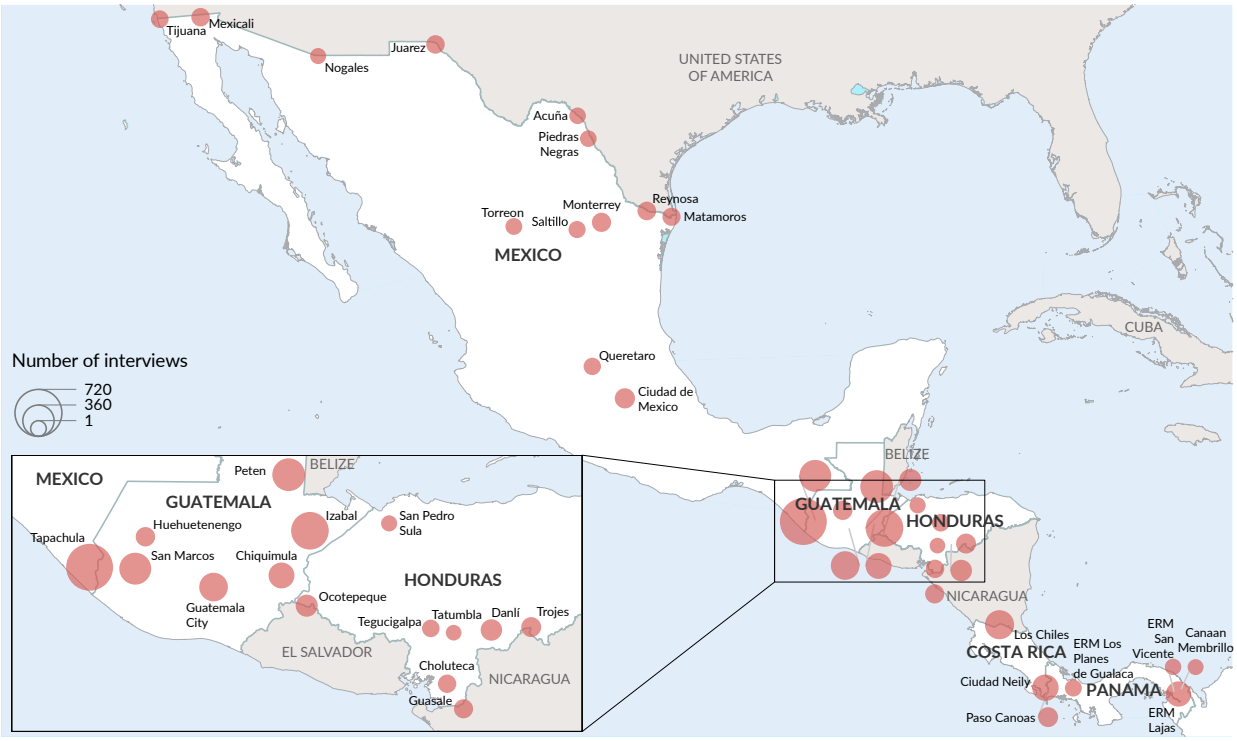
During the third quarter, modifications were implemented to the questionnaire with the aim of collecting data on the group's profile and the legal status of families residing in host countries. Some questions were eliminated due to their lack of variability, such as inquiries about modes of transportation. The changes made to the questionnaire were designed to minimize any significant disruption, ensuring that the data collected remains comparable to previous quarters.

Data collection in the context of mixed movements presents challenges and limitations due to the fluid nature of these movements. Challenges include the need to reach remote and border areas with limited infrastructure and security concerns. Limitations are particularly evident in the case of people originating from especially when considering individuals originating from countries outside the Americas.

Therefore, findings are only representative of the people who were interviewed and cannot be extrapolated to all people on the move. They provide, however, information on the protection environment, protection trends over time, rights violations, and risks (threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities), as well as food security issues faced by the population engaged in mixed movements.

Data collection locations

The majority of interviews conducted in this exercise occurred at border crossings, accounting for 86% of the total. Non- border locations, encompass strategic transit facilities, including bus terminals, shelters, and reception sites, predominantly situated in capital cities or larger urban centers. These non-border locations serve as gathering points for individuals in transit, where they seek support and assistance.



[1] Field observations stem from the Necocli Field Journal in Colombia, a qualitative data exercise conducted by UNHCR Colombia and its implementing partners. It was created as part of an information strategy to identify the protection risks and incidents faced by refugees and migrants along the route or during their stay in Necocli. The entries provide aggregate information regarding their profile, perceptions and experiences prior to the Darien crossing.

Mixed Movements Monitoring results

Understanding the Human Mobility Context

Unprecedented numbers of individuals involved in mixed movements have consistently been reported arriving in the Darien during the third quarter of 2023.Official records indicate a staggering 212,601 arrivals during the months of July, August, and September 2023. The majority, comprising 75%, originated from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereafter Venezuela), followed by Ecuador (11%) and Colombia (4%). This reflects a remarkable 95% surge compared to the previous quarter.

Between January and September 2023, the Darien region documented nearly 409,000 arrivals, with a significant spike observed in August, totaling 81,950 arrivals. This surge represents a substantial 170% increase compared to the corresponding period in 2022.

The primary nationalities of individuals engaged in mixed movements across the Darien in 2023 are Venezuelans (64%), Ecuadorians (12%), and Haitians (9%). Although there was a noticeable decline in the number of Haitian nationals during the second and third quarters, this may be attributed to their exploration of alternative routes, particularly through Nicaragua. Furthermore, the influx of extracontinental arrivals persisted and even increased throughout the third quarter, with Chinese, Indian, and Afghan nationals emerging as the most prominent among them.

Honduras also experienced a surge in irregular arrivals at its borders, with over 341,000 individuals recorded from January to September 2023. The primary nationalities included Venezuela (45%), Cuba (14%), Haiti (11%), and Ecuador (10%). Meanwhile, in Mexico, new asylum claims surpassed 115,000 from January to September 2023, reflecting a 131% increase compared to the same period in 2022. The primary nationalities seeking asylum in Mexico comprised Haiti (33%), Honduras (27%), and Cuba (11%).

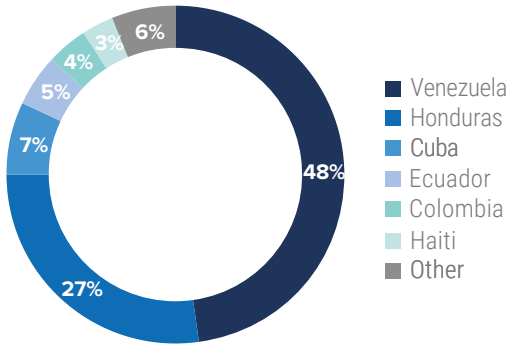
Several data collection initiatives in the region highlighted that the predominant goal of individuals engaging in mixed movements is to reach the United States. By September 2023, there were over 1.8 million reported encounters at the U.S. Southwest land border, indicating only a 5% decrease compared to the same period in 2022. A 9% increase was noted in July, August, and September 2023 compared to the corresponding period in the previous year, with primary nationalities including Mexico (24%), Venezuela (17%), Guatemala (14%), and Honduras (13%).

The escalating influx of individuals participating in mixed movements across the Americas has prompted governments in the region to advance discussions on regional measures and initiatives to manage human mobility effectively. Particularly, the U.S. Government, along with regional counterparts, is spearheading multilateral and bilateral initiatives, including the Safe Mobility Offices (SMO) initiative, a program facilitating access to lawful pathway to the United States. These efforts, coupled with a focus on addressing political and root causes, as well as providing humanitarian assistance and protection along the routes, aim at forming a robust response to one of the region's most significant challenges. During the period under report, Panama and Costa Rica agreed on key measures to manage mixed movements, including the direct transfer of individuals from Reception Center in Darien (Panamá) to a Transit facility in South Costa Rica. Additional measures implemented in the region encompass the initiation of return protocols, highlighted by the announcement regarding the recommencement of direct repatriations for Venezuelan nationals from the U.S.[2]

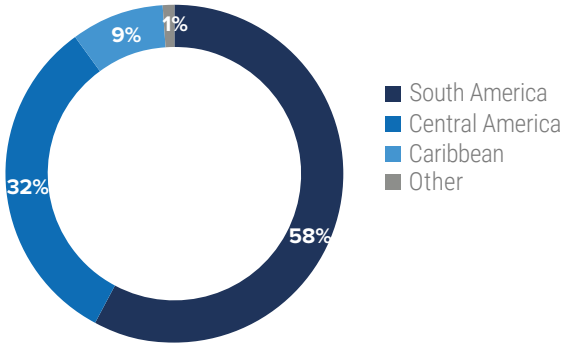
Demographics

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Countries of origin



Regions of origin of respondents
(by geographic location)



The Mixed Movement Monitoring interviewed people of **39 different nationalities**.

Almost two-thirds of the people interviewed are from a South American country, which marks a 6% increase compared the previous quarter. This is primarily attributed to the significant number of Venezuelans who were interviewed. There was also an increasing number of respondents from Ecuador, which is also backed by both official and qualitative data[3].

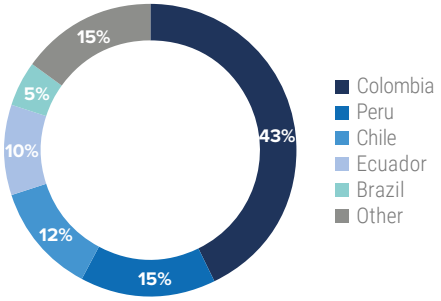
[2] For aditional details regarding return protocols: https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/10/18/dhs-resumes-direct-repatriations-venezuelan-nationals

[3] For additional details regarding official data on Human Mobility between Colombia and the United States, please access the IBC Dashboard: https://www.rcplac.org/en/ibcs-and-working-groups/ibc-on-human-mobility/ibc-human-mobility-dashboard

As in the previous quarter, approximately one-third of the respondents (32%) identify as originating from a country in Central America. Hondurans stand out as the predominant nationality among Central American respondents.
The Caribbean constitutes the third-largest region of origin, accounting for 9% of the total, which reflects a 5% decrease from the second quarter. This is followed by a smaller fraction of individuals originating from Asia and Africa (1%), mirroring the figures from the second quarter.

Venezuelans were the main nationality interviewed in most countries. Mexico was the country with the highest diversity of nationalities interviewed (24), where Hondurans ranked the first, and it also displayed the highest diversity in nationalities interviewed, with representatives from 24 different countries of origin. This was closely followed by Panama, which recorded interviews with individuals from 18 distinct countries.

Host countries



17%
of respondents have lived in one or more countries other than country of origin for at least six months[4].

One out of every six participants in the survey indicated living in a different country than their country of origin for at least six months. The most commonly cited host countries for these individuals were Colombia (43%), Peru (15%), and Chile (12%). This represents a shift from the previous quarter, where Chile and Brazil were more frequently mentioned. The change in destination preference, particularly among Haitians, can be partially attributed to the selection of alternative routes.

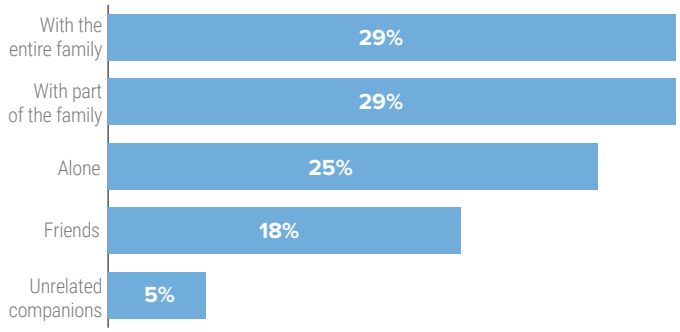
In cases involving families with young children who had fled from these host countries, it was often observed that the children held dual citizenship, being nationals of both the host country and their parents' country of origin.

This trend is supported by both on-the-ground observations and insights from key informants.

The vast majority of survey respondents (83%) stated that they had traveled directly from their countries of origin. Venezuela was the most commonly mentioned origin country (42%), followed by Honduras (31%), and Cuba (8%). Among those from Venezuela, 73% had left directly from Venezuela, while 27% had departed from host countries, predominantly Colombia (55%), Peru (20%), and Ecuador (12%). Moreover a significant majority of Hondurans (97%) and Cubans (96%) reported leaving directly from their countries of origin. This data highlights that the majority of those in transit are newly displaced individuals.

Group composition

Who do you travel with?



4.4
Average family composition

2.7
Average adults in group

1.7
Average children in group

1
Average child < 5 per group

In the third quarter, this exercise broadened its demographic section to provide more comprehensive information about the composition of displaced groups. A majority of respondents were either traveling with their entire family (29%), a part of their family (29%), or independently (25%). Among those traveling with family, the average group size is 4.4 members, typically including two children, with one being below 5 years old. These findings underscore the prevalence of children engaged in mixed movements within the region.

The characteristics of these groups and families vary depending on the participants' places of origin. Individuals from Central America tend to travel more frequently alone (35%) and in smaller family groups (3.5 members), in contrast to South Americans who more commonly travel with family and/or friends, forming larger family groups (5 members).

[4] Host country: The country in which a non-national stays or resides, whether legally or irregularly.

LEGAL STATUS

Legal status of respondents who have lived in host countries

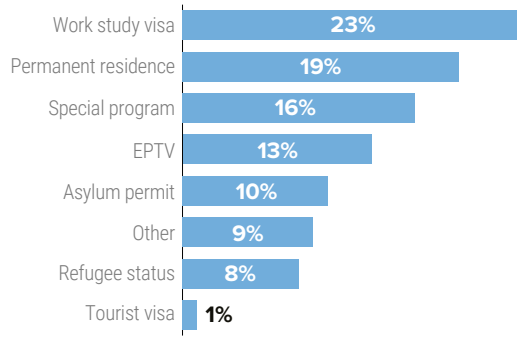
Commencing from the third quarter, the monitoring process has expanded its scope of questions to include individuals with a residential history in a third country distinct from their country of origin for a period exceeding six months, whether legally or irregularly, referred to as a "host country." The goal of these adjustments is to analyze the **access to legal status** in the region, given the changing political and normative landscape. The new section not only investigates the legal status of respondents but also of their family members residing in other countries for a similar duration.

Out of the 17% of people who have lived in other countries for more than 6 months:

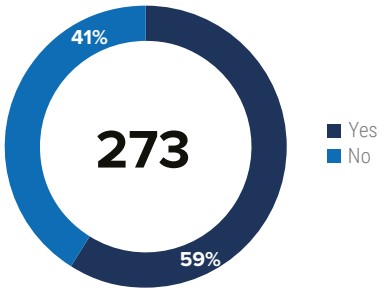
1 in 2
people applied for legal status

72%
of them obtained a legal status

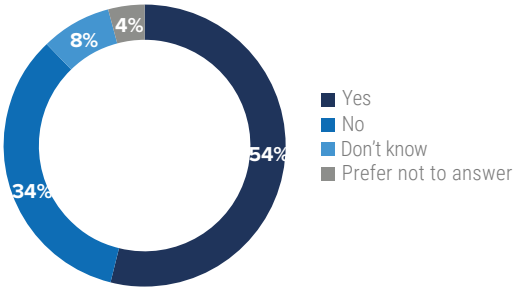
Type of legal status obtained



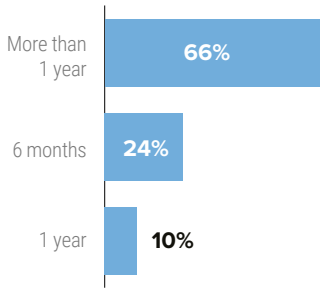
Are the documents in your possesion?



Are the documents still valid?



If valid, for how long?



Almost 80% of the people obtained the legal status they applied to. However, a significant percentage did not have documents in their possession to prove it (41%), while 34% of individuals had expired legal status.

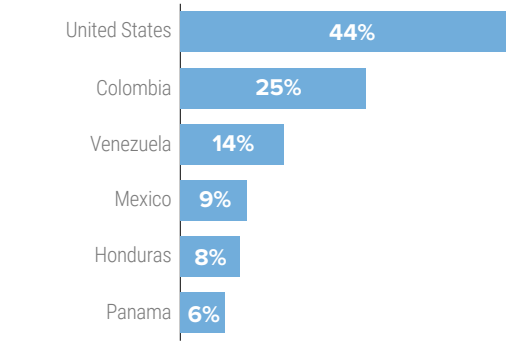
During focus group discussions, the predominant demographic comprised individuals with a history of residing in a host country, primarily Venezuelans facing challenges related to legal documentation. Many participants recounted their efforts to regularize their legal status in the host country underscoring the protracted duration between application and decision-making, which posed significant challenges in providing for their families. The extended waiting period was exacerbated by unfavorable economic conditions, restricted access to rights, and issues associated with integration or exclusion in host countries dissuading respondents from opting to stay. Additionally, it was observed that possessing legal documentation did not automatically guarantee access to certain rights, such as employment, housing, and social services, in some countries.

Most Venezuelans primarily rely on alternative legal stay arrangements, including Colombia's Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV, Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Migrantes Venezolanos, for its acronym in Spanish)[5], along with visas for work/study and permanent resident status. Similarly, a smaller proportion of Hondurans also have these types of visas. In terms of asylum documentation, Venezuelans, Hondurans, and Cubans collectively constitute

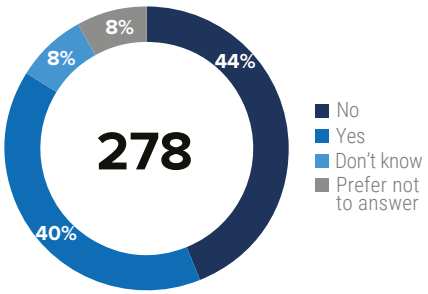
[5] For aditional details regarding ETPV: https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/FOTOS2020/ok._esp-_abc_estatuto_al_migrante_venezolano-_05mar-2021.pdf

Legal status of family living in host countries

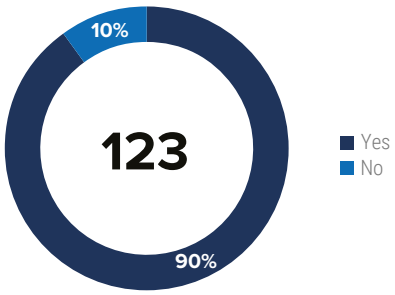
Where is the rest of the family?



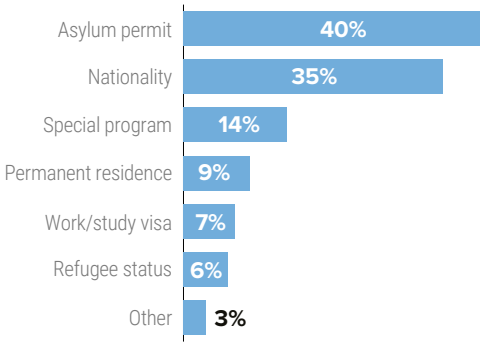
Applied for legal status in country



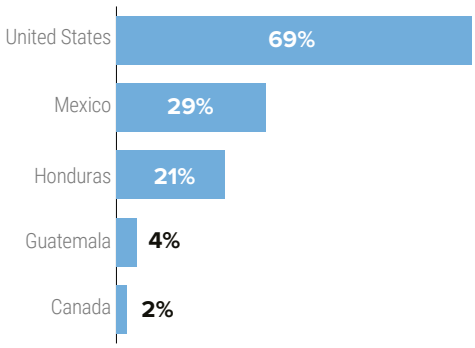
Type of status obtained



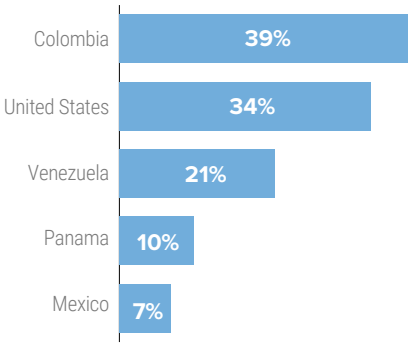
Type of status obtained



Central Americans
Where is the rest of the family?



South Americans
Where is the rest of the family?



As previously discussed in the context of group compositions, 29% of individuals are traveling with only a portion of their family, while the remaining family members are primarily located in the United States (44%), Colombia (25%), and Venezuela (14%).

These results vary depending on the interviewees' areas of origin: additional family members of individuals from Central America more commonly reside in the United States (69%), Mexico (29%), and Honduras (21%), whereas South Americans have family members primarily in Colombia (39%), the United States (34%), and Venezuela (21%).

Furthermore, among the family members residing in host countries, 40% have applied for legal status, and a significant majority of them (90%) have successfully obtained it. This success is predominantly attributed to their classification as asylum seekers (40%) or nationals of these countries (35%).

DOCUMENTATION

80%

of respondents carry an ID card as their primary form of documentation.

When queried about the documents they currently possess in the country of the interview, the majority of respondents carry their ID cards (80%), while a significant portion also has their passports (26%). Notably, the data exhibits substantial variations when cross-referenced with the respondents' areas of origin. Individuals coming from the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa predominantly opt for passports when traveling (83%), whereas those originating from South and Central American countries typically rely on their ID cards (83%).

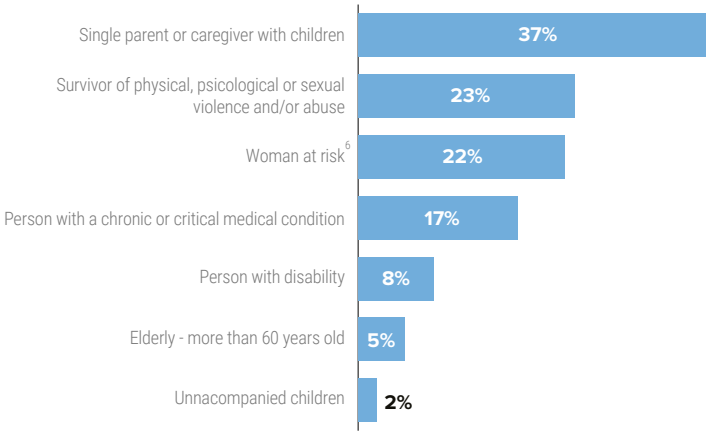
A persistent trend throughout the year reveals a growing number of individuals with expired passports. Among those holding national passports, 18% possess expired documents. This pattern is more pronounced among Venezuelans (38%), posing a potential threat to this population's access to parole programs and other legal pathways.

SPECIFIC NEEDS

22% of respondents had at least one specific protection need.

24% of respondents with specific protection needs reported experiencing physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse.

Type of specific need



Persons with specific needs[7] are particularly vulnerable to protection risks and abuses as the difficult conditions of the journey heighten their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation and put them at risk of irreversible and lasting harm.

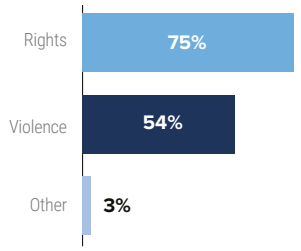
Throughout the third quarter of 2023, approximately one in four respondents indicated having specific protection needs, which represents a slight decrease compared to the last quarter. Among these identified needs, that of a single parent traveling with their children continued to be the most prevalent, accounting for 38% of cases, pointing to a significant presence of children in transit. The percentage of individuals with specific needs who reported incidents of physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse has surged to 24% of respondents for this quarter. This concern continues to stand out as the predominant specific need in Costa Rica, with 47% of those reporting specific needs citing instances of violence, marking a significant 124% increase from the previous quarter. Notably, in the preceding quarter, violence was most reported in Panama, where it was occurred at a rate of 31%.

Displacement

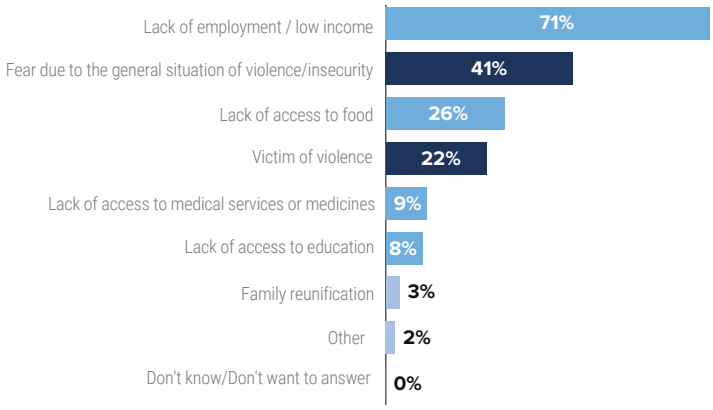
REASONS TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Participants were queried about the motives behind their departure from their respective countries of origin. This inquiry afforded them the opportunity to choose one or more reasons, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing their decision to leave. In the subsequent analysis, the various responses are classified into three overarching groups: rights-related, violence-related, and other factors[8].

Reasons to leave country of origin (groups)



Reasons to leave country of origin (breakdown)[9]



[6] The category for "woman at risk" includes risks specific to women such as pregnancy and lactation, which used to be separate categories in previous versions of the survey.

[7] Any person who experiences particular protection risks or barriers due to the intersection of their personal characteristics with the environments, which requires specific targeted actions in order to enjoy the full range of their human rights. Children (especially unaccompanied and separated children), victims of trafficking, women and girls at risk, older persons, and persons with disabilities are among the groups that often have specific protection needs. These persons have the same basic needs as other refugees but often face barriers to having these needs met.

[8] **Rights-related:** This category encompasses factors associated with the lack of access to basic rights and services, including challenges related to employment, low income, food, medical services, or education. **Violence-related:** Within this category, responses are linked to concerns about the general situation of violence or insecurity, as well as instances of being a victim of violence, including threats and intimidation. **Other:** This category encompasses a range of reasons, including but not limited to family reunification, natural disasters, and other options that may not distinctly fall into the rights-related or violence-related categories.

[9] In previous quarters, "victim of violence" and "threats/intimidation" were two separate answer options. For the third quarter, the answer options were revised and consolidated. "Victim of violence" now identifies "The person or someone close to them was a victim of violence, threats or intimidation (extortion, assault, GBV, kidnapping, discrimination / xenophobia, etc.)".

3 out of 4

cited rights-related factors, such as lack of employment, food, health or education as the reasons to leave their country of origin.

The most frequently cited reason for leaving one's own country of origin was the lack of access to employment (71%), aligning with trends observed in the first and second quarters.

1 out of 2

cited violence-related factors as a primary motivation for their decision to leave their country of origin.

Over half of the respondents consistently provide evidence that substantiates a profile indicating international protection needs. This is attributed either to the widespread prevalence of violence in their country of origin or their personal experiences as victims of violence [10].

29%

of respondents mentioned both violence and limited access to basic rights and services as reasons to leave their country of origin.

This highlights the intricate and interconnected nature of the factors driving mixed movements.

- Colombian and Haitian individuals have consistently cited a heightened prevalence of both generalized and individualized violence as the primary factors motivating their decision to leave their respective countries of origin throughout the various quarters of the year. In the third quarter, the most substantial percentage of reasons attributed to violence was reported among Colombian nationals, standing at 66%. Furthermore, Colombians reported the highest incidence of being victims of violence at 36%, closely followed by Hondurans at 37%. Despite a decrease in the number of Haitians interviewed, they represent the nationality with the highest reported level of generalized violence as a reason for leaving their country of origin, reaching 52%.

- Venezuelans who took part in Focus Groups Discussions in Honduras consistently cited the ongoing generalized crisis in Venezuela as the primary reason for leaving their country of origin. Many expressed difficulties in securing employment or accessing social rights due to their political opinions. Additionally, those who established businesses faced extortion demands from various actors, leading to business closures, loss of income, and ultimately rendering them unable to sustain their residence in their home countries.

26% of respondents left the country of origin due to lack of food,

consistent with the first and second quarters.

The absolute highest share is found amongst Venezuelans (39%). They are followed by Cubans and Ecuadorians (29% and 26% respectively), Nicaraguans (24 %), and Haitians (22%). Food security continues to represent one of the main push factors behind mixed movements in the region, weighing on the final decision to leave the country of origin.

[10] For the third quarter, violence-related reasons to leave include the categories "fear due to general situation of violence / insecurity" and "victim of violence". In the first and second quarters it includes the category "threats/intimidation" as well. Reasons related to limited access to rights and services include the categories "lack of employment / low income", "lack of access to food", "lack of access to medical services or medicines" and "lack of access to education".

JOURNEY

54% COLOMBIA
51% PANAMA
51% HONDURAS
44% NICARAGUA
38% COSTA RICA

Top 5 countries of transit

73%

of Venezuelan respondents came directly from their country of origin

This quarter has seen an **increase in the number of Venezuelans coming directly from their country of origin** (Q3 73% vs. Q2 68% vs. Q1 63% in the previous quarter). They transited through Colombia before reaching the Darien and moving northwards through Central America and Mexico. The other group of Venezuelans who came from another host country (32%) had departed mostly from Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. Smaller percentages came from various other countries across the continent and the Caribbean.

Countries in Central America are frequently cited as transit points, but the specific routes vary based on respondents' country of origin and host country. For those coming from Africa and Asia, Brazil serves as a predominant starting point (51%). From Brazil, the journey typically involves transit through Colombia or Peru, moving northward through Ecuador and Colombia. The perilous route through the Darien in Panama follows.

There has been a decrease in the number of direct air arrivals in Colombia or Ecuador, particularly among Chinese nationals who traditionally dominate this air route from Ecuador. A noteworthy trend is the growing prominence of the maritime route in the Pacific between Colombia and Panama via Jurado - Jaque. Initially, this route had limited usage, but in the third quarter, it has experienced a significant increase, with an average of 100-200 people monthly. Users now include not only Chinese nationals but also Ecuadorians and Venezuelans. Despite being a more expensive option, Chinese nationals remain the primary users due to the route's advantage of avoiding the challenging Darien jungle.

Additionally, there is a consistent use of the Caribbean route from San Andres Island in Colombia to Nicaragua, primarily by Venezuelans and Ecuadorians. This route is preferred as it offers an alternative to navigating the difficult terrain of the Darien Jungle.

A significant trend observed among Caribbean nationals is the initiation of their journeys from Central American countries, driven by more favorable visa entry policies. This strategy enables them to bypass the challenging Darien jungle. Almost all interviewed Cubans (92%) initiated their journeys in Nicaragua, highlighting a distinct pattern.

Arrival to country of interview

77%

of respondents have arrived in the country of interview less than one week ago.

Similar to previous quarters, most of the people interviewed had recently arrived to the country of interview.

Length of journey

66%

of people left their country of origin less than one month ago.

Of the people who came from their host country (17% of the respondents), 42% of them have left less than a month ago as well.

Intended length of stay

80%

expressed an intention to stay in the country of the interview for less than one month.

Across all transit countries—Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala—nearly all respondents planned stays of less than one month.

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Map: Mixed Movements towards North America

The map below illustrates the primary routes used by both continental and extracontinental individuals to reach North America:

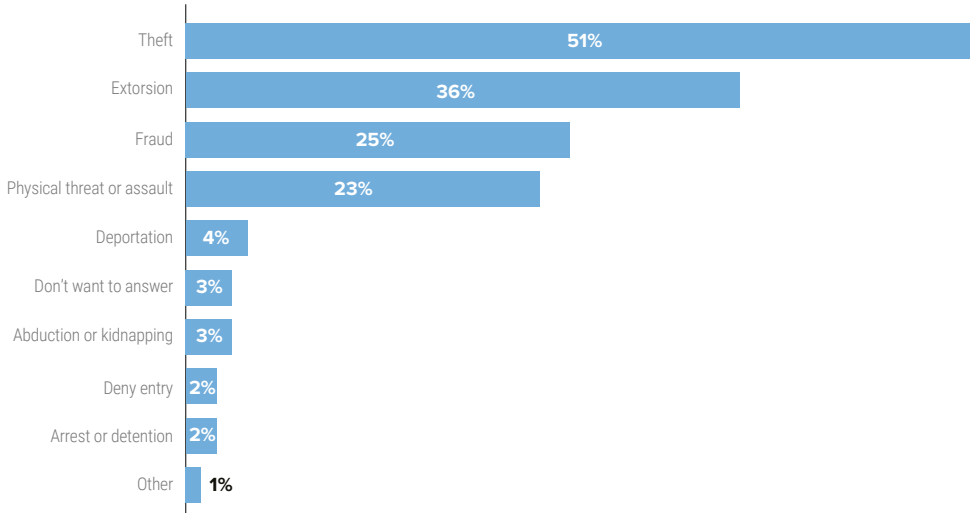
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: UNHCR and R4V

PROTECTION INCIDENTS

59%

of the people interviewed have suffered a protection incident or threat in the route

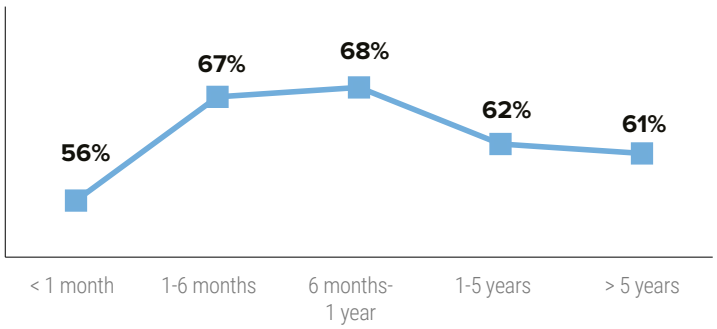


As of the third quarter of 2023, a modification was introduced in the methodology for the question regarding protection incidents along the route, which now encompasses both experienced and witnessed incidents. A substantial 59% of respondents indicated having experienced or witnessed one or more incidents along their journey. Notably, the variety of incident types has expanded, with theft remaining prevalent but now accompanied by a higher incidence of extortion (36%), fraud (25%), and physical threats/assault/abuse (23%). The shift in incident distribution is evident, reflecting a more complex and challenging landscape for those on the move.

Numerous participants in focus group discussions highlighted severe protection incidents, especially during the challenging Darien crossing, including instances of robbery, deaths, and kidnappings. Due to the limitations of collecting data on gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of mixed movements[11], it is also important to mention that both qualitative and secondary data have pointed to an increase in GBV incidents in the Darien in the third quarter of 2023, particularly regarding sexual exploitation and abuse[12].

Upon examining nationalities, Venezuelans and Hondurans surface as the primary reporters of protection incidents in the third quarter. Notably, Hondurans and Ecuadorians stand out, registering the highest incidence of theft at 60%, showcasing shifting patterns when compared to the second quarter.

Protection incidents by time of departure from country of origin



The longer a person has been on the journey the more protection incidents they report. A discernible peak is observed among those who left their country of origin within the first 6 months (67%) and between 6 months to 1 year (68%). Conversely, participants who have been on the move for more extended periods report slightly fewer protection incidents. This discrepancy could potentially be attributed to the fading of memories over time during the journey, impacting the recollection of incidents.

[11] Gender-based violence data is frequently underreported within the realm of mixed movements, primarily attributed to several factors such as the absence of a secure environment for disclosure of personal information, constraints on time etc.

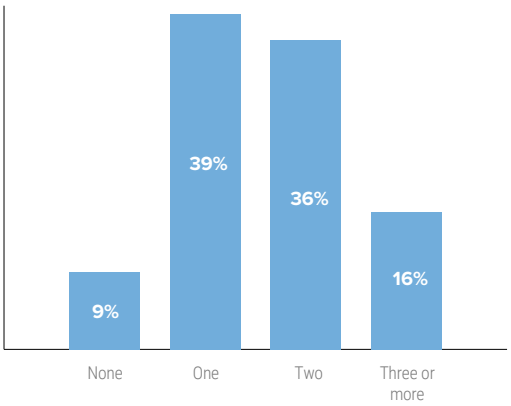
[12] Médicos Sin Fronteras, La violencia sexual en el Tapón del Darién es cada vez más cruel y deshumanizante, https://www.msf.es/noticia/la-violencia-sexual-tapon-del-darien-cada-vez-mas-cruel-y-deshumanizante.

ACCESS TO FOOD

Almost 1 in 2

respondents consumed only one meal (39%) or none at all (9%), the day before the interview.

How many meals did you eat yesterday?



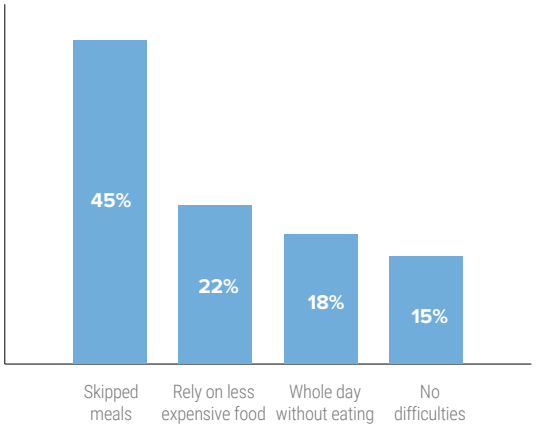
Food insecurity remains a pressing issue throughout the journey. Nearly half of those surveyed (48%) had only managed to consume a single meal (38%) or had gone without food entirely (9%) on the day preceding the interview. The situation worsens significantly among people interviewed in Costa Rica, where one in three respondents (32%) endured a whole day without food, followed by Panama (13%). The elevated numbers in Costa Rica can be attributed to the dynamics of the journey, typically comprising 12-14 hours on buses, followed by an additional 12 hours of travel toward the northern border. Alongside the prolonged travel durations, it is essential to consider the time spent in arrivals and stops, often occurring during the nighttime and the lack of public shelters and food programmes to people in displacement.

In terms of nationalities, more than half of Ecuadorians and Venezuelans respondents (60%) show a worse situation compared to others having inadequate number of meals consumption (none or only one). This is followed by Colombians (50%), Hondurans (43%), Nicaraguans (37%) and Haitians (31%) showing very low food consumption levels. It is striking that compared to previous quarter, Ecuadorians respondents (57%) claim a higher deterioration (15%) when trying to meet their food security requirements compared to other nationalities, having only one meal or none on the day [receding the interview.

85%

of respondents faced difficulties covering their food needs and resorted to various coping strategies due to a lack of food or insufficient funds to purchase it.

Percentage reporting different consumption coping strategies



When asked about their food situation over the previous week, only 15% of respondents reported having no difficulties. Still, the vast majority (85%) adopted coping mechanisms to face the shortage of food and/or of financial means to access it. These strategies range from eating cheaper and less preferred foods (22%) to skipping meals or eating less (45%), as well as regularly spending entire days without eating (18%). The latter was reported mostly in Costa Rica (55%), followed by Panama (41%), Honduras (20%), Guatemala (8%) and Mexico (8%).

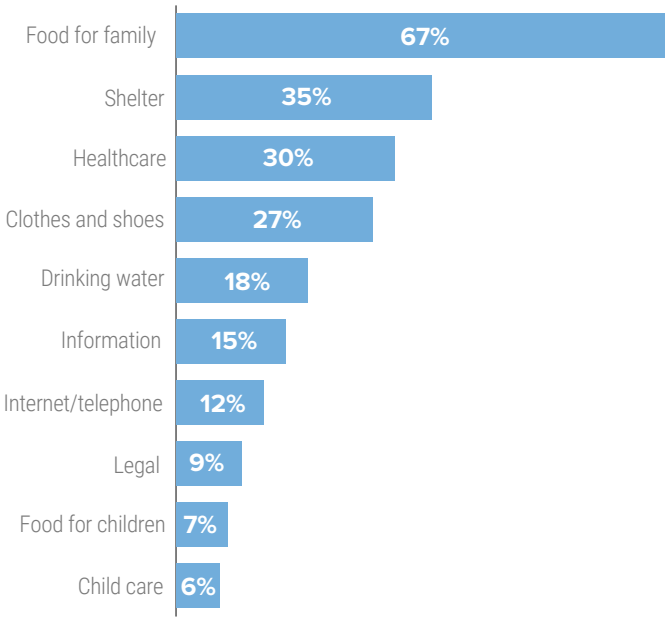
All participants of focus group discussions in Panama expressed that the food they carried was not sufficient for the journey, and they spent days without eating in the jungle or solely consumed "panela" (solidified sugarcane juice). At the same time, participants of focus group discussions in Honduras highlighted the solidarity of the local population as well as of the humanitarian organizations both in Honduras and in other countries through which they have transited. The support received was mainly water, food, shelter as well as other types of humanitarian assistance.

Food security and protection

The examination of the results of the third quarter continues to underscore the connection between protection incidents and food security indicators. The percentage of respondents who encountered protection incidents and engaged in negative coping mechanisms related to food security increased from 30% to 40% from one quarter to the other. Such mechanisms include skipping meals or going an entire day without eating.

It remains evident that individuals exposed to protection incidents are more prone to facing challenges in terms of food security, and vice versa. Given the central focus of WFP and UNHCR mandates on addressing both food security and protection, there will be dedicated attention in the joint monitoring to delve deeper into the evolving dynamics of this interconnected relationship.

MAIN NEEDS



67%

of people interviewed reported access to food for their families as one of their main needs

35%

of respondents need shelter

When respondents were asked about their current main needs, the top three reported were food (67%), shelter (35%), and health care support (30%). Need for more information has also been highlighted in most focus group discussions held in Panama and Honduras, particularly on the Humanitarian Parole Program and the “CBP One” application of the United States Government.

Upon analyzing the data based on the country of data collection, patterns emerged, particularly in Panama, which stands out due to the unique challenges associated with crossing the Darien. In Panama, the most frequently mentioned concerns revolve around clothing and shoes (52%), followed by food (34%) and health care support (23%).

Costa Rica reported the highest levels of need among the countries of data collection. Among the respondents, more than four out of five (84%) indicated a need for food, two out of three (66%) expressed a need for shelter, and 59% reported a need for clothing and shoes. These results might also be attributed to the dynamics of the journey in Costa Rica as previously mentioned. Among the five main countries of origin of respondents (Venezuela, Honduras, Cuba, Ecuador, and Colombia), Ecuadorians reported the highest need for food (77%), while Cubans were the only nationality that indicated their two main needs as information on protection and migratory alternatives (43%) and legal assistance (43%).

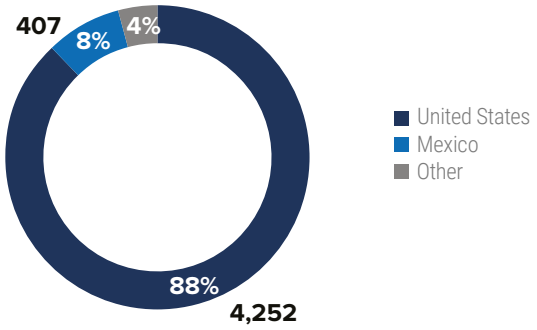
In Colombia, qualitative data gathered from field observations, as documented in the Necocli field diary, reveal that Venezuelans, particularly those squatting in the streets or on the beaches of Necoclí and Turbo, encounter substantial economic obstacles in commencing their journey as a family unit. Venezuelans usually have prolonged stays in Necocli due to the lack of economic resources for embarking on the journey. Unsanitary conditions, coupled with limited access to food, have resulted in an increase in cases of severe illnesses and malnutrition, which are aggravated during the Darien crossing. Additionally, there has been a growth in the number of reported cases of child labor, particularly affected unaccompanied children, which further compound the vulnerabilities faced by this population.

INTENTIONS

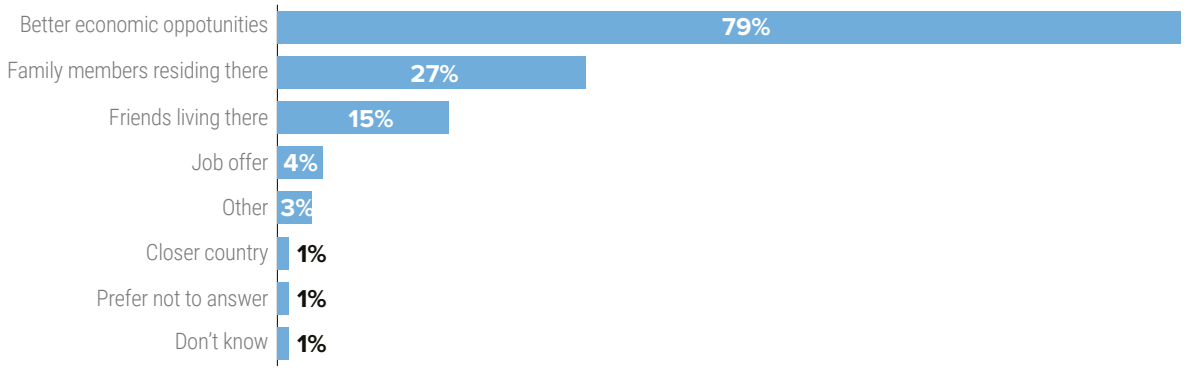
Intended country of destination

88%

of respondents intend to go to the United States.



Main reasons for intended destination



In Quarter 3, the results have sustained an upward trend in the desire to reach the United States, with a 9% increase compared to Quarter 2. This aligns with the consistent pattern from previous quarters, where the United States remains the predominant intended destination, selected by 88% of respondents, while Mexico follows with 8%.

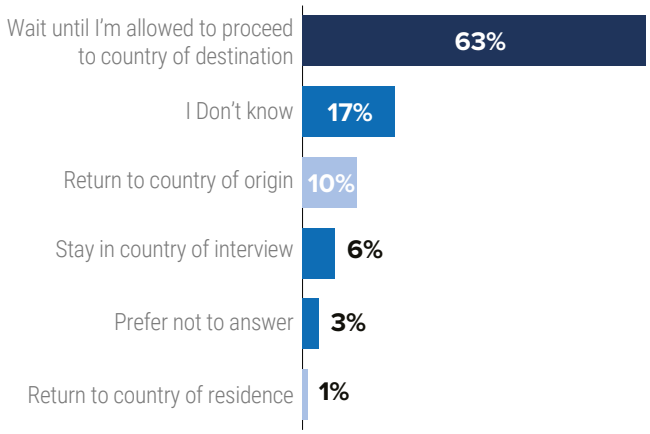
Venezuelans are the main nationality with the intention to make the United States their final destination, comprising 53%, followed by Hondurans at 23%. Among respondents selecting Mexico as their final destination, a substantial 62% are Hondurans, trailed by Cubans at 10%, and Guatemalans at 9%.

One of the updates of the questionnaire as of the third quarter is the examination of the reasons behind the respondents' choice of destination. A significant proportion (79%) cited the availability of better economic opportunities in the chosen country as their primary motivation. Following closely, 27% mentioned having family members residing there.

Scenarios of alternative intentions

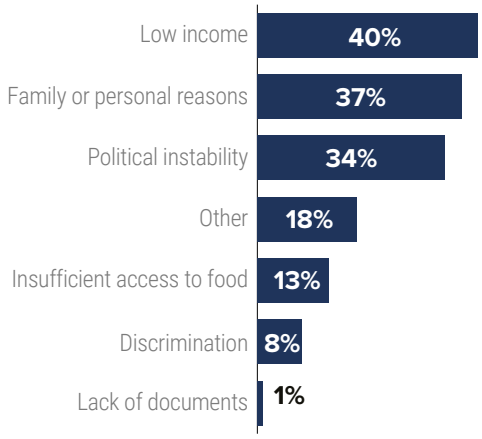
The survey also started to inquire respondents about **contingency plans and scenarios of alternative intentions in the event they are not able reach the final destination.**

In case not possible to reach intended country of destination, what would yo do?



Remarkably, 63% indicated their willingness to **wait until they are permitted to proceed to their intended country.** Within this group, 61% were Venezuelans, and 14% were Hondurans. On the contrary, among those considering a return to their country of origin, the majority (73%) were Hondurans, while 15% were Venezuelans. This divergence suggests that Hondurans are more inclined to view returning home as a viable alternative, in contrast to Venezuelans who lean towards waiting in a transit country as their preferred course of action.

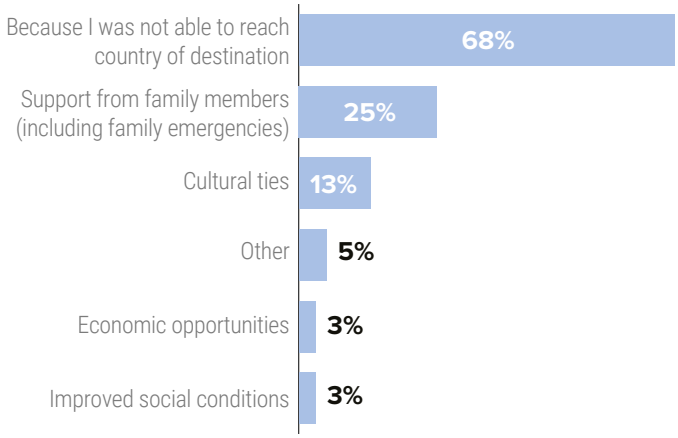
What would be the reason(s) for not considering to return to cuntry of origin or host country?



The **predominant factors** compelling individuals to wait until they are allowed to proceed to their intended country of destination include economic constraints in both their home and host countries, accounting for 40%. Family and/or personal considerations closely follow at 37%, and political instability is cited by 34% of respondents.

Further analyzing these reasons, low income emerges as the primary driver among Venezuelans (35%), Hondurans (28%), and Cubans (20%). For family or personal reasons, Hondurans reported the highest with 49%, followed by Cubans (25%) and Venezuelans (7%).

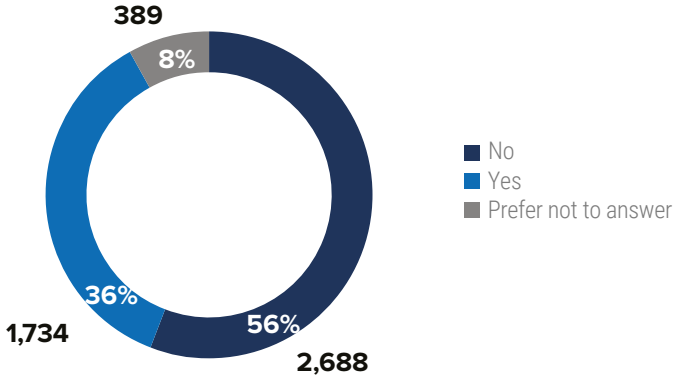
What would be the reason(s) to return?



Of the 10% who opted to **return to their country of origin or host country**, a significant 86% indicated that they would consider this course of action only in the event they could not reach their intended country of destination. Additionally, 15% cited their motivation as supporting their family or responding to family emergencies.

Risks upon return

Risk upon return for self or family



Respondents **were asked if they would face any kind of risk if they had to return to their country of origin or host country.**

Approximately **1 out of 3 of the people responded that they would face some kind of risk upon return.**

Protection concerns upon return can relate to security and/or reintegration prospects, particularly where the overall situation in the country or the circumstances for specific individuals and groups (e.g. unaccompanied and/or separated children, and trafficked persons) remains fragile.

In collaboration with:

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