

January - February 2024

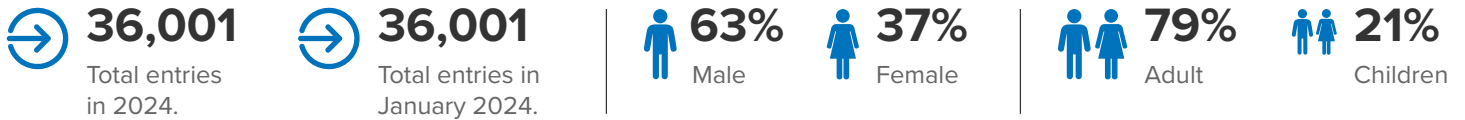
Context

Darien is Panama's largest and poorest province. Bordering Colombia, the province hosts a 60-mile-deep jungle, the only breaking point of the Pan-American highway, linking the continent from south to north. Despite being one of the most dangerous jungles in the world, Darien is a transit location for thousands of refugees and migrants, most of them coming from Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and African and South Asian nations.

Panama's unprecedented mixed movement crisis has been ongoing for over two years. According to National Migration Service (SNM) published statistics, from 2021 to 2023, nearly 900,000 people crossed through this area.

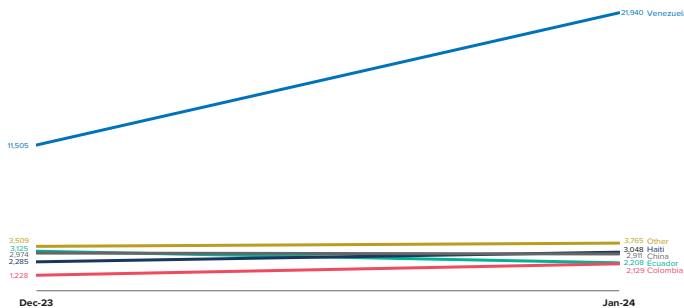


Key Figures

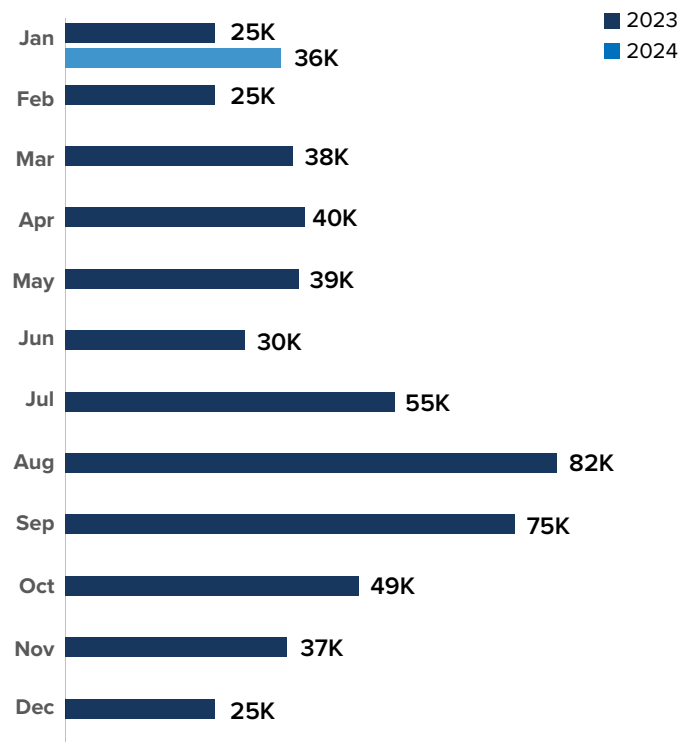


Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from December 2023 to January 2024

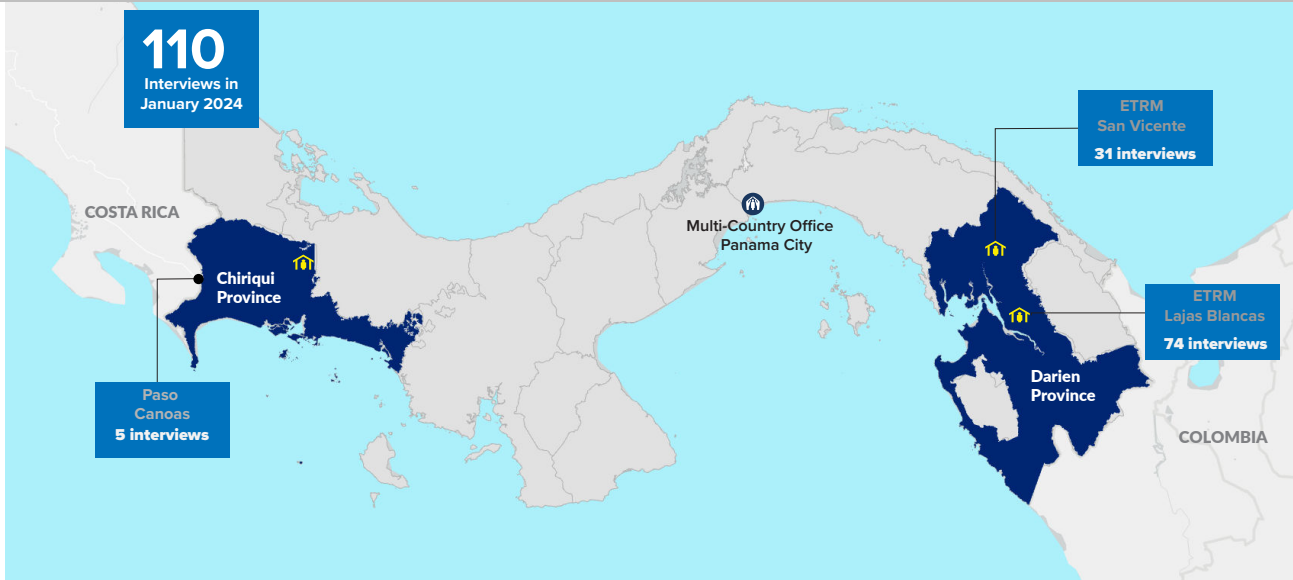


Irregular entries through Darien 2023-2024 (in thousands of people)



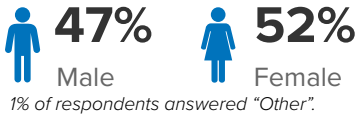
UNHCR Data Collection

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, collects monthly information on the characteristics, vulnerabilities, and protection needs of refugees and migrants who enter Panama through Darien. The information is compiled through individual interviews conducted in Panama's Darien and Chiriquí provinces. The preliminary results presented are indicative and should not be interpreted as representative of the total population of refugees and migrants crossing the border through the Darien jungle.



Demography

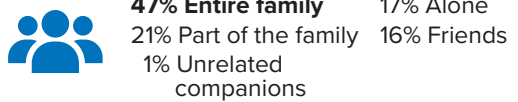
Sex of interviewed individuals



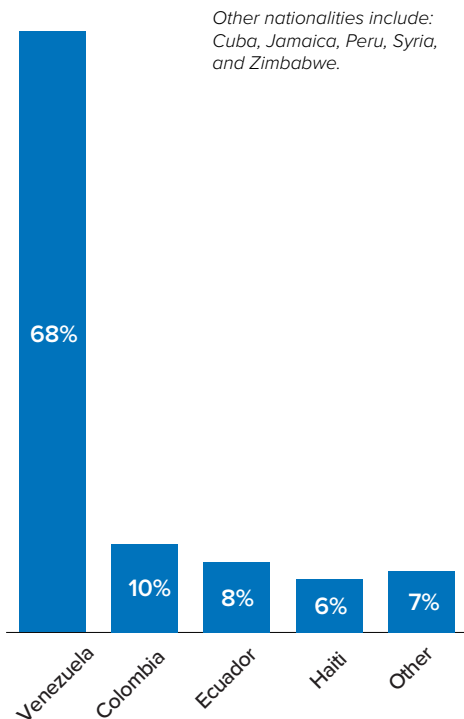
Average age



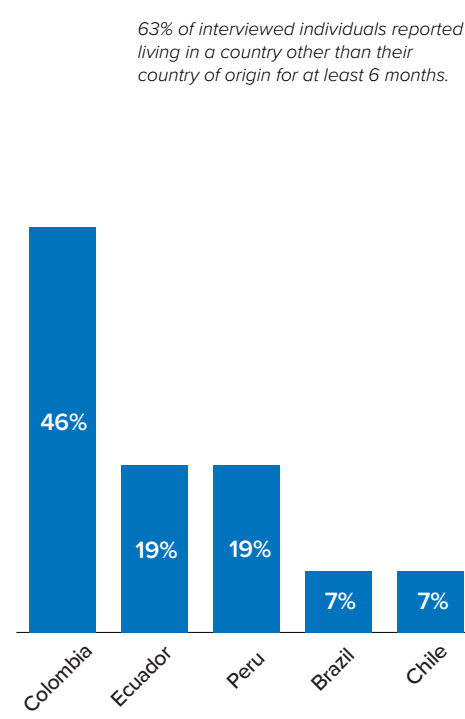
Travel group composition



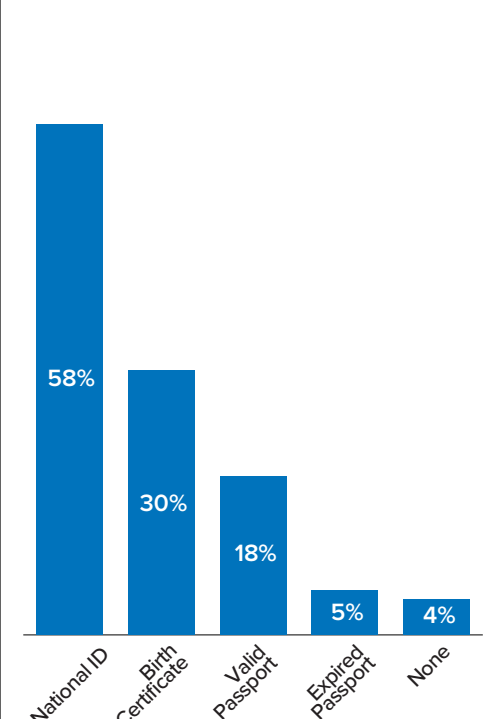
Nationality of interviewed individuals



Last country of residence



Documents carried by the family



Respondent profile

Nearly seven in ten interviewed refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (68%). Thirty seven percent of them came directly from Venezuela, a slight decrease compared to last month, while the remaining 67% came from other countries of residence, mainly Colombia (36%), Peru (15%), and Ecuador (11%).

More than half of participants (57%) had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and half of them reported having valid documentation from that country.

Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) reported travelling with family, and nearly one-fifth (18%) reported travelling alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of 2 children, most of which were under five (90%). Additionally, one childbirth was registered in the jungle this year.

One in three respondents (35%) travelled with at least one person with a specific need. In February, there was a slight increase in the number of people travelling with survivors of abuse (9%).



76% of interviewed individuals left their country of origin/residence less than four weeks ago.



1% of interviewed individuals reported having the intention to stay in Panama.



57%* of interviewed individuals had applied for legal status in another country, prior to their arrival to Panama.
Out of 63 respondents that had lived in another country.



9% of interviewed individuals reported travelling with a survivor of violence in their group (sexual, physical or psychological).
This figure likely represents an underestimation of these incidents.



5% of interviewed individuals reported travelling with pregnant or lactating women.



11% of respondents reported travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.



3% of interviewed individuals reported travelling with unaccompanied children in their group.



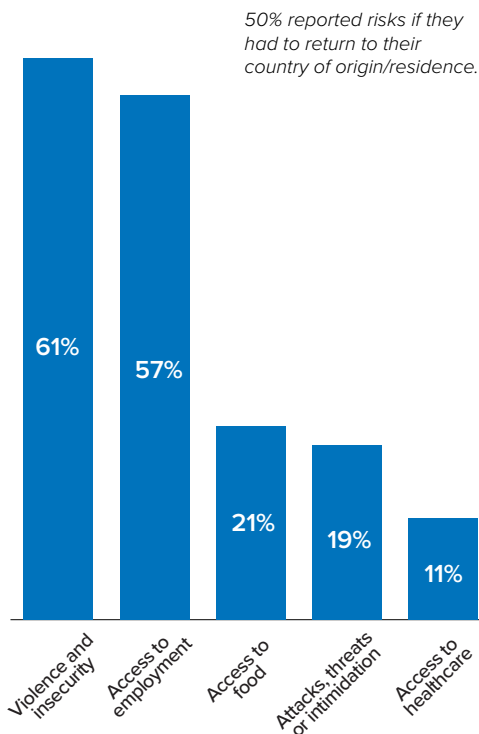
8% of interviewed individuals reported having a single parent travelling with children in their group.



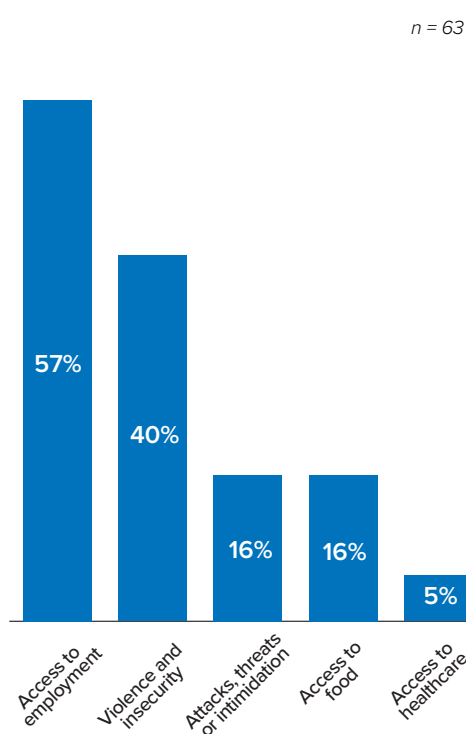
3% of interviewed individuals reported travelling with a person over the age of 60 in their group.

Push and pull factors

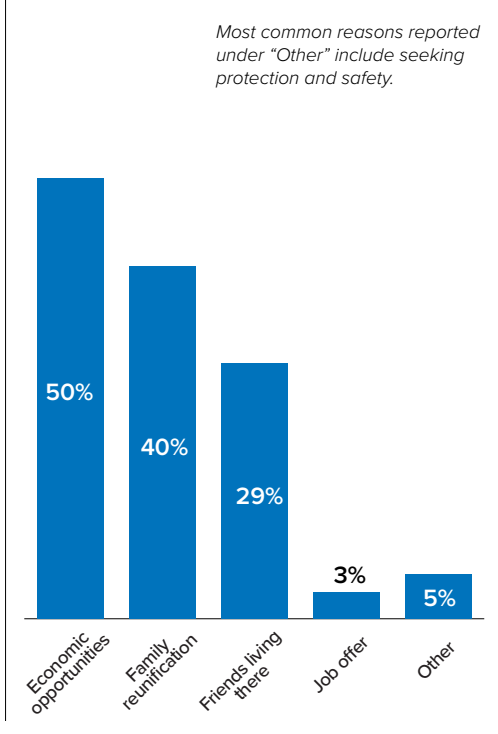
Main reasons for leaving country of origin



Main reasons for leaving country of residence



Reasons for choosing destination country



 **91%**

of interviewed individuals reported the United States as their final destination.

Followed by Canada (3%), Mexico (3%), Costa Rica (1%), Panama (1%), and Venezuela (1%).

 **8 in 10**

interviewed individuals reported that if they were unable to reach their country of destination, they would wait until allowed to proceed to said country.

 **5 in 10**

interviewed reported receiving information about the journey and making decisions based on the information received from friends and relatives who had already made it.

Also received information through social networks, mainly TikTok (31%) and Facebook (25%).

 **29%**

of interviewed Haitians, and Venezuelans reported not receiving information about the new entry requirements to the United States.

Challenges during the journey

 **3 days**

is the average time interviewed individuals spent crossing the Darien jungle (min. 1,5 days and max. 10 days).

 **3 in 5**

experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle.

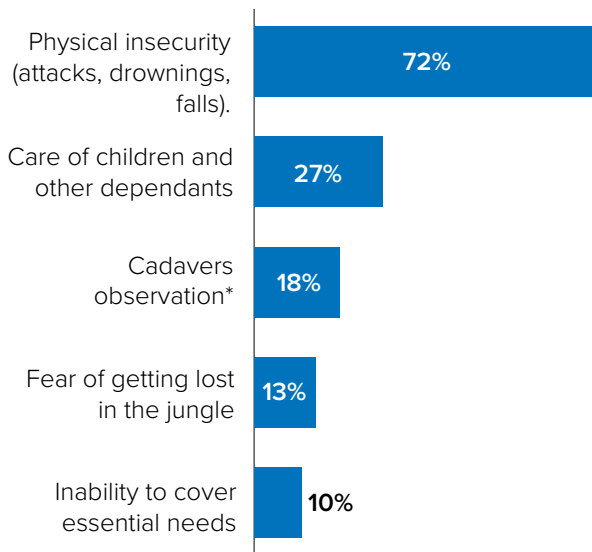
 **59%**

of interviewed individuals reported being victims of theft, scams or fraud during their journey through the jungle. **Additionally, 23% reported being victim of threats, intimidation, and attacks.**

 **56%**

of interviewed individuals paid a person to guide them through the jungle.

Situations that affected people the most while crossing the jungle



**Those who reported seeing cadavers, saw between 1 and 7 cadavers during the seven days before data collection.*

Main needs for the continuation of the journey

Cash

The lack of access to financial service providers in transit communities and the ETRMs.

Information

A lack of timely and detailed information about the transfer services to Costa Rica, including the increase in bus fares from \$40 to \$60.

Drinking water

Concerns about the quality and safety of drinking water available at the ETRMs.

Healthcare

Increased number of families travelling with children with disabilities. Lack of specialized healthcare, adequate installations, and mobility aids at the ETRMs.

UNHCR Multi Country Office for Belize, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua and Southern Caribbean

Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 1st to 9th February 2024

Access all our border protection monitoring publications [here](#)

Feedback: panpaim@unhcr.org