

March - April 2024

Context

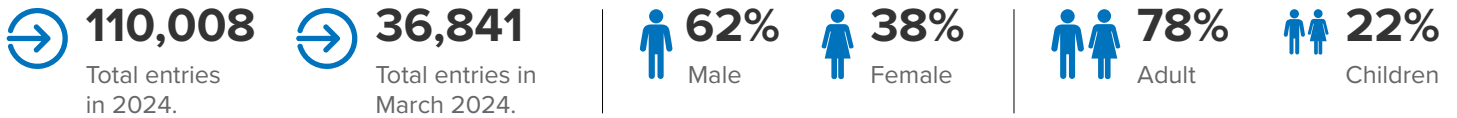
Darien is Panama's largest and poorest province. Bordering Colombia, the province hosts a 60-mile-deep jungle, the only breaking point of the Pan-American highway, linking the continent from south to north.

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 from Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and African and South Asian nations.

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

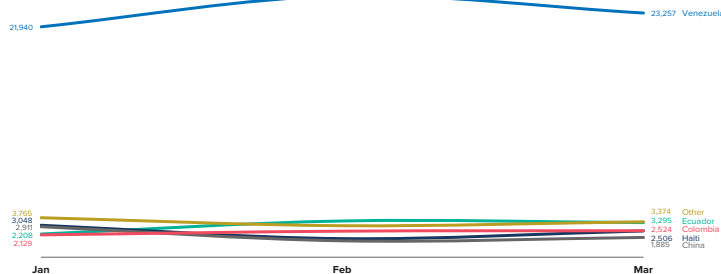


Key Figures



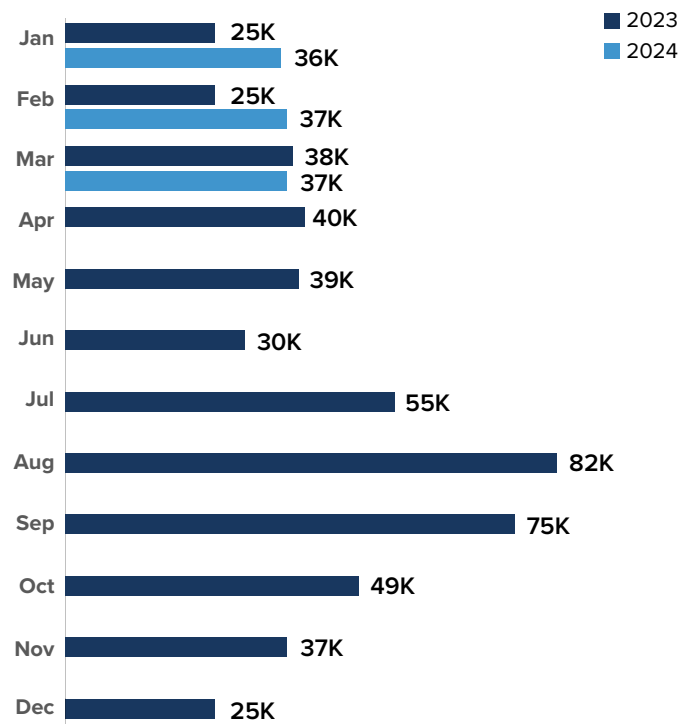
Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to March 2024



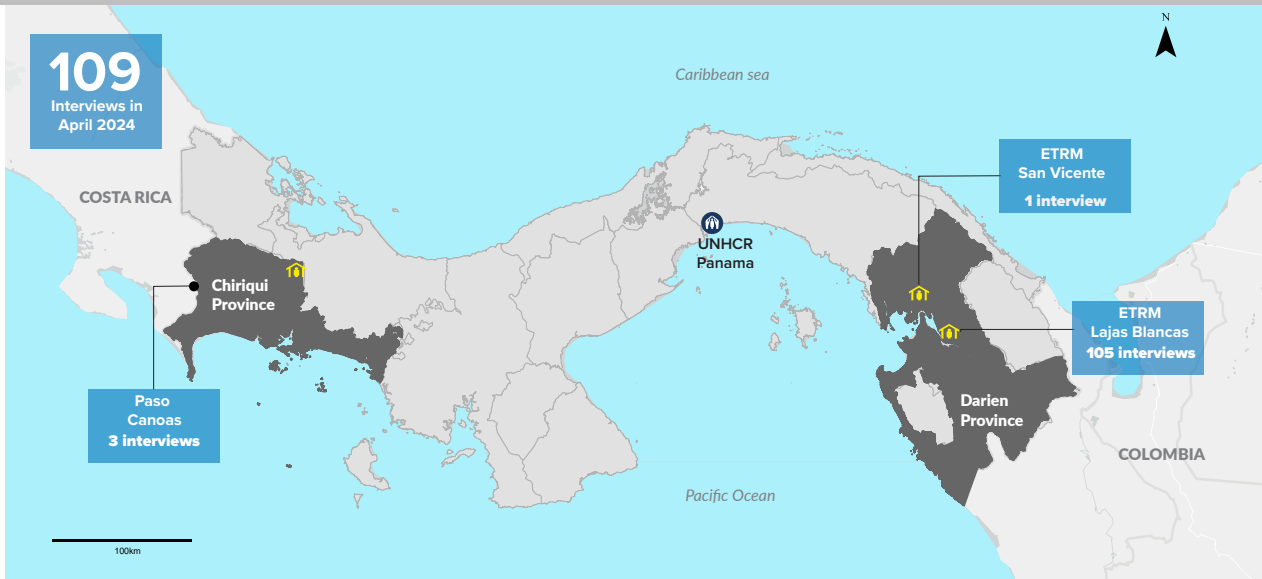
	Jan	Feb	Mar
Venezuela	21,940	24,895	23,257
Ecuador	2,208	3,450	3,295
Haiti	3,048	1,775	2,506
China	2,911	1,562	1,885
Colombia	2,129	2,483	2,524
Other	3,765	3,001	3,374
Total	36,001	37,166	36,841

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

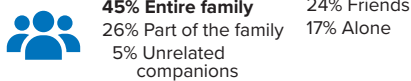
Sex of interviewed individuals



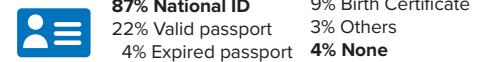
Average age



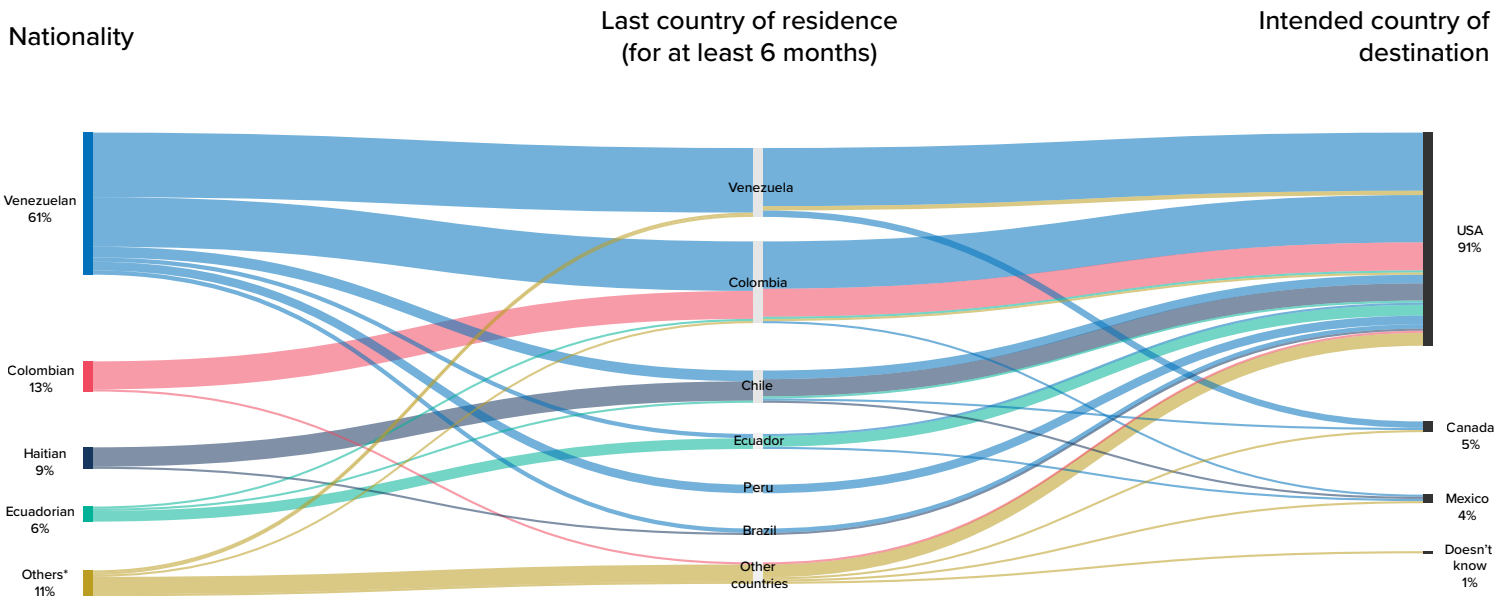
Travel group composition



Documents carried by the family



Interviewed individuals by country of origin, last country of residence, and intended country of destination



*Other nationalities include: Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, China, India, and Peru.

Respondent profile

Three in five refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (61%). Fifty-five per-cent of them came directly from Venezuela, a 15% increase compared to last month, while the remaining 45% came from other countries of residence, mainly Colombia (35%), Chile (8%), and Peru (6%).

Half (51%) had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and 19% reported having valid documentation from that country.

Seven in ten (71%) respondents were travelling with family, and one-fifth (21%) reported travelling alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of 2 children, 36% under five. Four childbirths were registered in the jungle this year.

Among the main reasons for fleeing their country of origin, 61% of respondents cited attacks, threats, and general insecurity; 68% stated that lack of employment or low income motivated their decision, while 49% noted the lack of access to services.



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



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

Most are planning to stay for less than one year.



of interviewed individuals had applied for legal status in another country, prior to their arrival to Panama.

Out of 53 respondents that had lived in another country.



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.



of interviewed individuals reported travelling with pregnant or lactating women.



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



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



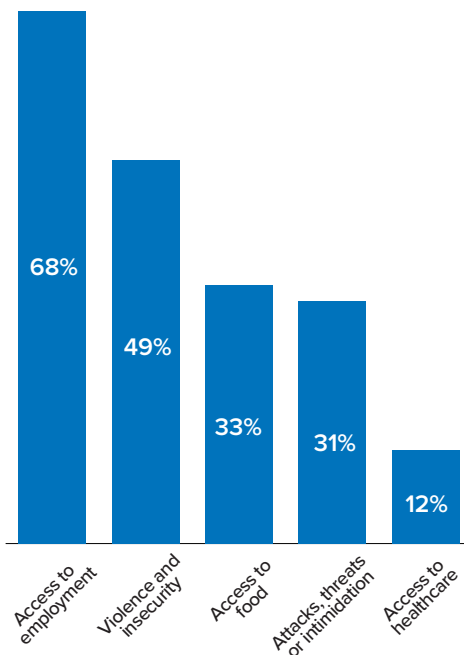
of interviewed individuals reported having a single parent travelling with children in their group.



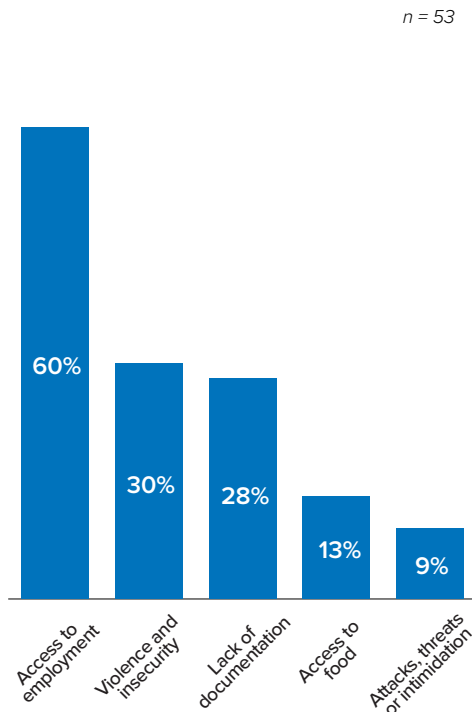
of interviewed individuals reported travelling with a person over the age of 60 in their group.

Push and pull factors

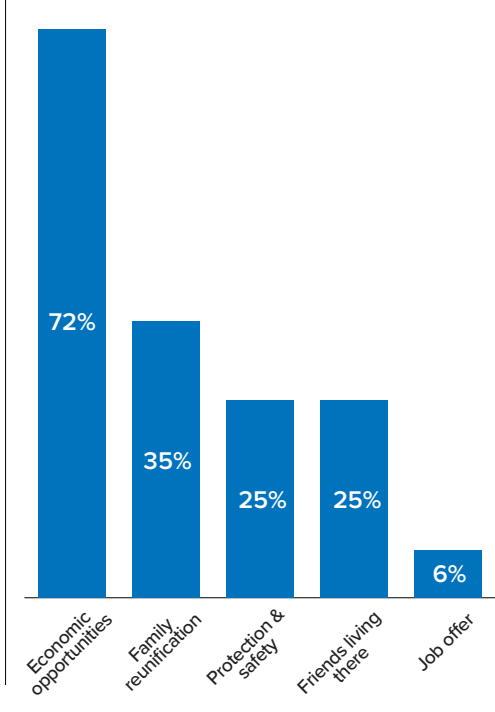
Main reasons for leaving country of origin



Main reasons for leaving country of residence



Reasons for choosing destination country



3 in 4

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

21%*

of interviewed individuals reported having applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, **and not obtaining it.**

**Out of 53 individuals that had lived in a country other than their country of origin for at least 6 months.*

54%

of interviewed individuals reported they would face risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.

Challenges during the journey

3 days

is the average time interviewed individuals spent crossing the Darien jungle (min. 1,5 days and max. 7 days).

2 in 5

experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle.

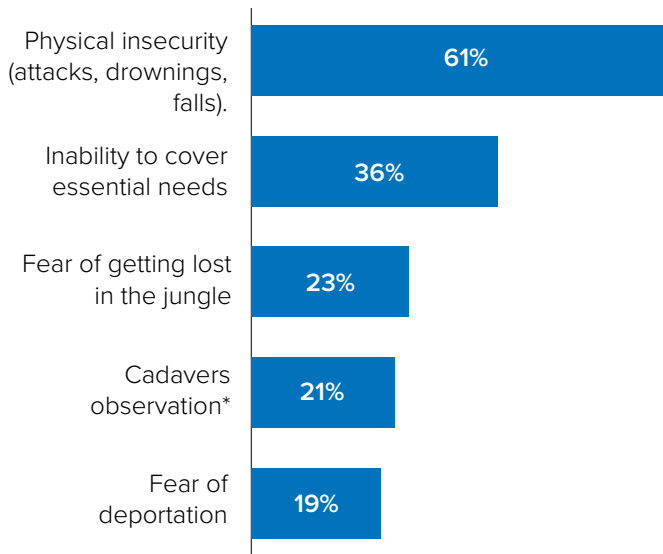
35%

of interviewed individuals reported being victims of theft, scams or fraud during their journey through the jungle. **Additionally, 17% reported being victim of threats, intimidation, and attacks.**

70%

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 6 cadavers during the seven days prior to data collection.*

Main needs for the continuation of the journey

Cash

There are no official financial service providers in transit communities and the ETRMs. Informal intermediaries leave people exposed to theft and scams.

Information

There is a lack of timely and detailed information about the transfer services to Costa Rica, including options for those that cannot pay for the bus and the criteria for assigning humanitarian spaces, managed by the Ombudspersons Office.

Food

Free meals provided at the ETRMs do not account for the specific needs of children or people with illnesses.

Clothes

There is a lack of clothes and shoes, especially for young children.

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

Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 15th and 16th April 2024

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

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