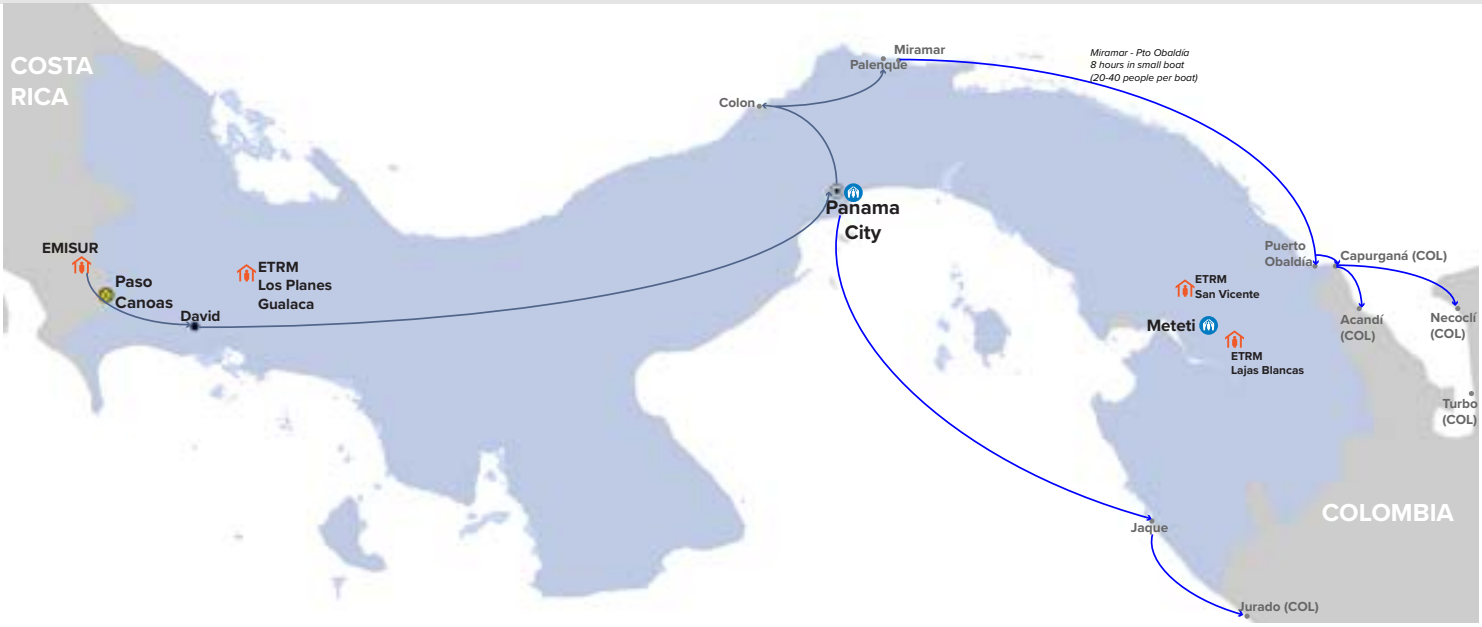
Reverse Flow Monitoring

Panama | April - June 2025

Following regional policy changes since mid-January 2025, increasing numbers of people have been moving in 'reverse flows' from Mexico and the United States toward Central and South America. By June, the Government of Panama had recorded over 15,000 individuals transiting through Panama towards Colombia.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, collects monthly information on the characteristics, vulnerabilities and protection needs of refugees and migrants engaged in these return movements. The data is compiled through individual interviews conducted in Panama's Colon and Chiriqui provinces. Results are indicative and should not be interpreted as representative of the total population.



Official statistics

15,244 Total entries in 2025

7,864 Total entries in Q2 2025

65% Male | **35%** Female

80% Adults | **20%** Children

Source: Panama National Migration Service

Respondent profile

83 people were interviewed

165 family members assessed

61% Adults

39% Children

59% Male

40% Female

*1% of respondents replied 'other' or preferred not to answer.

32 years Average age

95% of respondents were Venezuelan

Other nationalities include Colombia, Costa Rica*, and Ecuador.

*Costa Rican national travelling with Venezuelan family members.

40% Left their country of origin/residence between one and five years ago.

58% Arrived in Panama during the last week.

18% Had applied for asylum in another country, prior to their arrival to Panama.

5% Were travelling with pregnant women.

4% Were travelling with lactating women.

11% Were travelling with children or adolescents, and did not have support from another caregiver.

8% Were travelling with someone with a physical or mental disability.

17% Were travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.

8% Were travelling with a person over the age of 60.

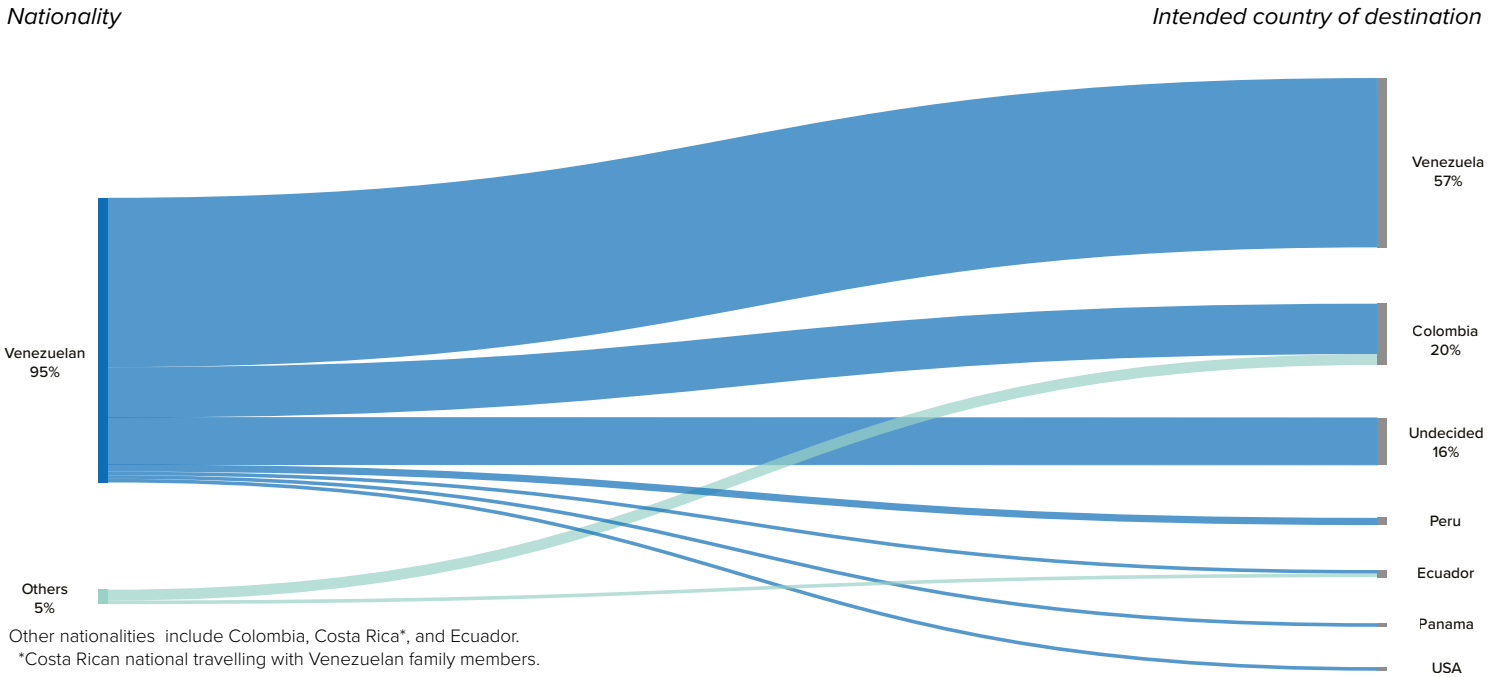
Routes

Two main routes are currently being used by those returning to their countries of origin or residence.

One route follows the Caribbean Sea, with departures from Puerto Pilón, Palenque, or Miramar, in Colón Province, heading toward Capurganá, Acandí, or Necoclí in Colombia.

The other route follows the Pacific Ocean, starting from Panama City and continuing to Jaqué, in Darien Province, from where travelers proceed to Juradó and Buenaventura in Colombia.

Interviewed individuals by country of origin and intended country of destination



Other nationalities include Colombia, Costa Rica*, and Ecuador.
*Costa Rican national travelling with Venezuelan family members.

Push and pull factors

1 in 2

started their return journey less than a month ago.

n = 43

23%

had been granted legal status in a previous country of residence.

15%

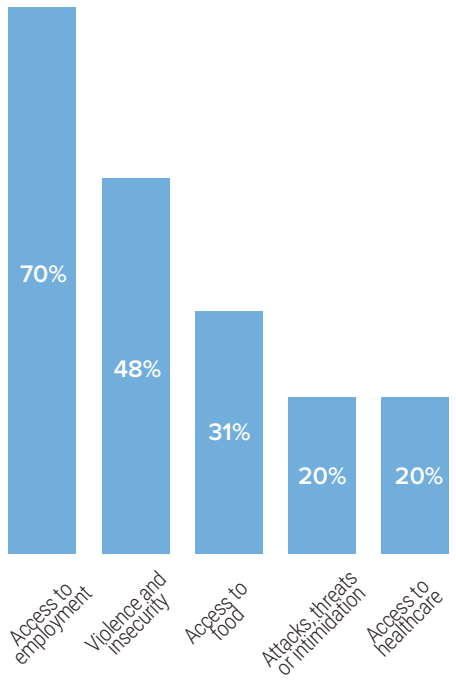
of interviewed Venezuelans intend to return to acountry where they have **no legal status.**

n = 40

30%

consider they would face risks returning to their country of origin/residence.

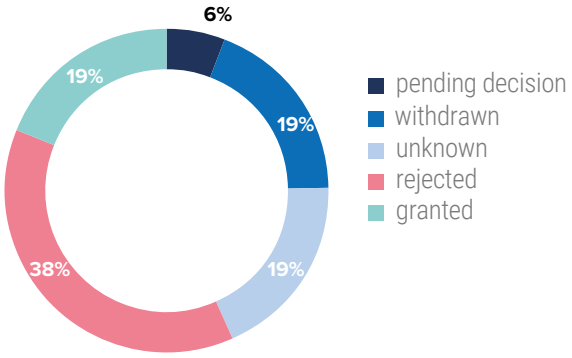
Main reasons for leaving country of origin



Access to asylum

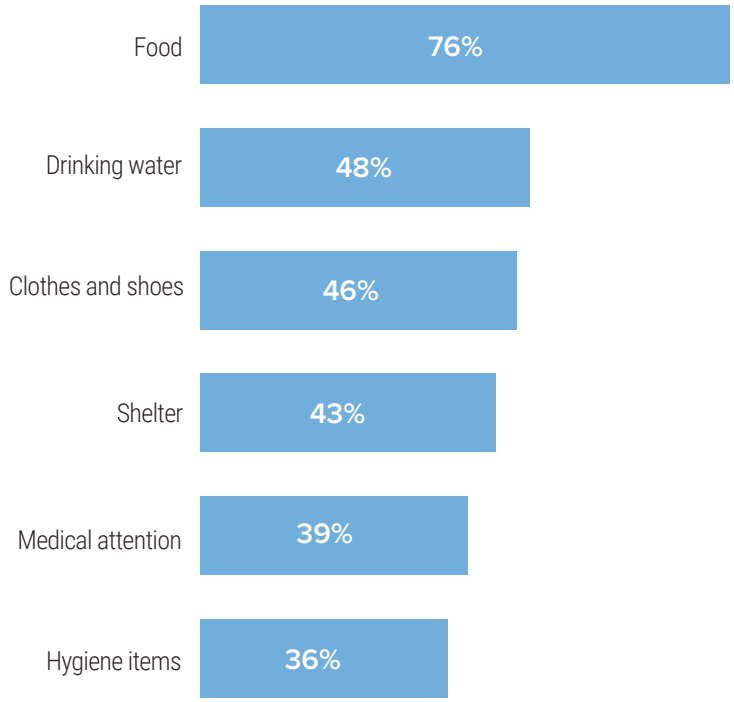
16 respondents had previously applied for asylum, one of them in Panama.

Last known status of their asylum application



Primary needs and challenges during the journey

Main needs now



3 in 5

experienced mistreatment or abuse during their journey.

34%

were victims of theft, scams or extortion during their journey.

Additionally, 43% were victims of threats, intimidation, and attacks.

Miramar and Palenque, two of the main departure points in the Caribbean route, are small communities with under 500 inhabitants each. Access to basic services is limited.

People arriving without the means to pay for the boat journey have very few income-generating opportunities, with some staying stranded for over three weeks.

In collaboration with:

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency HIAS RET

Access all our protection monitoring publications here

Feedback: panpaim@unhcr.org

Note: The World Food Programme (WFP) does not have field operations in Panama. All data and information collected in this country is managed by the WFP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Panama City, and are part of the regional initiative for Mixed Movements Monitoring in the Americas.