

Mixed Movements Monitoring

April - June 2025



© UNHCR/ Tomás Ayuso

Key Figures



1,398

Individuals were interviewed from April to June 2025.



18

Nationalities interviewed



33

Average age of respondents



41% VENEZUELAN
23% HONDURAN
22% CUBAN
4% SALVADORAN
3% COLOMBIAN
7% OTHER

Main countries of origin of respondents



MEXICO: 596
GUATEMALA: 543
COSTA RICA: 197
HONDURAS: 62

Number of interviews per country



59%

Men



41%

Women



42%

Travelling with family



27%

Travelling in families with children

Key Findings

- 1 Cross-border population movements across the Americas continued to decline—particularly northbound. For the first time since monitoring began, a higher share of respondents indicated Mexico (43%) rather than the United States (14%) as their intended destination, signaling a major shift in mobility patterns across the region.
- 2 More people are considering staying in country of interview if unable to reach the intended country of destination as this proportion increased to 11% from 3% of previous quarter. Accordingly, intentions to return to the country of origin dropped to 11% from 24% of previous quarter.
- 3 Perceptions of being exposed to risk upon return continued to rise, with 72% of respondents indicating they believe they would face some form of risk if required to return to their country of origin or a previous host country.
- 4 More than half of respondents (53%) experienced at least one protection incident en route. Families with children faced heightened risks, especially related to theft (72%) and kidnapping (25%).
- 5 Reasons for leaving the country of origin remained closely tied to violence and limited access to basic rights and services. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) cited violence-related factors, while 58% pointed to challenges such as lack of employment, documentation, food, and access to essential services—often reporting multiple overlapping drivers of displacement.
- 6 For children on the move aged 6 months to 17 years, caregivers identified access to food as the top need. Notably, for the first time, psychological support and access to education or safe spaces have also emerged among the top three priorities.
- 7 Food diversity among children aged 6 months to 5 years continues to be a challenge as 70% of caregivers reported children living in severe child food poverty (i.e. consumed foods from two or less food groups out of eight).
- 8 Approximately 30% of respondents reported having only one or no meal the day before the interview. The improvement in overall food access may be attributed to the fact that many individuals are currently stranded in transit countries, unable to continue their journey.

Introduction and scope

Since 2023, the regional Mixed Movements Monitoring initiative—led by UNHCR and WFP, with UNICEF joining in mid-2024—has been tracking mixed movements across Central America and Mexico, as well as Colombia and Chile in South America.

To date, the initiative has conducted more than 42,000 interviews across eight countries. Using a harmonized questionnaire and qualitative research methods applied in border contexts across multiple countries, the initiative systematically analyzes trends,

population profiles, and the needs of displaced and vulnerable groups. It collects critical data on drivers of movement, protection risks, food security, and child-related concerns to inform evidence-based policymaking and strengthen regional humanitarian responses.

Methodology

Q2 2025

10th round of data collection



4

Countries of data collection:
Costa Rica, Honduras,
Guatemala and Mexico.



11

Partners



Qualitative research in
COLOMBIA
HONDURAS
PANAMA

The tenth round of data collection under the Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM) initiative was carried out between 1 April and 30 June 2025. During this period, all participating countries experienced significant contextual changes and ongoing funding constraints. Despite these challenges, quantitative data collection was conducted in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras.

A total of 1,398 interviews were conducted across these four countries: 596 in Mexico (43%), 543 in Guatemala (39%), 197 in Costa Rica (14%), and 62 in Honduras (4%). Given this unweighted and uneven distribution—particularly the concentration of interviews in Mexico and Guatemala—this report limits cross-country and population group comparisons more than in previous rounds to minimize potential bias.

As in previous rounds, the methodology employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. These included structured individual interviews, as well as qualitative data collection through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and direct field observations conducted in Honduras, Colombia and Panama. The analysis was further supported by official government statistics, relevant secondary sources, and ongoing field-based monitoring.

Key methodological limitations include the need to adapt

outreach strategies amid shifting political and policy contexts; operational restrictions in accessing key border areas and transit locations; and persistent challenges in reaching highly vulnerable individuals, particularly those from countries outside the Americas who may have been excluded due to language or cultural barriers. As such, the findings presented here reflect only the experiences of those interviewed and are not statistically representative of the broader population in transit.

Nonetheless, the data provides timely insights into the protection environment, evolving risks, rights violations, food security concerns and child-related issues affecting displaced and vulnerable populations on the move across Latin America and the Caribbean.

In accordance with standard survey protocols, questions concerning the situation of children travelling within the family group were administered only to respondents who identified as the primary caregiver (e.g., mother, father, or legal guardian). Information was collected for one child randomly selected per each group. As a result, only a subset of children in each age group is represented in the findings, and no extrapolation to other children in the family of caregiver was applied. Because this information was not systematically collected in Mexico, interviews conducted there were excluded from the analysis of child-specific indicators.

Data collection locations

In this round, 77% of the interviews were conducted at formal and informal border crossing points, as well as nearby collective and temporary shelters. Additionally, interviews were held at non-border locations, such as strategic transit facilities, bus terminals, and reception sites.



This map does not reflect a position by UNHCR, WFP or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Context

During the second quarter of 2025, mixed movement dynamics in the Americas were marked by a dual shift: a substantial decrease in northbound movements and a notable rise in southbound return flows, many of which unfolded under involuntary or high-risk conditions. These changes have been largely shaped by evolving migration policies in the region, intensifying enforcement measures, and restrictions on access to asylum and regularization pathways in countries which have been traditionally hosting refugees and migrants.

Northbound movements continued to contract sharply. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), only 117,948 land encounters were recorded at the southern border between January and June 2025— 89% percent decrease compared to 1,036,335 during the same period in 2024. June 2025 marked a historic low, with just 9,304 encounters, the fewest recorded since 1966¹. Panama reported 2,927 irregular crossings through the Darien Gap in the first half of the year—a 99 percent year-on-year decrease compared with 201,063 for the same period of 2024². During first half of the year, Honduras registered 19,698 irregular entries, of whom 20% are children and 34% women, entering the country towards the north, representing a 92% drop in south-to-north movements with respect to the same period in 2024³.

Mexico recorded 119,183 foreign nationals in irregular status between January and June 2025 — an 83 percent decline compared to the same period of 2024. Children and adolescents made up just 10 percent of this total, compared to 12 percent of the same period of 2024, meaning a similar drop of 86% in the number. The proportion of unaccompanied children slightly increased from 4.4% to 4.9%⁴. Colombia similarly reported a 64 percent drop in detections of refugees and migrants in transit, with 84,083 individuals recorded between January and June. In traditional transit hubs like Necoclí and Turbo, detections dropped by 98 percent, mirroring the broader slowdown in flows emerging from the Darién corridor⁵.

In parallel, southbound—or reverse—flows have become increasingly visible. Between January and June 2025, Colombia had registered 12,347 individuals entering from Panama, many of whom used informal maritime routes. Venezuelan nationals made up 98 percent of these cases, though the flow also included Ecuadorians, Haitians, and Peruvians⁶. In Honduras, monitoring conducted by UNHCR and partners reported between January and April 2025 an increase in reverse north-to-south movements, with approximately 16,000 people transiting the country in that direction.

In this context, critical humanitarian needs remain, both for those moving north, even in much lower numbers, but also for persons who decide to return and/or move elsewhere. The withdrawal of humanitarian teams and the restrictions on service provision particularly in border areas across the region and due to funding shortfall, increases the vulnerability of refugees and migrants, exacerbating the severity of their situation and increasing their exposure to other risks.

In Honduras 17,661 individuals were returned to the country between January and June 2025, including 3,203 women and 1,607 children (15% (234) unaccompanied)⁷. Guatemala received 18,349 returnees from the US, including 2,393 women and 705 children (10% (75) unaccompanied), and 3,262 from Mexico, including 709 women and 402 children (72% (289) unaccompanied)⁸.

In Honduras, deportations of families and children remain at the same levels as in 2024, but vulnerability profiles have increased⁹. Returnees expressed fear of returning to their communities as a result of the current high rates of violence. Cases of deported children who have no ties to the country and, in many cases, do not even speak Spanish have been reported, thus heightening risks during the community reintegration, including school reintegration.

¹ U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). *Southwest Land Border Encounters Dashboard*. Available at <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>. Accessed August 19, 2025.

² National Migration Service (in Spanish, *Servicio Nacional de Migración*), Panama. Available at <https://www.migracion.gob.pa/estadisticas/> under “TRÁNSITO IRREGULAR POR DARIÉN”, direct links “[TRÁNSITO IRREGULAR POR DARIÉN 2025](#)” and “[TRÁNSITO IRREGULAR POR DARIÉN 2024](#)”. Accessed August 19, 2025.

³ National Migration Institute (in Spanish, *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (INM)), Honduras. Available at <https://inm.gob.hn/estadisticas.html>. If this address is not accessible, the official data is also available from IOM (International Organization for Migration) *dashboard on migrants in transit through Mexico, Central America and the Dominican Republic*, at <https://iac.iom.int/en/interactive-dashboard-migrants-transit-through-americas>. Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁴ Migration Policy, Registration and Identity Unit; Secretariat of the Interior (in Spanish: *Unidad de Política Migratoria, Registro e Identidad de Personas* (UPMRIP); *Secretaría de Gobernación* (SEGOB)), Mexico. Data elaborated on information registered by National Migration Institute (in Spanish, *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (INM)). Available at <https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/CuadrosBOLETIN?Anual=2025&Secc=3> (for 2025) and <https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/CuadrosBOLETIN?Anual=2024&Secc=3> (for 2024) under “Cuadro de datos” > “Eventos de personas en situación migratoria Irregular (antes, las y los extranjeros presentados y devueltos)”. “Cuadro 3.1” is for the total numbers (see direct links for [2025](#) and [2024](#)), “Cuadro 3.1.5” for children and adolescents (see direct links for [2025](#) and [2024](#)). Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁵ Information System for Monitoring Migration Phenomena, Migration Verification Subdirectorates, Migration Colombia (in Spanish: *Sistema de Información para el Monitoreo de Fenómenos Migratorios* (SIFM), *Subdirección de Verificación Migratoria, Migración Colombia*). Available at <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/migraci.n.colombia/viz/MigracionIrregularenTransito/MigracionIrregularenTransito>. Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁶ Information System for Monitoring Migration Phenomena, Migration Verification Subdirectorates, Migration Colombia (in Spanish: *Sistema de Información para el Monitoreo de Fenómenos Migratorios* (SIFM), *Subdirección de Verificación Migratoria, Migración Colombia*). Available at https://unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia.micolombiadigital.gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/002054/102700_reporte-mti-30-jun-2025.pdf. Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁷ This data doesn't include people returning by themselves, i.e. with their own means, due to insecurity or fear in the countries they had reached. Data source: Secretariat of Social Development (in Spanish: *Secretaría de Desarrollo Social* (SEDESOL)), Honduras. *Tablero Estadístico Dinámico de Atención a Personas Migrantes Retornadas*. Available at [this link](https://www.segob.gob.hn/estadisticas/). Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁸ Subdirectorates for the Care and Protection of Fundamental Rights of Migrants, Guatemalan Migration Institute (in Spanish: *Subdirección de Atención y Protección de Derechos Fundamentales de los Migrantes, Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración* (IGM)), Guatemala. Available at <https://igm.gob.gt/informes-estadisticos/> under “Guatemaltecos retornados 2025” > “Ver” > “Estados Unidos por mes y sexo”, “México por mes y sexo” and “México terrestre por mes y sexo”. Available at [this link](https://igm.gob.gt/informes-estadisticos/). Accessed August 19, 2025.

⁹ Secretariat for Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (in Spanish: *Secretaría de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia* (SENAF)).

In Costa Rica, between January and June 2025, a steady flow of returnees from Mexico was observed, with families entering through northern border with Nicaragua, where around 200 individuals per day were reported, accounting for people received in UNICEF Safe Space and field observation from informants at the borders in Peñas Blancas and Los Chiles. On the other hand, DTM IOM estimated 12,912 individuals¹⁰. Many are transiting toward Panama, while others seek protection and economic opportunities within Costa Rica.

Due to the lack of a controlled north-south movement of people and porous borders, refugees and migrant families are dispersing across various regions, including the capital, San José. These new routes coupled with limited services, increases exposure to protection risks including human trafficking, child exploitation, street begging, and survival sex, particularly affecting women and children. The growing visibility of refugees and migrants begging in urban areas is likely to fuel rising xenophobia.

Field observations in Necocli identify refugees and migrants, mostly from Venezuela, deciding to return to Colombia due to fear of detention and deportation, regardless of their asylum claims or other legal status in the country. These returns align with growing reverse trends already recorded in Panama and Colombia, where over 13,000 southbound entries were registered in the first half of 2025—again, predominantly Venezuelans returning via the Caribbean route.

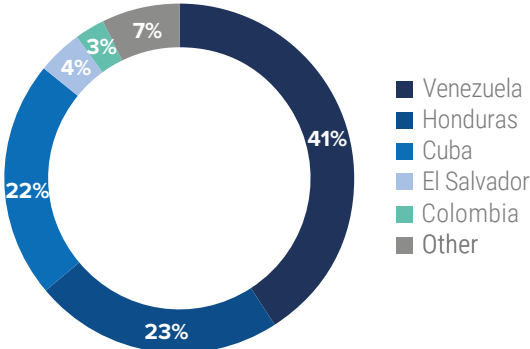
At the same time, refugees and migrants are seeking alternative routes and increasingly exposed to multiple protection risks with limited access to services and with reduced humanitarian presence at the borders in both transit and return contexts. According to ProLAC, 75 percent of surveyed households in Central America and Mexico were stranded by March 2025, a sharp rise from 53 percent in late 2024. Among these households, 42 percent reported experiencing some form of abuse, including theft, extortion, arbitrary detention, and gender-based violence. In Colombia, Venezuelans returning irregularly face documentation and security challenges. Those re-entering without authorization risk losing their special permits and are typically granted only a 15-day temporary stay permit¹¹.

Together, these developments point to a shifting regional landscape. Traditional northbound corridors are contracting, while returns and circular movement patterns are becoming more common. However, many of these returns occur under conditions of legal uncertainty, obstacles to accessing borders and protection, insecurity, and diminishing humanitarian space, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability and protection implications of current management approaches.

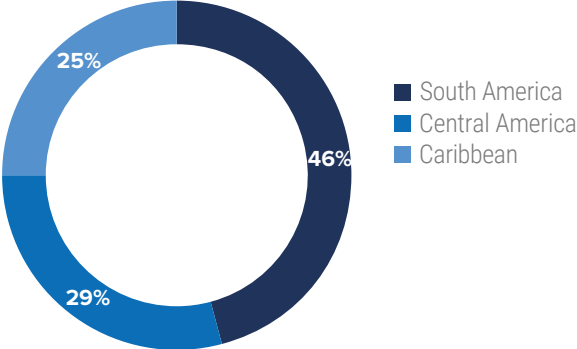
Demographics

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Top countries of origin of respondents



Regions of origin of respondents (by geographic location)



¹⁰ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Costa Rica — Migratory Flows across the Americas — South-north Flow (June 2025). Published on August 6, 2025. Available at <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/costa-rica-migratory-flows-across-americas-south-north-flow-june-2025>

¹¹ Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) & ProLAC. *Migration dynamics and protection risks in North-South return movements in the Americas*. Published June 3, 2025. Available at <https://mixedmigration.org/resource/migration-dynamics-and-protection-risks-in-north-south-return-movements-in-the-americas/>
ProLAC is a regional protection information management initiative led by Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) that provides comparable data and information across countries through a harmonized protection monitoring system.

During the second quarter of 2025, the Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM) initiative captured information from individuals of 18 different nationalities across four countries: Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras. While the diversity of nationalities remained notable, the overall number of nationalities and respondents observed during the quarter was more limited compared to the first quarter of the year.

Venezuelan nationals continued to represent the largest group among respondents, accounting for 41 percent of all interviews. They were followed by Hondurans at 23 percent and Cubans at 22 percent, with smaller shares reported for nationals of El Salvador, Colombia, and others. In terms of regional origin, 46 percent of respondents came from South America, 29 percent from Central America, and 25 percent from the Caribbean. Extracontinental and North American representation was negligible (less than 0,5% together).

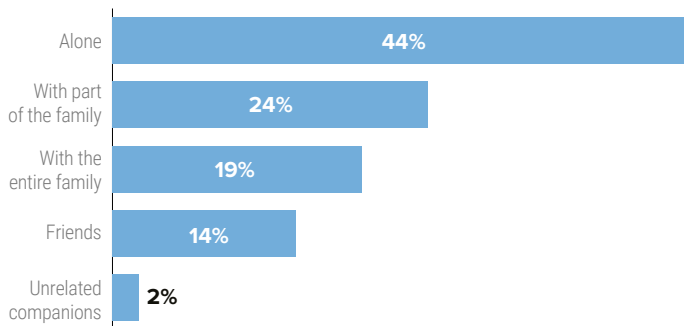
Compared to previous quarters, the share of South American respondents declined considerably, reversing a trend of

steady growth observed throughout 2023 and early 2024. The current proportion is the second lowest recorded since early 2023. At the same time, the proportion of respondents from Central America and the Caribbean increased substantially. These shifts were primarily driven by rising shares of Honduran and Cuban nationals and may reflect changes in mobility patterns, shifts in routes, or evolving dynamics in countries of origin and transit.

While these findings point to important directional trends, they should be interpreted with caution. As with all MMM rounds, the data is not representative and should be seen as indicative of emerging patterns rather than comprehensive population-level dynamics. These insights are best understood in conjunction with other sources and ongoing field monitoring.

Travel group composition

Who do you travel with?

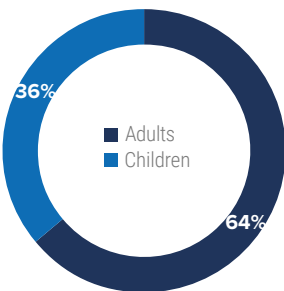


Data from the second quarter of 2025 confirms a continued shift toward individualized travel, with solo journeys reaching their highest level since monitoring began. The share of respondents traveling alone rose to 44%, reflecting a steady increase over the past year. In contrast, travel with family members—either in part or as an entire unit—declined for the second consecutive quarter.

The proportion of those moving with friends or unrelated companions also fell compared to Q1, suggesting a broader trend of group fragmentation. Regional differences were notable: solo travel was most common among individuals from the Caribbean (52%), and Central American (55%) countries, while South Americans were more likely to travel with relatives.

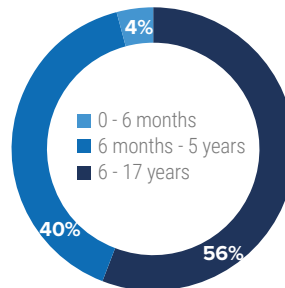
Family composition

Family age breakdown



A total of 42% of respondents reported traveling with their entire family or part of their family, composed of 64% adults and 36% children, a distribution consistent with previous quarters. Regional differences were notable: Caribbean families had the

Children in family age breakdown



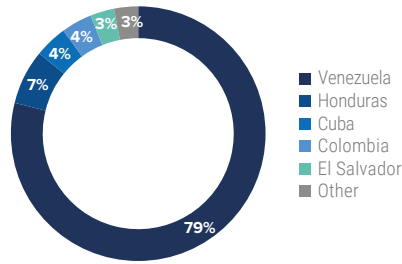
highest proportion of adults (79%) and the lowest of children (21%), while Central and South American families showed more balanced structures, with children representing 39% and 40% of members, respectively.

Host countries¹²

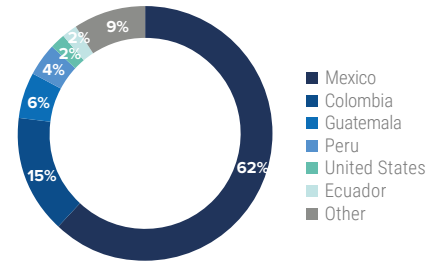
30%

of the respondents have lived in one or more countries other than their country of origin for at least six months.

Main nationalities of respondents who lived in another country



Main previous host countries



LEGAL STATUS

Legal status of respondents who have lived in a previous host country

Out of the 30% of people who have lived in other countries for more than six months (n=422):



72% did not apply for a legal status

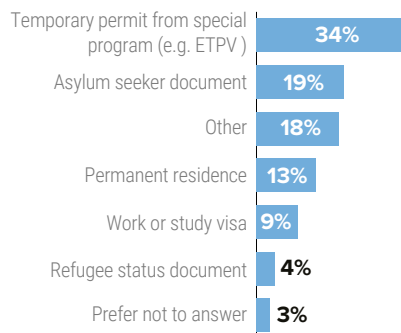


16% applied and obtained a legal status



12% applied but did not obtain a legal status

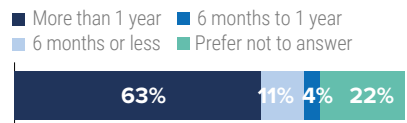
Type of legal status obtained



Have applied, obtained a legal status in host country and the document is still valid



Have applied, obtained a legal status in host country by document validity



Only 30% of respondents (n=422) reported having previously lived in another country for more than six months. Among this group, the majority (72%) had not applied for legal status during their stay, while 16% had applied and successfully obtained it, and 12% had applied but were not granted status. Of the 67 individuals who managed to regularize their stay, the most common types of documentation included temporary permits under special programs (34%) and asylum seeker documentation (19%). Smaller proportions held residency permits, work or study visas, or refugee status documents.

Although findings should be interpreted with caution due to the relatively small sample size, regularization trends varied by nationality and host country. Among Venezuelan respondents (n=334), 73% had not applied for legal status, 16% had applied and obtained it, and 11% had applied but were not granted status. Among Honduran respondents (n=31), 16% had successfully regularized their status. Outcomes also differed by host country: in Colombia (n=63), 44% of respondents had obtained legal status, while 51% had not applied. In Mexico (n=262), only 3% had applied and obtained legal status, and 82% had not applied at all.

DOCUMENTATION

Overall, 68% of respondents reported carrying a national identity card, and 35% held a national passport. Documentation patterns varied by region of origin: passport ownership was highest among Caribbean respondents (94%), while ID cards were most common among South and Central Americans (86% and 83%, respectively).

Notably, 5% reported having no documentation. This presents additional barriers to accessing basic services and regularization opportunities, which in turn may influence their intended destination. As noted in field observations in Necocli, reissuing or replacing documentation or IDs is one of the identified reasons for returning to their country of origin.

¹² Host country: The country in which a non-national stays or resides, whether legally or irregularly. The Mixed Movements Monitoring considers host country a country in which the person has resided for more than six months.

SPECIFIC PROTECTION NEEDS

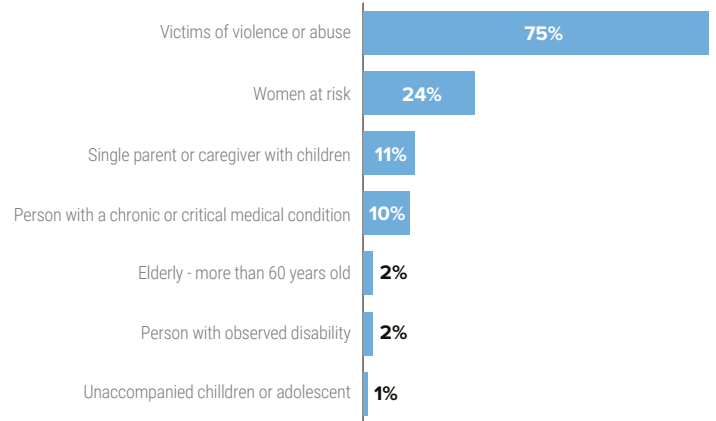


57% of individuals / families with at least one specific protection need observed.¹³

This quarter, 57% of respondents were identified as having specific protection needs. The most commonly reported vulnerability was being a survivor of physical or psychological violence and/or abuse, affecting 75% of those with specific needs. Other frequent profiles included women at risk (24%), single caregivers of children (11%), and individuals with chronic or critical health conditions (10%).

In Guatemala and Mexico, where protection needs were observed among 61% and 59% of respondents respectively, the vast majority were survivors of violence—many of them Venezuelans, Cubans and Central Americans—along with women at risk and persons with serious health conditions.

Type of specific protection needs observed



In Costa Rica, specific needs were observed among 57% of respondents and similar patterns emerged, particularly among Venezuelan and Colombian respondents, with a notable presence of single caregivers and individuals with protection-related medical needs.

Among the respondents, 3% have reported that at least one child or adolescent in their family has been separated from parents or legal guardians and is not currently with the family.

Moreover, considering the travel group of respondents¹⁴, 3% reported traveling with a pregnant woman or girl and 7% with a breastfeeding woman or girl.



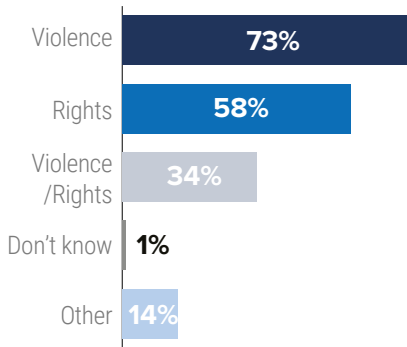
© UNHCR/ Tomás Ayuso

¹³ Persons with specific needs are particularly exposed to protection risks and abuses as the challenging conditions of the journey heighten their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation and put them at risk of irreversible and lasting harm. Any person who experiences particular protection risks or barriers due to the intersection of their personal characteristics with the environment requires specific targeted actions to enjoy the full range of their human rights. This is an internal query completed by enumerators at the end of the questionnaire and may not fully capture the range and extent of specific needs among all individuals.

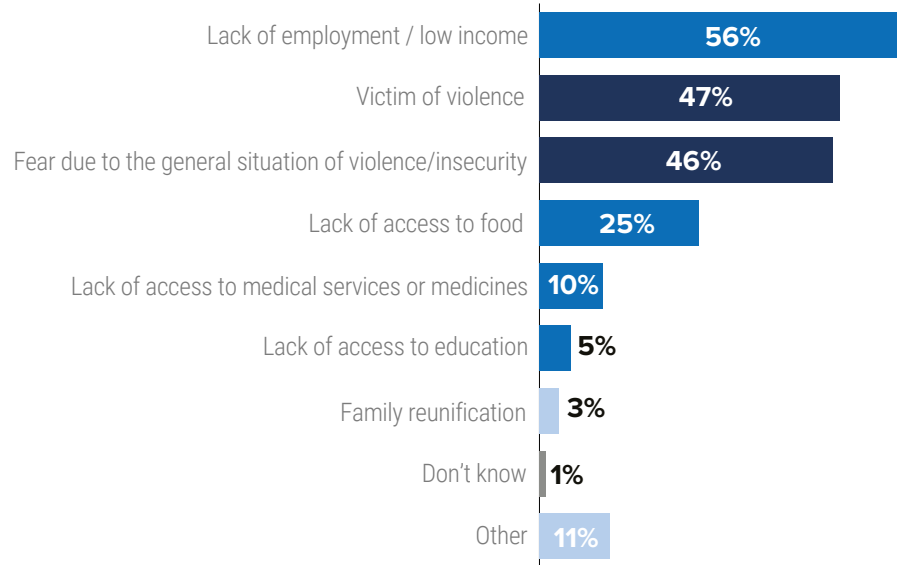
¹⁴ Questions about a pregnant woman and breastfeeding woman in travel group are asked to a subset of respondents, namely a woman traveling alone or respondent not traveling alone. Thus, the total number of respondents is N = 948, i.e. 68% of 1,398 interviewed people.

REASONS TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN¹⁵

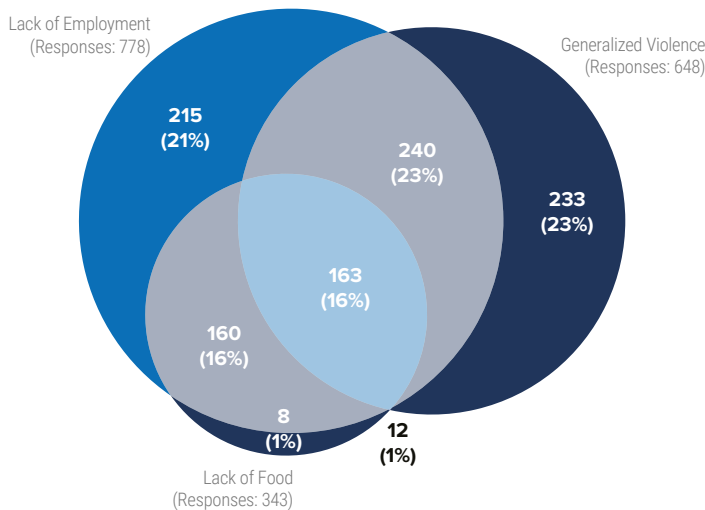
Reasons to leave country of origin (groups)¹⁶



Reasons to leave country of origin (breakdown)¹⁷



Reasons to leave country of origin
(Percentages based on a total of 1031 unique respondents)



The graphic illustrates the interconnected and multi-causal nature of forced displacement, highlighting links between violence, limited access to rights and services, and socioeconomic challenges. Among respondents who selected at least one of the top three reasons for leaving, 46% cited generalized violence. Of these, 23% also reported lack of employment, while 16% selected all three main factors. Notably, only 1% identified lack of food as the sole reason for displacement, underscoring that food insecurity is often associated with other overlapping causes.

¹⁵ The monitoring exercise examines the motives for respondents leaving their respective countries of origin. The question posed to respondents allows for multiple answers, 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: reasons related to violence, reasons related to lack of/difficulties in accessing rights, goods, and services, and reasons related to other factors.

¹⁶ **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.

¹⁷ In previous quarters, "victim of violence" and "threats/intimidation" were two separate answer options. After the third quarter of 2023, 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.)."

 **58%**

of respondents reported leaving their country of origin due to factors associated with limited access to basic rights and services—including challenges related to employment, low income, lack of documentation, and access to food, medical care, and education.

 **73%**

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

The most frequently cited among these were being a victim of violence and generalized violence.

 **34%**

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

In the second quarter of 2025, violence and insecurity remained the predominant drivers of displacement across the region. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) reported leaving their country of origin due to violence, while 58% cited rights-related factors, such as lack of access to services, legal protections, or livelihood opportunities. Additionally, 34% of respondents identified both violence and rights-related reasons, highlighting the interlinked nature of protection risks and structural deprivation.

These patterns mark a continuation of the growing role of violence in displacement decisions, while rights-based drivers

remain persistently high. Although not directly comparable, the data suggests that many individuals and families are navigating intersecting layers of vulnerability, with violence often compounding pre-existing hardship.

Disaggregation by nationality and region of origin shows consistent trends. Among Venezuelan respondents—the largest group interviewed—72% cited violence and 70% rights-related reasons. High levels of violence-related displacement were also reported among respondents from the Caribbean (78%), Central America (70%), and South America (73%).

Food insecurity remains a critical trigger for movement. While 29% of all respondents mentioned lack of food as a reason for leaving, this figure rose to 32% among those traveling with children, compared to 28% of those without children.

Families with children continued to more frequently cite being victims of violence (50% compared to 45% of those without children) and lacking access to food (32% versus 22%) as reasons for leaving, compared to those traveling without children.

Gender differences also persisted. Women were less likely to report lack of employment (49% compared to 60% of men) and exposure to generalized violence (44% versus 48%) as reasons for leaving, while women more often cited being victims of violence (51% versus 44% of men) and lack of access to food (26% versus 23%).



© UNHCR/ Melissa Pinel

DISPLACEMENT FLOWS



GUATEMALA: 93%
HONDURAS: 82%
NICARAGUA: 64%
PANAMA: 43%
MEXICO: 42%

Top 5 countries of transit

In the second quarter of 2025, displacement dynamics across the Americas continued to reflect the dual trend observed in previous months: sustained reductions in northbound movements and rising southbound flows. The number of people crossing the Darien Gap remained historically low, with just 2,927 entries recorded between January and June—a 98.5% decrease compared to the same period in 2024, when over 200,000 crossings were registered.

Meanwhile, reverse flows through Panama continued to increase. According to government figures, 12,794 individuals were registered between January and June¹⁸. Of these, 94% were Venezuelan nationals. Many are returning to their countries of origin (especially Venezuelans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians), while others are seeking protection elsewhere in the region.

Transit patterns also pointed to more complex and fragmented journeys. The most commonly transited countries were Guatemala (93%, or 1,299 respondents), Honduras (82%, or 1,147), and Nicaragua (64%, or 894). High proportions also reported transiting through Panama (43%, or 606), Mexico (42%, or 592), Colombia (42%, or 589) and Costa Rica (41%, or 579).

Arrival to country of interview



63%

of respondents reported arriving within the past week.

Length of journey



43%

of people left their country of origin between one month and one year ago, while 26% left less than a month ago.

Intended length of stay



58%

of respondents expected to stay in the country of interview for less than one month, and 35% more than one year.

PROTECTION INCIDENTS



53%

of the people interviewed reported a protection incident or threat along the route.

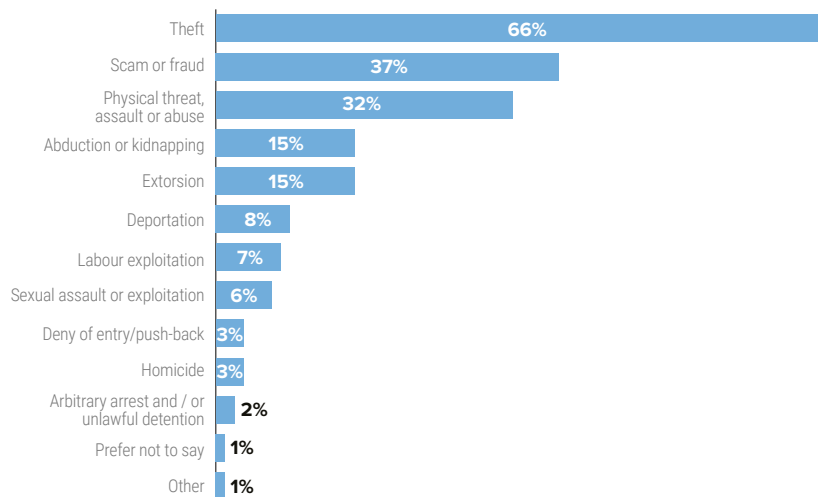


65%

of respondents traveling with family reported a protection incident or threat when accompanied by children, more likely than those traveling without children (48%).

This difference has widened significantly, growing from 5% to 17% since the last quarter.

Protection incidents along the route



¹⁸ National Migration Service (in Spanish, *Servicio Nacional de Migración*), Panama. Weekly report on July 6, 2025. Available at <https://www.migracion.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/REPORT-SEMANAL-SNM-07072025.pdf>. Accessed August 19, 2025.

In the second quarter of 2025, more than half of respondents (53%) reported at least one protection incident along their journey. Theft remained the most frequently reported incident (65%), followed by scam or fraud (37%), and threats or physical assault (32%). The latter showing an increase from 26% in the previous quarter. Consistent with these trends, field observations in Necocli, Colombia, identified theft and scams as common occurrences, often leaving travelers stranded mid-route without money or documents to continue their journey, exacerbating their vulnerability.

Incidents of abduction or kidnapping saw a surprising spike this quarter, rising to 15%, up from the 2024 average of 5-6%. Reports of deportation were slightly lower (8%) compared to last quarter (12%), though still notably higher than the typical low levels observed during 2023 and 2024. Meanwhile, reports of being denied entry in a country dropped to low levels this quarter after reaching the highest level, 9%, in the previous quarter. However, this decline likely reflects a slowdown in movement and fewer border crossing attempts, rather than an actual improvement in border conditions. Reports of sexual assault or exploitation remained relatively low at 5%, while labor exploitation rose slightly to 7%. Extortion or bribery, which had shown a continuous decline over the past year, remained relatively low at 15%. These trends highlight the continuously

shifting patterns in protection risks, with increases in certain incidents –such as abduction or kidnapping and threats or physical assault – contrasting with declines in others, like denial of entry.

Out of those who experienced or witnessed protection incidents, 10% left their country of origin within the last month. Meanwhile, individuals who left their country of origin between one month and one year accounted for 48%. These figures suggest that, even amid contextual changes, the early phases of displacement—particularly the first year—remain marked by heightened vulnerability.

When families traveled with children, they were more likely to experience theft (72%) than those traveling without children (62%). The opposite trend was observed for fraud, which was reported by 32% of those travelling with children versus 41% of those without. Threats and physical assault were reported at equal rates (40%) across both groups. Abduction or kidnapping was also more common —nearly three times as much— in families travelling with children (25%) than those without (9%). These findings underscore distinct and context-specific protection risks faced by different household types during their journeys.

ACCESS TO FOOD



30%

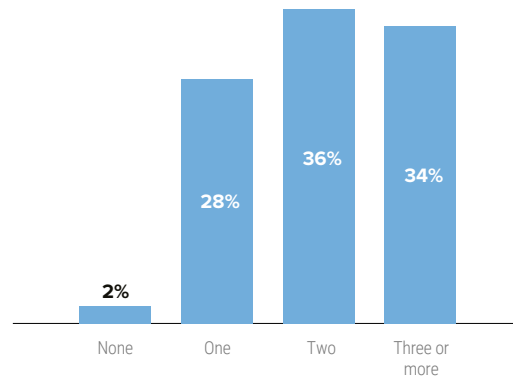
of respondents reported having only one or no meal the day before the interview.

However, this marks a sustained decrease compared to Q4 2024 and Q1 2025. The improvement in overall food access may be attributed to the fact that many individuals are currently stranded in transit countries, unable to continue their journey.

Food insecurity remains a pressing concern, though recent data points to gradual improvement. In the second quarter of 2025, 30% of respondents reported eating only one or no meals the day before the interview. Encouragingly, the share of individuals consuming three or more meals rose from 25% in Q1 to 34% in Q2—suggesting better access to food. This positive trend may reflect both a shift in the surveyed population’s profile and changes in displacement dynamics, with more individuals reaching minimum levels of food security.

A closer look reveals gender-based differences: women were slightly more likely than men to have eaten three or more meals (38% versus 31%), while a higher proportion of men reported eating only once (31% versus 25%). However, the percentage of individuals reporting no meals was the same for both genders (2%), continuing a downward trend from 8% in Q4 2024 to 4% in Q1 2025, and now 2% in Q2 2025.

How many meals did you eat yesterday?



Differences across nationalities were also notable. Cuban respondents were the most likely to have eaten three or more meals (62%), indicating relatively better short-term access to food. Colombians showed marked improvement, with 43% reporting three or more meals up from 27% in Q1. Salvadorians also emerged in Q2 with 37% meeting this threshold, whereas they were not previously highlighted among the main countries of origin.

In contrast, Venezuelans (23% in Q2 versus 21% in Q1) and Hondurans (21% in Q2 versus 12% in Q1) continued to report lower rates of adequate food intake. These figures suggest ongoing challenges in meeting basic dietary needs in terms of quantity, quality, and diversity, factors essential for maintaining health and well-being.

Despite overall gains, many still face serious hardships. Among those with limited food intake, 28% had only one meal and 2% had none the previous day. While this represents an improvement, troubling patterns persist, as 6% of respondents reported restricting their food intake so that children could eat, especially in Costa Rica (16% from 10% in Q4 2024) and Honduras (8% from 6% in Q4 2024 and Q1 2025) —both destination countries. This practice was more commonly reported by women (10%) than men (3%), highlighting the

persistent gendered burden of food insecurity within displaced families. Among families with children under six months, the situation is even more concerning: out of 30 respondents, 30% (9) reported skipping meals, 20% (6) went an entire day without eating, and 10% (3) restricted adult food intake to prioritize children. In Honduras specifically, the percentage of individuals who went an entire day without eating rose from 5% in Q1 to 8% in Q2.



68%

of respondents faced difficulties meeting their food needs and resorted to coping strategies. This includes 6% of respondents who reported restricting their meals so that children in their family or group could eat.

In the second quarter of 2025, 68% of respondents reported using at least one strategy to cope with limited access to food. The most common approaches included skipping meals (23%, down from 29% in Q1), relying on cheaper food options (21%), and going an entire day without eating (18%, a slight decrease from Q1). While these coping mechanisms remain widespread, the use of more severe strategies—such as skipping meals—has steadily declined from a peak of 45% in Q3 2023, when data collection began.

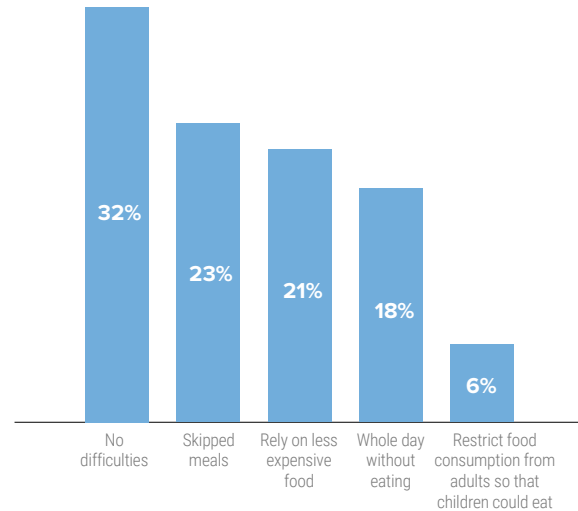
When asked about their food situation over the past week, the share of respondents using severe coping strategies dropped significantly—from 76% in Q1 2025 to 46% in the second quarter of the year. The highest use of these strategies was observed in Guatemala, while the lowest was in Mexico. This is particularly notable given the growing number of respondents now expressing an intention to remain in Mexico, rather than continue toward the United States. This shift may suggest that those settling in Mexico are beginning to establish safety nets,

which could be improving their access to food and reducing the need for extreme measures such as skipping meals, going an entire day without eating, or adults limiting their intake to prioritize children.

One possible explanation for the overall observed improvements is that many individuals are no longer in active transit. Instead, they are temporarily settled in host or transit countries, where their priorities have shifted toward securing shelter, accessing legal assistance, and building support networks. These changes may be contributing to improved access to basic needs, including food.

Nevertheless, families traveling with infants under six months remain particularly vulnerable. One-third (33%) of these respondents (N=30) reported eating only one meal, slightly above the overall average. This is especially concerning for breastfeeding mothers, whose nutritional needs are critical for their infants' health and development.

Distribution of food coping strategies used over the past week



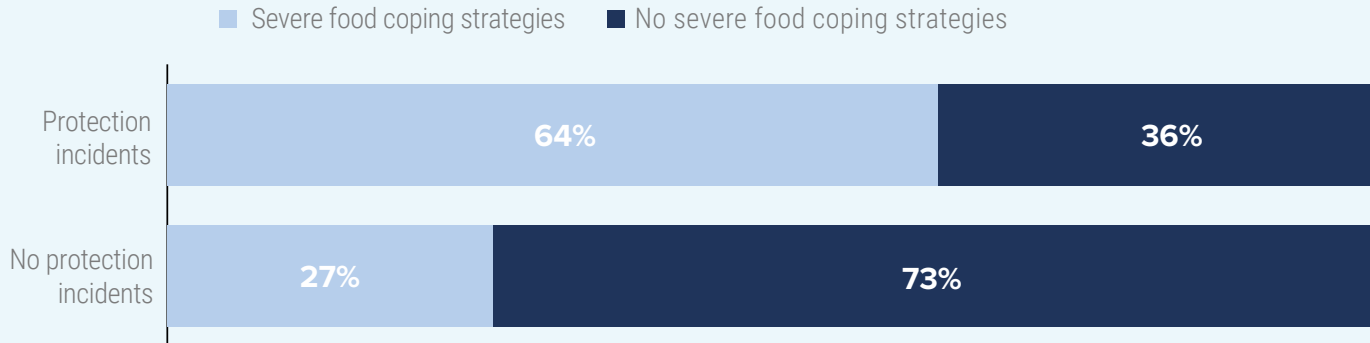
Food security and protection



This quarter, 64% of respondents who reported experiencing or witnessing at least one protection incident also reported using severe food coping strategies, —such as skipping meals, going an entire day without eating, or restricting food

consumption from adults so children could eat. This is in stark contrast and notably higher to the 27% reported among those that did not experience protection incidents.

Severe food coping strategies by victim/witness of protection incident



When disaggregated by type of protection incident, 71% of those who experienced or witnessed threats or physical assault resorted to severe food coping strategies —despite this not being the most commonly reported protection incident. Similarly, the use of severe food coping strategies was also

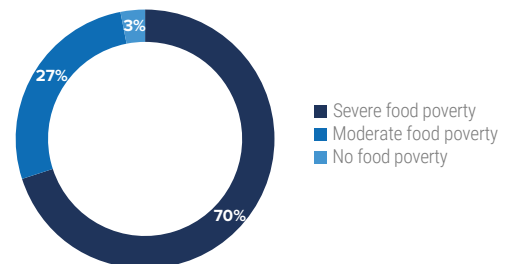
common among those that experienced or witnessed theft (58%) and extortion (58%). These patterns underscore the compounded vulnerabilities faced by individuals encountering both protection risks and food insecurity during their journey.

Infant and young child feeding indicators¹⁹

10 out of 16 caregivers reported that infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed.

70% of caregivers reported that children between six months and five years of age live in severe food poverty (N=136).

Food poverty: children aged 6 months to 5 years



This section covers the results of nutrition in early childhood, specifically children under five years of age.

Breastmilk is the only recommended source of nutrition for infants under six months of age²⁰. Therefore, exclusive breastfeeding is used as the primary child nutrition indicator for this age group. Six out of sixteen caregivers reported exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months of age the day before the interview. Lack of drinking water and dehydration

were cited as sources of difficulty for breastfeeding during the qualitative data collection in Honduras.

For **children between six months and five years of age**, the nutrition indicator used in this report is called “child food poverty” which quantifies the dietary diversity in terms of groups consumed the day before²¹. According to this quarter's data, 70% (95 out of 136) of caregivers reported children living in severe child food poverty (i.e. consumed foods from two

¹⁹ The exclusive breastfeeding and dietary diversity indicators are defined in accordance with WHO-UNICEF guidelines to evaluate feeding practices of children under five years of age. See “Indicators for assessing infant and young child feeding practices: definitions and measurement methods”. Geneva: World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2021. Available online at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/indicators-for-assessing-infant-and-young-child-feeding-practices/>

²⁰ Infants under 6 months who are not exclusively breastfed are highly vulnerable to diseases and infections, including diarrhea. Thus, they can easily become dehydrated and malnourished, as they may receive food or liquids that do not fulfill the nutrient needs nor come from a safe source, potentially facing a real risk of death. This is especially relevant in transit, where there may be no clean water for infant formula preparation, feeding and cleaning feeding utensils (e.g. baby bottles).

²¹ The child food poverty indicator uses the number of food items belonging to different food groups consumed by a child the previous day to assess if dietary diversity is sufficient. Children in this age group need to consume food from at least five out of the eight identified food groups for a “minimum dietary diversity”. Children who consume food from less food groups are considered in child food poverty of two levels: moderate if they consume food from three or four food groups, or severe if they consume foods from two or less food groups. Child food poverty harms all children, but it is particularly damaging in early childhood when insufficient dietary intake of essential nutrients can cause the greatest harm to child survival, physical growth, and cognitive development, trapping children and their families in a cycle of poverty and deprivation.

or less food groups out of eight) and 25% (37 out of 136) in moderate child food poverty (i.e. consumed foods from three or four food groups), while only 3% (4 out of 136) met the minimum dietary diversity standard (i.e. consumed foods from five or more food groups). These findings remain significantly

higher than regional estimates from UNICEF²², which indicate that 9% of children under five live in severe food poverty and 28% in moderate food poverty across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Child vaccination²³



53% of caregivers reported that children aged six months to five years completed the vaccination schedule (N=137).

Five out of 16 caregivers reported that infants under six months of age had completed the vaccination schedule according to their age, while 11 out of 16 have not completed it.²⁴

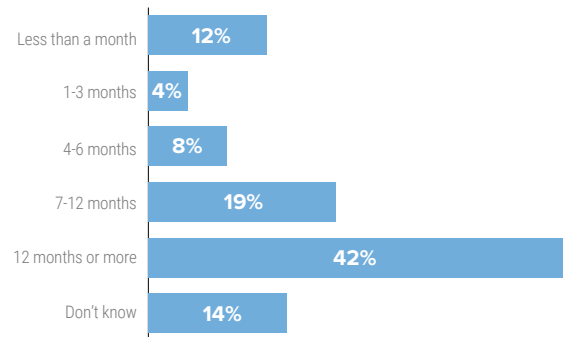
Child education



42%

of caregivers reported that children and adolescents between six and 17 years of age were not attending school before starting the journey (N=118).

Percentage of families with children aged 6-17 years by last attendance of education



A set of questions regarding access to education was asked to caregivers of children and adolescents aged 6 to 17. According to 58% of caregivers (68 out of 118), children and adolescents had attended school in the country where they lived before starting their journey. However, educational continuity appears to be disrupted for many for a long period, since 42% (50 out of 118) of caregivers reported that children and adolescents had not attended school for more than one year, while only 16% (19 out of 118) had attended school in the last three months. These findings could be explained by protracted movements and longer journeys from country of origin which hinders educational continuity.

completed primary school and 31% (36 out of 118) preschool, just 10% (12 out of 118) had reached secondary education. Documentation of educational level was another major barrier: 82% of caregivers (97 out of 118) said they did not carry any official record of their child or adolescent last approved grade.

In addition, 72% of caregivers (85 out of 118) reported not knowing the requirements for enrolling their children or adolescents in school in different countries. This lack of awareness, combined with the absence of documentation, poses a significant challenge to re-enrollment and learning continuity for children on the move.

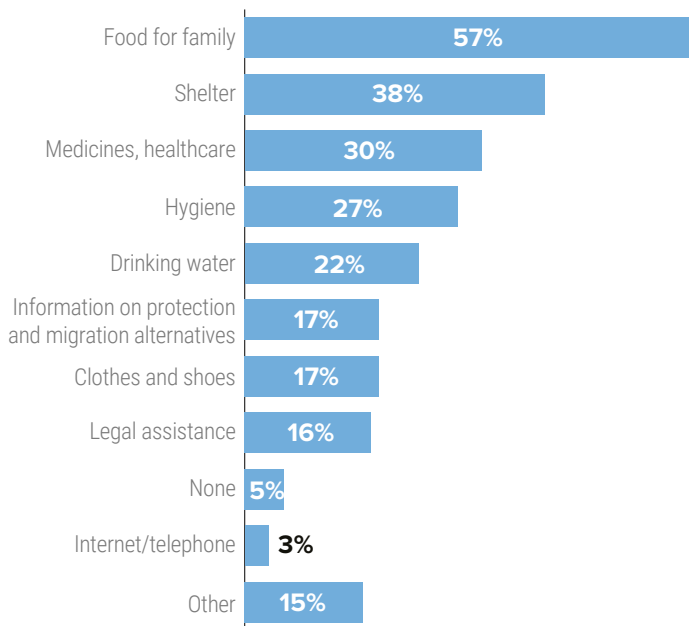
Most children and adolescents were reported to have reached only basic education levels. While 48% (57 out of 118) had

²² Child Food Poverty. Nutrition Deprivation in Early Childhood, UNICEF, New York, June 2024. Available online at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-food-poverty-report-2024/>

²³ Information about the vaccination status is gathered through a direct question, without checking the vaccination card.

²⁴ This category includes the direct response option for the schedule not been completed, as well as when the caregiver does not know. For infants under 6 months of age, they correspond to 7 and 4 cases out of 16 respectively. For children between six months and five years of age, they correspond to 37% (51 out of 137) and 9% (13 out of 137) respectively. The response when the caregiver does not know or remember is generally considered as if the vaccination schedule was not completed because completing it is an event that marks 6 months of age, after which the child enters a long interval without vaccines on schedule. As such, the event would be easy to remember. Consequently, it is likely that when respondents report not knowing, the child has in fact not completed the full vaccination schedule.

MAIN NEEDS



57%

of people interviewed reported access to food for their families as their main need to continue their journey.

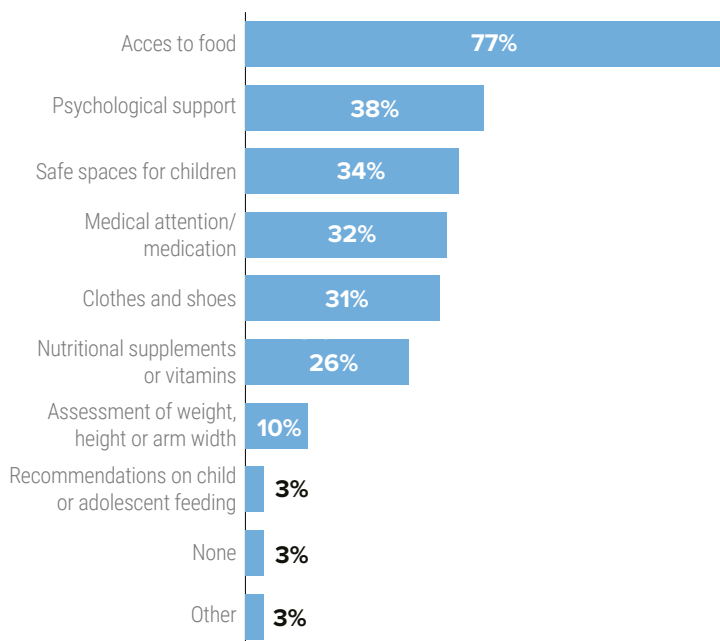
Access to food for their families remained the most frequently reported need among respondents, cited by 57%.

Shelter (38%) and access to health care and medicines (30%) rounded out the top three needs, displacing hygiene and water from the previous quarter. Information on protection

and migratory alternatives (17%) and legal assistance (16%) as main needs also saw increases from last quarter, reflecting respondent's growing consideration of alternative options (i.e. staying in transit countries) when reaching their original destination or returning home are not viable options.

Main needs of children

Main needs of children aged 6 months to 17 years (n=195)

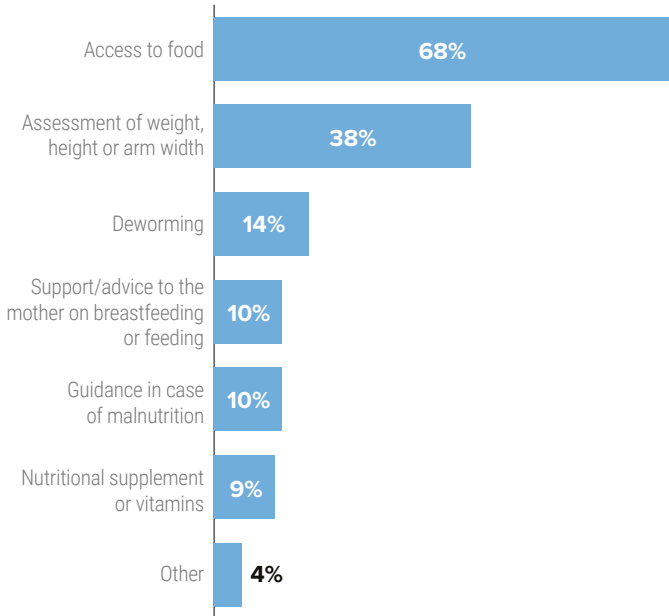


Among infants under six months of age, the most commonly reported needs according to caregivers were vaccines and diapers (each by 10 out of 16), followed by clothes or shoes (9 out of 16) and access to food or formula (7 out of 16), medical attention or medication (3 out of 16), educational or safe spaces for children (3 out of 16), and evaluation of nutritional status through assessment of weight and height (2 out of 16).

Among children and adolescents aged six months to 17 years, access to food was the most frequently reported need, cited by 77% of caregivers (151 out of 195), followed by psychological support (38%, 74 out of 195) and educational or safe spaces for children (34%, 67 out of 195). Medical attention or medication closely follows at 32% (62 out of 195) and clothes or shoes at 31% (60 out of 195). Nutritional supplements or vitamins (26%, 51 out of 195) was also highlighted as key concern. Evaluation of nutritional status through assessment of weight, height or arm width was reported by 10% (19 out of 195).

Humanitarian assistance received by children

Type of assistance received by children aged 6 months to 5 years (n=69)



50%

of caregivers reported that children between six months and five years of age have received humanitarian assistance along the route (69 out of 137).

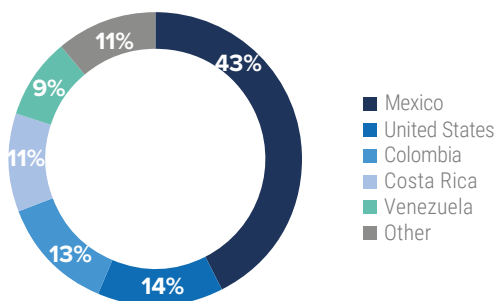
Only 7 out of 16 caregivers reported that infants under six months of age have received humanitarian assistance along the route. The most frequent type of assistance was the assessment of nutritional status through weight and height (6 out of 7), followed by support and advice to the mother on breastfeeding (3 out of 7), guidance in case of illness (2 out of 7), and guidance in case of malnutrition (1 out of 7).

For children aged six months to five years, caregivers most frequently reported that they received food assistance (68%,

47 out of 69), followed by assessment of nutritional status through weight, height, or arm width (38%, 26 out of 69). Among lower reported types of assistance were deworming (14%, 10 out of 69), support and advice to the mother on breastfeeding or feeding, and guidance in case of malnutrition with the same frequency (10%, 7 out of 69). Nutritional supplements or vitamins (9%, 6 out of 69) was also among the types of support received.

INTENTIONS

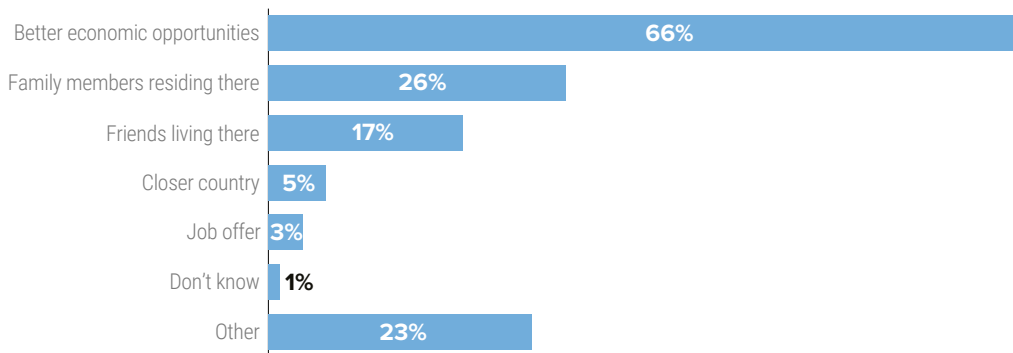
Intended country of destination



43%

of respondents intend to go to Mexico.

Main reasons for intended destination

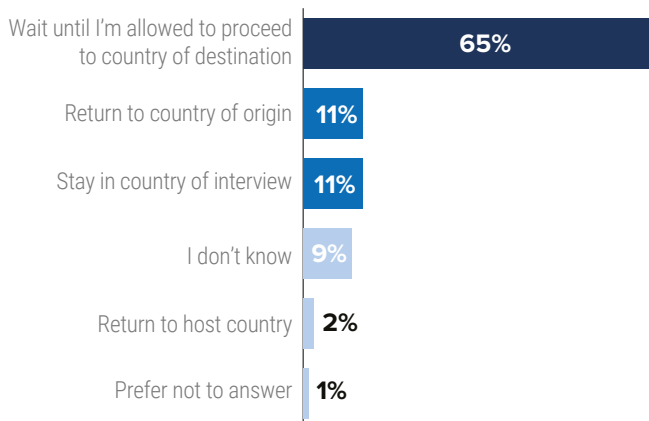


In the second quarter of 2025, the proportion of respondents indicating the United States as their intended destination dropped significantly to 14%, continuing the downward trend observed over the past year and the lowest ever recorded since data collection began. In contrast, Mexico has emerged as the top intended destination, cited by 43% of respondents. This change represents a threefold increase compared with last quarter of 2024, when only 12% of respondents indicated Mexico as an intended destination. This shift is particularly pronounced among respondents from Honduras (61%), El Salvador (61%) and Cuba (81%). An increasing number of refugees and migrants are choosing to return to their home countries or seek alternative destinations. The proportion of respondents citing other countries (primarily Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela) as their intended destination has risen sharply to 43% compared to 11% reported at the end of 2024.

The most commonly cited reason for selecting a destination has remained consistent since the last quarter: the pursuit of better economic opportunities, reported by 66% of respondents. Other key factors, which have also remained more or less consistent, include the presence of family members (26%) and friends (17%, up from 13% last quarter). Smaller proportions pointed to the proximity of the country (5%) or job offers (3%) as their motivation. Other motivators identified during qualitative data from Honduras include access to humanitarian support and services, ease of incorporating children in the educational system, as well as the opportunity to request asylum. These patterns highlight how both economic drivers and existing support networks continue to shape mobility decisions, while also reflecting a broader shift in movement dynamics across the region.

Scenarios of alternative intentions

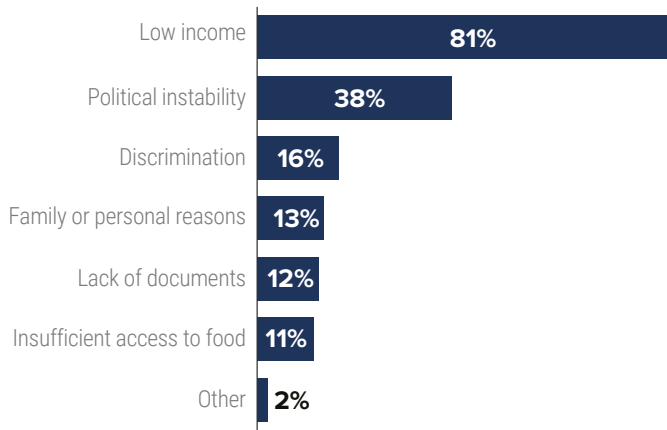
In case not possible to reach intended country of destination, what would you do?



During this second quarter, 65% of refugees and migrants said they would remain in their current location and wait if unable to reach their intended destination. This marks a rebound increase from last quarter's 58%, bringing the figure closer to the previous range between 69% and 75%. Conversely, while the last quarter presented an increase in those who would return to their country of origin (26%), the proportion dropped to 11% this quarter, closer to the average of 6%-7% of last year. This shift might reflect two possibilities: some individuals who previously intended to return may have already done so, and these profiles are no longer in transit nor represented in the current sample; or, as the year continues, the idea of returning to their country of origin is not as attractive as it was during the unexpected changes in context earlier in the year.

Alternatively, there was a notable increase in those who would prefer to stay in the country in which they were interviewed (11%) compared to the last quarter (3%). Qualitative data collected in Honduras supports this trend, as an interest in staying in the country of interview was common. Participants mentioned feeling well-received by the country and growing intentions of requesting asylum in Honduras and other previously transited countries. This trend may signal a growing pressure on transit countries to serve as longer-term host countries. Additionally, 9% of respondents were unsure of what they would do next, and only 2% would return to a previous host country.

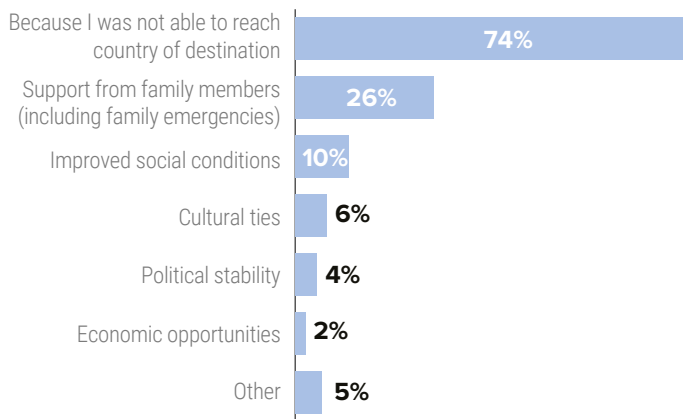
What would be the reason(s) for not considering to return to country of origin or host country?



In the second quarter of 2025, the primary reasons refugees and migrants chose not to return to their country of origin were low income (81%) and political instability (38%). While low income remains the most frequently cited concern—returning to levels seen in 2024—political instability continues to be a significant deterrent, maintaining high levels following its peak at the end of 2024. Other reported deterrents included discrimination (16%), family or personal concerns (13%), lack of documentation (12%) and lack of food (11%).

During qualitative data exercises in Honduras, participants also cited generalized violence as the main reason for not returning to their country of origin or previous host country. Other reasons mentioned include land usurpation, political persecution, and difficulties accessing healthcare and education for children.

What would be the reason(s) to return?



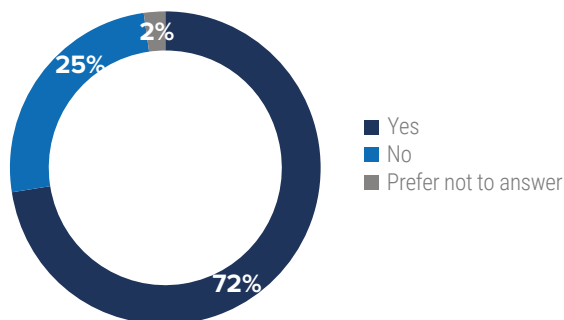
For refugees and migrants who have the intention of returning during the second quarter of 2025, their intentions remained largely shaped by structural barriers rather than by improvements in countries of origin. The inability to reach the intended destination was once again the most frequently cited reason for return, reported by 74% of respondents (a 10% increase from last quarter). While this figure has not returned to its highest levels—a peak of 87% in late 2023—it remains the dominant driver, highlighting how blocked mobility pathways continue to prompt returns more than any voluntary decisions. As mentioned in another section, qualitative data collected in Colombia identified re-issuance of personal documentation as another reason to return, since it is needed to access regularization opportunities in other countries.

Meanwhile, personal and social motivations have gained increasing relevance. Support from family was cited by 26% of respondents—the highest recorded since data collection began, and nearly triple the 9% reported in Q4 2023, the lowest recorded to date. Cultural ties have remained steady at 6%, improved social conditions have increased slightly at 10%, and economic reasons have declined to 2%, indicating that some returns may reflect longer-term displacement dynamics or efforts to reconnect socially or culturally, rather than immediate financial motivations.

Political stability was only mentioned by 4%, a figure that has remained consistently low across all quarters. This reinforces the view that most returns are still reactive and constrained, rather than voluntary or based on favorable developments in the country of origin.

Risks upon return

Risk upon return for self or family



Perceptions of risk upon return have reached an all-time high, reinforcing the urgency of protection and concern for displaced populations. In the second quarter of 2025, almost every 3 out of 4 respondents (72%) reported that they would face some risk if required to return to their country of origin or a previous host country—17% higher than the last quarter and twice as much compared to the beginning of data collection (36%). This concern was consistently high among the top nationalities, ranging from 59%-88%. In contrast, only 25% of all respondents said they would not face risk, while 2% preferred not to answer.

In Mexico, 69% of interviewed individuals reported facing risks upon return to their country of origin, due to threats, extortion, and/or persecution.

This sustained rise in perceived risk reflects the need to ensure that there are adequate reception mechanisms in countries of origin, to ensure that those without international protection needs can benefit from appropriate reception and reintegration mechanisms.

Respondents often associate these risks with threats to physical safety, political persecution, stressing the need to ensure that all returns are conducted in line with the principle of non-refoulement.

Particularly vulnerable groups—such as unaccompanied or separated children, survivors of gender-based violence, victims of human trafficking, and LGBTIQ+ individuals—remain at heightened risk. For these populations, return is not only undesirable but potentially dangerous, highlighting the need for individual protection assessments, and sustained monitoring of evolving risks in countries of origin.



© UNHCR/ Tomás Ayuso

In collaboration with:

