Mixed Movements Official Data
Darien Province, Panama-Colombia Border

February - March 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 unprecedented mixed movement crisis has been ongoing for over two years. According to statistics from the National Migration Service (SNM), from 2021 to 2023, over 900,000 people crossed through this area.

Key Figures

- **73,167**
  - Total entries in 2024.
- **37,166**
  - Total entries in February 2024.

- **62%** Male
- **38%** Female
- **78%** Adult
- **22%** Children

Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to February 2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Haiti</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Colombia</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>2,028</td>
<td>5,046</td>
<td>2,911</td>
<td>2,129</td>
<td>3,765</td>
<td>37,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>24,895</td>
<td>3,430</td>
<td>1,779</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td>2,483</td>
<td>3,001</td>
<td>37,166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- **Jan**
  - 25K
  - 36K
- **Feb**
  - 25K
  - 37K
- **Mar**
  - 38K
- **Apr**
  - 40K
- **May**
  - 39K
- **Jun**
  - 30K
- **Jul**
  - 55K
- **Aug**
  - 82K
- **Sep**
  - 75K
- **Oct**
  - 49K
- **Nov**
  - 37K
- **Dec**
  - 25K

Source: Panama National Migration Service
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.

### Sex of interviewed individuals
- 49% Male
- 50% Female
1% of respondents answered "Other".

### Average age
- 34 Years

### Travel group composition
- 56% Entire family
- 16% Part of the family
- 6% Unrelated companions
- 19% Alone
- 15% Friends

### Documents carried by the family
- 83% National ID
- 13% Valid passport
- 10% Expired passport
- 10% Birth Certificate
- 6% Others
- 5% None

### Nationality
- 70% Venezuelan
- 13% Colombian
- 10% Haitian
- 2% Ecuadorian
- 6% Others

### Last country of residence (for at least 6 months)
- Colombia
- Venezuela
- Chile
- Peru
- Ecuador
- Brazil
- Other countries

### Intended country of destination
- USA 80%
- Mexico 6%
- Canada 6%
- Costa Rica 5%
- Panama 2%
- Others** 2%

*Other nationalities include: Angola, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Morocco, and Peru.

**Other destination countries include: Venezuela, and respondents that had not chosen a destination.
Seven in ten interviewed refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (70%). Forty per-cent of them came directly from Venezuela (34%), Peru (16%), Chile (4%), and Ecuador (4%).

Nearly three in five (58%) had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and 27% reported having valid documentation from that country.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) reported travelling with family, and one-quarter (25%) reported travelling alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of 2 children, 40% under five. Additionally, two childbirths were registered in the jungle this year.

One in three respondents (35%) travelled with at least one person with a specific need. In March, there was a slight increase in the number of people travelling with survivors of abuse (15%).

Push and pull factors

Main reasons for leaving country of origin

- Access to employment: 68%
- Access to healthcare: 55%
- Access to food: 40%
- Violence and insecurity: 20%
- Attacks, threats or intimidation: 16%

Main reasons for leaving country of residence

- Access to employment: 69%
- Lack of documentation: 27%
- Violence and insecurity: 22%
- Attacks, threats or intimidation: 19%
- Access to food: 14%

Reasons for choosing destination country

- Economic opportunities: 68%
- Family, reunification: 36%
- Friends/religion: 25%
- Other: 9%
- Job offer: 7%

Most common reasons reported under “Other” include seeking protection and safety.
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.

7 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 (39%) and Facebook (20%).

67% of interviewed Haitians, and Venezuelans reported not receiving information about the new entry requirements to the United States.

50% of interviewed individuals reported they would face risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.

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77% Physical insecurity (attacks, drownings, falls).

35% Inability to cover essential needs.

19% Care of children and other dependants.

17% Fear of getting lost in the jungle.

14% Cadavers observation*

*Those who reported seeing cadavers, saw between 1 and 6 cadavers during the seven days before data collection.

Situations that affected people the most while crossing the jungle

Main needs for the continuation of the journey

Cash
There is a lack of access to 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 the increase in bus fares from $40 to $60. The new fare has been in effect since late October 2023.

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

Healthcare
There is a lack of healthcare professionals to cover the demand for services at the ETRMS, with people choosing to forego care to avoid long lines. There is also a need for specialized healthcare, adequate installations, and mobility aid devices.

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UNHCR Multi Country Office for Belize, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua and Southern Caribbean
Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 1st to 27th March 2024
Access all our border protection monitoring publications here
Feedback: panpaim@unhcr.org