Mixed Movements Official Data

Darien Province, Panama-Colombia Border

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

![Graph showing migration trends]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Entries (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>25K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>25K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>38K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>40K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>39K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>30K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>55K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>82K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>75K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>49K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>37K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>25K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to March 2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>2,489</td>
<td>2,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>2,098</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td>3,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>3,048</td>
<td>1,775</td>
<td>2,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2,541</td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>1,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,763</td>
<td>5,005</td>
<td>3,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>24,881</td>
<td>23,257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- **2023**
  - Jan: 25K
  - Feb: 25K
  - Mar: 38K
  - Apr: 40K
  - May: 39K
  - Jun: 30K
  - Jul: 55K
  - Aug: 82K
  - Sep: 75K
  - Oct: 49K
  - Nov: 37K
  - Dec: 25K

- **2024**
  - Jan: 36K
  - Feb: 37K
  - Mar: 37K
  - Apr: 40K
  - May: 39K
  - Jun: 30K
  - Jul: 55K
  - Aug: 82K
  - Sep: 75K
  - Oct: 49K
  - Nov: 37K
  - Dec: 25K

Source: Panama National Migration Service
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

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

Nationality

Venezuelan 61%
Colombian 13%
Haitian 9%
Ecuadorian 6%
Others* 11%

Last country of residence (for at least 6 months)

Venezuela
Colombia
Chile
Equador
Peru
Brazil
Other countries

Intended country of destination

USA 91%
Canada 5%
Mexico 4%
Other countries

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

### Respondent profile

- **64%** of interviewed individuals left their country of origin/residence less than four weeks ago.
- **2%** of interviewed individuals reported having the intention to stay in Panama. Most are planning to stay for less than one year.
- **51%** 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.

- **3%** 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.

- **9%** of interviewed individuals reported travelling with pregnant or lactating women.

- **6%** of respondents reported travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.

- **1%** of interviewed individuals reported travelling with unaccompanied children in their group.

- **25%** of interviewed individuals reported having a single parent travelling with children in their group.

- **2%** of interviewed individuals reported travelling with a person over the age of 60 in their group.

- **28%** of respondents reported travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.

### Push and pull factors

**Main reasons for leaving country of origin**

- Access to employment: 68%
- Violence and threats: 49%
- Access to food: 33%
- Access to healthcare: 31%
- Other: 12%

**Main reasons for leaving country of residence**

- Access to employment: 60%
- Violence and threats: 30%
- Lack of documentation: 28%
- Access to food: 13%
- Other: 9%

**Reasons for choosing destination country**

- Economic opportunities: 72%
- Family reunification: 35%
- Protection & safety: 25%
- Friends & living together: 25%
- Job offer: 6%
**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.

**54%** of interviewed individuals reported they would face risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.

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

### 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical insecurity (attacks, drownings, falls)</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to cover essential needs</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of getting lost in the jungle</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadavers observation*</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of deportation</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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.