

January - June 2024

### Context

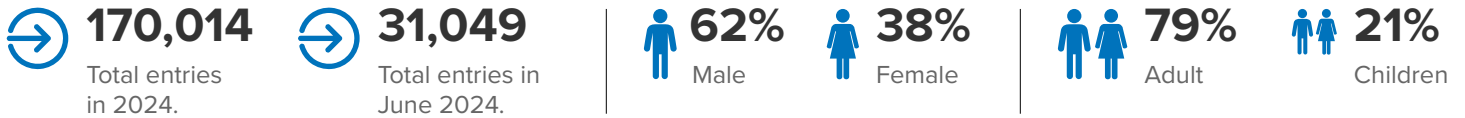
Darien is Panama's largest and poorest province. Bordering Colombia, the province hosts a 60-mile-deep jungle, the only breaking point of the Pan-American highway, linking the continent from south to north.

Despite being one of the most dangerous jungles in the world, Darien is a transit location for thousands of refugees and migrants, mainly 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 National Migration Service (SNM) statistics, over 1,100,000 people crossed through this area from 2021 to 2024.

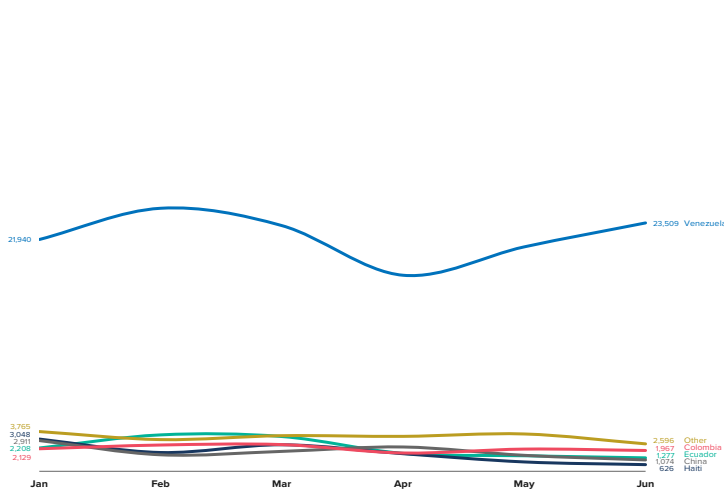


### Official data



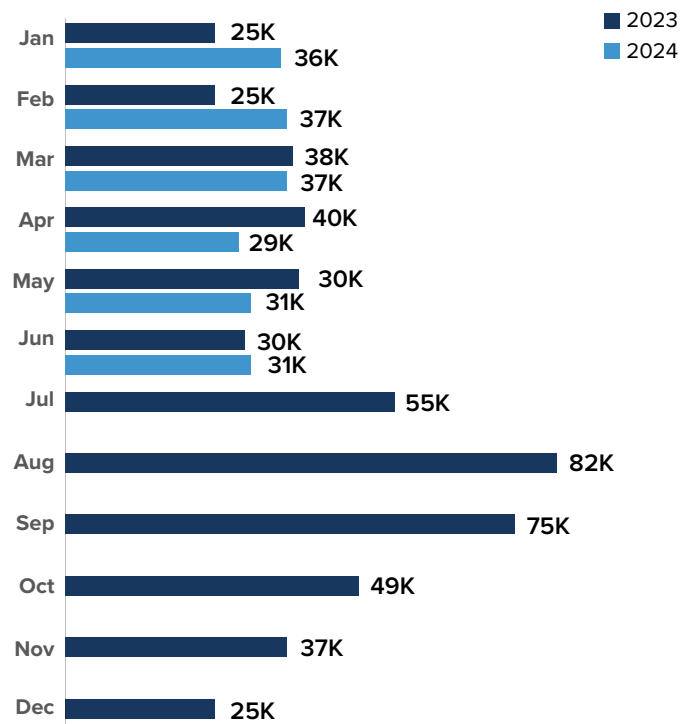
Source: Panama National Migration Service

### Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to June 2024



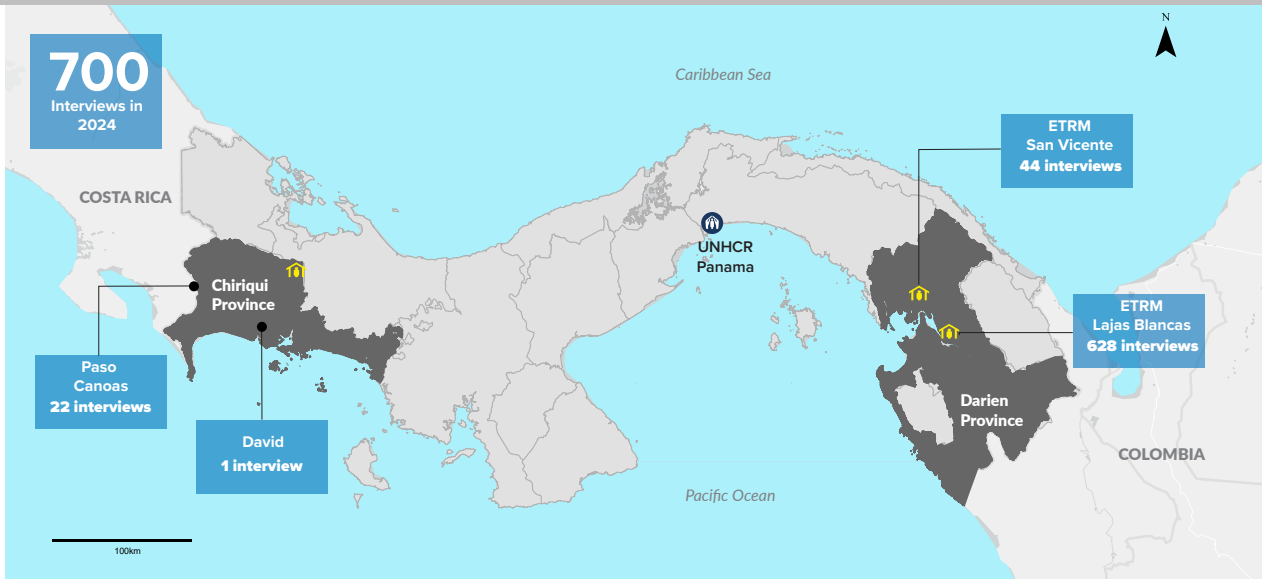
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Venezuela	21,940	24,895	23,257	18,558	21,245	23,509
Ecuador	2,208	3,450	3,295	1,700	1,475	1,277
Haiti	3,048	1,775	2,506	1,661	882	626
China	2,911	1,562	1,885	2,302	1,511	1,074
Colombia	2,129	2,483	2,524	1,729	2,098	1,967
Other	3,765	3,001	3,374	3,309	3,536	2,596
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,001</b>	<b>37,166</b>	<b>36,841</b>	<b>29,259</b>	<b>30,747</b>	<b>31,049</b>

### 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 data is compiled through individual interviews conducted in Panama's Darien and Chiriquí provinces. Preliminary results 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

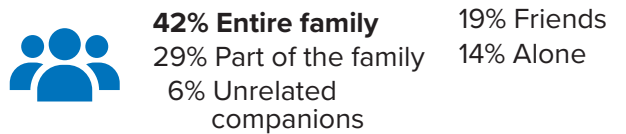
Sex of interviewed individuals



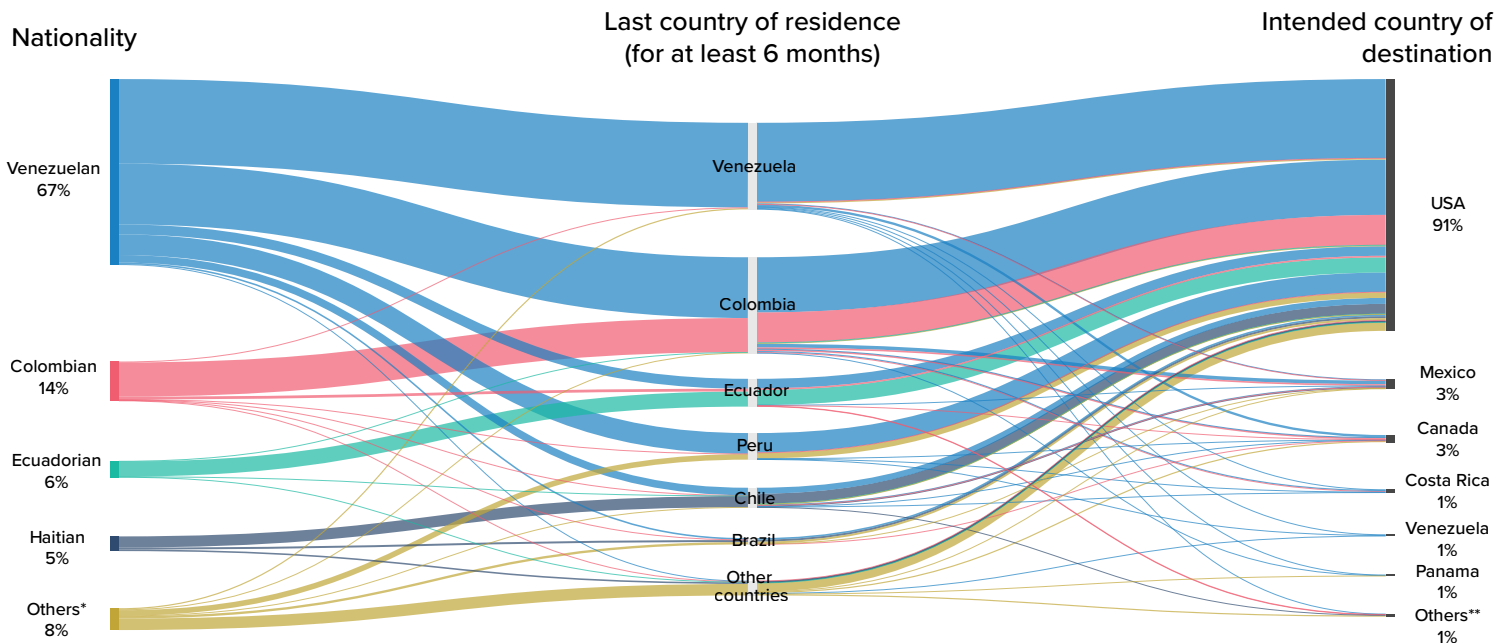
Average age



Travel group composition



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



\*Other nationalities include: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Cuba, DRC, Dominican Republic, India, Iran, Jamaica, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe.

\*\*Other destination countries include: Guatemala, Nicaragua, and those that had not chosen a destination.

## Respondent profile

Two-thirds of refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (67%). Nearly half (46%) came directly from Venezuela, while the remaining 54% came from other countries of residence, mainly Colombia (33%), Peru (11%), and Ecuador (5%).

Three in five (57%) had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and 23% had valid documentation from that country.

Seven in ten (72%) travelled with family, and one-third (33%) travelled alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of two children, 39% under five. Five childbirths were registered in the jungle this year.

The proportion of people travelling with survivors of violence steadily increased during the first three months of the year, reaching 15% in March. The lowest percentage (3%) was reported in April, the only month with a proportion below 5%.



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



intended to stay in Panama.

*Most are planning to stay for less than one year.*



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

*Out of 325 respondents that had lived in another country.*



were travelling with a survivor of violence in their group (sexual, physical or psychological).

*This figure likely represents an underestimation of these incidents.*



were travelling with pregnant or lactating women.



were travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.



were travelling with unaccompanied children in their group.



were travelling with a single parent accompanied by their children.

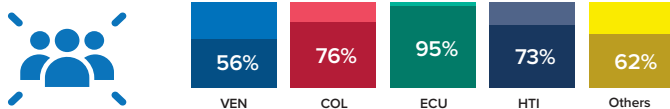


were travelling with a person over the age of 60 in their group.

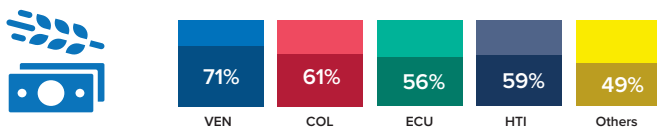
## Push factors

Reasons for leaving country of origin, by nationality

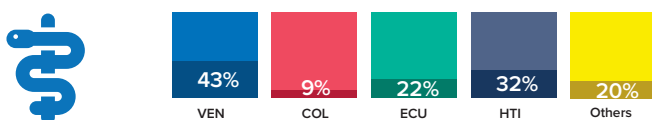
**63%** reported attacks, threats, and general insecurity as one of their main reasons for leaving



**66%** reported lack of employment or low income as one of their main reasons for leaving

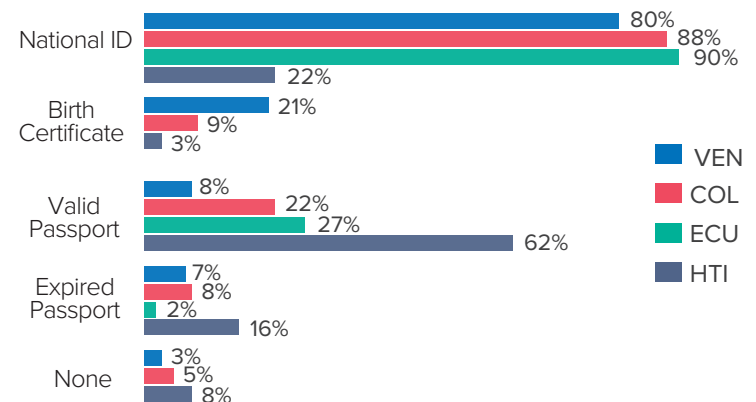


**35%** reported lack of access to services as one of their main reasons for leaving



## Documentation

Documents carried by the family, by nationality



 **4 in 5**

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

**2 in 5**

have family residing in their country of destination.

 **2 in 3**

received information about the journey and made decisions based on the information received from friends and relatives who had already made it.

*Also received information through social media, mainly TikTok (38%) and Facebook (21%).*

 **13%\***

had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, **and did not obtain it.**

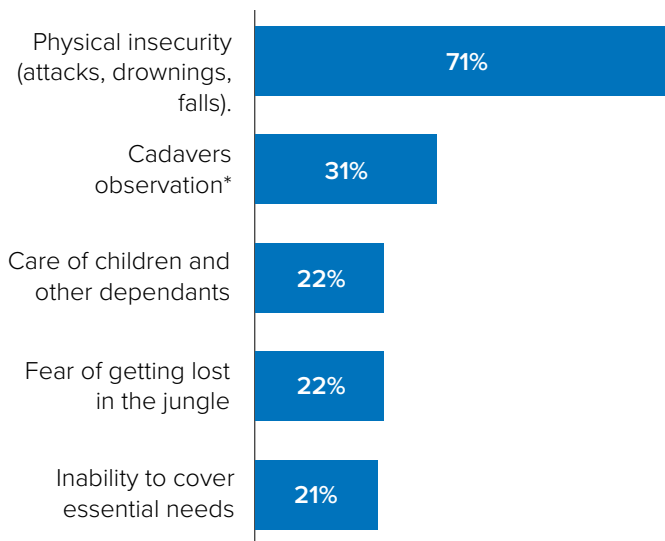
*\*Out of 325 individuals that had lived in a country other than their country of origin for at least 6 months.*

 **49%**

consider they would face risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.

## Challenges during the journey

### Situations that affected people the most while crossing the jungle



*\*Those who reported seeing cadavers, saw between 1 and 15 cadavers during the seven days prior to data collection.*

 **4 days**

is the average time spent crossing the Darien jungle (min. 1,5 days and max. 8 days).

 **68%**

paid a person to guide them through the jungle.

 **3 in 5**

experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle.

 **52%**

were victims of theft, scams or fraud during their journey through the jungle. **Additionally, 24% were victims of threats, intimidation, and attacks.**

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

Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 19th January till 25th June 2024

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

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