

Refugees and migrants transiting through Honduras enter through the south-eastern border (Nicaragua - Honduras) and leave through the western border (Honduras - Guatemala). This border has three official crossing points (Corinto, El Florido and Agua Caliente). The overland journey between the two borders takes between 10 and 15 hours by bus.

Map: More than 90% of people cross the border at Agua Caliente (municipality of Santa Fe of Ocotepeque).

Most people end the journey at the point known as Machuca, near Agua Caliente, located less than 2 kilometres from the border with Guatemala.



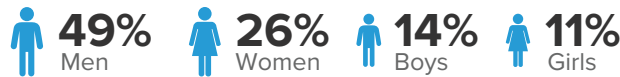
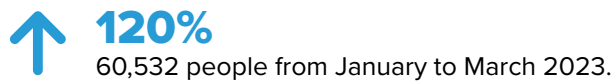
The routes in the image are illustrative and do not reflect the routes taken by refugees and migrants in transit.

Considering the humanitarian needs faced by refugees and migrants upon arrival in Machuca, as well as the importance of strengthening capacities to provide protection, orientation and assistance services, humanitarian organisations with a presence in the area have consolidated the **Western Border Local Team** as a space for coordination, analysis, and inter-sectoral response.

## Key Figures

Entries registered by the National Migration Institute (INM)

These figures represent an **increase compared to the same periods in 2023.**



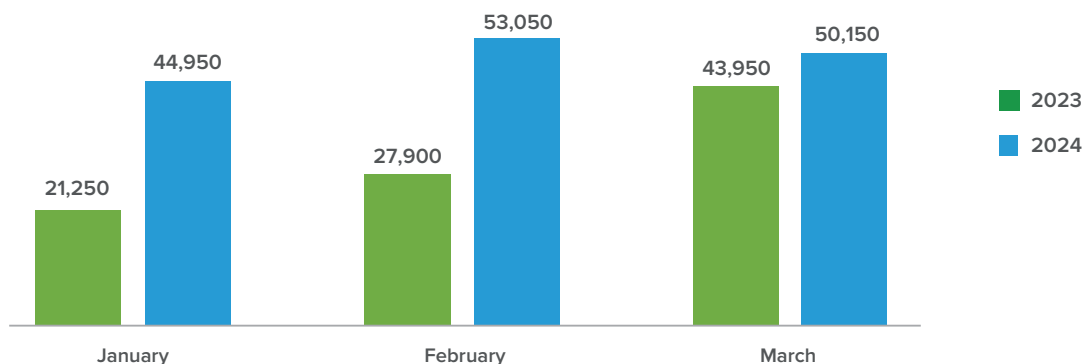
Due to the transit dynamics of refugees and migrants, official figures are consolidated at the points provided by the national authorities. Marked in blue on the reference map.

Estimated transit flows from monitoring activities of the Local Team

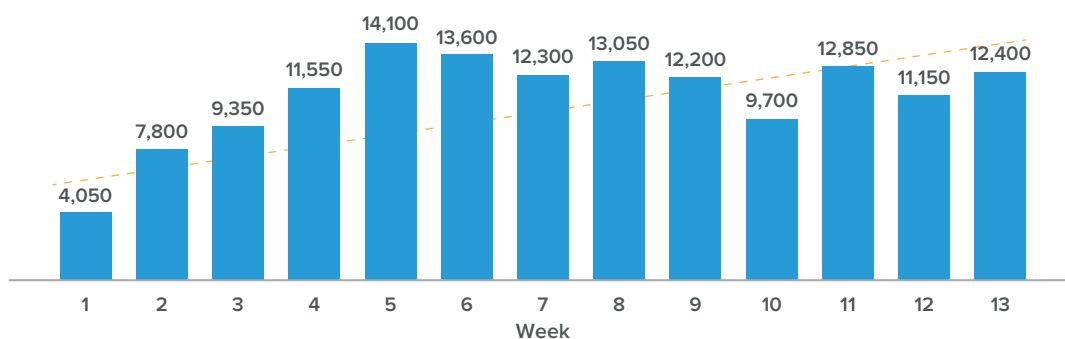


These estimates, based on the Local Team's monitoring, show an under-registration of around **10%** compared to the official data. In addition, they represent **an increase of 59% over the same period last year**, when the figure reached 93,000 people.

**Estimated number of persons who transited through the western border in the first quarter of 2023 vs. 2024, by month**



The **fifth week of the year saw the highest** in the number of people transiting the border.



During this week, the Western Border Local Team monitored the arrival of an average of 2,550 people per day in more than 40 buses. This increase created significant challenges for the humanitarian response deployed by the Local Team organisations.

The Western Border Local Team prioritises the monitoring of outflows, to contrast them with inflow figures and to alert on changes in dynamics, in order to programme the humanitarian response based on evidence.

## Main risks, responses and gaps

During the reporting period, the Western Border Local Team has prioritised two risks associated with the challenges posed by the context of arrival of refugees and migrants at the exit border.

### 1. Obstacles to accessing humanitarian services

**Risk:** Upon arrival in Machuca, people have critical physical and mental health care needs, access to toilets and hygiene supplies, including menstrual hygiene, hydration, food, rest, and protection information.

There are two contextual elements that impose challenges for humanitarian assistance at the exit border: **(i) arrival times**, with the largest flow of refugees and migrants arriving

at the Honduras-Guatemala border between 2:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.; and **(ii) the length of stay**, given that upon arrival in Machuca, most people intend to continue their journey as soon as possible, which is why the length of stay varies between 10 and 40 minutes.

These two elements, exacerbated by the presence of trafficking and smuggling networks, represent obstacles for people in mixed movements to access the response deployed by humanitarian actors.

The presence of trafficking and smuggling networks also presents a challenge for members of the Local Team, limiting the possibility of providing services, especially counselling and protection information, especially for survivors of gender-based violence.

**Response:** In Machuca there are protection services, including legal assistance and counselling, water, sanitation and hygiene, basic nutrition, case referral, information, and re-establishment of family contacts, WIFI access, child protection spaces, physical and mental health, and sexual and reproductive health focused on survivors of gender-based violence.

Humanitarian actors have adapted their schedules to provide services from Monday to Friday between 5:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., to cover the hours when there is more traffic of people. In addition, methodologies, and mechanisms for identifying and referring cases with protection needs have been adapted to respond to the dynamics of the area.

The Local Team organisations have established fluid communication channels that allow them to complement the response on the ground, expand presence and reinforce the availability of services required by refugees and migrants upon arrival at this point.

The Local Team, in coordination with the competent authorities, is currently working to improve the distribution of humanitarian space.

**Gaps:** Humanitarian response gaps occur mainly on weekends and at times of the day when, despite a lower flow, a presence is still required, because when there are no humanitarian actors, exposure to human trafficking and smuggling networks is heightened.

It is necessary to maintain the visibility of the humanitarian needs faced by refugees and migrants at this point along the route and to continue strengthening the capacity for care and assistance, considering that the funding of some of the humanitarian organisations is limited and it is likely that by mid-2024 there will be a decrease in the presence of key actors.

## 2. Lack of access to information

**Risk:** When people in mixed movements arrive at the border with Guatemala, they report an important need for information on procedures, points of care, values of services, and free humanitarian response. This information lowers the risks of false information, rumours, extortion, and even excessive and illegal charges.

The risks associated with lack of information are exacerbated for non-Spanish speakers, a challenge that the Local Team continues to address in order to have material that responds to this specific need.

**Response:** The Local Team has prioritised working together to ensure the highest level of access to information for refugees and migrants.

Currently in Machuca there is: (i) the Mobile Information Service implemented by UNHCR and World Vision, with the purpose of providing information and guidance to those who require it; and (ii) the platform RedSafe implemented by the Honduran Red Cross, which allows access to useful information on protection, as well as data to facilitate access to goods and services.

The Local Team continues to work on developing information products on access to rights and services, and on protection risks on the road.

**Gaps:** Conditions related to timetables, short time spent by people in mixed movements, lack of private counselling spaces and lack of information in various languages are barriers to accessing information.

## Highlights of the month

### High-level missions

In March, US Ambassador Laura F. Dogu visited the western border. During her visit, the Ambassador learned about the dynamics of the arrival of people in mixed movements, the vulnerabilities faced by refugees and migrants upon arrival at this point along the route, as well as the need to strengthen the coordinated and inter-agency response.





### Improving reception conditions

The Life Consortium, through ADRA and in coordination with the Western Border Local Team, moved the sanitation modules that were located at the Agua Caliente border to Machuca. This action was carried out with the purpose of reducing the costs generated by the maintenance of the sanitary structures that were in place at the point of care.

The leadership of the Western Border Local Team is coordinating actions to improve the Machuca Humanitarian Space, including clean-up days that promote peaceful coexistence and reduce the risk of xenophobia. In addition, strategies for the delivery of environmentally friendly supplies are being reinforced, to reduce the ecological footprint, for example, the reduction of plastic containers.

## Further Information

Below you will find some of the products published by the organisations that make up the Western Border Local Team during the month of March.

UNCHR: Mixed Movements Monitoring Report



UNHCR and WFP: Regional Mixed Movements Monitoring Report



Consortio Life: Situation Reports



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