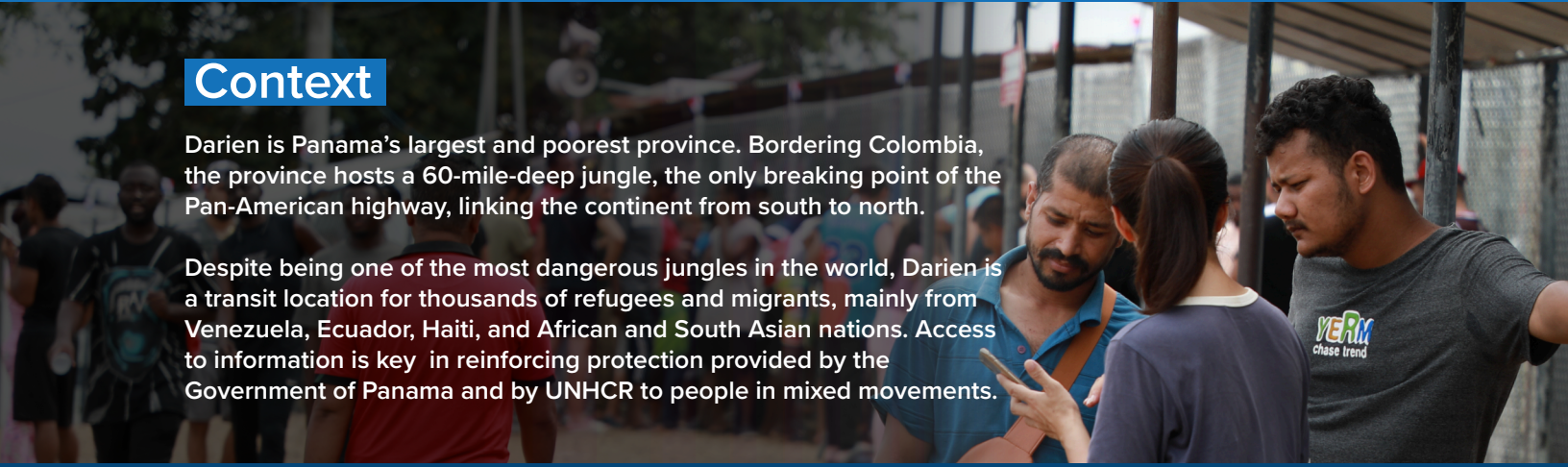


Context

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. Access to information is key in reinforcing protection provided by the Government of Panama and by UNHCR to people in mixed movements.



METHODOLOGY



The data is compiled through individual interviews conducted in Panama’s Darien province. Results are indicative and should not be interpreted as representative of the total population of refugees and migrants crossing the Darien jungle.

Languages used and education levels

Most respondents, 80 per cent speak Spanish, highlighting as the primary language among the group. English follows as the second most preferred language, albeit significantly lower at 8 per cent. French and Pashto, are equally preferred by 3 per cent of respondents each.

Other languages such as Persian (Farsi), Amharic, and Arabic are spoken by a smaller number, each accounting for 2 per cent. Data indicates that the majority of respondents, 40 per cent, have completed secondary education, and 20 per cent, have partially completed secondary education.

FIGURE 1. | MAIN LANGUAGES

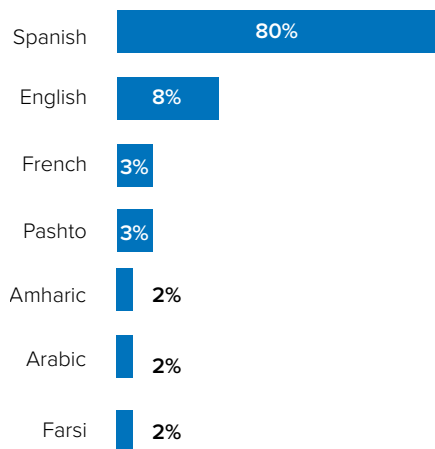
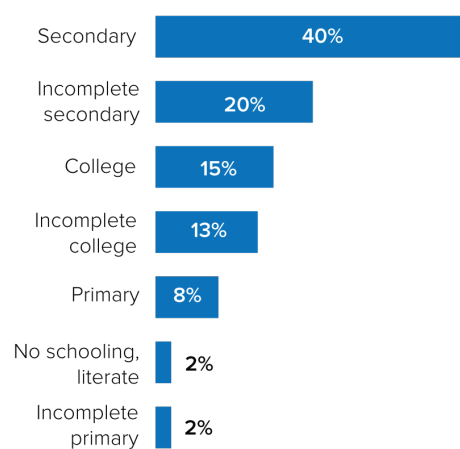


FIGURE 2. | HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL



University graduates account for 15 per cent, while 13 per cent were enrolled before being forced to flee. This suggests that while formal education levels vary, literacy is general.



9 in 10
could read and write.

Insight

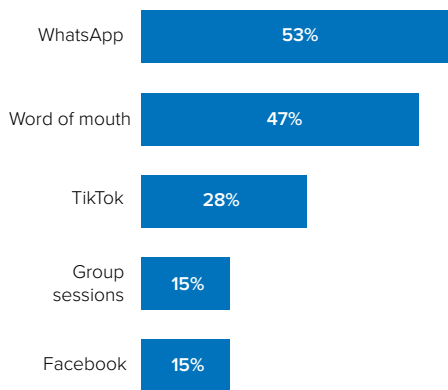
High literacy rates suggest that written communication will be effective for most respondents. However, combining written and voice messages ensures inclusivity for those with lower literacy levels.

Connectivity and digital literacy

Respondents had a high rate of mobile phone ownership (77%) and internet access on their devices (60%). Leveraging these channels significantly enhances the reach and impact of information dissemination efforts. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that all information is optimized for mobile devices and easily accessible online.

Facebook (70%) and TikTok (42%) are respondents' favourite social media platforms. Additionally, WhatsApp is widely used (74%) for communication, making it a key platform for sharing information and updates.

FIGURE 3. | DECISION MAKING CHANNELS



*Percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple answers

Insight



77%
owned a mobile phone,
however **one-third of them**
do not have SIM cards.



3 in 5
intended to **share their**
experiences in the jungle
with friends and family.

Decision-making channels before the journey

Word of mouth (53%) and WhatsApp (37%) are key sources of information for travel planning. This underscores the importance of leveraging trusted community members and digital platforms can help disseminate accurate and timely information.

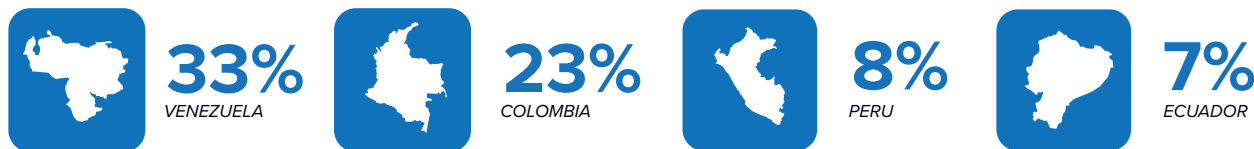


1 in 3
received information through
printed materials, but
two-thirds of them stated the
materials were not useful.

Insight

Printed materials and posters are not found useful, indicating the need to improve content, design, and placement throughout the journey. Ensuring these materials are in the appropriate language and contain engaging, pertinent content is crucial to enhance their effectiveness.

Decision-making locations



Influencing trust in information sources

Friends and family are the most influential, with 29 per cent of respondents relying on them for information. This is followed by the United Nations, and social media platforms such as TikTok, both at 13%. Facebook is a significant source, trusted by 12 per cent of respondents. Messaging apps like WhatsApp account for 8 per cent, while websites are trusted by 5 per cent.

Many individuals rely on information from people with firsthand experience, especially those in groups who survive the Darien Jungle, particularly those in groups. These sources are valued for appearing to provide genuine information and accurately depicting events, leading people to think they are getting factual information.

Main narratives for trusting sources and content	
Information is perceived as accurate because it is captured on-site	People who have survived the crossing used these networks before
Family, friends and acquaintances shared their personal experiences after reaching their destination	People in groups are shown on the content, giving the perception of safety and reliability

Factors influencing mistrust in information sources

The most distrusted sources include the armed forces (13%), police (12%), and local governments (10%). Social media platforms (used by human smuggling and trafficking networks) also face distrust (each at 8%). Reasons range from perceptions of dishonesty and exploitation to experiences of mistreatment and lack of support. Many respondents say these sources provide false information, and have hidden agendas.

Additionally, personal negative experiences, such as crimes occurring near security posts or feeling being misled by security officials, contribute to the skepticism.

Main narratives for mistrusting sources and content	
Safety incidents happening near security posts with no intervention	Perceived dishonesty related to double agendas and control
Misinformation and disinformation shared on social media by trafficking and smuggling networks for profit	Reports of mistreatment and lack of support