UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Mexico.
2023

FACT SHEET

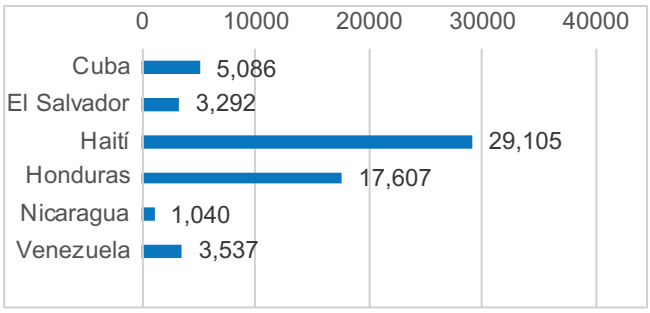
2021 and 2022 marked the history of asylum in Mexico. **In 2021, a record 130,000 applications** were filed. **In 2022 Mexico was placed among the top five** countries of individual registrations of new asylum seekers. June 2022.

To meet the growing demands, **the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR), has quadrupled its processing capacity since 2018** with support from UNHCR.

UNHCR's flagship **Local Integration Programme** has provided relocation and integration assistance to **over 29,000 recognized refugees** since 2016. Over **500 private** companies work with UNHCR, hiring refugees.

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS 2023

TOP NATIONALITIES

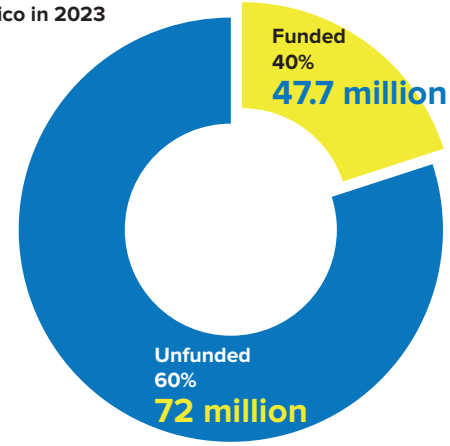


** Data available as of 23 June 2023. Due to the migration of data onto a new registration system, these figures may be subject to variation and may not therefore be considered final.*

FUNDING (AS OF 3 JULY 2023)

USD 119.7 million

requested for Mexico in 2023



Operational Context

Forced displacement across the hemisphere and the consequent increase in the number of new arrivals at Mexico's southern border continued in 2022. In 2021, the number of asylum applications reached **a new record** of 130,000 asylum claims, while 2022 represented **the second year with the highest number of asylum claims filed** with over 118,000 individual applications. Almost **50,000 asylum applications have been received by the beginning of May 20223.**

Just as 2021 was marked by the arrival of tens of thousands of **Haitian** nationals, in 2022 Mexico witnessed a notable increase in the number requests for asylum from **Venezuelan, Cuban,** and **Nicaraguan nationals. The number of applications from Cuban and Venezuelan nationals in 2022 doubled those of 2021, while the number of claims from Nicaraguan nationals in 2022 tripled** those of the year prior. Despite these peaks, **Honduras** was the most represented country of origin among the asylum-seeking population by the end of 2022 with 26% of all applications, followed by Cuba (15%), Haiti (14%), and Venezuela (13%).

Border restrictions and summary expulsions from the U.S. of asylum-seekers and migrants under **Title 42** persist, with limited humanitarian exceptions. Changes to the applicability of Title 42 announced related to Venezuelan nationals who entered the U.S. between ports of entry without authorisation to be expelled to Mexico announced on 12 October resulted in **more than 6,000 Venezuelans requesting asylum** in Mexico in the last three months of the year (double the number of claims filed between January and October 2022). On 5 January 2023, the U.S. government announced new policy changes for the treatment of asylum seekers and migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border in general. The changes further restricted access to territory and **expand the use of the Title 42 authority**, adding Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans to the nationalities to whom Title 42 expulsion back to Mexico may apply.

The complexity of mixed movements of refugees and migrants and consequent response policies like Title 42, increase not only the risk of refoulement (and chain refoulement) but also pose additional pressure on the already limited processing capacity of **the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR)** within the current scenario of fast-increasing asylum demands and an absence of alternative legal pathways. Though COMAR has made a remarkable progress in increasing its processing capacity over the years with the support from UNHCR, it remains insufficient to meet the current needs.

In addition to the pressure that mixed movements have placed in the south of the country -where 75% of asylum claims are filed- and the impact of the U.S. expulsion policies in the north, Mexico is also experiencing an **increase in internal displacement**, generated by a rise in violence perpetrated by criminal groups and land disputes in at least seven states. According to the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, **over 379,000 people were displaced in Mexico** due to incidents of mass violence from 2006 to 2021. Based on the NGO's figures, **approximately 30,000 more individuals are expected to be internally displaced** by the end of 2023, guiding UNHCR's strategy to further engage on this topic under its protection mandate.

By the end of 2022, there were over 95,000 recognized refugees and over 210,000 asylum seekers in Mexico.

Working with Partners

- In Mexico's context of complex mixed movements, UNHCR has sought to strengthen coordinated protection responses, maximising efforts, and avoiding duplication. **UNHCR co-leads the UN Interagency Group on Human Mobility (GIMH)** together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which covers topics related to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and migrants through a set of working groups such as **Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Child Protection, and Communication with Communities.** The GIMH also includes a **Working Group on Inclusion, Integration, and Development; a group on Trafficking, Smuggling, and Disappearances; a Working Group on Internally Displaced Persons, and a Working Group for Shelter**, in which many other UN Agencies and organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and international and national NGOs, also participate.
- With **36 partner organizations** across the country, UNHCR continues to expand its network to enhance coordination in the areas of protection and durable solutions. 22 agreements are also in place with **authorities of federal and local governments, academic institutions, and the private sector.** In the field, where UNHCR's presence is strong, enhanced dialogue and collaboration mechanisms are established with state and municipality government authorities.
- To strengthen coordination among actors implementing the **Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework** in Mexico (or MIRPS in Spanish) - the regional initiative of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and a concrete contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees-, an **inter-ministerial roundtable on the inclusion and integration of refugees** was set up jointly with COMAR, bringing together government entities, UN agencies, and development actors.

Key Priorities

Ensuring access to protection and protection responses

UNHCR provides technical support to COMAR through the Quality Asylum Initiative (QAI) programme since 2018 working on the implementation of **simplified and more efficient processing measures**, as well financial support in terms of personnel and material resources. UNHCR continues to advocate for the correct interpretation of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) standards to guarantee the quality of interviews, legal assessments, and the integrity of the asylum system.

UNHCR regards **access to timely and reliable information** as a linchpin of assistance; it strives to better reach those forced to flee with the information they need to make well-informed decisions – be it about access to protection, their rights or local integration perspectives. Refugee outreach volunteers, as well as a wide variety of innovative channels are used to produce and distribute information: the national HelpDesk as well as the *Confía en el Jaguar* Facebook page are some of the channels used to reach hundreds of thousands of those under UNHCR's mandate.

Through a robust network of 106 lawyers, 58 paralegals and 43 public defenders strategically placed in over 31 cities across the country, UNHCR provides **protection counselling and orientation**, and guarantees **legal assistance for people in need of international protection.** Legal representation of complex cases is taken on by UNHCR's pro-bono allies, who also provide legal opinions on intricate matters both for UNHCR and its NGO partners. At the same time, UNHCR works with eight human rights clinics in universities in Guadalajara, Monterrey, Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosí, Mexico City, Puebla, Tabasco, and Querétaro. In 2022 alone, **paralegals and lawyers reached 200,966 people** with information and legal advice, ensuring efficient access to asylum or immigration procedures in Mexico.

Through **resettlement**, UNHCR finds durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers as per the Global Compact for Refugees, particularly for cases who face protection challenges in the first country of asylum. Thanks to the solidarity of countries such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia, UNHCR Mexico was able to identify, interview, and submit for consideration 332 persons to be resettled to a third country of asylum in 2022.

Reception conditions and access to services with attention to specific needs

In Mexico, **shelters** play a central role in the humanitarian response and in the delivery of protection services to people who have been forced to flee such as **accommodation, access to information, assistance to specific needs, legal orientation and advice, medical support, and psychosocial assistance.** In partnership with 15 shelters and three shelter networks, UNHCR ensured that more **than 15,000 persons accessed comprehensive assistance** in 2022, including adequate housing, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as legal aid. In close collaboration with ICRC, IOM and UNICEF, UNHCR provided **direct and indirect support to 132 shelters** in 2022 through infrastructure improvement, staffing, distribution of Non-Food Items and capacity building.

UNHCR implements a cash-based **Humanitarian Assistance Programme** through the disbursement of Multi-Purpose Cash Grants to allow those considered as most vulnerable to be able to cover their basic needs while they undergo the asylum process. **A total of 16,952 vulnerable asylum seekers in nine locations across the country benefited from this assistance in 2022.**

UNHCR Mexico prioritizes the effective participation and involvement of refugees and host communities in its programming as part of its approach in **Community Based Protection.** Yearly participatory assessments and feedback sessions are conducted with the affected population as a way to integrate their opinions into the Operation's planning exercises. A complaint and feedback mechanism was put in place to channel concerns from people whom UNHCR serves as part of its commitment to the Accountability to Affected Population policy.

UNHCR has strengthened the **inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system** to address their specific needs and endeavours to ensure timely and comprehensive protection responses, improving reception conditions and access to asylum, and advocating for the implementation of the legal reforms that aim at eradicating child detention in the migratory context. Through its partners, UNHCR seeks to ensure alternative care for asylum-seeking and refugee children, specialized

case management services, psychosocial, recreational and educational activities in child-friendly safe spaces, as well as school enrolment. UNHCR also supports peaceful coexistence activities and positive parenting techniques to prevent family violence. **Over 8,000 children were assisted in 2022 with support from UNHCR, 19% of whom were referred to asylum procedures and/or temporary immigration status to prevent refoulement.**

UNHCR seeks to increase community awareness and prevent the risk of **gender-based violence** through capacity building and coordination with partners. UNHCR's specialized partners further provided a quality response to **1,227 survivors of gender-based violence in 2022.** UNHCR partners are also evaluated according to IASC standards on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

Sustainable solutions for refugees

UNHCR continues to promote and support the integration of thousands of recognized refugees through their relocation to cities with increased prospects of formal employment. Once relocated, UNHCR accompanies those part of the **Local Integration Programme (PIL)** to access employment, long-term accommodation, education, and health services, among others. **In 2022 alone, 12,796 refugees were supported with relocation and integration assistance** – the highest number supported in a year to date. **Since its inception in 2016, 29,364 persons have benefited from this assistance. An additional 70,000 individuals have been assisted with *in-situ* integration.** UNHCR has cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and over 500 private companies hiring refugees. Recent studies with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimate that USD$ 6.9 million were generated in income taxes per year for the first 25,000 participants of the program. **37 internally displaced persons have been assisted with relocation and integration assistance by UNHCR** through a pilot initiative possibly extended as a durable solution for those internally displaced.

UNHCR also supports young refugees to access **higher education in Mexico.** Under the Global DAFI Programme, 52 students were supported in 2022, whilst 14 DAFI students graduated that year. Additionally, UNHCR supported another 121 students within its tertiary education programme, including 32 students who were referenced with university programmes by partner DIME.

Regarding the naturalization of refugees who meet the eligibility criteria, UNHCR collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the submission of requests from refugees who wish to obtain the Mexican citizenship. Nearly 200 refugees submitted their naturalization requests in 2022, following the reinstatement of the process after its pause during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Internal Displacement

In line with its **global responsibility in protection of internally displaced persons** (IDPs), UNHCR has been working with the Government of Mexico on five main axes of response since 2019: (i) technical assistance for a legal and public policy framework; (ii) information management; (iii) capacity building; (iv) coordination with UN agencies and international stakeholders and (v) promoting operational responses.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.
As of 3 July 2023, UNHCR Mexico is 40% funded having required US$119.7 million to respond to the needs of thousands of asylum-seekers, refugees and those internally displaced in Mexico. Timely funding is urgent to ensure the continuity of our activities. UNHCR's humanitarian and durable solutions response in Mexico is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in Mexico.

Special thanks all our donors in 2023 (as of 3 July):

Private donors Australia | Private donors Japan | Private donors Mexico | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Private donors United States of America

Likewise, UNHCR thanks all our individual donors that every month contribute to our mission.

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