Mixed Movements Monitoring

October - December 2023

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Key Figures

3,969
Individuals were interviewed from October to December 2023.

39
Nationalities interviewed

52% VENEZUELANS
17% HONDURANS
6% CUBANS
5% COLOMBIANS
5% ECUADORIANS
Main countries of origin of respondents

GUATEMALA: 1,411
MEXICO: 1,113
COSTA RICA: 613
HONDURAS: 504
PANAMA: 328
Number of interviews per country

54% Men

46% Women

32 years
Average age of respondents

Introduction and scope

In recent years, Central America has witnessed a significant increase in mixed movements, a term used to describe the cross-border movement of individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or smugglers, but for different reasons. Generally, individuals in mixed movements travel in an irregular manner due to difficulties in accessing territory or meeting State entry requirements, among other factors. People travelling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons, and migrants, including migrants in irregular situations and migrants in vulnerable situations.

With the objective of generating evidence on mixed movements' dynamics in the Americas, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have embarked on a regional monitoring project enabling agencies to better understand trends, profiles, and protection and food security needs of people on the move. Gathering comprehensive data on mixed movements is essential for facilitating evidence-based responses to the protection and assistance needs of individuals on the move. This data not only enables us to address immediate concerns, but also plays a pivotal role in producing information for diverse forums focusing on discussing mixed movements within the United Nations. These include the Issue-Based Coalition on Human Mobility (IBC-HM) as well as regional inter-governmental collaborative initiatives. The Mixed Movements Monitoring serves as a crucial

Key Findings

1. Multiple interconnected factors continue to push individuals into situations of human mobility. Among the respondents, 72% left their country of origin due to difficulties in accessing fundamental rights and meeting basic needs, while 57% cited reasons associated with pervasive violence or personal experience of violent incidents.

2. 3 out of 5 individuals either experienced or witnessed protection incidents along the route (mostly theft, extorsion, fraud, or physical threat or assault), underscoring serious concerns regarding the overall protection environment.

3. Individuals exposed to protection incidents continue to be more likely to also face challenges related to food security, and vice versa.

4. In Q4, food insecurity persists as a major issue. 83% of those surveyed reported adopting coping strategies such as eating less, skipping meals, sometimes for entire days within the past week.

5. In Costa Rica, 71% of individuals reported having only one meal or none at all in the previous day. This situation is exacerbated by extended travel times, including long waiting periods at arrivals and stops, often at night, as well as a shortage of public shelters and food assistance programs for displaced people.

component of our commitment to advancing this cause, guaranteeing well-informed and effective contributions.

This report addresses multiple aspects of mixed movements, examining critical factors such as the motivating and triggering factors compelling individuals to leave their country of origin or their host country. It also examines the profiles of those engaged in mixed movements, the journey itself (including protection risks and threats), the condition in the current country (such as documentation, access to territory), food security, and the future aspirations of individuals. The report provides insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with mixed movements in Central and North America, with the aim of informing policy and guiding effective humanitarian response efforts.

Methodology

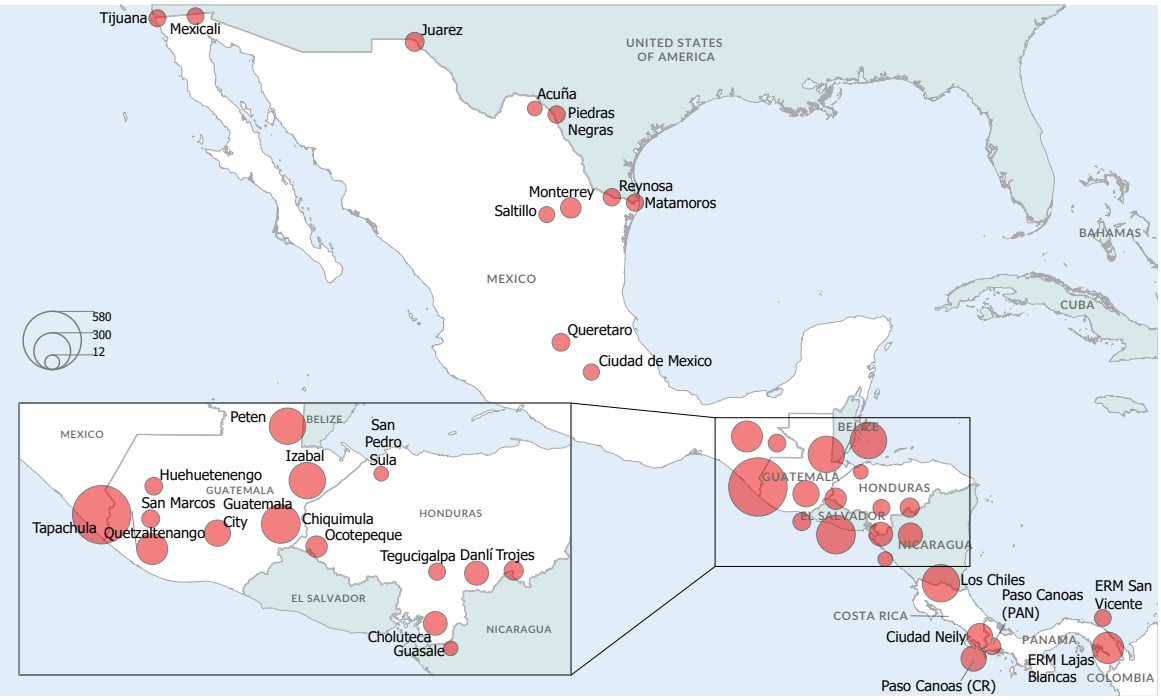
As part of UNHCR-WFP ongoing monitoring efforts, the fourth round of data collection was conducted between October 1st and December 31st, 2023. The questionnaire was applied in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. This round of data collection was specifically concentrated at border points, both official and unofficial, where mixed movements are most prominent. Qualitative research through standardized interviews with key informants and focus group discussions were held in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras Mexico and Panama. In addition, the monitoring exercise continues to incorporate secondary data, as well as qualitative information from joint analysis sessions and field observations, particularly from Colombia[1].

Data collection within the framework of mixed movements encounters several challenges and limitations, largely attributed to the dynamic nature of these movements. Significant challenges involve accessing remote and border regions, which are often hindered by inadequate infrastructure and security issues. Moreover, given that most movements are irregular, challenges are also faced in accessing individuals near border areas where fears around detention or deportation are heightened. Limitations become particularly pronounced in situations involving individuals from countries outside the Americas where cultural and linguistic barriers exist, as well as highlighting the complexities of gathering data across diverse geographic and socio-political landscapes.

Therefore, findings are only representative of the people who were interviewed and cannot be extrapolated to all people on the move. They provide, however, information on the protection environment, protection trends over time, rights violations, and risks, as well as food security issues faced by the population engaged in mixed movements.

Data collection locations

Most interviews conducted in this exercise occurred at formal and informal border crossing points and reception facilities, including shelters surrounding these areas, accounting for 80% of the total. Non-border locations encompass strategic transit facilities, including bus terminals, shelters, and reception sites situated in capital cities or larger urban or peri-urban centers. These non-border locations serve as gathering points for individuals in transit, where they seek support, assistance, and transportation means.



[1] Field observations in Colombia stem from the Necocli Field Journal, a qualitative data exercise conducted by UNHCR Colombia and its implementing partners. It was created as part of an information strategy to identify the protection risks and incidents faced by refugees and migrants along the route or during their stay in Necocli. The entries provide aggregate information regarding their profile, perceptions and experiences prior to the Darien crossing.

Mixed Movements Monitoring results

Understanding the Human Mobility Context

In 2023, the Central America and Mexico region experienced an unprecedent surge in human mobility, marked by a significant increase in mixed movements. This phenomenon was driven by a combination of factors including insecurity, violence, human rights abuses, poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and the effects of climate change. Despite increasingly stringent cross-border mobility policies, this situation led to large number of individuals of various nationalities embarking on perilous journeys, often relying on irregular movements and smuggling networks. The repercussions were dire, resulting in heightened risks of death, disappearances, extortions, sexual violence, and other human rights violations, with a distressing report of 1,275 individuals missing[2].

This surge in mixed movements not only put refugees and migrants in grave danger but also placed immense pressure on reception systems. It underscored the critical need for a comprehensive strategy to manage mixed movements effectively and to protect the well-being and human rights of those on the move.

While the fourth quarter of 2023 saw the usual seasonal decrease in arrivals to the Darien region, the year concluded with a record-breaking 520,085 arrivals, representing a 110% increase from the previous year. Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, and Haitians were the primary nationalities among those on the move, in addition to significant numbers of people arriving from outside the continent, including individuals from India, Afghanistan, and China, highlighting the global scope of the crisis.

Amidst these developments, Panama faced internal challenges that affected the transit of people taking part of mixed movements. On 20 October, nationwide protests erupted following the ratification of a controversial law involving a concession contract with Minera Panama, S.A., leading to severe disruptions. Protracted road closures by the protesters temporarily halted the transfer of people from the Darien's reception points to Costa Rica's South Migration Station (EMISUR). The situation began to normalize after the Supreme Court of Justice of Panama declared the law unconstitutional on 28 November, leading to the dissolution of roadblocks and the resumption of transportation services for migrants and refugees.

In Costa Rica, reception conditions at the South border were reorganized at EMISUR; however, as this space worked both as a transport terminal and as a temporary shelter, local capacities to ensure intersectoral humanitarian assistance and protection services were challenged. After a 10–12-hour bus journey, persons in mixed movements arrive at Los Chiles municipality (North) in dire humanitarian conditions, e.g., food insecurity, and expose to protection risks derived from a lack of shelter.

Honduras and Guatemala have both witnessed notable upticks in irregular migration patterns, accompanied by heightened protection concerns. Notably, Honduras experienced a staggering 189% surge in movements, largely attributed to a migration amnesty favoring individuals in transit who enter the country irregularly. Additionally, there has been a notable increase in arrivals from Nicaragua, including individuals from diverse nationalities such as Cuba, Haiti, and various African countries, who have benefited from simplified visa processes in neighboring Nicaragua. Meanwhile, Guatemala has seen alarming rates of theft and extortion, particularly targeting Venezuelan and Honduran migrants.

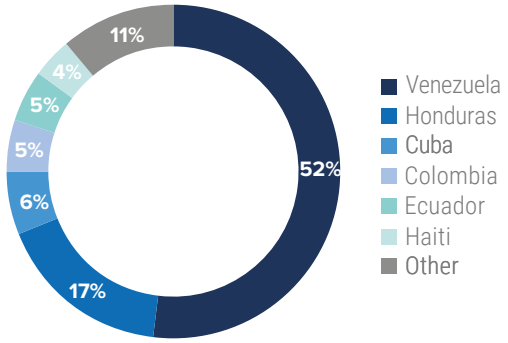
In Mexico, the situation was similarly challenging, with over 782,186 events involving individuals in an irregular migration status reported, alongside a significant rise in asylum applications. This trend underscores the broader narrative of mixed movements heading northward towards Mexico and the United States, where 2023 ended with over 2.5 million encounters at the U.S. Southwest border.

The complexity and scale of the situation across the region highlight the urgent need for a coordinated and humane approach. It's imperative to address the multifaceted challenges of mixed movements comprehensively, ensuring the safety and protection of those in transit, reflecting a collective responsibility towards human rights and dignity.

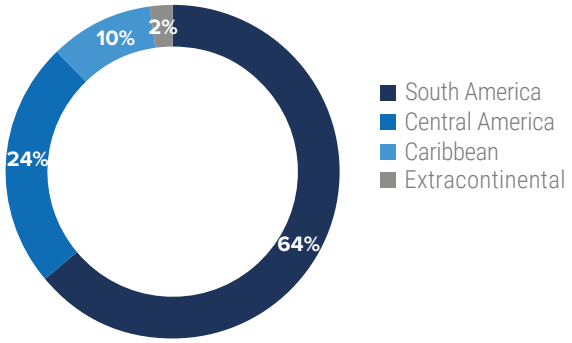
Demographics

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Countries of origin



Regions of origin of respondents
(by geographic location)



[2] IOM Missing Migrants Project, 2023: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/downloads

The Mixed Movement Monitoring interviewed people of 39 different nationalities. Almost two-thirds of the people interviewed are from a South American country, which marks a 6% increase compared to the previous quarter, and 21% increase since the first quarter. This is primarily attributed to the large number of Venezuelans who were interviewed and the increase in the number of respondents from Ecuador. The rise in the number of Ecuadorian respondents could also be indicative of the escalating insecurity and violence prevailing within the country[3].

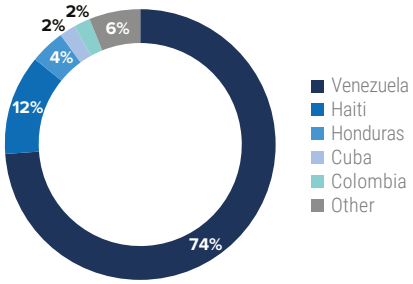
Contrary to previous quarters, there was a decline in the number of respondents from Central America. Hondurans (71%) stand out as the predominant nationality among Central American respondents, followed by smaller numbers of Guatemalans, Salvadorians, and Nicaraguans. The Caribbean constitutes the third-largest region of origin, accounting for 10% of the total, which reflects a 10% decrease from the first quarter. This is followed by a smaller fraction of individuals originating from Asia and Africa (2%), mirroring the figures from previous quarters. Mexico and Panama stood out as the countries with the highest diversity of nationalities among those interviewed. In Panama, individuals from 22 different countries were interviewed, with Venezuelans being the most common nationality. Mexico followed closely, with interviews conducted with individuals from 19 distinct countries, where Hondurans were the predominant group. Across most of the surveyed countries, Venezuelans were the primary nationality interviewed, followed by Hondurans and Cubans, highlighting their signicant presence.

Host countries[4]

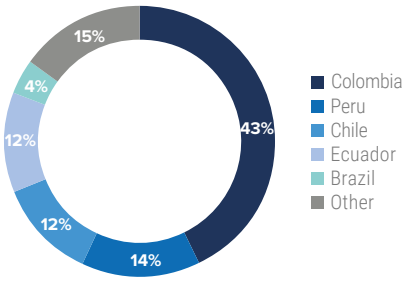
18%

of respondents have lived in one or more countries other than country of origin for at least six months[5].

Main nationalities of respondents who resided in one or more host countries for minimum six months



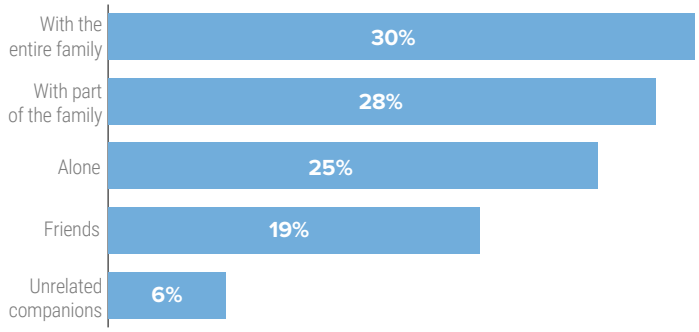
Host countries



- In the survey conducted, 18% of participants reported residing in one or more countries other than their country of origin for a minimum of six months. Venezuelans are the nationals who most frequently cited having lived in a host country amongst all nationalities, predominantly in Colombia (55%), Peru (18%), and Ecuador (15%). This quarter has witnessed a slight increase in the percentage of Venezuelans indicating that they have not resided in a host country previously, suggesting that they might have moved directly from their country of origin. Specifically, the figure rose from 73% in Q3 to 75% in Q4.
- The fourth quarter has captured more respondents from Haiti who lived in the Dominican Republic and Guyana (14% and 9% respectively). This increase can be partially attributed to the diversification of alternative routes amongst certain populations.

Group composition

Who do you travel with?



4.3
Average family composition

2.6
Average adults in group

1.7
Average children in group

1
Average child < 5 per group

[3] Host country: The country in which a non-national stays or resides, whether legally or irregularly.
[4] The question on host countries was modified since quarter 3, with a reduction in the length of residence from one year to six months.

In the fourth quarter, echoing trends from the previous one, the composition of traveling groups remained fairly balanced. Approximately 30% of respondents traveled with their entire family, while 28% journeyed with part of their family, and another 25% traveled independently. Among those traveling with family, the average group size was 4.3 members, typically comprising two children, one of whom is below 5 years old. These findings highlight the significant number of children on the move across the region.

The dynamics of these groups and families differ based on the participants' origins. Central Americans are more likely to travel alone (35%) and in smaller family units (averaging 3.5 members), whereas South Americans more frequently travel with their family and/or friends, forming larger groups (averaging 5 members).

For extracontinental travelers, there is also a tendency to travel alone (35%), with friends (25%), or with part of the family (24%). Among those traveling with family, the average group size is 4.7 members, including two children, with at least one child below the age of 5.

LEGAL STATUS

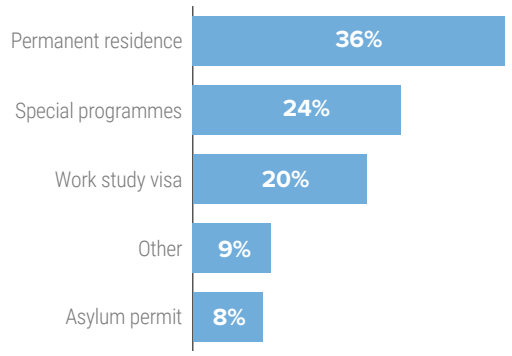
Legal status of respondents who have lived in host countries

Out of the 18% of individuals who have lived in countries other than their country of origin for a minimum of six months, half of them applied for legal status in the host country. Among those who applied, 70% successfully obtained the legal status they sought, accounting for almost 10% of the total respondents.

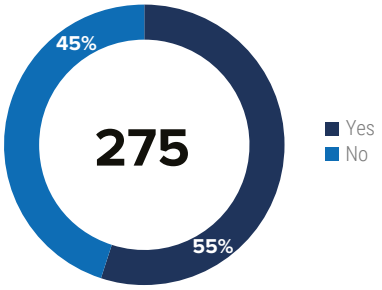
1 in 2
people applied for legal status in the host country

70%
of them obtained a legal status

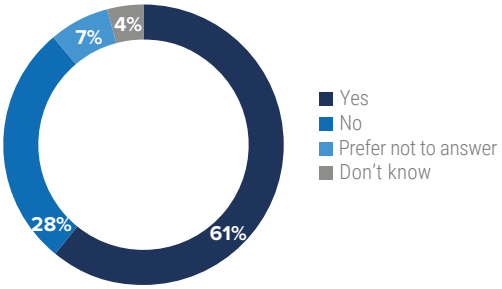
Type of legal status obtained



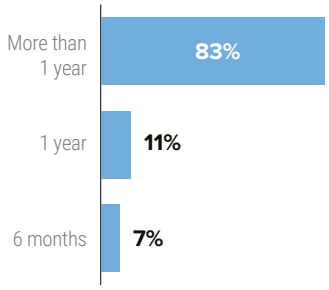
Are the documents in your possesion?



Are the documents still valid?



If valid, for how long?

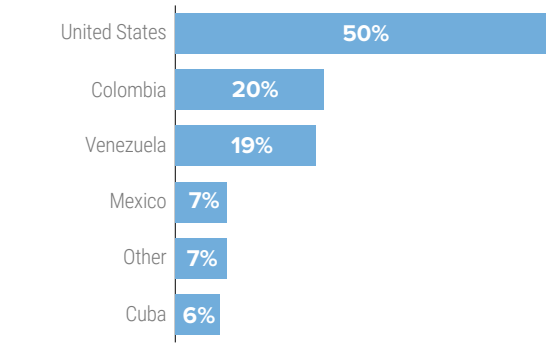


Nearly 70% of individuals successfully obtained the legal status for which they applied. However, a significant 45% lacked documentation to prove their legal status. This lack of documentation could stem from a high incidence of theft during their journey or instances where some individuals sent their documents to family members in other countries along their route. The fourth quarter marked an increase in the number of people holding valid documents from host countries, with 61% of these documents still valid for more than a year, indicating improvement in the stability of their legal status.

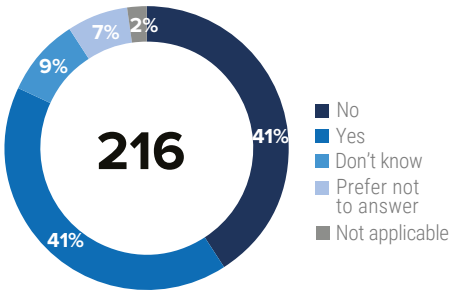
This quarter has seen an increase in the number of Venezuelans who left Colombia with permanent residency status – 43%, compared to 18% in the previous quarter. Haitians who lived in a host country obtained mostly permanent residence (49%) and work/study visas (38%). Venezuelans, Hondurans, and Haitians constitute the majority of asylum documentation holders, comprising 10% of the observed permits.

Legal status of family living in host countries

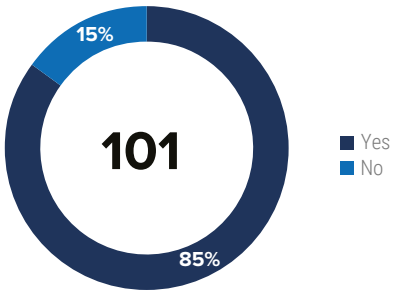
Where is the rest of the family?



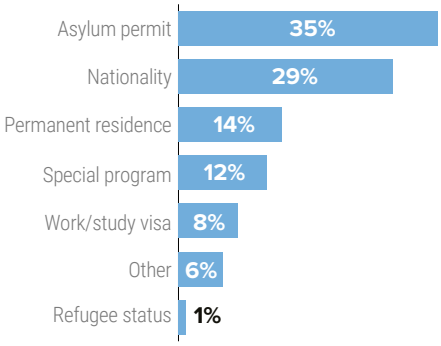
Applied for legal status in country



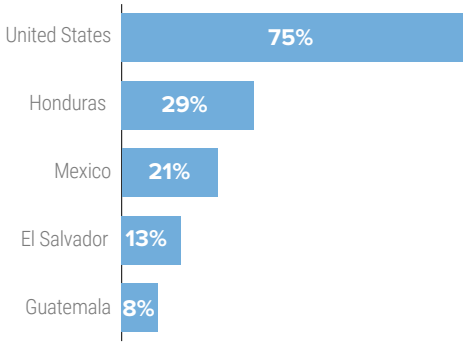
Status obtained in country



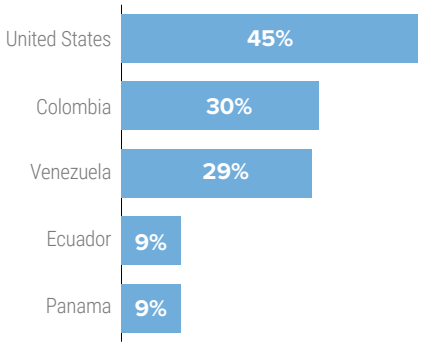
Type of status obtained



Central Americans
Where is the rest of the family?



South Americans
Where is the rest of the family?



As described in the previous section, 22% of individuals are traveling with only part of their family, while the remaining family members are primarily located in the United States (45%), Colombia (30%), and Venezuela (29%).

These results vary depending on the interviewees' country of origin: additional family members of individuals from Central America more commonly reside in the United States (75%), Mexico (29%), and Honduras (21%), whereas South Americans have family members primarily in the United States (45%), Colombia (30%), and Venezuela (29%).

Furthermore, among the family members residing in third countries, 40% have applied for legal status, with a significant majority (83%) successfully obtaining it. This success is primarily due to their classification as asylum seekers (47%) or their access to other legal stay arrangements within these countries (17%). Nevertheless, for those that may have been successful in obtaining temporary legal status as asylum seekers, it's important to note that this status is not permanent. Additionally, recognition rates for these nationalities, especially in the U.S., are extremely low. Consequently, they are unlikely to secure long-term status or achieve viable integration and may also face deportation if their claims are rejected.

DOCUMENTATION

Echoing trends observed in the previous quarter, when asked about the documents they currently possess within the country of interview, a majority of respondents reported carrying their national identification cards (79%), while a significant number also have their passports (27%). The distribution of these documents significantly varies when analyzed against the respondents' regions of origin. Individuals from the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa primarily use passports for travel (85%), in contrast to those from South and Central America, who predominantly carry ID cards (84%).

Throughout the year, a consistent pattern has emerged in the prevalence of expired passports, with a slight decrease observed in the last two quarters. Among passport holders, 15% possess documents that have expired. This issue is particularly pronounced among Venezuelans, with 41% holding expired passports. High costs and barriers to accessing renewal procedures are among the primary reasons for their limited access to valid passports, potentially restricting their access to parole programs and other legal pathways.

79%

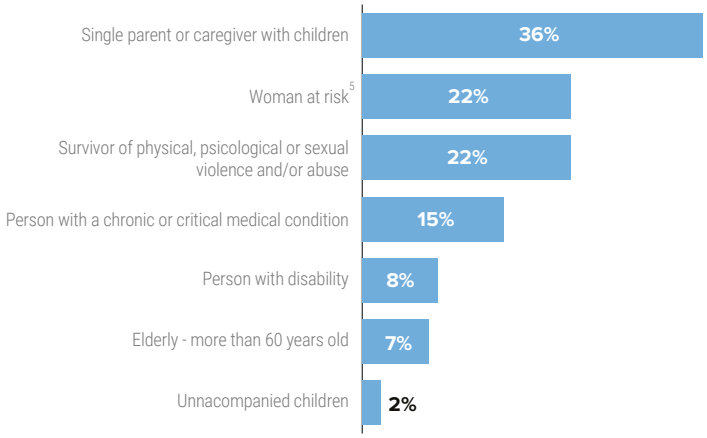
of respondents carry an ID card as their primary form of documentation.

SPECIFIC PROTECTION NEEDS

22% of respondents had at least one specific protection need.

22% of respondents with specific needs reported experiencing physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse.

Type of specific need



Persons with specific needs[6] are particularly vulnerable to protection risks and abuses as the difficult conditions of the journey heightens their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation and put them at risk of lasting or irreversible harm.

The percentage of respondents with one or more specific need identified has remained the same as the previous quarter, approximately one in four. Among these identified needs, that of a single parent traveling with their children continued to be the most prevalent, accounting for 36% of cases. This trend also points to a significant presence of children in transit. The percentage of individuals with specific needs who reported incidents of physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse (22%) continues to stand out as the predominant specific need in Costa Rica, with 46% of those reporting specific needs citing instances of violence. Additionally, by the end of December 2023, 15 children were born in Darien to parents who were taking part in mixed movements and officially registered by Panamanian authorities, highlighting the severe risks faced by women on the move. Furthermore, numerous births are reported to take place during the jungle crossing, tragically resulting in some stillbirths or mothers not surviving the arduous journey.

Displacement

REASONS TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

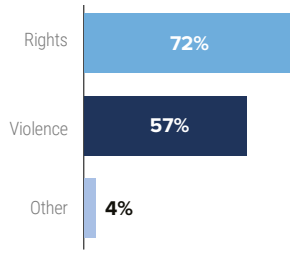
Participants were queried about the motives behind their departure from their respective countries of origin. This inquiry allowed them to choose one or more reasons, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing their decision to leave. In the subsequent analysis, the various responses are classified into three overarching groups: rights-related, violence-related, and other factors[7].

[5] The category for "woman at risk" includes risks specific to women such as pregnancy and lactation, which used to be separate categories in previous versions of the survey.

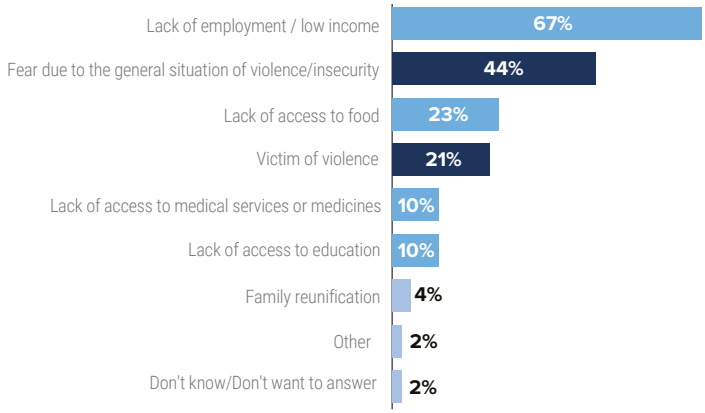
[6] Any person who experiences particular protection risks or barriers due to the intersection of their personal characteristics with the environments, which requires specific targeted actions in order to enjoy the full range of their human rights. Children (especially unaccompanied and separated children), victims of trafficking, women and girls at risk, older persons, and persons with disabilities are among the groups that often have specific protection needs. These persons have the same basic needs as other refugees but often face barriers to having these needs met.

[7] **Rights-related:** This category encompasses factors associated with the lack of access to basic rights and services, including challenges related to employment, low income, food, medical services, or education. **Violence-related:** Within this category, responses are linked to concerns about the general situation of violence or insecurity, as well as instances of being a victim of violence, including threats and intimidation. **Other:** This category encompasses a range of reasons, including but not limited to family reunification, natural disasters, and other options that may not distinctly fall into the rights-related or violence-related categories.

Reasons to leave country of origin (groups)



Reasons to leave country of origin (breakdown)[8]



72%

of respondents have left their country of origin due to lack of employment opportunities, or barriers in accessing the labor market, as well as rights and services, such as lack of access to food, health, or education.

The most frequently cited reason for leaving one's own country of origin was the lack of access to employment (67%), aligning with trends observed throughout the year

57%

of respondents cited violence-related factors as a primary motivation for their decision to leave their country of origin.

This encompasses apprehension stemming from the overall climate of violence and insecurity (44%), as well as instances where individuals themselves were victims of violence (21%). In sum, over half of the respondents consistently provide answers indicating that they moved in search of protection and safety.

30%

of respondents mentioned both violence and limited access to basic rights and services as reasons to leave their country of origin.

This highlights the intricate and interconnected nature of the factors driving mixed movements.

It is important to consider that the results above vary if checked against the countries of origin of the respondents.

- Respondents from **Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador**, who account for 22% of the total number of interviewees, have a higher prevalence of violence-related reasons to have left their country of origin (68%), as 45% declared being a victim of violence and 39% are fleeing generalized violence. Other nationality that most frequently cited violence related reasons are **Ecuadorians** (73%).
- The prevalence of violence-related reasons to leave one's country of origin is higher amongst **extracontinental nationalities** (72%), if compared to nationalities from the Americas continent (56%).

23%

of respondents left the country of origin due to lack of food, consistent with the previous quarters.

Women respondents were minimally more likely to state that they left country of origin due to lack of food (25%) than men respondents (21%), a trend consistent with other quarters.

Cubans (32%) and Haitians (21%) are among the main nationalities that left their country of origin due to lack of access to food. Food security remains a critical factor in the decision to leave one's country of origin, representing one of the main push factors behind mixed movements in the region.

[8] In previous quarters, "victim of violence" and "threats/intimidation" were two separate answer options. For the third quarter, the answer options were revised and consolidated. "Victim of violence" now identifies "The person or someone close to them was a victim of violence, threats or intimidation (extortion, assault, GBV, kidnapping, discrimination / xenophobia, etc.)".

JOURNEY

The human mobility patterns observed in the last quarter of the year are consistent with those of the previous period, illustrating the complex and varied routes taken by individuals navigating different regions. These routes are influenced by the travelers' countries of origin and their intended destinations, with Central American territories playing a key role as transit areas. The selection of these pathways varies across different groups, showcasing the varied strategies they employ to reach their intended destination.

Individuals from Africa and Asia often begin their journeys in Brazil, with 61% choosing it as their starting point within the Americas. They reach Brazil by plane and exit mainly through the land borders of Oiapoque (Amazonas) and Assis Brasil (Acre). Their route typically includes moving through Peru, then heading northward through Ecuador and Colombia, or through Guyana, Venezuela, and Colombia, before facing the perilous Darien jungle in Panama. On the other hand, Chinese nationals often commence their journey from Ecuador, benefitting from its visa flexible entry policy for Chinese nationals.

In Honduras, most of the people on the move entered the country from Nicaragua through the El Paraiso Department, particularly via Las Manos border (65%) and Trojes (22%). The remaining 13% entered mostly through Choluteca department. In October, the number of individuals from Haiti passing through Honduras spiked, multiplying twenty-threefold in comparison to July, primarily due to direct flights from Haiti to Nicaragua. In addition, while most Cubans arrive directly by plane to Nicaragua and then cross into Honduras, some 100 people arrived by boat on the shores of Honduras in 2023. The maritime path between Colombia and Panama has been increasingly used as a route of transit, with monthly averages of 300-400 individuals, including nationals from China, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Concurrently, the route from San Andres Island in Colombia to Nicaragua has become more common. Despite being more costly and equally dangerous, this maritime route is favored by many for its perceived safety of bypassing the Darien jungle. In 2023, Colombian authorities identified 533 people on this route, mainly from Venezuela, China, Vietnam, and Ecuador[9].

Additionally, individuals from the Caribbean started their journeys from Central American countries due to more lenient visa policies. This approach enables them to avoid the dangers of the Darien jungle.

These evolving transit routes underscore the search for safer and more accessible routes, reflecting the complexity of human mobility as well as people's resilience in overcoming obstacles to reach safety and security.

Arrival to country of interview

76%

of respondents have arrived in the country of interview less than one week ago.

Similar to previous quarters, most of the people interviewed had recently arrived in the country of interview.

Length of journey

58%

of people left their country of origin less than one month ago.

Of the people who came from their host country (18% of the respondents), 38% of them left less than a month ago as well.

Intended length of stay

81%

expressed an intention to stay in the country of the interview for less than one month.

Across all transit countries—Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala—nearly all respondents planned stays of less than one month.

[9] Migración Colombia, 2023:https://unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia.micolombiadigital.gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/001127/56345_mit-31-dic.pdf

Map: Mixed Movements towards North America

The map below illustrates the primary routes used by both continental and extracontinental individuals to reach North America:

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

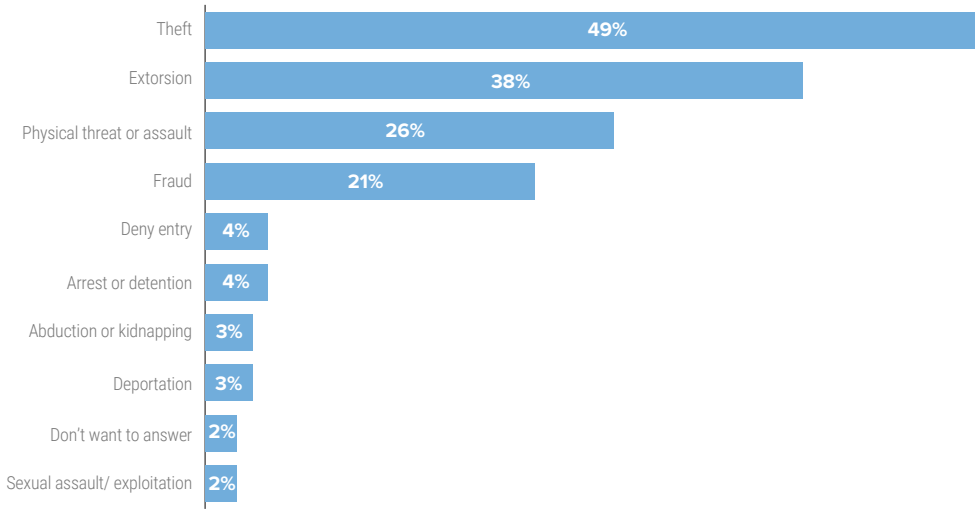
Source: UNHCR and R4V

PROTECTION INCIDENTS

62%

of the people interviewed have experienced or witnessed a protection incident or threat along the route.

Type of protection incidents (breakdown)



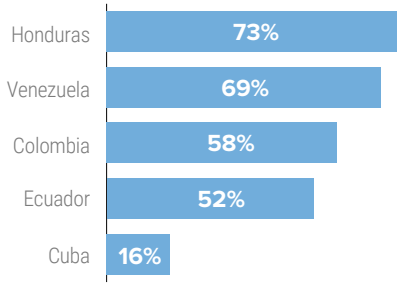
The number of people who experienced or witnessed a protection incident along the route has continued to grow in the last quarter of 2023 with 62% of respondents, a slight increase from 58% of people in the previous quarter. Theft remains the most prevalent incident type (49%), accompanied by extorsion (38%), physical threats/assaults (26%), and fraud (21%).

Numerous participants in focus group discussions highlighted severe protection incidents, especially during the crossing of the Darien Jungle, including instances of robbery, deaths, and kidnappings. Given the challenges in collecting data on gender-based violence (GBV) within the context of mixed movements, it is crucial to note that both qualitative and secondary data indicate an increase in GBV incidents in the Darien during the fourth quarter of 2023, particularly concerning sexual exploitation and abuse. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported a continuous increase in cases of gender-based violence (GBV), with the organization attending to a total of 676 victims in 2023. Alarmingly, 57% of these cases occurred in the last quarter alone[10].

Due to gender inequalities, which are amplified in the context of human mobility, as well as conflating factors such as limited legal admission pathways, lack of documentation, and inadequate financial resources, women and girls are also exposed to heightened risks of sexual, physical, psychological, and abuse. This is typically perpetrated by individuals, illegal armed and criminal groups, and trafficking networks. Further, the limited information and constrained GBV response services available throughout transit routes, represent two main barriers that hinder survivors' ability to seek assistance.

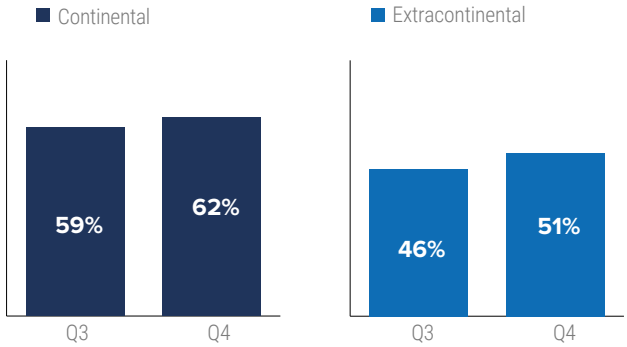
It is not feasible to monitor the precise prevalence of GBV due to ethical considerations and barriers in access to services. Nonetheless, governments and humanitarian actors should continue prioritizing actions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to incidents of GBV. Timely, multi-sectoral, and life-saving assistance to survivors is fundamental, including specialized case management, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and clinical management of rape, among others.

People who experienced or witnessed protection incidents in the route



Upon examining the top 5 nationalities, Venezuelans, and Hondurans surface as the primary reporters of protection incidents in the fourth quarter.

People who experienced protection incidents by quarter and continental/extracontinental



[10] Médecins Sans Frontières, 2023: https://www.msf.org/lack-action-sees-sharp-rise-sexual-violence-people-transiting-darien-gap-panama

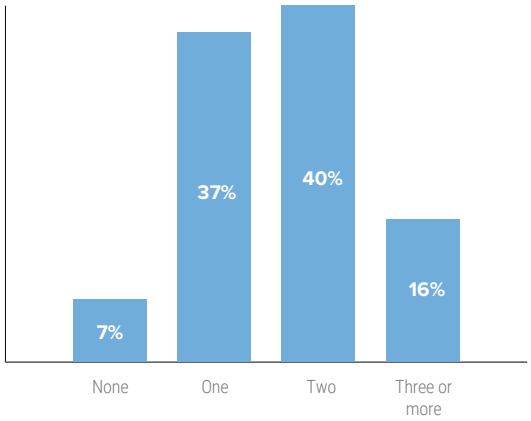
ACCESS TO FOOD

2 in 5

respondents consumed only one meal (37%) or none at all (7%), the day before the interview.

These figures were highest in Costa Rica and Guatemala, with 64% and 54% of interviewees reporting having eaten one meal or none in the day prior.

How many meals did you eat yesterday?



Food insecurity remains a critical issue throughout the journey. Nearly half of those surveyed (44%), slightly fewer than in the third quarter, managed to consume only a single meal (37%) or went without food entirely (7%) on the day before the interview. The situation is particularly dire among respondents in Costa Rica, where one in five (24%) endured a whole day without food, followed by Panama (7%). The higher figures in Costa Rica can be attributed to the journey's dynamics, which typically includes a 12–14-hour bus ride followed by an additional 12 hours of travel toward the northern border. The extended travel durations, coupled with the time spent at arrivals and stops—often during the night—as well as the lack of public shelters and food programs for people in human mobility, exacerbate the food security situation.

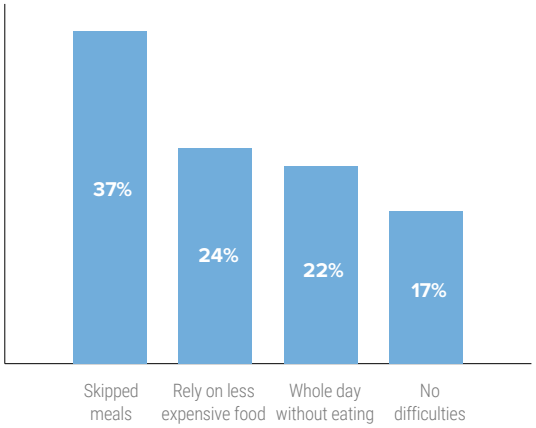
Regarding nationalities, respondents from Venezuela (59%), Colombia (50%), Ecuador (47%), and Haiti (40%), are all showing low levels of food consumption, eating only one meal or none the day prior to the interview while on the route. Meanwhile, Haitians have shown a further deterioration, with an increase to 40% from 31% in the previous quarter. Though inadequate meal consumption among Ecuadorian respondents remains high (47%), it has improved notably since the last quarter (57%).

83%

of respondents faced difficulties covering their food needs and resorted to various coping strategies due to a lack of food or insufficient funds to purchase it.

The most prevalent coping strategy is skipping meals (37%). 52% of respondents in Guatemala reporting skipping meals, the highest among all the countries of interviews.

Percentage reporting different consumption coping strategies



When asked about their food situation over the previous week, 17% of respondents reported having no difficulties, 8% higher than the previous quarter. Still, more than half (59%) adopted coping mechanisms to face food shortages and/or the lack of financial means to access food. These strategies range from eating cheaper and less preferred foods (24%) to skipping meals or eating less (37%), as well as regularly spending entire days without eating (17%). The latter was reported most in Costa Rica (55%), followed by Panama (41%), Guatemala (19%), Honduras (15%), and Mexico (7%).

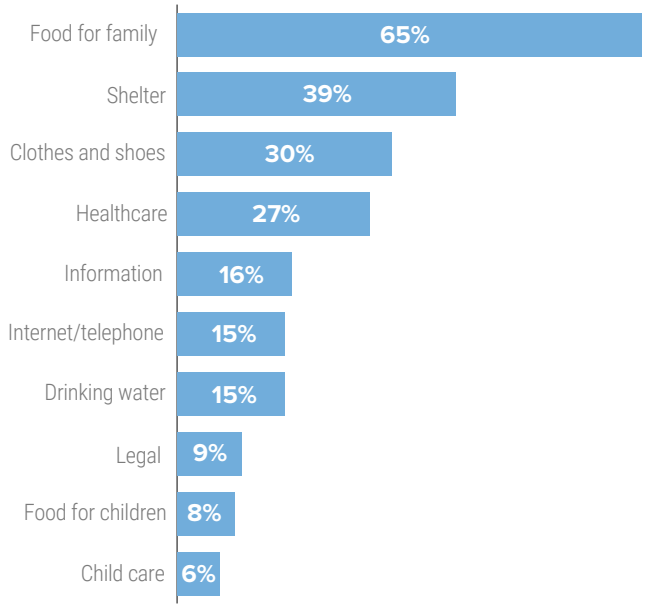
In Panama, participants reported that their food supplies were inadequate for the journey, leading to days without food in the jungle or sole reliance on "panela" (solidified sugarcane juice) for sustenance. Meanwhile, focus group discussions in Honduras revealed that participants felt they received better treatment there than in other countries. Additionally, people on the move mentioned receiving support, including water, food, medical care, shelter, and clothing from humanitarian organizations and government agencies.

In Honduras, 34% of respondents reported skipping meals as a negative coping mechanism and 32% reported eating one or no meals the day prior to the interview. 64% of interviewees highlighted access to food for their family as a primary need, highlighting the fact that despite efforts made by institutions, the limited reception conditions in Honduras must be continuously strengthened to address the high prevalence of negative coping strategies and food insecurity.

Food security and protection

An analysis of food security and protection indicators further underscores the connection between the two areas. 30% of respondents who encountered protection incidents also engaged in negative coping mechanisms related to food security, including skipping meals or going an entire day without food. When exploring women that experienced a protection incident along the route, Costa Rica stood out, with 68% of respondents eating one meal or none the day before the interview. These results mirror those from the second quarter of the year, pointing to the fact that individuals exposed to protection incidents are more prone to face food security challenges and vice versa.

MAIN NEEDS



65%

of people interviewed in quarter 4 reported access to food for their families as their main need.

This was followed by the need for shelter (39%) and the need for clothing and footwear (30%).

In the Necocli field diary, qualitative data from Colombia, captures the economic challenges confronting people on the route, particularly those without shelter on Necocli's streets or beaches. Many face prolonged stays in Necocli due to the lack of financial resources to proceed with their journey. They contend with unsanitary living conditions and limited access to food, which have led to an increase in cases of severe illnesses and malnutrition.

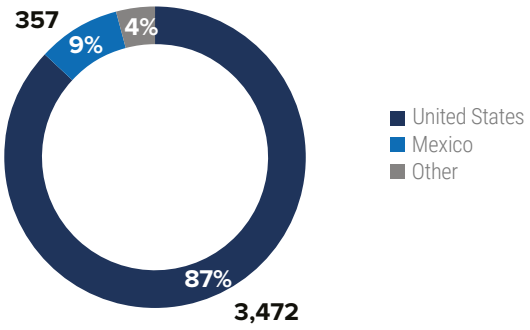
In the countries where quantitative data collection was conducted, the main needs reported by respondents were food (65%), shelter (39%), and clothing and footwear (30%), marking a shift from healthcare being a top need in the previous quarter. Moreover, the surveys as well as focus group discussions in Panama and Honduras revealed a significant demand for more information, particularly as it relates to the Humanitarian Parole Program and the "CBP One" application implemented by the United States Government.

Further analysis of the responses, segmented by the country of interview, showed notable trends. For instance, in Panama, challenges unique to the border crossing conditions through the jungle were reflected in the concerns expressed, with clothing and footwear (56%) being the most cited by respondents who lost their personal belongings in rivers and cliffs, followed by food (33%) and healthcare support (22%), maintaining consistency with the previous quarter's findings.

Costa Rica stood out for reporting the highest levels of need. Among its respondents, 91%, highlighted food as a primary concern, representing a 7% increase from the last quarter. Additionally, two-thirds (67%) indicated a need for shelter, and more than half (52%) needed clothing and footwear. In contrast, needs reported in Mexico, apart from food (69%), shelter (39%), and clothing and footwear (25%), call attention to Information (21%), which is higher than the regional average.

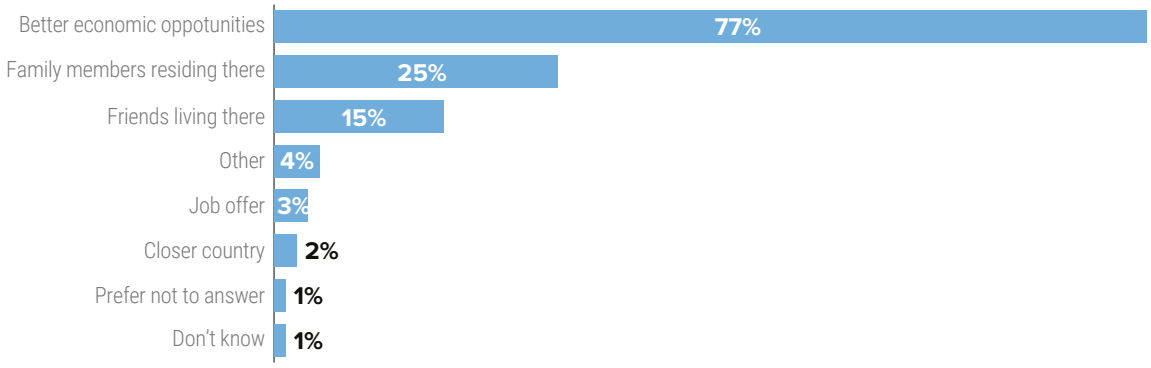
INTENTIONS

Intended country of destination



87%
of respondents intend to go to the United States.

Main reasons for intended destination



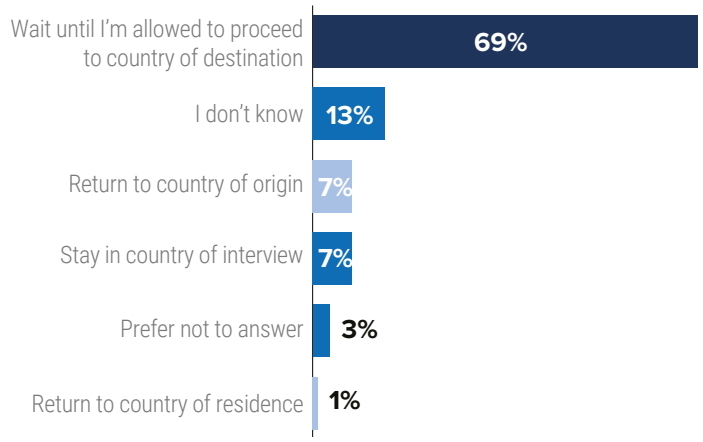
In the fourth quarter, the results remained similar to those of the third quarter, with a continued preference for the United States. This is consistent with the pattern observed in previous quarters, where the United States has been the dominant intended destination, chosen by 87% of respondents, followed by Mexico with 9%. Venezuelans are the leading nationality intending to make the United States their final destination, accounting for 58%, followed by Hondurans at 15%. Among those selecting Mexico as their final destination, Hondurans represent a significant amount at 37%, followed by Cubans at 19%, and both Salvadorans and Guatemalans at 10%.

The primary motivation for choosing their destination, as stated by a significant 77% of respondents, is the availability of better economic opportunities in the chosen country. Additionally, 25% cited the presence of family members in the destination country.

Scenarios of alternative intentions

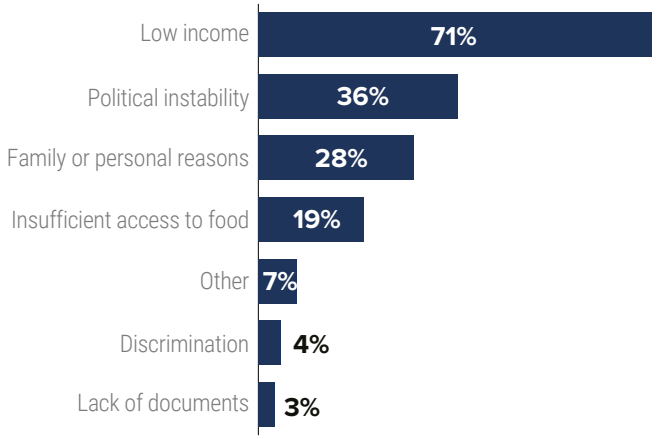
During the second half of the year, the survey also began to ask respondents about contingency plans and alternative intentions in case they are unable to reach their final destination.

In case not possible to reach intended country of destination, what would yo do?



Remarkably, 69% indicated their willingness to **wait until they are permitted to proceed to their intended country.** Within this group, 64% were Venezuelans, and 9% were Hondurans. On the contrary, among those considering a return to their country of origin, the majority (59%) were Hondurans, while 20% were Venezuelans. This suggests that Hondurans are more inclined to view returning home as a viable alternative, in contrast to Venezuelans who lean towards waiting in a transit country as their preferred course of action.

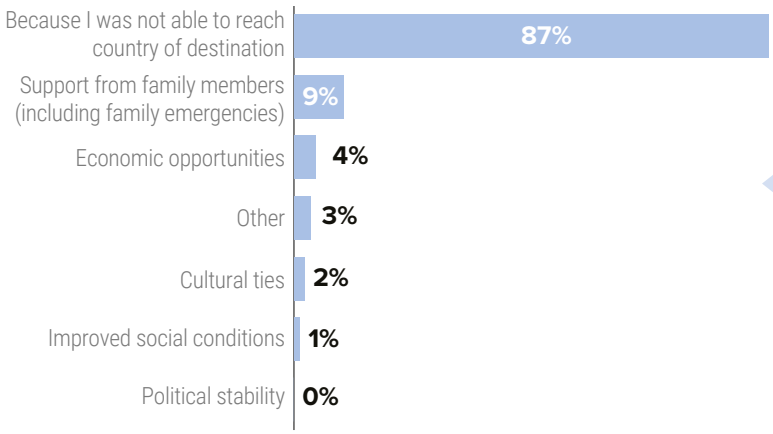
What would be the reason(s) for not considering to return to country of origin or host country?



The **primary reasons** prompting individuals to delay their journey to their chosen destinations are primarily economic challenges in both their origin and destination countries, representing 71% of the cases—a 5% increase from the previous quarter. Closely following is political instability, mentioned by 36% of those surveyed.

Upon further examination, it is evident that low income is the main factor influencing the decision to relocate among individuals from Venezuela (75%), Honduras (56%), and Cuba (66%) For family or personal reasons, Hondurans indicate the highest percentage at 47%, followed by Colombians (36%) and Venezuelans (25%). 26% of Haitian respondents noted that a lack of food would be a primary reason to delay return to their country of origin, the highest among other nationalities.

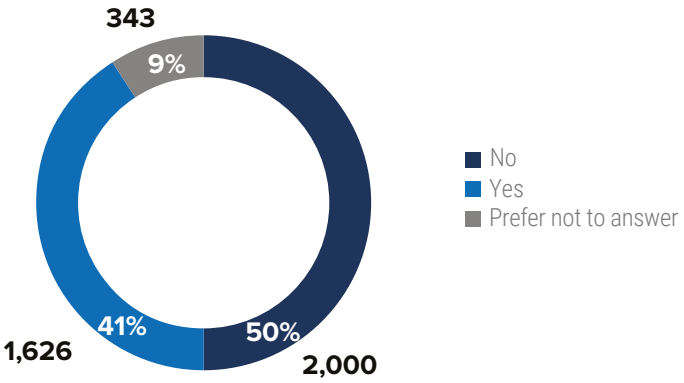
What would be the reason(s) to return?



Among those considering a return to their country of origin or host country, now at 7%, a decrease of 3% from the previous quarter, a substantial 87% stated they would only pursue this option if unable to reach their intended destination. Furthermore, 9% mentioned their reason as the need to support their family or address family emergencies.

Risks upon return

Risk upon return for self or family



Respondents were asked if they would face any kind of risk if they had to return to their country of origin or host country.

Approximately 2 out of 5 people responded that they would face some kind of risk upon return.

In broad terms, concerns about protection upon return often encompass considerations regarding security and prospects for successful reintegration, especially in situations where the overall condition of the country or the circumstances facing specific individuals and groups, such as unaccompanied and/or separated children, trafficked individuals, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), members of the LGBTIQ+ community, among others, are still precarious.

The prevalence of risks upon return is particularly high in Mexico, where 67% of the interviewed individuals expressed facing such risks when returning to their country of origin. Among the reasons, it is highlighted threats, extortion, and/or persecution (41%), and general violence, discrimination, and/or xenophobia (21%).

Extracontinental respondents, as well as those from **Central American countries, such as Guatemala and Honduras,** have a higher rate of perceived risks upon return than other groups.

These results follow the same pattern as the indicator on reasons for leaving countries of origin or host countries, where it was identified that more than half of the respondents had reasons related to violence to leave their respective countries, as mentioned in the section above. When considered together, these indicators suggest a high number of individuals in mixed movements who may qualify for **international refugee protection needs.** These factors create a complex landscape where safety, security, and reintegration prospects remain fragile. Recognizing and addressing these needs is essential to ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations in the context of mixed movements.

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