Mixed Movements Official Data

Darien Province, Panama-Colombia Border

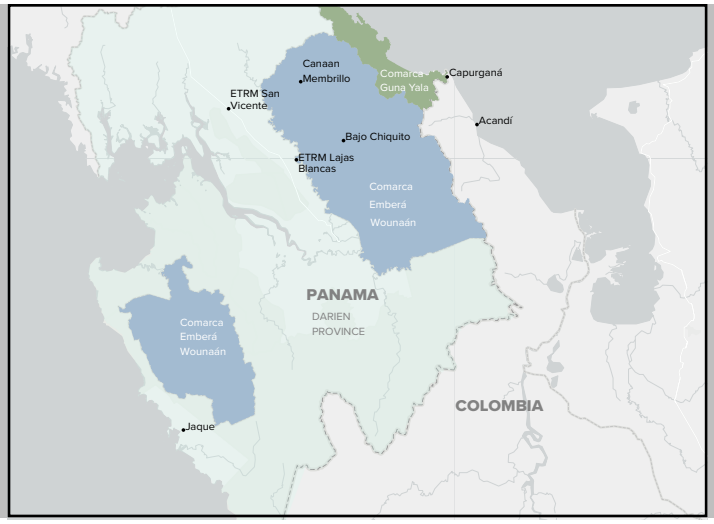
May - June 2024

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 900,000 people crossed through this area from 2021 to 2023.



Key Figures

170,014 Total entries in 2024.

30,747 Total entries in May 2024.

62% Male

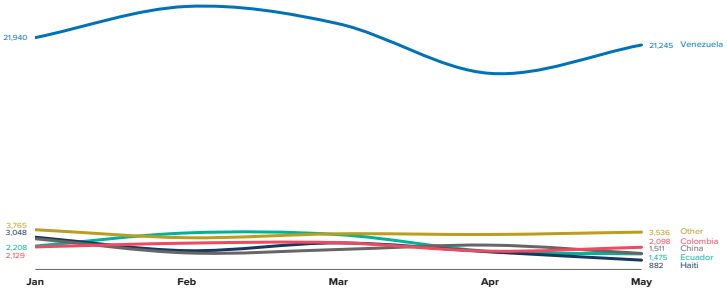
38% Female

79% Adult

21% Children

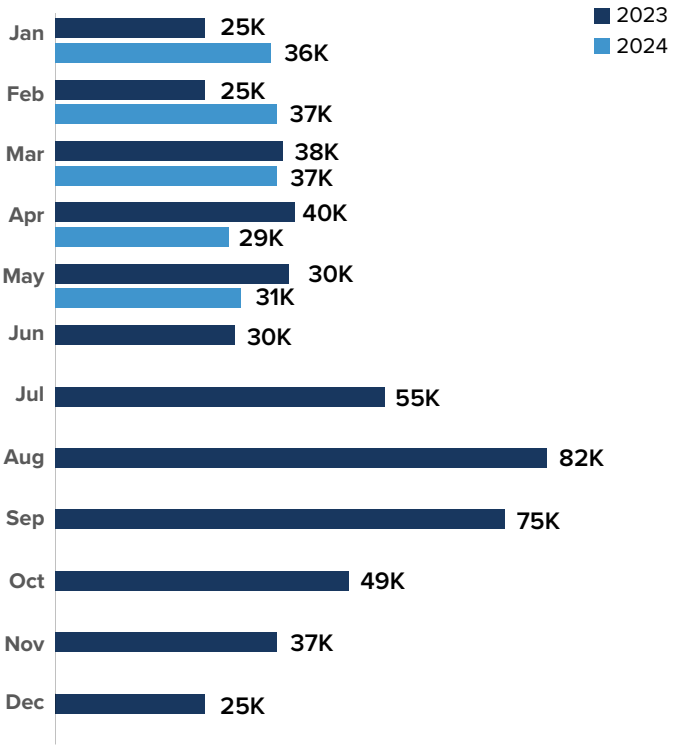
Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to May 2024



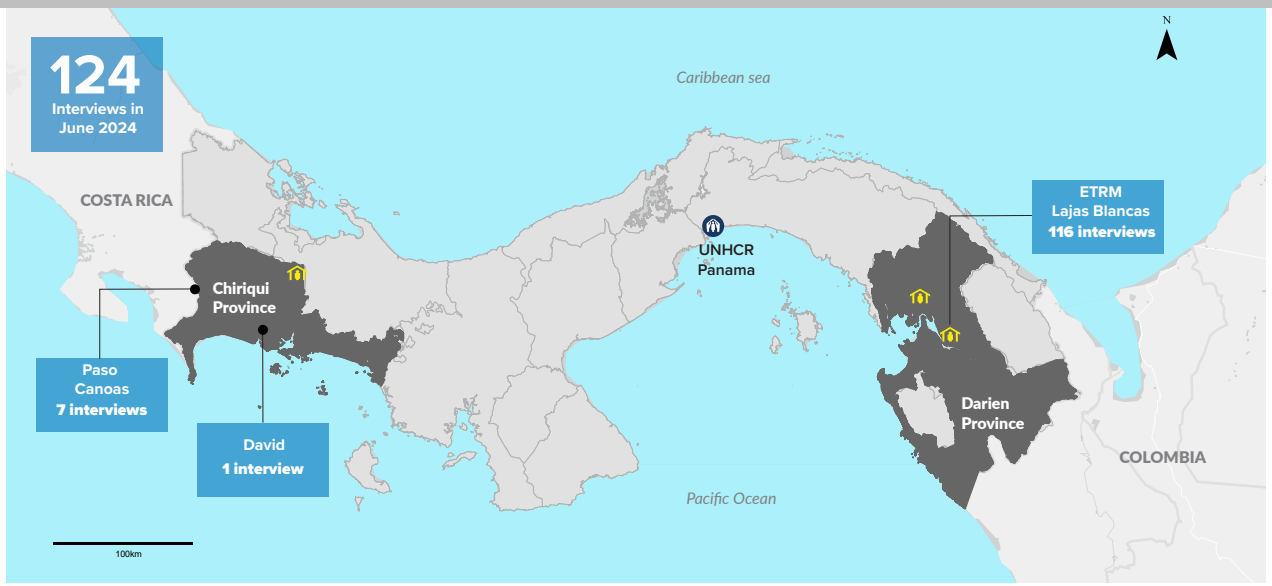
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Venezuela	21,940	24,895	23,257	18,558	21,245
Ecuador	2,208	3,450	3,295	1,700	1,475
Haiti	3,048	1,775	2,506	1,661	882
China	2,911	1,562	1,885	2,302	1,511
Colombia	2,129	2,483	2,524	1,729	2,098
Other	3,765	3,001	3,374	3,309	3,536
Total	**36,001**	**37,166**	**36,841**	**29,259**	**30,747**

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

59% Male

41% Female

Average age

32 Years

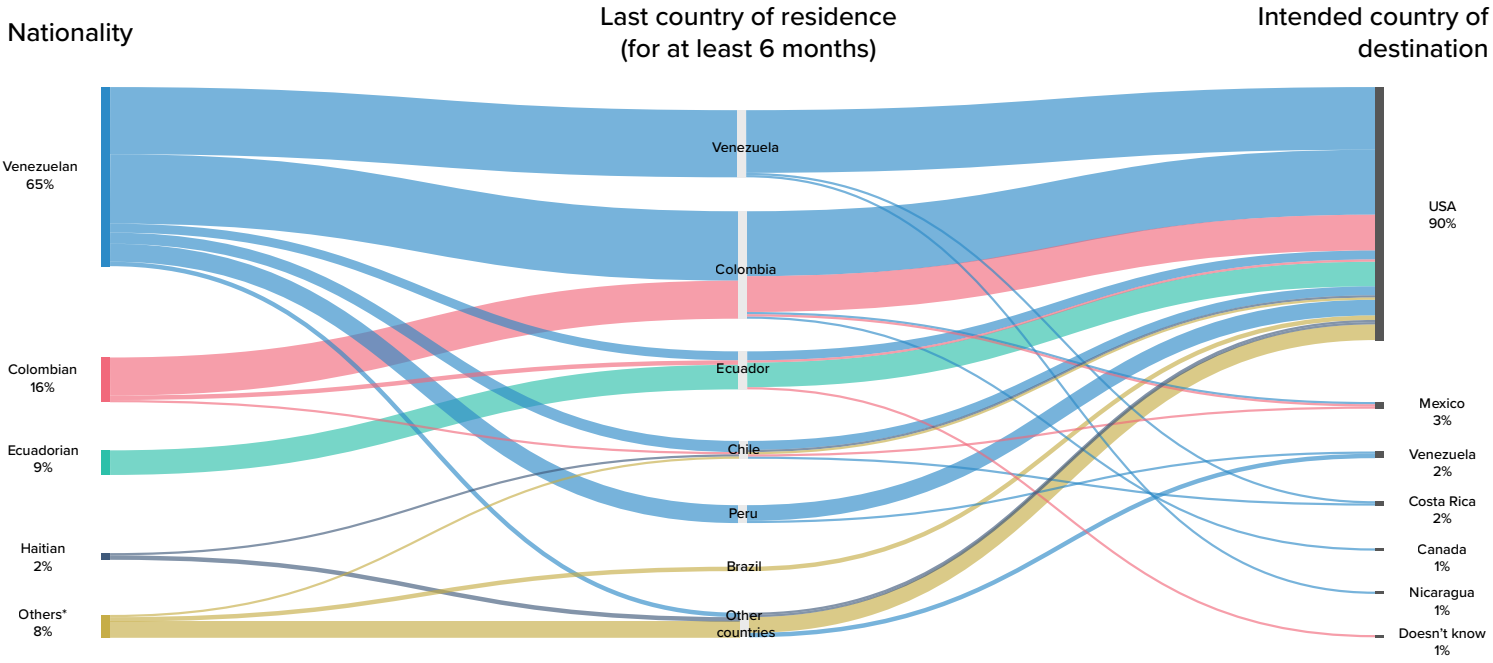
Travel group composition

40% Entire family
30% Part of the family
6% Unrelated companions
23% Friends
19% Alone

Documents carried by the family

91% National ID
24% Valid passport
9% Expired passport
8% Birth Certificate
5% Others
4% None

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



*Other nationalities include: Bolivia, Brazil, Nigeria, Peru, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

Respondent profile

Two-thirds of refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (65%). Nearly four in ten (38%) came directly from Venezuela, a 12% decrease compared to last month, while the remaining 62% came from other countries of residence, mainly Colombia (39%), Peru (10%), and Chile (6%).

Six in ten (57%) had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and 40% had valid documentation from that country.

Seven in ten (70%) travelled with family, and one-quarter (25%) travelled alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of 2 children, 43% under five. Four childbirths were registered in the jungle this year.

Among the main reasons for fleeing their country of origin, 56% of respondents cited attacks, threats, and general insecurity; 78% stated that lack of employment or low income motivated their decision, while 44% noted the lack of access to services.

65%

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

3%

of interviewed individuals reported having the intention to stay in Panama.

Most are planning to stay for less than one year.

57%*

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

Out of 61 respondents that had lived in another country.

11%

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

This figure likely represents an underestimation of these incidents.

10%

of interviewed individuals reported travelling with pregnant or lactating women.

2%

of respondents reported travelling with someone with a critical or chronic medical condition.

1%

of interviewed individuals reported travelling with unaccompanied children in their group.

15%

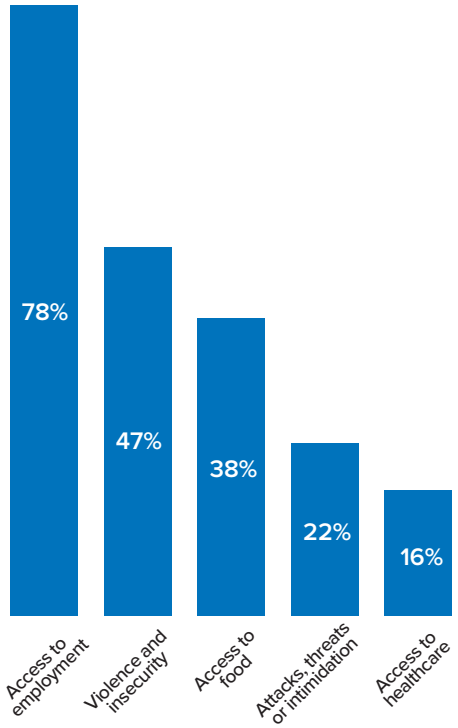
of interviewed individuals reported having a single parent travelling with children in their group.

0%

of interviewed individuals reported travelling with a person over the age of 60 in their group.

Push and pull factors

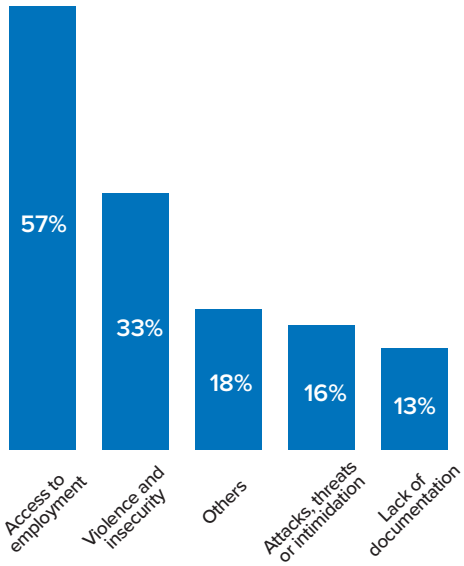
Main reasons for leaving the country of origin



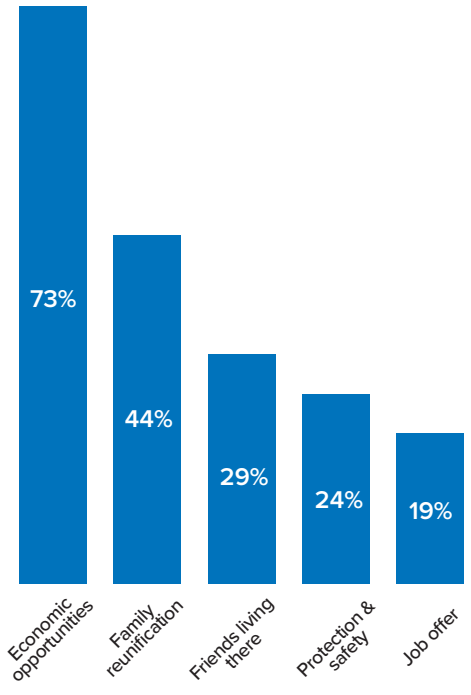
Main reasons for leaving the country of residence

Other reported reasons include family reunification

n = 61



Reasons for choosing the destination country



4 in 5

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

3 in 4

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

Also received information through social media, mainly TikTok (32%) and Facebook (20%).

8%*

of interviewed individuals reported having applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, **and not obtaining it.**

**Out of 61 individuals that had lived in a country other than their country of origin for at least 6 months.*

67%

of interviewed individuals reported they would face risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.

Challenges during the journey

4 days

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

7 in 10

experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle.

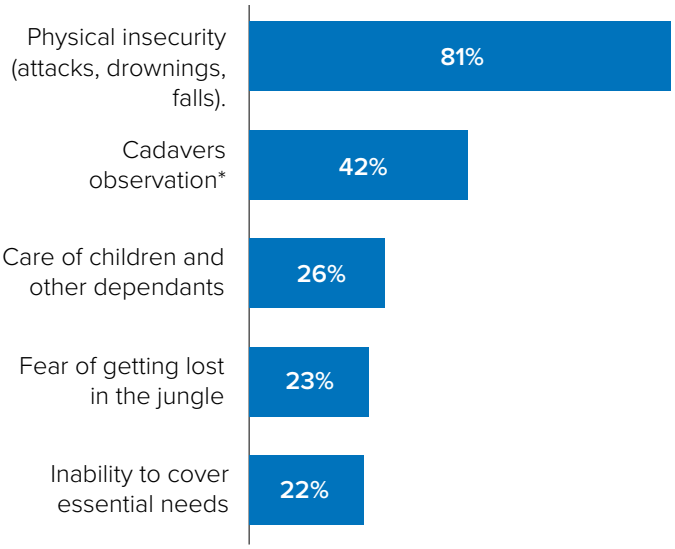
65%

of interviewed individuals reported being victims of theft, scams or fraud during their journey through the jungle. **Additionally, 36% reported being victim of threats, intimidation, and attacks.**

67%

of interviewed individuals paid a person to guide them through the jungle.

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.*

Main needs for the continuation of the journey

Cash
There are no official financial service providers in transit communities and at the ETRMs. Informal intermediaries leave people exposed to theft and scams.

Information
There is a lack of timely and detailed information about bus transfer services to Costa Rica, including options for those who cannot pay and the criteria for assigning humanitarian spaces managed by the Ombudsperson's Office.

Healthcare
There is a lack of healthcare professionals to cover the demand for services at the ETRMS, with people choosing to forego care to avoid long lines. There is a need for specialized healthcare, including treatment for chronic illnesses.

Clothes
There is a lack of clothes and shoes, especially for young children and adult men.

UNHCR Multi Country Office for Belize, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua and Southern Caribbean
Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 22nd May till 10th June 2024
Access all our border protection monitoring publications here
Feedback: panpaim@unhcr.org

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