Mixed Movements Monitoring

January - March 2025

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Key Figures

3,130
Individuals were interviewed from January to March 2025.

41 Nationalities interviewed

33 Average age of respondents

43% VENEZUELANS
27% HONDURANS
13% CUBANS
3% NICARAGUANS
3% COLOMBIANS
11% OTHER
Main countries of origin of respondents

GUATEMALA: 1,742
MEXICO: 550
HONDURAS: 400
PANAMA: 376
CHILE: 62
Number of interviews per country

60% Men

40% Women

39% Travelling with family

27% Travelling in families with children

Introduction and scope

Since 2023, the regional Mixed Movements Monitoring initiative—led by UNHCR and WFP, with UNICEF joining in mid-2024—has been tracking mixed movements across Central America and Mexico, as well as Colombia and Chile in South America.

To date, the initiative has conducted over 46,000 interviews across eight countries. Using a harmonized questionnaire and qualitative research methods applied in border contexts across multiple countries, the initiative systematically analyzes trends, population profiles, and the needs of displaced and vulnerable groups. It collects critical data on drivers of movement, protection risks, food security, and child-related concerns to inform evidence-based policymaking and strengthen regional humanitarian responses.

Key Findings

1. Cross-border population movements across the Americas continued to decline—particularly northbound. The share of respondents selecting the United States as their intended destination fell to just 48%, the lowest level recorded since the last quarter of 2022.

2. Intentions to remain in Mexico have nearly doubled compared to last quarter of 2024. 24% of respondents expressed intentions to remain in Mexico, the highest proportion reported since 2023. Cubans (52%) and Colombians (32%) reported the highest shares.

3. The main reasons for leaving the country of origin were lack of employment (70%) and violence-related factors (64%). Men most often cited unemployment (76%), while women more frequently reported food insecurity (35%) and personal violence (34%). Generalized violence was reported at similar rates (50%) by both genders.

4. More individuals are travelling alone, as the proportion of solo travellers increased to 39%, compared with a steady average of 25% in 2023 and the first half of 2024. The majority of them are men (70%).

5. Protection incidents and threats continue to be reported, with considerable variation in the type of reported incidents, including by gender. While theft has steadily remained the most reported incident (61%), fraud sharply rose to 38%, overtaking physical assault (26%).

6. 36% of respondents had only one or no meal the day before the interview, and 73% of children under five experienced severe food poverty, consuming foods from two or fewer food groups.

7. There has been a threefold increase in the proportion of individuals reporting intention to return to their country of origin or a previous host country if unable to reach their intended destination - from 7% of last quarter of 2024 to 24%. At the same time, there has been a significant decrease in individuals reporting that they would wait in the country of interview (from 75% of last quarter of 2024 to 58%).

Methodology

Q1 2025

9th round of data collection

5 Countries of data collection: Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and Chile.

11 Partners

Qualitative research in
COLOMBIA
HONDURAS
PANAMA

The ninth round of data collection under the Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM) initiative was conducted between 1 January and 31 March 2025. Throughout the quarter, all participating countries faced significant contextual shifts and funding constraints. Despite these challenges, data collection continued in Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and Chile.

Approximately 21% of all interviews during this period were conducted before 20 January 2025. In Panama, nearly 47% of interviews occurred before this date. Moreover, Guatemala accounted for 56% of the total number of interviews this quarter, making it a major part of the dataset. Given the unweighted and uneven distribution of the sample, this report limits cross-country or population group comparisons more than in previous quarters to avoid potential bias.

As in previous rounds, the methodology combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. These included structured interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews in Honduras and Panama (specifically in Colón) and direct field observations recorded in the Necocli Field Diary in Colombia and in Colón in Panama (during April). To strengthen the analysis, official government statistics and relevant secondary sources were also consulted, alongside insights gathered through field-based monitoring.

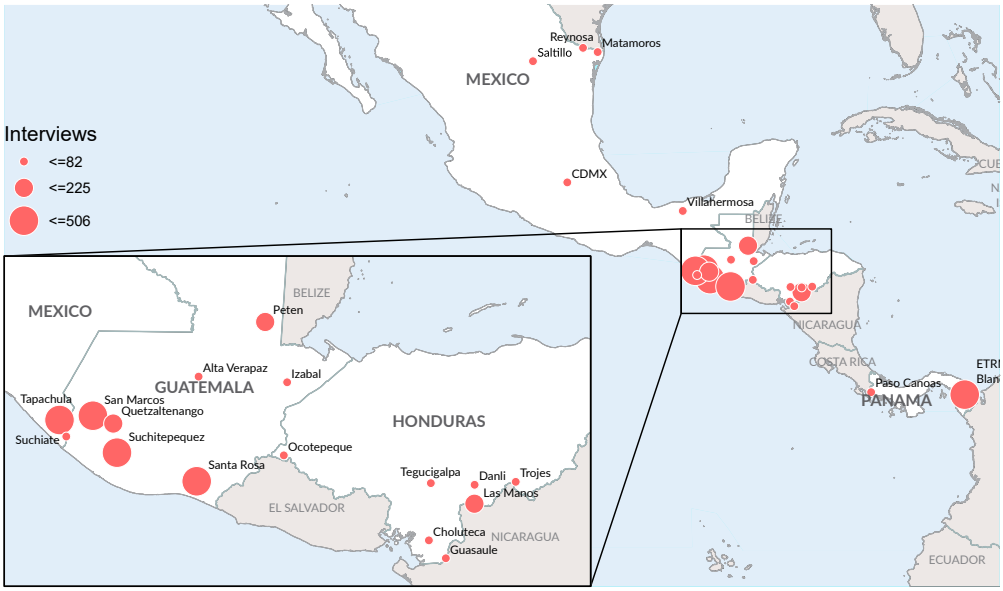
Additional methodological limitations include the need to adapt outreach strategies to a changing political and policy landscape, operational barriers to accessing border areas and key transit points, and persistent challenges in reaching highly vulnerable individuals, particularly those from extra-regional countries who may have been excluded due to linguistic or cultural barriers. As such, the findings presented here reflect only the experiences of those interviewed and should not be generalized.

Nonetheless, the data provides timely insights into the protection environment, evolving risks, rights violations, and food security concerns affecting displaced and vulnerable populations in mixed movements across Latin America and the Caribbean.

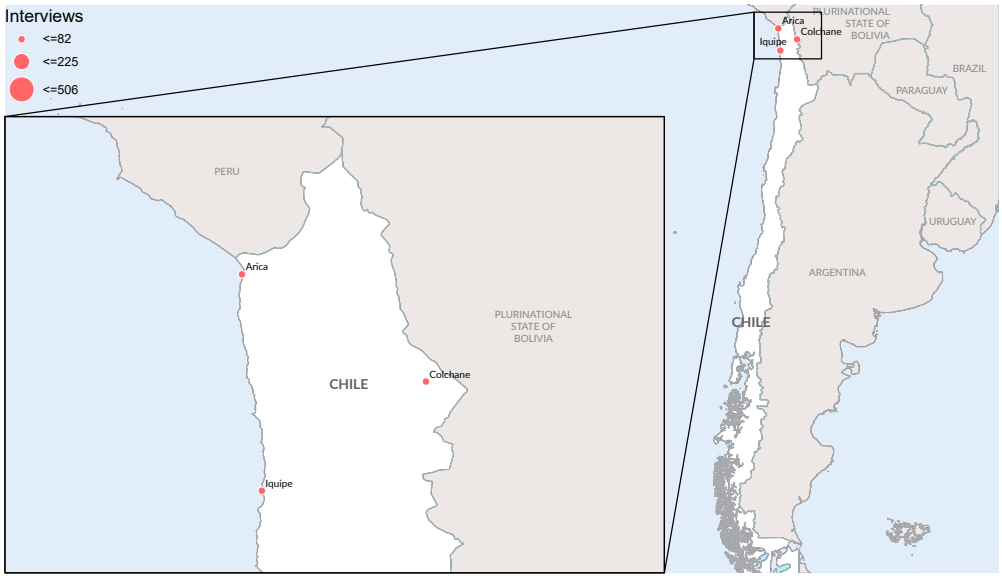
Based on standard survey protocols, questions related to the situation of children travelling in the family group were asked only if the interviewed person was the principal caregiver of children (i.e. mother, father or legal guardian), plus targeting only a single child selected at random in each age group. Since this information was not collected systematically in Mexico, we decided to exclude those interviews from the analysis of child-related indicators.

Data collection locations

In this round, 77% of the interviews conducted at formal and informal border crossing points, as well as nearby collective and temporary shelters. Additionally, interviews were held at non-border locations, such as strategic transit facilities, bus terminals, and reception sites.



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



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Mixed Movements Monitoring results

Context

In the first months of 2025, cross-border population movements across the Americas continued to decline—particularly northbound—amid changing migration policies, increased deterrence measures, and growing uncertainty among refugees and migrants. While dynamics varied by country, the overall trend pointed to reduced mobility and shifting movement patterns across the region.

In Panama, irregular entries through the Darien region dropped to just 2,831 individuals in quarter 1 2025, reflecting a 97% decrease compared to the same period in 2024. Only 194 crossings were recorded in March, the lowest monthly figure since 2021. This decline reflects the cumulative impact of reinforced border controls, regional deterrence efforts, and diminished confidence in the viability of the route.

In Honduras, a total of 14,270 irregular entries were registered between January and March 2025—an 89% decrease compared to quarter 1 2024. This marks the lowest quarterly total since 2021, driven by both reduced inflows and more restrictive border protocols.

In Mexico, according to official data published by the Mexican migration authority (INM), 109,227 foreign nationals were recorded in an irregular situation between January and March 2025, of whom 9% were children and adolescents. This represents a 68.8% decrease compared to the same period in 2024, when 350,677 individuals were reported, including 12% minors. The full dataset for 2024 was already published and covered in the quarter 4 2024 report.

Focusing on northern border states (Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora, and Tamaulipas), the decline was even more pronounced: 5,832 individuals were recorded in quarter 1 2025, down from 41,074 during the same period in 2024—an 85.8% decrease. These figures reflect significant changes in enforcement, mobility patterns, and the regional migration landscape.

The most recent available data on asylum applications in Mexico reports 78,975 claims filed in 2024, indicating sustained pressure on the national asylum system heading into 2025.

At the U.S.–Mexico border, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported a sharp decline in land encounters, from 61,448 in January to 11,019 in March, totaling 84,175 encounters in quarter 1 2025. This represents an 85% decrease compared to 555,467 encounters in quarter 1 2024. March 2025 marked the lowest monthly figure in at least four years, substantially lower than March levels recorded in 2024, 2023, and 2022.

These shifts align with the implementation of stricter migration controls since January 2025. Many refugees and migrants remain stranded along the corridor between Panama and the U.S.–Mexico border, facing reduced mobility options and heightened uncertainty.

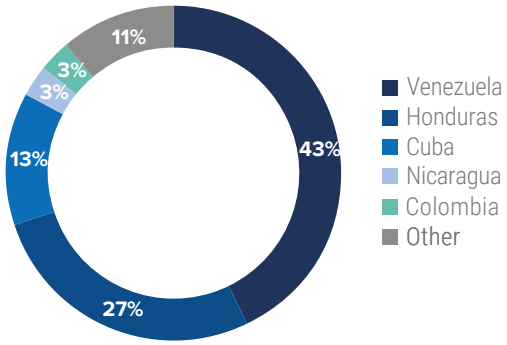
In response, reverse movements have gained visibility. An increasing number of refugees and migrants—particularly from Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador—have been observed traveling southward, some seeking access to asylum systems in previously transited countries, while others return to their country of origin after unsuccessful attempts to move north. Between January and March, Panama registered 5,040[1] individuals moving south, highlighting the scale of this trend.

Additionally, some refugees and migrants are turning to maritime routes, traveling by boat from Panama back to Colombia to bypass the dangerous Darien jungle. Although risky and expensive, these alternatives are increasingly seen as more accessible and better organized.

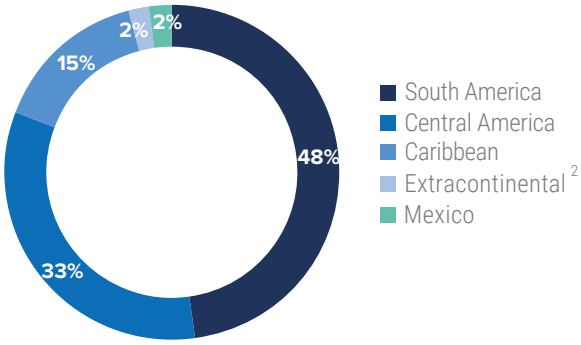
[1] Government of Panama (Weekly Presidential Conferences)

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Top countries of origin of respondents



Regions of origin of respondents
(by geographic location)



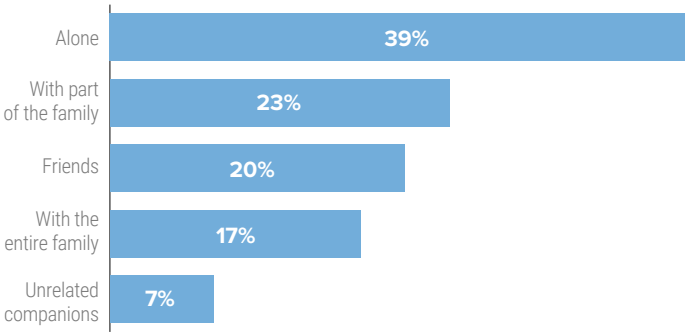
During the first quarter of 2025, the Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM) initiative interviewed individuals representing 41 different nationalities.

Among all countries where data collection took place, Panama continued to register the highest diversity of nationalities, with respondents from 26 different countries in January. However, by March, this number had declined to one. It is important to note that approximately 47% of interviews in Panama were conducted before 20 January, which corresponds to the period with the greatest diversity in nationalities.

A notable increase in the share of respondents from Caribbean countries was observed in multiple locations. In Honduras, 47% of respondents were from the Caribbean, while in Mexico, they accounted for 43%. Panama recorded the highest proportion of extracontinental individuals (8%), whereas Guatemala registered the highest share of respondents from Central America (50%), primarily nationals of Honduras.

Travel group composition

Who do you travel with?



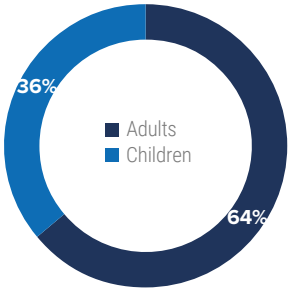
Four in ten respondents reported traveling with family members—either as part of a family group (23%) or with their entire family (17%). The largest share of respondents (39%) reported traveling alone. Smaller proportions reported traveling with friends (20%) or unrelated companions (7%). This quarter, compared to the last one, we have seen a decrease in traveling with part of the family and an increase with friends.

Between 2023 and the first half of 2024, the proportion of individuals traveling alone remained stable at around 25%. Starting in the third quarter of 2024—and particularly after 20 January 2025—this figure increased significantly, reaching 39%. Among those traveling alone, 70% are men and 30% are women.

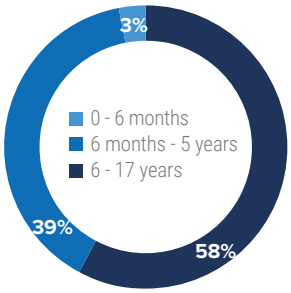
[2] The term "extracontinental" refers to people originating from regions outside the Americas continent, e.g., from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Family composition

Family age breakdown



Children in family age breakdown



Among the 39% of respondents traveling with their families, 64% were adults and 36% were children.

Family composition varied by region of origin. Family groups from Central America reported the highest proportion of children (42%), followed by South American families (38%) and extracontinental families (37%). In contrast, Caribbean families had the lowest proportion, with only 22% of their members being children. Among all children in families interviewed, 54% were boys. The average number of children per family was highest among respondents interviewed in Chile and Guatemala, while Ecuadorian families reported the largest number of children by nationality.

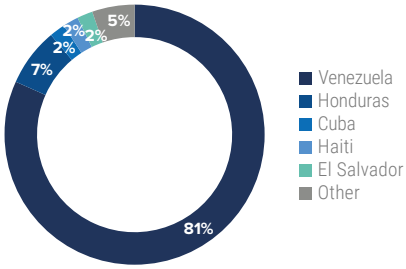
Host countries[3]

21%

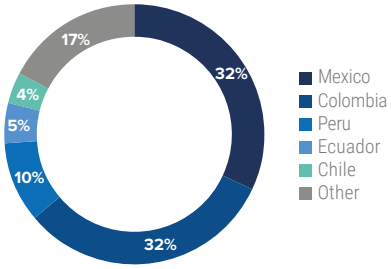
of the respondents have lived in one or more countries other than their country of origin for at least six months.

The proportion of respondents who had lived in another country for more than six months remained relatively stable over recent quarters.

Main nationalities of respondents who resided in host countries



Main previous host countries



LEGAL STATUS

Legal status of respondents who have lived in a previous host country

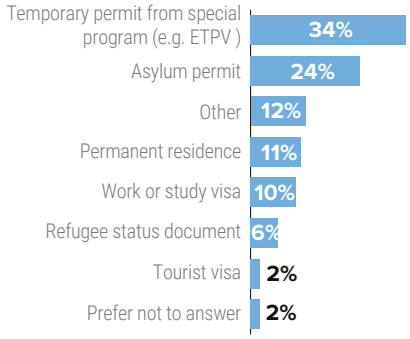
Out of the 21% of people who have lived in other countries for more than six months (N 669):

68% did not apply for a legal status

23% applied and obtained a legal status

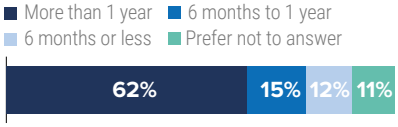
9% applied but did not obtain a legal status

Type of legal status obtained



Have applied, obtained a legal status in host country and the document is still valid

Have applied, obtained a legal status in host country by document validity



[3] Host country: The country in which a non-national stays or resides, whether legally or irregularly. The Mixed Movements Monitoring considers host country a country in which the person has resided for more than six months.

Twenty-one per cent of respondents reported having lived in another country for more than six months. Of these, 68% had not applied for legal status in the host country, while 23% had successfully obtained legal status, and 9% applied but were not granted status. Among those who obtained documentation, the most commonly reported types were temporary permits issued under special programs (34%), followed by asylum seeker documentation (24%). Other documents included visas or permits for permanent residence (11%), visas for work or study (10%), and refugee status documents (6%).

Regionally, particularly in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, the percentage of individuals reporting prior asylum applications in previous host countries remained relatively low and stable throughout most of 2024 (between 5% and 8%).

69% of those who applied and obtained status indicated that their documentation was still valid at the time of the interview. Among these, 62% held documents valid for more than one year, while smaller proportions held documents valid for shorter durations.

When asked why they left their host country, the most frequently cited reason was the lack of access to employment opportunities (54%). Other common reasons included generalized violence and insecurity (35%), lack of documentation (33%), and experiences of direct violence (15%). Additional factors mentioned included lack of food (13%), limited access to healthcare (4%), and barriers to education (2%).

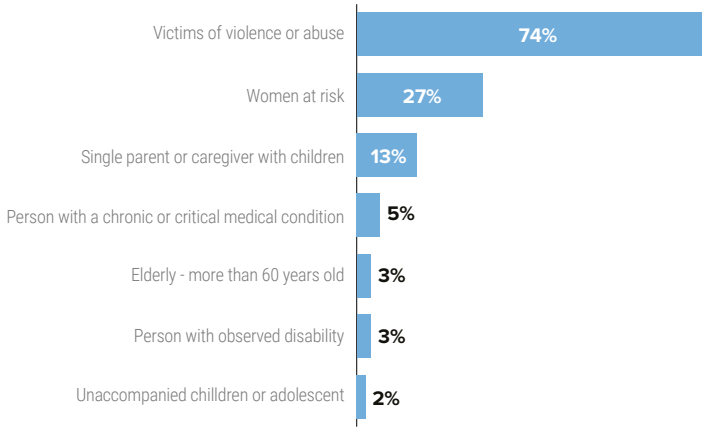
DOCUMENTATION

Reflecting previous trends, 77% of respondents carry national ID cards, while 27% have national passports. Additionally, 11% of passport holders have expired passports, consistent with earlier data.

SPECIFIC PROTECTION NEEDS

42% of individuals / families with at least one specific protection need observed.[4]

Type of specific protection needs observed



This quarter, 42% of respondents were identified as having specific needs. Notably, 74% of interviewed groups included at least one individual who had experienced physical or psychological violence and/or abuse, underscoring the significant protection and assistance needs among people on the move. Among Venezuelans—the largest nationality interviewed—54% were identified as having specific needs, particularly as survivors of physical violence or abuse.

[4] Persons with specific needs are particularly exposed to protection risks and abuses as the challenging conditions of the journey heighten their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation and put them at risk of irreversible and lasting harm. Any person who experiences particular protection risks or barriers due to the intersection of their personal characteristics with the environment requires specific targeted actions to enjoy the full range of their human rights. This is an internal query completed by enumerators at the end of the questionnaire and may not fully capture the range and extent of specific needs among all individuals.

Women at risk

27% of women or families with women at risk.[5]

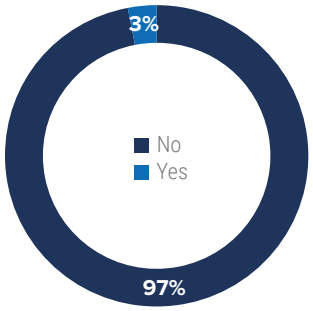
2% of pregnant women in the travel group.

7% of breastfeeding women in the travel group.

Women at risk were identified in 27% of interviews with women or family groups, based on observation-based indicators. In response to direct questions, 2% of respondents reported traveling with a pregnant woman or girl, and 7% indicated a breastfeeding woman or girl in their group.

Unaccompanied or separated children

Child or adolescent separated from their parent or legal guardian and is not currently with the respondent

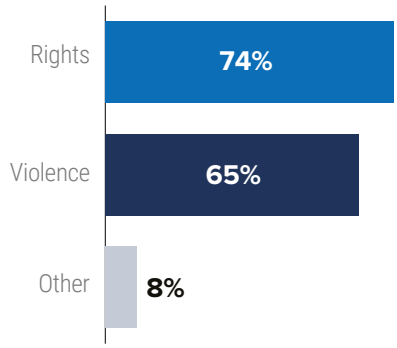


Among the respondents, 3% have reported that at least one child or adolescent in their family has been **separated** from parents or legal guardians and is not currently with the family.

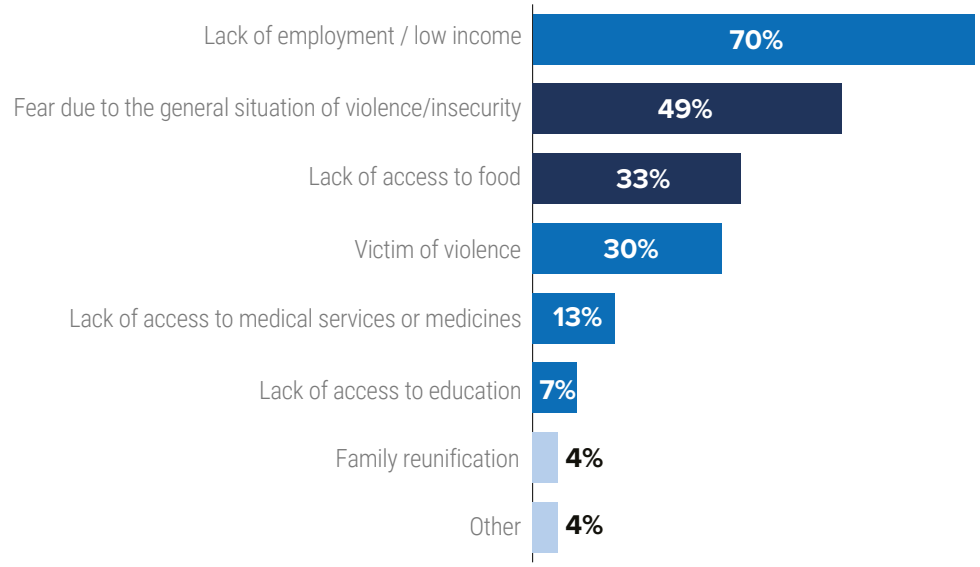
Displacement

REASONS TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN[6]

Reasons to leave country of origin (groups)[7]



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



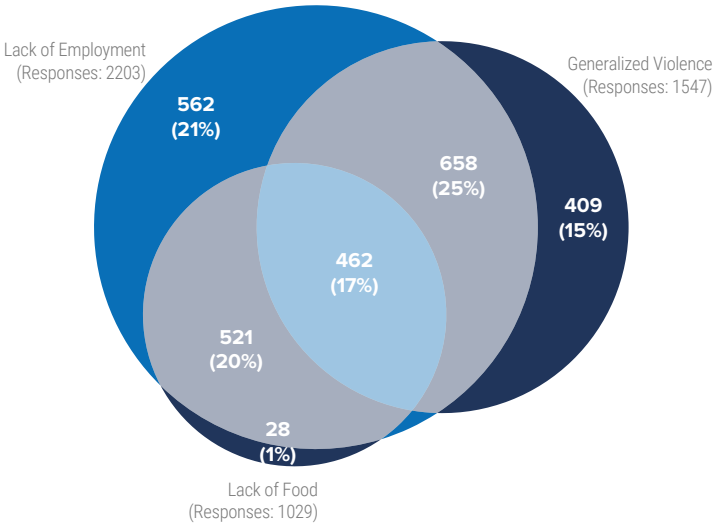
[5] The category "women at risk" refers to women who are pregnant, lactating, or have faced other risks, threats, or violence during the route.

[6] The monitoring exercise examines the motives for respondents leaving their respective countries of origin. The question posed to respondents allows for multiple answers, 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: reasons related to violence, reasons related to lack of/difficulties in accessing rights, goods, and services, and reasons related to other factors.

[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.

[8] In previous quarters, "victim of violence" and "threats/intimidation" were two separate answer options. After the third quarter of 2023, 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.)".

Reasons to leave country of origin
(Percentages based on a total of 2658 unique respondents)



The graphic illustrates the interconnected and multi-causal nature of forced displacement, highlighting links between violence, limited access to rights and services, and socioeconomic challenges. Among respondents who selected at least one of the top three reasons for leaving, 57% cited generalized violence. Of these, 25% also reported lack of employment, while 17% selected all three main factors. Notably, only 1% identified lack of food as the sole reason for displacement, underscoring that food insecurity is often associated with other overlapping causes.

70%

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

65%

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

The most frequently cited among these were generalized violence and being a victim of violence, both of which remained steady as key drivers for leaving countries of origin.

40%

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

In the first quarter of 2025, economic hardship and insecurity continued to be the main drivers of displacement across the region. The most commonly reported reason for leaving the country of origin was lack of employment opportunities (70%), followed by generalized violence (49%), food insecurity (33%), personal experiences of violence (30%), and lack of access to medical services (13%).

This quarter marked a new high in violence-related reasons, which rose to 64%, up from 54% in early 2023. Meanwhile, rights-related factors—such as access to work, food, and healthcare—remained consistently high, affecting 71–74% of respondents. Importantly, the share of people citing both types of drivers increased to 40%, reflecting how economic and protection concerns are becoming increasingly intertwined.

When disaggregated by nationality, key variations emerge. These trends confirm that displacement in the region is increasingly shaped by a convergence of chronic poverty, limited access to services, and growing exposure to violence, with nuances across nationalities reflecting distinct country contexts.

Food insecurity remains a critical trigger for movement, particularly for families. While 33% of all respondents mentioned lack of food as a reason for leaving, this figure rose to 36% among those traveling with children, compared to 32% of those without children.

Families with children also reported higher rates of having experienced violence (37% vs. 27%) and cited lack of access to education more frequently (14% vs. 4%) compared to those traveling without children, highlighting the compounding vulnerabilities they face during displacement.

Gender differences highlight distinct reasons for leaving the country of origin. Men more often cited unemployment (76%) and generalized violence (50%), while women more frequently pointed to food insecurity (35%) and experiences of violence (34%). Women also more commonly mentioned gaps in education (8% vs. 6%) and healthcare (14% vs. 13%), reflecting gender-specific risks in displacement.

DISPLACEMENT FLOWS[9]

GUATEMALA: 71%
HONDURAS: 65%
NICARAGUA: 45%
COLOMBIA: 44%
PANAMA: 37%

Top 5 countries of transit

In the first quarter of 2025, the movement of refugees and migrants across the Americas shifted notably as stricter enforcement and changing policies reduced northbound movement. Irregular entries into Panama through the Darién dropped by 97% compared to quarter 1 2024, while Honduras recorded an 89% decrease in arrivals. At the U.S. southern border, encounters fell by 85%, reaching the lowest levels in years.

In response, growing numbers of migrants and refugees began moving southward. Slight increases on asylum applications were noted in Guatemala and Honduras if compared with the same period last year. Over 4,100 individuals were officially registered traveling in reverse flows through Panama by the end of March. Many—especially Venezuelans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians—are returning to their countries of origin or seeking asylum elsewhere in the region. On 12 February, Costa Rica and Panama established a joint protocol to manage the arrival of individuals in reverse flows. At the same time, increasing numbers of refugees and migrants are opting for risky maritime routes from Panama to Colombia—not necessarily to avoid the Darién jungle, but because these return routes have become more available and organized, particularly for those traveling back from Costa Rica through Paso Canoas to Colón. On 21 February, a boat carrying refugees and migrants sank in the Panamanian coast, due to rough waters. An 8-year-old girl passed away.

These trends reflect a shift toward alternative, circular, and adaptive movement patterns, as migrants and refugees navigate a tightening regional protection and mobility landscape.

Arrival to country of interview

85%

of respondents reported arriving within the past month.

Length of journey

45%

of people left their country of origin less than one month ago, while 37% departed from one month to one year.

Intended length of stay

85%

of respondents expected to stay in the country of interview for less than one month.

PROTECTION INCIDENTS

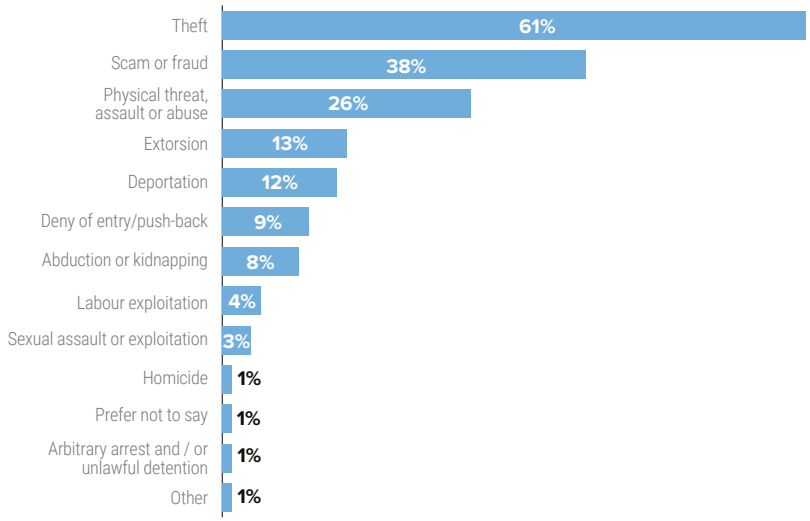
51%

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

55%

of respondents traveling with children experienced and/or witnessed a protection incident or threat, slightly more likely than those traveling without children (50%).

Protection incidents along the route



[9] The analysis of 'displacement flows' presented in this section focuses specifically on northward routes from the Darien. As such, interviews conducted in Chile were excluded to ensure consistency across the various route-specific indicators.

In the first quarter of 2025, 51% of respondents experienced and/or witnessed at least one protection incident along their journey. Theft was the most frequently reported incident (61%), followed by fraud (38%) and threats or physical assault (26%).

Those who had left their country of origin within the past month accounted for 35% of all incident reports, while individuals displaced between one month and one year represented the largest share (43%). These findings point to a period of heightened vulnerability in the early phases of displacement.

While the overall prevalence of protection incidents was similar between families traveling with children (55%) and those without (50%) , the nature of the threats differed. Families with children more frequently reported theft (63%), fraud (40%), and physical threats or assault (32%), while those without children reported higher rates of physical assault (46%) and fraud (46%). These findings highlight distinct and context-specific protection risks faced by different household types during their journeys.

Gender-disaggregated data also revealed important differences. Men were more frequently affected by theft (60%), fraud (66%), and physical assault (58%), whereas women made up the majority of those reporting sexual assault or exploitation (69%). These patterns underscore the intersectional nature of protection risks, with gender and household composition shaping exposure to harm.

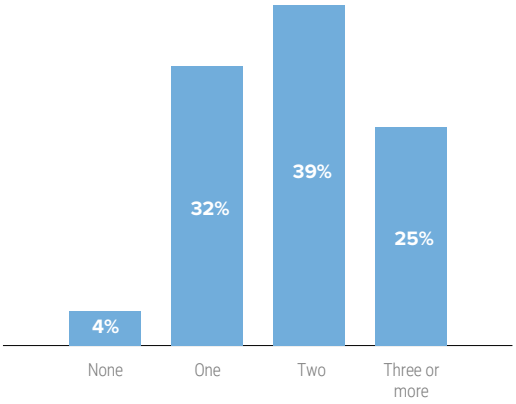
In the first quarter of 2025, notable shifts were observed in protection incidents reported along the route. Theft remained the most frequently reported incident at 61%, though this represents its lowest level since the third quarter of 2023. Scam or fraud became the second most commonly reported incident, increasing significantly to 38%, its highest level across the entire period. In contrast, physical threat, assault, or abuse decreased slightly to 23%, after peaking at 28% in the third and fourth quarters of 2024. Deportation reports, after remaining stable at lower levels throughout 2024, rose notably to 12% in the first quarter of 2025. Reports of denial of entry also increased, reaching 9%, the highest level recorded to date. Reports of abduction or kidnapping showed a gradual increase, reaching 8% in this period. Meanwhile, reports of sexual assault or exploitation remained at relatively low levels at 3%. Labor exploitation also rose slightly to 4%. Extortion or bribery, which had shown a continuous decline over the past year, remained low at 13%. These trends highlight variations in the type of incidents reported, including a rise in certain risks such as scam or fraud, deportation, and denial of entry, while some incidents such as theft and extortion saw decreases compared to earlier peaks.

ACCESS TO FOOD

36%

of respondents reported having only one or no meal the day before the interview.

How many meals did you eat yesterday?



While severe food insecurity persists—1 in 3 respondents reported eating only one or no meals the day before the interview. The proportion of people eating three or more meals a day has nearly doubled, rising from 13% in quarter 1 2023 to 25% in quarter 1 2025. This shift may reflect a slight diversification in the profile of the population interviewed, with a growing share accessing minimum levels of food.

Despite this progress, food insecurity remains widespread. This quarter, 36% of all respondents reported eating only one or no meals the day before the interview—32% had one meal, and 4% had none. These figures highlight the continued vulnerability of people on the move across the region.

Access to food varied by gender. Women were slightly more likely than men to have eaten three or more meals (29% vs. 22%), while different proportions of women and men reported eating only once (24% and 37%, respectively). The share reporting no meals was identical for both genders (4%).

Differences across nationalities were also observed. Respondents from Cuba (62%) were by far the most likely to have eaten three or more meals the day before the interview, suggesting relatively better short-term access to food. In contrast, Colombians (27%), Venezuelans (21%), and Hondurans (12%) reported much lower rates, reflecting more limited food intake.

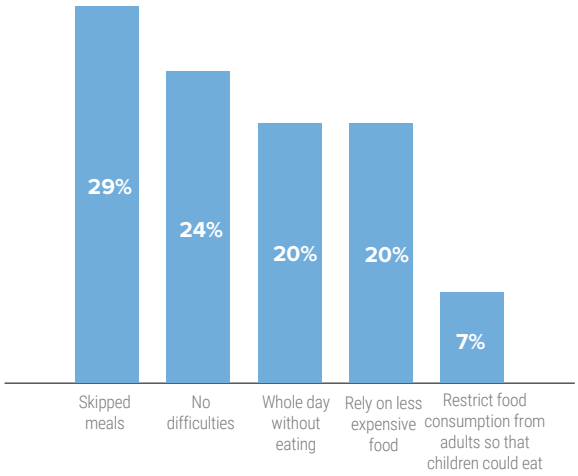
In terms of family composition, among respondents traveling with infants under six months of age, 40% (20 out of 50) reported eating only one or no meals the day before the interview, including 12% who had not eaten at all. This is slightly lower

than the 36% reported among those not traveling with infants. While differences in group size may influence these patterns, families with infants still face critical nutritional challenges, particularly for breastfeeding women, whose dietary needs are essential for infant health and development.

76%

of respondents faced difficulties meeting their food needs and resorted to coping strategies. This includes a 7% of respondents who reported restricting their meals so that children in their family or group could eat.

Distribution of food coping strategies used over the past week



In quarter 1, 2025, 76% of respondents reported using a strategy to cope with limited access to food. The most common were skipping meals (29%), going a whole day without eating (20%), and relying on less expensive food (20%).

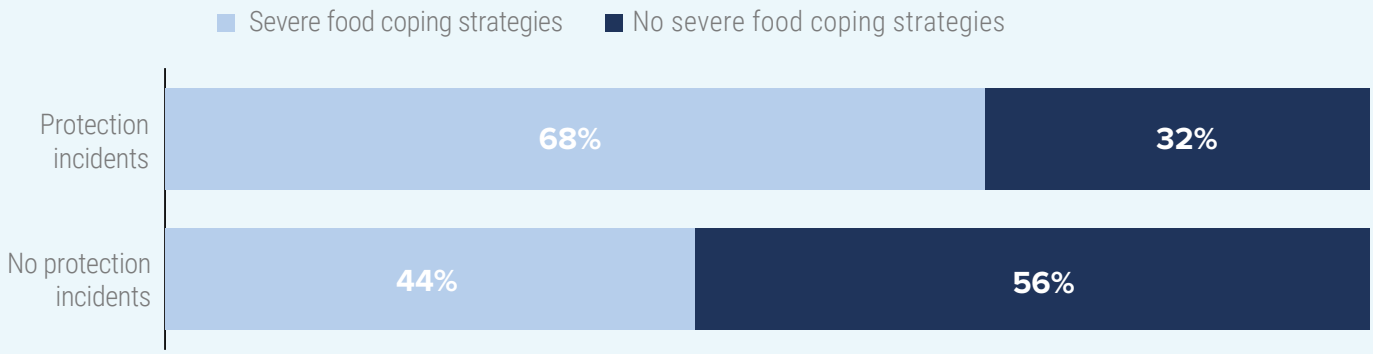
The use of these strategies has declined steadily since 2023. Skipping meals, for example, dropped from 45% in quarter 3 2023 to 29% this quarter.

Restricting food intake so children could eat was reported by 7%, down from 10% in quarter 3 2024. Women were more likely than men to report this practice (11% vs. 4%), highlighting the unequal burden of food shortages within families.

Food security and protection

This quarter, 68% of respondents who reported experiencing or witnessing at least one protection incident also reported using severe food coping strategies, i.e., skipping meals, going a whole day without eating and restricting food consumption from adults so that the children could eat. This remains notably higher than the 44% reported among those who did not experience protection incidents.

Severe food coping strategies by victim/witness of protection incident



When disaggregated by type of protection incident, 74% of those who experienced or witnessed theft—the most commonly reported protection incident—resorted to severe food coping strategies. These patterns highlight the compounded vulnerabilities faced by individuals encountering both protection risks and food insecurity during their journey.

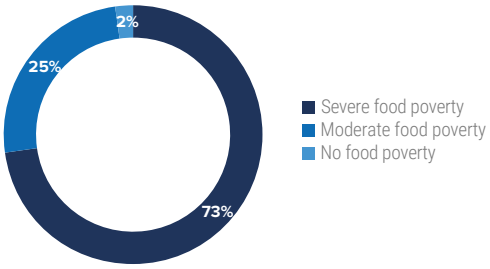
Infant and young child feeding indicators

42%

of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed [10] (17 out of 40 respondents)

Food poverty: children aged 6 months to 5 years

73% of children between six months and five years of age live in severe food poverty (268 out of 370).



This section covers the results of nutrition in early childhood, specifically children under five years of age.

Breastmilk is the only recommended source of nutrition for infants under six months of age[11]. Therefore, exclusive breastfeeding is used as the primary child nutrition indicator for this age group. Forty two percent of caregivers (17 out of 40) reported exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months of age the day before the interview.

For **children between six months and five years of age**, the nutrition indicator used in this report is called “child food poverty" which quantifies the dietary diversity in terms of groups consumed the day before[12]. According to this quarter's data, 73% (268 out of 369) of caregivers reported children living in severe child food poverty and 25% (93 out of 369) in moderate child food poverty, while only 2% (8 out of 369) met the minimum dietary diversity standard. These findings remain significantly higher than regional estimates from UNICEF[13], which reports 9% of children under five live in severe food poverty, and 28% in moderate food poverty across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Child vaccination[14]

62% of infants under six months of age (25 out of 40) had completed their vaccination schedule, while 32% (13 out of 40) had not yet completed it.

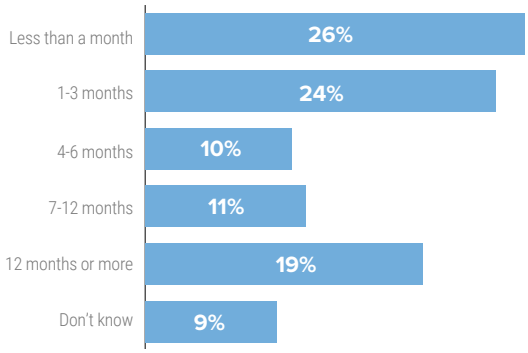
77% children aged six months to five years (288 out of 373) were reported as fully vaccinated according to their age.

Child education

29%

of children and adolescents between six and 17 years of age were not receiving education before the journey.

Percentage of families with children aged 6-17 years by last attendance of education
(Data was not collected in Mexico)



[10] The exclusive breastfeeding and dietary diversity indicators are defined in accordance with WHO-UNICEF guidelines to evaluate feeding practices of children under five years of age. See “Indicators for assessing infant and young child feeding practices: definitions and measurement methods”. Geneva: World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2021. Available online at https://data.unicef.org/resources/indicators-for-assessing-infant-and-young-child-feeding-practices/

[11] Infants who are not exclusively breastfed are highly vulnerable to diseases and infections, including diarrhea, at that age. Thus, they can easily become dehydrated and malnourished, implying a real risk of death.

[12] The child food poverty indicator uses the number of food items belonging to different food groups consumed by a child the previous day to assess if dietary diversity is sufficient. Children in this age group need to consume food from at least five out of the eight identified food groups for a “minimum dietary diversity”. Children who consume food from less food groups are considered in child food poverty of two levels: moderate if they consume food from three or four food groups, or severe if they consume foods from two or less food groups. Child food poverty harms all children, but it is particularly damaging in early childhood when insufficient dietary intake of essential nutrients can cause the greatest harm to child survival, physical growth, and cognitive development, trapping children and their families in a cycle of poverty and deprivation.

[13] Child Food Poverty. Nutrition Deprivation in Early Childhood”, UNICEF, New York, June 2024. Available online at https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-food-poverty-report-2024/

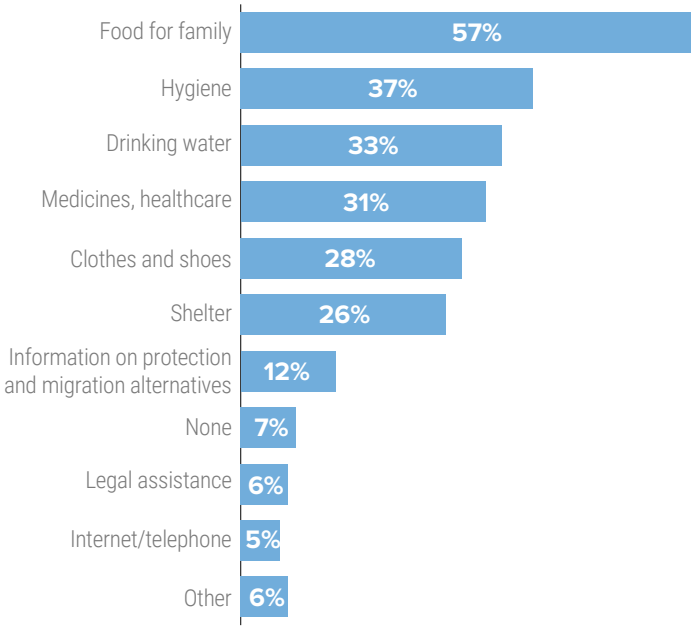
[14] Information about the vaccination status is gathered through a direct question, without checking the vaccination card.

Caregivers with children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 were asked a set of questions regarding school attendance and access to education. 71% (291 out of 409) reported that their children had attended school in the country where they lived prior to starting their journey. However, educational continuity appears to be disrupted for many. Only half had attended school within the past three months, while nearly one in five (19% - 77 out of 409) had been out of school for over a year.

Most children were reported to have reached only basic education levels. While 43% (177 out of 409) had completed primary school and 32% (129 out of 409) preschool, just 17% (68 out of 409) had reached secondary education. Documentation was another major barrier: 75% of caregivers (306 out of 409) said they did not carry any official record of the child or adolescent last approved grade.

In addition, 78% of caregivers (317 out of 409) reported not knowing the requirements for enrolling their children or adolescents in school in different countries. This lack of awareness, combined with the absence of documentation, poses a significant challenge to re-enrollment and learning continuity for children on the move.

MAIN NEEDS



57%

of people interviewed reported access to food for their families as their main need to continue their journey.

In quarter 1 2025, the most pressing needs reported by people on the move remained focused on basic needs, with food, hygiene, water, and healthcare consistently ranking highest. The proportion of respondents citing food as a main need declined from a peak of 69% in quarter 2 2024 to 57% this quarter. However, hygiene-related needs reached their highest level yet at 37%, while needs for drinking water (33%) and healthcare (31%) also increased slightly compared to the previous quarter, indicating ongoing gaps in access to essential services.

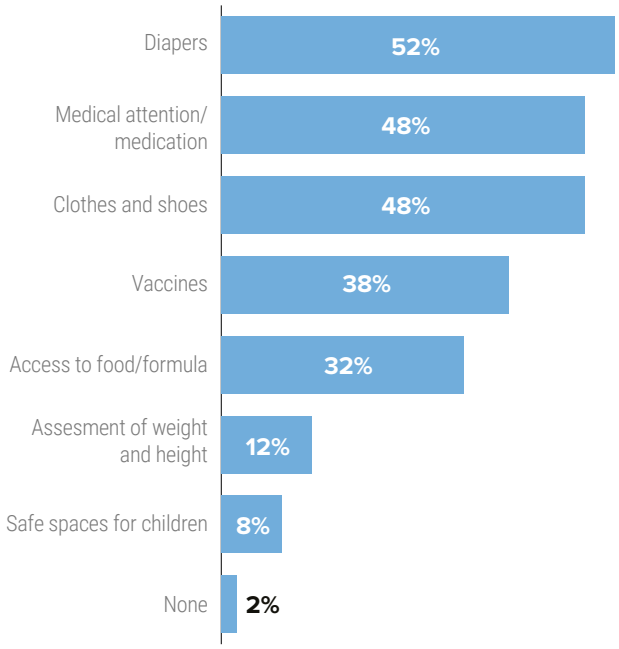
Only 7% of respondents reported having no urgent needs—a proportion that has remained stable over recent quarters—underscoring the continued vulnerability of the population. Differences across nationalities and countries of interview reveal how diverse profiles face distinct challenges.

Venezuelans and Colombians, reported food for their families as their main need to continue their journeys (72% and 65% respectively), while Hondurans showed high levels of need across nearly all basic services, particularly healthcare, hygiene, and clothing. In contrast, 28% of Cuban respondents indicated no immediate needs, reflecting different contexts or levels of support.

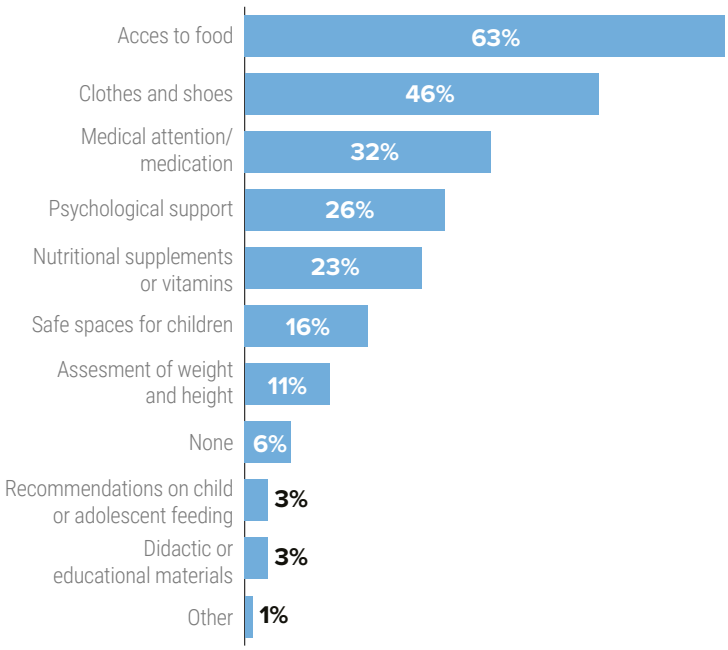
Geographically, needs varied according to the stage of the journey. In transit hubs such as Panama and Guatemala, respondents prioritized food, water, and hygiene. In Mexico, the profile of needs was more diversified, with greater demand for shelter, legal assistance, and information on protection—consistent with individuals in a more advanced stage of displacement or pursuing asylum.

Main needs of children

Main needs of infants under 6 months (N=40)



Main needs of children aged 6 months to 17 years (N=628)



For infants under six months of age, the most commonly reported needs were diapers (52%, 21 respondents), followed by medical attention or medication (48%, 19) and clothes or shoes (48%, 19). Other frequently mentioned needs included vaccines (38%, 15) and access to food or formula (32%, 13).

Among children and adolescents aged six months to 17 years, access to food was the most frequently reported need, cited by 63% of caregivers (398 respondents). This was followed by the need for clothes and shoes (47%, 292) and medical attention or medication (32%, 199). Psychological support (26%, 165) and nutritional supplements or vitamins (24%, 147) were also highlighted as key concerns. Despite the high demand for basic necessities, only 16% (103) reported needing access to educational or safe spaces for children, pointing to potential underreporting or competing priorities during transit.

Humanitarian assistance received by children

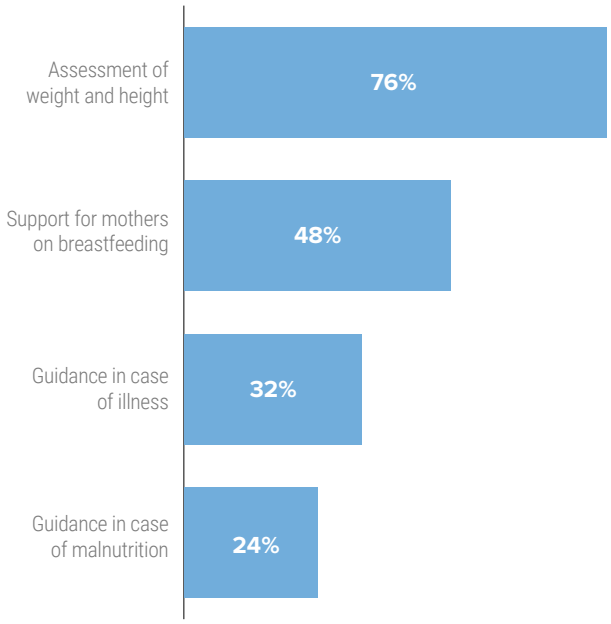
62%

of infants under six months of age have received humanitarian assistance along the route (25 out of 40).

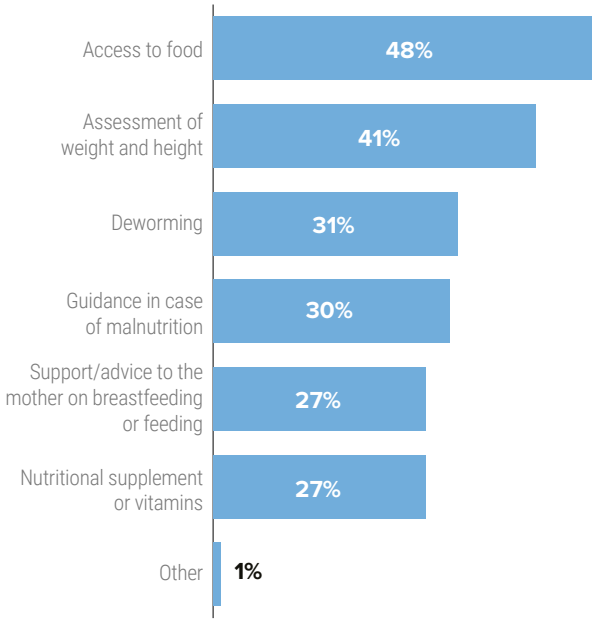
59%

of children between six months and five years of age received humanitarian assistance along the route (219 out of 372).

Type of assistance received by infants under 6 months (N=25)



Type of assistance received by children aged 6 months to 5 years (N=219)

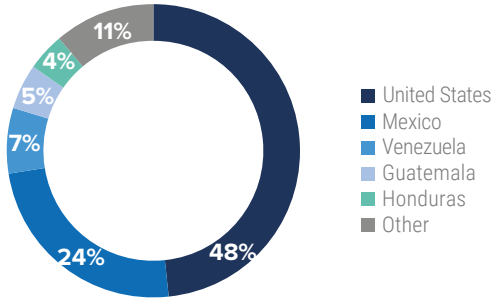


Among infants under six months of age, the most frequently reported form of assistance was the assessment of their nutritional status through weight and height (76%, 19 out of 40), followed by support for mothers on breastfeeding (48%, 12 out of 40), guidance in case of illness (32%, 8 out of 40), and guidance in case of malnutrition (24%, 6 out of 40).

For children aged six months to five years, caregivers most frequently reported receiving food assistance (48%, 105 out of 372). This was followed by assessment of their nutritional status through weight, height, or arm width (41%, 90 out of 372), deworming (31%, 68 out of 372), and guidance in case of malnutrition (30%, 65 out of 372). Nutritional supplements or vitamins (27%, 59 out of 372) and advice to the mother on feeding or breastfeeding (27%, 59 out of 372) were also among the commonly cited types of support.

INTENTIONS

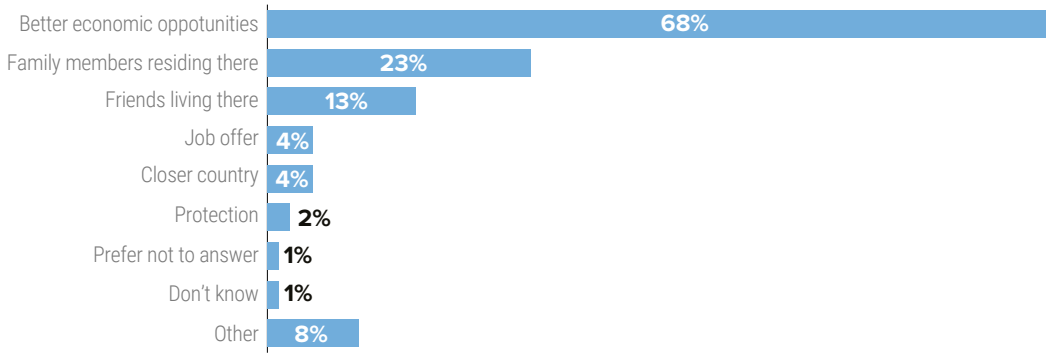
Intended country of destination



48%

of respondents intend to go to the United States.

Main reasons for intended destination

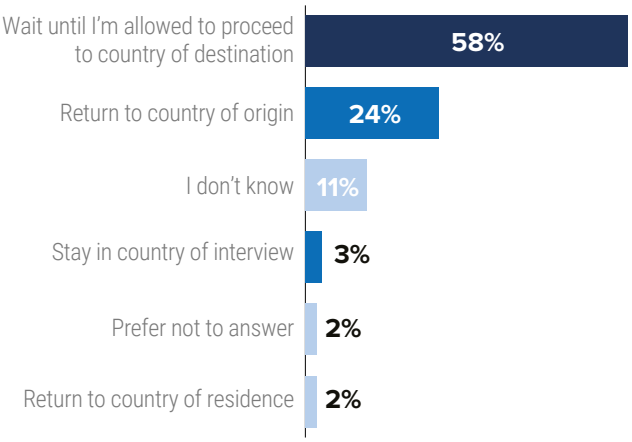


In the first quarter of 2025, the proportion of respondents indicating the United States as their intended destination dropped to 48%, continuing a downward trend observed over the past year. This marks a significant decline from previous quarters, where the U.S. consistently represented the overwhelming majority of intended destinations. There has been a noticeable trend of refugees and migrants returning to their home countries or seeking alternative destinations due to the challenges and dangers of reaching the US. In contrast, intentions to reach Mexico rose to 24%, with notable increases among respondents from Colombia and Cuba—52% of Cubans and 32% of Colombians reported Mexico as their preferred destination.

The most commonly cited reason for selecting a destination remained the pursuit of better economic opportunities, reported by 68% of respondents. Other key factors included the presence of family members (23%) or friends (13%), while smaller proportions pointed to job offers (4%) or the proximity of the country (4%) as their motivation. These patterns highlight how both economic drivers and existing support networks continue to shape mobility decisions.

Scenarios of alternative intentions

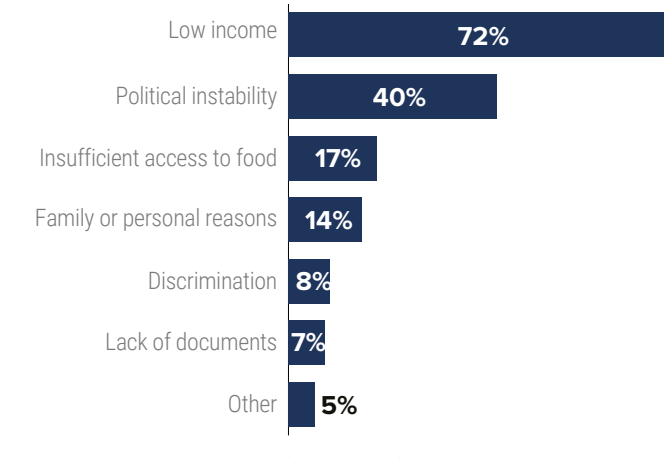
In case not possible to reach intended country of destination, what would yo do?



In Q1 2025, 58% of refugees and migrants said they would remain in their current location if unable to reach their intended destination—a notable drop from previous quarters, when this figure consistently ranged between 69% and 75%. At the same time, 26% said they would return to their country of origin or a previous host country, more than doubling the rate observed in late 2024. Another 11% were unsure of what they would do, reflecting growing uncertainty and lack of viable alternatives. Only small shares said they would stay in the country of interview (3%) or return to a previously transited country (2%).

These patterns varied significantly by nationality. Venezuelans were the most likely to wait in the country of interview if unable to continue, with 64% indicating this intention. For Nicaraguans, 48% said they would return to their country of origin or previous residence—the highest among all groups—, in contrast with Colombians who were the least likely to return (only 16%). Hondurans showed more mixed responses, with 53% preferring to wait and 36% considering return. Cubans were the most likely to express the intention to stay in the country of interview (14%), showing a greater tendency to either remain in place or explore other alternatives.

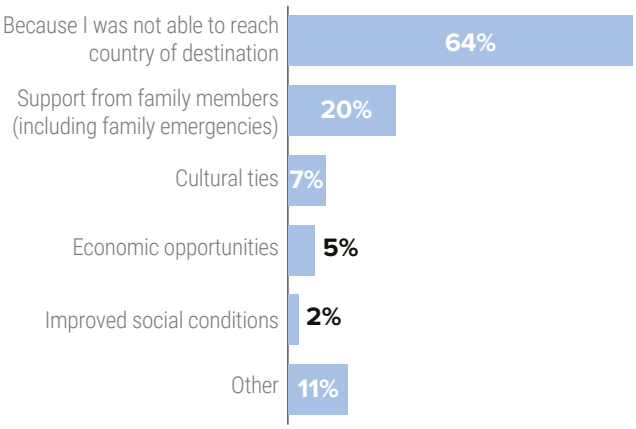
What would be the reason(s) for not considering to return to country of origin or host country?



In Q1 2025, the main reasons refugees and migrants chose not to return to their country of origin were low income (72%) and political instability (40%). While low income remains the top concern, its slight decline from previous quarters coincides with a growing emphasis on political instability. Other reported deterrents included lack of food (17%), family or personal concerns (14%), discrimination (8%), and lack of documentation (7%).

Venezuelans are the most likely to report political instability as their reason not to return, while most Nicaraguans cite economic hardships. Lack of documentation and discrimination are also cited more often by Venezuelans than other nationalities. Cubans and Colombians are more likely to weigh food insecurity in their reasons, compared to the others. Overall, these findings reflect a combination of economic hardship, insecurity, and social exclusion that discourages return—even when continuing their journey is no longer a viable option.

What would be the reason(s) to return?



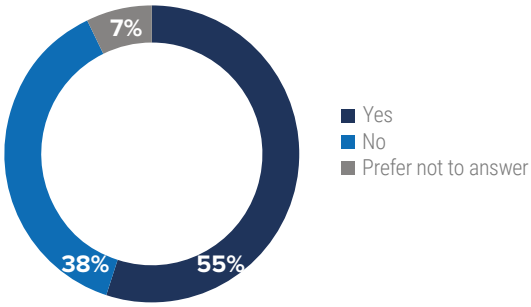
In the first quarter of 2025, return intentions among refugees and migrants remained largely shaped by structural barriers rather than by improvements in countries of origin. The inability to reach the intended destination was once again the most commonly cited reason for return, reported by 64% of respondents. Although this marks a continued decline from previous quarters—down from a peak of 87% in late 2023—it remains the dominant driver, highlighting how blocked mobility pathways continue to trigger returns more than any voluntary choice.

Meanwhile, personal and social motivations have steadily gained relevance. Support for family was cited by 20% of respondents in Q1 2025—slightly below the peak of 23% in Q4 2024, which marked the highest level since data collection began, and more than double the 9% reported in Q4 2023, the lowest recorded to date. Smaller but consistent increases were also observed for cultural ties (7%) and economic reasons (5%), indicating that some returns may reflect longer-term displacement dynamics or efforts to reconnect socially or economically.

In contrast, returns motivated by positive changes in countries of origin remain rare. Only 2% cited improved social conditions, and none mentioned political stability—figures that have remained consistently low across all quarters. This reinforces the view that most returns are still reactive and constrained, rather than voluntary or based on favorable developments in the country of origin.

Risks upon return

Risk upon return for self or family



55%

of people responded that they would face some kind of risk upon return.

Perceptions of risk upon return remain a central protection concern for displaced populations. In Q1 2025, 55% of respondents reported that they would face some risk if required to return to their country of origin or a previous host country—the highest level recorded in the past six quarters. In contrast, 38% said they would not face risk, while 7% preferred not to answer.

This sustained increase in perceived risk reflects the persistently insecure conditions in many countries of origin, as well as the absence of adequate reintegration mechanisms. Respondents often associate these risks with threats to physical safety, political persecution, and a lack of institutional support to facilitate safe and dignified return.

Particularly vulnerable groups—such as unaccompanied or separated children, survivors of gender-based violence, victims of human trafficking, and LGBTIQ+ individuals—remain at heightened risk. For these populations, return is not only undesirable but potentially dangerous, highlighting the need for individual protection assessments and sustained monitoring of evolving risks in countries of origin.

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