

# Mixed Movements Monitoring

January - March 2023



© UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

## Key Figures



**3,456**

People interviewed between January and March, 2023.



**42**

Nationalities interviewed



**30% HONDURANS<sup>1</sup>**  
**30% VENEZUELANOS**  
**15% HAITIANS**  
**8% ECUADORIAN**

Main nationalities in the first quarter.



**GUATEMALA: 1,595**  
**MEXICO: 1,040**  
**COSTA RICA: 511**  
**PANAMA: 310**

Countries of data collection.



**65%** Men



**35%** Women



**35%**

of respondents lived in one or more countries other than their country of origin for at least one year.

## Introduction and scope

In recent years, Central America has witnessed a significant upsurge in mixed movements—a term used to describe the cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. 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 or migrants in vulnerable situations)<sup>2</sup>.

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) are embarking on a monitoring project enabling agencies to better understand trends, profiles, protection and food security needs of people on the move. Data on mixed movements is key to maintain and expand the ability to lead and actively participate in the multiple forums where mixed movements are discussed within the UN, such as the Issue-Based Coalition (IBC) on Human Mobility, and with Governments in the region. As part of this monitoring efforts, first round of data collection took place from 1 January to 31 March 2023, in Panama, Costa Rica,

<sup>1</sup> Most individuals interviewed in the different countries have crossed the Darien jungle with the notable exceptions of Hondurans interviewed in Guatemala (30% of total interviews) who had just started the journey. For this group, Guatemala was the first transit country.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/glossary/>

## Key Findings

- 1** Multiple interconnected factors, ranging from limited access to fundamental rights and essential services to the pervasive impact of violence and insecurity continue to drive people into situations of displacement.
- 2** A staggering half of the respondents mentioned violence-related reasons to flee their country of origin.
- 3** At the Colombia-Panama border, food security is at alarmingly low levels, with over half of the respondents (54%) reporting that they consumed just one meal (48%) or went without any food at all (6%) the day before. Additionally, one in four individuals (24%) faced the harsh reality of food scarcity in this region.
- 4** Haitians manifest one of the highest level of vulnerability in terms of food security.
- 5** One out of every four individuals experienced a protection incident or encountered a threat along the route. These incidents predominantly encompassed theft, bribery, and physical threats or assault/abuse.

Guatemala, and Mexico, with a focus on border points where mixed movements are particularly prevalent.

This report covers several key aspects of mixed movements, including the motivation/trigger factors behind the departure from country of origin or habitual residence, the profiles of people engaged in mixed movements, the journey itself (including protection risks and threats), the situation in the current country (such as documentation, access to territory and food security), and the future intentions of individuals. By examining these factors, the report aims to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with mixed movements in Central America, with the ultimate aim of informing policy and guiding effective humanitarian response efforts.

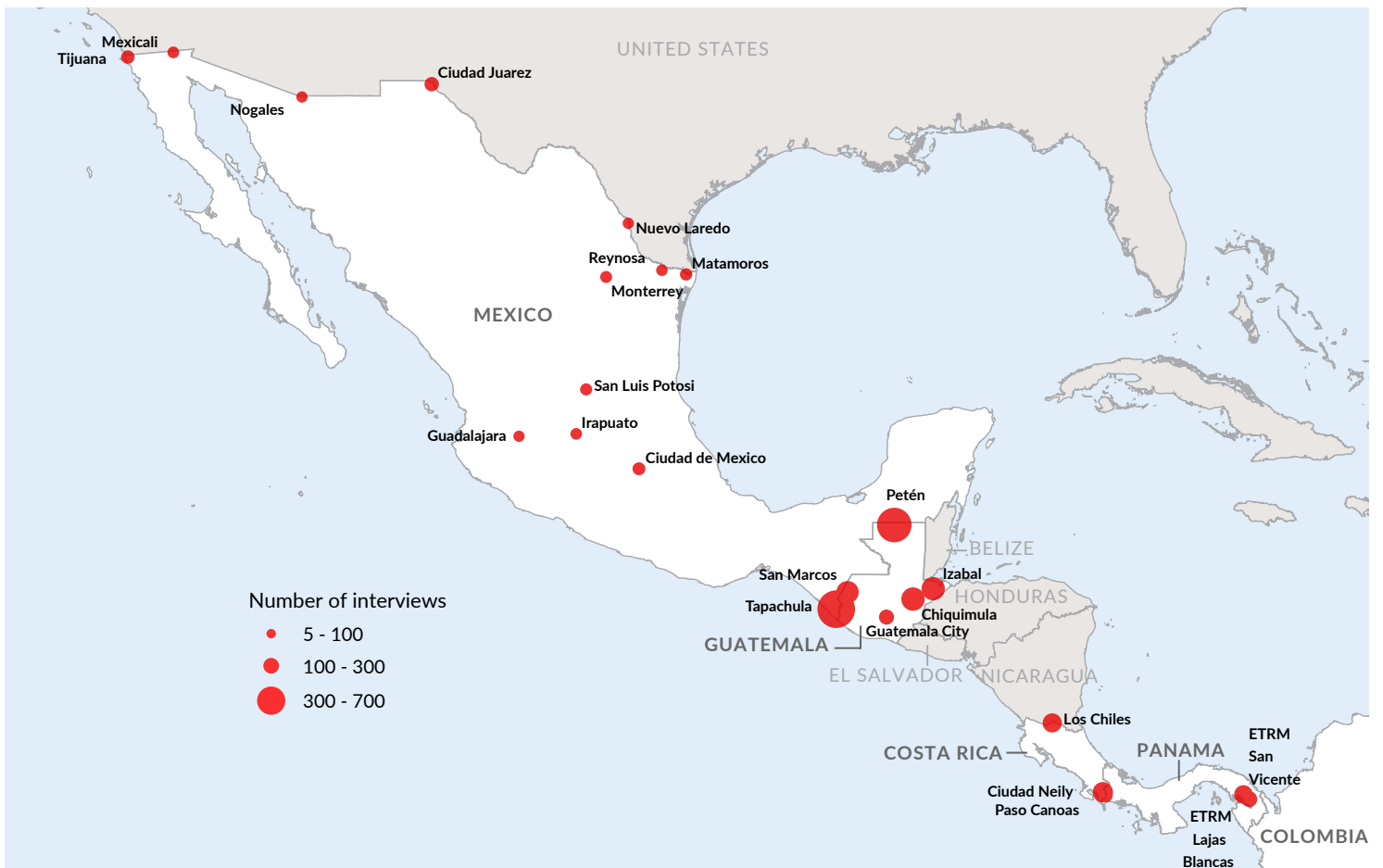
## Methodology

As part of the mixed movements' monitoring efforts between UNHCR and WFP, the first round of data collection took place from 1 January to 31 March 2023, in Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico. Most interviews took place in border areas, and a small portion of interviews were conducted in transit areas within the capital cities or larger urban centers. The majority of individuals interviewed across various countries have undertaken the challenging crossing of the Darien. However, it is worth highlighting that Hondurans interviewed in Guatemala, comprising 30% of the total interviews, had recently embarked on their journey, making Guatemala their initial transit country.

Data collection in the context of mixed movements presents challenges and limitations due to the fluid nature of these movements. Challenges include the need to reach remote and border areas with limited infrastructure and security concerns. Findings are only representative of the people who were interviewed and cannot be extrapolated to all people on the move. They provide, however, indicative information on the protection environment, protection trends over time, rights violations, and / or risks (threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities) faced by the population engage in mixed movements.

## Data collection locations

Most in-person interviews conducted as part of this exercise took place in border crossings (93%). The others were conducted in strategic locations and facilities (i.e., bus terminals, shelters, reception sites etc.) in capital cities or larger urban centers where people on the move congregate or approach seeking support or assistance.



# Mixed Movements Monitoring results

## Context: Political and normative landscape

The mixed movement of refugees and migrants across borders and regions, involving individuals from various nationalities, has created multifaceted challenges in the Americas. This crisis is influenced by various factors, such as insecurity, violence, poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, and the erosion of public order. These underlying issues persist in many situations leading to displacement within and from the region.

Moreover, the adverse effects of climate-related shocks and hazards, compounded by the socioeconomic repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, have further exacerbated the plight of vulnerable communities already struggling with violence and poverty. Understanding and predicting the ongoing movements within and from the Americas region requires a comprehensive examination of the multiple causes contributing to displacement.

Within the above-mentioned hemispheric context, Central America in particular is currently dealing with a highly complex human mobility crisis. Most individuals engaged in mixed movements from or through Central America are taking part in northbound movement aiming to reach Mexico, the United States or Canada, while others seek protection or economic opportunities within Central America itself. This situation has

given rise to the emergence of a wide array of routes and human mobility patterns.

New U.S. government policies aimed at deterring refugees and migrants from reaching and crossing the U.S. border with Mexico irregularly, coupled with new U.S. 'lawful pathways' initiatives for Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans, have had significant impact on the dynamics of South-North mobility. In particular the introduction of a new U.S. policy framework for Venezuelans in October 2022 disrupted the mobility of this population.

A significant number of Venezuelans en route to the U.S. Southwest border found themselves stranded in transit countries, leading some Venezuelans in multiple transit countries to request support to return to their country of origin or countries of previous residence. The lifting of Covid-era U.S. border restrictions (specifically the Title 42<sup>3</sup> expulsions policy), replaced by a new bar to asylum based on third-country transit (under the regular Title 8 immigration statute) have also contributed to further strain reception capacities at key border crossings and shelter networks in Mexico and further south.

## Demographics



**3,456**

People interviewed between January and March, 2023.



**98%**

of respondents are between 18 and 59 years of age.

2% of people interviewed between 15 and 17 years old.



**65%**

Men

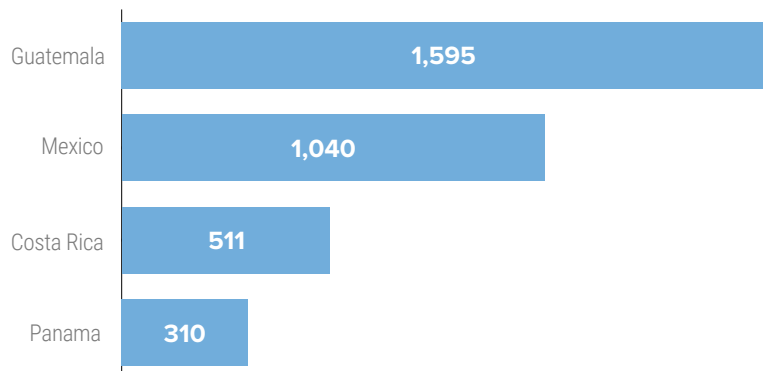


**35%**

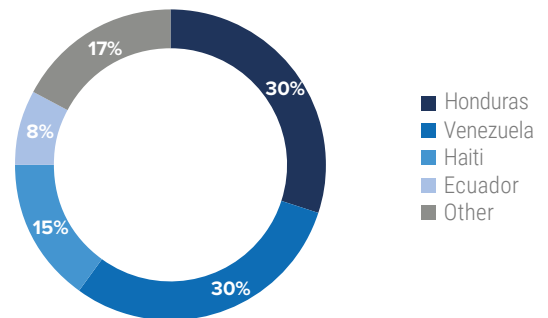
Women

The percentage of men interviewed is the highest in Panama (77%), while the percentage of women interviewed is the highest in Mexico (44%), if compared to other countries.

## Country of data collection



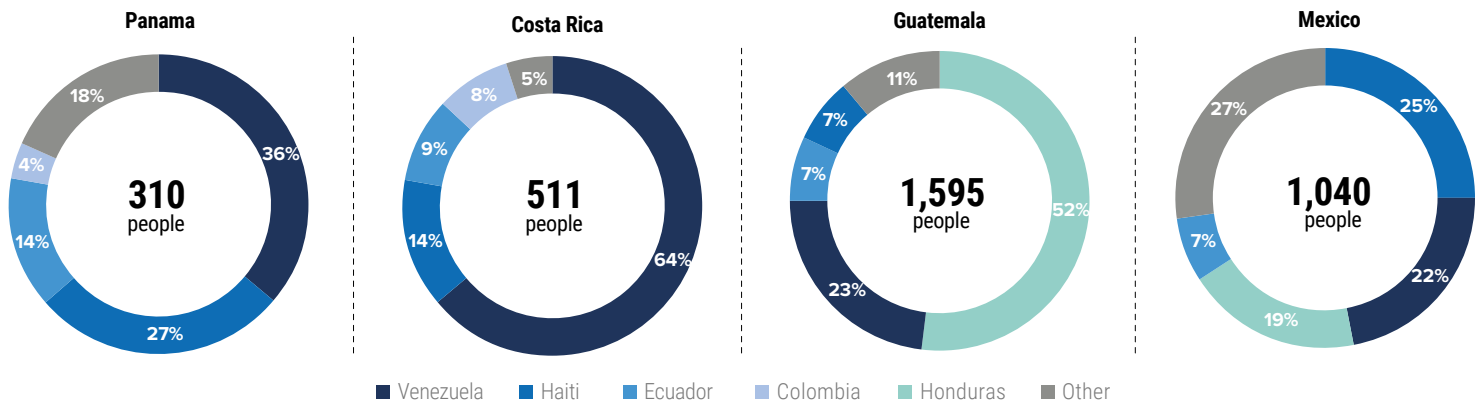
## Countries of origin



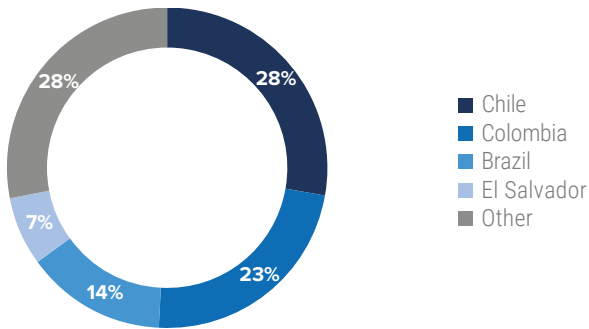
In Panama and Costa Rica, the main nationality interviewed was Venezuelans (36% and 64%, respectively). The main nationality interviewed in Mexico was Haitians (25%). Mexico was the country of data collection with the highest diversity of nationalities interviewed (28 different countries of origin), followed by Panama (24 different countries of origin).

<sup>3</sup> Title 42 was an emergency health regulation that allows the authorities to swiftly expel people crossing the US border irregularly, without giving them the possibility of claiming asylum in the US, on public health grounds.

## Main countries of origin by country of data collection



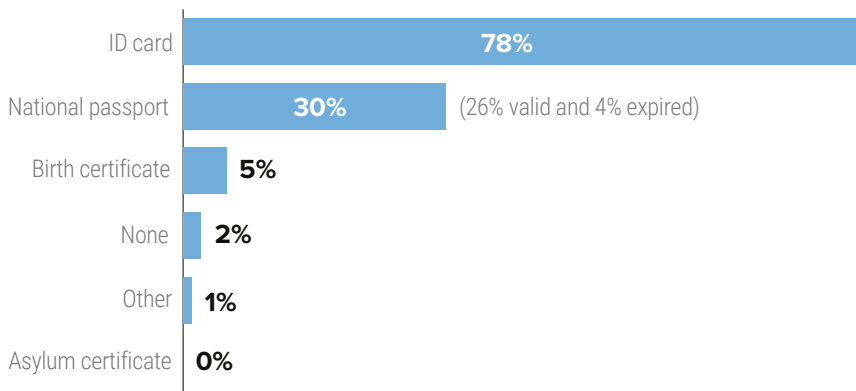
## Country of habitual residence<sup>4</sup>



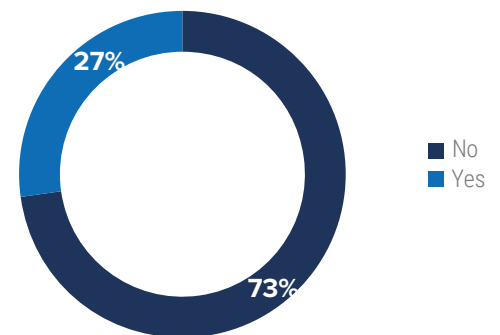
When asked if they had resided in a different country other than their country of nationality (herein designed as "country of habitual residence"), 25 countries were mentioned. The top three countries of habitual residence were Chile (28%), Colombia (23%) and Brazil (14%).

## Documentation and asylum

### Type of document



### Applied for refugee status in country of data collection or another country in the route





A small fraction of respondents in Panama, Costa Rica and Guatemala (4%) have applied for refugee status in the country of data collection or in other countries along the route. However, in Mexico, 80% of the total number of individuals interviewed in the country have formalized an asylum claim. This striking percentage can be attributed to the specific circumstances under which the interviews were conducted, particularly in Tapachula. It is worth emphasizing that the majority of the interviews (64%) took place in the Laureles market, which conveniently lies in close proximity to the office of the COMAR (Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance).

Moreover, Mexico's geographical proximity to the United States plays a significant role in its prominent position as a key transit country for individuals aiming to reach the United States. The combination of Mexico's close proximity to the United States and its asylum system, which facilitates individuals in seeking protection and applying for refugee status, serves as contributing factors to the higher influx of asylum seekers.

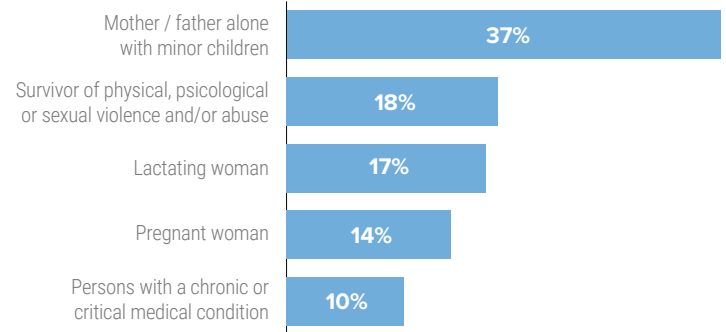
<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this exercise, the term "country of habitual residence" refers to any country where individuals have resided for more than 12 months after leaving their country of origin. This includes the last country where they have lived for an extended period before the data collection took place.

## Specific needs

 **23%** of respondents had at least one specific protection need.

 **18%** of respondents reported physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse.

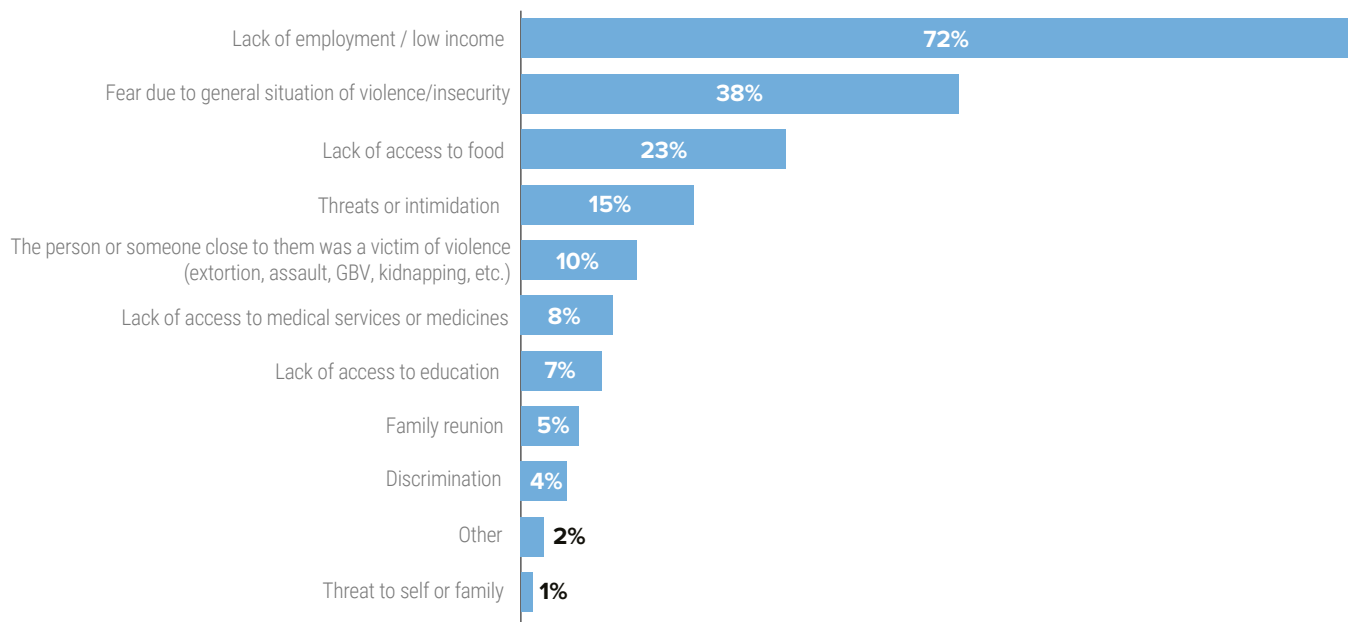
Persons with specific needs are particularly vulnerable to protection risks and abuses as the difficult conditions of the journey heighten their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation and put them at risk of irreversible and lasting harm. In the first quarter of 2023, nearly one in four respondents reported having at least one specific protection need. Among the identified needs, the most prominent was single parents traveling alone with children, accounting for 37% of the cases, indicating a high number of children in transit.



A significant proportion of those interviewed with specific needs have experienced physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse, comprising 18% of the respondents. In comparison to other countries, this stands out as the primary specific need in Panama, accounting for 47% of cases, which is more than double the regional average. The increase is attributed to the context prevailing in the crossing of the Darien, where the incidence of violence is particularly high.

## Displacement

### Motivations (reasons to leave)



An analysis of the full list of reasons provided by interviewees to leave their country of origin shows that a significant number of respondents have mentioned a combination of contributing factors related to both violence and insecurity, and lack of access to basic rights and services (37%)<sup>5</sup>. Most respondents (74%) have mentioned rights-related reasons to leave their country of origin (i.e., lack of access to employment, food, medical services / supplies, education). However, **almost half of the respondents (49%) have mentioned reasons to leave related to violence** (i.e., fear due to general situation of violence/insecurity, threats or intimidation, victims of violence, threat to self or family and discrimination), which evidence presumed needs for international protection.

The proportion of Haitians (67%) citing violence-related reasons for leaving their country of origin is significantly higher than that of other nationalities. They consistently reported a higher prevalence of both generalized and individualized violence as the main factors influencing their decision to leave the country of origin.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the results exhibit considerable variation due to the high number of Honduran nationals interviewed in Guatemala. The majority of Hondurans (87%) in Guatemala reported leaving Honduras for reasons related to their rights, such as lack of employment, insufficient access to food and healthcare, among others. Additionally, one in four of them cited violence-related reasons, including generalized violence, physical threats, and intimidation. When we exclude this specific group from the regional analysis, the percentage of individuals who left their country of origin due to lack of employment decreases from 72% to 65%. On the other hand, the average for respondents who experienced generalized violence increases from 38% to 44%.



**23%** of respondents left the country of origin due to lack of food.

The highest share is found in Venezuela (44%) followed by Nicaragua (28%), Haiti (27%) and Cuba (27%).

Food security continues to represent one of the main push factors behind mixed movements in the region, weighing on the final decision to leave the country of origin.

### Experiences in the route

More than half of the people interviewed have transited through Colombia, followed by Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. This information depicts a complex route of mixed movements that originates in Colombia and spans across multiple countries in Central America.

Some respondents have started their journey as far as Brazil, Chile, and Peru or farther. In the interviews undertaken in Panama and Mexico, around 1 in 5 respondents have listed either Chile, Ecuador or Brazil as a transit country. Haitians are the nationality with the highest number of transit countries reported, including Colombia (82%), Ecuador (57%) and Chile (50%).

### Mixed Movements towards North America



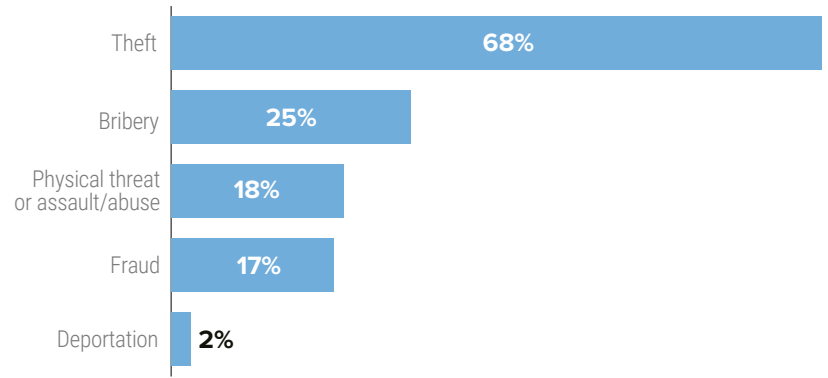
## Protection incidents



# 29%

of the people interviewed have suffered a protection incident or threat in the route<sup>6</sup>.

### Type of protection incidents



- The Darien region in Panama has shown a significant prevalence of theft incidents. Among the individuals who experienced protection incidents in the Darien (27%), over 70% of them reported being victims of theft. Additionally, Panama has the highest percentages of individuals reporting physical threats (39%) and fraud (32%) in the region. These findings are closely related to the substantial number of respondents who have experienced situations of physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse during the crossing of the Darien (47%, compared to the regional average of 18%).
- Among different nationalities, Venezuelans reported the highest incidence of theft (60%), followed by bribery (23%), fraud (23%), physical threats or assaults (23%), and deportation (4%).

## Access to food



# 54%

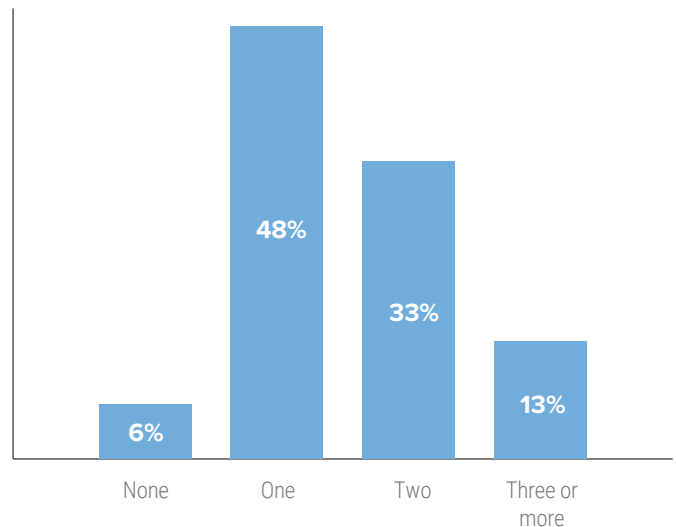
of respondents consumed only one meal or none at all, the day before the interview.



# 24%

of refugees and migrants at the Colombia-Panama border did not eat during the previous day.

### How many meals did you eat yesterday?



Food insecurity remains a pressing issue throughout the journey. Over half of those surveyed (54%) had only managed to have a single meal (48%) or had gone without food entirely (6%) on the day preceding the interview. The situation worsens significantly at the Colombia-Panama border, where one in four migrants and refugees (24%) endured a whole day without food.

This can be attributed largely to the harrowing conditions they face while traversing the treacherous Darien, widely regarded

as one of the deadliest junctures along the migration route. In terms of nationalities, Hondurans show a significantly worse situation compared to others, with 70% having inadequate number of meals consumption (none or only one). This is followed by extra-continental nationalities (68%). Around half of the respondents from Haiti (54%), Ecuador (52%), Colombia (49%), and Venezuela (48%) are also showing very low food consumption levels.

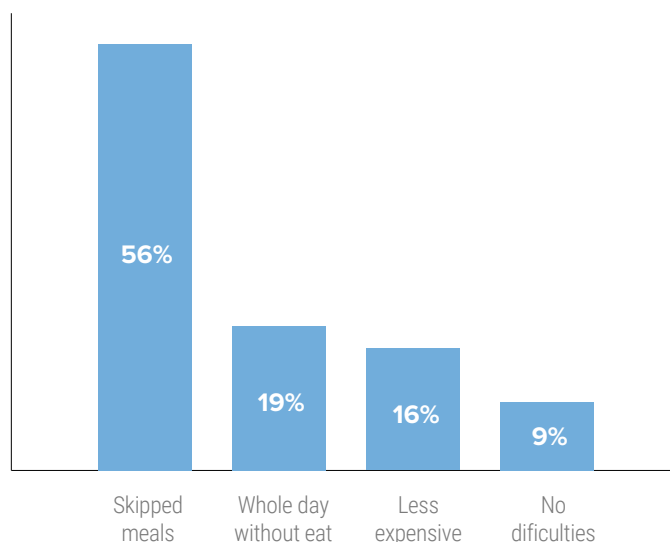
<sup>6</sup> In order to reduce the bias, this percentage of people who suffered a protection incident along the route does not include the high number of Hondurans interviewed in Guatemala who answered the questionnaire and had just started their journey. Most of them had not faced a protection incident (95%) as they entered the country less than a week before the data collection (88%). The vast majority of them have been robbed (92%) in Honduras while en route to Guatemala.



# 91%

of respondents adopted coping mechanisms related to food in the last 30 days, such as eating less, skipping meals, or going without food for whole days.

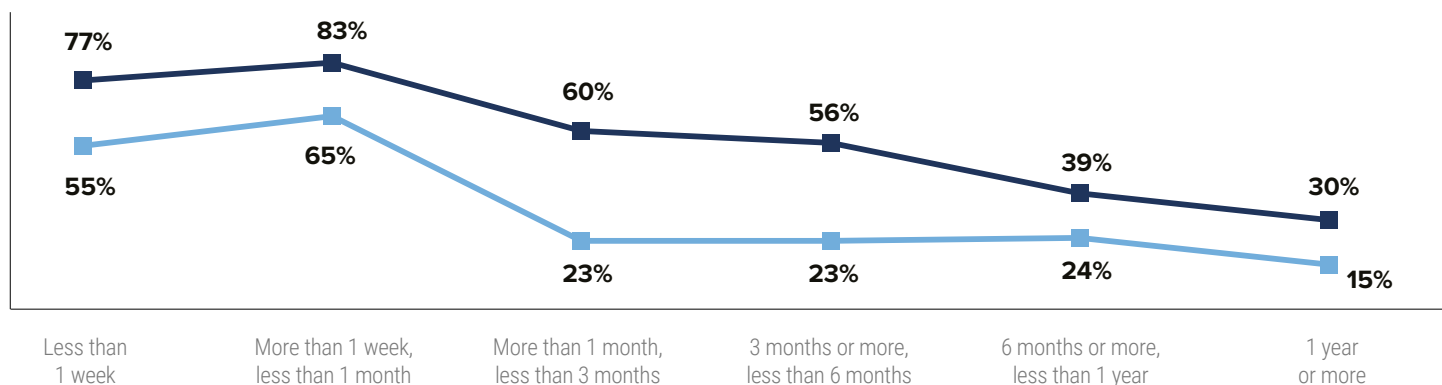
### Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 30 days?



In addition, people were asked about their food situation over the previous 30 days. Overall, only 9% reported having no difficulties. The vast majority (91%) adopted coping mechanisms to face the shortage of food and/or of financial means to access it. These strategies range from eating less expensive and less preferred foods (9%) to skipping meals or eating less (56%), as well as regularly passing whole days without eating (19%). The latter records the highest value in Costa Rica (56%), followed by Panama (27%), Guatemala (13%) and Mexico (8%).

### Food security indicators by time of arrival to country of data collection

- People skipping meals or spending whole days without eating (%)
- People with inadequate consumption of meals (none or one)



One consistent finding is the association between the time of arrival and the food consumption indicators. As the graph above shows, people arriving within the first month show significantly worse consumption and perceived food situation compared to those who settled who can rely on already established livelihood mechanisms.





# 31%

of respondents reported drinking water from rivers, lakes, or rainwater, with higher rates in Panama (91%) and Costa Rica (83%).

In terms of access to water during the journey, markets were mentioned as the main source by 57% of respondents. Humanitarian organization (35%) and local communities (14%) also play a key role in granting access to safe water sources. However, a worrying 31% reported drinking water from rivers, lakes, rainwater. The latter reaches a striking 91% in Panama and 83% in Costa Rica.

Refugees and migrants originating from South America show higher use of rivers, lakes, rainwater as source of water compared to Central American people, which is likely explained by the Darien route. Similarly, refugees and migrants interviewed in Panama report high use of own food (45%) as main source.

## Profiles in the current country



**33% COLOMBIA**  
**26% HONDURAS**  
**9% GUATEMALA**  
**6% CHILE**  
**5% BRAZIL**

Top 5 countries where respondents started their journey.



# 88%

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



# 80%

of respondents have crossed the border on ground transportation<sup>7</sup>.

When asked if the ground transportation was formal or informal, 60% of the respondents used formal means (e.g., public transportation provided by the government) and 40% used informal means. In Costa Rica, almost all respondents (99%) said they had crossed using formal ground transportation.

## UNHCR's Necocli Field Journal<sup>8</sup>: a glimpse prior to the Darien crossing

Necocli is a municipality located in the Northwest of Colombia, on the shores of the Uraba Gulf, and an important transit point on the mixed movement route to the U.S. Southwest border. Maritime transport companies departure from Necocli on a daily basis, heading towards the border with Panama. The costs to cross the 60 km sea route amount to over 200 USD, a figure that many refugees and migrants in transit do not have in savings to afford. The high cost of the crossing results in many of them staying on Necocli's beach for several days or even weeks until gathering sufficient funds to pay for the journey or considering alternative plans.

Data from UNHCR's Necocli Field Journal provides valuable insights into this reality. According to the 61 journal entries of the reporting period, many refugees and migrants arrived at Necocli uninformed about the costs and dangers associated with the onward route. An average of 415 people were reported to be sleeping on the beach daily, facing several protection risks, such as lack of potable water, precarious hygiene and sanitation conditions, violence and xenophobia from the local population. People with specific vulnerabilities are exposed to heightened protection risks in this context. Field staff and partners frequently noted high numbers of pregnant women and children living and working on the beach. Several cases of gender-based and physical violence, child exploitation and abuse, and unaccompanied children and adolescents were identified. While many of these cases were referred to the available specialized services, the journal highlights the urgent need to strengthen the local government's protection services.



# 39%

 Fear deportation

# 37%

 Not able to cover essential needs

**Main concerns in the last week**



# 78%

of respondents need financial means to continue their journey.



# 46%

of people interviewed need food for the family to continue their route.

<sup>7</sup> The question on time of arrival in country of data collection and means of transportation were not asked in Panama, as the interviews are made in the Migratory Reception Stations (Estaciones de Recepción Migratoria – ERM) upon arrival of the Darien jungle crossing.

<sup>8</sup> The Necocli Field Journal is a qualitative data exercise conducted by UNHCR 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.

When examining the data by each country of data collection, distinct patterns emerge in Panama compared to other countries. Notably, concerns regarding physical security constitute the most frequently cited issues (44%). These concerns encompass apprehensions about attacks from individuals or animals, the risk of drownings, falls, and similar hazards. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents (24%) reported observing corpses, while others expressed concerns about the well-being and care of children and dependents such as pregnant women, the elderly, and the chronically ill (20%). These responses are specific to Panama and can be attributed to the risks and threats faced during the arduous crossing of the Darien jungle.

Haitians' respondents had the highest percentage of inability to cover food needs (40%) and other essential needs (health, shelter, water etc.) (32%).

Respondents were asked about **the main needs in the country of data collection and in order to continue their journey**. The main needs are food for the family (46%), shelter (12%) and drinking water (10%), followed by additional categories such as health care and legal assistance less frequently cited (by less than 10% of respondents). Most of the respondents stated that they would prefer to receive support through financial assistance (78%).

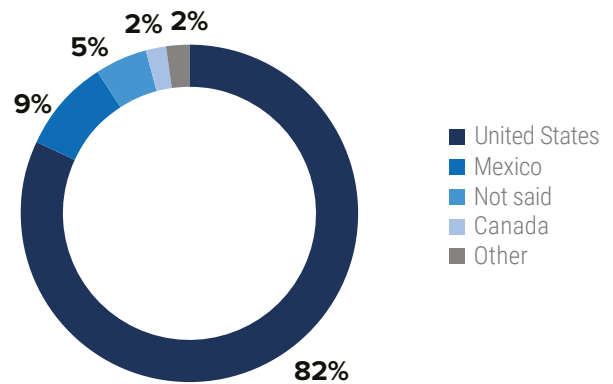
## Intentions



**82%**

of respondents intend to go to the United States.

Intended country of destination



Most respondents intend to reach the United States (82%), while 9% intends to settle into Mexico. In Panama the percentage of respondents who intend to reach the US is slightly lower (77%), followed by 8% of people who want to reach Canada.

A considerable number of people prefer not to share their intended destination. The percentage of respondents who do not wish to disclose their destination is higher in Mexico (17%), as well as amongst Haitians (22%).

## Intentions to return to Venezuela

The Mixed Movements Monitoring also captured the intentions of Venezuelans to return to their country of origin. A smaller sample of 1,016 Venezuelans were questioned about their intentions to return permanently, as well as their reasons to return. Some 14% of respondents confirmed their intention to return permanently to Venezuela (more than half of them were currently in Guatemala and one third in Panama at the time).

The primary reason cited by this segment of the Venezuelan population for their wish to return is to reunite with family members who have chosen to remain in Venezuela (80%). According to the Mixed Migration Centre's 4Mi<sup>9</sup>, additional motivations to return include a perception of improved economic opportunities in the country and the difficulties settling in host countries.



**1,016**

Venezuelans were questioned about their intentions to return to Venezuela.



**14%**

of respondents confirmed their intention to return permanently to Venezuela.



**80%**

of this segment wish to return to reunite with family members who have chosen to remain in Venezuela

<sup>9</sup> Mixed Migration Centre 4Mi. Returning to Venezuela: Drivers, expectations, and intentions. [https://www.r4v.info/sites/default/files/2022-12/Returning\\_to\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.r4v.info/sites/default/files/2022-12/Returning_to_Venezuela_ENG.pdf)

## Conclusions

The Americas region is grappling with an unparalleled and multifaceted crisis of human mobility. Over the past few years, there has been a significant surge in the number of people on the move within the Americas, particularly along the mixed movement route spanning from Colombia to the U.S. Southwest border.

Mixed movements involve individuals with diverse needs and circumstances. Among them are asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless people, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation. Those embarking on these journeys—men, women, and children—have either been forcibly displaced from their homes due to a combination of interrelated factors such as insecurity, violence, poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, and the breakdown of public order. Others are simply seeking a better life and improved opportunities.

To effectively address the challenges posed by this crisis, it is crucial to consistently gather and analyze data on mixed movements across the region. This ongoing effort will provide vital information that can inform evidence-based protection interventions in support of refugees and migrants. By systematically collecting and analyzing data, international organizations and other stakeholders will be equipped with the necessary insights to develop targeted and effective measures to address the complex issues faced by those on the move. The findings of the report aim to offer insights into the complex realities and pressing challenges linked to mixed movements in Central America during the first quarter of 2023.

In terms of demographics, the survey revealed a predominant male presence among the respondents. However, an interesting trend emerged as the journey advanced from Panama to Mexico, showing a significant rise in the percentage of women participating.

The majority of respondents indicated that they carried personal documentation during their journey, with ID cards obtained from their country of origin being the most common form (78%). However, it is noteworthy that only a minority (26%) possessed a valid passport. The percentage of respondents traveling without any form of personal documentation remained relatively low, accounting for just 2% of the total. The data collected on documentation reveals that respondents originating from Caribbean countries, such as Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, have a higher prevalence of carrying national passports compared to nationals of continental countries in Latin America.

The motivations expressed by the respondents when interviewed about their decision to leave their country of origin were characterized by a multitude of complex and interconnected factors. Economic considerations, particularly the absence of employment opportunities (72%), were entwined with the prevailing issues of violence and insecurity in their communities. It is crucial to underscore that a significant proportion of respondents (49%) have raised reasons to leave

their countries of origin related to violence (i.e., fear due to general situation of violence/insecurity, threats or intimidation, victims of violence, threat to self or family and discrimination). This highlights the profound impact that these adverse circumstances have on individuals and their decision-making process and evidences the presumed need of international protection of almost half of the population interviewed. Furthermore, lack of access to food (23%) and the inability to meet basic needs were identified as significant drivers for embarking on the journey. Economic pressures, including the unprecedented levels of (food) inflation in the countries of residence, drastically affected the ability of people to meet their food and other essential needs. In a context characterized by significantly lower purchasing power in which households are progressively eroding their coping capacity, migration can be seen as a last resort coping mechanism.

The transit through multiple countries was fraught with incidents that posed a significant risk to personal safety. Theft was identified as a prevalent issue, with individuals frequently experiencing the theft of their belongings during the journey. Additionally, instances of bribery and fraud were reported, indicating the risk of extortion and exploitation along the way. Furthermore, respondents referred to various forms of physical threats, including verbal and physical aggression, as well as instances of assault and abuse. These distressing incidents highlighted the risks and heightened levels of vulnerability faced by people on the move, who often found themselves subjected to violence and mistreatment during their journey.

Food insecurity remains a significant concern along the route, with over half of those interviewed reporting limited access to meals. This finding is exacerbated at the Colombia-Panama border, where a significant proportion of people faced food scarcity. Additionally, the majority of respondents adopted negative coping mechanisms, such as eating less expensive and less preferred foods or skipping meals, to mitigate the shortage of food and financial means.

The profiles of individuals observed during the data collection indicated that a significant proportion were recent arrivals who predominantly relied on ground transportation for their journey. Among the recurring concerns voiced by these individuals, the fear of deportation emerged as a prominent issue. This fear underscores the vulnerability and uncertainty that many people on the move face in the context of mixed movements, as they navigate unfamiliar territories and legal systems.

In addition to deportation fears, a prevailing challenge highlighted by these individuals was their struggle to meet basic needs. Limited access to fundamental resources, including food, shelter, and healthcare, posed significant difficulties for them. This emphasizes the precarious conditions in which they find themselves, with their well-being and livelihoods at stake.

Moreover, the data collection exercise identified specific protection profiles that shed light on the vulnerabilities of certain groups within the population. These profiles highlighted

the urgent need for targeted attention and support to address the unique circumstances faced by these individuals. Among the identified vulnerable groups were single parents with children, who face distinct challenges and responsibilities. The circumstances of single parenthood can amplify their vulnerability and necessitate tailored support to ensure the well-being of both the parent and the children. Lactating or pregnant women constitute another group with specific protection needs identified.

A notable proportion of the individuals interviewed for the purpose of this exercise indicated specific needs related to being survivors of physical, psychological, or sexual violence and/or abuse, accounting for 18% of the respondents. Notably, the number of survivors stands out as the primary specific need in Panama, reaching 47%. This figure is more than double the regional average. This high percentage can be explained considering the specific context of the Darien crossing, i.e., challenging terrain, limited availability of services and state presence, and the presence and actions asserted by criminal networks and armed groups. These factors particularly contribute to physical threats and fraud,

exposing refugees and migrants to exploitation, violence, and financial abuse during this part of the route.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of mixed movements in Central America, driven by push factors in countries of origin and pull factors towards intended destinations. Addressing the underlying roots of displacement and migration, such as violence, economic disparities, and lack of opportunities, is crucial in effectively addressing the challenges faced by individuals on the move. Efforts to address the protection and support needs of people on the move remain an urgent priority, including the strengthening of available reception capacities and protection services in key hotspots along the mixed movement route.

The insights gained from this report seek to better inform policy and preparedness and response actions to address the challenges faced people engaged in hazardous and risky mixed movements, enabling more targeted and effective interventions to support and protect individuals involved in mixed movements in Central America.



© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

