

December 2023

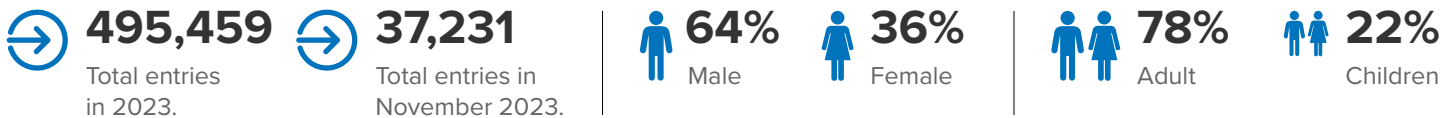
Context

Darien is Panama's largest and poorest province. Bordering Colombia, the province hosts a 60-mile-deep jungle, the only breaking point of the Pan-American highway, linking the continent from south to north. Despite being one of the most dangerous jungles in the world, Darien is a transit location for thousands of refugees and migrants, most of them coming from Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and African and South Asian nations.

Panama's unprecedented mixed movement crisis has been ongoing for over two years. According to National Migration Service (SNM) published statistics, from 2021 to 2023, nearly 900,000 people crossed through this area.

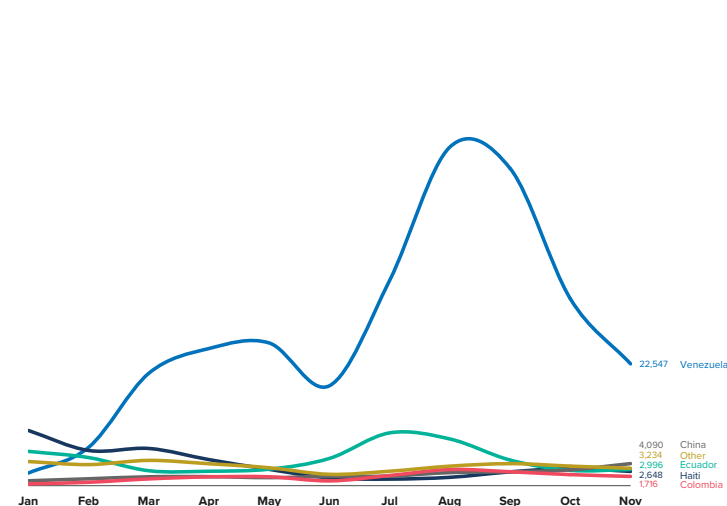


Key Figures



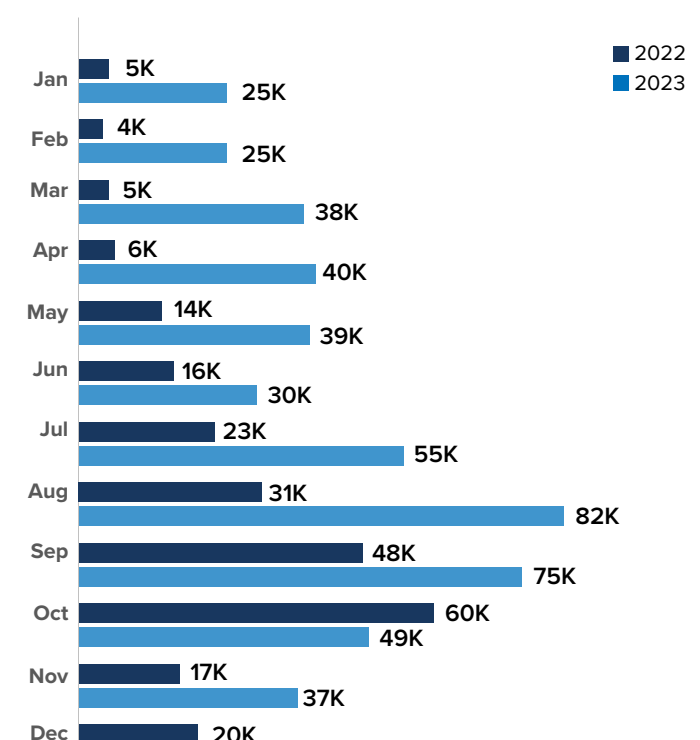
Source: Panama National Migration Service

Main Nationalities entering irregularly through Darien from January to November 2023



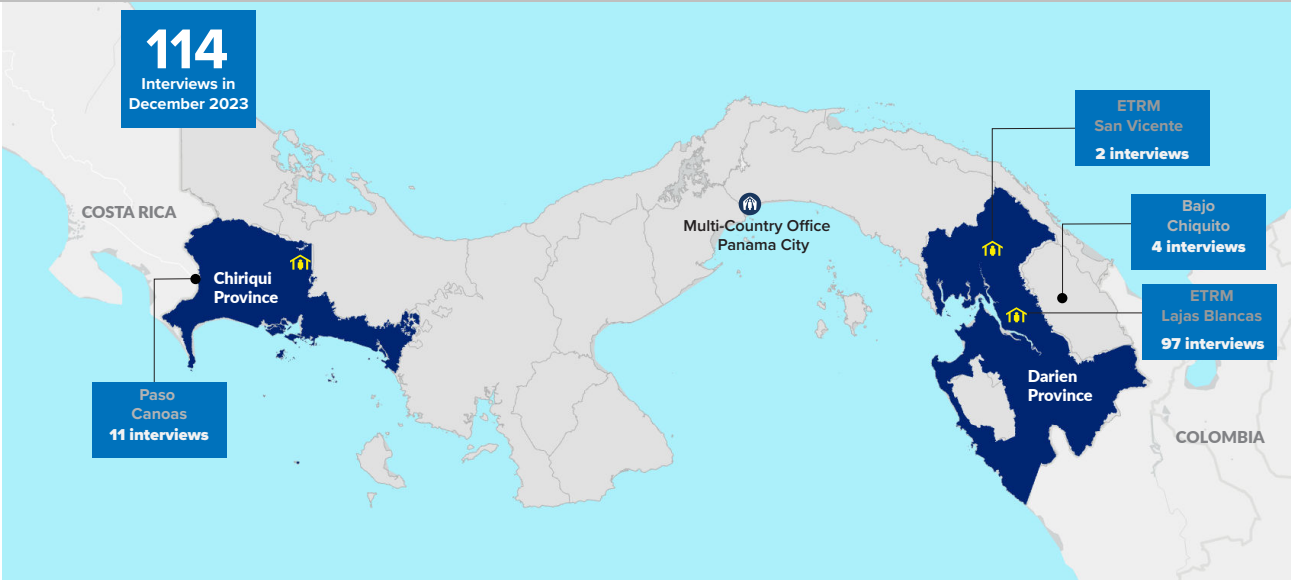
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Venezuela	2,337	7,097	20,816	25,395	26,409	18,501	38,033	62,700	58,716	34,594	22,547
Haiti	10,222	6,522	6,896	4,830	3,023	1,446	1,226	1,559	2,563	3,202	2,648
Ecuador	6,352	5,203	2,772	2,683	3,059	5,052	9,773	8,642	4,744	2,949	2,996
China	913	1,285	1,657	1,683	1,497	1,722	1,789	2,433	2,588	2,934	4,090
Colombia	333	637	1,260	1,634	1,645	894	1,884	2,989	2,570	2,051	1,716
Otro	4,477	3,913	4,698	4,072	3,329	2,107	2,682	3,623	4,087	3,626	3,234
Total	24,634	24,657	38,099	40,297	38,962	29,722	55,387	81,946	75,268	49,256	37,231

Irregular entries through Darien 2022-2023 (in thousands of people)



UNHCR Data Collection

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, collects monthly information on the characteristics, vulnerabilities, and protection needs of refugees and migrants who enter Panama through Darien. The information is compiled through individual interviews conducted in Panama’s Darien and Chiriquí provinces. The preliminary results presented are indicative and should not be interpreted as representative of the total population of refugees and migrants crossing the border through the Darien jungle.



Demography

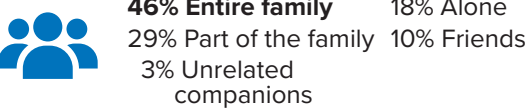
Sex of interviewed individuals



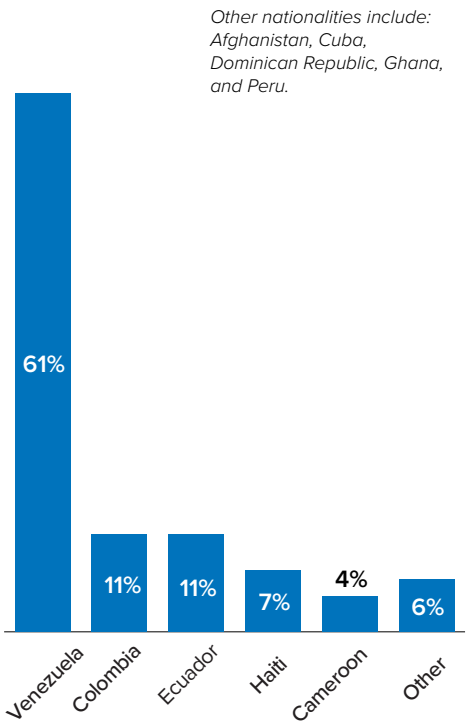
Average age



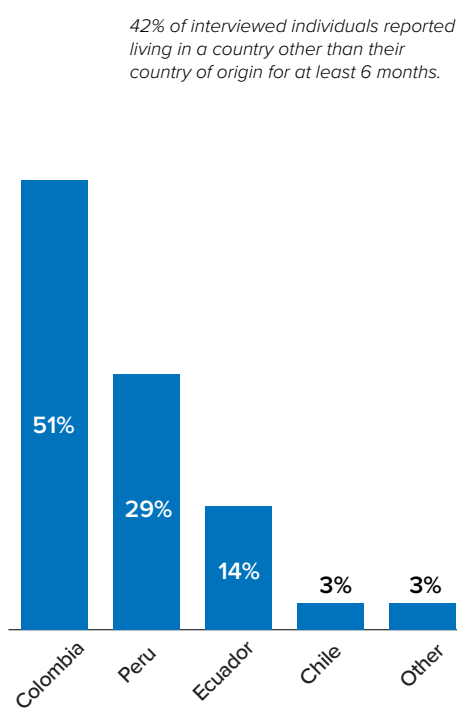
Travel group composition



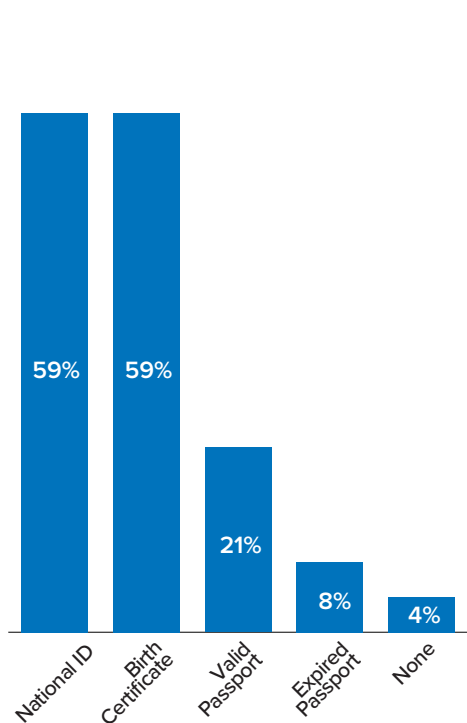
Nationality of interviewed individuals



Last country of residence



Documents carried by the family



Respondent profile

Three in five interviewed refugees and migrants were from Venezuela (61%). Half of them (50%) came directly from Venezuela, a 29% decrease compared to last month, while the remaining half came from other countries of residence, mainly: Colombia (24%), Peru (13%), and Ecuador (7%).

Four in ten participants had applied for legal status in their previous country of residence, and 15% reported having valid documentation from that country.

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported travelling with family, and one-fifth (20%) reported travelling alone or with unrelated companions. Those travelling with children had an average of 2 children, of which 1 was under five. Additionally, 15 childbirths were registered in the jungle this year.

Nearly one-third of respondents (32%) travelled with at least one person with a specific need. In December, there was an increase in the number of people travelling with single parents (12%), and people over the age of 60 (4%).



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



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

Most are planning to stay for less than one year.



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



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

This figure likely represents an underestimation of these incidents.



of interviewed individuals reported travelling with pregnant or lactating women.



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



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



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

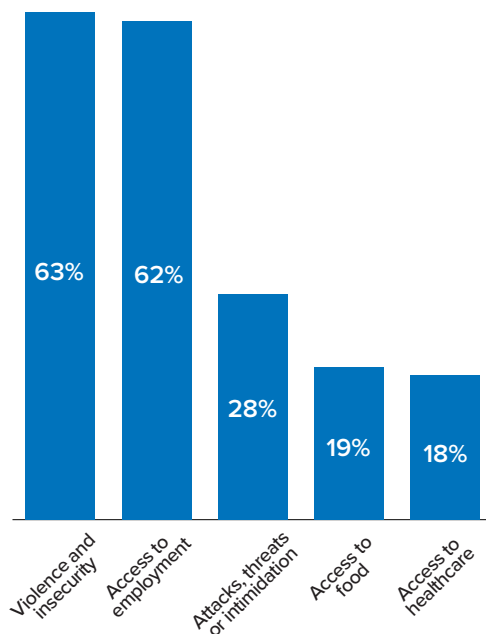


of interviewed individuals reported travelling with an elder in their group.

Push and pull factors

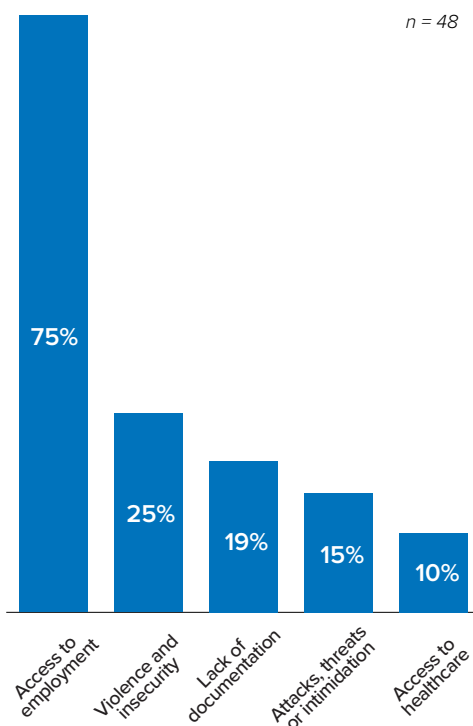
Main reasons for leaving country of origin

61% reported risks if they had to return to their country of origin/residence.



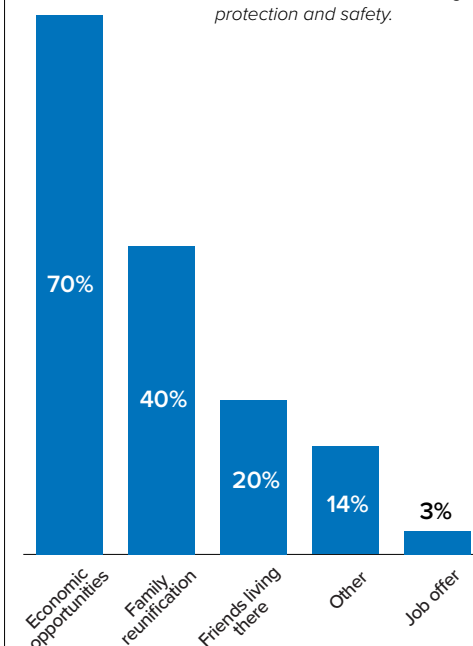
Main reasons for leaving country of residence

n = 48



Reasons for choosing destination country

Most common reasons reported under "Other" include seeking protection and safety.



 **92%**

of interviewed individuals reported the United States as their final destination.

Followed by Mexico (3%), and Costa Rica (2%).

4% preferred not to answer or had not chosen a destination.

 **4 in 5**

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

 **4 in 5**

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

Also received information through social networks, mainly TikTok (35%) and Facebook (25%).

 **54%**

of interviewed Haitians, and Venezuelans reported not receiving information about the new entry requirements to the United States.

Challenges during the journey

 **4 days**

is the average time interviewed individuals crossed the Darien jungle (Min. 1,5 days and max. 8 days).

 **1 in 3**

experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle.

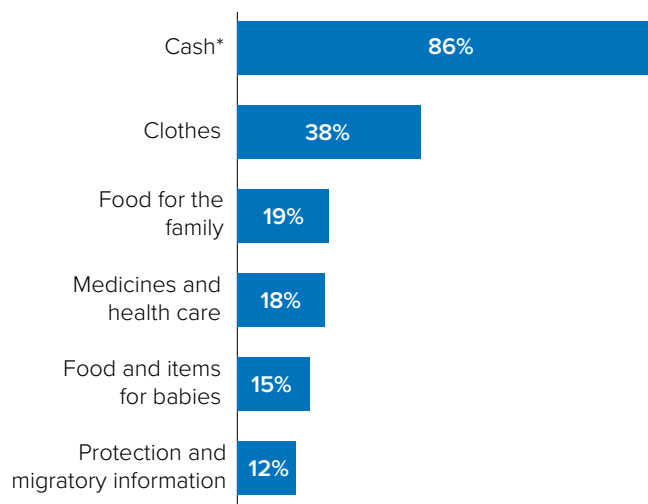
 **24%**

of interviewed individuals reported being victims of theft, scam or fraud during their journey through the jungle. **Additionally, 23% reported being victim of threats, intimidation, and attacks.**

 **69%**

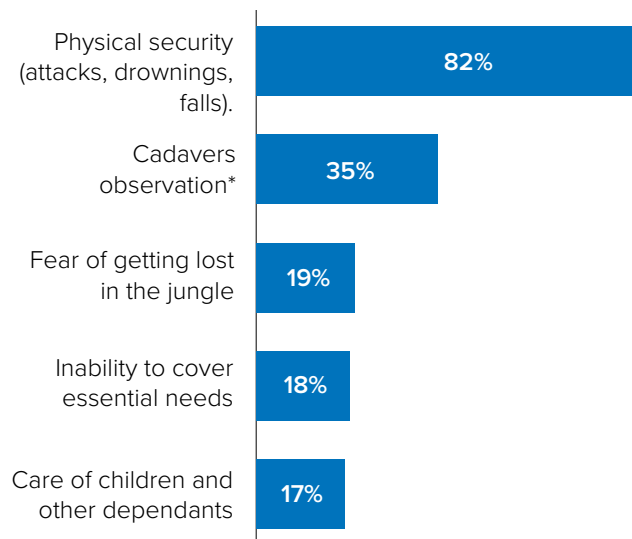
of interviewed individuals paid a person to guide them through the jungle.

Main reported needs for the continuation of the journey



**During data collection, cash for the bus fare was reported as one of the primary unmet needs, especially among families travelling with children.*

Situations that affected people the most while crossing the jungle



**Those who reported seeing cadavers, saw between 1 and 8 cadavers during the seven days prior to data collection.*

UNHCR Multi Country Office for Belize, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua and Southern Caribbean

Data Sources: UNHCR Protection Monitoring, conducted on the 1st to 13th December 2023

Access all our border protection monitoring publications [here](#)

Feedback: panpaim@unhcr.org