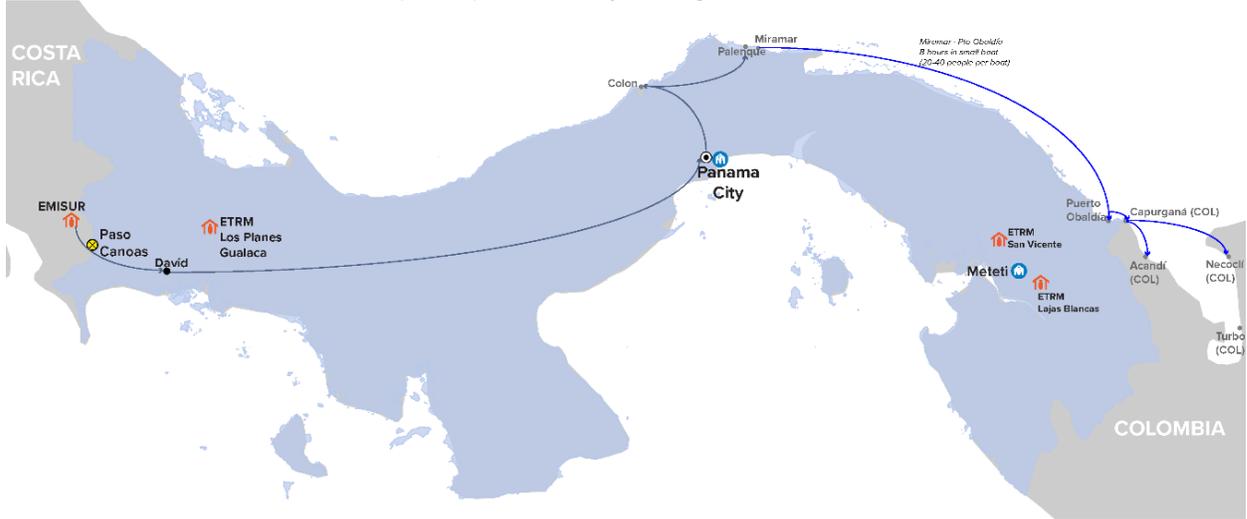


UNHCR Panama Mixed Movements Monitoring

Since mid-January 2025, regional policy changes have contributed to an increase in “reverse flows” from Mexico and the United States toward Central and South America. By December, the Government of Panama had recorded over 22,300 individuals transiting through the country en route to Colombia. Since January, UNHCR, in close coordination with HIAS, has conducted 1,393 interviews with individuals traveling through the provinces of Chiriquí and Colón in Panama. This snapshot presents key findings from these interviews.



PROFILES

According to the Government of Panama, 65% of individuals who crossed Panama toward Colombia were male, 35% were female, and most (79%) were adults. Based on the interviews, the average age was 31 years, and 95% of respondents were from Venezuela, followed by 3% from Colombia.

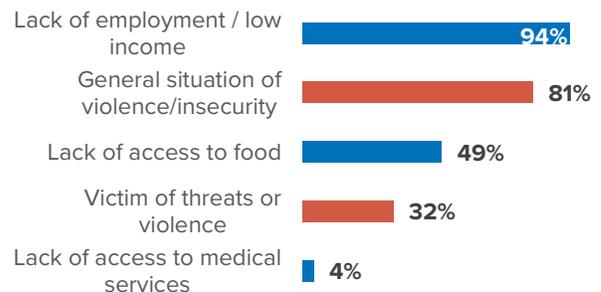
Most interviewees (89%) held a National ID, and only 5% held a valid passport. Approximately 40% had left their country of origin or residence between 1 and 5 years ago, and more than half (58%) had arrived in Panama within the last week. Some 14% reported having legal status in a previous country of residence, mainly in Colombia and Peru.

Several individuals were traveling with family members who had specific needs. 10% were accompanied by children without another caregiver, 8% by a person over 60 years old, 7% by someone with a critical or chronic medical condition, 4% by pregnant women, and 4% by a person with a physical disability. Additionally, around 1% were traveling with

children born during the journey whose births had not been registered with any national authority.

PUSH FACTORS

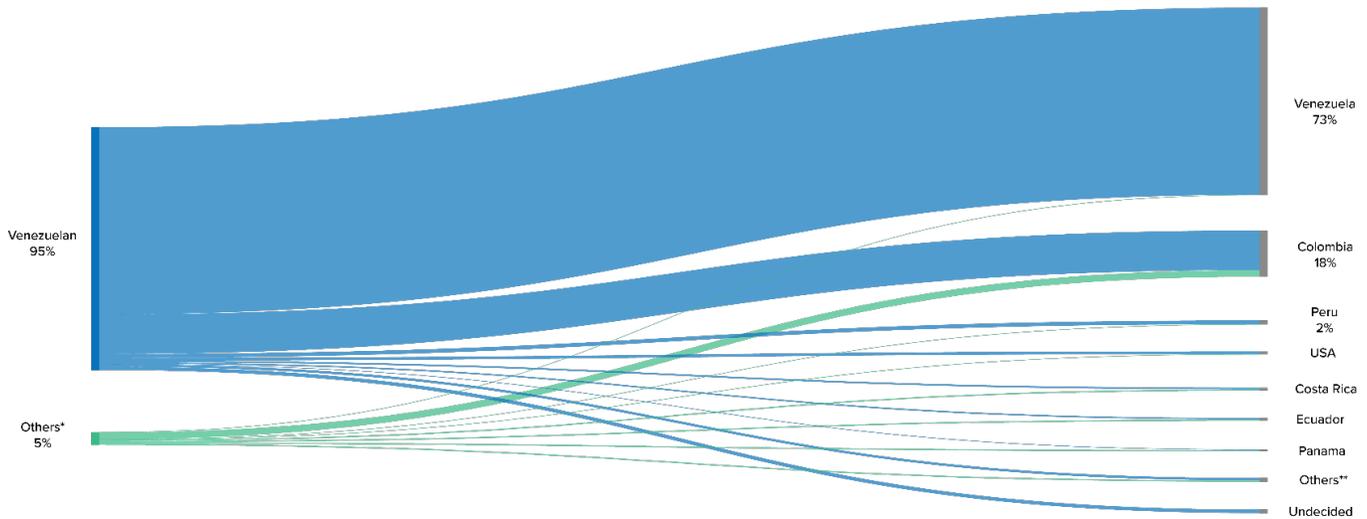
While most interviewees cited lack of employment and low income as the primary reason for leaving their country of origin (94%), a significant majority (86%) reported insecurity and violence as key drivers, highlighting the complex and interconnected factors behind this displacement. **One in ten respondents indicated they fled due to threats, intimidation, or direct violent attacks against themselves or their families.** Consequently, 11% reported having applied for asylum in another country before arriving in Panama; 23% of these applications were granted refugee status, while 54% were still awaiting a decision.



Interviewed individuals by country of origin and intended country of destination

Nationality

Intended country of destination



*Other nationalities include Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, and the United States.

**Other destination countries include Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, India, Mexico, and Uruguay.

Labels are not included for values under 2%.

ORIGIN, DESTINATION, AND TRANSIT

Most Venezuelans reported Venezuela as their country of destination (74%), followed by Colombia (18%) and Peru (2%). Nearly one-third (30%) manifested that they would face risks returning to their country of origin.

Approximately 5% of individuals returning from the United States reported self-deporting, in some cases through official self-deportation programs. During their journey, three in five respondents experienced mistreatment or abuse, and at least one-third were victims of extortion. Across their transit through Mexico and Central America, nearly half (48%) reported being subjected to threats, attacks, or kidnapping. Furthermore, **one in two required legal assistance during the journey, yet the vast majority (90%) were unable to access it.**

In Panama, after entering from Costa Rica, refugees and migrants transited through several remote communities with limited access to essential services. Two main routes were identified for those returning to Colombia by sea: one departing from the province of Colón, through the communities of Miramar and Palenque, and another from Panama

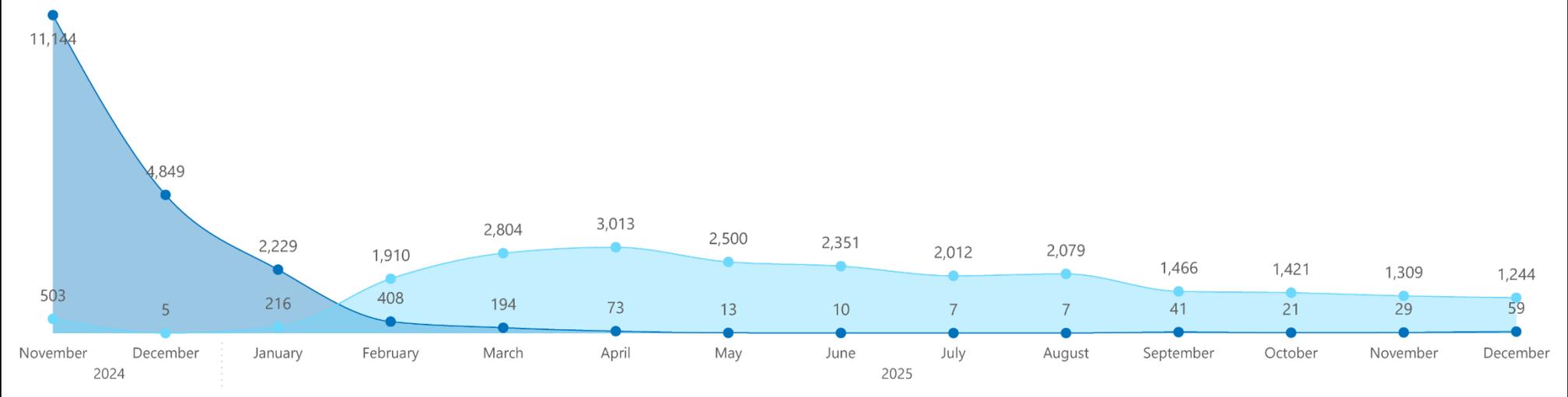
City via the Pacific Ocean, transiting through Jaque in Darien province. Miramar and Palenque, the two key departure points along the Caribbean route, are small communities with fewer than 50 residents each, already facing significant challenges in accessing basic services. Those unable to pay for the boat journey faced very limited income-generating opportunities, leaving some stranded for over three weeks

Sea journeys remain extremely perilous, often undertaken in unsafe and inadequate boats, which frequently result in fatal accidents. In 2025, at least three people lost their lives, including two young girls: in February, a vessel carrying 22 refugees and migrants sank near the Panamanian coast, claiming the life of a Venezuelan girl. Later, in November, another boat accident occurred in a nearby area with 21 people on board, leading to the death of a Colombian girl.

For more information on UNHCR Border Protection Monitoring, visit the [MCO Panama Data Portal](#)

Monthly crossings through Panama, by travel direction

● North ● South



Source: Panama's National Migration Service (SNM)