

REGIONAL MOVEMENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS LAC



IBC Human Mobility

Inter-Agency Coordination
Platform for Refugees and
Migrants from Venezuela

Key Findings:

60%

Drop in U.S. Southwest Land Border encounters from Q1 (84,172) to Q2 (33,776) in 2025 reflects a sharp quarterly decline, reinforcing a downward trend with total encounters **falling from 480,868 in Q2 2024 to just 33,776 in Q2 2025—a 93% annual decrease.**

62%

Decrease in irregular entries to **Honduras** from Q1 (14,300) to Q2 2025 (5,400)- the **lowest quarterly figure recorded since 2021.**

60%

Irregular north-south movement in Panama rose by 60% in Q2 2025 (7,861) compared to Q1 (4,930), with **signs of slowing down in Q3.**

COLOMBIA → ECUADOR
ECUADOR → PERU

Irregular southbound movement from Colombia to Ecuador and further to Peru has increased, particularly among Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

70%

Of migrant and refugee respondents in Mexico **did not intend to return to their countries of origin.**

Food

Is consistently the most urgent need across regional surveys, with children also require psychological support and safe spaces. Shelter and healthcare are frequently mentioned as additional priorities.

Regional Overview:

In the second quarter of the year, overall irregular movement sharply declined, particularly in Central America. Honduras recorded a sharp drop in irregular [entries](#); 5,400 in Q2 compared to 14,300 in Q1, marking the lowest quarterly total since 2021.¹ In Panama, entries through the Darien Jungle dropped significantly, leading to the closure of the Lajas Blancas migration reception center in yet another sign of the shifting dynamics, with Q2 2025 registering only 96 entries—a dramatic 99.89% reduction compared to Q2 2024 (91,055) and a 96.61% drop from Q1 2025 (2,831).²

Meanwhile, a smaller number of migrants and refugees continue to move through Latin America and the Caribbean. In the absence of regular alternatives, many resort to irregular and dangerous routes, exposing themselves to violence and exploitation at the hands of human traffickers, smugglers and non-state armed groups, as well as extreme weather conditions.³

Across the region, available data indicates that many refugees and migrants who initially planned to travel north to the United States are reassessing their plans. Some are returning to their countries of origin, while others intend

to settle in a third country. In Mexico, a survey⁴ conducted in April–May found that over 70% of migrant and refugee respondents did not intend to return to their countries of origin. Southbound movements through Central America are contributing to shifts in mobility across South America. Surveyed intentions show a majority aims to stay in the region, most frequently citing as destination Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Chile. Second-quarter irregular entry and exit data point to increased southbound movement across Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The trend is strongest among Venezuelan refugees and migrants, who registered more exits from Colombia to Ecuador and from Ecuador to Peru compared to the same quarter a year earlier.

In Chile, heightened border enforcement and surveillance have coincided with the use of longer routes. Second-quarter monitoring on the Chile–Bolivia border observed individuals walking extended distances to avoid checkpoints, including through areas with extreme temperatures and adverse weather. During the reporting period, four deaths⁵ were recorded along this border.

1 National Institute of Migration (Honduras), Irregular Migration, <https://inm.gob.hn/migracion-irregular.html>

2 National Migration Service, Panama, Irregular Transit via the Darien, 2025, www.migracion.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/IRREGULARES-DARIEN-2025.pdf

3 National Migration Service (Panama). Report Dirección, 15 September. www.migracion.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/REPORTE-DIRECCION-15-sept.pdf

4 IOM, DTM, Mexico, Síntesis Abril-Mayo 2025, https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11686/files/documents/2025-07/2507-sintesis-dtm-abril_mayo_2025.pdf

5 IOM, Missing Migrants, 2025, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

Movement Trends: Country Highlights

MEXICO Following changes in migration and border policies in the United States (US), movement along Mexico's northern border continued to drop sharply. Data from US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) show a 60% decrease encounters between Q1 and Q2 in 2025, with total encounters in Q2 (33,776) falling to less than one tenth of those recorded during the same period in 2024 (480,868).⁶ Many refugees and migrants were stranded in Mexico or considering return to their countries of origin or other countries.

PANAMA In the second quarter of 2025, Panama continued to experience high levels of north-south movement, with many exiting via both the Caribbean Sea and a new Pacific Ocean route toward Ecuador via Colombia. These routes are associated with life threatening and other serious protection risks. During the reporting period, 7,864 migrants and refugees departed irregularly from Panama to Colombia according to government data, with children making up for around 20% of the recorded exits.⁷ Despite the growing number of exits, only 96 irregular arrivals into Panama through the Darien Jungle were reported during the same period. In response to these dynamics, the Panamanian government closed the Temporary Migration Reception Center (ETRM) in Lajas Blancas in May.

COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
PERU Trends and intentions documented in Central America coincided with changes in mobility patterns in parts of South America. While 2024 was largely characterized by northbound movement of migrants and refugees, the second quarter of 2025 registered an increase in southbound exits, particularly among Venezuelan nationals. In Colombia, exits toward Ecuador (regular and irregular) increased by 77% compared to Q2 2024, while exits to Venezuela decreased by 24%. Similarly in Ecuador, irregular entries from Colombia rose by 8% compared to Q1 2025 and by 23% compared to Q2 2024). Exits toward Peru also increased by 17%.

CHILE
BOLIVIA Chile reinforced border controls through military deployment and technological surveillance, leading refugees and migrants to seek more remote and hazardous routes to avoid detection, extending travel times to shelters.⁸ Recent monitoring in Pisiga-Colchane confirms a shift in movement patterns, with migrants and refugees utilizing longer journeys to bypass checkpoints.



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⁶ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Nationwide Encounters, <https://www.cbp.gov/document/stats/nationwide-encounters>

⁷ IOM, Missing Migrants, 2025, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

⁸ Border monitoring by R4V Support Spaces.

Movement Trends: Return Movement

Venezuela's 'Vuelta a la Patria'-programme continued to support the repatriation of Venezuelan nationals. Since the beginning of the year, several repatriation flights departed from Mexico. A total of 8,743 Venezuelan nationals have returned via flights from Mexico, Honduras and the United States, including 6,777 men, 7, 444 women (52 of whom were pregnant) and 1,182 children.⁹

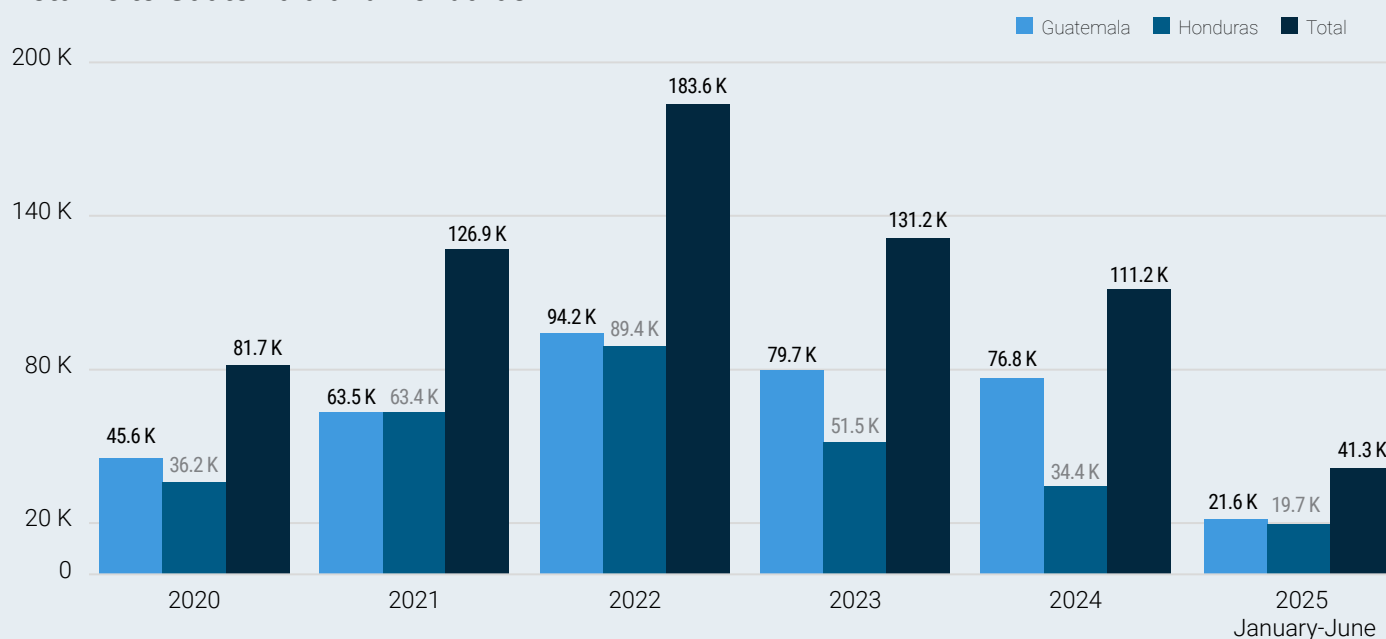
In Central American countries,¹⁰ monitoring findings showed that returns across the region were primarily driven by structural barriers rather than voluntary decisions. Three out of four respondents cited the inability to reach the intended destination as the main reason for returning, highlighting how restricted mobility pathways continue to shape movement. While personal motivations such as family support (26%), cultural ties (6%), and improved social conditions (10%) were also noted, economic reasons declined to just 2%. Notably, 72% of respondents indicated they would face risks—such as violence, persecution, or lack of access to services—if they returned to their country of origin or previous host country. Qualitative data from Colombia and Honduras further emphasized challenges around reintegration, documentation barriers, and the vulnerability of deported children, particularly those with limited ties to their country of return.

Guatemala saw nearly 12,000 returns¹¹ of Guatemalan nationals during the second quarter. Additionally, over 10,000 Honduran nationals¹² returned to [Honduras](#) during the reporting period. These figures represent a slight increase compared to the previous quarter. As well, in both countries, a majority were deported from the U.S.

Chile and Peru continued and intensified the use of expulsion procedures for irregular movements. Chile carried out [107 deportations](#) in Q2 2025, a decrease compared to the 295 expulsions registered in Q1, bringing the total number of expulsions as of mid-June this year to 402. However, the number of expulsions resolutions¹³ rose significantly, with [6,038 issued by the end of May](#), already [exceeding the total](#) for all of 2024 (4,279).

In Peru, 976 administrative sanctions were issued under the [Special Administrative Sanctioning Procedure](#) (PASEE, by its acronym in Spanish), which allows for the expulsion within 48 hours of foreigners in irregular movements or linked to criminal activities.¹⁴ These Q2 numbers nearly doubled the [546 sanctions](#) recorded in the same period of 2024. Tumbes (363) and Piura (331) remained the regions with the highest number of cases.

Returns to Guatemala and Honduras



Source: <https://inm.gob.hn/retornados.html> | <https://igm.gob.gt/informes-estadisticos>

9 TeleSUR TV, "Venezuela rescues 8,743 nationals in the first half of 2025", www.telesurty.net/venezuela-rescata-8743-connacionales-semester/

10 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring Report, Q2 2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118404>

11 Guatemalan Migration Institute, Statistical Reports, <https://igm.gob.gt/informes-estadisticos>

12 Honduran Migration Institute, Return Statistics <https://inm.gob.hn/retornados.html>

13 In Chile and Peru, expulsion resolutions are formal administrative orders to remove individuals following irregular entry to the country or in cases deemed to involve public order or security. In Chile, they are governed by Law No. 21.325 and in Peru, by Legislative Decree No. 1582. These do not always result in immediate deportation and should comply with due process and international protection standards.

14 National Superintendence of Migration (SNM), Local Headquarters (Jefaturas zonales), July 2025.

Intentions and Motivations

In the second quarter of 2025, intentions among refugees and migrants across the region continued to reflect their willingness to stay and settle in the country where they are or search for a third country in South America to move to. In Colombia,¹⁵ 64% of surveyed individuals intended to remain in the country, a slight increase from Q1, while 23% planned to return to Venezuela (up from 17%).

Migrants and refugees surveyed in Ecuador¹⁶ and Peru¹⁷ mentioned economic reasons as the main motivations for moving, followed by presence and/or family reunification. South American countries were most frequently mentioned as their intended destinations. Among Venezuelan nationals, only 25% of the respondents in Ecuador and Peru mentioned to be returning to Venezuela.

In Ecuador, refugees and migrants traveling to Peru, Chile, and Brazil were mainly seeking for family reunification, job offers in agriculture, trade, and fishing. In Peru,¹⁸ stated reasons remained consistent, with job opportunities and family reunification driving decisions to settle, particularly in Lima. However, a higher proportion of individuals entering through Desaguadero reported it was their first time undertaking the journey, and many were still undecided about their long-term plans, reflecting increased uncertainty.

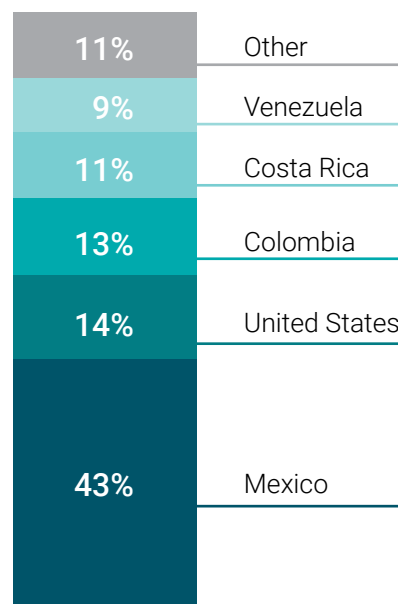
At Peru's southern border, a significant share of individuals entering from Chile cited limited access to employment and food insecurity as key reasons for leaving, echoing Q1 findings but with a stronger emphasis on lack of documentation. Motivations such as employment and family reunification remained central, amidst protection risks, economic instability, and policy shifts shaping movement decisions and intentions across the region. In Central America, data from various surveys show changes in movement trends and intentions. In Panama, a survey¹⁹ conducted at four transit points found that 95% of all southbound migrants and refugees were from Venezuela, followed by 4% from Colombia. Most Venezuelans reported returning to Venezuela, with 10% heading to Colombia. More than half (60%) cited changes in migratory policies as their reason for returning.

In Guatemala, flow monitoring across four border areas²⁰ showed that 77% of refugees and migrants engaging in southward movement were Venezuelan and 14% Honduran nationals. Most Hondurans were returning home, and 56%

of Venezuelans indicated that they were travelling back to their country of origin. In contrast, most of the northbound refugees and migrants were Honduran (82%), had United States as main destination country, driven mainly by economic reasons.

Another monitoring exercise²¹ conducted in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica during the second quarter of 2025 among refugees and migrants –primarily nationals of Venezuela, Hondurans, and Cubans—revealed a notable shift in preferred destinations. Mexico was identified by 43% of respondents as their intended destination, surpassing the United States (14%) for the first time since data collection began. The most frequently cited reasons for choosing a destination included better economic opportunities (66%), the presence of family (26%) or friends (17%), and access to services or asylum. If unable to reach their intended destination, 65% of respondents indicated they would remain in their current location, while only 11% would return to their country of origin—a significant decrease from 26% in the previous quarter. Additionally, 11% planned to stay in the country where they were interviewed.

Intended country of destination



Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q2 2025.

¹⁵ IOM, DTM, Flow Monitoring, Colombia, Q2 2025.

¹⁶ IOM, DTM, Flow Monitoring, Ecuador, Q2 2025.

¹⁷ IOM, DTM, Flow Monitoring, Peru, May-June 2025.

¹⁸ UNHCR, Border Monitoring - Tumbes, 1 April to 30 June 2025, internal report.

UNHCR, Border Monitoring - Tacna, 1 April to 30 June 2025, internal report.

UNHCR, Border Monitoring - Madre de Dios, 1 April to 30 June 2025, internal report.

IOM, DTM, Tumbes, Tacna, and Desaguadero, 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025, internal data.

¹⁹ IOM, DTM, Flow Monitoring, Panama, Q2 2025.

²⁰ IOM, DTM, Flow Monitoring, Guatemala, Q2 2025.

²¹ UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring Report, Q2 2025. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118404>

Protection Incidents along Routes

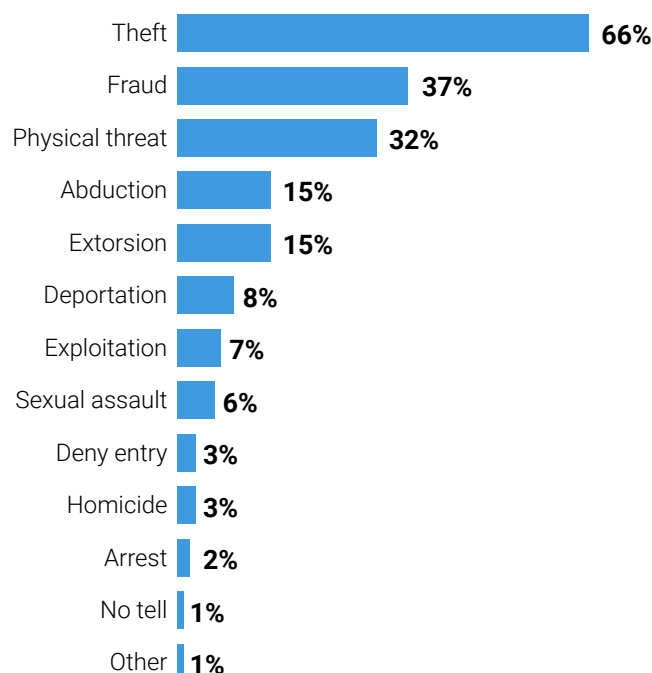
In response to continued arrivals of migrants and refugees traveling along north-south routes via the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea toward Colombia, the [Office of the Inspector General](#) in Colombia issued a warning about a potential humanitarian crisis. The alert highlighted that most individuals—primarily from Venezuela, India, Afghanistan, Colombia, and Ecuador—face serious risks, including scams, discrimination, arbitrary detention, and harassment by non-state armed groups controlling irregular routes.

Protection monitoring across Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica²² revealed that over half of the refugees and migrants interviewed (53%) experienced at least one protection incident during their journey. Among individuals who left their country of origin between one month and one year ago, 48% reported experiencing a protection incident. Furthermore, 65% of respondents traveling with family and accompanied by children reported a protection incident or threat, compared to 48% of those traveling without children.

Between 2014 and June 2025, a total of 11,258 cases involving refugees and migrants have been recorded across the Americas.²³ The actual number is likely much higher, as many deaths go unreported. Drowning remains the leading cause of death in the region, followed by exposure to harsh environmental conditions and the lack of adequate shelter, food, and water. Since 2014, 504 children have died or gone missing. During the second quarter of 2025 alone, five child deaths were recorded.

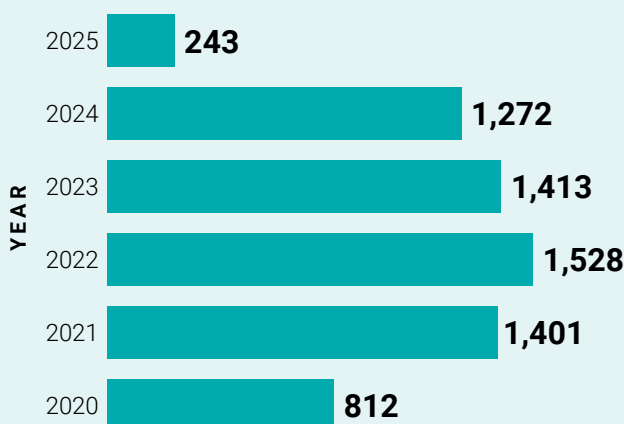
Protection incidents along the route

This question allows multiple selections; therefore, the total percentage may exceed 100%.



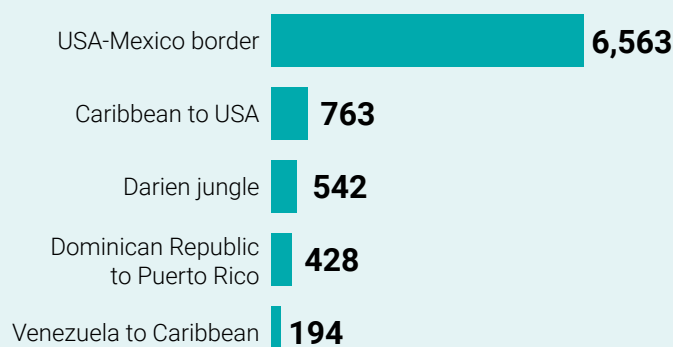
Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q2 2025.

Dead and missing migrants by year



Source: IOM, Missing Migrants, 2025, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int>

Dead and missing migrants by main routes



²² UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring Report, Q2 2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118404>

²³ IOM, Missing Migrants, 2025, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>