



Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

IBC Human Mobility

# REGIONAL MOVEMENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS LAC

## Key Findings<sup>i</sup>



U.S. Southwest Land Border encounters remained at historic lows in Q4 2025 (32,661) – still **3% below Q2 2025 (33,776)**, sustaining the sharp downward trend from the Q1 2025 peak (84,172). Mexican nationals accounted for **76% of all encounters**, continuing to dominate the nationality profile of arrivals.



Irregular northbound entries to **Honduras more than doubled from Q3 (6,622) to Q4 (13,064)** – signaling a strong reversal after the record low in Q2 2025, with Q4 figures **nearly matching the Q1 2025 peak (14,300)**. Despite a 90% decrease of people heading North compared to 2024, Cubans accounted for 45% of northbound transit movements, followed by Haitians (34%).



Irregular reported north-south movement in Panama totalled 9,276 in Q3 and Q4 2025 combined, with Q4 alone (3,719), represented a **53% decline compared to the Q2 2025 peak (7,864)**, with an accelerating downward trend closing the year at 3,719 in Q4.



Decline in combined facilitated returns\* to Guatemala and Honduras in 2025 (98,204 total) – well below the 2022 peak of 183,600. Guatemalan returns fell to their **lowest level since 2020 (55,276)**, while Honduran returns increased by 24.8%, reversing three consecutive years of decline.

\*not including spontaneous self-organized returns.



Of respondents in Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Chile, Honduras, and Bolivia did not know or had not decided their next steps in Q4 2025.



Food remained the top self-reported need in Q4 2025 – cited by over half of all respondents despite a 15 percentage-point drop from Q3 (72%) – while need for asylum and migration information nearly doubled (from 14% to 22%), reflecting a shift from acute survival needs toward protection and legal gaps as journeys stall.

## Regional Overview

During the second half of 2025, refugee and migrant movements across Latin America and the Caribbean were increasingly shaped by more restrictive policy environments, heightened security focus, and limited access to regular movement and stay options. These dynamics contributed to a sharp contraction in northbound mixed movements, while return dynamics—whether temporary, deportation-related, or exploratory—became more prominent. While Q3 showed relative stabilization in some corridors, Q4 was marked by a more pronounced slowdown, driven by both seasonal factors and tightening mobility conditions.

Northbound movements toward the United States remained comparatively low by historical standards, despite a slight uptick in Q4. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recorded 32,661 encounters at the Southwest land border, an 11% increase from Q3. However, this level remained significantly below 2024 and early-2025 figures. Mexican nationals continued to dominate the profile of arrivals, representing 76% of all encounters, underscoring the diminished presence of South American and extra-regional nationals along this route during the semester.

Across the region, control- and security-centred policies, together with increasing political attention and debate over cross-border movements, have significantly influenced mobility patterns and dynamics. While movements in Q3 still reflected adaptation to earlier shifts in policies, Q4 saw mobility constrained by expanded states of emergency, militarized border operations, reinforced surveillance systems, and temporary border closures. These measures reduced options for regular transit across the Andean corridor and complicated decision-making for refugees and migrants contemplating onward movement.

Meanwhile, southbound movement through the Colon route continued its sustained decline. Panama registered 3,719 southbound transits in Q4, a 33% decrease from Q3. Cumulatively, from January to December 2025, authorities recorded 22,578 people travelling southward, 93% of whom were Venezuelan nationals—confirming the consolidation of reverse-direction flows toward Colombia throughout the year. These reduced flows echo broader semester trends: fewer people attempting northbound journeys and more turning back or seeking alternatives within South America due to risks, enforcement, or lack of viable northbound pathways.

<sup>i</sup> UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q4 2025. Data collected for Q3 includes information from Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, and Bolivia. Data collected for Q4 additionally includes Honduras and Chile.

Seasonality also shaped Q4 dynamics, especially among Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Temporary return movements linked to holidays, family reunification, administrative needs, and short-term stays were widely documented. Brazil exemplified this trend: exits through Pacaraima increased in December, and intention monitoring confirmed that most travellers planned only brief returns before re-entering Brazil.

Ecuador diverged sharply from typical seasonal patterns, as December did not bring the usual increase in exits; instead, mobility remained unusually low throughout Q4. According to R4V partners, this subdued movement was driven by multiple factors, including uncertainty about conditions in Venezuela, instability and political tensions in key transit and reception countries such as Peru and Chile, and increasingly

restricted mobility options linked to militarization and border closures. Limited economic resources further constrained onward journeys for many refugees and migrants. In addition, the five-week national strike, temporary closures of secondary border points, and ongoing legal reforms collectively depressed mobility across both Q3 and Q4.

By the end of 2025, the combined effects of enforcement measures, insecurity, political volatility, and constrained access to regular pathways resulted in a semester marked by lower overall mobility, increased short-term circularity, and heightened uncertainty. Refugees and migrants increasingly opted to pause movement, remain in place, or travel temporarily—rather than undertake longer, riskier, or more restrictive routes.

## Movement Trends: Country Highlights

### ARUBA CURAÇAO

Irregular maritime movements of Venezuelans toward the Caribbean islands of Aruba and Curaçao appeared to decline during the second half of 2025. Only one boat carrying 16 Venezuelans was reported in July en route to Aruba was intercepted by Coast Guard authorities. Increased interdictions and enforcement at sea are likely to have had a deterrent effect on irregular movements of migrants and refugees from Venezuela to neighbouring islands.

### BRAZIL

Brazil maintained a stable movement pattern of Venezuelan migrants and refugees across Q3 and Q4. In Q3, entries increased by 16% and exits by 14% compared with the previous quarter, although entries were slightly below Q3 2024 (-3%) while exits exceeded the same period in 2024 (+10%). This stability continued into Q4, with a net balance of around 29,000, almost identical to Q4 2024, despite an overall year-on-year decline in total flows (-13%). Entries in Q4 remained broadly stable compared with Q3, while exits rose modestly, reflecting a seasonal end-of-year increase. Pacaraima remained the principal entry point, registering higher activity than in Q3, although its share decreased in December. Movements were predominantly regular, and December exits largely reflected temporary returns for family visits or administrative reasons, with no notable large-scale return dynamics observed. Cuban migration into Brazil intensified significantly in 2025. Although, net migration decreased during the last semester (2,472) compared to first semester (4,178). The State of Roraima is the main land entry point (Bonfin /Guyana and Pacaraima/ Venezuela borders).

### CHILE

Pre-election context and the presidential elections led to intensified uncertainty among refugees and migrants in Chile given strong political messaging around enforcement and deportations. Movement data confirms that Chile maintains a negative migratory balance for the Venezuelan population, with more exits than entries in both regular and irregular movements. Although December data was incomplete, irregular movement remained steady, and the land route with Peru continued to concentrate the majority of movements. The [Integrated Border System \(SIFON\) was also expanded](#) during the final quarter of the year, implying stricter border surveillance and enforcement along northern borders.

## Movement Trends: Country Highlights

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**COLOMBIA** According to *Migración Colombia* data, Venezuelan nationals continued to represent the majority of entries to Colombia (88%), while movements of Ecuadorian nationals fell (from 11% in Q3 to 8% in Q4) due to deteriorating security and administrative conditions along the southern border. Violence and the presence of non-state armed groups and criminal organizations along key transit corridors, particularly in Nariño and Putumayo, has significantly increased risks for refugees and migrants in transit, further discouraging regular cross-border movement. Venezuelan movements showed a seasonal increase at the end of the year, with entries and exits rising compared with Q3 but remaining well below Q4 2024 levels. Regular movements increased, with over 80% of entries and exits occurring through formal border points, while irregular movements declined significantly compared with both Q3 2025 and Q4 2024.

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**ECUADOR** After the sharp increase observed in Q3, Venezuelan mobility in Ecuador declined significantly in Q4, totaling 122,908 movements—a reduction compared with both Q3 and Q4 2024. The drop was driven primarily by a substantial decrease in exits, resulting in a nearly balanced flow of entries and departures. Most irregular entries continued through the Colombia–Ecuador border, while flows at the Peru border remained nearly symmetrical. As a result, Ecuador closed the year with contained, low intensity mobility, and notably without the usual December seasonal increase.

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**MEXICO** Migration dynamics during Q3 2025 reflected shifting enforcement approaches and mounting operational pressures. Intensified interception activities by the National Migration Institute (INM) in Chiapas, Tabasco, and along the northern border resulted in higher numbers of people stranded in key transit locations. At the same time, the asylum system faced mounting strain, with processing times extending beyond one year. up from an average of eight months, and nearly 70% of asylum applicants remaining without documentation, increasing vulnerability and limiting access to essential services.<sup>1</sup>

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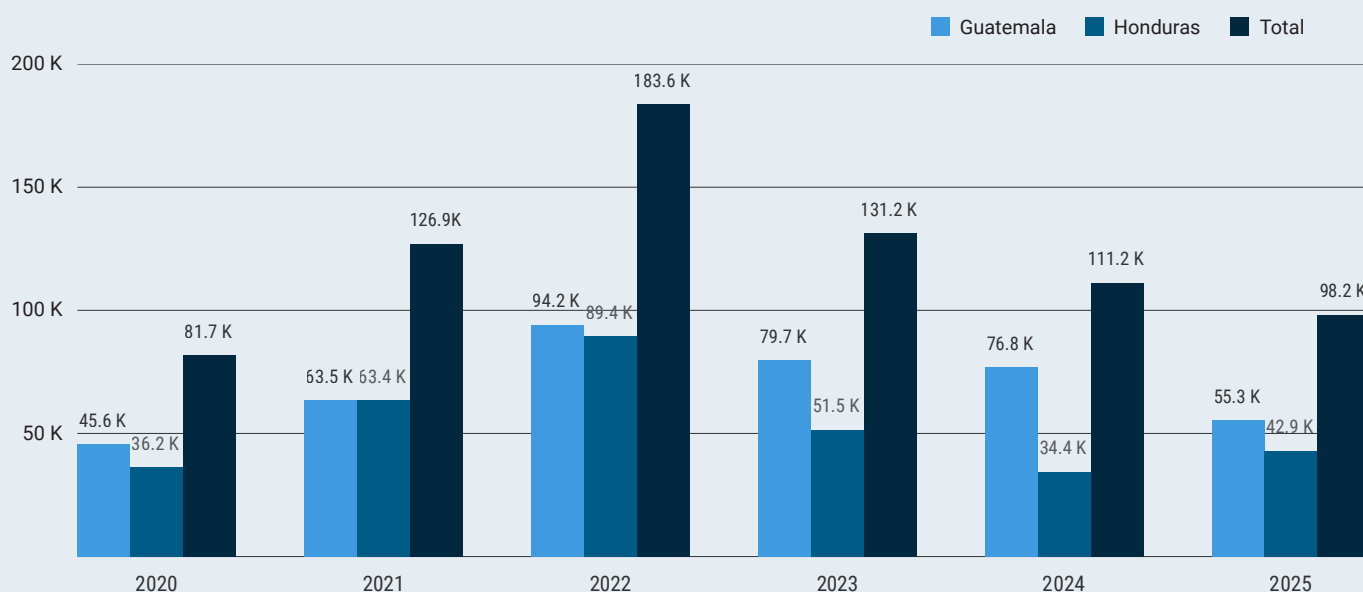
**PERU** Peru saw reduced mobility of Venezuelan nationals in Q4 2025, with entries falling and exits rising, returning to a negative net balance. Compared with 2024, overall movement remained lower, especially entries. Tacna continued as the main entry point, while Tumbes became the dominant exit corridor, with a clear increase in December. These trends point to greater return or redirection of movement toward Ecuador or Colombia, and a sustained decline in flows relative to the previous year.

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1 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mexico Protection Monitoring Report, Q3 2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/121431>.



## Returns to Guatemala and Honduras



Source: IOM Honduras and Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración (IGM).

## Intentions and Motivations

Intentions and motivations depended largely on the point of data collection, nationalities and directionality. For example, respondents interviewed in Mexico were more likely to intend to remain in the country of interview (51%), with 64% reporting no intention to return to their country of origin. At the time of the interview, only 28% of respondents indicated that the United States was their intended country of destination.<sup>8</sup>

In Panama, return flows predominated among Venezuelan nationals (64%), with 76% of respondents intending to return to their country of origin. Northbound transit toward the United States was more prevalent among Honduran (59%) and Cuban (84%) respondents interviewed in Costa Rica and Mexico. In Chile, most respondents (49%) intended to stay in the country of interview, while those in Bolivia were predominantly planning to move onward (78%), reflecting active intraregional repositioning.<sup>9</sup>

Across the second semester of 2025, reported intentions shifted notably, reflecting growing uncertainty and changing conditions along key routes. In Q3, the most commonly reported intention was to return to the country of origin (37%), followed by staying in the country of interview (27%),

with equal shares planning to move onward or reporting uncertainty (18% each). By Q4, uncertainty rose sharply to become the leading response (30%), while the intention to return fell to 24% and onward movement to 17%. The proportion intending to stay remained relatively stable at 29%. This increase in uncertainty across the semester may reflect the cumulative toll of difficult journeys, evolving conditions in both origin and destination countries, and the challenges people face in planning amid instability.

Intentions varied considerably by nationality. Cubans and Haitians showed the strongest preference for remaining in the country of interview across both quarters, while Venezuelan respondents expressed a notable intention to return in Q3 (52%), declining to 35% by Q4 alongside a rise in uncertainty (27%). Honduran respondents showed particularly high levels of undecidedness in both quarters (56% Q3, 39% Q4), suggesting prolonged limbo for many in this group. The share of people who had changed their intended destination since leaving their country of origin increased from 15% in Q3 to 25% in Q4, pointing to growing route and destination flexibility likely driven by changing border conditions and enforcement dynamics.

8 IOM, Mexico, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Síntesis México, September-December 2025, [https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11686/files/documents/2026-02/2512-sintesis-dtm-nacional-sep-dic\\_0.pdf](https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11686/files/documents/2026-02/2512-sintesis-dtm-nacional-sep-dic_0.pdf).

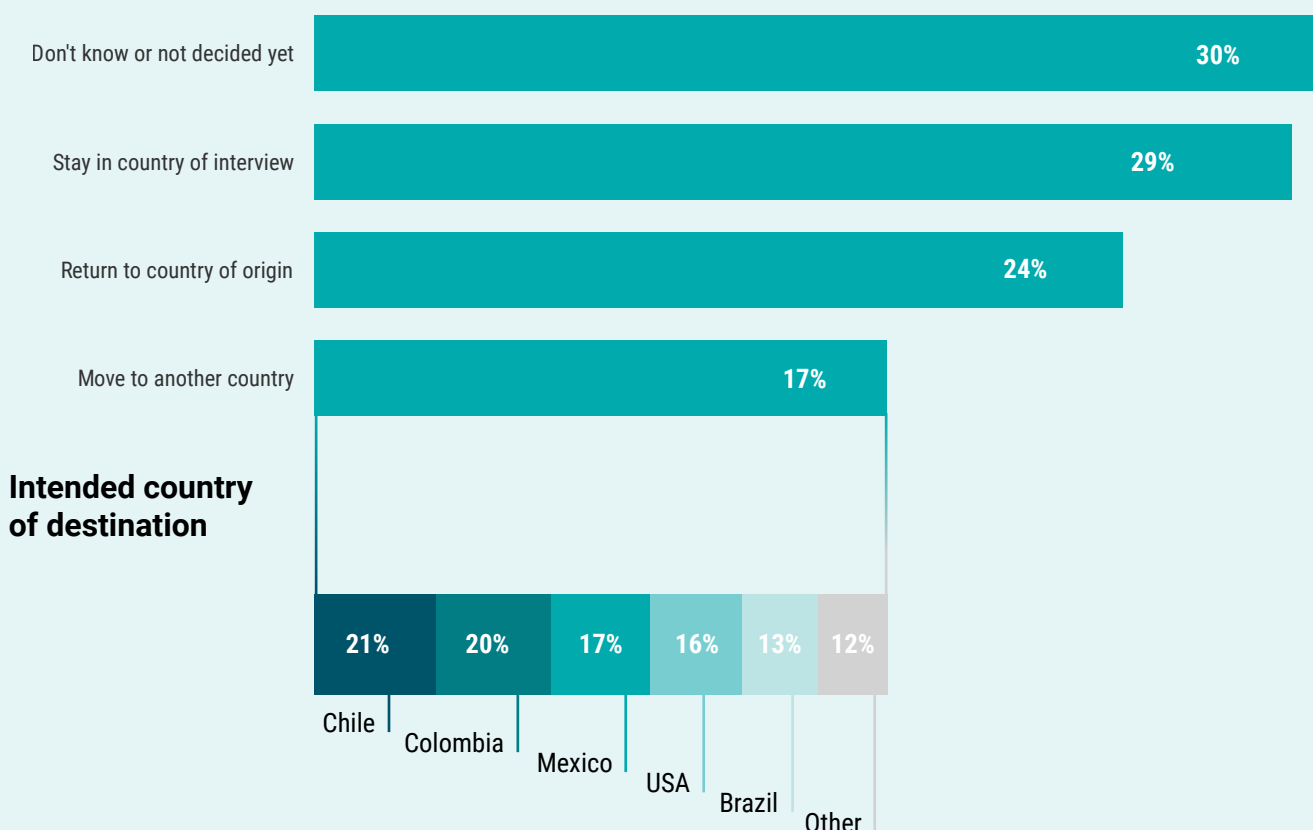
9 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q3 and Q4 2025 (Q4 not yet published), <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/120934>.

The United States remained the most frequently cited original intended destination across both quarters of the semester, though its prominence declined from 67% in Q3 to 59% in Q4. Chile rose as a destination of current interest, moving to the top position in Q4 (21%), while Colombia remained consistently prominent – particularly among Venezuelan respondents navigating southbound routes.

A particularly significant shift across the semester relates to perceptions of risk upon return. In Q3, 44% of respondents reported perceiving no risks in returning to their country of origin. By Q4, this had fallen substantially to 29%, while

concerns about individualized violence or persecution rose from 29% to 35%, and lack of access to basic services increased from 20% to 33%, becoming the two leading concerns upon return by year-end. This shift suggests that for a growing number of people, conditions in countries of origin are perceived as having deteriorated over the course of the semester, reinforcing the constraints on voluntary return and underscoring the importance of understanding the protection and socioeconomic dimensions shaping people's decisions.

### Intention to stay, move or return



Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q4 2025. Data collected for Q3 includes information from Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, and Bolivia. Data collected for Q4 additionally includes Honduras and Chile.

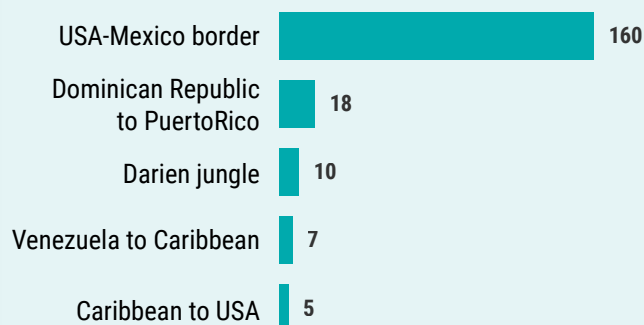
## Protection Incidents Along Routes

Across the second half of 2025, protection monitoring<sup>10</sup> along transit routes in Latin America and the Caribbean points to a sustained and worsening trend. In Q3, 59% of respondents reported experiencing at least one form of mistreatment or abuse during their journey, rising to 61% in Q4 – a figure that has increased consistently since Q2 (53%). Threats and intimidation were the most frequently reported incident type in both quarters, rising from 43% to 50%, and were the only major category to increase over the period. While some incident types – including kidnapping and abduction, extortion, denial of entry, and physical aggression – declined from Q3 to Q4, these reductions did not translate into an overall improvement in protection conditions, suggesting a shift in the nature of risks faced rather than a meaningful reduction in overall vulnerability.

Families travelling with children were among those most consistently and severely affected, with abuse rates rising from 62% in Q3 to 68% in Q4, compared to 58% among adult-only groups – a gap that has persisted throughout the year. Venezuelans reported the highest rates of abuse across both quarters (67% Q3, 74% Q4), well above the regional average and increasing across the semester. While overall abuse rates were broadly similar across genders, women disproportionately reported sexual harassment and sexual assault, underscoring the importance of gender-responsive protection approaches.

The human cost of these journeys is further reflected in mortality data. Between 2014 and December 2025, 11,423 deaths involving refugees and migrants have been recorded across the Americas, with drowning and exposure to harsh environmental conditions among the leading causes.<sup>11</sup> At least 24 children died or went missing in 2025 alone. A notable development in Q4 was the emergence of the Bolivia–Chile border as an area of increasing concern, with six deaths recorded at the Pisiga–Colchane crossing in 2025, reflecting a broader pattern of people increasingly using more remote and physically hazardous routes.

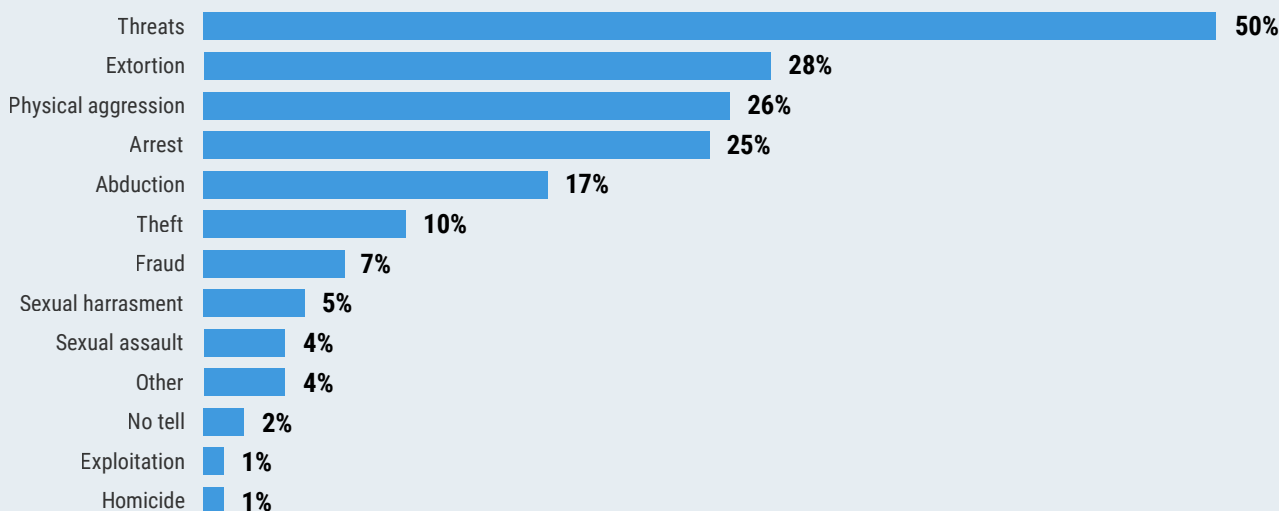
### Dead and missing migrants by main routes



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

### 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), Q4 2025.

10 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q3 and Q4 2025 (Q4 not yet published), <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/120934>.

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

## Haiti: Analysis of the Situation of Refugees and Migrants in the Americas

### Multidimensional Crisis and Internal Displacement

Haiti continues to face a deepening multidimensional protection crisis, driven by political instability, widespread insecurity, escalating gang violence, and large-scale internal displacement, particularly in the West, Artibonite, and Centre departments. Weak rule of law institutions, limited state presence, constrained resources, and systemic governance challenges continue to undermine the State's capacity to protect and promote human rights.

Up to December 2025, almost 1.5 million people are internally displaced in the country (a 39% increase compared to end of 2024). DTM multisectoral assessments conducted in Q3 highlight that both internally displaced persons (IDP) and host communities face converging and severe needs, including limited access to food and essential goods, as well as overstretched health and education services. With over 1.4 million people internally displaced—nearly 79% residing in provinces, largely outside formal sites—host communities are under increasing strain, while IDPs in sites continue to exhibit the most acute vulnerabilities across nearly all sectors. Additionally, of the 1.4 million, over 200,000 reside in displacement sites, where DTM assessments consistently show higher levels of unmet needs—particularly in food, shelter and health—compared to those living in host communities.<sup>12</sup>

IOM's Stability Index indicates that conditions across Haiti are increasingly fragile, with areas such as the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, Centre and Artibonite facing declining access to basic services, weakened social cohesion and reduced perceptions of safety, while relatively more stable regions—including parts of the Grand Sud (South, South-East, Grande'Anse, Nippes) and the North—remain more capable of hosting displaced and returning populations.<sup>13</sup>

### Cross-border Displacement

As of mid-2025, an estimated 1.7 million Haitians are displaced across the Americas, including 135,979 recognized refugees and 249,430 asylum-seekers with pending claims.<sup>14</sup> Haitians rank as the fourth-largest nationality of asylum-seekers awaiting decisions in Latin America. The main host countries are the United States (48%), Mexico (17%), and Canada (9%).<sup>15</sup>

UNHCR's International Protection Considerations highlight that generalized violence, pervasive insecurity, and the collapse of essential services continue to create life-threatening conditions.<sup>16</sup> Widespread gang control, targeted killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and severe restrictions on freedom of movement pose serious risks to life, safety, and physical integrity. In this context, many Haitians fleeing the country are likely to be in need of international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and/or the Cartagena Declaration criteria.

The continued forced returns to Haiti raise concerns as conditions may not allow for safe, dignified, and sustainable return. This non-return advisory remains a minimum protection standard and has been consistently shared with national authorities.

While significant asylum backlogs persist across the region, some positive practices have emerged. Mexico applies the Cartagena Declaration definition through simplified procedures to facilitate access to protection for Haitians. Canada has maintained administrative deferrals of removal alongside temporary immigration measures, while Brazil continues to provide humanitarian visas granting temporary residence and access to basic rights and services.

In the United States, the situation regarding Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians evolved significantly in 2025. The announcement of its termination created uncertainty for more than 300,000 beneficiaries, marking a departure from continuous extensions since 2010. However, judicial interventions have temporarily suspended the termination, allowing TPS holders to retain protection and work authorization pending ongoing litigation.<sup>17</sup>

12 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Haiti – Report on the internal displacement situation – Round 12 (December 2025), <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/haiti-report-internal-displacement-situation-round-12-december-2025>.

13 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Haiti – Stability index: A tool for informing solutions in situations of fragility, conflict and violence (Round 2 – September 2025), <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/haiti-stability-index-tool-informing-solutions-situations-fragility-conflict-and-violence-0>.

14 UNHCR, Displaced Haitians in the Americas – January 2026, January 2026, <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/121047>.

15 UNHCR, Refugee Statistics, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.

16 UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing Haiti, March 2024, <https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2024/en/147710>.

17 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Temporary Protected Status Designated Country: Haiti, last reviewed 4 February 2025, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-haiti>.

## Forced Returns of Haitians<sup>18</sup>

Returns to Haiti intensified significantly in 2025, adding further pressure to an already fragile context. IOM's DTM recorded a significant increase in forced returns in 2025, with over 270,000 Haitians deported—representing a 36% rise compared to 2024, primarily from the Dominican Republic. Data collected at border points highlights immediate needs upon arrival, particularly transportation (92%), food (72%) and temporary shelter (27%), underscoring the strain on already fragile reception and reintegration systems.

While adult men constituted the majority of returnees (66%), there was a notable increase in returns affecting women, girls, and boys compared to previous years. Most returns occurred through land border crossings with the Dominican Republic, particularly via Belladère (51%) and Ouanaminthe (27%), with additional increases recorded at Malpasse and Anse-à-Pitres.

Data indicates that one in five returnees had already experienced internal displacement prior to leaving Haiti, highlighting the cyclical nature of displacement. Furthermore, 32% reported lacking identification documents, increasing protection risks upon return. Recidivism remains high, with 60% of returnees having been previously deported. While 11% expressed intentions to leave Haiti again within six months, this proportion is significantly higher among those returned from countries outside the region.

Immediate needs upon return include transportation to areas of origin (92%), food (72%), and temporary shelter (27%), underscoring the limited absorption capacity and challenging reintegration conditions.

## Mobility Trends and Monitoring Results

Haitian nationals have consistently been identified among populations participating in mixed movements across the Americas. They represented a significant proportion of those crossing the Darién area from 2021 onwards and were also recorded among encounters at the United States southwest land border. However, in line with broader regional trends, there has been a sharp decline in northbound movements since mid-2025. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Haitians transiting through the Darién and Central America en route to North America. At the same time, mobility patterns have become increasingly multidirectional and more complex.

While northbound flows have decreased, Haitian mixed movements continue to be reported in South America and across the Caribbean, reflecting ongoing protection needs and the persistence of underlying drivers of displacement.

Mixed Movement Monitoring<sup>19</sup> data from the last quarter of 2025 confirms that violence remains the primary driver of displacement among Haitians, cited by 75% of respondents, followed by direct threats or intimidation (34%), lack of employment (22%), and food insecurity (17%). The majority of respondents intend to remain in their current location (64%), while 21% remain undecided and 15% plan onward movement, primarily toward Mexico, the United States, Chile, and Canada.<sup>20</sup>

Uncertainty surrounding protection measures, including the potential termination of TPS in the United States, may influence future mobility patterns, including increased risks of forced returns. In this context, protection-oriented measures in the region—such as Brazil's humanitarian visa, Canada's temporary measures, and Mexico's application of the Cartagena definition—remain critical to mitigating protection risks.

Overall, the combination of escalating internal displacement, increasing returns, and constrained protection pathways continues to generate significant protection needs both within Haiti and across the region. This underscores the importance of sustained access to asylum, adherence to non-refoulement, and strengthened regional protection responses.

18 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Haiti – Factsheet of key information on forced returns in 2025 (January–December 2025), <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/haiti-factsheet-key-information-forced-returns-2025-january-december-2025>.

19 UNHCR, Displaced Haitians in the Americas – January 2026, January 2026, <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/121047>.

20 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM), Q4 2025 (not yet published).