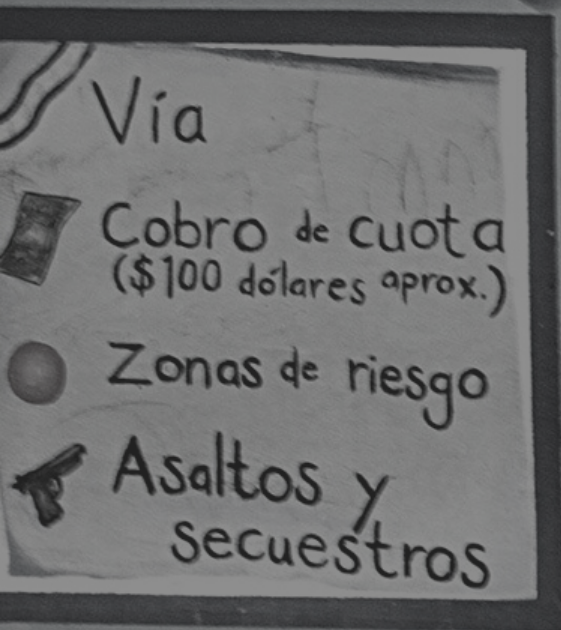


Risking it all: Refugees' and migrants' "journey through hell" crossing the Darien Gap



Simon Tomasi
Mixed Migration Centre

Juan Carlos Tomasi/MSF (2018)



International Forum
on Migration Statistics
IFMS 2023
24-26 January • Santiago, Chile



Mixed
Migration
Centre



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DÁNES PARA
REFUGIADOS

Risking it all: Refugees' and migrants' "journey through hell" crossing the Darien Gap

ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION

Using our analytical framework and data to produce evidence on the magnitude of the risks and needs of refugees and migrants heading to North America and relay the key messages and findings for programming.

Agenda

1. About the Mixed Migration Centre

2. Data collection: 4Mi project

3. 4Mi data on the journey through the Darien Gap

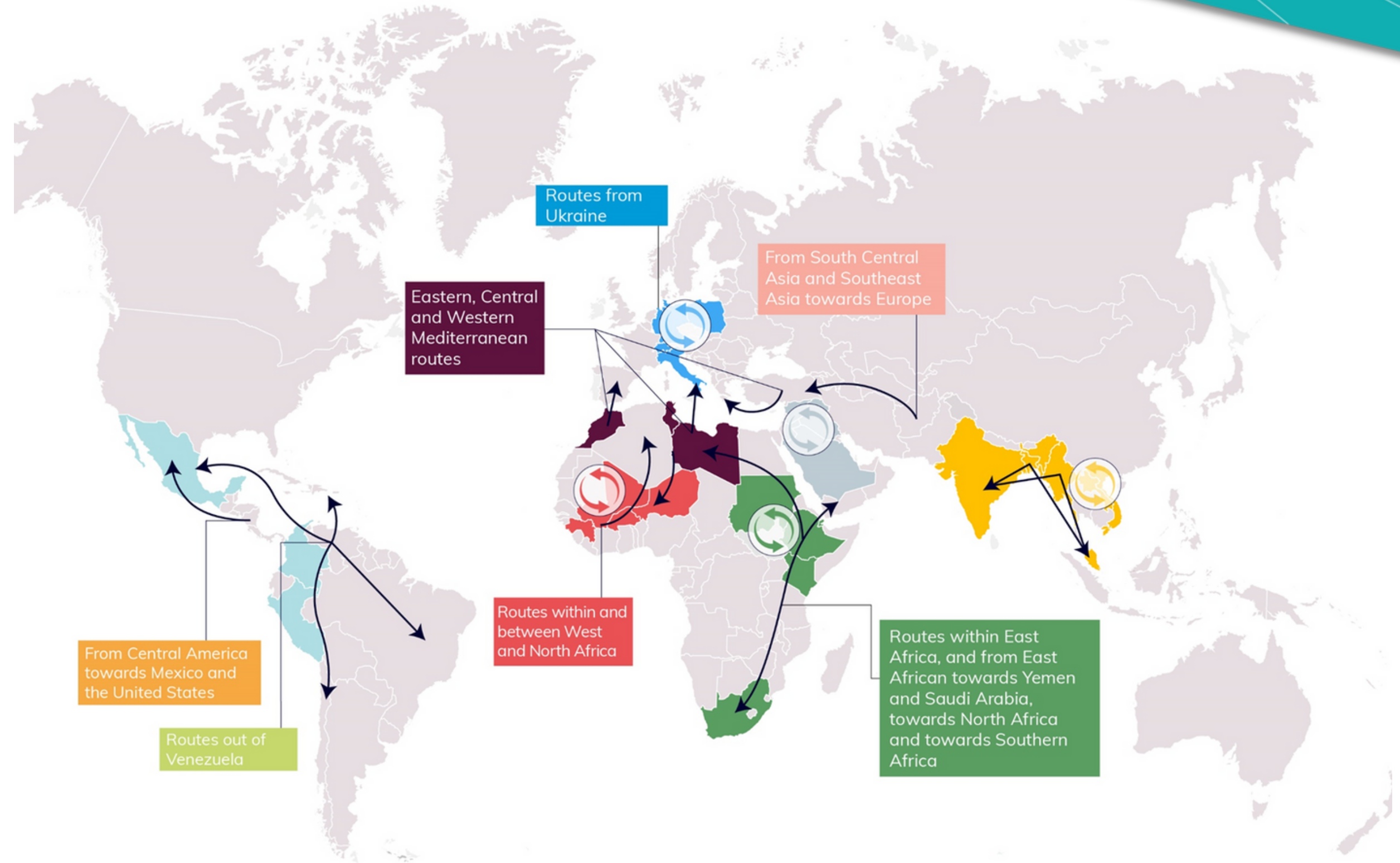
- Respondents profiles
- Abuses and dangers experienced during the journey in the Darien Gap, by sex
- Access to information before and during the journey

4. Cooperation with coordination platforms

About the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC)

SOURCE FOR
CREDIBLE EVIDENCE
& EXPERTISE

Data and analysis to support agencies, policy makers and practitioners to make well-informed decisions in policy and programming responses to mixed migration.



Data collection: 4Mi

INTRODUCTION TO 4MI

4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's **flagship primary data collection system**, conducting survey interviews with **refugees and migrants** on the move in more than **15 countries** to help fill knowledge gaps and inform policy and response.



100,000
Interviews since 2014

120
FIELD ENUMERATORS
19
LANGUAGES

30,000+
Interviews on our
interactive dashboard
since 2019

4Mi
A GLOBAL DATA
COLLECTION INITIATIVE

Risking it all: Refugees' and migrants' "journey through hell" crossing the Darien Gap

Introduction

- Migration along the Darien Gap, from South America to Central America is not a new dynamic.
- The number of people on the move irregularly crossing into Panama after embarking on the perilous Darien Gap route reached a record in 2022 : nearly 250,000 people crossed into the country (133,000 in 2021).
- Between January to October 2021, 70% of the irregular entries into Panama through the Darien Gap correspond to Venezuelan nationals.

January - October 2022, SNM PANAMÁ

4Mi data on the journey through the Darien Gap

4Mi in LAC



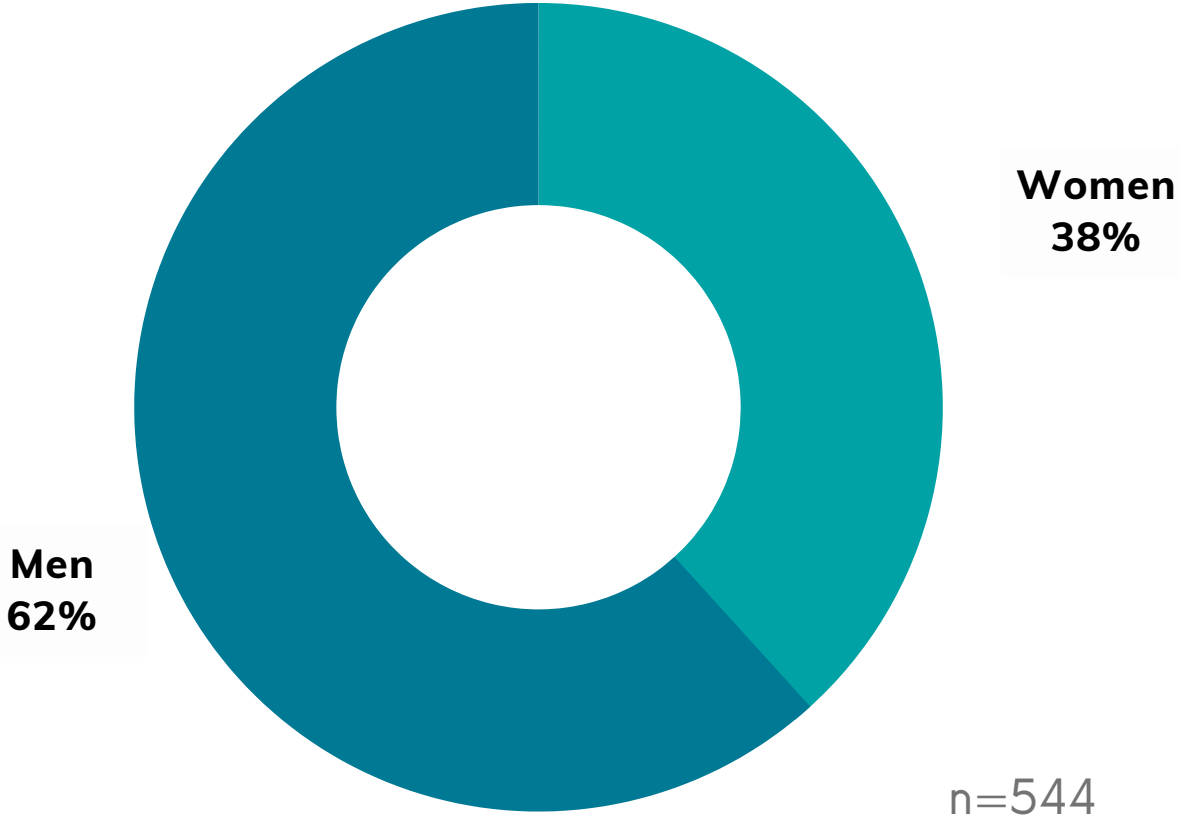
4MI Costa Rica

- DATA COLLECTION SITES: Paso Canoas, Ciudad Nelly, Rio Claro (Costa Rica-Panamá border); San Carlos, Heredia, and Alejuela (Central Costa Rica); Los Chiles (Costa Rica-Nicaragua border)
- DATA COLLECTION PERIOD: 24 may to 24 October 2022
- METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION: Face-to-face interviews
- SAMPLE SIZE: 554 respondents

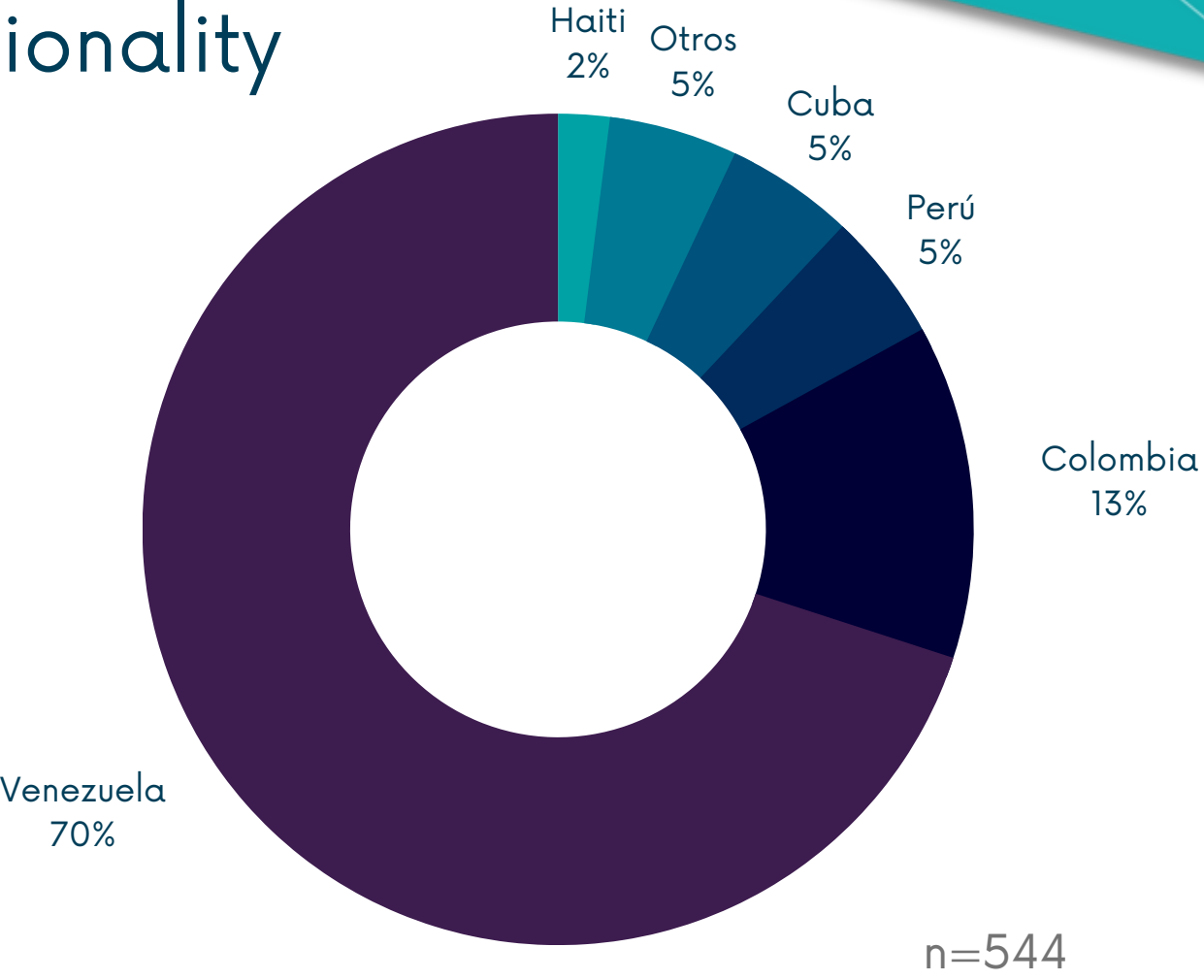
NOTE: THE 4MI SAMPLE IS PURPOSIVE. DATA PRESENTED IN THIS SNAPSHOT CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MIXED MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN THE REGION.

RESPONDENTS PROFILES

Sex distributions of respondents



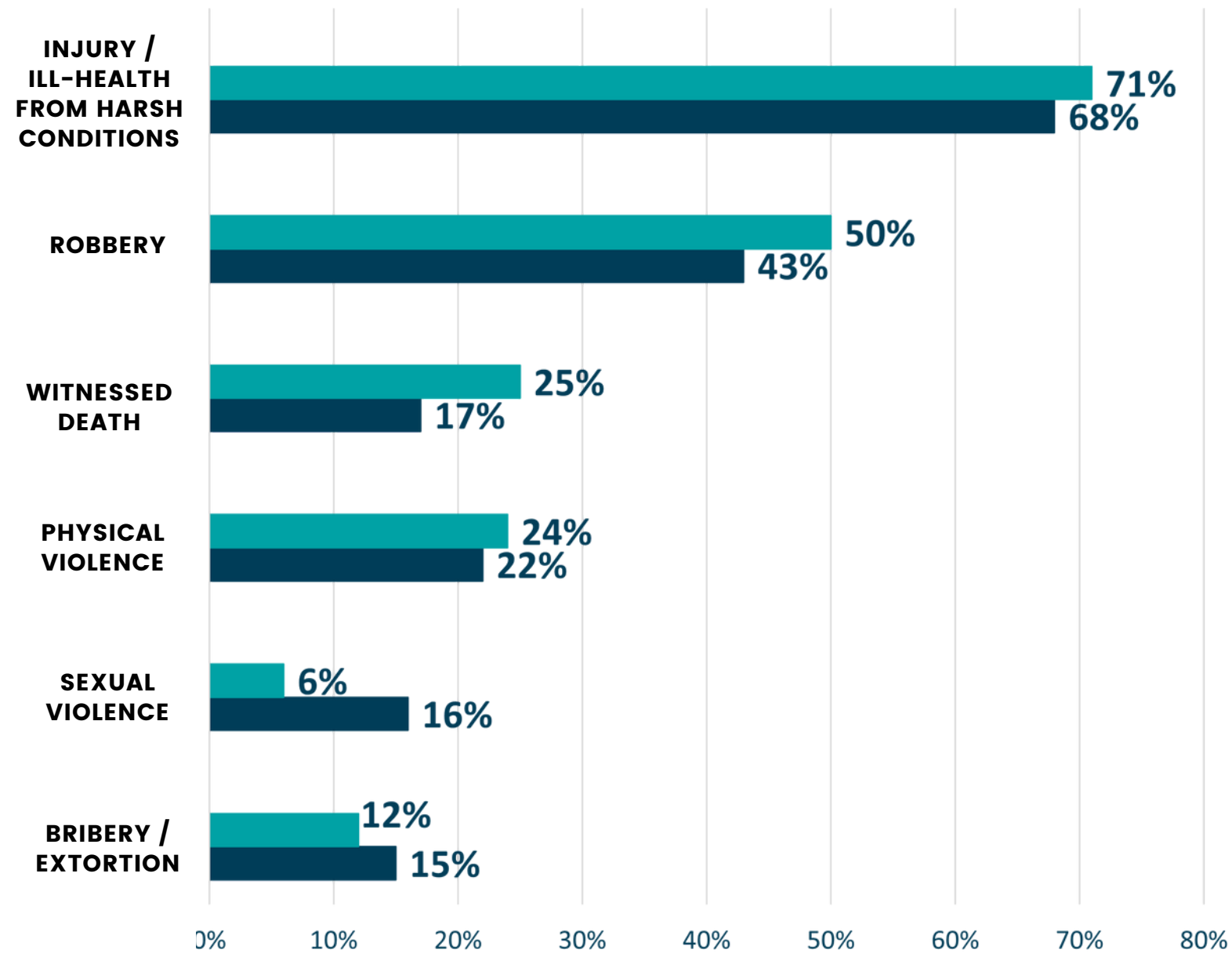
Nationality



- Change in profile: People in the move cross the Darien, without economic resources.
- 49% of respondents mentioned not having used the services of smugglers.

Main findings

ABUSES AND DANGERS EXPERIENCED DURING THE JOURNEY IN THE DARIEN GAP, BY SEX



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question

Respondents who reported the Darien Gap as the most dangerous location on their journey, n=492

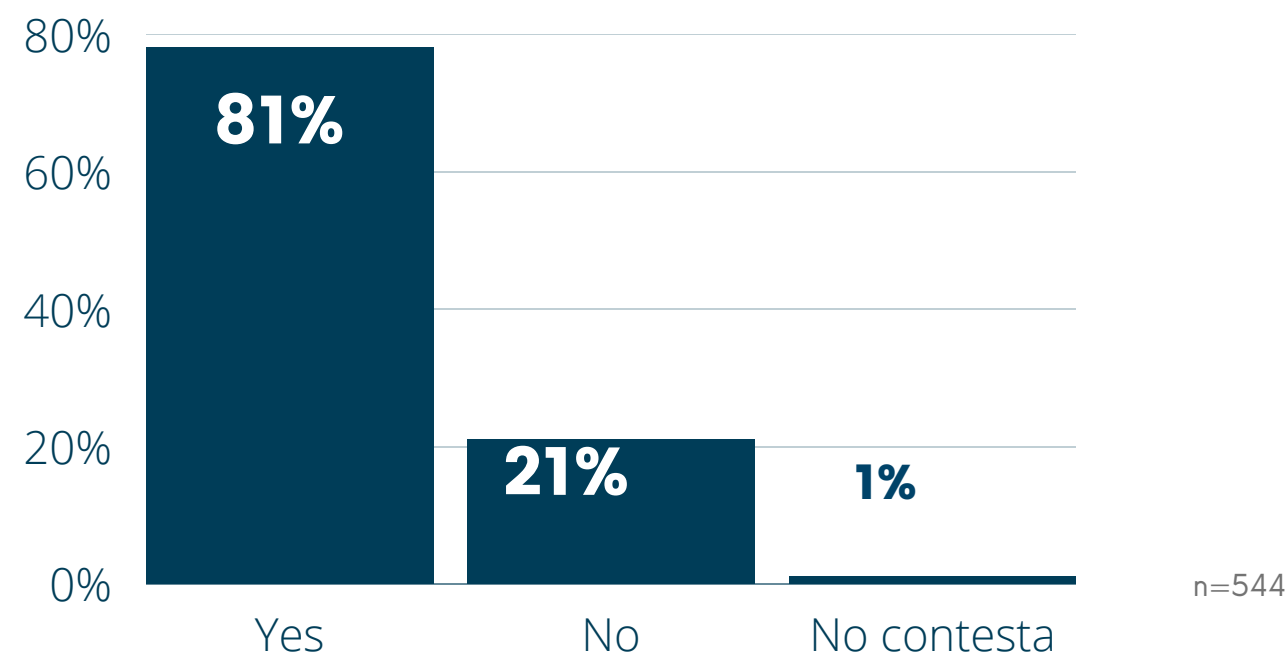
1 of 6 women interviewed reported having suffered sexual violence in the Darien Gap

89% of all respondents reported that children were very or highly exposed to those risks in the Darien.

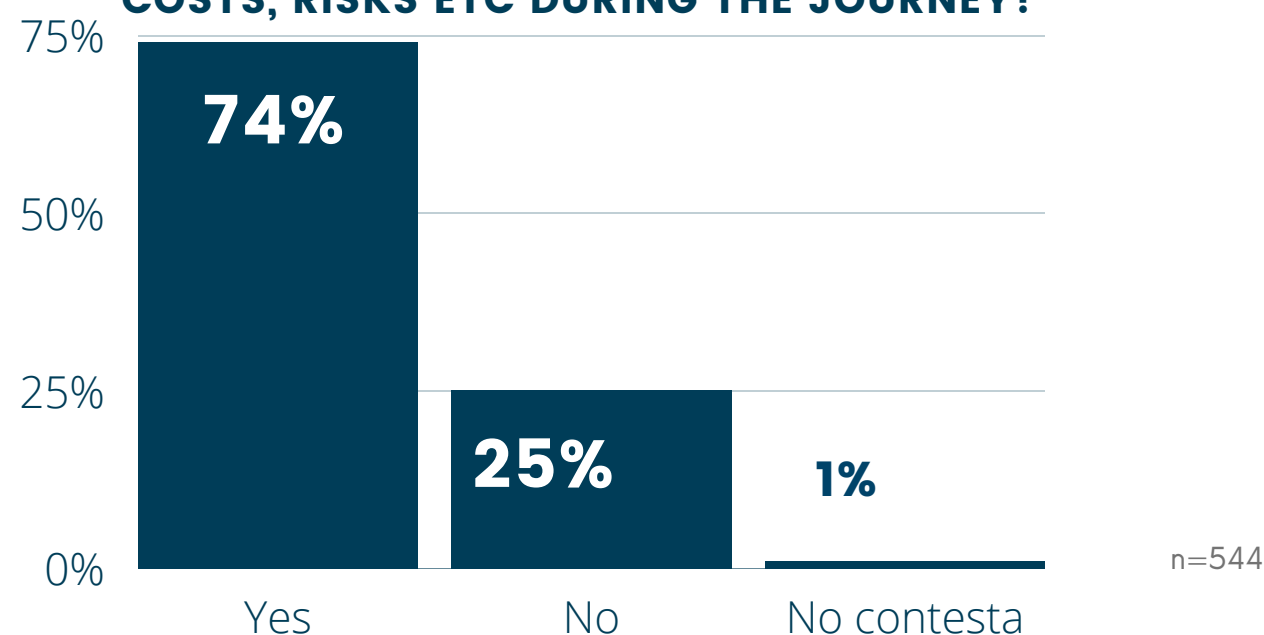
"...During the journey through the jungle we had to adopt an 8 year old boy who was lost, alone. Apparently, they had taken his mother to rape her. He was waiting for the mother for two days in a tree root, but she never appeared... She is most likely dead...". **53-year-old Venezuelan man, interviewed in Costa Rica**

Main findings

DID YOU OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT ROUTES, DESTINATIONS, COSTS, RISKS ETC BEFORE THE JOURNEY?



DID YOU OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT ROUTES, DESTINATIONS, COSTS, RISKS ETC DURING THE JOURNEY?



77%

Of the people surveyed obtained information before and during their journey through social networks and messaging applications.

- Respondents do not mention NGOs, UN organizations or institutional actors as trusted sources of information, used before or during the journey.
- Respondents report that their decision making was not (well) informed:

36% of respondents would not have initiated their migration knowing what they know, at the time of the survey.

64% would not recommend the migration route they used (Darien).

Cooperation with coordination platforms




GIFMM
GRUPO INTERAGENCIAL SOBRE
FLUJOS MIGRATORIOS MIXTOS



Plataforma de Coordinación
Interagencial para Refugiados
y Migrantes de Venezuela

- Presentation of those results at bilateral meetings.
- GIFMM/R4V: Identification of protection risks in the Darien Gap.
- Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2023 : Priority population groups 2023 defined by the Regional Protection Sector.
- Regional Protection Sector (R4V): Regional analyse of Venezuelan protection and information needs and design of an awareness campaign for Venezuelan refugees and migrants heading to Central/North America.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



4Mi INFOGRAPHIC

Access to information before and during the journey among refugees and migrants in Costa Rica

This infographic presents data on access to information among refugees and migrants heading north, interviewed in Costa Rica. It aims to contribute towards a solid evidence base to inform targeted responses on the ground, as well as advocacy efforts related to the situation of refugees and migrants in the region.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION SITES: Paso Canoas, Ciudad Nelly, Río Claro (Costa Rica-Panamá border); San Carlos, Heredia, and Alejuela (Central Costa Rica); Los Chiles (Costa Rica-Nicaragua border)

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD: 5 September - 8 November 2022

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION: Face-to-face interviews

SAMPLE SIZE: 268 respondents

Background

- In October 2022, 59,773 people heading north entered Panama through the Darien Gap, (+92% compared to August, and +24% compared to September). Between January and October, 211,355 refugees and migrants entered Panama from the Darien Gap. Most were Venezuelans (70%).¹
- On October 12, the US government announced a new legal pathway for Venezuelan nationals.² Applicants willing to enter the country regularly should apply from abroad and have a supporter in the United States, who will provide financial and other support. Venezuelan nationals would be ineligible if they irregularly entered Mexico or Panama after October 12 or had been ordered to be removed from the US in the past five years.
- In the weeks following the announcement of the new policy, the number of Venezuelans heading to Panama from Colombia has strongly decreased (-90% between the first week of October and the first week of November).³
- However, the transit of refugees and migrants of other nationalities from South to Central America through the Darien Gap continues.

Respondents profiles

Sex distributions of respondents

Men 57%
Women 43%

Profiles

- 38% of respondents were in the 18 to 25 years age range during the data collection period.

Note: The 4Mi sample is purposive. Data presented in this snapshot cannot be considered as representative of the mixed migration dynamics in the region.

31% of respondents were traveling with children in their care at the time of the interview



Age distributions of respondents

Age Group	Women (n=115)	Men (n=153)
18-25	29%	51%
26-35	34%	30%
36-45	12%	27%
46-55	2%	4%
>55	1%	1%

¹ Servicio Nacional de Migración de Panamá (2022): [Base de datos abierta](#)

² USCIS (2022): [Access for Venezuelans](#)

³ GIFMM (2022): [Actualización semanal - Situación de personas refugiadas y migrantes en tránsito en Panamá \(Setiembre 2022\)](#)

BRIEFING PAPER

DECEMBER 2022

WRITTEN BY: Daniely Vicari, Simon Tomasi

REVIEWED BY: Jane Linekar, Bram Frouws

SUGGESTED CITATION: Mixed Migration Centre (2022) Returning to Venezuela: drivers, expectations, and intentions. Available at: <https://mixedmigration.org/resource/returning-to-venezuela/>

LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Simon Pegler

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This document uses 4Mi data to explore the profiles of Venezuelans heading back, the factors driving them to leave their host countries, and their motivations for returning. It also provides an analysis of the expectations of refugees and migrants about their return to Venezuela and their future migration intentions. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Danish Refugee Council or any of the donors supporting the work of MMC or this report. The content of this report is entirely the responsibility of MMC.

Returning to Venezuela: drivers, expectations, and intentions

Analysis of 4Mi data

- **80%** of refugees and migrants surveyed on their way back to Venezuela had tried settling in **one host country**.
- **61%** of respondents had been in the last host country for between **six months to two years**, which could show long-term difficulties in settling.
- **66%** of all respondents had **irregular migratory status** in their last host country, and less than 6% were officially temporary residents.
- **71% of respondents** lifted their host country due to at least one or more of those factors: **insufficient access to services (27%)**, and/or **difficulties making a living (26%)** integrating (23%), or **regularizing their migratory status (22%)**. At the same time, 81% of respondents were heading to Venezuela to **reunite with family or friends** and 63% were going because **they were homesick**.
- 45% of respondents were also motivated by the **improved economic opportunities** in the country, **starting a new business or investing (19%)**, or **job opportunities (11%)**.
- **Even before reaching Venezuela, 27% of respondents said they intend to migrate again**, either to their last host country or another country.

1

Thank you

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@Mixed_Migration
@DRC_LAC



ConsejoDanesDRC



info@mixedmigration.org