



**MMC Latin America
and the Caribbean**

QUARTER 1 2024



**Quarterly Mixed
Migration Update:
Latin America and
the Caribbean**

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. The core countries of focus for this region are the countries currently affected by the Venezuelan crisis and the Caribbean islands. This QMMU covers Mexico and Central American countries concerning northern movements to the United States. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to some countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels. For more information on MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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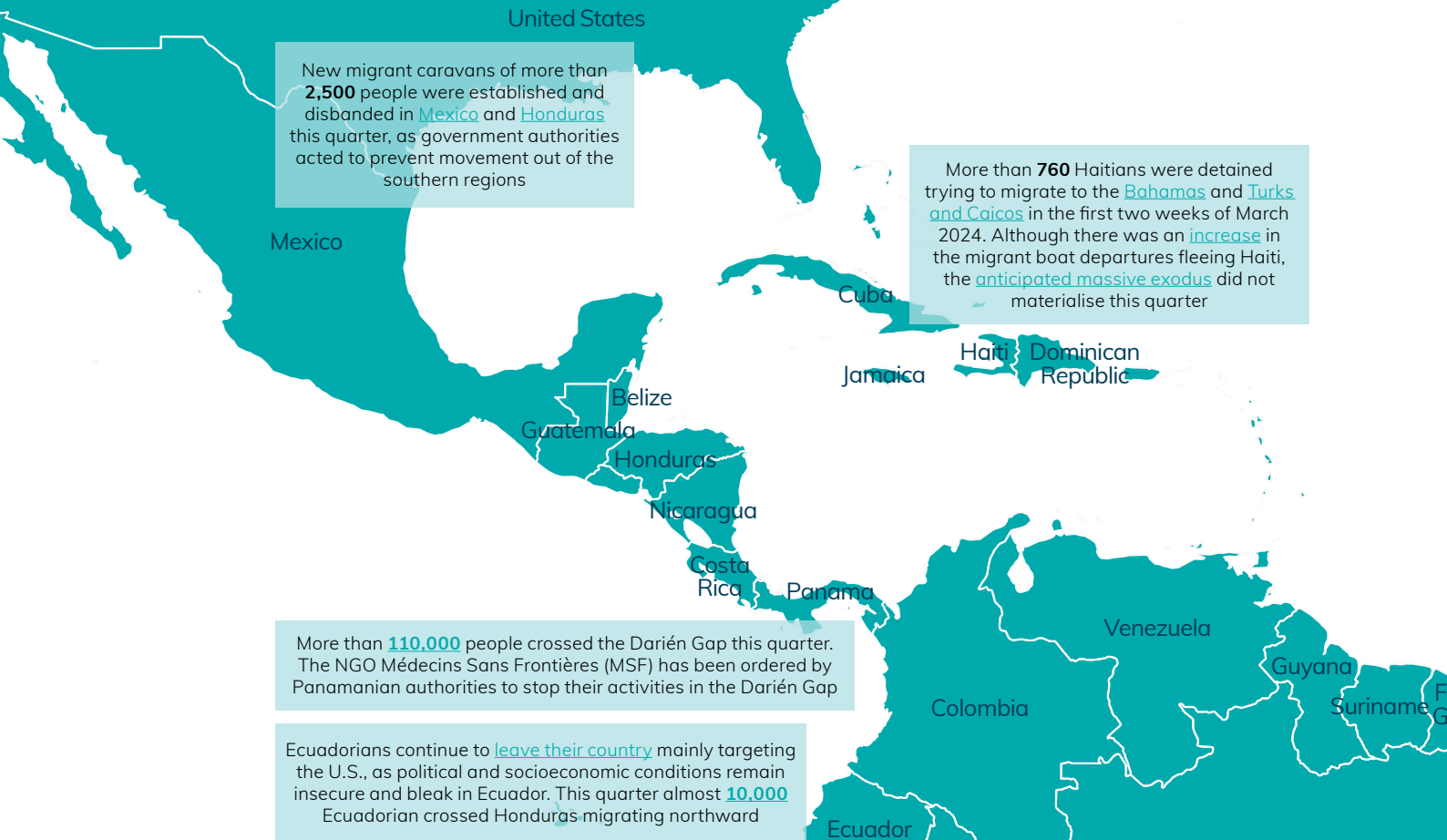
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean

Quarter 1 - 2024

Key Updates

- **Increase in onward movements among Venezuelan migrants:** This quarter saw a rising number of Venezuelans leaving their host countries to move northwards towards the U.S. mainly due to their [experiences in host countries](#) and perceived better opportunities in the U.S.
- **High volume continues through the Darién Gap:** After record-breaking migration through Panama and Colombia's [notorious](#) Darién Gap in 2023, the high volume of migrants has continued into 2024. During the first quarter of 2024, [110,008](#) people made the treacherous northbound journey.
- **Crime continues to drive the Ecuadorian exodus:** An increasing number of Ecuadorians are considering emigration: [63 per cent](#) of a sample surveyed by IOM declared their intention to migrate abroad in the next 12 months and, just over half of them, identified the U.S. as their intended destination.
- **Mexico's "containment" strategy exposes migrants to higher risks:** Mexico's strategy of containment or [recirculation](#) of migrants inside its territory this quarter puts migrants in considerable danger the longer they remain on the road in the country. Mexico is [notorious for the risks](#) migrants face when passing through its states and waiting to cross into the U.S. from northern towns.
- **Texas clashes with federal authorities over border control:** This quarter saw dramatic developments in the migration standoff in the U.S. between the federal government, the Biden administration and Texas. Texas Governor, Greg Abbott has pushed through a state law that would allow state law enforcement officers [to arrest irregular migrants](#) for 'invading' their state with a possible 20 years stint in prison if convicted.

Regional Overview*



The Caribbean



The Chilean government now allows for immediate **removal and return** of irregular migrants at the border itself

*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration within and out of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed migration dynamics in South America

Mixed movements of Venezuelans continue, with rising levels of onward movement

Spiralling hyperinflation, political turmoil, violence, and persecution continue to drive Venezuelans to migrate. According to a [UN report](#) released this quarter, one in four Venezuelans have left the country in search of safety and better opportunities. By the end of 2023, [approximately 7.7 million Venezuelan migrants](#) now reside outside of their home country - with the vast majority (almost 6,540,000) residing in Latin America and the Caribbean. More specifically, [70 per cent](#) are in Colombia (2.9 million), Peru (1.5 million), Ecuador (475,000), and Chile (444,000). While Colombia, the primary initial destination for Venezuelans, noted a decline in arrivals [during 2023](#), according to the [Regional Inter-agency Coordination Platform](#) (R4V), the number of Venezuelan migrants hosted in the region will likely increase to more than 6.82 million. It is estimated that some 4.71 million need assistance due to difficulties accessing food, shelter, health care, education, and formal employment.

This quarter saw a rising number of Venezuelans engaged in onward movements northwards towards the U.S. (see the Darién Gap section, below), driven by experiences in host countries and perceived opportunities in the U.S. Complaints of [discrimination](#) and [xenophobia](#) have also frequently been reported by migrants in [Peru and Chile](#), likely also fuelling onward movements. Additionally, many migrants who have returned to Venezuela from Chile, Peru, Ecuador, or Colombia in the last 2 years are leaving again, [reportedly](#), often with additional family members in tow and heading northbound to the U.S.

Crime continues to drive migration from Ecuador

Migration from Ecuador continued its upward trend this quarter driven by socioeconomic, security and political factors, including [drug-related gang violence](#). 2023 was the most violent year in recent history for Ecuador, registering 7,872 murders — [43.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants](#). Just in this quarter alone, Ecuador faced [prison mutinies](#), [hostage-taking during a live television broadcast](#), and widespread violence in cities strategically crucial for the cocaine trade. In response President Daniel Noboa declared a [60-day state of emergency and nationwide curfew](#), declaring a state of “[internal armed conflict](#).”

Released in March this quarter, an [IOM survey](#) showed that 63 per cent of those interviewed in Ecuador was intending to migrate in the next 12 months with just over half identifying the U.S. as their intended destination. [Reportedly](#), U.S. Border Patrol agents apprehended a record 118,000 migrants from Ecuador in the fiscal year 2023, a 371 per cent increase from 2022. This quarter, Brazil’s National Committee for Refugees says it is [preparing for a massive influx of Ecuadorians](#). Ecuador also currently hosts over 800,000 migrants, including 475,000 Venezuelans and 203,000 Colombians, [according to 2023 UN data](#). Amid worsening conditions and rising [anti-migrant sentiment](#) (particularly against Venezuelans), [many may be pushed to consider onward movements](#).

Chile continues to stem irregular migration, facilitating removals and limiting options for asylum

This quarter Chile enacted [Law No: 21,655](#) making [19 modifications](#) to existing laws (No. 20,430 and No. 21,325) dealing with refugee determination and irregular entry. Through the amendments, Chile seems intent on stemming irregular migration, facilitating removals, and limiting options for asylum, which some argue is an '[illegitimate restriction on the right to seek asylum](#)'. Particularly concerning is the risk of denying international protection to those who transited through a third country before entering Chile. Additionally, the modification establishes a mechanism for immediate 'redirection' of irregular entrants, in addition to expanding border control up to 10 km inland.

Despite initial praise for hosting Venezuelans, Chile, [since 2018](#), has increasingly tightened controls and has come under fire for its [treatment of refugees and irregular migrants](#) through tougher policies and [changes in the law](#). Previous actions, including [militarizing the northern border](#) and [implementing legislative reforms](#), have been criticized for violating the rights of asylum seekers and migrants, [leaving Venezuelans in Chile without options to regularize their status and lacking adequate protection](#).

Regularisation updates in South America

Colombia

The end of this quarter marks 6 months since the Colombian government announced a new regularization strategy, replacing the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) which was previously rolled out to [2,394,202 people](#). However, since then, no further updates or implementation has occurred and hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants remain in irregular situations. Colombia has implemented the region's [largest regularisation programme](#) for Venezuelan migrants to date and has granted a 10-year temporary status for almost 2.4 million of the estimated 2.9 million Venezuelan migrants in the country.

Another area of policy development awaiting finalisation is that of refugee regime reform in Colombia. Following a December 2023 ruling (SU-543/23), Colombia's Constitutional Court instructed the government to [reform refugee procedures](#) and unify jurisprudence so that applications are expedited and someone applying for refugee status would not jeopardise their ability to have a PPT at the same time (previously they had to give up the PPT if applying for refugee status).

Peru

During this quarter the government has been [warning migrants](#) with expiring permits to apply for renewal, with an estimated 60,000 migrants, mostly Venezuelans, set to lose their status between March and June 2024. As of the start of 2024, Peru hosts over [1,540,000 Venezuelan](#) migrants the second largest number after Colombia. Peru typically issues a Temporary Permit to Stay (PTP), allowing foreigners to regularise their migration status for one year through the temporary residence permit card ([also known as the Temporary Permanence Permit Card \(CPP\)](#)). After six months with the CPP, migrants can request special resident immigration status, which allows them to access the immigration card for one year, renewable. According to Peru's National Superintendence of Migration, those who do not regularise their status within

the established deadlines may be sanctioned and expelled from the country raising concerns by some that international obligations and [rights to refugees may be at stake](#).

Brazil

The Venezuelan population in Brazil has nearly doubled in the last two years jumping to around [511,000](#). Despite some media and politic-driven anti-migration sentiment, Brazil has an open policy of welcoming and registering Venezuelan migrants. A part of this policy is Operation Horizon ([Operação Horizonte](#)), a partnership between the Federal Police, Immigrant Integration and Citizenship Centre (CIC do Imigrante), UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), and IOM (International Organization for Migration), which started in January 2022. It consists of providing free assistance, guidance, and referral for immigration regularization with a date scheduled with the entity. Operation Horizon started a new phase in February in the Sao Paulo area, and it will be operational up to [May 2024](#).

Mixed migration movements northward through Central America and Colombia

Colombia: disruption in ferry services strands migrants

This quarter, ferry companies transporting migrants en route to Central America temporarily suspended their services in the Urabá, Antioquia, near the border with Panama. The suspension followed the arrest of [two captains](#) in late February 2024 for human smuggling. In protest, other providers, including four in Turbo and two in Necoclí, stopped operating, arguing that it was not the responsibility of captains, or their crew, to verify the status of paying clients. Consequently, these stoppages led to migrants being [stranded](#) without shelter and food in small port towns. These towns serve as crucial points for up [to 2,000 migrants](#) and others who depend on ferry services daily as part of their journey towards the Darién Gap, and onward to the US.

Colombia's new migration observatory records large increases in irregular migration, particularly from Chinese migrants

Colombia Migration (Migración Colombia) launched the [Observatory of Migrations, Migrants and Human Mobility](#) (OM3) in January 2024, a website providing data on migration in the country publicly. OM3's data showed an increase in the number of [irregular entries](#) from Venezuela, from 126,198 in 2022 to 399,997 in 2023 (169% rise); Haiti, from 25,395 in 2022 to 60,074 in 2023 (137% rise); Ecuador, from 21,151 in 2022 to 61,695 in 2023 (192% rise); and, lastly, China, from 1,665 cases in 2022 to 32,787 records in 2023 (1,869% rise). In neighbouring [Panama](#), [Chinese nationals](#) passing through the Darién Gap in 2023 counted 25,565 - a difference of over seven thousand from Colombian figures, suggesting that, as [Colombian institutions](#) have stated, many Chinese migrants continue their journey towards the U.S. by sea from San Andres Island, in the Colombian Caribbean, to Nicaragua.

High numbers continue through the Darién Gap, with increased reports of sexual violence

During the first quarter of 2024, migrants continued in high numbers to cross the dangerous Darién Gap, despite a short hiatus in late February due to the suspension of ferry services, mentioned above. [Panamanian authorities](#) recorded 110,008 crossings in the first quarter of 2024, representing a 126 per cent more than in Q1 2023 ([87,390](#)) and 798 per cent more than in Q2 2022 ([12,791](#)). This quarter 22 per cent of those making the jungle crossing were children, reflecting a similar composition to Q1 in 2023. If patterns continue, this year will break last year's [record levels](#) of irregular movement along this route.

[As mentioned](#) last quarter, Colombia's largest criminal group, the Gulf Clan or Autodefensas Gaitanistas, reportedly [controls the movement of migrants through](#) the Darién Gap, profiting from smuggling and also responsible for [rights abuses](#) including trafficking, as well as forcing migrants [to transport drugs into Panama](#). [A report released by MMC this quarter](#) noted an overwhelming 86 per cent of all those interviewed said crossing Darién Gap was the most dangerous part of their journey northwards. Further, 60 per cent of men and women interviewed experienced robbery crossing the Darién jungle, over 50 per cent experienced violence and an alarming 29 per cent of women said they experienced sexual violence.

Additionally, this quarter the [Panamanian government banned the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF) from delivering its urgent health services at reception posts where the Darién trail ends. This came a few days after [MSF publicised a report noting a sharp increase in sexual violence](#) cases along the Darién route. MSF reported 233 cases in January and February alone, compared to 676 cases in all of 2023, although numbers are likely much higher due to underreporting. This quarter [Panama also indicated](#) that it was discussing deportations of migrants to other Latin American countries to reduce the number of those crossing the Darién Gap, with deportation of Colombians already underway.

Costa Rica: limited assistance despite national emergency

Last quarter in September, Costa Rica's president, Rodrigo Chaves, declared a [National Emergency, in response to rising migration](#). This was followed by a bilateral agreement with Panama which aimed to facilitate [the rapid transit of tens of thousands of migrants up to the Nicaraguan border](#) by bus. The final leg of this journey relies on local buses operated by criminal gangs, [exposing migrants to significant risks](#). A [deadly accident](#) in February 2024 prompted the United Nations (UN) to [urge Costa Rican authorities](#) to dismantle migrant smuggling networks, despite claims from the government that the networks [had already been dismantled](#). Activists continue to criticize the [lack of state-provided services](#) for migrants, as the situation is becoming increasingly [permanent](#).

Additionally, during this quarter, reports emerged that those applying for refugee status in Costa Rica may have to wait [between 10 to 20 years](#) before their applications are heard. This quarter also marked the end of 'CET' registration - [Categoría Especial Temporal](#) - providing a work permit with a renewable term of two years, for asylum seekers from Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba lacking evidence of persecution. The initiative starting in March 2023, was open until the end of February 2024 through [Executive Decree 43809](#) and provided an immigration solution to those with pending or denied refugee applications. [Reportedly](#),

7,500 people, of which more than 4,000 were Nicaraguans, successfully obtained the CET in the last year. A temporary extension of the decree is not being considered at this time.

Nicaragua continues to facilitate movements northward, although the U.S implements new visa restrictions

This quarter, Nicaragua continued to [facilitate the movement of migrants northward](#), frustrating U.S. efforts to control and manage migration to its Southern border. Nicaragua is the only country in Central America that does not require entry visas from citizens of several nations in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, and therefore is used as a springboard for migrants seeking to get to the U.S. overland. Throughout 2023, Nicaragua reportedly enabled [more than 500 flights](#) carrying prospective migrants from various countries to land, including on chartered aircraft. Smuggling packages for migrants travelling to the U.S. via Nicaragua are widely advertised through [social media](#).

In response, in February this quarter, the U.S. Department of State introduced [a new visa restriction policy](#) targeting owners, executives, and senior officials of transportation companies facilitating irregular immigration to the U.S. via countries such as Nicaragua. This policy expands on and replaces the previous [Nicaragua 3C policy](#), targeting charter flights arriving in Nicaragua as mentioned in [Q4 QMMU 2023](#), and extending restrictions to include charter flight, ground, and maritime transportation companies aiding irregular migration routes.

Some reports quote [tens of thousands](#) and even more than [100,000](#) of would-be migrants of multiple nationalities have already used and continue to use the route. This quarter [new revelations showed that](#) the Nicaraguan route is also used by nationals from [India](#).

Guatemala/Mexico border: Migrant caravans heading north re-group and disperse

In January 2024, around [2,000 migrants](#) primarily from Central and Southern America gathered at the Guatemalan border before making their way northward through Mexico. The group were mainly members of an [original caravan](#) of about 6,000 migrants (some reported [10,000](#)) from Venezuela, Cuba and Central America that had started walking northward on Christmas Eve. Since January the caravan made limited progress through Mexico and has since dispersed. In late January a [smaller caravan](#) heading from Honduras disbanded upon entering Guatemala. In late March another group of about [2,000 migrants](#) began walking in southern Mexico as part of a traditional Holy Week demonstration before Easter, to draw attention to the dangers they face including robberies, sexual assaults, extortion and kidnapping. While migrant caravans have previously been unique to migrants from Central America and Mexico, they now include people from South America, Africa and Asia [gaining particular prominence](#) in the last six years. Mexico is strongly invested in preventing caravans from reaching the U.S. border through various [enforcement measures](#), resulting in no intact caravan ever [reaching the northern Mexican/U.S. border](#). Despite the caravans disbanding, many members continue onward in smaller, disparate groups.

Mexico exacerbates existing risks for migrants through containment and expulsion strategies

This quarter, Mexico's current migration strategy – whether through containment, recirculation or deportation – has continued to expose migrants to significant dangers (see the Thematic Focus, below). Mexico has a [notorious](#) reputation for migrants, with reports [continuing to be published](#) documenting [abuse](#), [neglect](#), exploitation, and murder from a range of perpetrators including organised crime and certain local authorities. Further, a high number of migrants continue to 'disappear' while crossing the country on their journey. In January, a mother and two children [drowned](#) in the Rio Grande while [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) reported a spike in sexual abuse against migrants in Mexico with more survivors of sexual violence treated in January 2024, alone, than in the previous 12 months. Furthermore, Mexico's plan to initiate [land deportations](#) to Central American countries in March raise additional concerns about exposing migrants to dangers beyond Mexico's borders.

Safe Mobility Offices' contribution to reduce irregular movement remains small

Safe Mobility Offices (SMO) in Colombia, Costa Rica, [Ecuador](#) and Guatemala have been continuing "the [expansion of lawful pathways](#) to the United States for refugees and migrants in South and Central America". At the SMOs, refugees and migrants can assess whether they may qualify for [refugee resettlement](#), [family reunification](#), [humanitarian parole](#), [temporary worker visas](#), or other legal pathways. [As of February 18](#), more than 147,000 people had applied to the initiative since their launch in June 2023. More than 12,700 people have already been approved to travel to the United States with 5,900 migrants and refugees already arriving. However, it remains unclear how successful the SMOs will be in expanding legal pathways. [In an MMC study](#) released this quarter, nine out of ten people on the move surveyed in Colombia and Costa Rica would not meet the eligibility criteria for the processes of the Safe Mobility Offices.

Mixed migration in the Caribbean

CARICOM on track for free movement deadline

In mid-2023, marking the 50th anniversary of the institution, [CARICOM](#) Heads of State announced the intention to move towards full freedom of movement for citizens of its member states. The [end of March](#) 2024 was set as the date of implementation, despite a [derogation](#) concerning Haiti's current humanitarian crisis and potential security [issues raised](#) by members. Previously CARICOM nationals had the right to move within the bloc for 6 months without constraint. The bloc's decision marks the beginning of a complex process requiring ratification and integration into national legislation. The decision coincides with economic changes within the region, particularly in [Guyana's emerging oil and gas industry](#), highlighting the need for strategic labour migration from neighbouring countries.

Fears Haitian crisis will result in mass maritime movements not yet materialised

Risky irregular maritime movements persisted throughout the Caribbean over the quarter with concerns that the crisis in Haiti would provoke a wave of mass migration. Joint and [overlapping patrols](#) involving the coast guards from the U.S., Cuba, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Bahamas were on high alert in response to the potential mass displacement of [400,000 Haitians](#) due to a significant surge in [gang violence and political turmoil](#), including the [jailbreak](#) of 4,500 prisoners. On 11 March, the [Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force](#) (RTCIPF) intercepted 140 Haitians attempting to enter the Islands and by the end of March, the Royal Bahamas Defense Force (RBDF) reported an uptick in interceptions, with [369](#) cases reported between March 13 to 27 alone. In Florida, U.S. [several boats](#) carrying migrants were also [intercepted attempting to enter the U.S.](#) On one specific occasion, in mid-March, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted [65 Haitians](#) and sent them back to Haiti despite the [deteriorating and dangerous conditions](#) in the country. The Biden administration has been discussing [using Guantanamo Bay](#) in Cuba, 200 miles away from Haiti, to process the possible influx of Haitian migrants fleeing the violence.

However, despite concerns from governments across the region this quarter [no mass maritime movements from Haiti have been recorded](#). Reports from the U.S. Coast Guard suggest they continue to be busy intercepting the regular stream of maritime movement where Haitians are one nationality amongst many others including migrants from the [Dominican Republic](#).

A new report highlights dangers for Cubans migrating irregularly, while detention and deportation remain commonplace

A [new report released this quarter estimates that](#) at least 800 Cubans have died on irregular migration routes over the past decade, highlighting the persistent safety concerns for people braving irregular migration routes in the region. For Cubans who disembark or are rescued at sea, most are detained and processed for deportation, such as those arriving in the [Caymen Islands in early January](#), or the 24 Cubans who arrived at the [Florida Keys](#) and the [16 Cubans](#) found off Mexico's Isle of Contoy - both in March, this quarter. A total of [257 Cuban](#) migrants were deported from several countries in the region in the first two months of 2024, while in 2023 Cuba received back a total of [5,253 nationals](#), mostly from the United States, but also from Mexico, [Jamaica](#), the Bahamas, Belize, the Cayman Islands, and the Dominican Republic.

Mixed migration into North America

New data highlights shifting migration dynamics to the U.S. border

A decade ago almost [65 per cent](#) of all those crossing into the U.S. from Mexico were Mexican. While Mexico is still the [single-largest origin country](#) for migrants crossing into the U.S., this figure has decreased to just [33%](#) in the last quarter. Stats updated to this quarter show that [half of the people](#) attempting to enter the U.S. via Mexico are now from outside the Northern Triangle/Mexican region. According to figures from [encounters at the U.S. southern border](#), between January and March 2024, the nationalities entering

the U.S. reflect a broad spectrum, with notable representation from countries including Venezuela (7% of all encounters), Cuba (7%), Ecuador (6%), Colombia (6%), Haiti (5%), Nicaragua (3%), China (2%), Brazil (1%), and India (1%).

Recent years have also seen a gradual increase in the irregular entry of “Individuals in a Family Unit”, while the entry of single adults and unaccompanied children progressively decreased. [Encounters of people on the move in family units](#) at the southern U.S. border rose from 24% in FY2022, to 39% so far in FY2024, with this quarter specifically reaching 35%.

Migration set to be a hot topic in upcoming U.S. elections

A [new survey](#) this quarter indicated that the U.S. public is broadly dissatisfied with how immigration is being handled. The Pew Research Centre survey found that eight in ten U.S. adults said the government is doing a very or somewhat bad job dealing with the large number of migrants seeking to enter the U.S. at the border with Mexico. [Other polls](#) this quarter also saw migration surging as the most important issue for U.S. people. Analysts are predicting the issue of migration will be [one of the major issues](#) that will decide the U.S. election in 2024. The survey found that 45 per cent describe the situation as either a “crisis” and 32 per cent as a “major problem” for the country.

U.S. states clash with federal authorities over border control

This quarter saw developments in the migration [standoff](#) between the federal government, the Biden administration and Texas. Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, has pushed through a state law that would allow state law enforcement officers [to arrest irregular migrants](#) for ‘invading’ their state with a possible 20 years stint in prison, if convicted. Initially cleared by the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) when contested by federal authorities, the law (known as SB 4) was blocked again by a federal appeals court [in late March](#). Irrespective of [federal threats](#) and challenges, Texas has used razor wire, guards and other barriers to the access of migrants crossing irregularly from Mexico. Also this quarter there have been [chaotic scenes](#) of migrants overrunning some sections of the barrier. Republicans in Arizona have also moved to [copy Texas’ approach](#). Known as the [“Arizona Invasion Act.”](#) Senate Bill 1231 would make it a crime for an undocumented person to enter Arizona from Mexico anywhere other than a port of entry.

U.S. continues deportations by air, despite temporary halt by Venezuela

As announced in [October 2023](#), the U.S. resumed deportation flights to Venezuela, as well as deportations of other nationalities via charter [into Mexico](#). However, Venezuela temporarily halted deportation flights [from the U.S. and Mexico](#) in February and as of now, there is no additional information regarding the resumption of these flights. Government figures indicate that in fiscal year 2023, ICE’s Enforcement and Removal Operations conducted 142,580 removals and 62,545 Title 42 expulsions to more than 170 countries worldwide. These air-transported removals are part of the total removal figures, most of which happen on land.

Deportation flights are considered a key tool for the Biden administration to deter irregular migration from major source countries although, according to [Amnesty International](#), they violate international refugee law.

U.S. successfully pressures Canada to change Mexican visa rules

In late February, under pressure from the U.S., Canada started to impose [new visa rules](#) for Mexicans. For many years Mexicans have been flying into Canada visa-free and then either applying for asylum once inside the country or crossing clandestinely the less-patrolled border into the U.S. This route is seen as a back door access to the U.S. or as a direct migratory route to Canada. [More than 25,000 Mexicans](#) applied for asylum in Canada last year, making Mexico the top source of asylum claims, [according to statistics from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#). The number of backlogged claims from Mexican nationals currently filed with the board was more than [28,000](#) and the overload has [become a concern](#).

New figures illustrate the scale of Biden's 'parole' programme

Figures released this quarter show that [more than 1 million people](#) have been allowed to enter the U.S. under various instruments implemented by the Biden administration particularly including temporary access to nationals from fragile or failed states. Between January 2023 and early February 2024, migrants in Mexico made more than [64.3 million requests](#) to enter the U.S. [using a smartphone app](#) CBP One™ that the Biden administration has established to reduce irregular entry and as the legal and orderly gateway to the American asylum system at the southern border. During these 13 months, nearly [450,000 migrants](#) have reportedly been allowed into the U.S. under the process which involves an appointment to be processed by U.S. immigration authorities at an official border crossing and then awaiting a hearing in a U.S. immigration court at a later date. Alongside CBP One™, the administration has enacted specific programmes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans ([CHNV](#)) with up to 30,000 temporary humanitarian permits allocated for these nationalities per month, as well as for Ukrainians and Afghans. As of late January, [340,000](#) had been admitted to the U.S. through CHNV parole, along with [186,000](#) Ukrainians and [77,000](#) Afghans who had been granted protection.

Since taking office, the Biden administration has extensively utilized [immigration parole](#), sparking criticism from some, [mainly Republicans](#), who argue against its use as a de facto immigration policy. Republicans aim [to end parole programs](#) if they win the 2024 election, potentially leaving hundreds of thousands in legal limbo after their two-year parole expires.

Republicans and Democrats fight over new border security bill

This quarter Republicans and Democrats have locked horns over the proposed new border security bill with tough new legislation to address what many are seeing as a border crisis of irregular migrants. Although Republicans designed the bill in order to twist Democrat / government arms into accepting the border security reforms, [in the end the Republicans refused to back it themselves](#), arguably preferring the migrant crisis to [damage Democrats politically](#) as election campaigning starts.

Thematic Focus:

Mexico's containment practices as an attempt to prevent mixed migration into the U.S.

Bilateral cooperation seeks to curb mixed migration

Following [December's migration talks](#) in Mexico City, top U.S. and Mexican officials convened in Washington [in late January](#) to further enhance cooperation [on migration issues](#) at the U.S.-Mexico border. With the increasing [number of migrants](#) transiting Mexico, including more families, and people from outside the region, [organizations](#) and [media](#) have documented Mexico's evolving role as the key U.S. [immigration ally](#) since 2019, throughout Andrés Manuel López Obrador's presidency.

The U.S. government under President Joe Biden has continued many of former President Donald Trump's anti-immigration policies and has blocked access to asylum at the U.S. southern border through policies like Title 42 and Remain in Mexico as part of the earlier so-called [Migrant Protection Protocols](#). The Mexican government, on its part, has deployed a reported [32,000 soldiers](#) alongside National Migration Institute (INM) agents to enforce migration laws, who [participate](#) with military weapons in inspections and detentions of undocumented migrants throughout Mexico. In addition, some organizations have denounced the fact that the agents of the INM, a civilian institution that has no faculty of using force, have received [military training](#). After Mexico deployed its new National Guard for immigration enforcement in 2019, [reports of mistreatment of migrants rose](#).

[As part of its cooperation](#) with the U.S. to fight drugs and migration, Mexico has [established](#) naval bases on its rivers, security cordons and drone surveillance to monitor and interdict migrants. It has also [set up](#) mobile highway checkpoints and biometric screening at migrant detention centres, all to detect, [detain](#) and [deport](#) people on the move heading northward. Mexico has also [imposed restrictions](#) on domestic travel, including requiring proof of migration status for domestic bus trips and regular migration status checks on domestic flights. Soldiers and immigration agents regularly conduct ["control and verification" operations](#) nationwide to apprehend undocumented migrants. They operate checkpoints on major roads and conduct patrols and surprise [inspections](#) on buses and aeroplanes, at hotels, along the northern and southern borders, and in public spaces like parks. Additionally, trains have been [stalled](#) with [migrants riding the trains](#) removed.

The policy of containment and militarization is in force

During this first quarter of 2024, experts characterize Mexico's migration management tactics as more [obstructionist](#). For instance, in January 2024 [119,469](#) people on the move were detained, an all-time monthly record, and almost the same number as in the entire first quarter of 2023 (120,029). After announcing the [suspension](#) of migrant deportations due to budget shortfalls in December 2023, Mexico's tactic changed to carry out ["internal deportations"](#) from the northern border to the southern, a [tactic that wears down](#) migrants who have often spent all their savings to reach the border with the United States.

Mexico has also required visas for those from Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela and has expelled Haitian migrants to Haiti and Central Americans to Guatemala. In March, plans by the IMN to [repatriate people on the move by bus](#) to seven Central American countries (namely Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Panama), was initiated by issuing commercial tender, another example of actions taken by Mexico to reduce the number of migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach the United States.

The INM has a significant presence across Mexico and operates one of the largest migration detention systems in the world. In 2023 almost [800,000 migrants were detained](#) although most were later released being too numerous for the authorities to process.

Mexico is described by [organizations](#) and [analysts](#) as pursuing a containment strategy, based on “sabotage” of migrants’ travel objectives, that aims to keep migrants in southern Mexico [far from the U.S. border](#). Migrant caravans that come from Central America are [prevented](#) or [persuaded](#) to not move northwards, as mentioned in the body of the QMMU above. People on the move can languish there for months trying to regularize their status through asylum or other means. Evidence from past Human Rights Watch (HRW) analysis indicates that [“outsourcing U.S. immigration enforcement to Mexico has led to serious abuses and forced hundreds of thousands to wait in appalling conditions to seek protection.”](#) HRW Findings in 2022 found that the Mexican immigration agency pressured people on the move not to claim refugee status or to abandon claims and illegally expelled some, including children, who feared for their lives in their home countries. Nevertheless, refugee status applications in Mexico have soared. In 2023 a record number of asylum claims were made ([140,000](#)). To the Mexican Refugee Commission (COMAR) [23,753](#) applications were made in the first quarter of 2024. The main applicant came from Honduras, Cuba, Haiti, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Guatemala.

At the northern border with the U.S., during January, even accounting for seasonal trends, there was a drop in the U.S. [apprehensions](#) of people on the move from [250,000](#) in December 2023 to a monthly average of around 134,000 in the first quarter of 2024. [U.S. officials credited Mexico](#) with reducing arrivals at the border through greater enforcement. However, data from [previous years](#) may suggest a downward trend in the first months of the year, which typically reverses in the subsequent quarters. As mentioned, many migrants and asylum seekers are [transported southward internally](#) within Mexico, back to the Guatemalan border and away from the U.S. border in what [appears to be an active effort](#) to wear them out physically and financially as if forcing them onto a pointless treadmill or like the game ‘snakes and ladders’ where they never reach their goal. But many do reach their goal. Despite increasing [restrictive measures](#) since 2019, 2023 was a record year for irregular entries from Mexico into the U.S., with more than [2,500,000](#) “encounters” at the border between these two countries.

But many do reach their goal: rethinking an approach on mixed migration towards the U.S.

Some [experts](#) argue that the cooperation between Mexico and the U.S. on immigration management along with pushing enforcement further south in Mexico will not achieve its aims. Reality is shifting, situations are fast-evolving and immigration enforcement and border control will need a [significant rethink and new approach](#) if the U.S. is to address the current and future realities of migration demand. In a new report by the [Migration Policy Institute](#), commentators claim that cooperation with Mexico is vital, but the U.S. needs to further strengthen engagement and cooperation with Mexico on migration management – not only enforcement and deterrence but also human rights protection. The analysis [concludes](#) that “Border control

through effective migration management calls for a paradigm shift, with policy and political implications that extend well beyond the U.S.-Mexico border.” The implication is that however stringently Mexico acts to contain migration movements through its territory, it might never be enough.

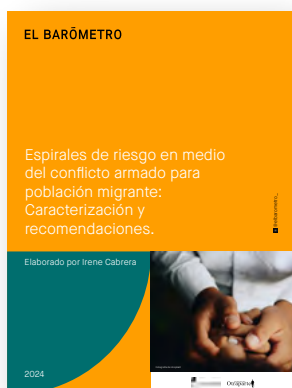
Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Lack of action sees sharp rise in sexual violence on people transiting Darién Gap](#)

Médecins Sans Frontières | February 2024

This important short advocacy report and associated articles highlights the brutal violence and in particular sexual abuse taking place on the migrants' route through the Darién Gap. MSF's demand for action and public condemnation may be the reason their activities and assistance were curtailed shortly after publication release.



[Espirales de riesgo en medio del conflicto armado para población migrante](#)

El Barómetro | February 2024 (Spanish only)

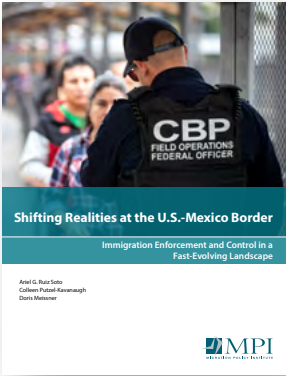
This report explores the 'spirals' of multiple risk, primarily security risks, facing vulnerable refugees and migrant populations in Colombia that comes from the dynamics of war and proximity to armed groups. The study uses data from between 2018 and July 2023, and identifies twenty-two types of security risks affecting refugees and migrants as a result of armed conflict dynamics.



[Spotlight Note: Socio-economic integration of forcibly displaced populations in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

IDB, OECD & UNHCR | February 2024

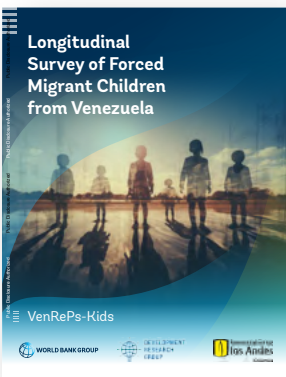
This report explores the specificities of the socio-economic integration of forcibly displaced populations residing in the Latin American OECD countries of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico, as well as Ecuador and Peru.



Shifting Realities at the U.S.-Mexico Border: Immigration Enforcement and Control in a Fast-Evolving Landscape

Migration Policy Institute | January 2024

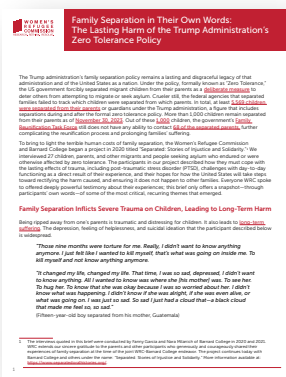
This report examines the history of the federal government's efforts to strengthen southwest border security in the modern era, and identifies key developments in the evolution of U.S.-Mexico border security, including the changing origins and characteristics of migrants arriving at the border. It also draws lessons from this long view of the border that may benefit policymakers and political leaders today.



Longitudinal Survey of Forced Migrant Children from Venezuela

World Bank | January 2024

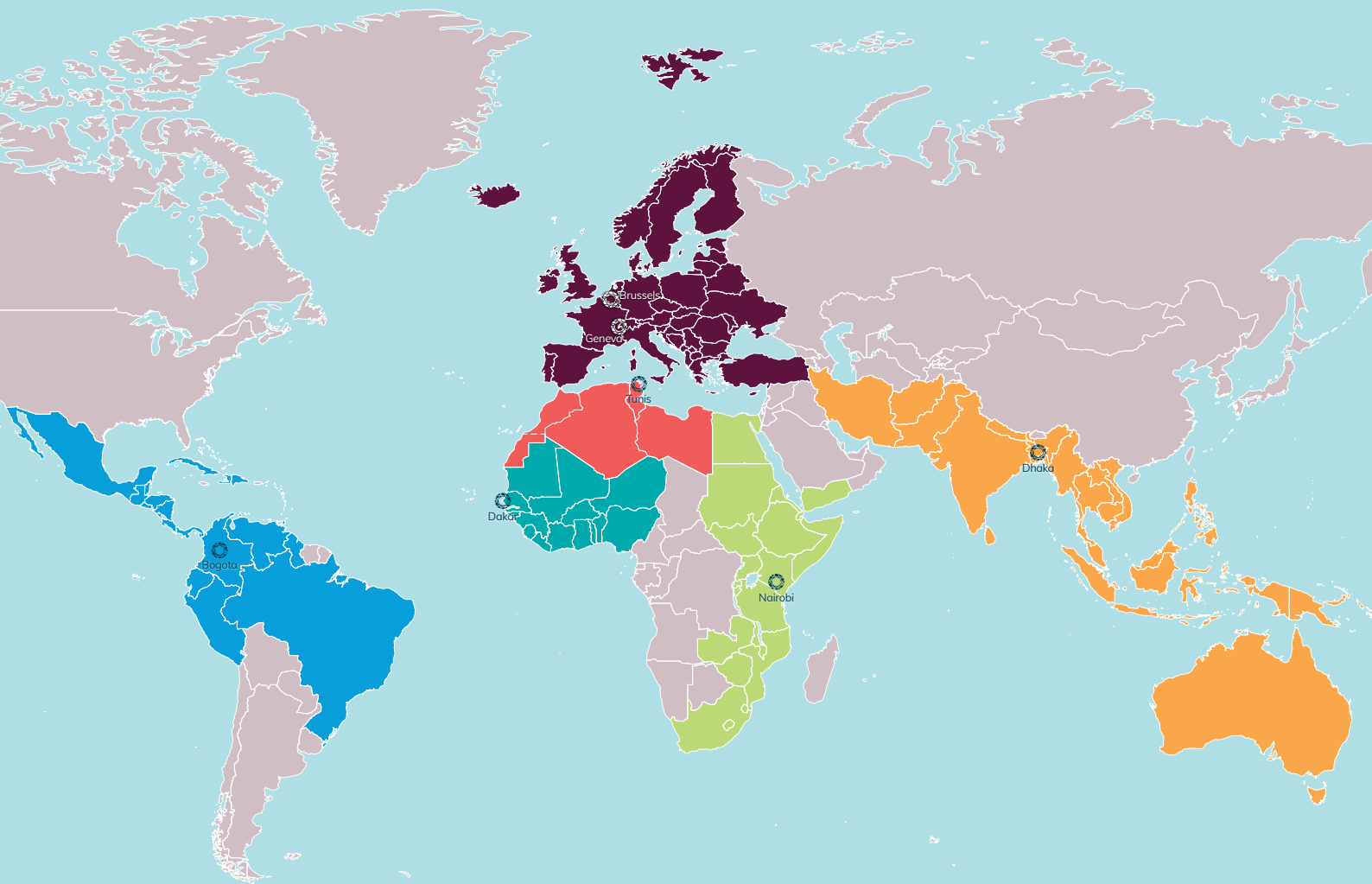
Forced displacement is a global development issue. It is estimated that by early 2021, there were more than 110 million displaced people, of whom 41% are children under the age of 18. One of the main obstacles to progress in this field is the lack of longitudinal data and information on the human development status of children. This study was developed to address this deficiency in the sector and includes 3,100 participants, both Venezuelan and Colombian children, living in Medellín, the second city in Colombia with the highest flow of Venezuelan migration.



Family Separation in Their Own Words: The Lasting Harm of the Trump Administration's Zero Tolerance Policy

Women's Refugee Commission | January 2024

The Trump administration's family separation policy remains a lasting and disgraceful legacy of that administration. According to this report, the policy's lasting harm of that administration. Under the policy, formally known as "Zero Tolerance," the U.S. government forcibly separated migrant children from their parents as a deliberate measure to deter others from attempting to migrate or seek asylum. The Women's Refugee Commission presents this paper to bring to light the terrible human costs of family separation, in the words of those affected.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

