

# Risks, dangers and assistance needs among migrants in South America

This infographic presents the latest 4Mi data on the dangers and abuses reported and experienced by migrants interviewed in South America, as well as their access to assistance during the journey and their needs at the time of interview. This document 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 migrants in the region.

## METHODOLOGY

### DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Peru (Desaguadero, Puno and Tumbes, n=474), Bolivia (La Paz and El Alto, n=236), Argentina (Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Mendoza, Neuquen, San Luis and Santa Cruz, n=234), Uruguay (Montevideo and Rivera, n=106), Chile (Arica, Santiago and Pedro Aguirre Cerda, n=255), Other (n=13).<sup>1</sup>

### DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:

12 July – 31 October 2024

### METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

In-person and telephone surveys

**SAMPLE SIZE:** 1,318 respondents

## Background

- South America currently hosts more than 10.9 million migrants.<sup>2</sup> Venezuelan migrants continue to move across the region,<sup>3</sup> alongside growing numbers of migrants from other nationalities, including Colombians, Ecuadorians, Peruvians, and Haitians.<sup>4</sup>
- Over the past year, migration policies in key countries along routes through South America have become stricter, and border controls have been reinforced. Peru imposed new visa requirements on Venezuelans earlier this year and augmented immigration enforcement along the borders with Ecuador.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Chile expanded its military presence along its borders with Peru and Bolivia<sup>6</sup> and introduced new entry requirements, resulting in detention, expulsions, and the forced return of migrants.<sup>7</sup>
- These restrictions on pathways and visa requirements have made regular, orderly, and safe migration processes more difficult across the region. In the absence of regular pathways, migrants resort to more dangerous and less monitored routes, increasing their exposure to risks such as human trafficking, bribery and sexual violence.<sup>8</sup>

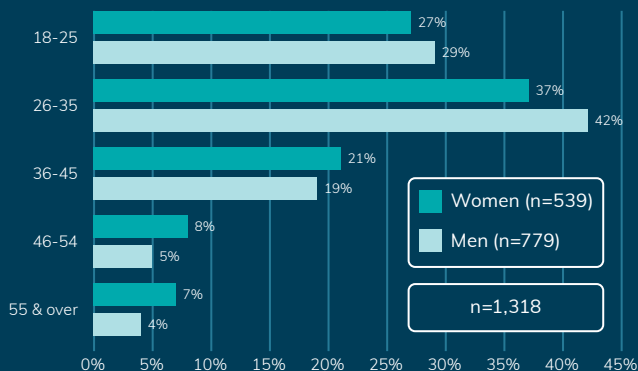
## Respondents profiles

### Gender



**28%** of respondents were traveling with children in their care at the time of the interview. 66% of respondents travelling with children in their care (n=373) were women.

### Age

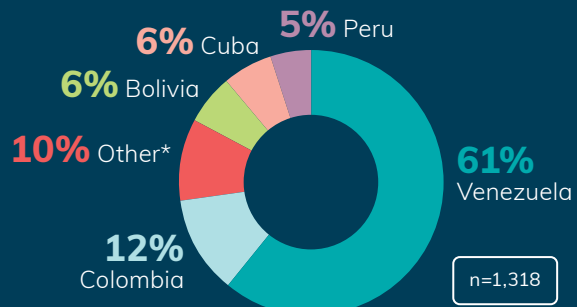


### Profiles

- 40% of respondents were between 26 and 35 years old.
- More than half of the respondents were Venezuelan nationals (61%), followed by Colombians (12%), Bolivians (6%), Cubans (6%), and Peruvians (5%).
- Chile (62%) was the most selected destination country among those who had not yet completed their journey (n=559).

Note: The 4Mi sample is purposive. Therefore, the data presented in this infographic should not be considered representative of mixed migration dynamics in the Americas.

### Nationality



\*These respondents (n=133) were from Ecuador (4%), Chile (2%), Argentina (1%), Brazil (1%), Paraguay (1%), and Haiti (1%).

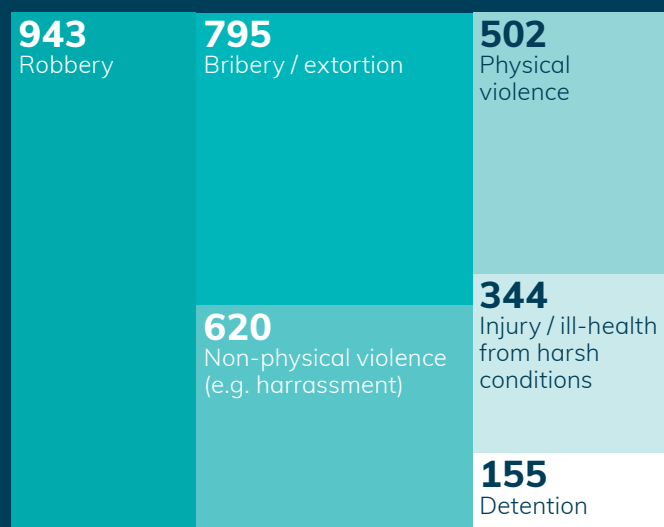
1 Other locations were Santa do Livramento in Brazil (n=12) and Guayaquil in Ecuador (n=1). The survey in Ecuador was conducted by telephone.  
 2 IOM (2023) [Movimientos migratorios recientes en América del Sur - Informe anual 2023](#). Foro Especializado Migratorio del MERCOSUR y Estados Asociados (FEM).  
 3 R4V. (2024). [Personas refugiadas y migrantes venezolanas - Mayo 2024](#).  
 4 Human Rights Watch. (2024). [El Tapón del Darién. La selva donde confluyen las deficientes políticas migratorias de América Latina](#).

5 Voz de América. (2024). [Perú retira la excepción migratoria a venezolanos menores y en vulnerabilidad y exige visa a todos](#); Perú 21. (2023). [Migración ilegal: Policía nacional intensifica operativos en frontera norte del Perú](#).  
 6 R4V (2024). [Reporte de movimientos Julio-Septiembre 2024](#).  
 7 Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile. (2024). [Ley 21655 de 2024](#); Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes (2014). [Entra en vigencia ley que modifica procedimiento de refugio y ley de migración en reconducciones](#).  
 8 DRC & Encuentros (2024). [SNAPSHOT DE PROTECCIÓN: PERÚ Agosto - Septiembre 2024](#).

## Abuses and dangers along the journey

**57%** of respondents identified at least one particularly dangerous location on their route where they perceived risks of violence and/or abuses.

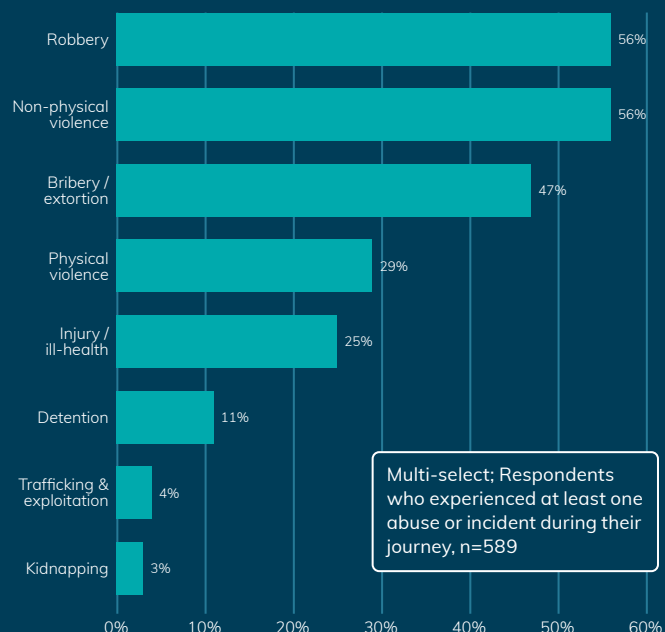
### Main risks perceived at identified dangerous locations



Note: The chart shows the number of times respondents mentioned a perceived risk in the locations they identified as dangerous on their route. Respondents could select up to five of the most dangerous locations and the associated risks.

Multi-select; Total number of perceived risks at identified dangerous locations, n=3,542

### Main abuses and incidents experienced during the journey



Multi-select; Respondents who experienced at least one abuse or incident during their journey, n=589

### Main perceived perpetrators of abuses at identified dangerous locations



**22%**

Local Community



**21%**

Criminal gangs



**20%**

Other migrants



**12%**

Military/police

Note: The % figures refer to the times each perceived perpetrator was cited out of the total number of perpetrator citations at identified dangerous locations. Respondents could select up to five of the most dangerous locations and identify the likely perpetrators there.

Multi-select; n=3,622 total cited likely perpetrators at identified dangerous locations

## Key findings

- **57% of respondents identified at least one dangerous location** on their journey where they perceived a risk (n=748), of which **79% reported having directly experienced an abuse or incident** (n=589). This highlights not only a **widespread perception of danger during the journey but also real threats**, emphasising the need for greater security and support for migrants.
- Robberies occur at any stage of the journey, although mainly in border areas and large cities. **The main belongings targeted are money, mobile phones, documents, clothes, and travel essentials.** The loss of money can have a direct impact on migrants' continuation of their journey and increase their vulnerability to labour exploitation.<sup>9</sup> Since documentation is a requirement for regularisation, the theft of identity documents reduces migrants' chances to regularise.<sup>10</sup> The loss of mobile phones hinders communication and maintaining interpersonal relationships through social media platforms.<sup>11</sup>
- **According to respondents, cases of extortion and bribery generally occur at border crossings and road checkpoints.** Payments are demanded to allow entry to or transit through countries that have policies restricting the movement of certain nationalities.<sup>12</sup>
- Members of the local community were **one of the most frequently mentioned potential perpetrators of abuse**, a situation that also occurs in other contexts across the Americas.<sup>13</sup> This may be linked to high levels of xenophobia<sup>14</sup> and could become a barrier to migrants' integration.<sup>15</sup>

9 Instituto de Defensa Legal (2024) [Migrantes venezolanos en el Perú: víctimas de estafa y explotación en la economía informal.](#)

10 BBC News (2024) [El gobierno de Argentina autoriza la entrada y la regularización de migrantes venezolanos con documentos vencidos.](#)

11 MMC (2023) [Digital lifelines: The use of social media networks among Venezuelan refugees and migrants heading north.](#)

12 Infobae (2024). ['Coyote', el policía acusado de cobrar a migrantes para facilitar su entrada a Perú en la frontera con Chile.](#); La Opinión (2024). [El paso de migrantes por la frontera](#)

[Perú-Bolivia "es horrible".](#)

13 MMC (2024). [Riesgos de seguridad en el Topón del Darién y asistencia necesitada por personas migrantes.](#)

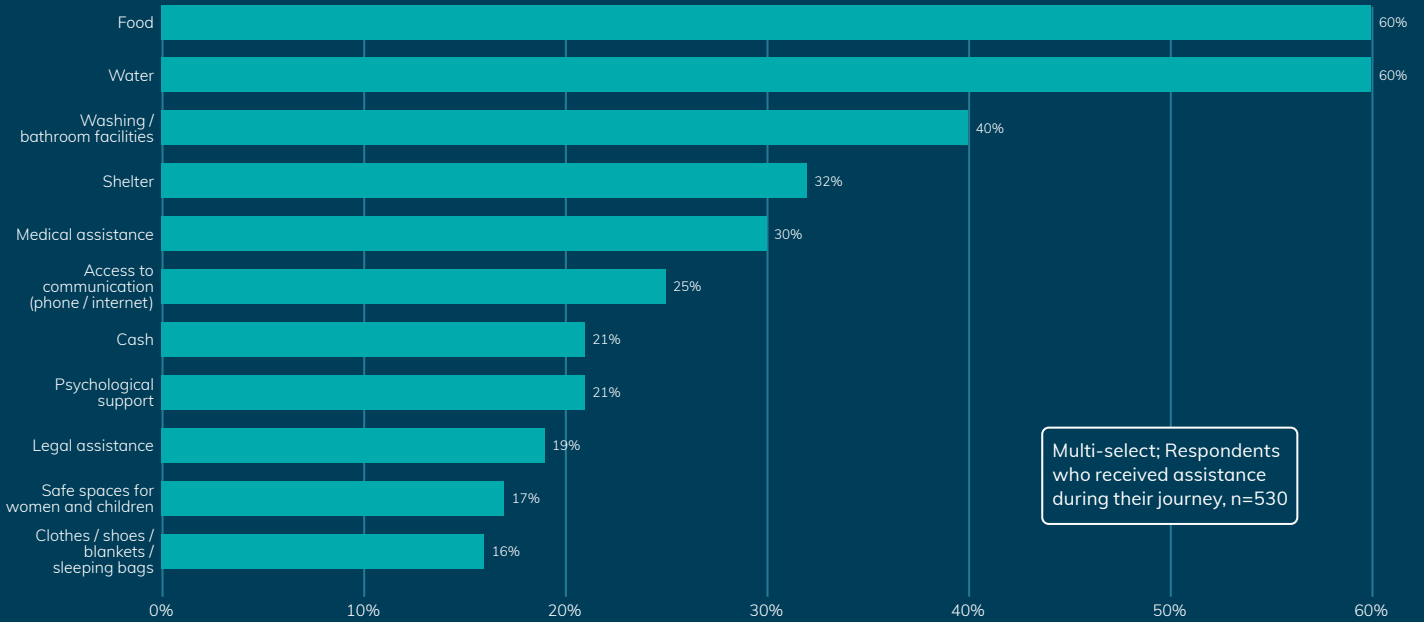
14 OXFAM (2019). [Sí, Pero no Aquí: Percepciones de xenofobia y discriminación hacia migrantes de Venezuela en Colombia, Ecuador y Perú.](#)

15 Ceriani, P. et. al (2023) [Recepción e integración de personas migrantes y refugiadas en ciudades de las Américas.](#) OAS, PADF, IOM & UNHCR.

## Access to assistance during the journey

**60%** of respondents reported not accessing any assistance during their journey.

### Main type of assistance received by respondents during their journey



### Main providers of assistance received by respondents



**58%**

NGOs



**45%**

Local population and volunteers



**29%**

UN agencies



**28%**

Other migrants



**23%**

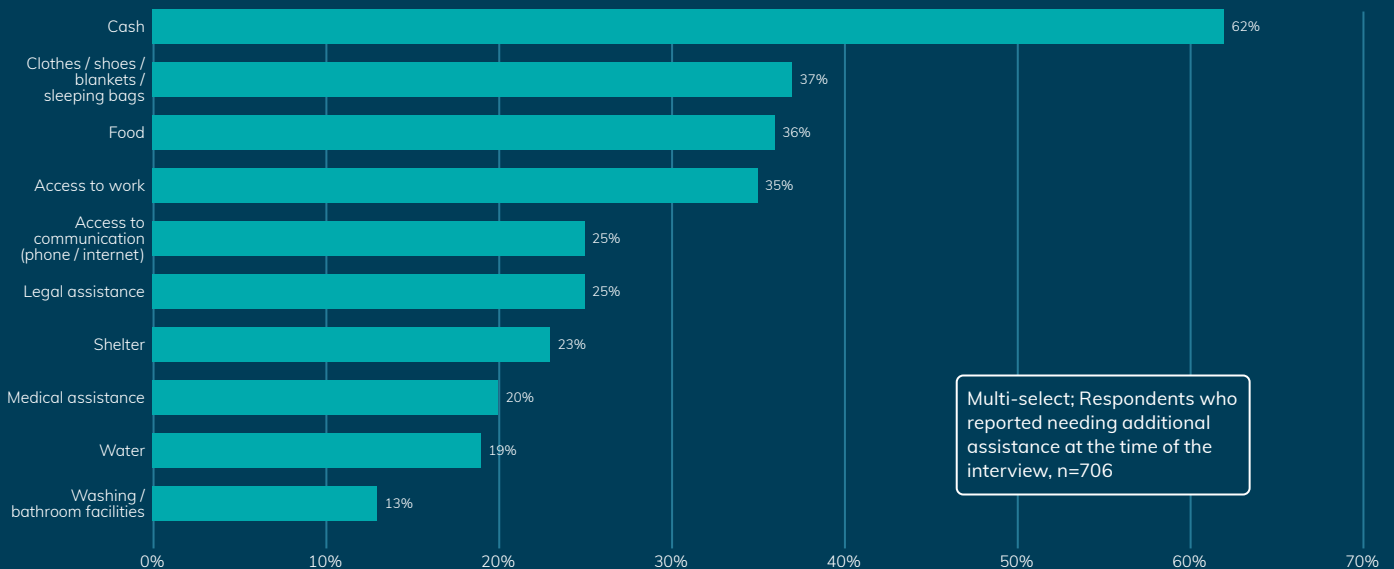
Family and friends

Multi-select; n=530

## Assistance needs

**54%** of respondents mentioned needing additional assistance at the time of the interview.

### Main type of assistance needed by respondents at the time of interview



## Key findings

- **60% of respondents reported not having accessed any assistance during their journey.** Humanitarian actors on the ground indicate that **a lack of funding severely limits their ability to respond effectively.** This, combined with the underfunding of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Venezuela,<sup>16</sup> demonstrates the urgent need to increase funding for the provision of services to migrants in transit.
- **Among respondents who received assistance during their journey (n=530), only 3% received it from governments.** Most South American countries have committed to addressing and reducing migration-related vulnerabilities by adopting the Global Compact for Migration<sup>17</sup> and the Lima Declaration.<sup>18</sup> In practice, however, governments' efforts to protect migrants in transit remain limited.<sup>19</sup>
- **The type of assistance required by respondents varies depending on the stage of their journey.** In Peru and Bolivia (n=710), where 74% of respondents had not completed their journey, **money (73%)** was the primary need among those respondents who had not completed their journey and required assistance (n=432), followed by **clothes and shoes (41%), food (39%), and shelter (29%).** These needs reflect the **respondents' intention to continue travelling.** In contrast, in **Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay** (n=595), where **85% of respondents reported having completed their journey,** the main needs among those who had completed their journey and required assistance (n=108) were **legal assistance (69%), access to the labour market (27%), and psychological support (19%).** These needs are related to aspects of integration, such as regularisation and access to employment.<sup>20</sup>



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## 4Mi data collection

4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with migrants in Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, and West Africa.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at: [www.mixedmigration.org/4mi](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)



16 R4V (2024). [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP 2023 - 2024\)](#).  
17 UN General Assembly (2019). [Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018 \(A/RES/73/195\)](#).  
18 CSM (2023). [Declaración de Lima. XXI Conferencia Suramericana sobre Migraciones. "Articular el diálogo continental para la atención integral de la migración en las Américas."](#)

19 UNHCR. (2024). [Se necesita más apoyo para 4.2 millones de personas refugiadas y migrantes que buscan seguridad y estabilidad en las Américas](#).  
20 World Bank Group. (2024). [Barreras y facilitadores de la integración de la población migrante y refugiada en Chile](#).