



234.5 K

VENEZUELAN IN THE SUB-REGIONⁱ

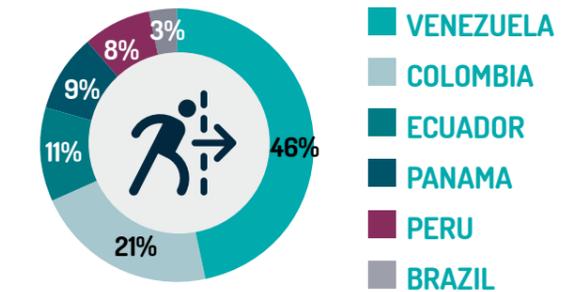
121.6 K PANAMA
83.0 K MEXICO
29.9 K COSTA RICA

(AS OF JAN 2022)

VENEZUELAN ON THE MOVE IN CENTRAL AMERICA



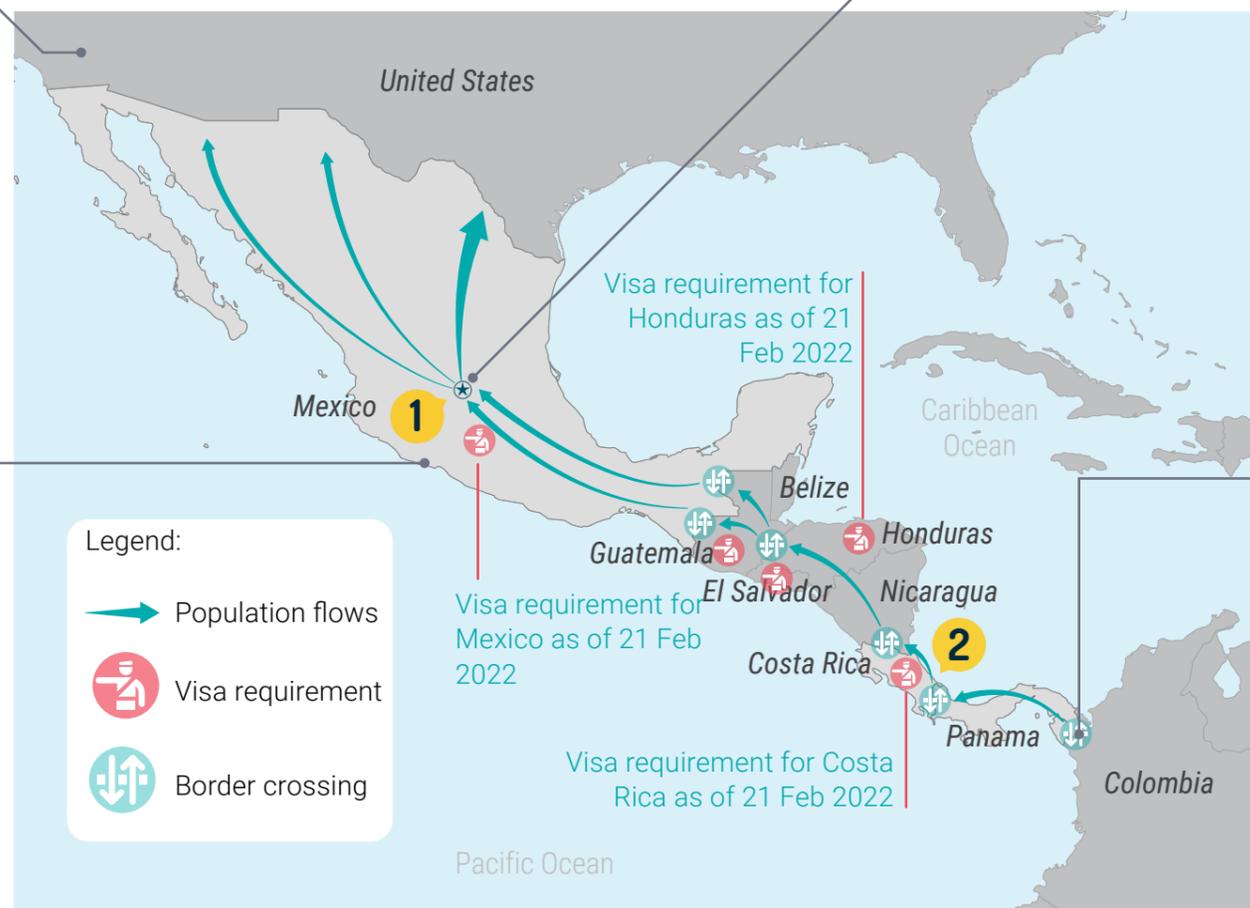
LAST COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE:



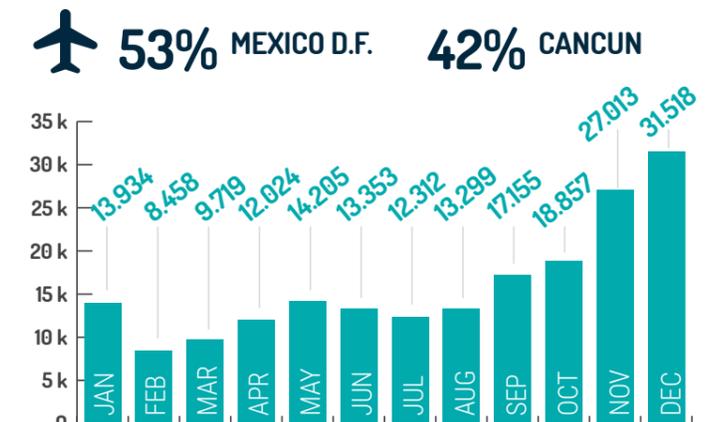
ENCOUNTERS WITH VENEZUELAN AT THE U.S./MEXICO BORDER IN 2021^{iv}



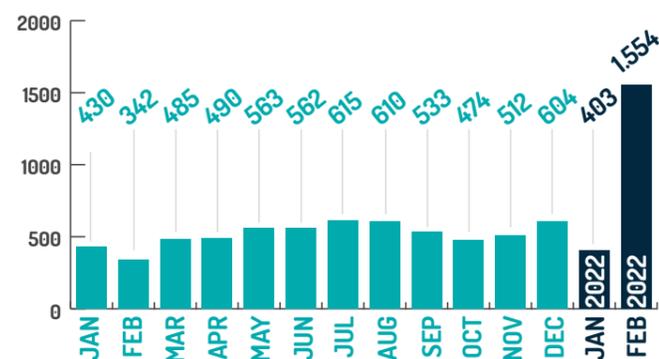
POPULATION FLOWS IN CENTRAL AMERICA



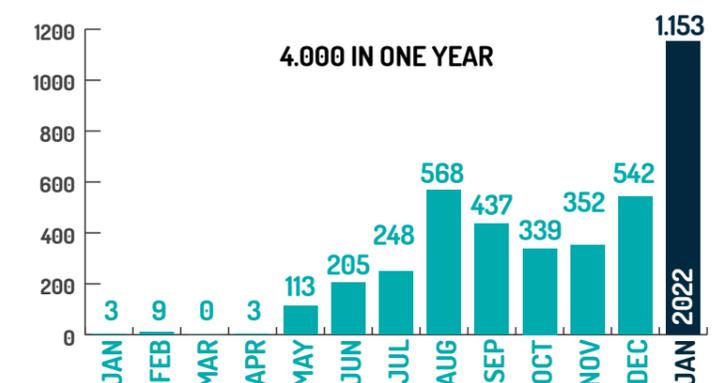
VENEZUELAN ARRIVING IN MEXICO BY AIR IN 2021



NEW ASYLUM CLAIMS FROM VENEZUELAN IN MEXICO



VENEZUELAN CROSSING THE DARIEN



Sources: (i) The latest available data on cumulative residency permits for the region comprises: Panama: 79.7k (data cutoff: July 2021), Mexico 43.0k (data cutoff: March 2021) and Costa Rica 7.1k (data cutoff: March 2021). (ii) <https://reliefweb.int/report/mexico/dtm-matriz-de-monitoreo-del-desplazamiento-entendiendo-el-flujo-migratorio-0> (iii) https://displacement.iom.int/sites/default/files/public/reports/Report%20_Flowmonitoring_janu2022.pdf (iv) <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>



SPECIAL SITUATION REPORT

CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO

CURRENT SITUATION

In the context of increased onward movements of refugees and migrants in the region, crossing multiple countries in vulnerable situations and through unofficial border points, especially the second half of 2021 witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela moving northward, via the Darien Gap, with many attempting to reach the United States (U.S.) via its southern land border with Mexico. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported a more than 10,000 per cent increase in the number of “encounters” with Venezuelans [attempting to enter the United States from Mexico](#), up to 24,819 in December 2021 (from 206 in December 2020). In total, there were 106,755 “encounters”¹ with Venezuelans attempting to enter the U.S. from Mexico during 2021. Venezuelans made up just 0.4 per cent of those attempting to cross irregularly into the U.S. in January 2021, but 15 per cent of all nationalities arriving to the U.S. by January 2022. Venezuelans surpassed Hondurans, Haitians and Salvadorans in arrivals at the U.S. southern border in the last two months of 2021 and in January 2022.

This increase in attempted entries of refugees and migrants from Venezuela to the U.S. corresponds both with the increase of [Venezuelans arriving by air to Mexico](#), particularly in the last four months of 2021 (which rose from 13,299 in August to 31,518 in December), and with the increase of Venezuelans traveling via irregular overland routes through Central America to Mexico. Particularly noteworthy is the number of Venezuelans crossing the perilous Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama, which rose from just 3 in January 2021 to 1,153 in January 2022, according to [Panama’s National Migration Service](#) (SNM); despite an agreement between the Governments of Panama and Colombia from mid-August to limit the number of refugees and migrants (of all nationalities) who would be permitted to cross

daily. Children made up 23 per cent of refugees and migrants of all nationalities crossing via the Darien Gap in 2021, according to data from the [SNM](#). Meanwhile, the number of new asylum claims per month from Venezuelans in Mexico remained stable (averaging 552 per month throughout 2021; with a peak of 615 in July), underscoring the trend of Mexico transitioning from a country of destination for Venezuelans, to a transit country for those en route to the U.S.

It is understood that these movements of Venezuelan refugees and migrants transiting through countries in Central America and Mexico to reach the U.S. are almost evenly split between onward movements of Venezuelans who previously resided in other host countries throughout the region, and movements of Venezuelans who more recently left their country of origin. For example, a [January 2022 survey by an R4V partner](#) of refugees and migrants arriving to Costa Rica from Panama via overland routes found that 52 per cent of Venezuelans in transit through Costa Rica (most of whom noted the U.S. as their final destination) had previously resided in another host country (mostly Colombia, followed by Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Brazil), while 46 per cent recently departed from Venezuela. Meanwhile, of Venezuelans [interviewed by an R4V partner in May 2021](#) in four northern border cities of Mexico – 43 per cent of whom expressed the intention to travel on to the U.S. – 47 per cent held a Permanent Residence card in Mexico, 20 per cent had resided in Colombia prior to entering Mexico, and 12 per cent had previously resided in Ecuador, Peru or Chile. These Venezuelans stated that their primary need was for legal support, including to establish legal residence through asylum or other migratory procedures, and 29 per cent had no documented form of legal status in the country (the remaining respondents indicated that they had either a humanitarian visa, a temporary residence permit, or that their documentation was in process).

¹ Encounter data includes U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Title 8 Apprehensions, Office of Field Operations (OFO) Title 8 Inadmissibles, and Title 42 Expulsions. Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters-by-component>

In another joint analysis carried out by the R4V Platform in Mexico in September and October 2021, of Venezuelans residing in five cities (Monterrey, Querétaro, Puebla, Cancún and Playa del Carmen) who had arrived mostly by plane, a significant proportion noted that they had lived previously in Colombia, Peru or Ecuador before traveling to Mexico, and had left those other host countries primarily due to xenophobia, discrimination and precarious economic situations.

On 17 December 2021, noting that Venezuelan nationals were increasingly entering Mexico with the intention to undertake “irregular transit to a third country,” the Government of Mexico **announced** that it would require visas for Venezuelans to enter the country as tourists, and the visa requirement **took effect** on 21 January 2022. Costa Rica also **implemented** a visa requirement for Venezuelans as of 21 February 2022, and that same day, Honduras **announced** that it would also begin to require a visa for Venezuelans. Of other countries in Central America, Panama, El Salvador and Guatemala have also imposed visa requirements for Venezuelans.

As a result of these new visa requirements, most Venezuelans will no longer be able to enter most Central American countries or Mexico regularly (due to visa application fees or difficulties obtaining necessary paperwork, including availability of passports and/or civil documentation). Yet still impacted by the needs that compelled them to leave their country of origin, and often unable to integrate locally, it is anticipated that many more will resort to irregular overland travel, with a view to reach Mexico and the U.S.

OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (*RMRP*) includes the activities of six partner agencies and organizations² in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico working to support refugees and migrants from Venezuela and their affected host communities. In total, they aim to assist some 55.6K Venezuelans and members of affected host communities out of an estimated total population of 265K Venezuelans in destination and in transit in these three countries (see [here, the planned activities](#)). The number of people reached by R4V partners is reported publicly every month and can be viewed on the R4V [implementation](#)

While Venezuelans were not the predominant nationality along the mixed movement routes through Central America up until the latter part 2021, since January 2022 – coinciding with the new visa requirements in Costa Rica and Mexico – Venezuelans have surpassed all other nationalities traveling by land from Colombia to Panama via the Darien Gap, according to the [SNM](#). Since January 2022, Venezuelans were also the predominant nationality of refugees and migrants traveling by land from Panama to Costa Rica, making up 43 per cent of all entries (1,601 people in transit), according to monitoring undertaken by an [R4V partner](#) along the border between Panama and Costa Rica.

Key vulnerabilities for refugees and migrants from Venezuela undertaking these irregular movements include exposure to natural hazards (such as extreme variations in climate, between heavy rains and landslides in the jungle in the Darien Gap, to parched deserts along the northern border of Mexico with the U.S.), lack of safe transportation resulting in vulnerability to smuggling and trafficking networks, and other forms of violence (including sexual violence), abuse and exploitation. In 2021, over 1,000 cases of sexual violence and abuse against women and girls were [reported](#) in the Darien Gap. Almost half – or 49 per cent – of Venezuelans [surveyed](#) by an R4V partner in four cities along the northern border of Mexico in May of 2021 reported having been a victim of a crime, including robbery, extortion and assault. In addition, refugees and migrants from Venezuela who undertake the long and dangerous overland journey through Central America and Mexico often do not have sufficient resources to cover basic needs such as food, water and shelter.

[dashboard](#) and filtered by country and sector of the response.

The current R4V response for Venezuelans in Central America and Mexico includes activities in the sectors of Education, Food Security, Health, Integration, Protection, Shelter and WASH, with [SitReps](#) published monthly highlighting the situation and R4V response in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico.

In **Mexico**, a total of 9,020 refugees and migrants from Venezuela received assistance from R4V partners in 2021, or 69 per cent of the total Venezuelan target

² The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), RET International, UN Habitat and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

population, out of an estimated 18K refugees and migrants from Venezuela in need in Mexico. The Protection, Education and Integration sectors reached the greatest numbers of Venezuelans in need, including with support to access documentation and legal status (through both asylum and migratory regularization procedures) as well as support for school enrolment and professional degree validation. R4V partners also conducted [border monitoring](#) and protection monitoring surveys in order to better understand the numbers and needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in destination and in transit in Mexico (the findings of some of them cited above).

In **Costa Rica** by the end of 2021 a total of 4,459 refugees and migrants from Venezuela – or 52 per cent of the population of Venezuelans targeted for assistance, out of an estimated 31K Venezuelans in need in Costa Rica – had received some form of assistance from R4V partners. The most common forms of support provided were in the areas of Protection, Health and Food Security. To respond specifically to the situation of the increased number of irregular arrivals by land, including Venezuelan refugees and migrants, a joint R4V inter-agency mission, together with relevant government authorities and the UN Resident Coordinator, is planned to visit the border with Panama for the

week of 28 February, particularly to assess possible expansions of shelter and reception capacities.

In **Panamá**, R4V partners reached a total of 6,839 refugees and migrants from Venezuela with some form of assistance in 2021, which represented just 31 per cent of the total Venezuelan target population, out of an estimated 78K Venezuelans in need in Panama. The forms of support provided to the greatest numbers of Venezuelans were Protection, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), and assistance with Integration and Food Security. Partners provided technical and logistical support to state authorities to complement their response in managing mixed movements and strengthening protection interventions. Significant efforts to promote coordination between protection actors facilitated the timely referral of Venezuelans identified with international protection needs. R4V partners in Panama also carried out [border monitoring](#) and [protection monitoring](#) surveys with refugees and migrants from Venezuela in destination and in transit to gather information about their needs and experiences.

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