



**MMC Latin America
and the Caribbean**

QUARTER 1 2021



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, including Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador, in addition to the Caribbean islands. Concerning northern movements to the United States, this QMMU covers Mexico and Central American countries. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to some of the 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.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy development on mixed migration. For more information on the 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 in mixed flows 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. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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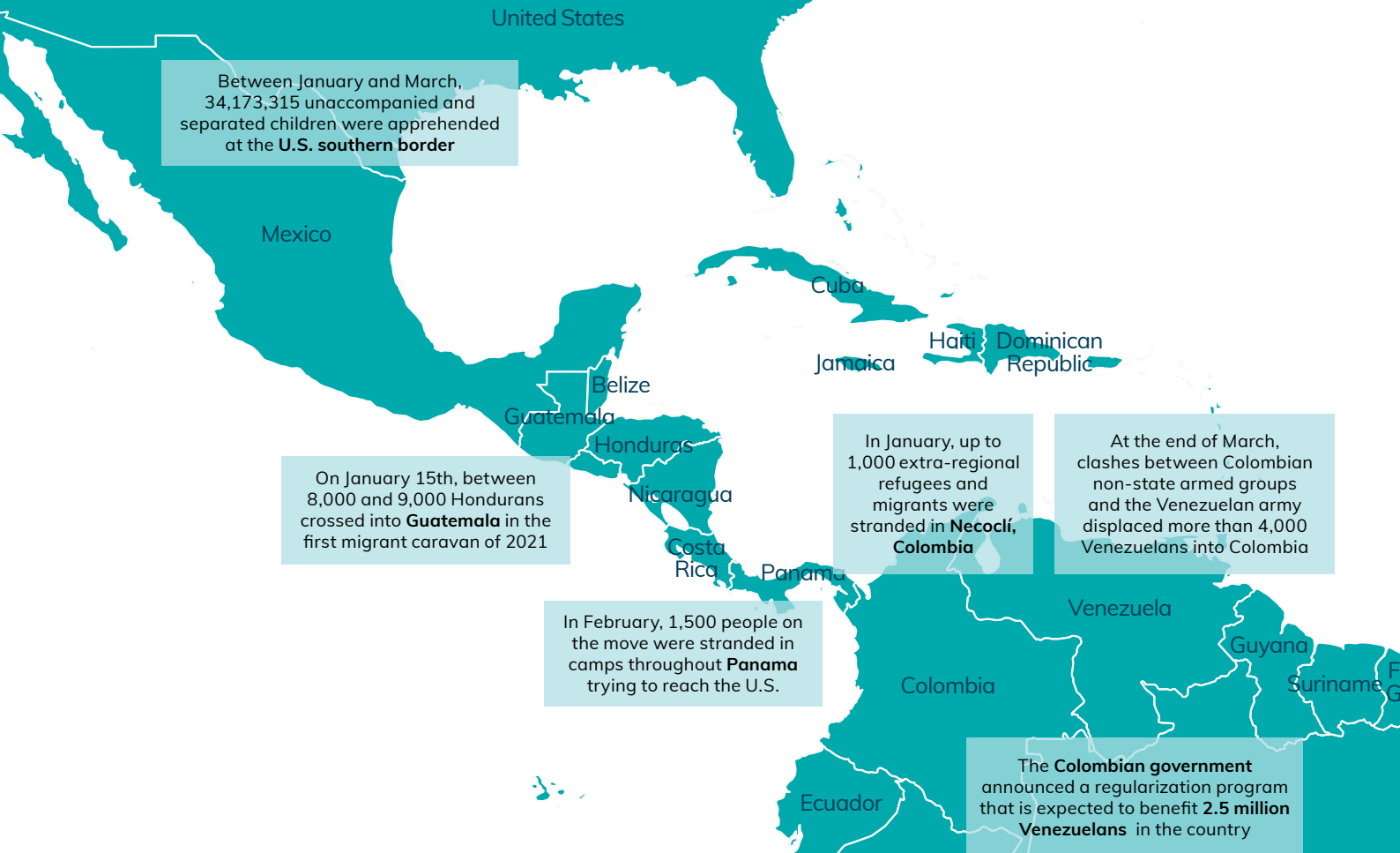
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean

Quarter 1 - 2021

Key Updates

- **The problematic of refugees and migrants coming from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean being left stranded in the region is increasing**, as a result of extended border closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In January, there were between [680](#) and [1,000](#) extra-regional refugees and migrants - predominantly from Haiti, followed by Cuba and several African countries - stranded in Necoclí, a Colombian town near the border with Panama. In February, 1,500 people on the move were blocked in camps throughout Panama. At the same time, approximately 600 people on the move, mostly Haitians, were stranded at the Brazil-Peru border, while trying to migrate north toward or returning home.
- **More and more countries in the region are militarizing their borders.** Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru are the latest countries to militarize their borders aiming to prevent irregular migration. Peru deployed 1,200 troops to the border, followed by Ecuador with 200 troops on January 27th. Mexico, that had started militarizing its southern border in January, increased the presence of National Guard troops to [8,715 officers](#) as of March 22nd.
- **Onward migration** in the region is on the rise. Haitian refugees and migrants who had previously settled in Brazil have been leaving the country due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, faced with long processing times for asylum and immigration proceedings in Mexico and changes in the U.S. immigration policy, many asylum seekers in Mexico have also changed their destination and decided to head toward the U.S.
- **Sharp increase in the arrival of unaccompanied and separated children at the U.S. border.** Between January and March, 34,173 children on the move were apprehended at the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Only 30 of them were expelled, while the remaining were allowed entry, in line with the new U.S. administration's position on the protection of refugee and migrant children.
- **Colombia and the U.S. announce strategies to regularize Venezuelans in their territory.** Colombia is set to grant temporary protected status to approximately 2.5 million Venezuelans and the U.S. to about 300,000 Venezuelans.
- During the first quarter of 2021, **two migrant caravans departed from San Pedro Sula**, Honduras. The first caravan departed in January and registered between 8,000 and 9,000 refugees and migrants. On March 31st, a caravan with around 400 people on the move – including a considerable number of unaccompanied children - departed Honduras. Both caravans encountered Guatemalan military forces at the border upon entry, preventing their passage.

Regional Overview*



The Caribbean



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

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Drivers that lead people from different parts of the region to leave their country of origin – including violence, economic factors and climate change – appear to be very far from fading. In mid-January 2021, the Center for Preventive Action published its [Preventive Priorities Survey](#), a survey that ranks sources of conflict and instability for the coming year. One of the top conflicts identified in the report was “the accelerating economic collapse and political instability in Venezuela, leading to further violent unrest and increased refugee [and migrant] outflows”, followed by the “intensification of organized crime-related violence in Mexico...” and “deteriorating economic and security conditions in the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras)”. In parallel, on March 24th, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) [warned](#) that food insecurity is likely to deteriorate in the next months unless assistance is received; among the 20 countries of highest concern were Venezuela, Haiti, and the Northern Triangle countries.

Likewise, climate-induced migration (caused by hurricanes ETA and IOTA in late 2020), displacement induced by internal violence and armed conflict, the continuing effects of COVID-19 on the region’s economies, and changes promised from the newly elected U.S. President Joe Biden, are other factors associated with the migration of people throughout the region – either for the first time or for the second time (onward migration). Measures taken by governments to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as militarizing land borders, have restricted access to asylum and led more people on the move to migrate irregularly, increasing [the use of smuggling](#), facing more [protection risks](#), or to find themselves in a situation of involuntary immobility. Increased obstacles and administrative hurdles are also forcing many to remain in countries of transit for prolonged periods of time.

Venezuelan mixed migration flows

As of March 5th, the Response for Venezuelans ([R4V](#)) reported a total of 5.57 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the Latin American and Caribbean region. According to several forecasts and analysis, the number of Venezuelans on the move is highly likely to increase in 2021. In 2020, Venezuela reported a 37.5% [drop in oil exports](#), the lowest level since the 1940s. As the country’s economy depends mostly on the export of this commodity – 97.68% according to the latest available data of the [World Bank](#) – its economic situation is expected to worsen, forcing more Venezuelans to migrate. In a recent publication, [FAO and the WFP](#) also reported that the country’s economy is expected to further contract 10% and projected the inflation rate to reach 6,500% in 2021.

In 2018, the Venezuelan government created the “Return to the Homeland Plan” aimed at repatriating Venezuelans that were interested in the leaving the countries they had migrated to in Latin America and the Caribbean. On February 1st, 86 Venezuelans residing in Guayaquil, Ecuador returned voluntarily under this program, due to the adverse impact of the pandemic in their country of destination. At the beginning of February, the Venezuelan government started to update the list of Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago interested in [returning home](#), although no flight has been scheduled yet. Since being established, [23,518 Venezuelans](#) have returned home through this programme – indicating a limited interest in returning among people on the move from Venezuela.

Movements towards South America

Colombia

The number of Venezuelans in Colombia reached [1.72 million](#) by the end of 2020, according to R4V: a 2.35% decrease of Venezuelans in the country, compared to the previous year. As of [January 31st, 2021](#), the number had already increased once again to 1.74 million.

Even though the President of Colombia announced last year that only Venezuelans with a regular status in the country would be included in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, in January the [Ministry of Health](#) assured the government was working on a plan to include all Venezuelans in the immunization effort, but needed further [international cooperation to reach that aim](#).

On February 8th, the government announced it would grant temporary protected status to Venezuelans already residing in the country before January 31st, and those who arrive during the first two years of the scheme through regular means only. The decision was labelled "[a humanitarian gesture of an unprecedented scale in the region](#)" by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Immigration authorities estimated that as many as [2.5 million Venezuelans](#) could benefit from this measure, including some 770,000 projected to arrive over the next two years. Although other countries were expected to follow, none in the region has acted accordingly yet.

The Draft Bill on the Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans received more than [300 observations](#) from civil society and other non-governmental organizations. On March 1st, the President signed the [decree creating the new permit](#). The [requirements](#) to apply include being registered in the Single Registry of Venezuelan Migrants, not having an administrative investigation underway, nor previous criminal records in the country. Immigration authorities have discretionary power to grant these permits even if a person meets all requirements. The decree has raised several concerns, including the fact that it does not mention the programs and services to which beneficiaries would have access, nor does it include a clause on non-refoulement. Additionally, the status is expected to have a temporary duration (10 years) and cannot be extended unless renewed by the National Government and it requires submitting a proof of residence in Colombia prior to the date of the introduction of the status.

Colombia's initial decision to maintain its land border with Venezuela closed until [March 1st](#) was further extended until June 1st. The country however recently witnessed a mass displacement of Venezuelans into its territory, regardless of the border closure. As of March 27th, [4,501 Venezuelans](#) were displaced from their hometown in La Victoria (Venezuelan State of Apure) due to clashes between Colombian armed groups and the Venezuelan military; most fled to Arauquita, in the Colombian border region of Arauca.

Ecuador

During the first few months of the year, the movement of refugees and migrants from Colombia to Ecuador [decreased](#) as a result of Ecuador's deployment of 200 troops to the border on January 27th, according to the Ecuadorian military command.

On February 3rd, Colombia, Ecuador and Perú held thematic round tables aimed at enabling a humanitarian pathway for people on the move trying to cross their borders. According to sources, there were between 400 and 500 people on the move stranded at the [Ecuador-Peru border, trying to head south](#). According to [R4V](#), the profile of Venezuelan refugees and migrants now arriving in Ecuador are mostly families that recently left Venezuela, rather than secondary movements from other countries of migration.

Perú

According to R4V, [35,000 Venezuelans entered Peru from Huaquillas, Ecuador, in January 2021](#), either trying to settle in Peru or aiming to reach Chile and Argentina. Starting on January 25th, RV4 recorded approximately 400 daily entries, despite [militarized borders](#). At the end of February, military officers fired gunshots into the air at a group of Venezuelans in the [Tumbes region](#), to deter them from entering the country irregularly. The militarization of the border coincides with the country's [presidential elections](#) in early April and the candidates' campaign promises to combat insecurity, which they link to irregular migration.

On February 8th, the Peruvian government announced that the [COVID-19 vaccination plan](#) will include all foreigners, regardless of their immigration status.

Chile

During January, approximately 3,600 people on the move - most of them Venezuelans - entered [Chile](#) irregularly through Bolivia. According to local authorities, the arrivals of refugees and migrants in January through the border town of Colchane [increased 10-fold](#) compared to the same month last year; the town's basic services are now on the verge of total collapse. At the end of January, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reported [daily border crossings of 800](#) people on the move through the Colchane region. The government's response to this increase in irregular entries was the deportation of more than [100 people](#), mostly Venezuelan nationals, on February 9th. A Court of Appeals [invalidated](#) the expulsion order of February 19th, but many of them were by that time already in Venezuela. On February 24th, the Supreme Court [ratified the expulsion](#) order, on grounds that the government was acting according to the [constitution and immigration law](#).

A couple of days after the deportation of 100 Venezuelans, the Chilean government announced that the COVID-19 [vaccination plan](#) will only include nationals and foreigners with a regular immigration status.

Movements towards Caribbean countries

As of January 2021, [Aruba and Curacao](#) started requiring Venezuelan nationals to apply for a visa in Caracas in order to be allowed entry. In mid-February, the Dominican government issued a resolution to [regularize](#) Venezuelans who entered the country irregularly, between January 2014 and March 2020.

Trinidad and Tobago

On January 16th, a [human trafficking network](#) accused of trafficking Venezuelan girls and women into the country for sexual exploitation was dismantled. The risk of human trafficking has been on the rise in Trinidad and Tobago, according to a [migrant support group](#).

In mid-February, the Prime Minister announced that Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country will be included in the [COVID-19 rollout](#); no mention was made to immigration status.

A special stay permit granting Venezuelans the right to work on the island, which expired on December 31st, was [renewed](#) in March, but was only extended for a 6-month period, for now. The [registration process](#) took place between the 8th and 26th of March. Despite this extension, some Venezuelans have already suffered the [repercussions of expired registration cards](#) such as evictions, unpaid work, layoffs, and contract non-renewal, among other consequences, even though expired registration cards are valid, according to the government. Some Venezuelans have not been able to register because their employers refused to give them a letter of employment or the landlord denies them a copy of a recent utility bill – both necessary requirements for registration.

Mixed migration flows in Central America

Migration out of the Northern Triangle countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) and Nicaragua is expected to continue. According to a [survey conducted](#) by the World Food Programme (WFP) in January, about 15% of respondents from these four countries confirmed they had plans to migrate. In fact, the beginning of 2021 has already witnessed a rise in Honduran refugees and migrants trying to reach the U.S., according to the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#), as a consequence of COVID-19 and the humanitarian emergency caused by hurricanes ETA and IOTA: [staple food and cash crops](#) were destroyed and 7,500 [displaced people](#) in Honduras are still living in shelters or homeless.

Costa Rica

Authorities are experiencing delays in renewing temporary identification cards for asylum seekers in the country. Approximately 52,000 Nicaraguan asylum seekers, out of 64,256, have [expired permits](#) and renewal appointments have been postponed for six months due to COVID-19. Without a valid identification card, asylum claimants are having difficulties opening and managing bank accounts, sending remittances back home, and getting a job.

Northern Triangle countries

Preparations for a new migrant caravan out of Honduras started at the beginning of January 2021 and, in response, Guatemalan authorities announced a [plan](#) to contain migration movements transiting across their territory in an attempt to reach the U.S. The plan was designed in preparation for the arrival of people on the move who were planning to travel in a migrant caravan expected to leave Honduras in mid-January. The adoption of this plan was followed by a [joint declaration](#) by the governments of Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to address and manage U.S.-bound mixed migration flows, calling for regional cooperation, inciting people not to migrate irregularly and not to expose children the risks of migration and restating their commitment to facilitating a safe, orderly and regular migration. The emphasis on preventing irregular migration was clearly demonstrated when the Guatemalan government placed 7,000 [police officers](#) across the country to intercept and apprehend people on the move. In the same way, the [Honduran government](#) deployed the police at its northern border to deter nationals from leaving.

On January 14th, a week before the end of President Trump's presidency and despite warnings from the [U.S.](#) not to embark on a journey toward their territory, a [migrant caravan](#) with several thousand Hondurans departed San Pedro Sula. According to [immigration authorities](#), between 8,000 and 9,000 people crossed irregularly into Guatemala a day after. The Guatemalan government responded with force in an attempt to block them from reaching Mexico, with some people on the move getting injured in the process according to a [media source](#). [Most members of the caravan](#) were apprehended after entry and [deported](#). Hondurans who were traveling in the caravan stated that the [reasons behind their decision to migrate](#) included the losses caused by hurricanes ETA and IOTA, widespread violence, a crippled economy, and President Joe Biden's promises to ease the U.S. immigration policies. A second [migrant caravan](#) was prepared to depart from San Pedro Sula in late-March.

On March 25th, El Salvador's congress approved a [law against migrant smuggling](#), modifying the initial prison sentence for "coyotes" (smugglers) from 6-10 years to 8-12 years. Days later, however, President Nayib Bukele [vetoed the law, stating that migration should not be criminalized](#).

Mixed migration flows in Mexico

Migration flows

According to a Mexican migrant movement, since January, the arrival of refugees and migrants at the country's southern border has [tripled](#). A [shelter](#) on the Mexico-Guatemala border hosted a total of 1,500 refugees and migrants during the first quarter of 2021, compared to 3,000 in all of 2020. Many of them mentioned they were [swayed](#) to start their journey due to the change of presidency in the U.S.

In mid-February, the Mexican government declared that it would not allow the [irregular entry of migrant caravans](#) into its territory. In mid-March, Mexico [closed its southern border](#) to all non-essential travel to contain the spread of COVID-19 and [the deployed](#) security forces to the border, allegedly to protect refugees and migrants, including children on the move. As of March 21th, the [National Institute of Migration](#) apprehended 3,438 unaccompanied and separated children and 28,054 adults, 8% more compared to the same trimester last year: 55.8% were Hondurans, followed by Guatemalans (29.9%) and Salvadorans (7.45%).

People on the move who had applied for asylum in Mexico are increasingly abandoning their asylum applications and [changing their final destination, deciding to move onward](#) towards the U.S., due to administrative hurdles. Nonetheless, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR, for its Spanish acronym) still reported 22,606 new [asylum claims](#) filed between January and March. In February, COMAR registered a [30% increase in asylum claims](#) in Tapachula, despite militarized borders in Mexico and Guatemala. Hondurans, Haitians, and Cubans were the main nationalities of people seeking asylum in the city.

The NGO Doctors Without Borders predicted an [increase in violence](#) at the Mexico-U.S. border now that some ports of entry have (partially) reopened and the number of new people on the move arriving in the area is increasing. At the end of January, [nineteen bodies](#) were recovered in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, near the U.S. southeastern border. Initially, officials reported the bodies might belong to irregular migrants, of which 13 were thought to be of Guatemalan origin. Days later, a Guatemalan media source [confirmed](#) that at least [16](#) bodies were of people on the move from Guatemala. A dozen of Mexican officials have been [arrested](#) for allegedly being involved in these killings, which they later [confessed](#) – 5 migrants survived the attack.

The situation at the U.S. border

Immigration management and the situation at the Mexico-U.S. border have been a top priority for the new U.S. administration. President Biden started delivering on his promises to repeal many immigration policies of the previous administration but managing the change has proven to be difficult, as arrivals at the border have been sharply increasing – adding to the tens of thousands of people who were already stranded at the border waiting for their asylum hearing or hoping to get a chance to cross over.

Some [reports](#) expect that the number of people on the move now trying to reach the U.S. will reach levels not seen in fifteen years. The sharp increase in the arrival of refugees and migrants at the U.S. border is also attributed to [misinformation provided by smugglers](#) in countries of origin, who are inciting people who are thinking about migrating by telling them that the U.S. border is now open. To counter this narrative, the U.S. administration has repeatedly released public statements telling people on the move that “[now is not the time to come](#) [to the U.S. border].”

Changes in U.S. policy

President Biden rolled back on many of the previous administration's policies during the first days of his presidency, except for [Title 42](#) – the CDC's order allowing for swift expulsions at the border on COVID-19 related grounds. Amid the continuation of this policy, only unaccompanied and separated children as well as selected asylum seekers enrolled in the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) are being [allowed entry](#) at the border. New asylum seekers, by contrast, are being [expelled](#) into Mexican territory. In January, however, some exceptions were made as border agents began letting in families seeking asylum into the [United States](#) after Mexican authorities refused to allow their re-entry.

A measure was introduced by the U.S. government to grant Venezuelans already living in the U.S. [temporary protected status](#) (TPS), allowing approximately [320,000](#) Venezuelan nationals the possibility to regularly reside and work in the country for 18 months – fulfilling one of the promises made by President Biden during his presidential campaign.

Asylum seekers

On January 8th, a federal judge in California [declared inadmissible](#) a measure passed by the former U.S. administration that would make it much more difficult for people on the move arriving at the U.S. southern border to obtain asylum. The measure would have prevented people who had previously crossed at least one country on their way to the U.S. from applying for asylum, implying that only Mexican nationals and people arriving to the U.S. from their country of origin by air could apply for asylum in country. It also ruled that domestic violence, gender-based persecution, gang violence, or organized crime could not be considered valid grounds for obtaining asylum.

New enrollments to the MPP, commonly known as the “Remain in Mexico” Program, were [suspended](#) on January 21st when the new U.S. administration announced it would start allowing the entry of asylum seekers enrolled in MPP and currently waiting in Mexico – up to 25,000 active cases. In order to prioritize asylum seekers on grounds of vulnerability and accumulated waiting time in Mexico, the U.S. government coordinated with UNHCR the creation of an online registry. Some asylum seekers, however, reported [difficulties in registering through the platform](#). 8,600 out of the 25,000 asylum seekers with pending cases had registered as of February 25th, but only 350 had already met all the [requirements to be allowed entry into the U.S.](#)

On February 26th, the U.S. was expected to allow in the selected asylum seekers at three [ports of entry](#): Rio Grande Valley (Brownsville), California (San Isidro), and at El Paso (El Paso bridge). As of March 27th, more than [1,110 asylum seekers enrolled in the MPP](#) had entered the U.S., according to Mexican immigration authorities.

At the beginning of February, the U.S. administration suspended the Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACAs) with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador – the so-called “safe third country agreements” under which asylum seekers were expected to seek protection in one of these countries before trying to reach the U.S. From 2019, when the ACA between the U.S and Guatemala was signed until March 2020, when the asylum system was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Guatemala received the transfer of [939](#) Salvadorans and Hondurans who had tried to seek asylum in the U.S., of whom only 34 decided to file an [asylum claim in Guatemala under the agreement](#). While 16 abandoned their claim, the remaining 18 have not received a decision on their asylum application yet; no asylum seeker has been granted international protection under this agreement. El Salvador and Honduras did [not receive asylum seekers](#) under these agreements, as they had not entered into effect yet when the new U.S. administration decided to suspend them.

Apprehensions and detentions

In January 2021, 78,442 people on the move were apprehended while trying to enter U.S. territory, double the number of the same month last year and the highest number since 2006. The majority were single adults, although the number of [family units](#) increased from 4,494 in December to 7,260 in January. In February, U.S. Customs and Border Protection ([CBP](#)) registered 100,441 more apprehensions than double that of the same month last year.

Expulsions and deportations

Although President Biden signed a moratorium on deportations for 100 days, this policy was blocked by a U.S. District Court, after the Attorney General of Texas filed a [judicial complaint](#) against it. At the end of January, 15 people were [deported to Jamaica](#) and 269 to Guatemala and Honduras. On February 8th, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency deported [72 Haitians back](#) to their country of origin, followed by the expulsion of dozens of [Haitians](#) from El Paso to Ciudad Juarez, contrary to the agreement between the two countries that Mexico would only receive from the U.S. people on the move from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The [drop in deportations](#) by at least 50% in March corresponds to the new administration's focus on deporting only irregular migrants with a previous criminal record. At the same time, most people on the move are now not being processed and deported to their country of origin, but rather summarily expelled back into Mexico under [Title 42](#): 241,802 single adults and family units were expelled from the U.S. southern border between January and March.

Return flows to Mexico and Central America

Between January 14th and 20th, 1,223 former [members](#) of the first migrant caravan were deported from Guatemala to their country of origin (Honduras, El Salvador or Nicaragua), including 336 children. Additionally, 3,303 people returned voluntarily from Guatemala to their country, of which 322 were children. In total, 4,526 former members of the caravan returned either voluntarily or involuntarily to their country of origin.

At the same time, overall deportations from Mexico decreased during the first trimester of 2021. Mexico's National Institute of Migration [registered](#) 4,572 deportations in January, compared to 8,619 registered in January 2020.

Extra-regional mixed migration flows

Even though people on the move can apply for asylum in Brazil or Argentina, they are increasingly choosing – especially in the case of Cuban and Dominican nationals – to move onward to [Uruguay](#). On January 1st, immigration authorities in Rivera, an Uruguayan border city with Brazil, reported the entry of [65 asylum seekers](#) – mostly of Cuban nationality, along with 4 Venezuelans. The city has been on high alert due to an increase in the number of people on the move arriving in Uruguay through this port of entry. Although most are in transit and en route to Montevideo, many of them end up coming back to Rivera for several reasons.

In mid-February, hundreds of Haitians in [Brazil](#) (Acre) started to move onward toward Peru (Madre de Dios) but were not allowed to cross over the border by the Peruvian military – a decision that was followed by protests. These secondary movements of refugees and migrants are caused by the adverse impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods in their first country of migration. A media outlet reported between 250 and 300 Haitian migrants stranded at the border between Peru and Brazil from February 14th until March 8th. Days later after crossing over into Peru irregularly, up to 450 refugees and migrants – among them Haitians and [people on the move](#) from Sierra Leone, Senegal, [Burkina Faso](#), Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh - were [expelled](#) back into Brazil, according to the Ministry of the Interior of Peru. 14 of them received healthcare due to clashes with immigration officers. These refugees and migrants are trying to reach Ecuador, Panama, Mexico, the U.S., or even returning home, in the case of some Haitians. Since then,

Peru has further tightened border control. [Recent reports](#) point to more than 500 refugees and migrants at the Brazil-Peru border and the daily arrival of 20 or 30 more people.

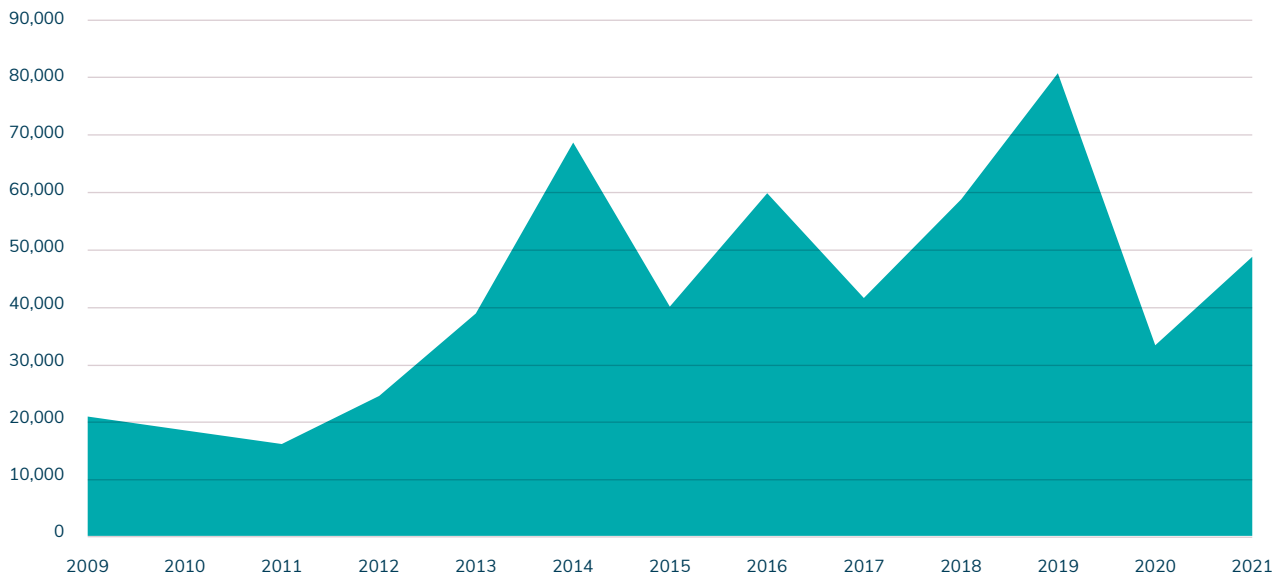
At the beginning of the year, there were between [680](#) and [1,000](#) extra-regional refugees and migrants stranded in Necoclí, a Colombian town near the border with Panama, due to border closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a media outlet, the group of people on the move had been waiting for 20 days for the border to open. Most of them were Haitian nationals (647), but the group also included people from Cuba, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Ghana, among other nationalities. In [one week alone](#), 500 people arrived in Necoclí hoping to travel onward toward the U.S. On January 29th, the border was reopened and the stranded refugees and migrants [resumed their migration journey](#). In February, there were 1,500 people on the move [stranded in camps in Panama](#) while trying to continue their journey toward North America.

Thematic Focus: Unaccompanied children on the move toward the U.S.

The first trimester of 2021 witnessed an increase in the arrival of unaccompanied children (UAC) at the U.S. southern border, as mentioned above: a total of 34,173 UAC were apprehended in the area. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported a 101,3% rise in March, compared to the previous month, of 9,271 apprehensions. 82% of UAC apprehended were from the Northern Triangle countries: most of them (42%) were from Guatemala, followed by Honduras (28%), and El Salvador (8%); only 18% of the apprehended UAC were from Mexico. In addition, UAC tend to be mostly boys, although the gender gap is narrowing. In addition, UAC tend to be mostly boys, although the [gender gap](#) is narrowing.

The arrival of UAC at the Mexico-U.S. border is however nothing new, as can be seen in Figure 1, and there have been spikes throughout the years, specifically in 2014 and 2019. The peak in 2014 corresponds to an increase in children from the Northern Triangle countries seeking asylum in the U.S.: prior to 2012, 82% of UAC apprehended at the U.S. border were from Mexico; in the fiscal year 2014 – the first reported spike in UAC arrivals – out of 68,541 UAC, 70% were boys and 80% came from El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras. As can be seen in Figure 1, all peaks are followed by a decrease in arrivals which can be attributed to [immigration enforcement efforts](#) in the U.S. and in Central America, as well as increased measures by the U.S. against migrant smugglers.

Figure 1. Unaccompanied Children (0-17 years old) apprehensions



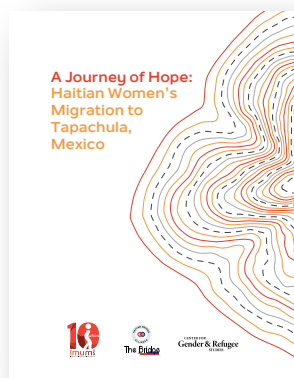
Source: U.S. Border Patrol ([2009-2014](#)) ([2015-2017](#)) ([2018-2021](#)).

The [reasons](#) that lead children from the Northern Triangle to migrate are diverse and interconnected – a mix of “push” and “pull” factors. These include violence from organized armed groups, abuse at home, reunification with family members who already live in the U.S. and the search for better opportunities - among them education - in addition to high rates of poverty, inequality, as well as natural disasters (i.e., drought and hurricanes).

In 2014, following the first peak in the arrival of unaccompanied children, the Obama administration initiated some [programs](#) to address the “root causes” of child migration. One of these programs was an education campaign aimed at dissuading UAC from leaving their countries of origin. In the same year, the Central American Minors (CAM) refugee program was created, which allowed children to [apply for refugee status in the U.S.](#) from their country of origin in order to prevent them from undertaking the dangerous irregular journey toward their destination. The program, which allowed more than 3,000 children to travel to the U.S. regularly either as refugees or under a parole scheme, was however [terminated in 2017](#) by the Trump administration. Additionally, in an effort to prevent irregular migration, in 2018 the Trump administration implemented a “[zero-tolerance](#)” policy separating children from their parents and reclassifying them as unaccompanied minors. Around 3,000 children were separated from their parents under this policy – [445 children](#) still remain to reunite with their parents. This did not prevent, however, a second peak in the arrival of UAC at the U.S. border in 2019. In 2020, during to the COVID-19 pandemic, arrivals decreased also – mainly – due to the application of the [CDC order allowing for expedite expulsion to all foreigners, children included](#): 11,157 UAC were expelled into Mexican territory in FY 2020 and 4,739 in FY 2021.

At the beginning of February, the new U.S. administration announced it would [no longer expel](#) UAC, but rather it would grant them access to U.S. territory. On March 10th, moreover, President Biden announced his administration would resume the CAM program and initiated talks with UNHCR in that respect. While the return to more welcoming immigration and child protection policies surely raised hopes for a better treatment among Central American children, the latest surge in the arrival of UAC at the U.S. border cannot be solely attributed to the change in administration. The underlying drivers that, for years, lead UAC in the region to migrate remain, further deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic and two consecutive hurricanes (ETA and IOTA): unabated violence and poverty in Central America, coupled with food insecurity, homelessness and precariousness caused by natural disasters.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[A Journey of Hope: Haitian Women's Migration to Tapachula, Mexico](#)

Center for Gender and Refugee Studies | January 2021

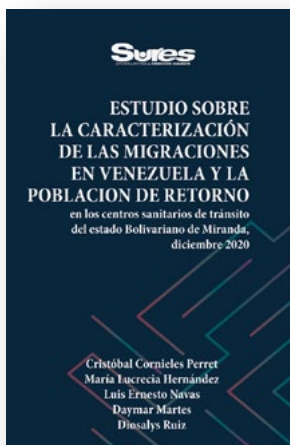
This research report, published by the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, highlights the dangerous journey of Haitian women to Tapachula, Mexico. In addition to the difficulties faced for being foreigners, Haitian women face a double discrimination on grounds of race and gender. As the report reveals, most of the respondents lived in Brazil or Chile for years before moving onward to Mexico. Since 2015, these countries experienced an economic slowdown, a harder stance on immigration, and a rise in stigma and discrimination against the refugee and migrant population, and these women felt forced to move out. In Tapachula, however, discrimination is not only rampant within the host community, but also by law enforcement agencies.



["There is a Target on Us" - The Impact of Anti-Black Racism on African Migrants at Mexico's Southern Border](#)

Black Alliance for Just Immigration | January 2021

This research discloses migration drivers and the experience African migrants endure en route to the United States while in Mexico, including gender-based discrimination, racism, and xenophobia by state officials. The report also analyzes Mexico's immigration policy and reveals how African refugees and migrants receive a differential treatment and face additional barriers compared to other people on the move, based on their race and skin color. Moreover, African people on the move are apprehended at a higher rate than other refugees and migrants and must submit more documentation when applying for asylum.



[Estudio sobre la Caracterización de las Migraciones en Venezuela y la Población de Retorno: en los Centros Sanitarios de Tránsito del Estado Bolivariano de Miranda](#)

SURES IOM | February 2021

According to the Venezuelan government, from March 2020 and until the end of 2020, 160,000 Venezuelans returned home. This study reveals the profile of returnees from the state of Miranda, specifically. 266 surveys were conducted to Venezuelans who were in quarantine at health care facilities. The study mentions that most returnees have low educational levels, are single, and intend to stay in Venezuela for at least the following year. Almost half of the returnees said they had left their children behind in Venezuela. Finally, 85% of returnees had an irregular migration status in the country they left.



[Personas trabajadoras temporales guatemaltecas en Chiapas, México: un diagnóstico a partir de la documentación para desempeñar actividades remuneradas](#)

IOM | February 2021

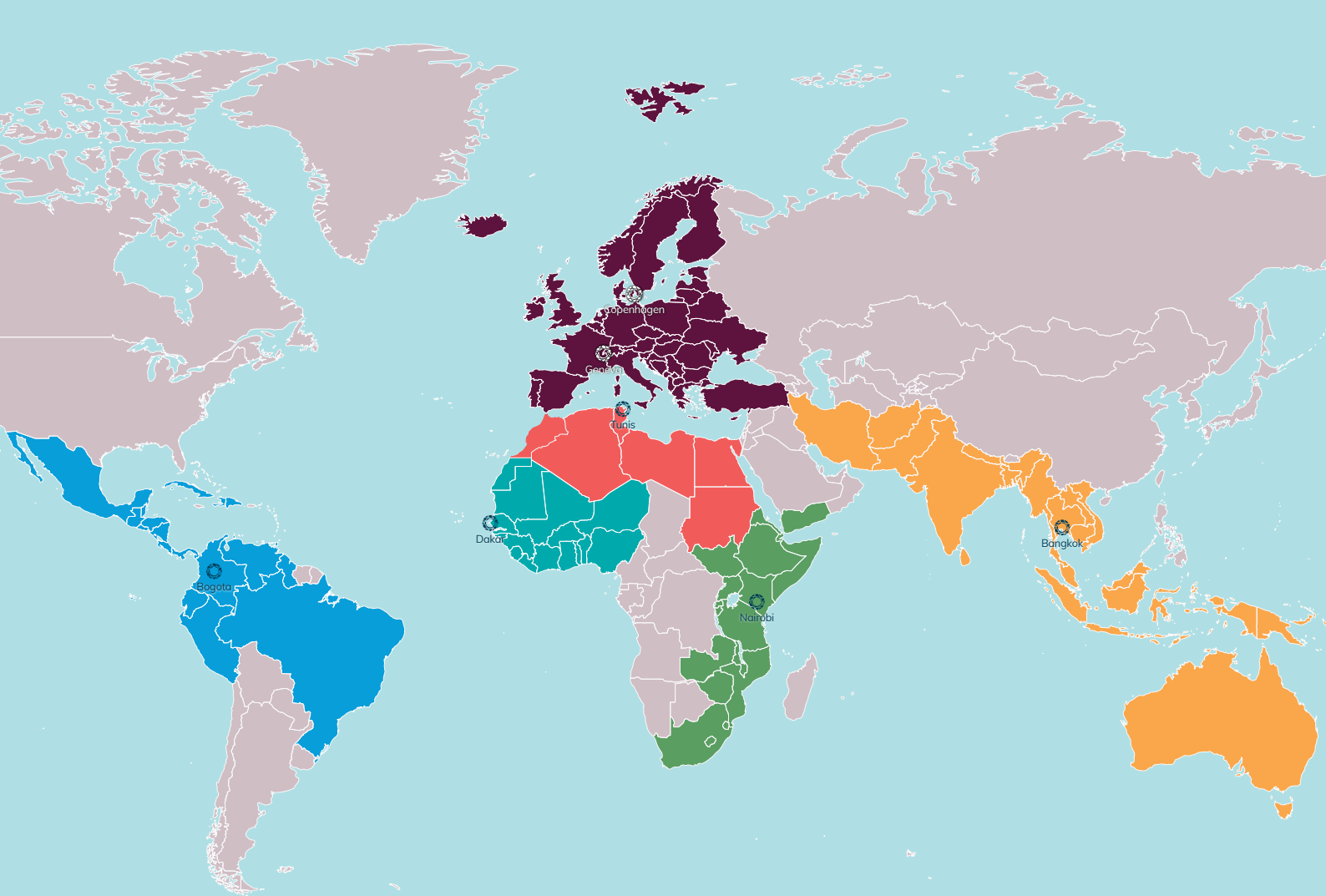
This research paper focuses on the pendular flow of Guatemalan migrants to Chiapas, Mexico, and the characteristics of the labor market in the Mexico-Guatemala border area between 2016 and 2019. Initially, temporary Guatemalan migrants were employed in the agricultural sector, but over time they started to work in different sectors of the economy. One of the study's findings is the modest use of a temporary working permit that allows regular border crossings, having a negative impact on working conditions and employee benefits.



[Sentir que se nos va la vida: personas LGBTI+ refugiadas y migrantes de Venezuela en Colombia, Ecuador y Chile](#)

Caribe Afirmativo, Red de Movilidad Humana LGBTI+ and UNHCR | March 2021

This qualitative study was conducted between November 2019 and May 2020 and involved face-to-face and virtual (during the COVID-19 pandemic) interviews and focus groups – a total of 136 LGBTI+ Venezuelans participated in the study. The report exposes the human rights situation of Venezuelan refugees and LGBTI+ migrants in three South American countries - Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile. Among the reasons for leaving their country are insecurity, persecution, and threats. Risks and dangers were further exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and 51% have an irregular immigration status which impedes them from accessing public services. The report also identifies the risks faced by LGBTI+ Venezuelans on every leg of their migration journey and the actors involved.



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

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

For more information visit:

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

