

Safety risks in the Darien Gap and assistance needed among refugees and migrants

This infographic presents data on the dangers and abuses that refugees and migrants interviewed by 4Mi witnessed and experienced in the Darien Gap, and the assistance needed by respondents. It aims to contribute towards a solid evidence base to inform targeted responses on the ground, as well as advocacy efforts related to the situation of refugees and migrants in the region.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Paso Canoas, Ciudad Nelly, Rio Claro (Costa Rica-Panama border); San Carlos (central Costa Rica); Los Chiles (Costa Rica-Nicaragua border)

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:

4 July - 4 September 2022

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

Face-to-face interviews

SAMPLE SIZE:

219 respondents


Background

- The Darien Gap is a dangerous region between the borders of Colombia and Panama, controlled by criminal groups. People transiting through this area face risks of death, violence, kidnapping, and extortion, among others.
- Mixed movements through the Darien are increasing: 29,527 people entered Panama through the Darien Gap from May to June 2022 and 53,637 from July to August 2022 (+81%). Between January and August 2022, 102,067 persons entered Panama from the Darien Gap. 67% were Venezuelans.¹
- In the Darien region, the Government of Panama is currently receiving refugees and migrants in the Migration Reception Stations (ERM) of San Vicente and proceeded to temporarily reopen the ERM of Lajas Blancas in July.
- In July, protests in Panama blocked major roads and therefore refugees' and migrants' transit in Darien region.² Local actors reported the presence of more than 3,300 people in Canaán Membrillo host community (with a capacity of 100 people).³
- In Costa Rica, local actors have voiced alarm that an increasing number of refugees and migrants are stranded, some of them living in the streets.⁴

Respondents profiles

Sex distributions of respondents



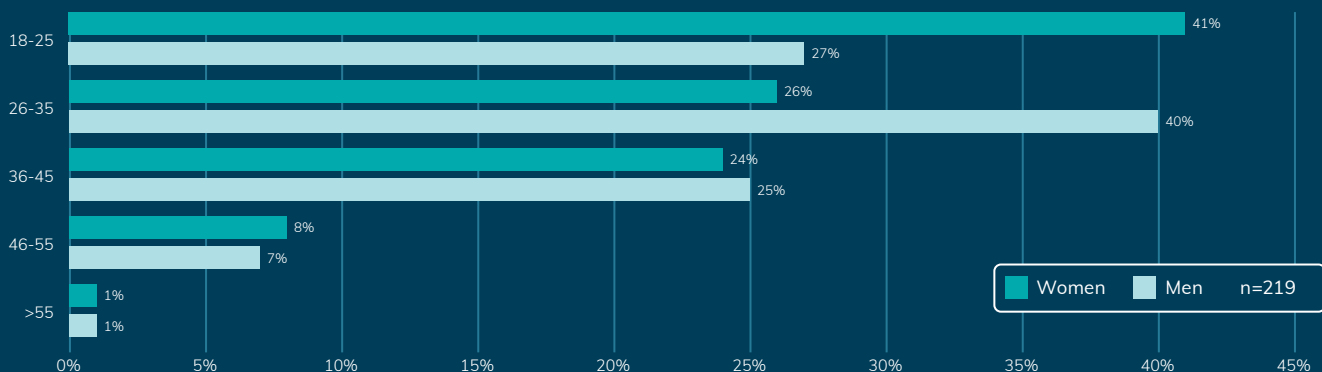
 **33%** of respondents were traveling with children in their care at the time of the interview

Profiles

- **32% of respondents** were in the **36 to 55 years** age range, compared to **17%** in the sample of the previous data collection period (from May/June 2022).
- The proportion of **respondents mentioning Mexico as destination is increasing (8%)**, compared to the previous data collection period (1.5% in May/June 2022).

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

Age distributions of respondents



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

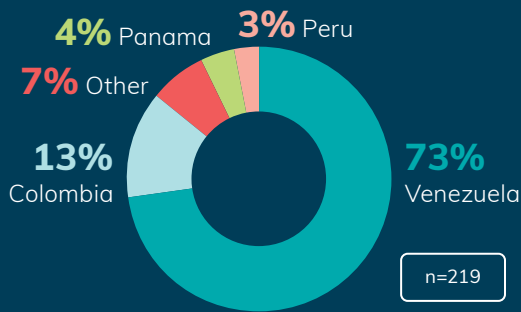
2 R4V (2022). [Alerta de situación: Refugiados y migrantes en tránsito en Necoclí](#)

3 R4V (2022). [Risk of 'bottleneck' of refugees and migrants in transit in Necoclí \(Antioquia\)](#)

4 El Nacional (2022). [El drama en una localidad de Costa Rica por una abrupta llegada de migrantes venezolanos](#)

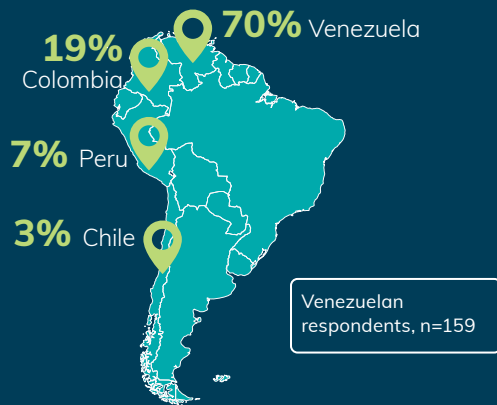
Respondents Profiles

Nationality



The proportions of respondents by nationality broadly correspond to the composition of registered entries in Panama from the Darien Gap in July/August.⁵

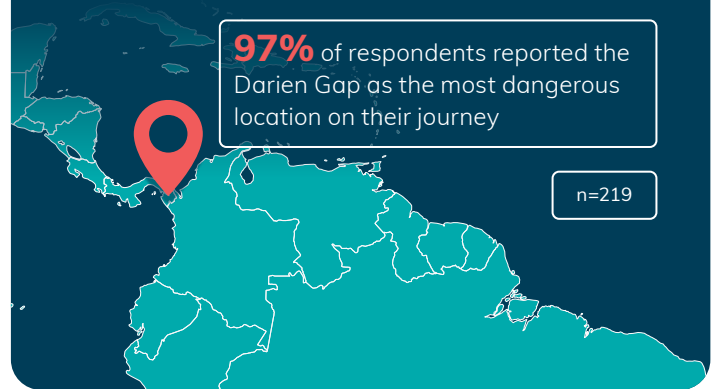
Where Venezuelans' journeys began



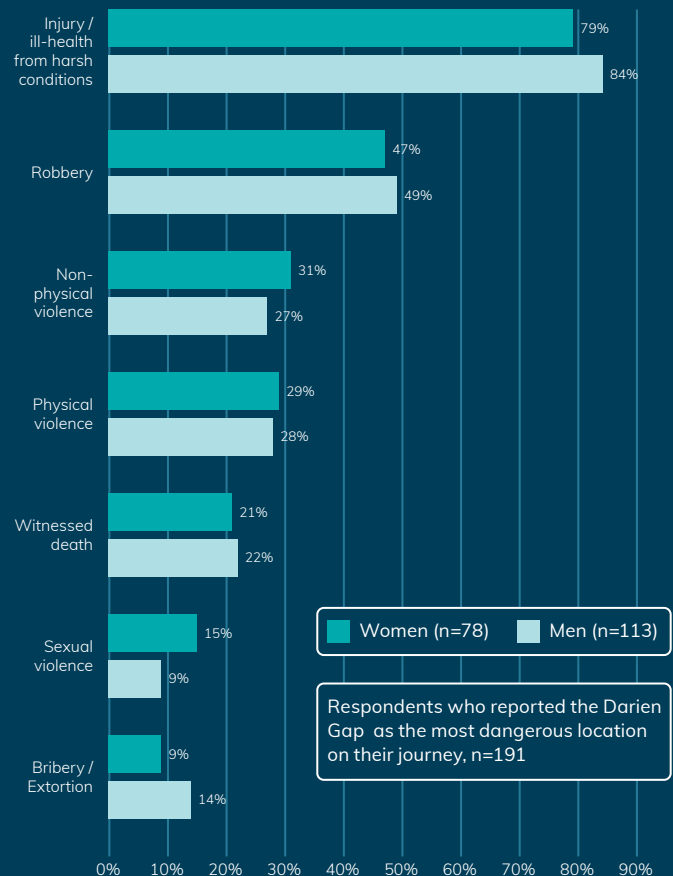
Country of destination



The most dangerous location reported along the journey



Abuses and dangers experienced during the journey in the Darien Gap, by sex



Respondents who reported the Darien Gap as the most dangerous location on their journey, n=191

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

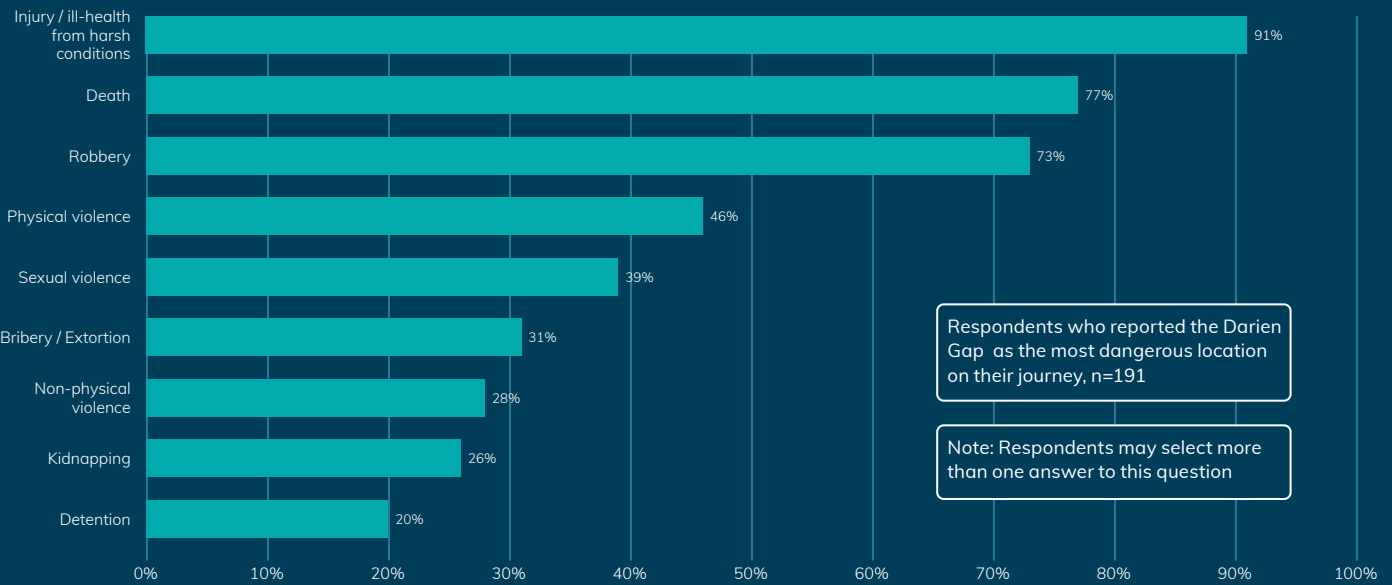
Abuses and dangers experienced in the Darien Gap

- The beginning of the **rainy season in August** made the journey across the Darien Gap longer and more perilous.
- **15% of women** interviewed reported **having suffered sexual violence** in the Darien Gap. This proportion is lower than in the previous sample surveyed in May/June (25%).
- However, the total number of victims could be higher in the last two months: **the number of people crossing the Darien Gap, and therefore exposed to sexual violence, is increasing** (see page 1).

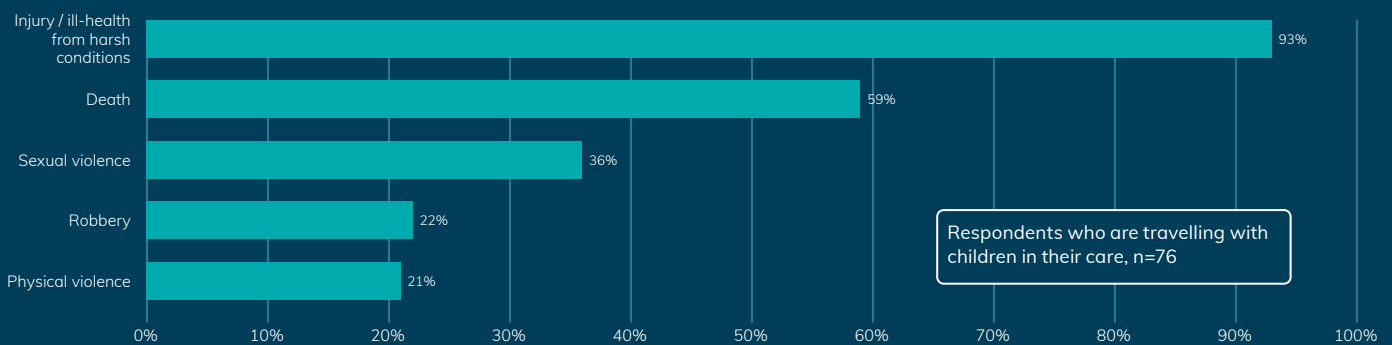
⁵ Servicio Nacional de Migración de Panamá (2022). [Base de datos abierta](#)

Main risks reported by respondents in the Darien Gap

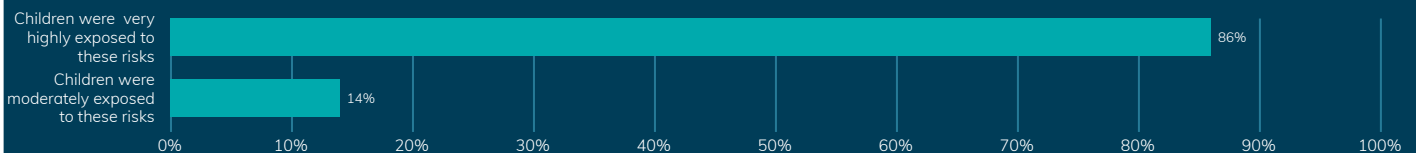
Main risks reported by respondents in the Darien Gap



What are the risks for children travelling in the Darien Gap?



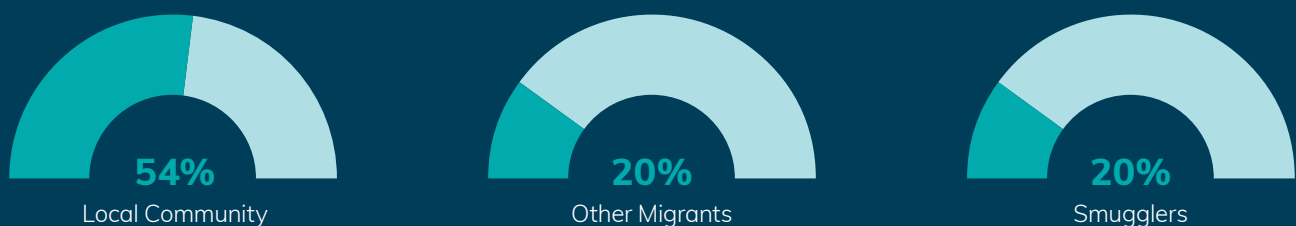
To what extent were children exposed to these risks?



Actors in the Darien region reported an increase in minors travelling alone or in the company of non-family members.⁶

Respondents who are travelling or living with children, n=73

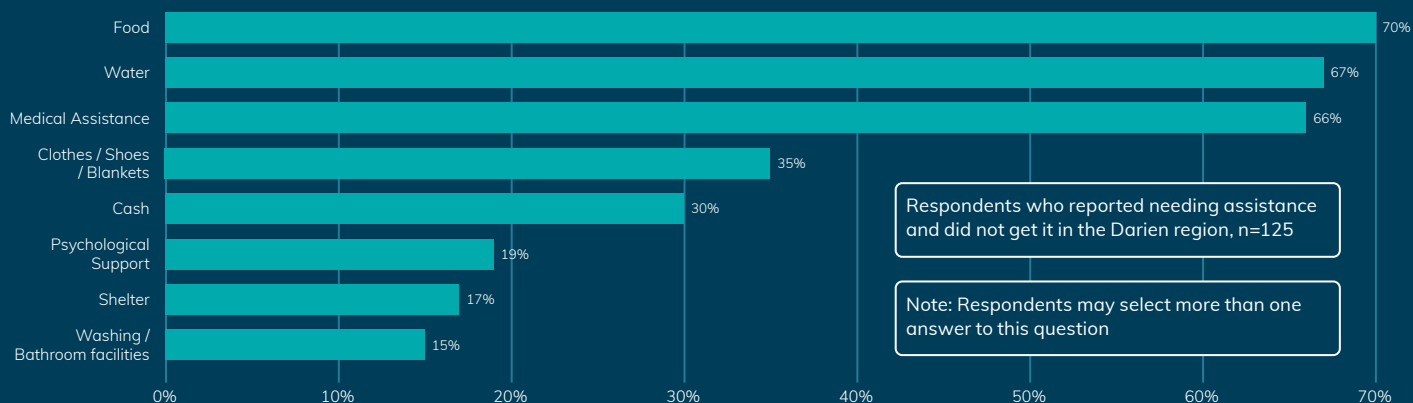
Reported perpetrators of abuses in the Darien Gap



Respondents mentioned that it is sometimes **difficult to differentiate between armed groups and armed criminals, and even the local community.**

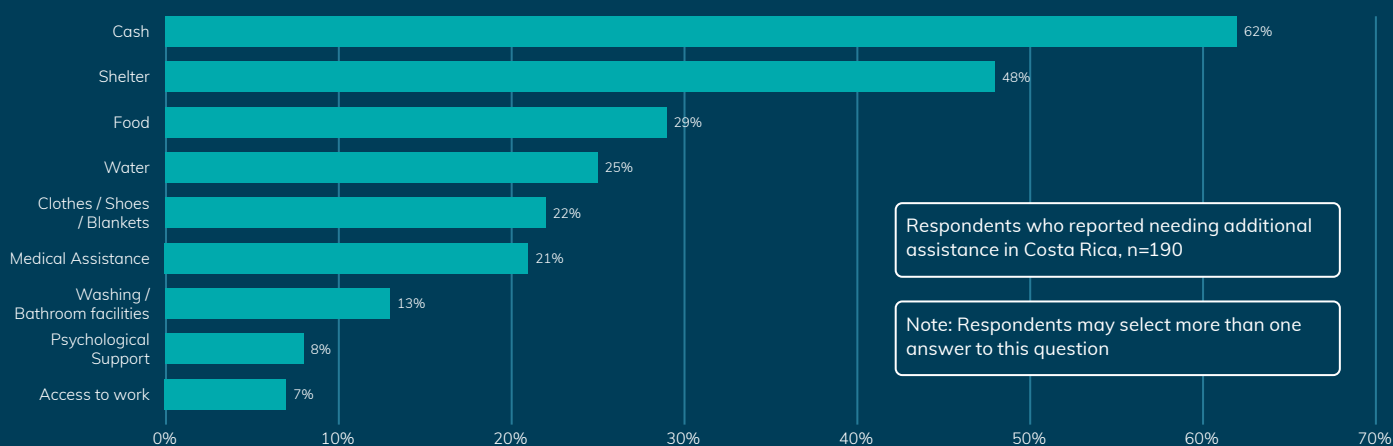
6. UNICEF (2022). [Este año se ha duplicado la cantidad de niños, niñas y adolescentes que migran a través del Tapón del Darién en Panamá](#)

Assistance needed in the Darien region of Panama



- 57% of the refugees and migrants surveyed reported that the Darien region in Panama was the location where they most needed assistance and did not receive it.
- Humanitarian assistance is provided in the ERMs. However, according to respondents and local actors, the substantial increase of people in transit have increased the humanitarian needs in the Darien region of Panama.⁷
- **Food and water were the most often reported unmet needs in the Darien region.** People on the move reported starting the journey through the Darien **without enough food and water for the duration of the journey.**
- **66% of respondents mentioned medical assistance.** Most respondents arrived at the ERM in Panama with leg and foot injuries and other conditions associated with the journey conditions through the Darien.

Assistance needed in Costa Rica



- 87% of respondents reported requiring additional assistance in Costa Rica.
- Money, shelter, and food were most often reported: local actors reported an increasing number of refugees and migrants stranded in the country, without money to continue their journey.⁸

7. Unicef (2022). [Panamá CO: Situation Report No 2](#)

8. El Diario (2022). [Migrantes venezolanos se aglomeran en aceras y terrenos de una localidad en Costa Rica](#).



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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 refugees and migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. 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



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