

# Flow monitoring of people on the move across the Americas



Locations of high transit and migrant presence in Costa Rica

Cantons: Alajuela, Cartago, Corredores, Desamparados, Heredia, Liberia, Los Chiles, San Carlos, Santa Ana, San José.



Situation Report: December 2023

## MAIN FINDINGS

In order to characterize and understand the needs and migratory trends across the Americas in specific locations within the Costa Rican territory, various tools from the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) were combined to create this report. These tools include Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR), Emergency Events Tracking (EET), and Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) from the Mobility Tracking and Flow Monitoring components, respectively<sup>1</sup>. The results of this report present information collected from 1 – 31 December 2023.

### FLOW MONITORING REGISTRY



**28,721** ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ENTERED COSTA RICA FROM PANAMA IN DECEMBER 2023  
 Estimated daily average of **926** individuals  
 Estimated decrease of **32 %** compared to October 2023 (**13,429** individuals)

Source: Projection from IOM Costa Rica, based on previously published monthly data<sup>2</sup>.

### EMERGENCY EVENT TRACKING IN MONITORED LOCATIONS



**1,345** INDIVIDUALS STRANDED IN MONITORED PUBLIC SITES  
 Average stay: **2 days**



**1,888** INDIVIDUALS STRANDED IN **3 MONITORED SHELTERS**  
 Average stay: **6 days**

Source: Estimation from IOM Costa Rica, based on key informants and direct observation.

### FLOW MONITORING SURVEY: HIGH MOBILITY SITES AND HIGH CONCENTRATION OF MIGRANT POPUALTIIONS (811 individuals surveyed and 1,332 family members)



**44 %** WOMEN | **56 %** MEN  
**35 %** ACCOMPANIED MINORS



**85 %** OF INDIVIDUALS **TRAVEL IN GORUPS**

#### PRIMARY NEED

Food and nutrition (36 %)  
 Income (22 %)  
 Water (11 %)  
 Other (31 %)



Shelter, medical care, sanitation and hygiene, diapers, feminine hygiene supplies, psychosocial support, safety and security

Source: IOM, 2023

<sup>1</sup> For more information, visit: [www.dtm.iom.int](http://www.dtm.iom.int)

<sup>2</sup> Beginning August 30, 2023, there is no access to data on departures of migrants from the Temporary Migrant Reception Station (ETRM) in Los Planes de Gualaca, Chiriquí. This situation has been remedied with monthly estimates based on previously collected data.

The data presented in this report does not represent the entirety of the migratory flow. December 2023





Costa Rica, like other countries in Central America, has been characterized as a migratory corridor that begins when migrants cross the land bridge between Colombia and Panama at the Darien Gap in hopes of reaching countries in North America as the primary destination. This is known as the **trend of people on the move across the Americas**<sup>3</sup>. According to data published by the Republic of Panama, between January and November 2023, there were 497,996 entries from Colombia: 64 per cent were men and 36 per cent women; 21 per cent minors. Around 64 per cent came from Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 11 per cent from Ecuador, 9 per cent from Haiti, 5 per cent from the People's Republic of China, 4 per cent from Colombia, and another 8 per cent from 31 different countries<sup>4</sup>.



**In Costa Rica, there has been a downward trend in migration towards the end of each year, evidenced by notable decreases in the last months of 2021 and 2022. This trend has apparently reappeared in 2023, with a 31 per cent reduction in October compared to the previous month, 18 per cent reduction in November, and 32 per cent in December.** This downward trend could be explained by a combination of factors, such as changes in immigration policies, including the implementation of Title 42 in October 2022, adverse weather conditions at the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere, or a decreased inclination to migrate during the year-end season due to family religious and cultural events. Likewise, economic and social circumstances in transit countries, such as road closures in Panama in July 2022 and November 2023 due to social protests, are also factors that affected these migration patterns.



The inauguration of the South Migration Station (EMI Sur) in October 2023 was aimed at improving migration flow management. As a result, there was an increase in the reception of migrants at this location and a decrease in migrants stranded in public places. In September 2023, 23 per cent of migrants arriving in Costa Rica were in public spaces and only 1 per cent in shelters; however, these figures changed to 3 per cent and 25 per cent respectively in November. In December, a significant reduction of migrants stranded in the Temporary Migrant Attention Center (CATEM) was noted, representing only 7 per cent of monthly arrivals, and a slight increase of people in public spaces, 5 per cent of the monthly total. **This decrease in CATEM and the increase in the length of stays in shelters reflect an active migratory dynamic and a more precise selection of vulnerable profiles, who lack the economic resources to continue their journey.**



On December 18, International Migrants Day was commemorated at EMI Sur in Corredores, Puntarenas, with recreational activities aimed at providing dignified and humane treatment to migrants in vulnerable situations. The activities included washing services, haircuts, manicures and hairstyling, as well as an assembly act with speeches by important figures of migration and security in Costa Rica. Cultural presentations, food and activities for children were also offered. IOM Costa Rica supported these initiatives in collaboration with other national and international authorities, focusing on guaranteeing a safe and orderly migration process, always seeking the well-being and **dignity of migrants**<sup>5</sup>.



Recreational activity  
CATEM, Corredores, Puntarenas  
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<sup>3</sup> For more information, visit: [www.dtm.iom.int/costa-rica](http://www.dtm.iom.int/costa-rica)

<sup>4</sup> For more information, visit: [www.migracion.gob.pa](http://www.migracion.gob.pa)

<sup>5</sup> For more information, visit: [www.facebook.com/OIMCR?locale=es\\_LA](https://www.facebook.com/OIMCR?locale=es_LA)



At the request of key informants, starting in October 2023, IOM Costa Rica began calculating the number of potential entries of migrants to Costa Rica. These estimates are derived from historical data on outflows from the Temporary Migration Reception Station (ETRM) in Los Planes, Gualaca until 30 August 2023 and the inflows to Panama that are published on the website of the National Migration Service of Panama<sup>6</sup>. Likewise, since the beginning of November, **the Migration Institute of Costa Rica (DGME, by its Spanish acronym) publishes a daily report of people moving by public transportation and the number of people who remain stranded in CATEM<sup>7</sup>.**

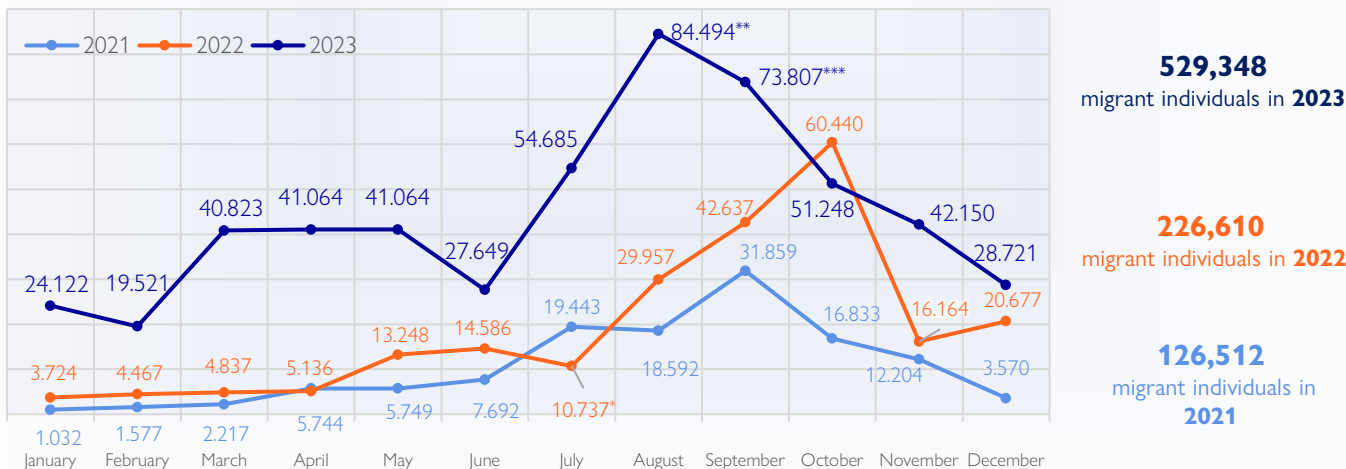
The FMS data collection method involves in-person surveys to migrants on the move across the Americas in Costa Rica, in the cantons Corredores, San Jose, Liberia, and Los Chiles. The surveys are available in Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. The flow monitoring points are locations with high migrant presence and mobility, which allow for differentiation between those stranded in shelters and those in transit sites (Map 1). The surveys use a non-probabilistic, convenience sampling technique, and are applied voluntarily to adults, representatives of groups, or individuals traveling alone to gain in-depth knowledge of the profile of migrants<sup>8</sup>.

For the November 2023 FMS, **811 valid surveys** were obtained (99% response rate and 1% non-response rate) and information on 2,143 migrants (811 respondents and 1,332 family members); 60 per cent of the surveys conducted were of people stranded in shelters and the remaining 40 per cent were conducted in sites of high transit and migrant presence in the cantons of Liberia and Los Chiles.

Parallel to the quantitative information presented in the report, descriptive information on the migratory dynamics of the trend through Costa Rica was also obtained through the EET, which allows tracking sudden movements and providing recent updates through key informant interviews, direct observation and compilation of secondary sources. This section will be represented in the report by a blue box, the same as this section of the methodology.

**LIMITATIONS:** Currently, the Government of Costa Rica has an official registry for those persons using the direct route between the South Migratory Station (EMI Sur) and Los Chiles, located on the northern border. It also maintains a count of individuals housed at the Temporary Migrant Attention Center (CATEM). However, the detection of migratory movements in areas far from these checkpoints, such as the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM), Liberia, San Carlos and Upala, suggests that there is still a considerable flow through unofficial routes. This situation represents a significant constraint due to the absence of a comprehensive registry of all entries into the country. Additional challenges that hinder the adequate collection of information include language and cultural barriers, the short stay of migrants at monitoring points, and complexities on the ground, including the operation of human trafficking networks.

Figure 1. Estimated number of migrants entering Costa Rica, per month and year



\*In July 2022, not all data was collected due to road closures in Panama. Source: Government of Panama, 2023.

\*\* Data for August 31, 2023 was not available, so a weekly moving average was used.

\*\*\* As of September, 2023 data correspond to estimates with a confidence level of 95%.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, visit: [www.migracion.gob.pa](http://www.migracion.gob.pa)

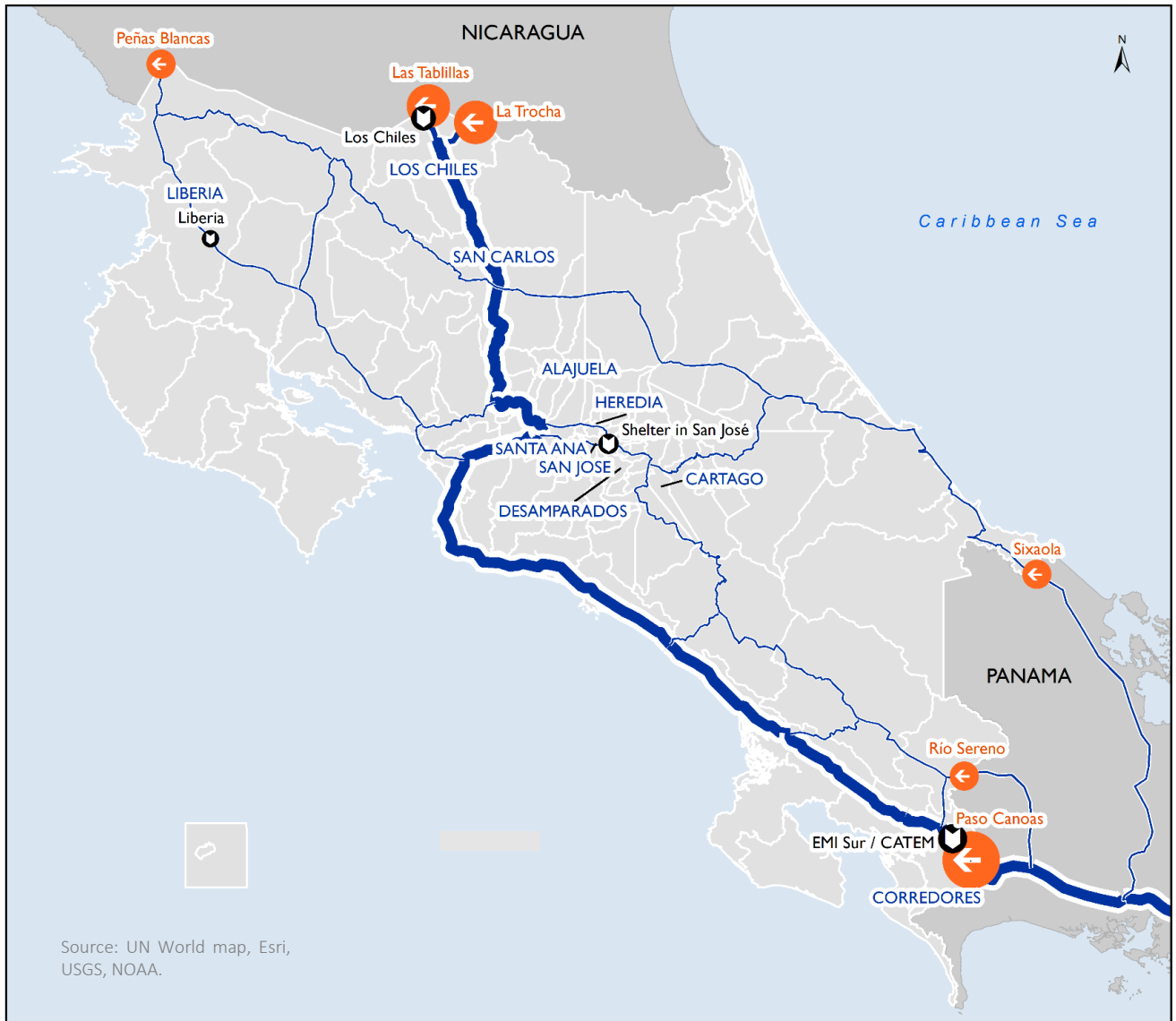
<sup>7</sup> For more information, visit: [www.migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Centro%20de%20Documentaci%C3%B3n/Estad%C3%ADsticas.aspx](http://www.migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Centro%20de%20Documentaci%C3%B3n/Estad%C3%ADsticas.aspx)

<sup>8</sup> For more information, visit: [www.iom.int/es/proteccion-de-datos](http://www.iom.int/es/proteccion-de-datos)

The data presented in this report does not represent the entirety of the migratory flow. December 2023

# TREND DISPLACEMENT IN COSTA RICA

Map 1 Sites of high presence and transit of migrants in mobility through the Americas, and their movement through Costa Rica. December, 2023



Source: UN World map, Esri, USGS, NOAA.

## Legend

### Surveys

- 17
- 41
- 209
- 544

### Border Crossing

- ← 143 - 145
- ← 14,217 - 14,361
- ← 28,434

### Route

- Direct Route Paso Canoas - Los Chiles
- Alternative Route

### Stranded Migrats in Cantons

- <46
- 46 - 255
- 256 - 611
- 1,792

Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The boundaries, names and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

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# 28,721

Estimated number of individuals entering Costa Rica. December 2023



Estimated decrease of **32 %** compared to November 2023 (42,150).

According to projections from IOM Costa Rica, it is estimated that around **28,721** people entered the country in November 2023 as part of the migratory flow across the Americas. The majority would have entered through Paso Canoas, on the border with Panama (99 %) with a daily average of 926. It is estimated that **the number of entries between January and December 2023 (529,348) have exceeded the 2022 total (226,610) by 133 per cent.**

The main route identified was directly from Paso Canoas (southern border) to Los Chiles (northern border) by bus, costing approximately USD 30 per person and taking less than a day. This month, an estimated **26,875 people** moved through this route, equivalent to **94 per cent of the total trend entering the country in the same month** (Graph 2)<sup>9</sup>. The presence of people stranded in public places in the GAM and areas far from Los Chiles and Paso Canoas are evidence that alternative routes continue to be active.

A careful analysis of Costa Rica's annual migration data for the year 2023 shows a marked upward trend compared to the previous year. This increase is not isolated, but part of a constant dynamic throughout the year, where months such as August and September presented significant peaks, with a flow that exceeded 70,000 monthly entries. Despite the fluctuations, the direct route between Paso Canoas and Los Chiles was consolidated as the preferred route for most migrants, demonstrating an efficiency and effectiveness that responds to the needs of the population in transit.

Figure 2. Estimated number of individuals traveling on direct route (EMI Sur - Los Chiles), per week



<sup>9</sup> The estimate of persons is calculated by approximate number of buses reported by key informants. It is assumed that 60 people travel per bus.



## ROUTES AND MOBILITY SCHEDULES

While the main route goes directly from Paso Canoas to Los Chiles, misinformation about direct routes, the search for temporary rest, avoiding migration controls, and the need to find economic resources to continue the migration route promote the use of alternative routes.

**MOBILITY IN SOUTHERN CANTONS:** During December 2023, Costa Rica's EMI Sur functioned as a key center for migratory mobility, with a high presence in the flow, especially of Asian, Haitian and African populations (compared to previous months). TRACOPA's public transportation services were instrumental in facilitating transit northward, while humanitarian organizations provided comprehensive assistance. In EMI Sur, various strategies have been adopted to optimize management and improve conditions of stay. Despite these improvements, continued challenges have been faced, such as delays in transport schedules and hygiene issues that still require attention. However, the response to the needs of migrants has proven to be adaptable, facilitating access to financial services and adapting mobility logistics effectively in the face of unforeseen circumstances.

**MOBILITY IN CENTRAL CANTONS:** By December 2023, the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM) has seen an increase in the mobility of migrants, especially at night through the Tracopa terminal. Although initially there was a decrease, a more constant flow to the north is now reported, mainly during daytime hours and through Terminal 710 or by cab services. Eateries and shelters have noted an increase in demand for services, including information on domestic routes and legal assistance for migrants, indicating continued adaptation to regional mobility dynamics.

**MOBILITY IN NORTHERN CANTONS:** In December 2023, there was initially an increase in the use of the direct route to the north, with migrants opting to travel from the south or San José to Los Chiles, and then moving to Las Tablillas by unofficial means. It was also common for migrants to get off at unofficial points such as the community of El Parque in Los Chiles, where they took informal cabs to the La Trocha crossing, which in November handled close to 50 per cent of the migratory flow. This pattern of mobility, which resulted in a significant number of people stranded in the northern zone at the beginning of the month, experienced a decrease in subsequent weeks.





## INDIVIDUALS STRANDED AT MONITORED SITES

In December 2023, 1,888 migrants were identified as stranded in shelters and 1,345 in public places in various cantons monitored. There was a significant decrease in the number of people staying in CATEM compared to previous months. There was also a considerable increase in the average length of stay, from 2 days in November to 6 days in December. The marked decrease in the number of migrants housed in CATEM and the increase in the length of stay in shelters during December 2023 suggests an effective intervention in reception policies and practices. This change can be attributed to the implementation of more rigorous measures for the management of migration flows and the accurate identification of cases requiring extended assistance. Although the number of migrants in public spaces was maintained, the extension of the period in shelters indicates that available resources are being allocated more effectively, providing more sustained support to those in vulnerable conditions.

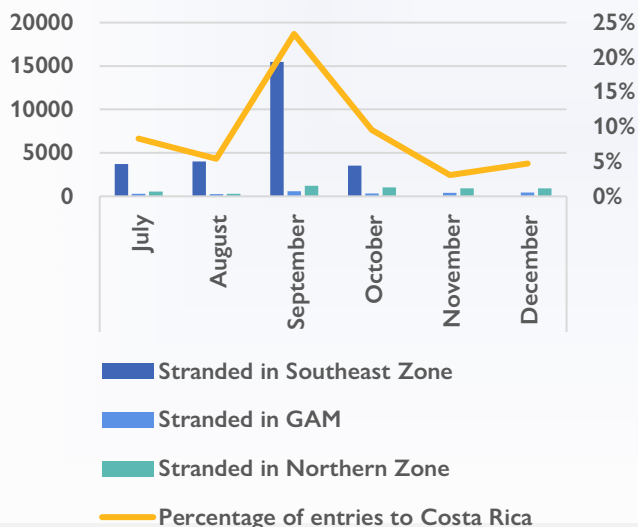
↓ ↓  
1,345  
Individuals stranded  
in public  
monitored sites

1,888  
Individuals stranded  
in monitored  
shelters

### INDIVIDUALS STRANDED IN SOUTHERN CANTONS:

Since the beginning of November, Costa Rica's Directorate General of Migration and Aliens (DGME) has issued daily reports on **people stranded in the EMI Sur shelter, known as CATEM**<sup>10</sup>. In December 2023, 1,792 people were counted.

Figure 3. Monthly distribution of stranded individuals in public monitored sites



According to key informants, the measures implemented with the creation of the EMI Sur (first implemented on October 7, 2023) have helped alleviate congestion of people stranded in public places, such as Paso Canoas, and have contributed to the solution of problems related to waste management, including garbage and human waste. They have also made it possible to better organize the flow of migrants and meet basic humanitarian needs.

### INDIVIDUALS STRANDED IN CENTRAL CANTONS:

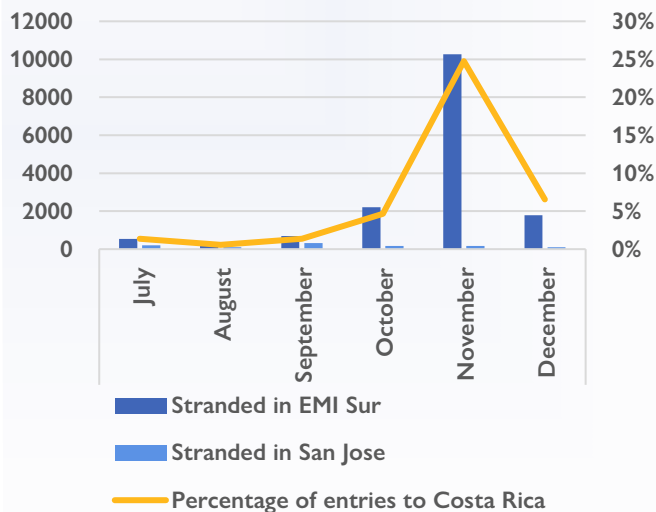
In December 2023, 442 migrants were identified as stranded in monitored public sites in the **cantons of San José, Desamparados, Cartago Heredia, Santa Ana y Alajuel** (figure 3). Likewise, 96 stranded migrants were identified in **two shelters in the central canton of San José** (Figure 3). The presence of stranded people in this region is evidence that people are still using alternate routes in Costa Rica (Map 1).

### INDIVIDUALS STRANDED IN NORTHERN CANTONS:

A total of 903 people were identified as stranded in monitored public sites distributed in the cantons of Liberia, Los Chiles and San Carlos (figure 3). As in GAM, the presence of stranded people in San Carlos and Liberia cantons is evidence of the existence of alternate routes.

According to key informants, Los Chiles continues to be the point with the highest presence of stranded people in the northern zone, highlighting the existence of a safe space provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), where child protection and psychosocial assistance is provided.

Figure 4. Monthly distribution of stranded individuals in monitored shelters



<sup>8</sup> The estimate of individuals is calculated by approximate number of buses reported by key informants. It is assumed that 60 people travel per bus.

# FLOW MONITORING SURVEY

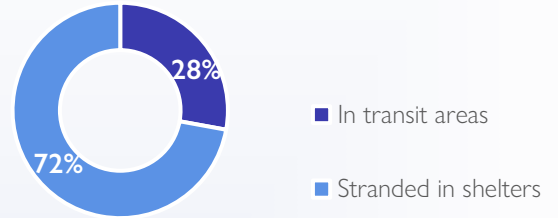
(Individuals surveyed: 811 | Family members: 1,332)  
Data collection: December 1-31, 2023

This monitoring was carried out through individual surveys of persons of legal age (18 years or older) stranded in **three shelters (2 in San José and 1 in the southern zone)** and people in transit in **two cantons in the northern zone (Liberia and Los Chiles)** and **one canton in the southern zone (Corredores)** following a **non-probabilistic sampling methodology**. This means that the results obtained cannot be generalized to the total number of people moving through the Americas, but it does allow us to describe the migratory profile of the people surveyed during the period. In total, information was obtained on **2,143** migrants (811 respondents and 1,332 family members).



It should be noted that, for the purposes of this report, the **left side presents the data of the respondents who were at points of high traffic concentration** while the **right side presents the data of the respondents who were in the monitored shelters**.

Figure 5. Surveys by type of movement of surveyed individuals (n=811)



**226**

Individuals surveyed in **high-traffic transit areas** throughout Costa Rica (San José, Ciudad Neily, Paso Canoas, Liberia and Los Chiles).



**585**

Individual surveyed persons surveyed stranded in shelters in Costa Rica (2 shelters in the Greater Metropolitan Area and 1 in the southern zone)

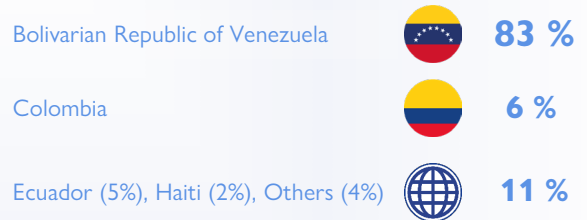
## SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

### NATIONALITIES OF SURVEYED INDIVIDUALS

Percentage of individuals in transit by nationality (n=226)



Percentage of individuals stranded in monitored shelters by nationality (n=585)



### EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 6. Percentage of individuals surveyed in transit by gender and highest level of completed education (n=226)

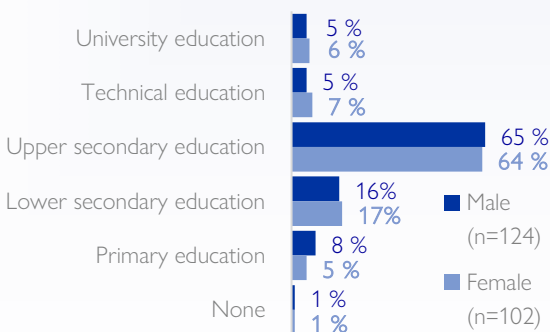
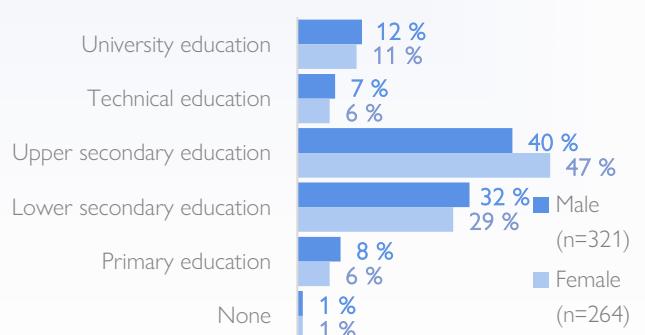


Figure 7. Percentage of individuals surveyed in shelters by gender and highest level of completed education (n=585)



The data presented in this report does not represent the entirety of the migratory flow. December 2023

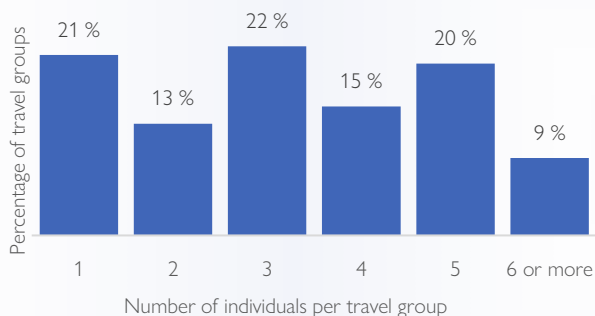


## GROUPS IN TRANSIT

Of the 226 people surveyed at transit sites, information was obtained on 294 travel companions, equivalent to a total of **520 family members and respondents**. Of the groups analyzed, 21 per cent were traveling alone (30 % for men and 12 % for women), and 13 per cent were couples, of which 68 per cent were spouses and 18 per cent were fathers or mothers with a son or daughter. The largest groups (3 or more persons), representing 66 per cent of the total, consisted mainly (86 %) of couples and their children (Figure 8)

In terms of gender and age distribution, 56 per cent of the people in the travel groups, including respondents and their family members, were male, while 44 per cent were female. Minors (17 years of age or younger) constituted 33 per cent of the total. The average age of adults was 32 years and that of minors was 6 years, as detailed in Figure 9.

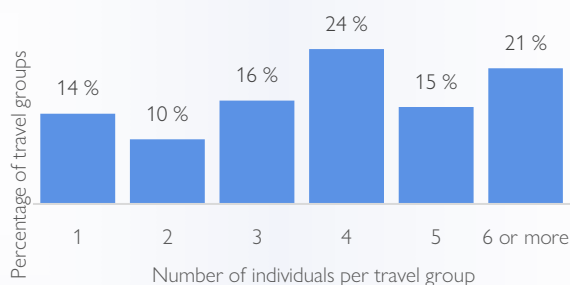
Figure 8. Size and number of travel groups of surveyed individuals at transit sites (n=520)



Of the 585 people surveyed in **3 shelters** in the southern zone (1 and San José (2)), information was obtained on 1,038 travel companions, equivalent to a total of **1,623 family members and respondents**. Of the groups analyzed, 14 per cent were traveling alone (33 % men and 2 % women), and 10 per cent were couples, of which 49 per cent were spouses and 18 per cent were fathers or mothers with a son or daughter. The largest groups (3 or more persons), representing 76 per cent of the total, consisted mainly (77 %) of spouses and their children (Figure 10).

In terms of gender and age distribution, 57 per cent of the members of the travel groups, including transit respondents and their family members, were male, while 43 per cent were female. Minors (17 years of age or younger) constituted 38 per cent of the total. The average age of adults was 31 years and that of minors was 8 years, as detailed in Figure 11.

Figure 10. Size and number of travel groups of surveyed individuals stranded in monitored shelters (n=1,623).



## GENDER AND AGE COMPOSITION OF INDIVIDUALS IN TRAVEL GROUPS

Figure 9. Percentage of individuals comprising travel groups in transit, by age and sex (n=520)

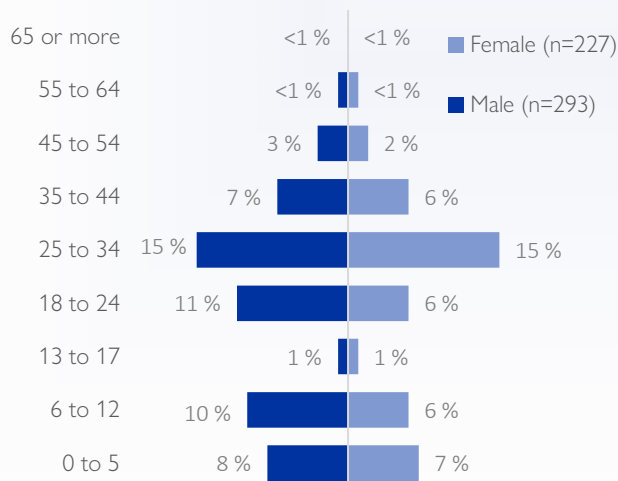
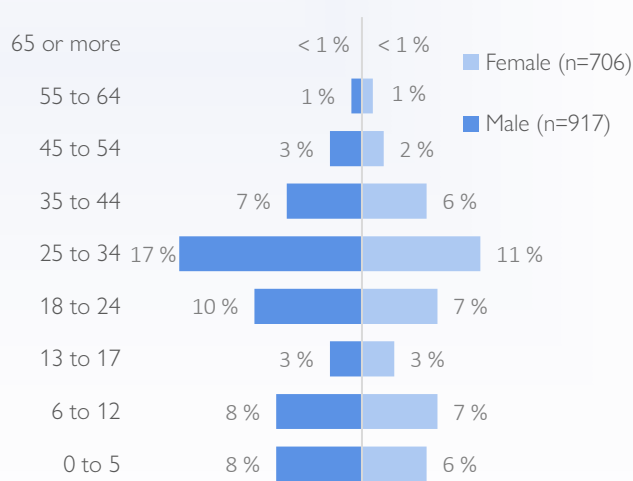


Figure 11. Percentage of individuals comprising travel groups stranded in monitored shelters, by age and sex (n=1,623)



The data presented in this report does not represent the entirety of the migratory flow. December 2023



## REASONS FOR MIGRATING

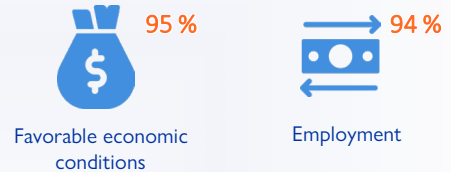
Of the total number of **people surveyed in transit sites**, 98 per cent indicated that their main reason for migrating was the search for favorable work conditions, followed by the search for favorable economic conditions (98 %), political stability (73 %), access to refugee determination processes (54 %), and family reunification (2%).

Percentage of respondents in transit by main reason for migration (n=226)



Of the total number of **surveyed persons stranded in monitored shelters**, 95 per cent indicated that their main reason for migrating was the search for socioeconomic conditions, followed by the search for favorable conditions to obtain employment (94 %), access to refugee processes (70%), political stability (70%) and family reunification (38%).

Percentage of surveyed persons stranded in shelters by main reason for migration (n=585)



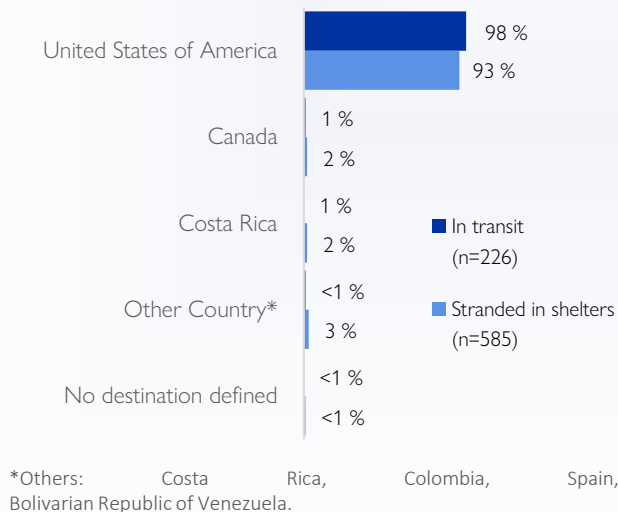
Note: individuals could choose more than one option

## INTENDED DESTINATION

Of all the **individuals surveyed at transit sites**, 95 per cent of respondents indicated the United States of America as their final destination, followed, to a lesser extent, by other countries such as Canada, Costa Rica, among others (Figure 12).

These proportions remain similar among respondents in transit sites and shelters: 99 per cent of respondents in transit sites indicated the United States of America as their destination compared to 94 per cent of respondents in shelters.

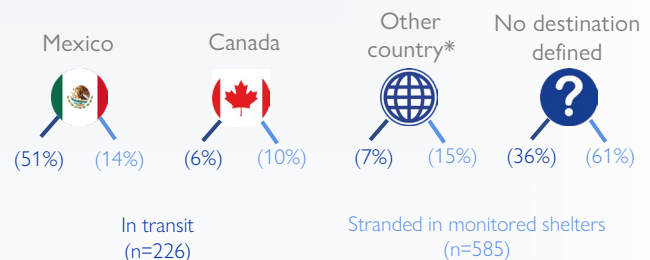
Figure 12. Percentage of surveyed individuals by country of final destination (n=811)



On the other hand, Mexico emerged as the main alternative destination country (24 % of the total number of people surveyed), followed by Costa Rica (9 %) and Canada (9 %), among others (4 %). Meanwhile, 54 per cent indicated not having an alternative destination.

Regarding the minimum needs to stay in the alternative country, 93 per cent cited economic income, 85 per cent cited regularization and 69 per cent indicated medical care (respondents had the option to choose more than one need). Differences in the minimum needs for staying in the alternate destination country were highlighted between transit and stranded respondents; 80 per cent of transit respondents indicated and 75 per cent indicated regularization, while 98 per cent of stranded respondents indicated income and 89 per cent indicated regularization.

Percentage of surveyed individuals by alternative destinations (n=811)



\*Costa Rica, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, United States of America, Honduras, Colombia Chile and Brazil.

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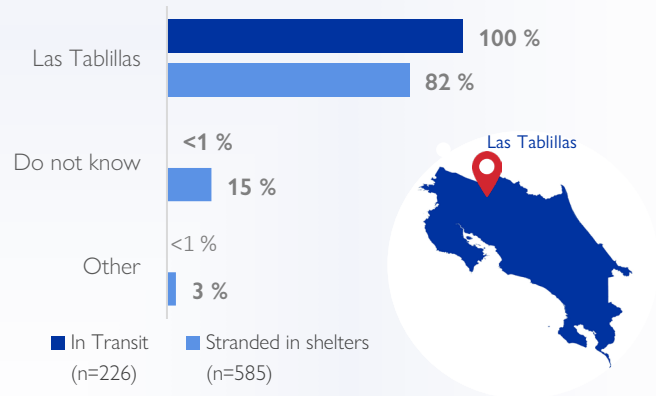
# MIGRATORY ROUTE

Map 2 shows the route of respondents (in transit sites and stranded in shelters) from their country of departure to their country of usual residence during the last 12 months, and then on to Costa Rica. **22 per cent reported residing in a country other than their country of departure**, of which 10 per cent (of the total number of persons surveyed) corresponded to persons who started their journey in Colombia but resided in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela but went to live in Colombia. Additionally, 3 per cent made this movement from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Peru.

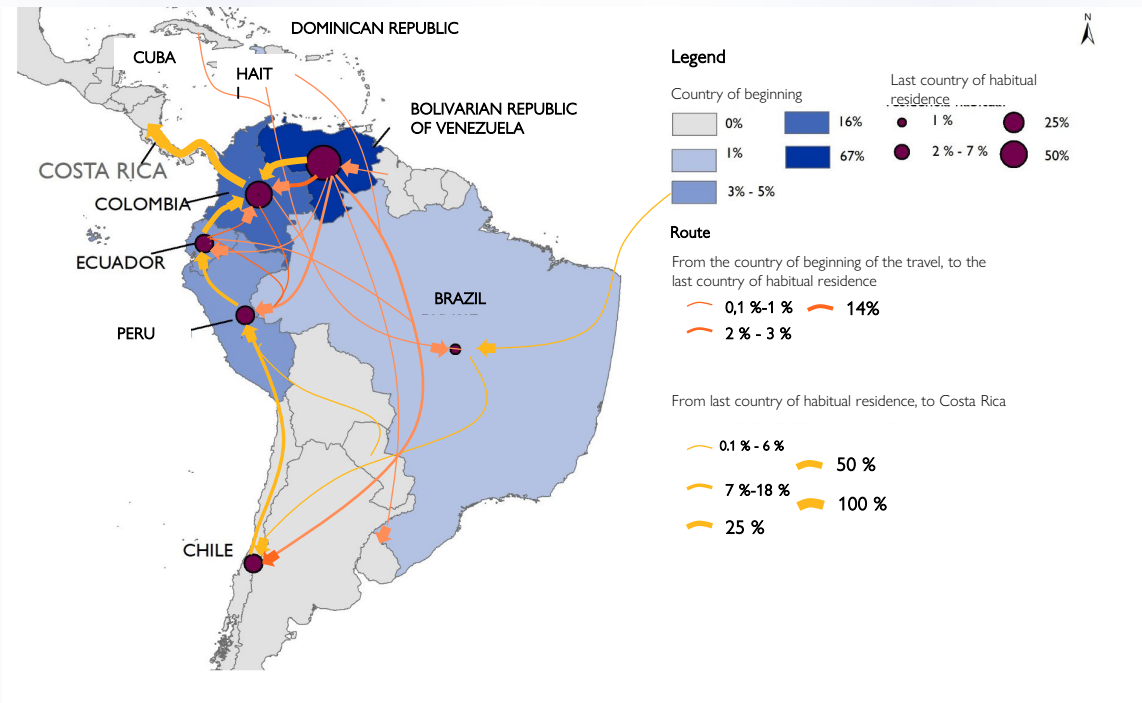
Most respondents indicated planning to leave Costa Rica through the Las Tablillas border crossing in Los Chiles (87%), while 11 per cent indicated they did not know where they would exit (the remaining 2% indicated other border crossings). On the other hand, less than one per cent of the migrants surveyed indicated leaving through border points between Costa Rica and Panama, that is, in the opposite direction of most of the trend.

Differences emerged in the cited exit locations between those surveyed in transit sites and in shelters: 100 per cent of those surveyed in transit sites indicated that they would exit the country through the Las Tablillas sector. On the other hand, of those surveyed in shelters, 82 per cent would exit through Las Tablillas, 3 per cent through other sites, and 15 per cent indicated that they did not know (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Percentage of respondents by planned place of departure from Costa Rica (n=811)



Map 2. Percentage of surveyed individuals by country of origin and last country of usual residence (n=811).

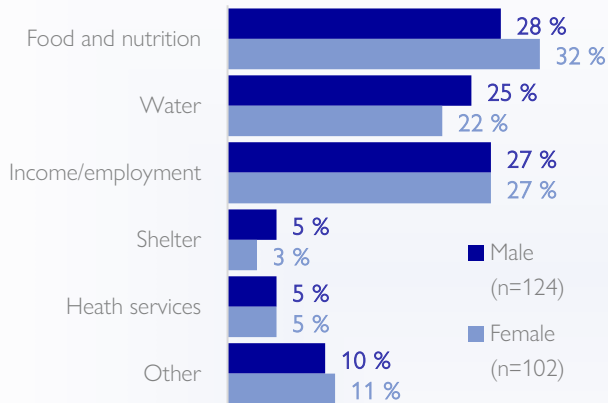


Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The boundaries, names and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

The routes presented represent movements between the country of departure, the last country of residence and Costa Rica. For more details, visit the interactive dashboard (link at the end of the document).

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Percentage of surveyed individuals in transit by gender and main need (n=226)



**90 %** indicated a need for legal advice to learn about migration options (n=226).



**40 %** indicated that they were missing some information during their journey (n=226).

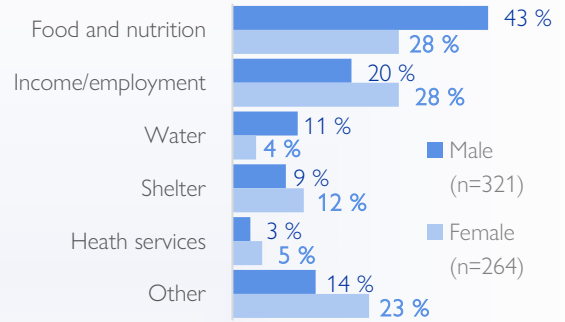
**PRIMARY NEEDS**

As of December 2023, EMI Sur continues to strengthen its role in the management of human mobility in the southern region. Throughout the month, the fluidity of migratory transit has been maintained, ensuring effective coordination between the different humanitarian actors and the authorities. The implementation of controls such as the allocation of identification bracelets and the regulation of the use of common spaces has contributed to a better organization and control of flows. Despite occasional challenges, such as the persistence of health problems and the need to adjust the logistics of basic services, the response has been proactive and adaptive.

In the GAM, the UN System, together with local entities and NGOs, has maintained constant support to migrants, offering everything from legal advice to medical attention, with the work of HIAS and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) standing out. UNICEF and UNHCR have ensured safe spaces and surveillance. Despite challenges such as waste management, a dignified and orderly migratory flow has been guaranteed, reaffirming GAM's commitment to human rights.

However, in the Northern Zone, the situation presents a marked contrast. Border communities, such as La Cruz, Liberia, Upala, Los Chiles and Ciudad Quesada, face increasing challenges due to the lack of economic resources of stranded migrants. Despite coordinated efforts between organizations and authorities, critical needs for housing, food and medical care remain.

Figure 15. Percentage of surveyed individuals stranded in shelters by gender and main need (n=585)



**37 %** indicated a need for legal advice to learn about immigration options (n=585).



**24 %** indicated that they were missing some information during their trip (n=585).

Other needs: Non-food items (diapers, sanitation and hygiene items, feminine hygiene items), Communication, Protection and security.

**NEEDS BY NATIONALITY**



**Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:**

As in previous months, the priority continues to be food, followed by the need to generate income and find employment. Over time, medical care and legal support have become essential, especially for those with longer stays in the country.



**Ecuador:**

An increase in the number of stranded Ecuadorian families has been reported, with a considerable presence of children with health problems and in precarious hygienic conditions. The humanitarian response has had to be intensified to address these emerging conditions.



**Others:**

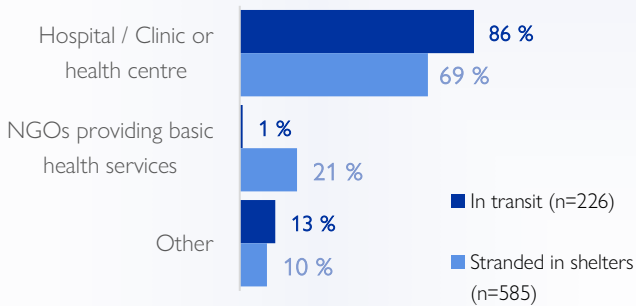
Among the various nationalities present, which include Haiti, Afghanistan, Philippines, China, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Eritrea, Ghana, Peru, Dominican Republic, Nepal, Bangladesh, Congo, Sierra Leone and Togo, there has been an increase in the concentration of people at the Emi Sur waiting for transport to San José. There has been a significant change in the provision of cabs to transport migrants, facilitating their access to bus services.

The data presented in this report does not represent the entirety of the migratory flow. December 2023



In terms of requiring medical assistance, respondents indicated that they would go to hospitals and the nearest clinic or health center (69%), pharmacies (12%), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide health services (9%), alternative medicine (7%), among others (3%). Differences were found between respondents in public sites and shelters, specifically in the percentage of people who would attend pharmacies; 12 per cent of respondents in transit sites compared to 7 per cent of respondents in shelters.

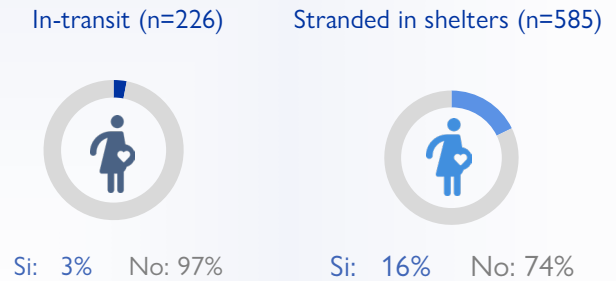
Figure 16. Percentage of surveyed individuals by type of movement and injuries suffered during the journey (n=811)



Other sites: Pharmacy, Alternative Medicine, Local medical or nursing professional.

Among the women (respondents and family members over 15 years of age), 11% indicated that they were pregnant. The average age of pregnant women was 27 years old. These percentages vary between respondents in transit sites, where the percentage of pregnant women is 3 per cent and an average age of 29, and those in shelters, where these data are 16 per cent and 26 years old.

Gráfico 17: Percentage of women aged 15 and over by pregnancy status



## HEALTH AFFLICTIONS OBSERVED

Main health conditions observed in stranded migrants include:

- Severe dehydration.
- Gastrointestinal issues, primarily diarrhea.
- Mild flu.
- Child malnutrition.
- Dermatological problems; primarily sunburns and exposed wounds.
- Psychological stress.
- Others: Risk of vector-borne diseases, infections



People waiting for food. CATEM, Corredores, Puntarenas © OIM 2023/Carlos BARQUERO

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## CONCLUSION AND KEY FINDINGS



According to IOM Costa Rica projections, the total number of entries from January to November 2023 (529,348), is estimated to have exceeded the 2022 total (226,610) by 133 per cent. In November 2023, approximately 28,721 individuals entered the country as part of the migratory trend in the Americas, mainly through Paso Canoas on the border with Panama (99 %) with a daily average of 926 individuals.



The main route identified was directly from Paso Canoas (southern border) to Los Chiles (northern border) by bus; this month, it was estimated that around 26,875 people moved through this route, equivalent to 96 percent of the total flow entering the country in the same month. In 2023, there was a marked upward trend compared to the previous year. This increase is not isolated, but part of a constant dynamic throughout the year, where months such as August and September presented significant peaks, with a flow that exceeded 70,000 entries per month. Despite fluctuations, the direct route between Paso Canoas and Los Chiles was consolidated as the preferred route for most migrants, demonstrating efficiency and cost-effectiveness that responds to the needs of the transit population.



In December 2023, 1,888 migrants were identified as stranded in shelters and 1,345 in public places in various cantons monitored, with the highest number in CATEM in 2023, where a significant presence of 1,792 stranded people was noted, while in Los Chiles, San José, Liberia, San Carlos and other cantons, varied but smaller numbers were distributed, reflecting the heterogeneity of the migratory situation and the need for responses adapted to the particularities of each locality.



During December 2023, Costa Rica experienced distinct migration mobility dynamics in its regions. In the south, the EMI South emerged as a critical nexus for migratory flow, with an increase in Asian, Haitian and African migrants, supported by TRACOPA transportation and assistance from humanitarian organizations. Despite challenges such as transportation delays and hygiene problems, responses have been flexible and effective. In the GAM, nighttime mobility increased, and although the flow initially declined, it stabilized during the day, reflecting an increasing demand for services by migrants. To the north, an increase in direct mobility to Los Chiles and Las Tablillas was initially observed, with frequent use of unofficial routes and informal cabs, but this flow decreased towards the end of the month, leaving many migrants stranded at the beginning.



People in shelter  
CATEM, Corredores, Puntarenas  
© OIM 2023/Eliana SANCHEZ

For more information about the study, follow this [enlace](#) or scan the QR code.



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During 2023, the Flow Monitoring Registry revealed trends and variations in the number of migrants entering Costa Rica from Panama, reflecting the complex dynamics of migratory flows in mobility through the Americas. In January, a flow of 24,122 people was recorded, a figure that fluctuated from month to month, reaching a peak in August with 84,494 individuals. This increase indicates greater mobility during certain periods of the year. Towards the end of the year, in December, there was a notable decrease to 28,721 people, in line with a historical downward trend characteristic of the last months of the year. This reduction could be due to a variety of factors, including changes in migration policies, adverse weather conditions, and a reduced inclination to migrate during the holiday season for religious and cultural events. The variability in these numbers is not only evidence of seasonal fluctuations and adjustments in migration policies, but also highlights the importance of constant and meticulous monitoring to better understand the needs and mobility patterns of these populations. A detailed record of these flows is vital for the planning and implementation of effective humanitarian responses and informed migration policies that adapt to the changing dynamics of migration flows in the region.

Throughout the year 2023, the migration flow from Panama to Costa Rica has been characterized by notable fluctuations in the nationalities, ages and gender of migrants. A diversity of nationalities has been recorded, with a high representation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (64 %), followed by other nationalities such as Ecuador (11 %), Haiti (9 %) and the People's Republic of China (5%). In addition, there was a significant presence of minors, who accounted for 21 per cent of the total flow. These variations throughout the year underscore the complexity and dynamics of migration flows in the region, highlighting the importance of ongoing analysis to inform adaptive policies and responses that address the changing needs of migrant populations.

From January through December, an evolution in the number and conditions of people stranded in both shelters and monitored public places has been noted. Between July and November, significant increases were shown, reflecting peaks of up to 10,445 people in shelters (November 2023), while others, such as December, evidenced a decrease to 1,888 individuals, revealing a variability influenced by more rigorous measures for the management of migratory flows and the precise identification of cases requiring extended assistance. This situation highlights the complex dynamics of migration flows and the need for adaptive and multifaceted responses that address not only shelter, but also critical needs such as food, medical care and security. The prevalence and profile of stranded persons, which include a notable proportion of minors, highlight the importance of adopting inclusive migration and humanitarian policies that are sensitive to the diverse needs of this population. Understanding and responding to the causes and consequences of this phenomenon is crucial to mitigate its humanitarian impact and improve migration management in the region.

The socio-demographic profile of migrants who crossed through Darien to Costa Rica and North America during 2023 showed a remarkable diversity, with a predominance of men (64 %), but with a significant representation of women (36 %) and a considerable percentage of accompanying minors (21 %). The structures and dynamics of migration varied, from individuals traveling alone (20 %) to entire families (40 %), reflecting the plurality of these experiences. The reasons for migrating were mainly the search for better working and economic conditions (95 %), although factors such as access to refugee processes (62 %), political stability (57 %) and family reunification (18 %) were also cited. Although the United States of America remained the predominant destination (97 %), some indicated other countries or lacked a defined destination (2 %) or other country (1 %), illustrating the uncertainty and complexity of their trajectories. Migratory routes revealed both the use of main and alternative paths, adapting to changes in migration policies and conditions en route. Identified needs varied widely, focusing on food (39%), income (22 %) and access to water (15 %), along with critical shelter requirements (10 %) and medical care (4 %). The most common health problems included severe dehydration, gastrointestinal problems and child malnutrition, highlighting the vulnerability of this population and the need for integrated humanitarian responses sensitive to their complex realities.



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