



WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND RISKS FACED BY THOSE STRANDED IN MEXICO?

The situation for people on the move in Mexico, following the recent adjustments to the U.S. asylum policy

Rapid Needs Assessment | Mexico | January 2025

Executive Summary

Throughout Mexico, displaced people face severe challenges and humanitarian needs driven by their exposure to different protection risks. Recent policy changes and a series of executive orders limiting access to asylum at the border including the removal of the scheduling functionality within the CBP One app, profoundly impacted the lives of people on the move (POM) in Mexico.

To better understand the needs and main priorities of this population in light of recent changes in immigration policies, the IRC implemented a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) which underscores pressing protection, livelihoods, and basic needs. 243 household surveys, representing 618 individuals, and 3 focus groups with POM, were conducted between January 27 and 30 by IRC teams in Tapachula, Mexico City, Ciudad Juárez, Matamoros, and Tijuana.

RNA findings highlight the urgency of strengthening the provision of accompaniment services for individuals who have experienced protection risks, access to up-to-date reliable information on migration pathways to ensure informed decision-making, durable solutions and long-term integration for refugees, deportees, and other POM, documents and provision of legal services, disability inclusive programming and coordinated humanitarian funding. The findings are as follows:

Highlights



44% of respondents planned to go to the US but are now thinking about staying in Mexico



One in every two respondents mentioned livelihood opportunities as a main need



55% reported having at least one medical condition that required medical attention



Over 26% reported being kidnapped in Mexico at least once*

*Several respondents indicated that they had experience kidnapping multiple times during their transit through Mexico

Methodology



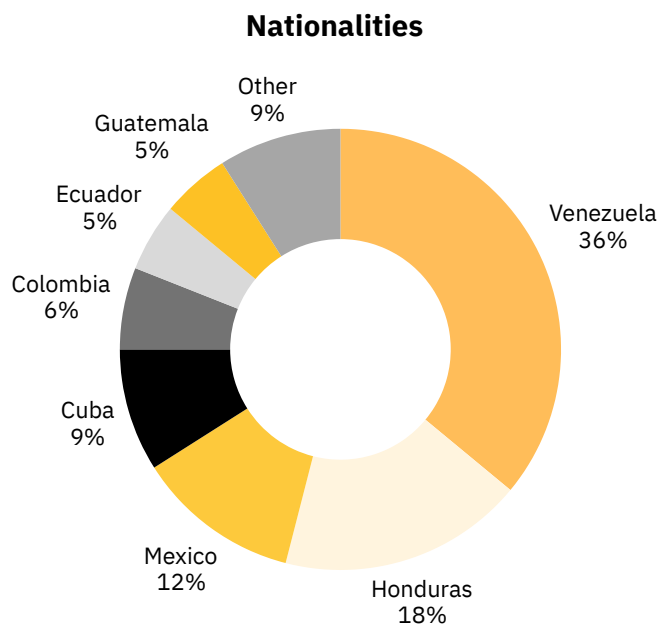
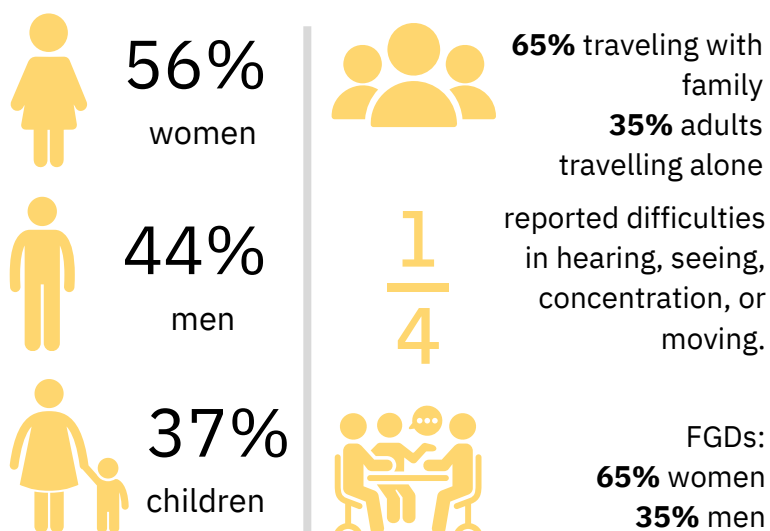
This RNA includes a sample of 243 household surveys (618 individuals), conducted along Mexico's southern and northern borders, including Tapachula, Ciudad Juárez, and Matamoros, as well as in Mexico City. Additionally, 3 focus group discussions (FGD) with heads of households were held in Tijuana and Mexico City. A convenience sampling method was used, focusing on key locations to ensure access to protection services. A standardized survey was developed in CommCare and used as data collection tool.

This RNA focused on Mexicans and other nationalities intending to access the United States, including those with cancelled or unscheduled CBPOne appointments, and recently deported or returned individuals aiming to return to the U.S.

IRC teams visited shelters, community kitchens, informal camps, parks, and service centers to include diverse profiles and nationalities. The analysis is limited by selection and application biases.

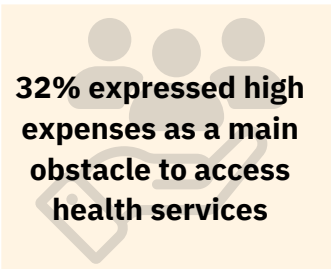
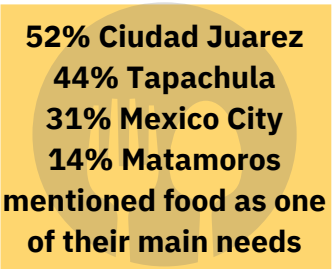
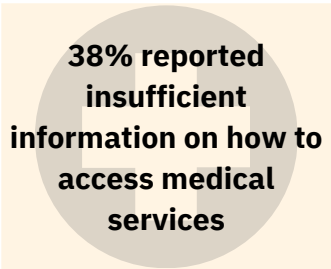
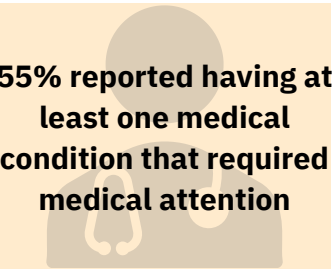
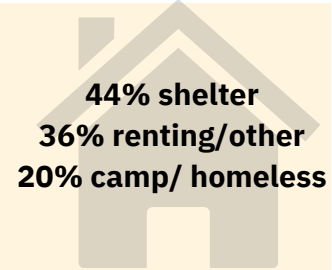
Demographics

People on the move included within the study include asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, those deported and returned and migrants. The demographic composition of the respondents is as follows:



Key findings

Basic needs



Livelihoods



72% responded that the lack of economic resources was one of the main obstacles to meeting their basic needs

54% responded that the lack of needed documentation was one of the main obstacles to accessing livelihood opportunities



Lack of information



19% highlighted the lack of information about available services as one of the main barriers to meeting their basic needs

Protection

50% suffered from protection risks including theft, extortion, kidnapping, and gender-based violence

32% mentioned the lack of documentation as a barrier for accessing health, education, information and employment services

26% reported being kidnapped in Mexico at least once (many stated they were kidnapped multiple times)

FGD participants mentioned they will wait to see if there are any other options to cross to the United States

Intentions and integration

44% responded they previously planned to go to the United States and now consider integrating into Mexico, while 40% expressed they still have the intention to go to the United States, 11% mentioned they would return to their place of origin, and 5% were unsure of their plans. **Among the 44% who expressed a desire to integrate into Mexico, 48% stated they do not know the procedure to seek asylum in Mexico.**

“After January 20 we all went blank, we had to restart and we don’t know what to do now” - FGD participant in Mexico City.

“We had an appointment for the 20th at 1pm. We were the first group that was told we couldn’t come in... those from the morning managed to get in. I’m going to wait because I feel like we’re still in a state of uncertainty, waiting to see if there’s going to be a program, if there’s a light” - FGD participant in Tijuana.

Recommendations

Access to Information: Provide up-to-date, reliable information on migration pathways to ensure informed decision-making and reduce exposure to fraudulent practices.

Durable solutions: Assist with transport and reintegration for those wishing to return to their place of origin. For those who cannot return, for instance because of safety concerns, support longer-term integration in Mexico, especially in northern border areas, through access to the labor market, documentation and education. Increase the capacity of COMAR to reduce existing backlogs and strengthen access to refugee status for those seeking, and in need of, international protection in the country.

Legal Stay and Services: The lack of documentation is a major barrier to self-sufficiency. Ensure access to legal stay within the country so people can access the formal labor market, healthcare, and other basic services.

Coordinated Humanitarian Funding: With needs at an all-time high and resources significantly reduced following the dissolution of USAID, establish a common funding mechanism for local and international organizations to respond to needs in a coordinated manner.

Combat Kidnapping: Strengthen or create state-level Task Forces to combat kidnapping, a major concern for those on the move and a significant income source for organized crime networks. Strengthen the provision of accompaniment services for access to justice.

Focus on Children: Ensure children, regardless of their parents' intentions, have access to safe learning opportunities and healthcare, as a significant portion of the surveyed households are integrated by individuals under 18.

Disability inclusive programming: Ensure programs consider and reduce barriers to participation for those with physical or mental disabilities, as one in four people covered by this survey reported difficulties in hearing, seeing, concentration, or moving.

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