

ANALYSIS OF FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS

CHIRIQUI, PANAMA

17TH-22ND OF JUNE, 2019



BACKGROUND

Migrant flows through irregular and unsafe channels, coming from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean and using South America and Central America as region of transit to Northern America, have increased in the last decade and last years, and have also gained in visibility, especially in Panama. In 2018, 9,222 migrants irregularly crossed the international border between Colombia and Panama. In the first half of 2019, 13,673 migrants crossed the same border.¹

Due to the substantial increase in irregular, extra-regional migration flows, particularly in the last few months (2,514 registered cases in April, 2,838 in May, 3,065 in June), Panamanian authorities requested IOM support in collecting data on migrant profiles, routes, vulnerabilities, needs and intentions. The Temporal Center for Humanitarian Assistance (ETAH) of Los Planes was chosen to conduct data collection activities. The methodology and findings are detailed in this report.

The report highlights that several routes and trends can be identified. First, migrants coming from African and Asian countries, often with the help of international smuggling networks, arrive predominantly by airplane to Latin America — to Brazil, Ecuador and Peru in particular. The primary reasons for leaving their country of origin are civil conflict and violence. Pull factors such as the appealing socio-economic conditions, political stability and believed ease of access to asylum procedures place the United States of America in the predominant position among the preferred countries of destination.

On the other hand, push factors for Haitians are more related to natural disasters and the lack of economic opportunities that followed the earthquake of 2010. Countries of residence are usually Brazil and Chile, where they spend between one and three years on average before undertaking the journey towards northern America. In the case of Cuban emigration, migrants fly to Guyana and travel to Panama by land.

According to migrants' experience, the probability of being exposed to physical and psychological harm is considerably high throughout the entire journey, especially between Colombia and Panama. This is mainly due to the crossing of what is known as the Darien Gap, a roadless, narrow strip of wild tropical land that lies between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

These constantly evolving migration flows challenge government's migration management capacities. Regarding assistance to migrants, challenges include, among others: the lack of resources, installations and services to meet needs derived from increased number of migrants to assist and protect, especially regarding women migrants and family units; the multiple religious and cultural backgrounds; the lack of interpreters to ensure communication between officials and migrants; the absence of diplomatic missions of the countries of origin in the countries of transit; the unavailability of reliable, accurate, disaggregated and comprehensive data on the situation.

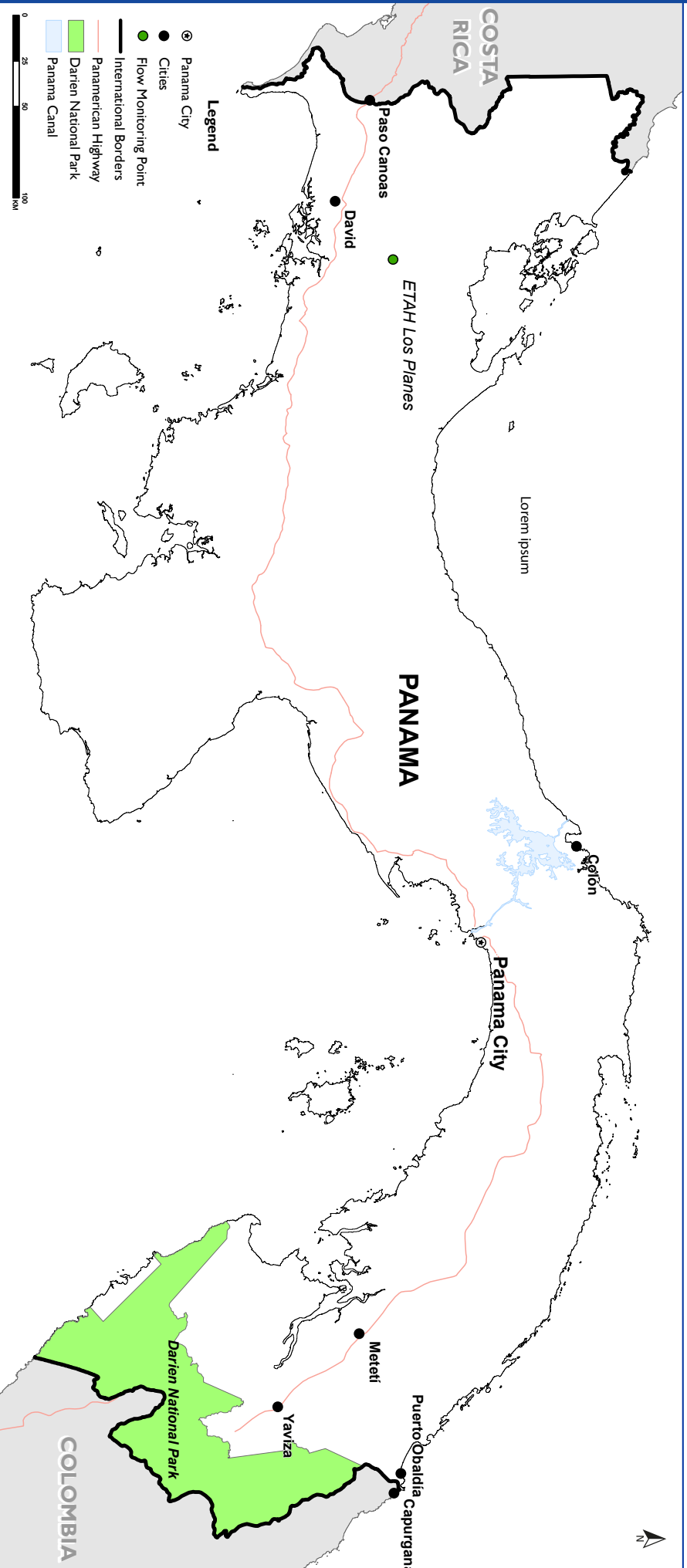
METHODOLOGY

IOM data collection activities took place between Monday, June 17th and Saturday, June 22nd, 2019. Over that period of time, 1,580 migrant adults and 138 accompanied minors transited through the Center of Los Planes. Due to missing

information on the population distribution inside the facility, random selection could not be implemented. Instead, 316 migrants (226 men and 90 women), were selected by convenience and surveyed.

¹Source: National Migration Service of Panama, June 2019.

Location of Temporary Station of Humanitarian Assistance Los Planes



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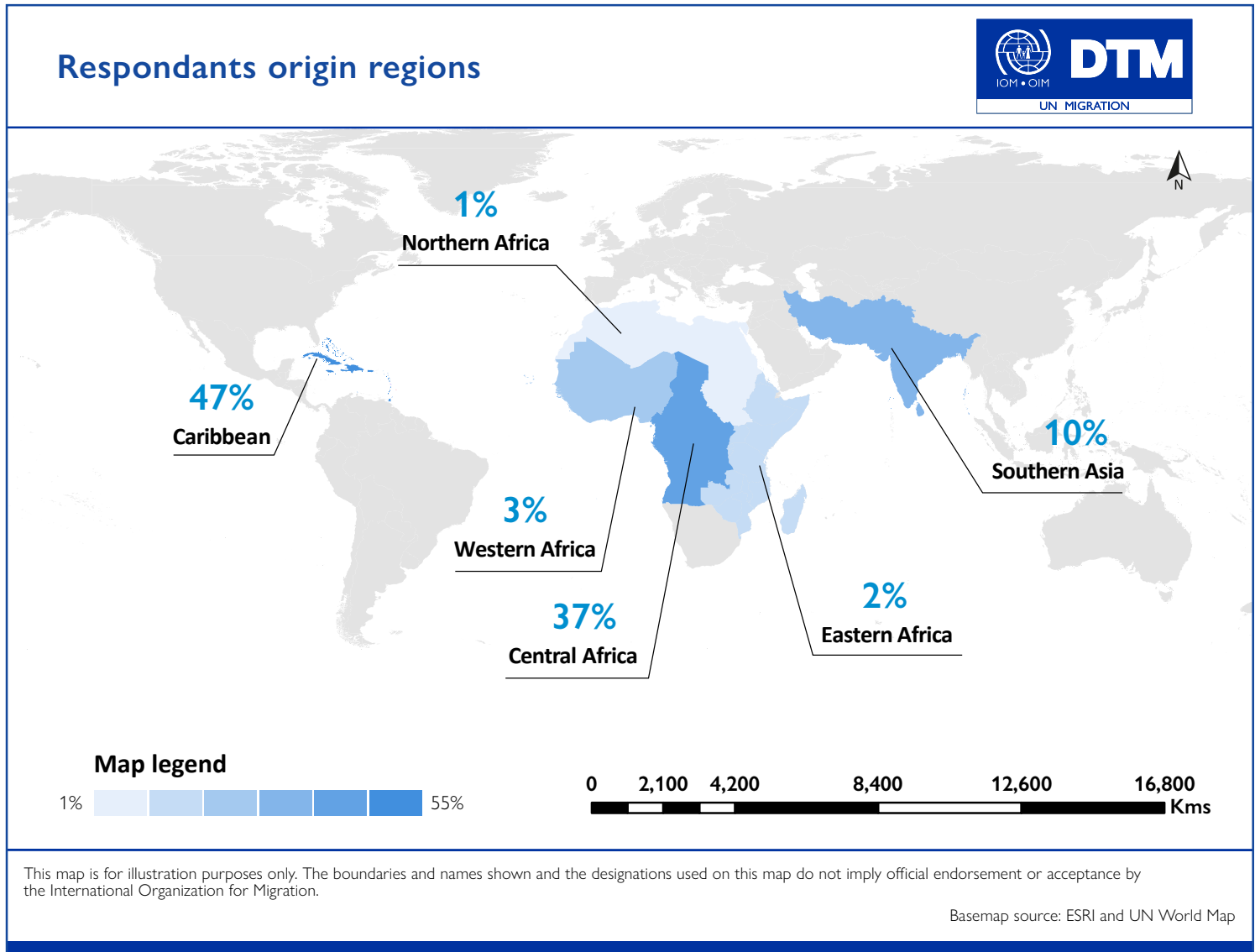
Basemap source: ESRI and UN World Map

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SURVEY RESULTS

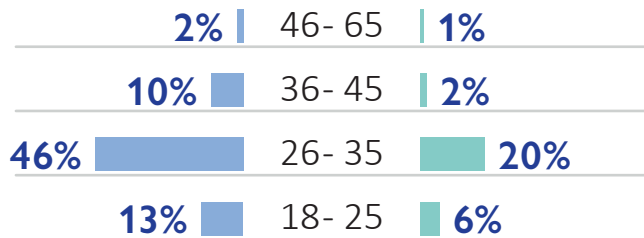
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS



The majority of respondents are from Caribbean countries (48%), followed by African (42%) and then Asian countries (10%). Specifically, from Cameroon (32%), Haiti (32%),

Cuba (15%) and India (9%). Women represent 29 per cent of the total number of migrants surveyed, while men represent 71 per cent.

Gender and age



71%



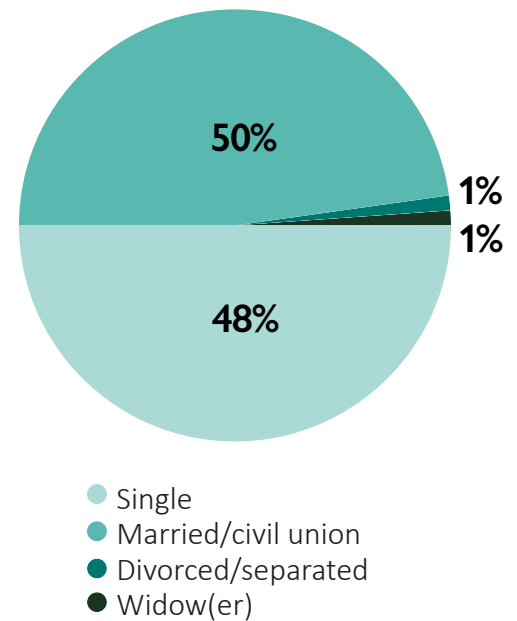
Men

29%



Women

Civil status

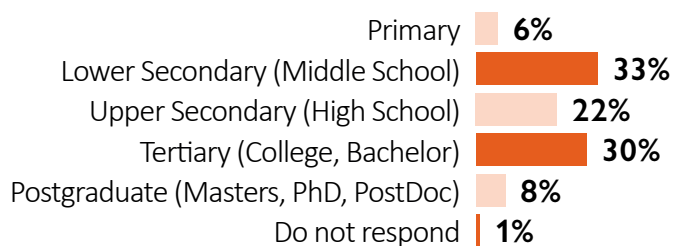


Results show that migrants between the age of 26 and 35 (66%) are more likely to migrate than any other age group. In regards to civil status, approximately half of surveyed migrants declared to be in a relationship (48%), while 50 per cent declared to be single.

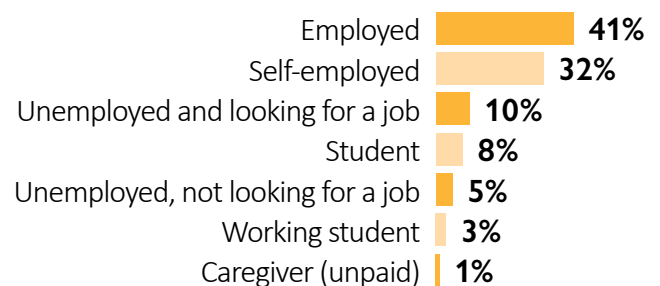
In relation to educational attainment, it has been found that 38 per cent of participants completed

Tertiary or Postgraduate education. It is important to mention that only 21 per cent of this group is represented by women. This means that men are almost four times more likely to have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational attainment



Employment status



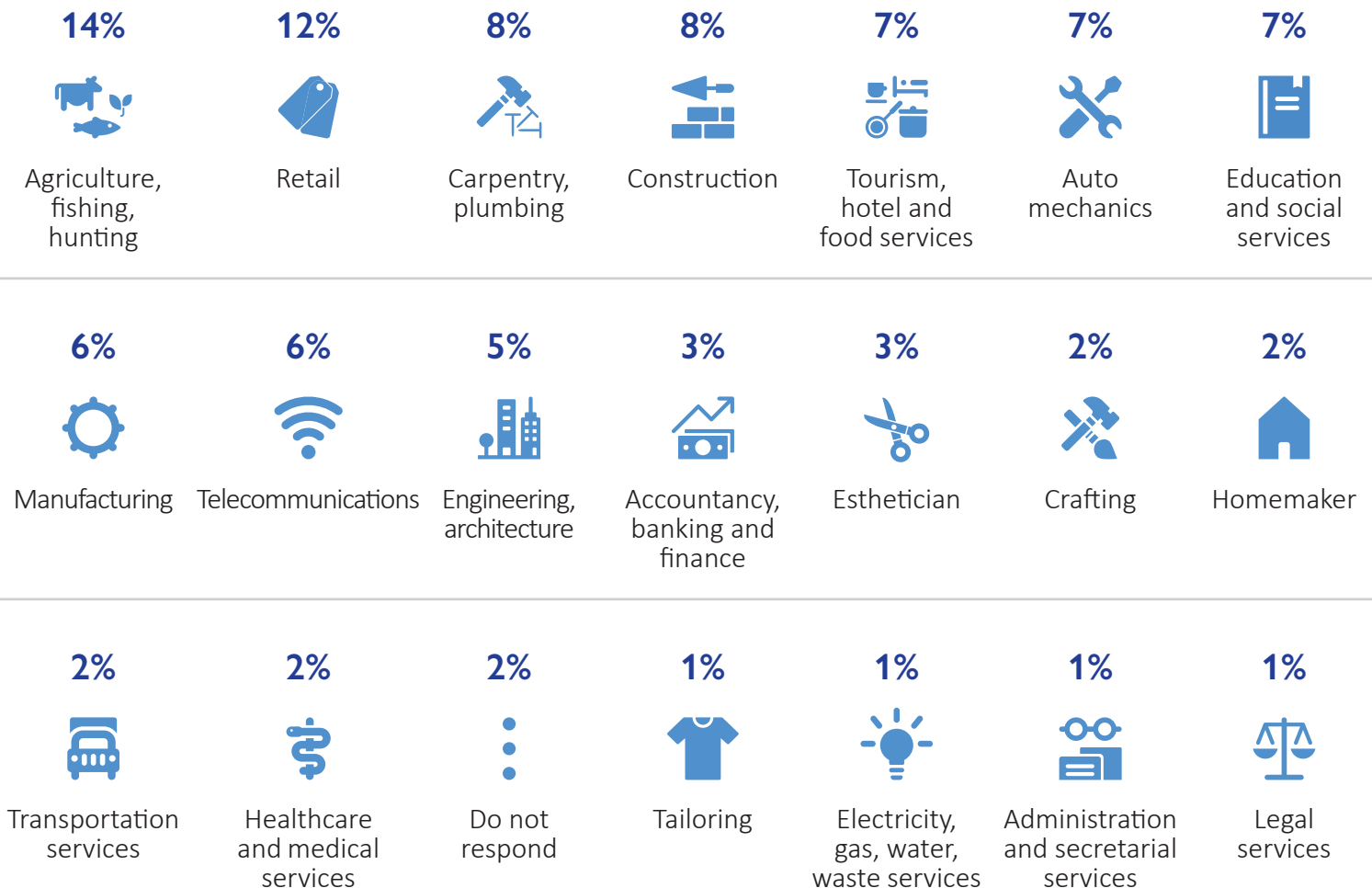
With regards to the employment status, 76% of participants were working prior to departing: they were either receiving a salary through waged work (44%) or generating income through self-established businesses (32%). It is noteworthy that the likelihood of being an entrepreneur was higher for men, who represent 84% of self-employed respondents.

Like educational attainment, tendencies for women and men in regards to occupational sectors diverge: women are mostly employed in retail (21%), esthetics (13%), manufacturing (13%), tourism, hotel and food services (8%) and education and social services (8%);

men are more likely to be employed in sectors such as agriculture, fishing and hunting (15%), carpentry and plumbing (10%) and construction (10%).

It should be mentioned that 50 per cent of all working women were employed in the informal economy, compared to 30 per cent of men. The occupational sectors with the highest share of workers employed in the informal economy are: esthetics (71%); domestic services (67%); transportation services (67%); agriculture, fishing and hunting (62%); construction (60%); auto mechanics (46%); retail (45%); and carpentry and plumbing (45%).

Occupational sector



DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Human mobility is the result of specific factors that either attract an individual to migration (pull factors) or that repel the individual from staying in the place of habitual residence (push factors). Personal characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity or age, can influence mobility decisions. Similarly, factors shaping mobility and determining population movement are highly related to

specific regional contexts and conditions in countries of origin, such as natural endowments, social tensions, economic systems and socio-demographic conditions. Therefore, explanatory push and pull factors that are relevant or meaningful for one population or group of migrants are not necessarily as relevant for another. This can be displayed in the results of the survey.

Nationals of the Caribbean countries reported that the main reasons for leaving their country of origin are: lack of economic opportunities and unemployment (36%), social and political instability and persecution (20%) and limited access to basic services such as education, health care and transportation (9%). Specifically, 43 per cent of Haitians indicated lack of economic opportunities and unemployment among the main factors that drove them to leave the county, followed by the limited access to basic services, reported by 10 per cent of Haitian respondents. Nationals of Cuba, on the other hand, attribute their departure to the political instability of the country (37%) and the lack of economic opportunities (23%). Additionally, 9 per cent of Cuban respondents mentioned family reunification played a pivotal role in the migration decision-making process.

War or civil conflicts (32%), social instability and persecution (32%), insecurity and indiscriminate violence (28%) were identified as the main push factors for respondents from African Countries. In 90 per cent of the cases, respondents declared that returning to their country of origin would be a life-threatening decision.

The main reasons for emigrating for nationals coming from Asian countries were social crisis and persecution (50%), war and civil conflicts (18%), and insecurity and indiscriminate violence (16%). The majority of respondents (74%) declared that their life would be in danger if they attempted to return to their country of origin.

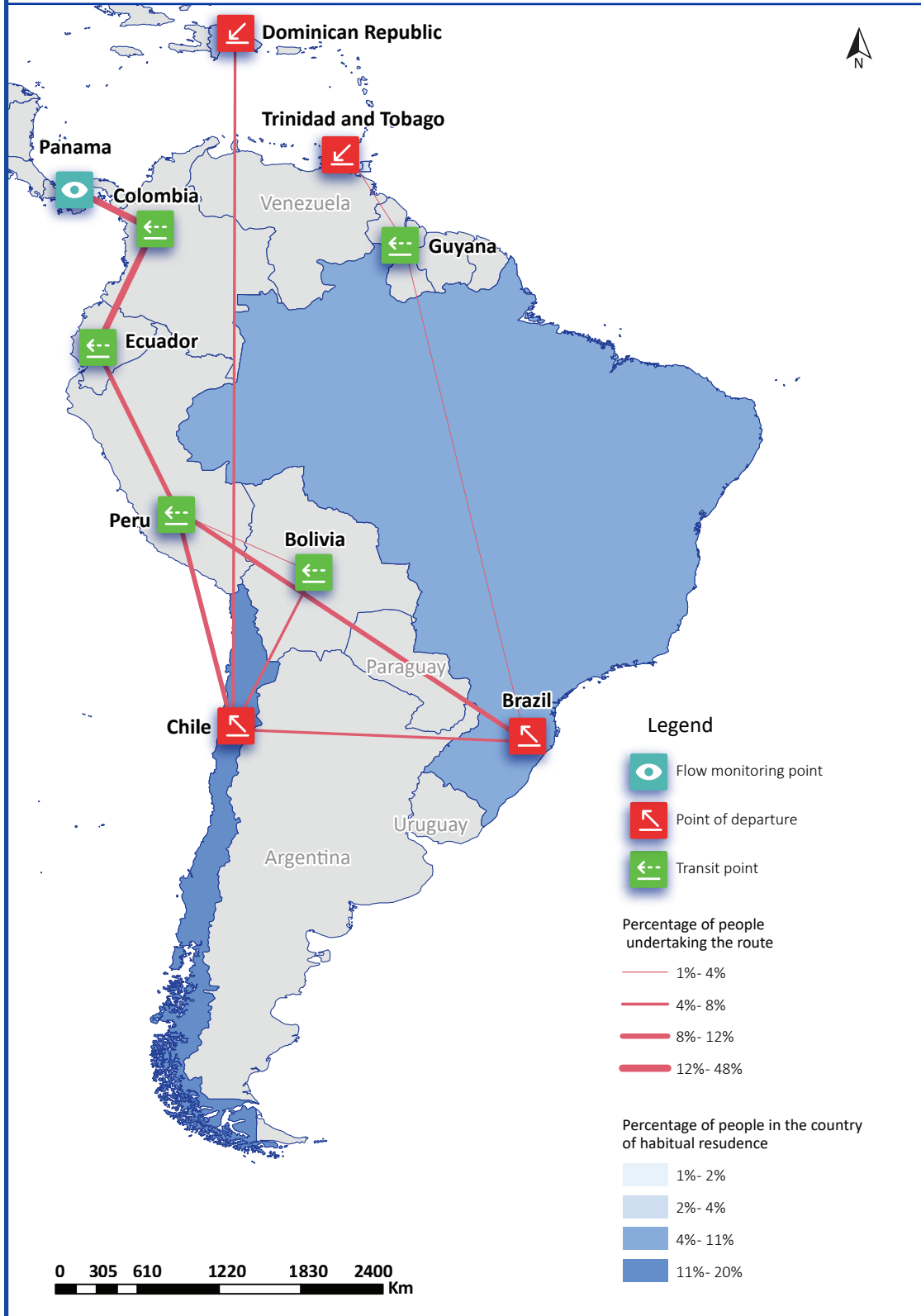
The country of habitual residence prior to departure did not correspond to the country of nationality for 39 per cent of respondents, most of them from Haiti (84%). The 56 per cent of them resided in Chile, 33 per cent resided in Brazil, 5 per cent in the Dominican Republic, 4 per cent in Sudan and 2 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. The majority (38%) had spent between one and two years in the host country, 29 per cent between two and three years, and 33 per cent more than three years.

Lack of economic opportunities and unemployment (61%), discrimination based on race, nationality and ethnicity (7%), and difficulties in accessing regularization processes (6%) were reported as the main reasons for leaving the host country.

Main push factors in the countries of habitual residence



Routes of respondents departing from a country of habitual residence

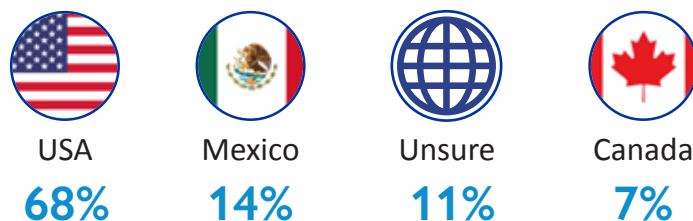


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Basemap source: ESRI and UN World Map

DESTINATION COUNTRIES AND PULL FACTORS

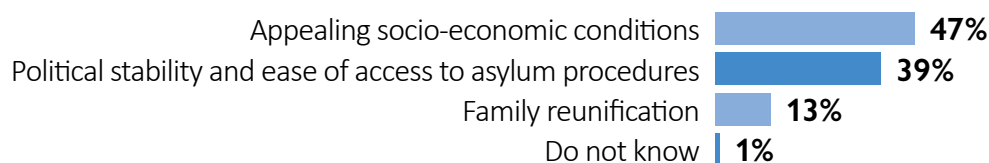
Destination countries



The final destination of most interviewed migrants is the United States of America (68%). Mexico, chosen by 14 per cent of respondents, is the desired country of destination for 38 per cent of Haitians and 14 per cent of Indians.

Canada, on the other hand, was the preferred country for nationals of Senegal (50%), Angola (43%), Congo (25%), Guinea (20%), Cameroon (9%), India (7%) and Haiti (4%).

Pull factors



Appealing socio-economic conditions was classified by 47 per cent as the main factor influencing this choice, followed by political stability and ease of access to asylum procedures (39%). Family reunification, instead,

is the main purpose for the journey for 13 per cent of respondents, who come from Haiti (60%), Cuba (18%), Cameroon (15%), Morocco (5%) and Senegal (2%).

THE JOURNEY

MAIN MIGRATORY ROUTES, COSTS AND MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION



As displayed in the map, the migration routes of all migrants surveyed are constructed from the countries and places of transit reported (they do not represent officially established routes), and also involve air and land transportation. Migrants coming from Asian countries fly from India, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka to either Brazil or Ecuador - directly or through Ethiopia. With regards to the total cost of the journey, 69 per cent reported an expenditure greater than 10,000 US dollars.

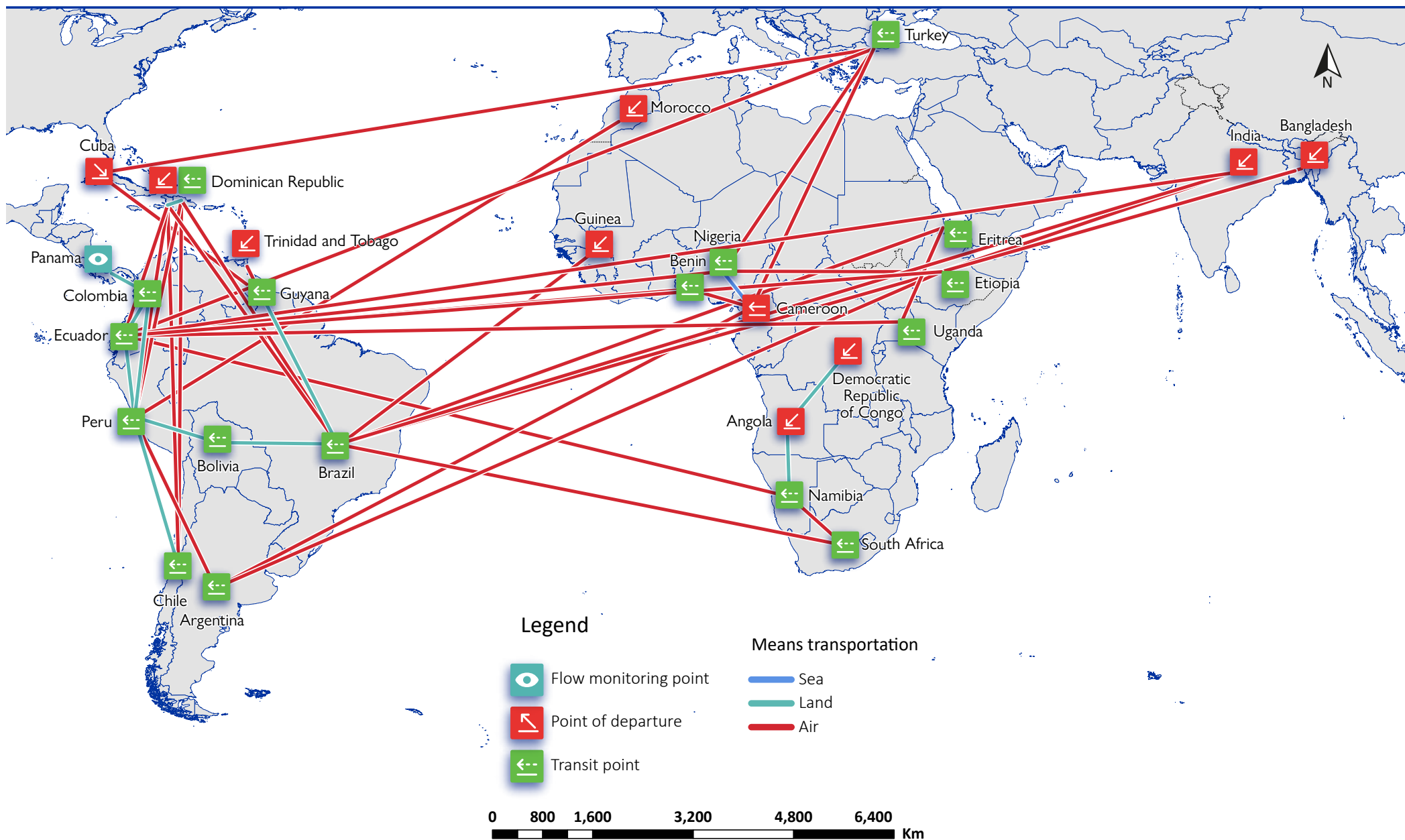
Countries of first arrivals for African migrants flying from Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Guinea, Morocco are either Brazil or Ecuador. The majority (54%) spent between 3,000 and 7,000 dollars.

Most Haitians start their journey from either Brazil or Chile (countries of habitual residence) or fly from Haiti to Peru or Ecuador, through the Dominican

Republic. Cubans fly to Guyana and travel by land to Brazil or fly directly to Ecuador. The majority of Haitians and Cubans (71%) spent between 1,000 and 3,000 US dollars.

Once migrants reach the American continent, routes overlap. Most of them travel by bus to the international border between Colombia and Panama – some travel by sea from Necoclí to Capurgana – and proceed by foot through what is known as the Darien Gap, a roadless, narrow strip of wild tropical land that lies between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Here, in the most dangerous stretch for people heading north from South America, the probability of being exposed to assault, robbery and sexual abuse is extremely high: 80 per cent of all reported episodes of violence happened in the Darien Gap.

Main migratory routes and means of transportation identified by the respondents

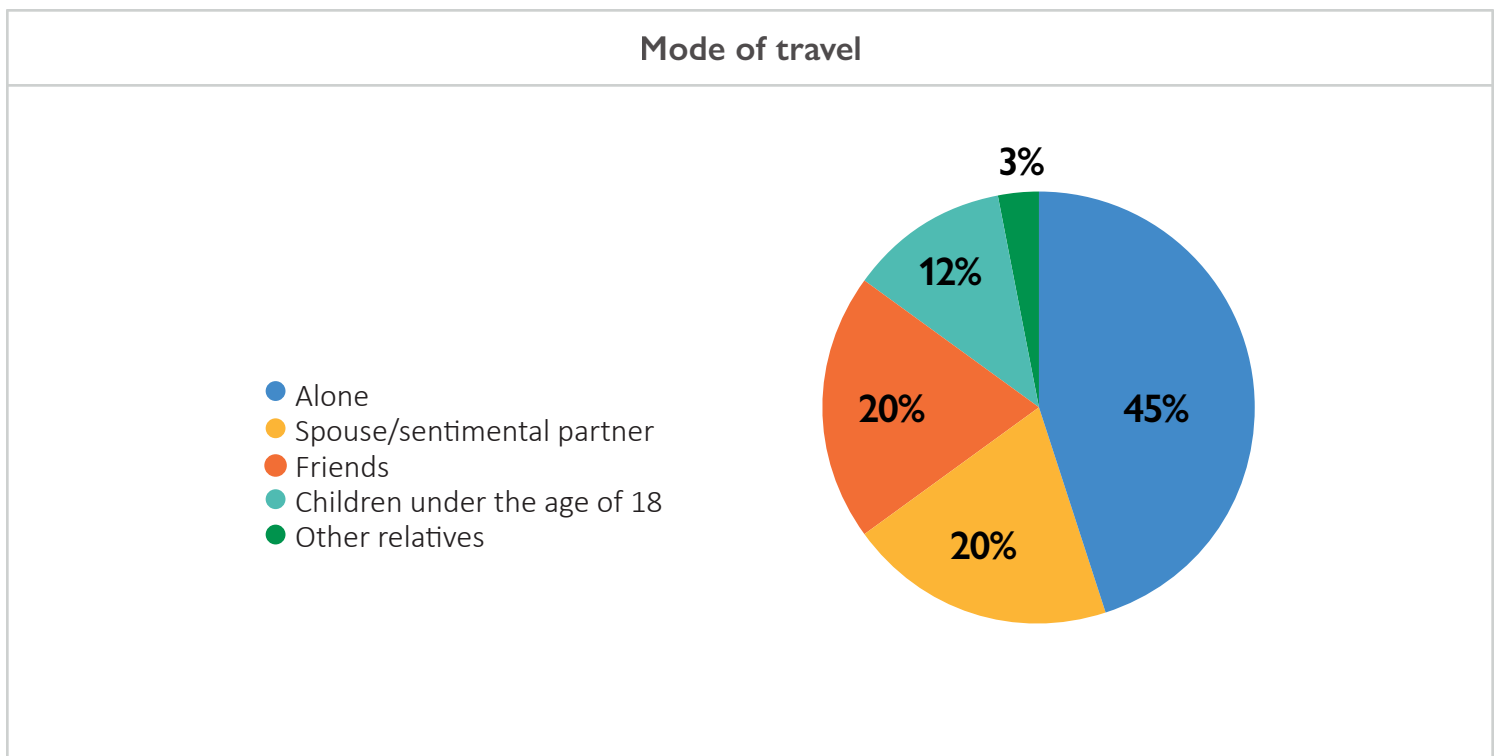


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MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE

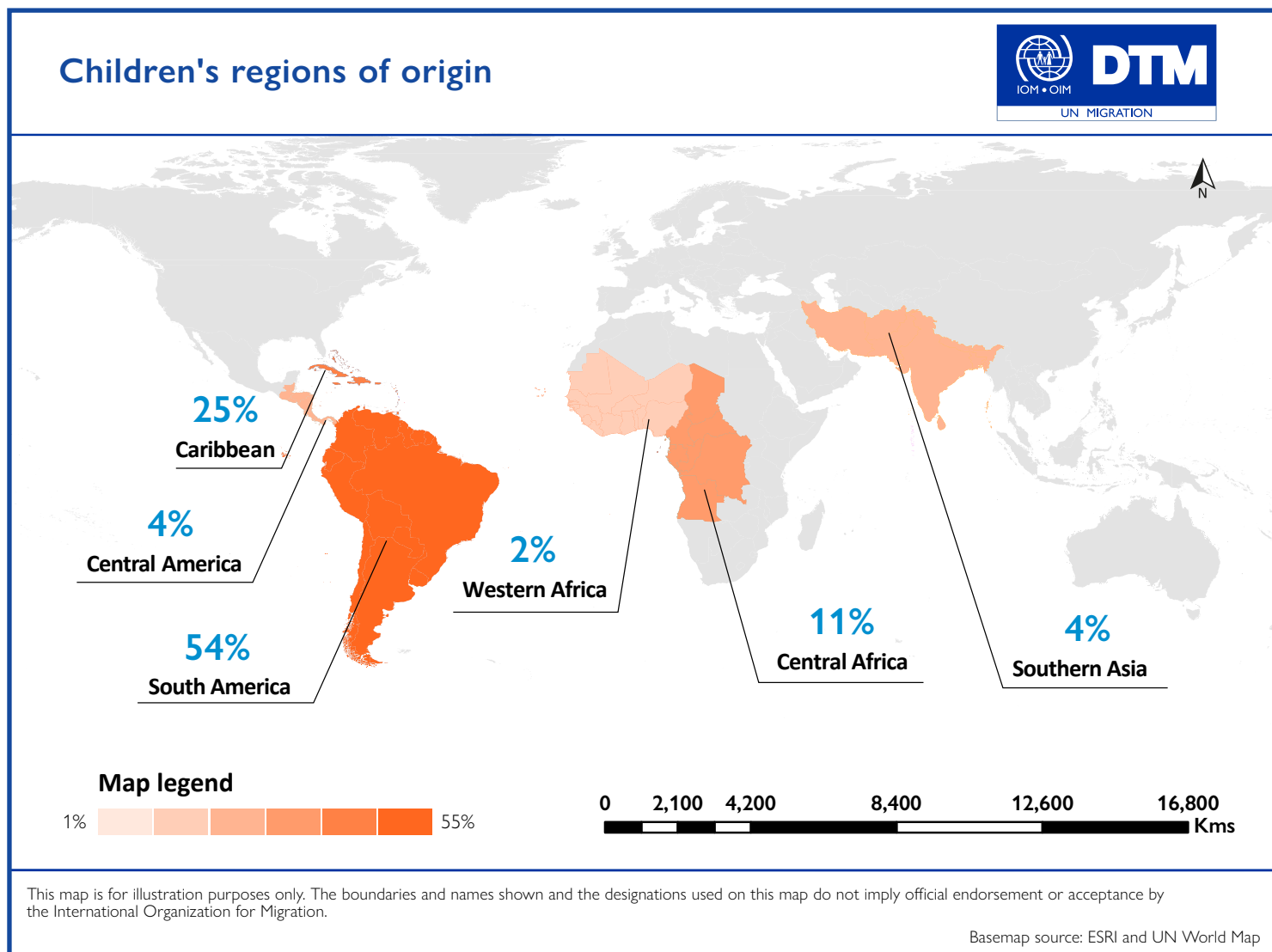
Gender are especially important to consider when analyzing the migratory experience. Results suggest that men are more likely to travel alone (51%) compared to women (21%). On the contrary, 22 per cent of women are traveling with children under the age of

18, compared to 9 per cent of men. It is important to recognize that the population of mothers traveling with children —experiencing multiple and intersecting risky situations — is on the increase.



The majority of parents traveling with minors (12%) come from Haiti (75%). They reported that 63 per cent of children had received medical care at birth and 72 per cent had received some or all mandatory vaccines. Moreover, it has been registered that 77 per cent of

children suffered from at least one medical condition during the journey: mainly gastrointestinal infections, skin rashes and fever. Among them, 70 per cent received medical care and/or medicines.



HEALTH

21 per cent of all surveyed migrants have suffered from a medical condition during the journey. The most common health issues are infections (27%), gastrointestinal diseases (16%), myalgia (16%), allergies (11%), cardiovascular (11%) and respiratory diseases (10%). Moreover, sporadic cases of otorhinolaryngologic diseases (4%), malaria (1%), diabetes (1%) and sexual transmitted diseases (1%) were recorded exclusively

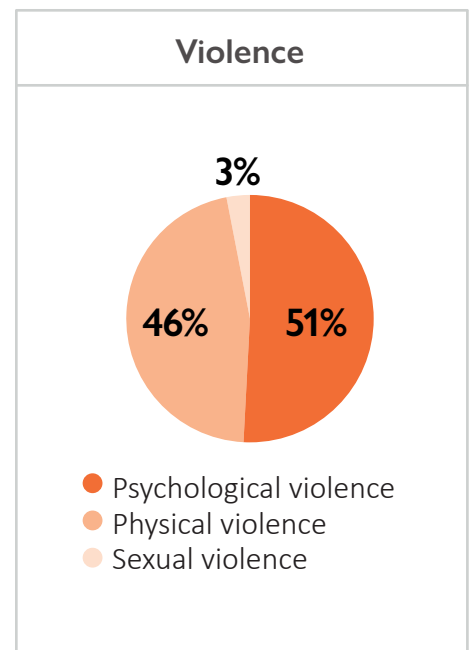
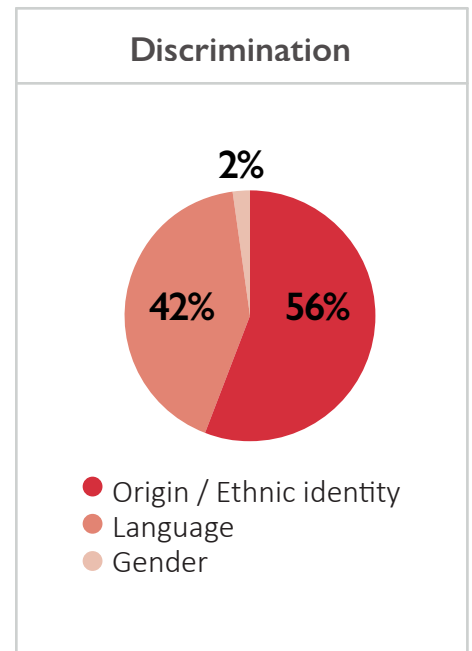
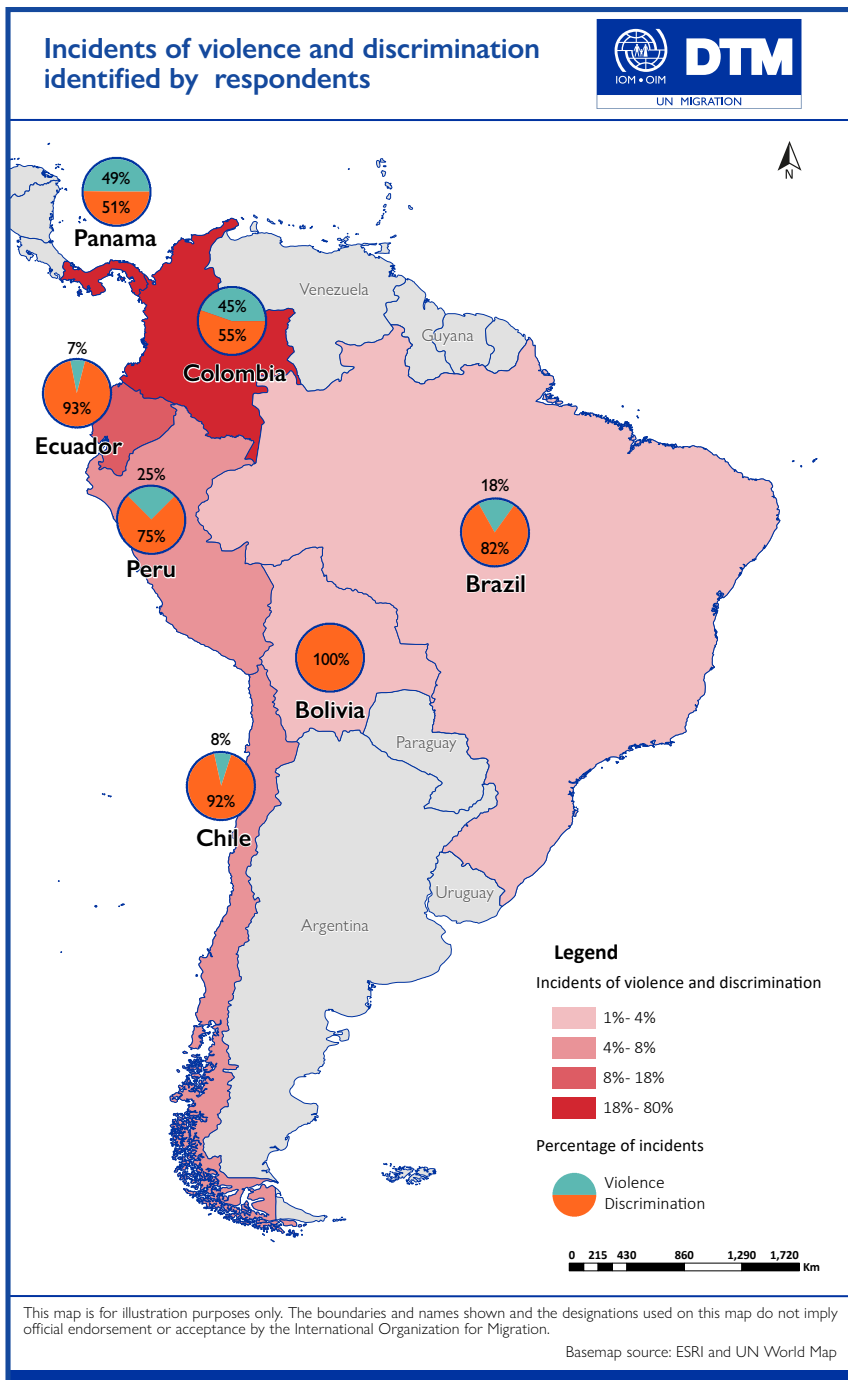
among men. Only 43 per cent of men and 58 per cent of women reporting health issues could receive medical care: 91 per cent were examined by a doctor in Panama, 6 per cent in Brazil and 3 per cent in Chile.

Emotional distress, either mild (33%) or severe (67%) was reported by 78 per cent of male and 82 per cent of female respondents.

VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

59 per cent of respondents declared to have suffered discrimination, mostly based on their origins or ethnic identity (56%) and language (42%). Most incidents of discrimination were recorded in Panama (52%), Colombia (21%) and Ecuador (13%). Additionally, incidents of violence were reported by 44 per cent of participants: 51 per cent experienced psychological

violence while 46 per cent experiences physical violence. 3 per cent of surveyed migrants who experienced violence were sexual assault survivors (11% of total number of women and 1% of men). Moreover, 30 per cent had their travel documents retained or damaged, either by criminals (83%) or national authorities of the countries of transit (17%).



MIGRANT SMUGGLING

Despite the efforts at the national, regional and international level to promote a safe, orderly and regular migration, smuggling of migrants continues to be one of the main sources of income for the organized crime and it is one of the fact identified by the study.

Results show that 65 per cent of respondent paid smugglers to cross one or more international borders: 63 per cent from Colombia to Panama, 17 per cent from Ecuador to Colombia, 12 per cent from Peru to Ecuador, 4 per cent from Brazil to Peru, 2 per cent from Chile to Peru, 2 per cent from Peru to Colombia.



DIFFICULTIES AND NEEDS

The main difficulties faced by migrants along the journey are economic issues (23%), unavailable information on the dangers of the journey and migration related procedures in the countries of transit (21%), hunger

and thirst (20%), physical (12%) or mental health issues (7%), loss of identity or travel documents (8%), assaults, deportation (2%) or detention (1%).

Main difficulties faced by migrants



20%

Hunger and thirst



23%

Economic issues



21%

Lack of information



36%

Others

Almost all surveyed migrants (97%) requested information on migration related issues: 24 per cent needed information on asylum procedures and regularization processes in the country of destination; 24 per cent on the possible dangers along the route; 13

per cent on accommodation, reception and transit centers; 13 per cent on legal support options; 11 per cent on available health services; 10 per cent on job opportunities in the countries of transit and destination; and 5 per cent on assisted return.

DISCLAIMERS

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

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As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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