

# PROTECTION MONITORING: MEXICO

## SNAPSHOT NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2023

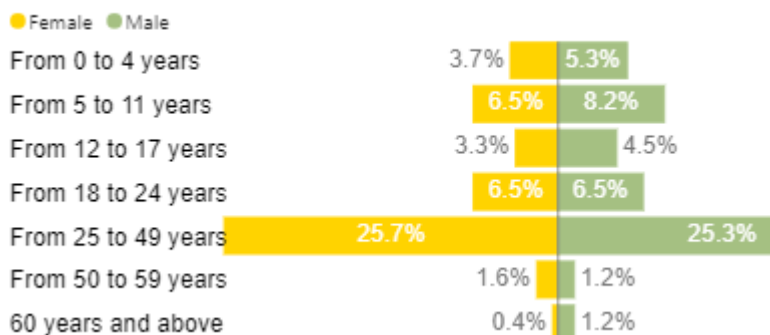
This SNAPSHOT summarizes the findings of Protection Monitoring conducted during the two-month period. Protection Monitoring is part of the humanitarian response of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Mexico to the crisis affecting mixed migration flows. DRC conducts this Protection Monitoring directly in Tapachula, Reynosa and Matamoros and jointly with the Jesuit Refugee Service Mexico (JRS) in Ciudad Juarez. The activities are carried out with the financial support of the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the United States Department of State. The intervention is conducted in association with Save the Children Spain and Mexico, Plan International Spain and Mexico, HIAS Mexico, Doctors of the World France and Switzerland, and Alternativas Pacificas- To view the interactive Dashboard of the results of this period and since the start of the Protection Monitoring program, click [here](#).

During November and December, new arrivals of people of various nationalities to Tapachula continued, while changes in COMAR and INM practices limited access to documentation and aggravated desperation, thus causing the departure of caravans. Practices that limit the possibility of formalizing an asylum application with COMAR were associated with a significant reduction in the number of people who formalized their requests with COMAR: [12,500](#) during the two-month period, compared to more than 20,000 in all other two-month periods in 2023. On the northern border, a [decrease](#) in the presence of people of Venezuelan nationality was reported, while an [increase](#) in irregular crossings from Mexico to the United States was reported, particularly during the month of December. Appointments to request asylum in the United States were still being processed through the CBP One application - 43,000 people were admitted in [November](#), and approximately the same number is estimated in December, although official figures have not yet been published. In 2023, Haitians, Mexicans and Venezuelans are the main nationalities that have scheduled appointments through CBP One. Faced with the continuation of irregular crossings from Mexico to the United States, the [border wall](#) in Ciudad Juarez was reinforced and informal camps were dismantled in [Matamoros](#) and Reynosa.

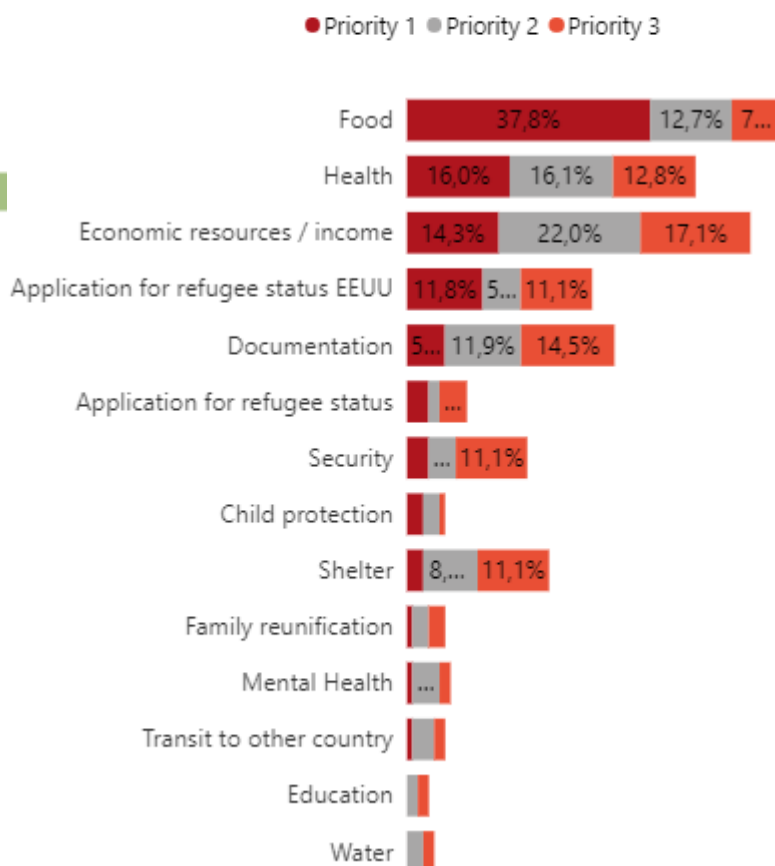
## KEY FIGURES

Between November and December 2023, 119 interviews were conducted, covering a total of 245 people.

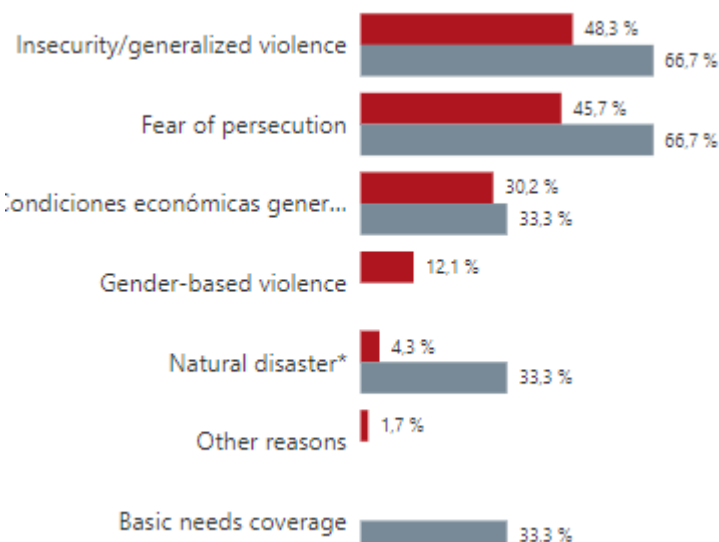
### Sex and Age



### Main Priorities



### Flight Motives



## PRIORITY ISSUE: XENOPHOBIA

*In humanitarian crises, particularly those associated with the movement of people from one place to another, the rejection of those perceived as different often contributes to increasing their exposure to various protection risks. This stigmatization, which reflects a devaluation of certain population groups, can manifest itself in **community tensions and controversies** between groups of affected people and with individuals and institutions in the host community. Many times, these relationships are influenced by the existing security or socioeconomic situation in the host community that is aggravated by humanitarian crises, leading to the people affected by these crises being perceived as a factor that contributes to the deterioration of these conditions. In other cases, the lack or insufficiency of a response to the needs of the affected population – including a **denial of humanitarian needs** – causes competition and conflict between different groups of people for the limited assistance available and the adoption of coping mechanisms to cover their basic needs, such as survival sex or begging, which may be frowned upon by the host community, thus exacerbating the rejection of those who participate in these practices.*

*These tensions aggravate the vulnerability of affected people to incidents of **harassment, theft, physical assault and sexual and gender violence**, among other forms of **violence**, while reducing their capacity to avoid these forms of violence or mitigate their effects given the reluctance or refusal of institutions in some host settings to provide services to certain groups due to stigmatization. Likewise, xenophobia can cause certain people or population groups to face greater exposure to different forms of **coercion**, such as **forced labor or refoulement** due to stereotypes based on the degradation and discreditation of certain population groups. Xenophobia also underlies many practices of **deliberate deprivation**. Discrimination based on race, nationality or other characteristics perceived as different in an affected person may manifest itself in the **denial of resources, opportunities and services** to which the person is entitled, or the denial of the enjoyment of these rights on equal footing. Likewise, it can lead to **arbitrary detention** or **impediments to entry** into a country for certain groups.*

Mixed migration movements in Mexico are characterized by a high level of diversity, including with respect to the national origin of those who make up these flows. According to [COMAR statistics](#), Haitians make up 31.4% of applicants who began the asylum process in 2023, followed by Hondurans and Cubans. Likewise, during the two-month period, the Protection Monitoring addressed Honduran, Venezuelan, Guatemalan, Haitian and Salvadoran nationals, among others. The national diversity reflected in these trends confirms the relevance of considering how the dynamics of stigmatization and xenophobia influence the protection environment.

Figures suggest that people of certain nationalities – especially Haitians – face the effects of this xenophobia more frequently. 69.2% of Haitian respondents stated that they had not received assistance in Mexico compared to 33.3% across other nationalities. 23.1% of respondents of Haitian nationality and 19.2% of respondents of Venezuelan nationality reported some experience of immigration detention among the members of their household, compared to 8.3% of respondents of Salvadoran nationality and 5.1% of respondents of Honduran nationality. These trends of greater marginalization of Haitians coincide with the findings of a rapid assessment carried out by the [International Rescue Committee](#) in early 2023 and suggest that the effects of xenophobia are more severe among the population from Haiti.

Additionally, 42.9% of Haitian respondents cited discrimination as a barrier to meeting their **medical needs**, compared to 10.9% among other nationalities. However, a practice was documented in two of the eight health centers in Tapachula by which the person seeking medical attention must present proof of being registered with the COMAR or a document from the INM as a requirement to be treated. This despite the fact that Mexico guarantees access to medical care regardless of immigration status. In this location, 35.0% of respondents of all nationalities stated that their lack of documentation of immigration status prevented them from accessing medical services.

Likewise, 30.8% of Haitian respondents indicated discrimination was a barrier to accessing **job opportunities**, compared to 10.1% of other nationalities. In this regard, people monitored across distinct nationalities indicated that, when approaching businesses or construction projects in search of work, the local population asks about their nationality as a first criterion. In this regard, Honduran, Guatemalan and Salvadoran people reported that they are stigmatized in the eyes of the local community as lazy and conflictive. Additionally, some people monitored in Tapachula who had found work described facing precarious conditions, such as salaries



below the required minimum or having received threats of being reported to the INM if they demanded the payment which they were due. This situation that arises from xenophobia contributes to the fact that no member of the 84.8% of monitored households is working, which impacts their ability to cover their basic needs and increases the probability of resorting to **negative coping mechanisms** and their exposure to protection risks. Multiple women participating in a focus group reported facing proposals for transactional sex.

In some places, xenophobia and stereotypes based on nationality generate the exclusion of some population groups from accessing private housing. In Tapachula, there is a widespread perception that people of Cuban nationality have greater purchasing power due to the support networks that many have in the United States, which is why some rental advertisements are expressly limited only to Cuban people. This situation leaves some people of other nationalities without private accommodation options. 23.5% of respondents of other nationalities in this place were living on the streets, 17.6% were housed in a temporary shelters and 2.0% in an informal settlement. On the other hand, in Reynosa,

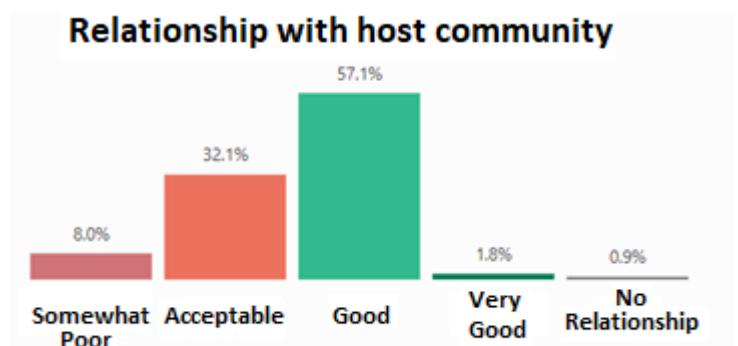
participants in a focus group pointed out dynamics of favoritism in shelters in which some groups receive better treatment and access to certain privileges based on their nationality.

In addition to discrimination in access to services, the people monitored also described experiences of **violence** that they attribute to the rejection they face for being foreign nationals. 45.4% of respondents reported that someone in their household had experienced violence in Mexico. Participants in a focus group in Reynosa described how the immigration authorities themselves extort them due to the vulnerability they face as a result of their lack of documentation. During a focus group in Tapachula, multiple people indicated that the violence is motivated by the fact that they are migrants, and in some cases by their nationality. The women reported experiences of harassment and gender violence motivated by their nationalities and the heightened vulnerability that they face. At the same time, transportation providers and landlords have taken advantage of the presence of people on the move, especially in places like Tapachula, to increase costs significantly, which has led to situations of **extortion** and **sexual harassment**.



In some parts of the country, although the offer of assistance and services for those on the move is insufficient to meet their needs, it has aggravated the rejection of people of concern by members of local communities who claim not to have benefited from these initiatives. In Ciudad Juarez, for example, a [Jesuit Refugee Service](#) forum during December confirmed that people on the move face xenophobia there. As response initiatives for people on the move by authorities have been very limited, most of the documented frustration is directed towards programs implemented by humanitarian actors that have been perceived to exclude the host population. The stigmatization of the population of concern has also been aggravated by the authorities' migration control actions, such as raids, which encourage the perception that people on the move contribute to insecurity in different parts of the country.

However, the majority of the population approached – 58.9% – considered that they have a good or very good relationship with the host community. In this regard, participants in a focus group discussion in Tapachula highlighted positive experiences, in which the local community provided them with initial information that allowed them to access services. For the minority who consider that the relationship with their host community is less than acceptable, insecurity, cultural differences and xenophobia were the factors that influence this situation.



## REYNOSA & MATAMOROS

During November and December, the **eviction** of informal settlements of persons of interest in [Matamoros](#) and Reynosa was documented, causing the departure of various humanitarian actors and leaving those who insisted on remaining in these places, in the hope of be able to cross into the United States, more exposed to protection risks. Media reported patterns of [irregular crossings](#) of the Rio Bravo in Matamoros by groups of between 10 and 30 people at a time, leading some of these people to lose their lives by drowning in the river.

40.5% of respondents in Tamaulipas stated that they consider that the area where they are located is very unsafe, mainly due to common crime and the presence of criminal groups. In this regard, the media reported a [deterioration](#) in security conditions in the area during November, apparently due to an escalation in clashes between different organized crime groups.

In this context, the dynamics of **kidnapping** are still very present in [both locations](#). At the end of December, one case of more than 30 migrants kidnapped in Tamaulipas received [international attention](#) and that of the Mexican president, prompting the intervention of authorities.



## TAPACHULA

The two-month period saw demands among the population of concern for **documentation** that would allow regular and safer transit through Mexican territory. 35.6% of households monitored in that location expressed an intention to transit to the United States, and another 30.5% to transit to another part of Mexico. However, 94.9% of respondents in Tapachula stated that they did not have a valid document that confers legal status to be in the country. This is due in part to changes in COMAR and INM practices verified through legal aid activities that make obtaining documentation even more difficult. Specifically, during November, COMAR began to notify appointments exclusively by email, while INM began to postpone appointments arbitrarily. In December, COMAR closed the office in the Ecological Park, leaving 27.1% of respondents who had approached the COMAR without an appointment to formalize their request and multiple people who had missed their appointments without the possibility to reschedule. For its part, the INM suspended issuance of the TVRH and began, instead, to deliver a format on a sheet of paper that authorizes presence for humanitarian reasons, but without conferring rights or authorizing transit. This prejudices those with the intention of settling in another part of Mexico where they might be able to more easily cover their basic needs and those with the intention of traveling to the center of the country to be able to seek an appointment through the CBP One application to request asylum in United States. These measures result in further restrictions on **internal movement** through the territory and contribute to hindering the **right to request asylum**, whether in Mexico or the United States.

These changes contributed to the departure of a [caravan](#) of approximately five thousand people at the beginning of November, with the associated establishment of improvised camps in different parts of the route. Monitoring activities in the municipality of Huixtla enabled the verification of conditions in one of these camps, in addition to **community tensions** with the local population and the accumulation of garbage. Likewise, the changes produced in December provoked [protests](#) by hundreds of persons of concern and attempts at judicial actions – [massive constitutional suits known as amparos](#) – supported by thousands of people seeking their free movement through the country, without risk of detention or deportation. The refusal to allow this judicial action, which reflects the barriers that those intending to transit face in accessing an **effective remedy** against practices that deny access to documentation, caused the collective northward departure of [caravan](#) of between six and eight thousand people on December 24. According to [some media sources](#), this is the largest collective movement of 2023. At the end of the month, [other media sources](#) reported that the caravan had been dissolved following an agreement by which the [INM committed](#) itself to granting humanitarian visas that confer the right to transit and work. Still [other sources](#) point out that this INM practice of delaying the issuance of documentation is part of a deliberate migration management strategy, but that the desperation among people of concern in the poorest regions of Mexico – such as Chiapas – is a factor that predictably causes the formation of these types of caravans.



## CIUDAD JUAREZ

The [irregular crossings](#) from Ciudad Juarez to the city of El Paso continued during the two-month period, thus evidencing the desperation of the population of concern to enter the United States. A [massive crossing](#) of up to 1,000 people was reported in mid-December, in what appears to be the month with the most irregular crossings from Ciudad Juarez in all of 2023. A large part of the population monitored in Ciudad Juárez – 73.9% – reported experiences of violence during their time in the country, with extortion, kidnapping and physical assault being the most common types, and with criminal groups and authorities being referenced as the primary perpetrators of these abuses. Although these experiences are reported by people of different nationalities, ages and genders, there are some groups that face greater risks. For example, monitoring activities confirmed a perception among the population of concern that people of Chinese nationality face greater exposure to forms of violence associated with money – such as **extortion**–, given the stereotype that these people have greater access to economic resources.

**Abduction or kidnapping** was highlighted as an experience that occurs upon entry to Mexico, during transit through the country or even in Ciudad Juarez itself. In this regard, some of those monitored in an informal settlement near the border described witnessing the arrival at night of vehicles, apparently from organized criminal groups, that forcibly take away settlement residents. Likewise, the presence of abandoned backpacks, documents and other personal items was detected in these areas. This dynamic of kidnapping has persisted [for years](#) in Ciudad Juarez, although in recent months, a greater frequency of cruel or inhuman acts reported during the kidnapping experiences has been registered

During November, child protection authorities reported having detected cases of adolescents between 14 and 17 years of age who are facilitating the crossing of people and drugs into the United States, on some occasions, acting under force for criminal groups. The so-called '[circuit children](#)' are an example of **minors associated with armed groups**.

*This document is part of the humanitarian response activities of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Mexico, with the financial support of the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the United States Department of State. It is not a publication of ECHO or PRM. The financing agencies are not responsible for the use that may be made of the information contained in the document and do not necessarily support its contents. All of the opinions expressed herein belong exclusively to DRC and should not be interpreted in any way as the official opinion of the United States or of the European Union or its Member States.*

