

# PROTECTION MONITORING: MEXICO

## SNAPSHOT MAY & JUNE 2024

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 in Tapachula, Reynosa and Matamoros. 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 USA 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](#).

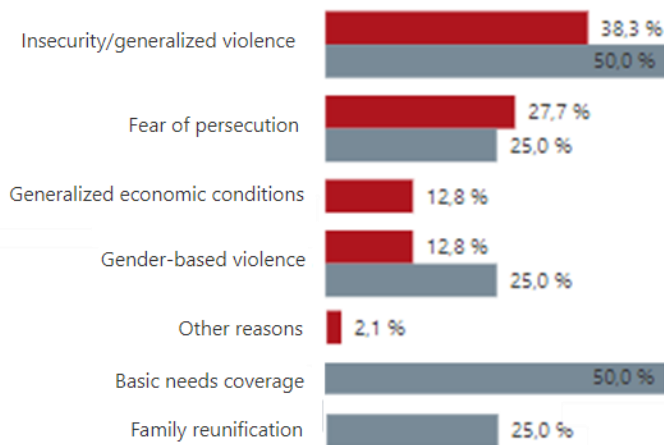
The period from May to June 2024 saw a continuation of the decline in asylum applications in Mexico reported in the previous two-month period. COMAR data reflects the formalization of applications by approximately [11,000 people](#) between May and June, a slight reduction from the 13,000 registered between March and April of this year, but more significant compared to the 26,000 received between May and June 2023. Among the affected population in Tapachula, practices that limit access to documentation and delay the resolution of procedures discouraged asylum applications in Mexico and encouraged decisions to transit to the United States or other destinations in Mexico, resulting in shorter stays in this locality. On the northern border, deteriorating security conditions along with new measures restricting access to U.S. territory contributed to an atmosphere of desperation. With the entry into force at the beginning of June of the [presidential proclamation](#) that temporarily suspends access to the U.S. asylum procedure at the border, affected people in Reynosa and Matamoros face the elimination of exceptional mechanisms to facilitate access to asylum for vulnerable cases and a prolonged wait for an appointment through CBP One.

## KEY FIGURES

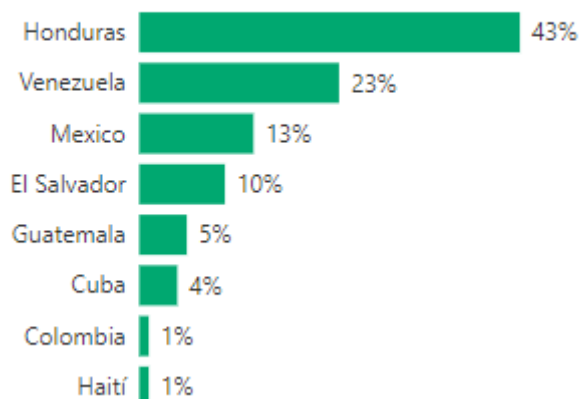
Between May and June 2024, 52 interviews were conducted, covering a total of 149 people.

### Flight Motives

● Country of origin (foreign persons) ● Community of origin (Mexican persons)

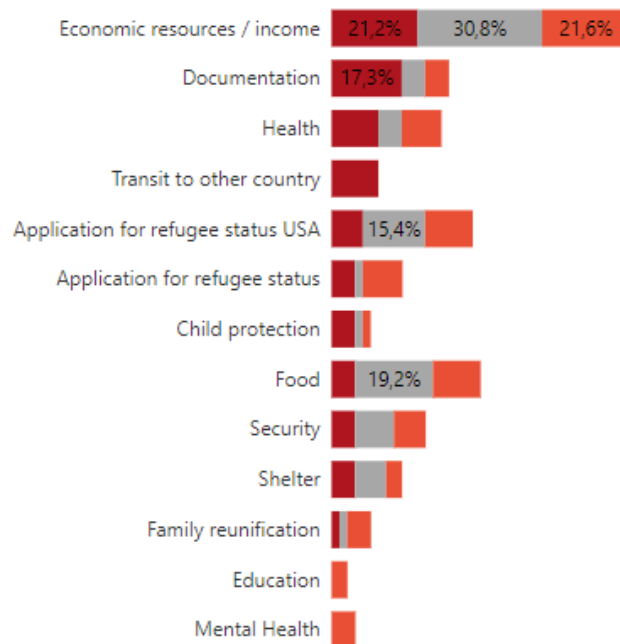


### Nationality



### Main Priorities

● Priority 1 ● Priority 2 ● Priority 3



## PRIORITY ISSUE: NATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

*In humanitarian crises, the protection risks faced by affected people are magnified by **vulnerability** factors that influence their exposure to violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation. The Protection Analytical Framework recognizes that different population groups experience these protection threats differently, and that **demographic factors**, among others, can influence vulnerability. Thus, age and gender characteristics are relevant in all humanitarian contexts, where there is almost always greater exposure among women and girls to **sexual and gender-based violence** and specific consequences of **child labor** among children and adolescents. Notwithstanding these recurring dynamics, among others, that affect certain groups based on their age and gender, many other diversity factors can contribute to the vulnerability of affected people to protection risks. The diversity associated with people's **national origin** and the **languages they use to communicate** often impacts their exposure to various threats. The actual or perceived characteristics of people of certain nationalities may increase their exposure to **extortion, arbitrary detention or family separation**, among many other protection risks. Also, in some humanitarian contexts, these categories of diversity may be associated with **denial of services**, due to structural barriers or incidents of discrimination. The effects of these experiences on these population groups may also vary and generate **specific needs** for assistance.*

*In addition to influencing vulnerability to different protection threats in a context, national and linguistic diversity also affects the **capacities** of affected people to avoid exposure to or mitigate the effects of certain protection risks. Language barriers may limit access to information or assistance, thereby undermining the ability of people who do not speak the dominant language in the transit or host location to protect themselves. Likewise, **xenophobia** directed at people of certain nationalities may limit their access to livelihoods or safe shelter, thereby reducing their abilities to avoid exposure to violence or other protection threats. In some cases, these forms of diversity can contribute favorably to the generation of certain **coping** capacities, such as the development of support systems and solidarity networks.*

In Mexico, people within mixed migration movements are characterized by their national and, to a lesser extent, linguistic diversity. Although there is no data that accounts for the entire affected population due to the irregularity and clandestinity of a large part of mixed movements through Mexican territory, some sources offer an approximation of the composition of these flows. The data on asylum seekers in Mexico registered by [COMAR](#) and on people in an irregular migratory situation registered by the [INM](#) during 2024 show the presence of people from numerous countries in **different regions** of the world and the predominance of nationals from Latin American countries. The presence of nationals from countries as diverse as Honduras, Venezuela, Brazil, Cuba and Ecuador, to name just a few, necessarily entails particular dynamics in the differentiated experiences in Mexico. For example, some of the Latin Americans

monitored indicated that the accent of their voice and the use of non-Mexican words reveals that they are foreigners and exposes them to **extortion**, persecution, kidnapping and discrimination. **Xenophobia** and cultural differences were also cited as the main factors contributing to poor relations with the host community.

However, in the Mexican context, there are some groups of people on the move who face greater challenges due to their national origin and language. Beyond the general heterogeneity evident in the mixed flows, there is a notable presence of a significant number of people of Haitian origin and people who come from countries in Africa (mainly Angola, Guinea, DRC and Mauritania), and Asia (including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), who are often referred to collectively as the **extracontinental population**. It is mainly these two groups who, in addition to being



foreigners in Mexico, face a barrier to being able to communicate in Spanish.

Some of the Haitians monitored reported experiences of **racism** for being Afro-descendants, easily identifiable by their complexion and features. In Tapachula, the people approached mentioned having been insulted and suffered intimidation and exclusion by the local population. They cited incidents of receiving hostile responses from landlords when looking to rent **accommodation**, in addition to prohibitively high rents compared to those charged to the local population. They also referred to receiving **threats** and contemptuous comments while using public transport, with many local people avoiding sitting next to Haitian people or denying them seats. Likewise, DRC observed that people of certain nationalities are **denied access to some services**. Through direct observation in Viva Mexico, a town on the outskirts of Tapachula where the INM carries out transfer of people to Tuxtla Gutierrez, DRC observed that the authorities denied this service to people from China and Afghanistan without giving further explanation or offering alternatives.

For many Haitians, not being able to communicate in Spanish also plays a role in limiting **access to rights and services**. Among the Haitians approached in Tapachula, some reported being denied medical care due to a lack of Haitian Creole interpreters and illustrative materials at health centers. Quantitative data from Protection Monitoring confirm this dynamic of marginalization and exclusion. Despite efforts to incorporate Haitian people and/or those with the ability to communicate in languages such as French and English into the DRC teams, the reach of

non-Spanish speakers has been very limited. Still, 19.9% of people reached in the first half of 2024 do not communicate in Spanish, and 9.1% cannot read in this language. This coincides with the fact that 14.1% of those monitored were of Haitian nationality.

Similarly, there is an insufficient supply of interpretation services at COMAR, which delays the processing of applications from Haitians. The main reason why Monitoring respondents did not start the procedure with COMAR was not knowing how to do so. Even though COMAR assigned one day each week to serve non-Spanish speakers, translators are overwhelmed, and the informational audios recordings provided at this location are only broadcast in Spanish. The language barrier is even more complicated for people from Asian countries, since there are no informational materials in their languages and there is no supply of interpreters for their languages at COMAR. The impacts on these people are evident in the fact that many of these people go to the COMAR appointment module without knowing that the service there is for asylum-seekers in Mexico, even though their intention is to obtain a document to transit through Mexico and not to remain in the country. In some cases, these people have requested an appointment with COMAR due to a lack of understanding of the purpose of this procedure. These language barriers also influence everyday contexts, such as shelters, the market, banks and public spaces, contributing to difficulties in meeting basic needs and coexistence. Although Spanish classes are available in this town, the capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of this population group.





Participation by Haitians and people from other continents in focus group discussions confirmed the importance of mutually-generated **support networks** as a factor that increases capacity. In Reynosa, some Haitians pointed out the importance of living close to and interacting with people of the same nationality to receive updates on relevant practices and policies, information on safe and unsafe places, and interpretation and translation support for various procedures. The importance of these networks was affirmed in understanding how to navigate local systems to access health services and in identifying places to avoid due to insecurity. Similarly, some of these people stated that moving in groups with their fellow citizens provided some protection against extortion and other abuses, as perpetrators often direct their efforts at single individuals or families who are considered more vulnerable. In Tapachula, people from different African

## REYNOSA & MATAMOROS

The new measures announced by the United States in early June created more confusion about **access to the territory** of that country and required [new efforts](#) to keep the population of concern informed in Reynosa, Matamoros and other towns on the northern border. These measures establish that people who cross irregularly into the United States or who do not have an appointment at CBP One will not be able to request asylum, once a threshold of arrivals at the northern border is reached, unless they meet certain exceptions. Although protection actors expressed their [concern](#) about these restrictions and many others, [including DRC](#), presented observations and recommendations against the adoption of these measures, they remained in effect for the rest of June. In this regard, the manager of the [Senda de Vida](#) shelter in Reynosa indicated that these measures could increase the number of people in this and other accommodation spaces in the town. In practice, DRC has seen that regimes to facilitate access to the US territory for exceptionally vulnerable cases - colloquially known as vulnerable crossings - have been suspended indefinitely, both in Reynosa and Matamoros. The fact that none of those monitored in these locations had an appointment at CBP One, which remains the main mechanism for access to the territory, suggests prolonged wait times as a result of these new measures.

countries pointed to the creation of exclusive support networks as a strategy to find accommodation, often in spaces where only other African people live. These networks serve as a source of information about the COMAR and INM processes, based on the lived experiences of other Africans who arrived earlier and went through the first stages of the procedures with these authorities. In addition, they accompany each other in groups to carry out daily activities, sharing the costs of transportation. In the case of certain African nationalities and Russians, DRC recorded that these support networks often extend to the United States, and that these persons of interest can access more up-to-date information on US policies. The ability to communicate in English is an advantage that increases the capacities of these individuals, particularly in the face of widespread misinformation on these issues.

In mid-June, the U.S. Consulate in Matamoros issued a [security warning due to kidnappings](#) on intercity buses leaving Reynosa, targeting passengers with ties to the United States. This warning highlights the trend of organized **kidnappings** in which perpetrators demand ransom payments of thousands of dollars for each victim. This development reflects the violent dynamics and the risk of **extortion** faced by people on the move in Reynosa, even in the context of everyday activities, such as using public transportation. In the same way, through a new Protection Monitoring question incorporated during this two-month period, 83.3% of respondents who reported that they had missed their CBP One appointment reported that this was due to kidnapping.

In response to the publication in early June 2024 by the United States authorities of the regulation '[Securing the Border](#)', DRC presented a comment in the rule-making process on the impacts of this measure in limiting **access to protection** and **increasing vulnerability** of the population.

Read the full comment [here](#).

## TAPACHULA

During the two-month period, DRC observed various practices that hinder **access to asylum** in Mexico. COMAR consolidated the implementation of the requirement that applicants present themselves to sign to confirm their continued presence in Tapachula. At the end of May, COMAR stopped carrying out this procedure at the INM facilities, concentrating this process in COMAR's own offices. According to some of those monitored, this change provides more clarity and certainty about the place where applicants must go, avoiding confusion between the functions of the INM and COMAR, and reduces the fear of coming to sign for fear of being returned by INM to their country of origin or detained. However, there is still a lot of misinformation and confusion regarding the obligation to sign and the corresponding procedure. A practice was recorded by some affected people, mainly from Cuba and Honduras, of filing complaints with the National Human Rights Commission as a coping mechanism. Still other people who face the closure of their applications due to failure to comply with the requirement to sign choose to leave Tapachula and continue their journey northwards along the [coastal highway](#).

In this regard, caravans have left Tapachula at different times during the two-month period due to the constant lack of alternatives for immigration regularization that favor free transit, especially for those seeking to request asylum in the United States. In [mid-](#) and [late May](#), groups of between 200 and 300 people of various nationalities, including men, women, children and adolescents, left Tapachula. In some cases, people turn themselves in to the INM at a checkpoint in the town of Viva Mexico on the outskirts of Tapachula to sign up on a list to be transferred by the INM to Tuxtla Gutierrez. They must present documentation from their country of origin to be transported by bus to the capital of Chiapas and be able to continue their journey. Some of these caravans were disintegrated along the way, while other groups managed to advance towards Oaxaca and Veracruz, where the INM reported having carried out '[humanitarian rescues](#)'.

At the same time, the constant arrival of people to informal camps on the banks of the Suchiate River, on the border between Guatemala and Mexico, as well as in the Central Park of the same municipality, was observed. A direct observation carried out during May confirmed the presence of approximately 500 people in tents in the border area. Families face unsanitary conditions in the tents in which they sleep, lack of food, respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses, as well as anxiety and depression due to not having freedom of movement and being exposed to safety risks such as kidnappings and extortion. During June, the precarious conditions in the camp and the rains that caused the water levels to rise in the river contributed to more than 300 people deciding to move from [Suchiate to Tapachula](#) on foot due to the lack of attention and long waiting times on the part of the INM to carry out the transfers.

Arbitrary practices persist with respect to access to documentation, since the INM continues to refuse to issue humanitarian visas (TVRH). According to data from the [Migration Policy Unit](#), in the first five months of 2024, only 200 TVRH issued to asylum seekers were recorded throughout Mexico, and less than 700 for other humanitarian reasons. This means that asylum-seekers, among others, do not have documentation of legal stay, which creates challenges for safe transit and when seeking to generate income to cover their basic needs. In this regard, despite the existence of the Social Emergency Program (PES) that facilitates access to temporary employment, multiple barriers to access have been observed. In May, some of those monitored reported receiving denials of registration, with the explanation that the program was suspended due to the elections. In June, the main reason for the denial was that the program would only be available to family groups that include children and adolescents. As a result, 54.3% of the people interviewed at this location confirmed not having any source of income.

*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.*

