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# Adolescent Girls in **Crisis:**

## Impact of Migration Policies in Ciudad Juarez

Executive  
Summary

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# Introduction



Girls, adolescents, and women on the move are in an extremely vulnerable situation, facing specific risks and particular needs during their passage. The lack of information on migration policies increases their exposure to protection risks, with serious consequences for their lives. As a result, there has been an increase in the incidence of crimes directed against migrant girls, adolescents, and women in Ciudad Juarez, including kidnappings, extortion, and acts of physical violence. These illegal activities have a significant impact, increasing their vulnerability and negatively affecting their mental and physical well-being. In addition, public rhetoric and actions surrounding migration contribute to a climate of xenophobia and hostility towards migrants, which exacerbates their vulnerability and complicates their efforts to seek safety and better opportunities.

This diagnostic study analyzes in depth the impacts of migration policies on women, children, and adolescents at the border of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. In this sense, it offers a comprehensive exploration of the complexities faced by this population on the move at one of the critical migration points.

The migration policies referred to in this diagnosis are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

- Title 42: U.S. immigration policy that came into effect in March 2020, during the Trump Administration, and was repealed in May 2023. Due to the COVID pandemic, and under health arguments, it allowed the rapid expulsion of migrant populations.
- Title: 8. This is a U.S. law that replaces Title 42, and therefore came into effect in May 2023. It allows the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expeditiously process and remove individuals who arrive at the U.S. border illegally.

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<sup>1</sup> More migration policy initiatives can be found at the end of the report.

- CBP One application to manage asylum processes. Operational as of January 2023. It is limited to 10 travelers, and there is a 12-hour window to process the application. Its use is complemented by screening interviews called "credible fear interviews".

Violence and lack of safety on the migration route towards and through Ciudad Juarez not only cause immediate physical and psychological harm to people on the move but also pose significant obstacles to their access to fair and safe asylum processes. The lack of focus on creating legal and safe migration pathways can lead migrants to seek even more dangerous routes to reach their destinations, increasing their vulnerability to risks and violations of their rights.

The diagnostic study seeks to offer an overview of the obstacles and potentialities of the current situation, providing a solid basis for developing recommendations to improve the situation of people on the move at the Ciudad Juarez border. It is, as such, a call for reflection and action. In doing so, it underscores the importance of approaching migration from a human rights perspective, ensuring that the measures adopted promote the protection, well-being, safety, and dignity of all people on the move, especially women, girls, boys, and adolescents.



# Methodology



In a socio-political context that, in itself, implies violence, it is imperative to specifically take into account the violence in all contexts experienced by girls and adolescents due to their gender and age. The methodology that allows this approach must recognize that girls and adolescents are the voice and source of knowledge of the issues that affect their lives in order to analyze the situation of adolescent women in different contexts of crisis, and thus corroborate that young women experience its effects in different ways.

This methodology, which is the cornerstone of this research, has been defined by Plan International as the *Girls in Crisis methodology*. It has the following characteristics:

- A rights-based approach which, in terms of research, means incorporating and reflecting the principles of non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency within it. While this framework is based on human rights in general, it focuses on the rights of girls and boys and particularly on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which speaks of the right of girls and boys to have their voices heard in decisions concerning them.
- A feminist approach that positions the promotion of adolescent girls' rights and their empowerment as central to the research process. This can be done by looking for and identifying how girls experience crises in ways unique to their age, sex, and gender, which requires listening to and taking seriously their crisis narratives.
- A research framework focused on adolescents, that is, on their efforts to amplify and legitimize their knowledge.
- When data permits, it adopts an intersectional approach that recognizes the diversity in the adolescent experience of crisis.
- And finally, a grounded or actor-oriented approach that relies on the voices and experiences of adolescent girls to establish the knowledge base. In this sense, the research accepts adolescent girls as "experts" in their lived experiences. It does not seek to validate or confirm the opinions of girls and adolescents, but rather to amplify their voices.

Thus, *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Impact of Migration Policies in Ciudad Juarez*, through a methodology that incorporates diverse sources of information, including the voices and experiences of people affected by current migration dynamics, reveals the changing migration trends, emotional and physical impacts, and security challenges of children and adolescents on the move. The findings underscore the need to reform

migration policies with a human rights focus, emphasizing the well-being and comprehensive protection of affected people, especially women, girls, and adolescents.

To this end, between November 2023 and February 2024, Plan Internacional Mexico collected the testimonies and experiences of 60 adolescents and women on the move through a survey; conducted interviews with 30 key entities<sup>2</sup>, including shelters, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, government authorities, and organizations dedicated to addressing cases of gender violence, among others, and conducted five focus groups in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua.

It is important to mention that the instruments and methodology for the research were designed and adjusted to the particular context of Ciudad Juarez and complied with the policies of Safeguarding and Protection, MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning), and Data Protection and Confidentiality according to Plan Internacional standards, as well as local ethical norms. The information-gathering tools were approved by Plan Internacional's Ethics Review Team (ERT), which, due to the nature of the assessment, was managed with the team specializing in MERL in humanitarian aid contexts. The latter ensured that the questions and dynamics included in the different methodologies were safe and did not invade the privacy or violate the emotional well-being and safety of the participants on the move.

For these reasons, the group of specialists in charge of the study offered recommendations for dealing effectively with the migratory crisis, emphasizing the importance of placing people on the move at the center of political and legislative decisions. They advocate the implementation of inclusive measures to ensure access to basic services, protection against violence and exploitation, as well as respect for the human rights of all people on the move.



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<sup>2</sup> List of participating entities: Save The Children, UNHCR, COESPO, IOM, DHIA, HIAS, IMMuj, UNICEF, KIND, IRAP, DMRS, Las Americas, IRC, SINVIAC, ABARA, Preemptive Love, Casa YMCA, Oasis, Salem, Pasos de fe, Lirio de los Valles, Oscar Romero, Última Milla, Casa Hogar Migrante, Frontera de Gracia, Buen Samaritano, Consulado, El Refugio, Vida (Jesucristo), CEDIMAC, Doctors of the World.

# Results

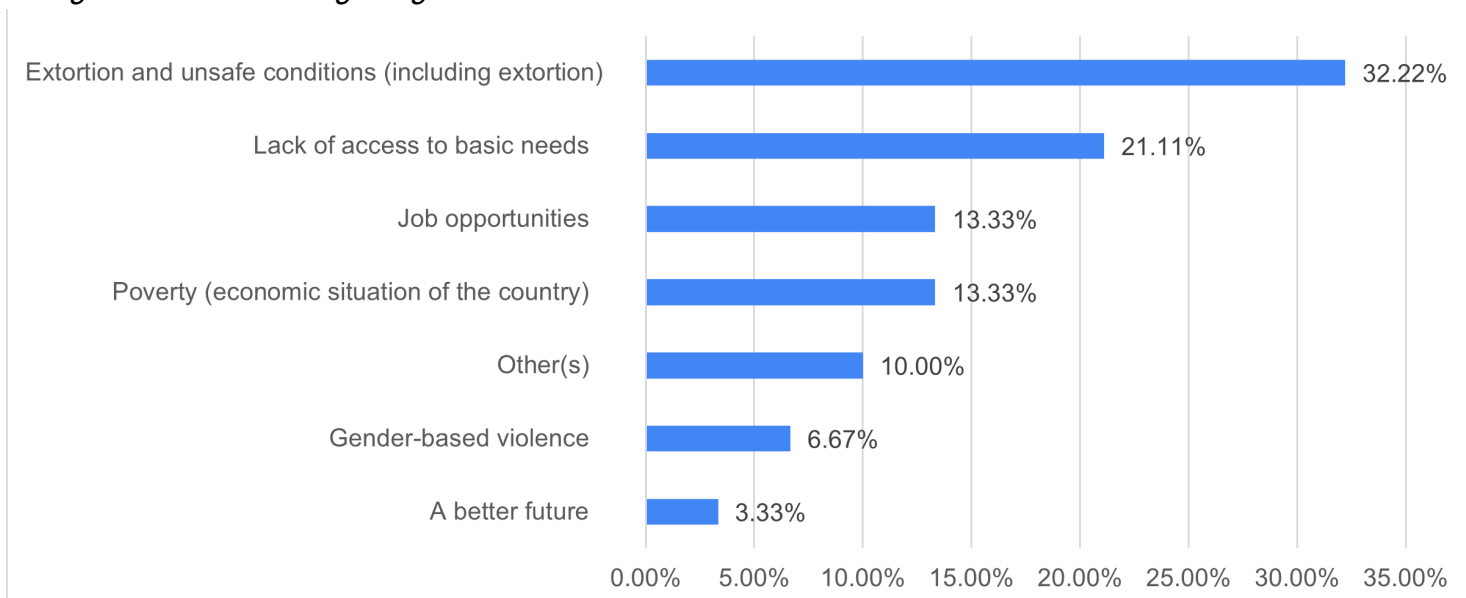


The following is a summary of the main results of the study, derived from the application of the above-described methodology.

## 1. Reasons for migrating and changes in migratory trends

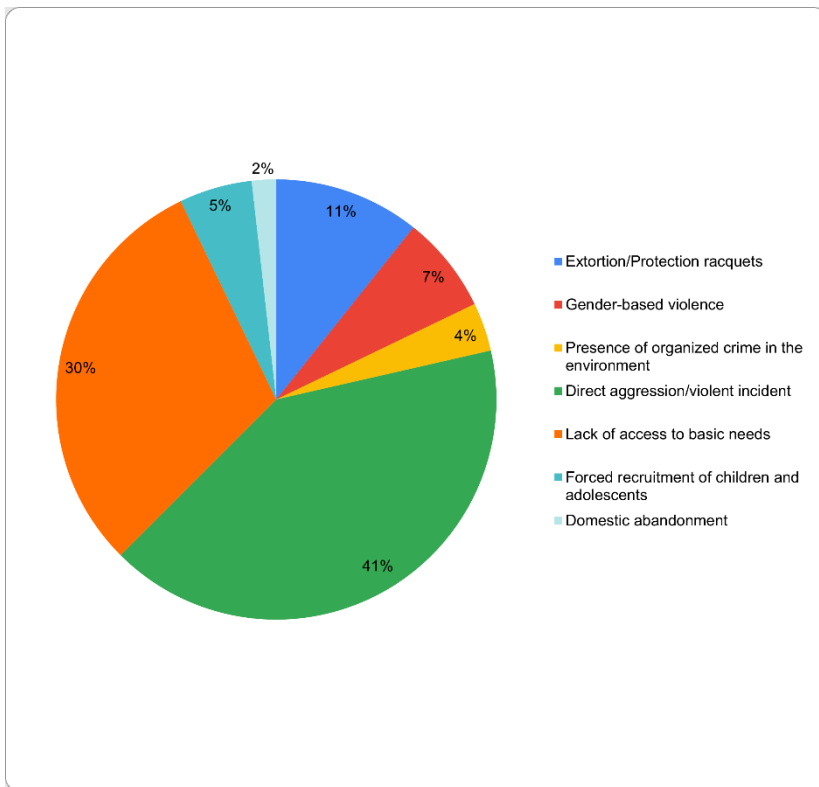
The principal reasons for migration include violence, lack of access to basic necessities, and the search for employment opportunities. As can be seen in Figure 1, 32% of women report that they leave their country of origin because of safety concerns. This percentage, added to the 21% who leave because of lack of access to basic necessities, reaches 53%. Thus, it can be inferred that more than 50% leave due to protection needs. This breaks with the pattern (even the historical narrative) that people leave because of job opportunities or a perception of poverty. Flight from violence, persecution, and limited opportunities in their countries of origin are the main reasons that lead them to face the uncertainties and dangers during their migration journey. Women flee because of violence and encounter more violence on their journey. In the case of children and adolescents, as can be seen in Figure 2, the reasons for leaving the country of origin are also related to the occurrence of a violent incident (40%).

Figure 1: Reasons for migrating.



Source: survey analysis

Figure 2: Motive of migration of children and adolescents



Source: survey analysis

Concerning their travel plans, 94.3% of the women interviewed stated that they would wait in Ciudad Juarez until they were able to cross into the United States. This is of relevance since, between August 2023 and February 2024, there have been significant changes in migration trends and their impacts on both the local community and people on the move. The changes in migration trends mostly mean that the population in shelters has decreased significantly, going from a situation of overcapacity to operating at 50-70% of their capacity.

On this matter, the person in charge of a shelter mentions that "lately there has been a reduction in the number of migrants, at least those arriving here to the shelter. We have fewer requests from the migrant population for shelter or space".

The main trend is that individuals and families are avoiding the shelters and going directly to the wall to "turn themselves in." The human rights organization Integral Human Rights in Action (DHIA) comments that "they regularly do not look for spaces in the shelters, either because they already want to leave or because they have received [negative] reports of the spaces."

There are varying perceptions of detention centers or immigration stations, as some people on the move consider them inadequate, highlighting the cold and the lack of adequate sanitary services.

The organization ABARA mentions that "it may be that the context of the word is so criminalized in other countries. The word "shelter" in other countries often means prison, confinement, etc.; maybe we, as humanitarian workers, should be a little more aware of that. [...] Later, we understood why they don't [want to go to shelters]; we used to ask, 'Hey, why don't you want a shelter?' and they would answer, 'Well, how can I go to a shelter if I haven't done anything wrong?' It's just that 'shelter' there is a prison. So, we have to change the way we talk and ask them if they want a refuge."



With this information gathered, it can be asserted that the lack of adequate regulation in the spaces that serve vulnerable people has led to serious problems, including allegations of forced labor without remuneration, solicitation of fees, and denial of access to certain services. In addition, power dynamics have been reported in some spaces, cases of safeguarding and sexual harassment, as well as complicity between shelters and organized crime, sometimes functioning as additional secure housing.

## 2. Impacts of migration policies on the population on the move

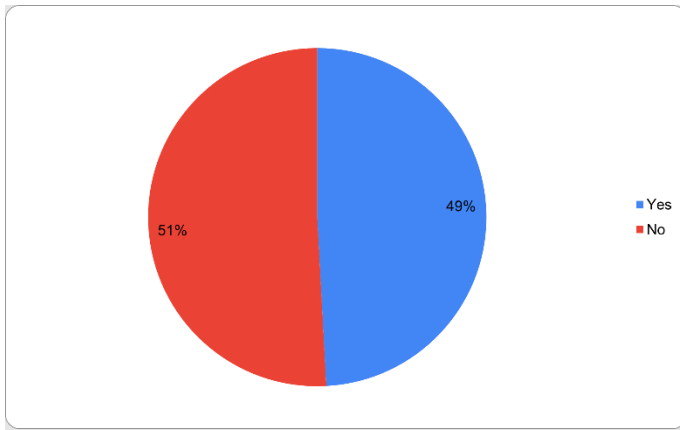


The information gathered in the study allows us to identify five main impacts of the application of current migration policies, which we can list as follows:

- a) Current policies lead to the implementation of complex and inaccessible procedures for the population.
- b) Lack of access to and increasing digital divide in the use of the platforms chosen for the processes: CBP One.
- c) Increase in irregular crossings, significantly increasing the vulnerability of the population in transit.
- d) Processes subject to variability and discretion are encouraged.
- e) Effects on the emotional and physical well-being of the population on the move.

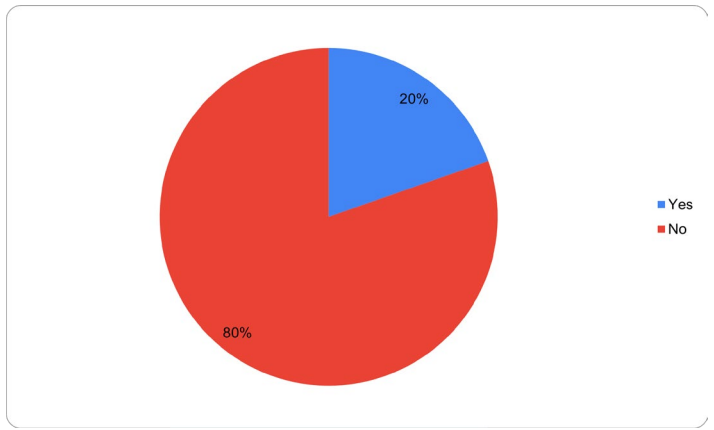
According to the survey, 80% of the population surveyed during their journey through Mexico did not have adequate and accessible transit information (Figure 3). In addition, 51% of the people surveyed did not have appropriate information during their stay in Ciudad Juárez (Graph 4). Specifically, the results (Graph 5) show that the people surveyed need to know about the procedures and documentation for asylum in the U.S. (62%).

**Figure 3:** Receipt of necessary information in Ciudad Juarez.



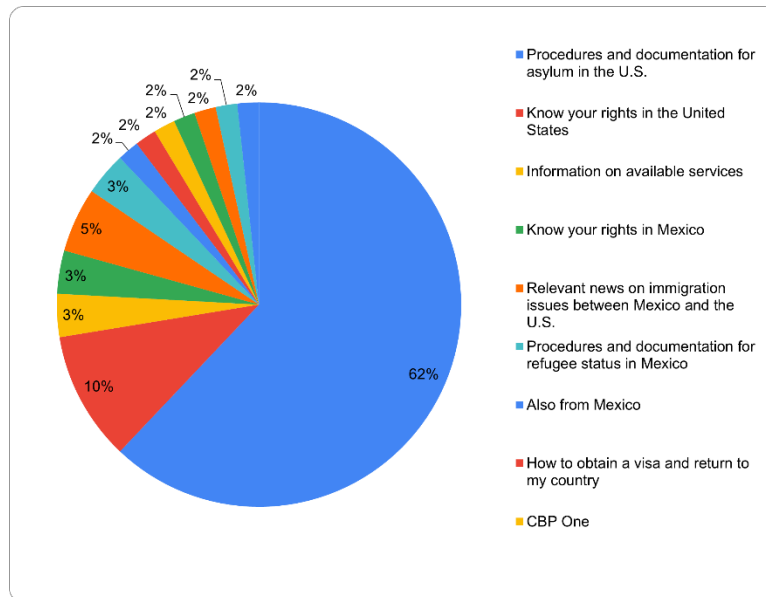
Source: survey analysis

**Figure 4:** Receipt of appropriate information during the journey through Mexico.



Source: survey analysis

**Figure 5:** Need-to-know information.

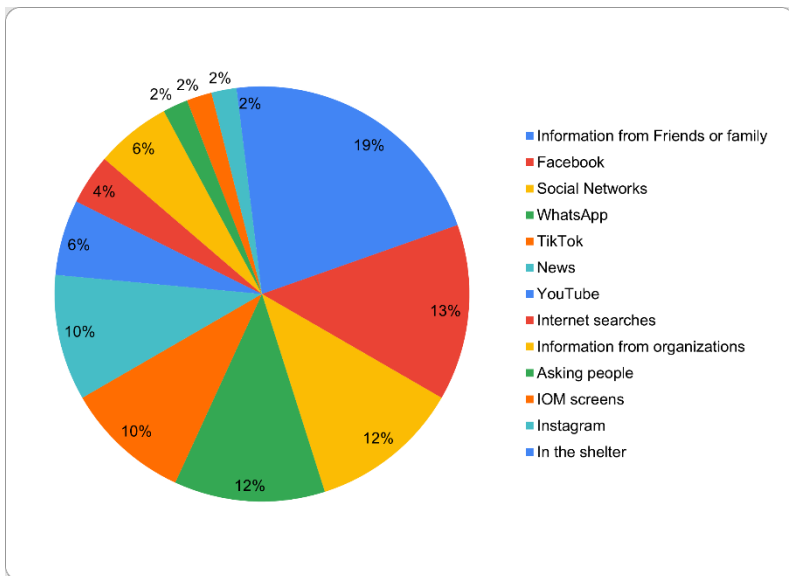


Source: survey analysis

Language barriers and misinformation are significant challenges in communicating services to migrants. Furthermore, the lack of reliable information and the prevalence of rumors complicate effective orientation. Migrants often rely on information shared among themselves, which can result in misleading or incorrect information.

In Figure 6, it can be seen how direct communication with family members or individuals (19%) in shelter spaces and word-of-mouth recommendations among people on the move play a vital role in the dissemination of information. Also, the use of social networks, such as Facebook (13%) and WhatsApp (12%), are common sources of information.

Figure 6: Sources of information of people in transit.



Source: survey analysis

Similarly, according to the survey data, 47% of the surveyed population was requesting an appointment via the CBP One app. 31% reported not knowing how to use it. The CBP One app, operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), is presented as a technological solution for scheduling appointments at official ports of entry. The implementation of CBP One has faced significant criticism for being inaccessible to many people on the move due to technological, linguistic, and geographic barriers. Its use brings with it long waiting times for appointments, lack of compatibility with low-end devices, and limited language availability.

For all these reasons, current migration policies and the misinformation surrounding them generate a profound psycho-emotional impact, exacerbating the vulnerability and desperation of people on the move. The Hope Border Institute points out that the specific safety threats to migrants today "are the very immigration policies of the U.S. These are a danger to the population, they put them in danger with the wait. All other impacts are collateral to the migration policies of channeling and containment."

Misinformation and hasty decisions derived from the confusion surrounding policies such as Title 42 and Title 8 have motivated people on the move to opt for irregular crossings, increasing their vulnerability. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ciudad Juarez points out that "this uncertainty of not knowing when you are going to get an appointment is very distressing for the population and drives them to turn themselves in by irregular means, which increases the chances of deportation, punishment for deportation, etc."

Hopelessness and depression among migrants have been exacerbated. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) points out: "On a psychosocial level there is a lot of frustration, a lot of desperation, people are also tired at this point. There is a lot of misinformation, and people arrive without understanding what the CBP appointment is like, without understanding what to expect and that it is not immediate".

People on the move face appalling conditions waiting for the opportunity to ask for asylum, often in informal settlements near the border fence and ports of entry, in precarious spaces such as abandoned houses and shelters lacking in dignified living conditions, which raises concerns for their well-being and safety.

### 3. Situation of people on the move

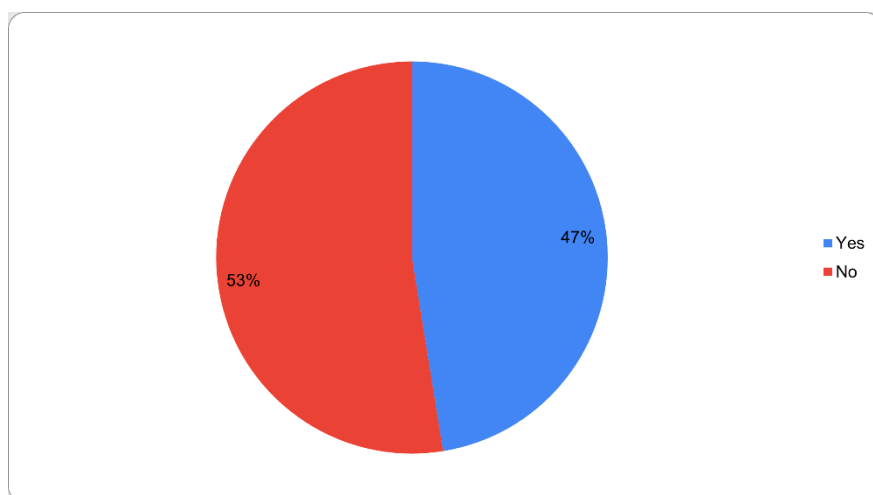


The following situations experienced by people in transit have been identified in the collection of information carried out for the preparation of this study:

#### 3.1 Insecurity

The results of the information survey show that violence in its multiple forms is present during the passage of migrants. "Human trafficking or kidnapping of children and adolescents", "Organized crime", "Sexual violence by strangers". This is exacerbated by the lack of coverage of basic needs: "Cold, lack of food". In this regard, as can be seen in Figure 7, 53% of those surveyed state that he/she or his/her family have been victims of some crime or security incident during their transit through Mexico.

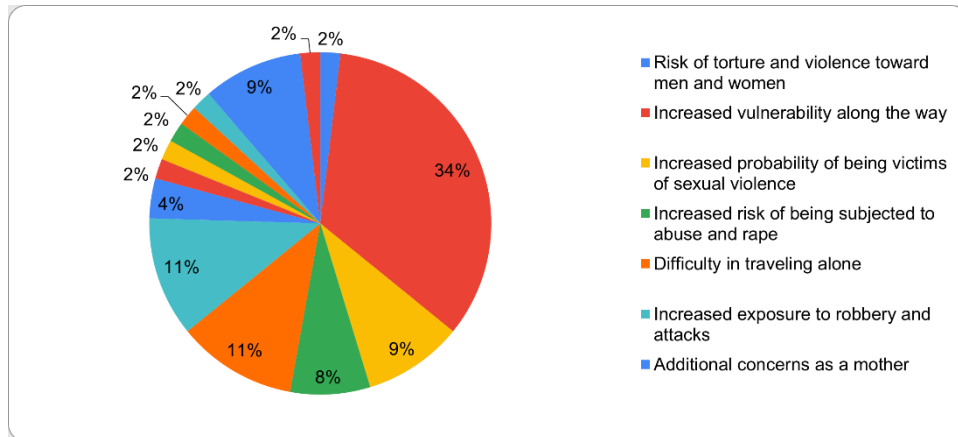
Figure 7: Have you suffered any security incidents during your transit through Mexico?



Source: survey analysis

According to the survey, 59% consider that the migration project is different if one is a man or if one is a woman. As can be seen in Figure 8, 34% of people report "greater vulnerability during the journey" due to their gender.

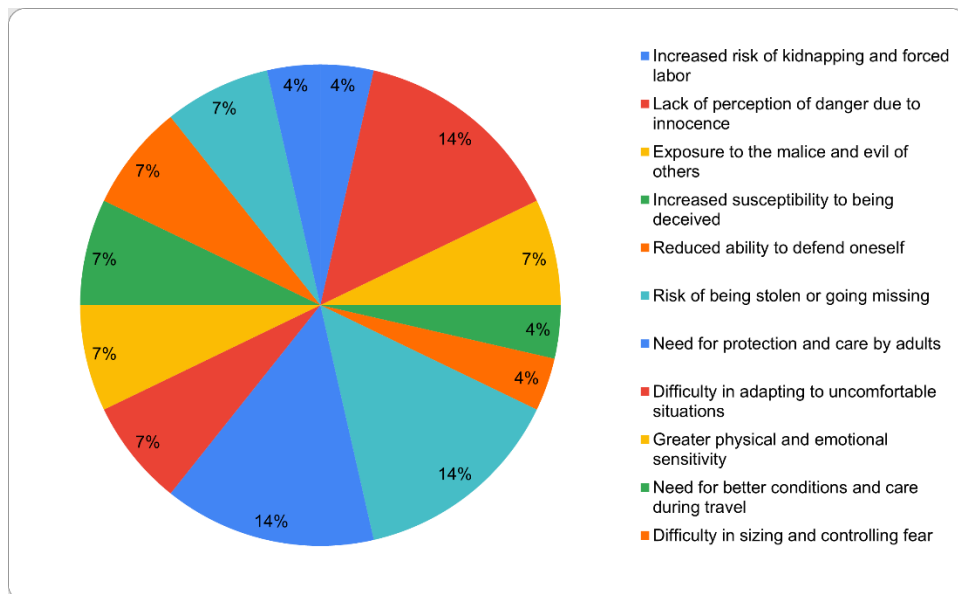
Figure 8: Gender differences in migratory transit.



Source: survey analysis

In addition, 69% of the surveyed population indicates that the experience of migrating as a child or adolescent is also different. Risks are also related to disappearances or robberies (security risks).

Figure 9: Differences for children and adolescents in the migratory process.

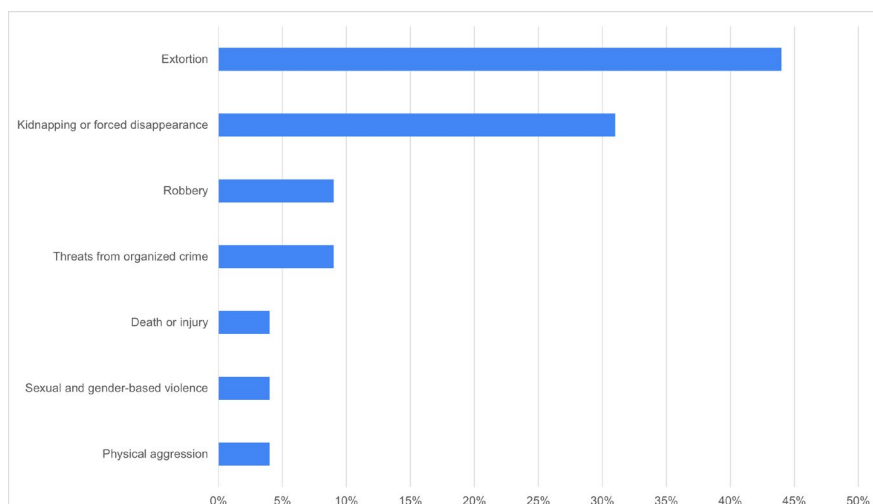


Source: survey analysis

As shown in Figure 10, 28% of the surveyed population reports incidents of kidnapping or forced disappearance. The current concern among the population centers on the alarming increase in kidnappings. In the almost five years since the implementation of Title 42, there have never been so many cases of kidnapping reported with such frequency. We have been informed of situations where, for example, one woman reported that, during her captivity, she shared a warehouse-like space with hundreds of women and

children, indicating that this was just one of many such places in the area. Hundreds of people on the move are kidnapped on a daily basis.

Figure 10: Types of security incidents in Mexico.



Source: survey analysis

Some humanitarian actors shared with us that they have observed that many people are intercepted and kidnapped during their passage, for months at a time. In the last six months, especially since May, there has been an increase in cases of kidnapping of people on the move.

### 3.2. Economic extortion

According to the survey, 40% of the population has suffered economic extortion. During the interviews, a pattern of systematic extortion has been revealed at different points along their migratory path, illustrating a scenario of vulnerability and exploitation. A recurrent practice of extortion by the authorities is observed at the different checkpoints. People report that, on average, they are asked to pay 500 Mexican pesos per person in order to continue their passage along the different points of the migratory path. This type of systematic extortion demonstrates the vulnerability to which they are exposed and the exploitation of their situation by certain authorities.

In the case of those traveling by air, upon arrival in Ciudad Juarez, it has been reported that a common practice to avoid detention is to leave US\$100 per person inside the passport.

This also implies an additional challenge for people on the move, who frequently arrive at their destinations without economic resources. The payment of these "fees" at different border points, in addition to robberies and kidnappings, depletes the limited resources they have, exacerbating their vulnerability.

### 3.3. Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence, stands out as a relevant risk in their journey, pointing to the vulnerability faced by young women. According to the survey (Figure 10), 4% of the surveyed population reports GBV as a security incident. This low percentage may be the result of a lack of knowledge of the concept of, or not knowing how to identify, this type of violence.

Throughout their journey to the north of the country, many female victims and survivors of various forms of violence face a significant lack of monitoring of their physical and mental health. This abandonment is especially accentuated in contexts of extreme violence, such as those that can be experienced on the journey through El Darien, a notoriously dangerous passage on their way north. This violence profoundly affects women's well-being.

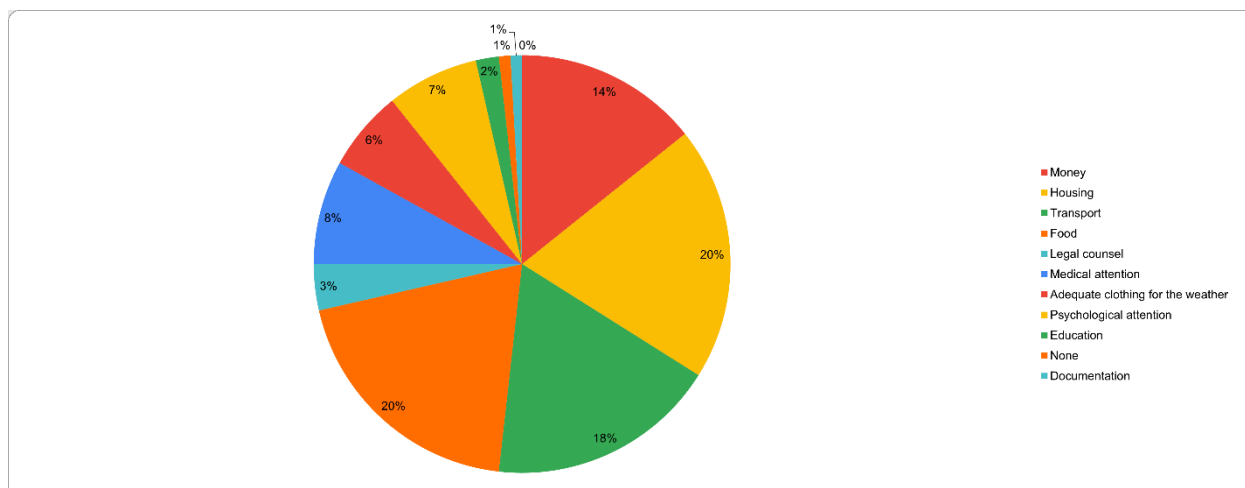
Some service providers have pointed out that violence is not limited to the stages prior to or during the journey of women on the move, but also occurs within the shelter spaces. In particular, domestic violence and problems related to the safeguarding of women are issues of concern that arise in these spaces.

Widespread distrust of the authorities and justice systems causes many women to refrain from reporting the abuses they have suffered, limiting even further their access to the necessary protection and support.

### 3.4. Lack of coverage of basic needs

This demographic group often faces significant barriers to accessing formal education, exacerbated by the difficulties inherent in their migratory status. According to Figure 11, the main needs are food (22%), shelter (22%), and transportation (20%).

Figure 11: Basic needs



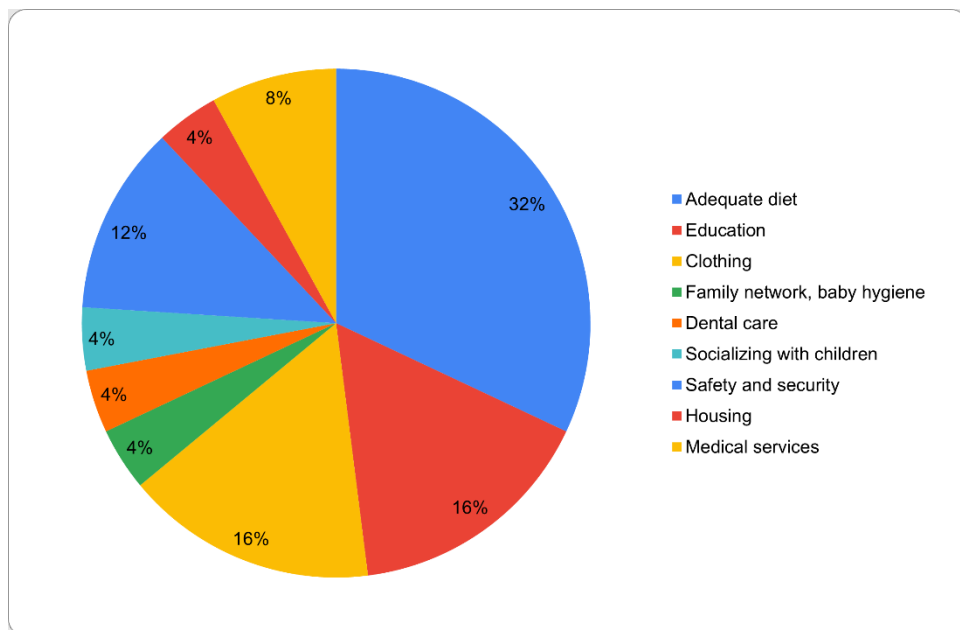
Source: survey analysis

Within the context of migration policies and their impact on people on the move in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, a critical aspect is the educational challenge, particularly among women, children and adolescents. Collaborations with UNICEF and others aim to provide education and psychosocial support, but face significant barriers in terms of formal schooling and educational integration. As mentioned by the Center for the Integral Development of Women (Cedimac), "the problem [is] that there is no access to education and it is very necessary; right now there is a big deterioration in their educational abilities, children who arrived there reading, partially writing, now they are not reading anything, not even writing their name, so you can see the deterioration".

This demographic group often faces significant barriers to accessing formal education, exacerbated by the difficulties inherent in their migratory status.

Concerning the needs to be met, according to the survey data, 60% consider that children and adolescents on the move do not require specific or additional care to meet their needs. Those who do consider this additional attention necessary demand healthy food (32%).

Figure 12: Specific needs of children and adolescents on the move



Source: survey analysis

### 3.5. Impacts on the emotional well-being of children and adolescents



Psychological care and education for children and adolescents emerge as significant needs, underscoring the impact of mobility on emotional well-being.

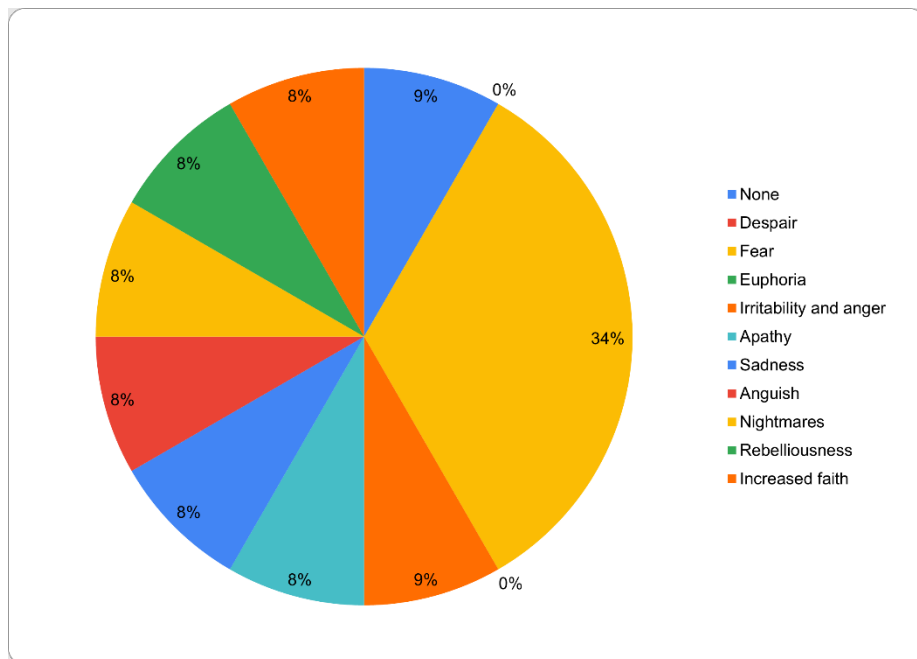
Prolonged stays in shelters and transit spaces not only imply physical challenges and challenges of access to basic services, but also have a significant impact on the psycho-emotional well-being of children and adolescents. As time passes, the sense of hopelessness and symptoms of depression intensify among this age group. This situation is further aggravated by the nature of migration decisions made by adults, who take



children with them into a vortex of uncertainty and uprootedness, moving away from their family environments, friends, and even pets. Thus, they face multiple losses that go beyond the geographical setting, entering into the emotional and affective realms.

According to the survey results (Figure 13), fear (34%) and irritability and anger (9%) are some of the effects on the emotional well-being of children and adolescents.

Figure 13: Psycho-emotional effects on children and adolescents.



Source: survey analysis

The qualitative information also reveals the experiences of children and adolescents in the migratory process, as reported by their mothers.

"We haven't told the big guy what we've been through, he doesn't know all the facts ... He only saw us packing our bags and they kicked us out of here".

Female survey participant

"The older guy gets very upset, he doesn't understand the situation, we lie to him so as not to scare him, but he wants an explanation as to why they came in with guns."

Female survey participant

"I think kids look at this as an adventure, my 11-year-old son was having fun in El Darien, he saw it as something fun without thinking about the magnitude of the danger."

Female survey participant

"So many years traveling, he's used to it."

Female survey participant

### 3.6. "Circuit children"

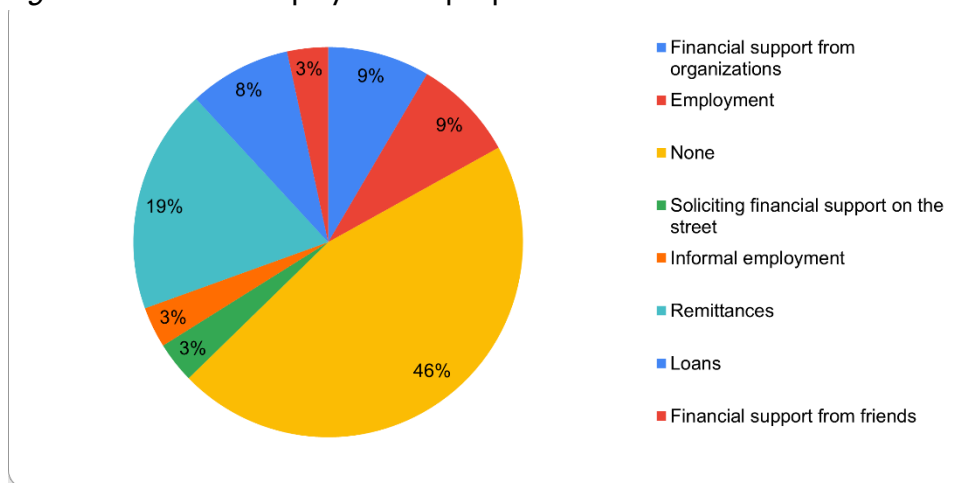
Another evident increase is the number of arrivals of families with children, as well as the continued arrival of children traveling unaccompanied. Interviews held with service providers confirm this, as they mention "unaccompanied minors" on at least 45 occasions, and more than half of them relate this to the increase in the number of cases of children facilitating crossings.

Despite this issue being of vital importance, it would require further research or a specific study to be carried out. It is worth mentioning that "circuit children" are minors involved in activities that facilitate or assist in irregular border crossings. This may include activities such as helping others to cross the border by irregular means, transporting contraband goods across the border, or couriering in human trafficking networks.

### 3.7. Access to employment

Access to sources of employment for migrants is marked by significant limitations due to lack of documentation and legal barriers, which lead to precarious employment and expose migrants, especially women with no legal status, to the risk of exploitation and trafficking. According to the survey data, 46% of those surveyed were unemployed. Labor inclusion, while part of socioeconomic integration strategies, faces specific challenges that disproportionately affect women, who may be more vulnerable to exploitation and economic violence.

Figure 14: Access to employment of people on the move.



Source: survey analysis

Women on the move, in particular, face significant difficulties due to restrictions similar to those of men, but with the added risks of harassment, labor exploitation, risks during travel to places of work, and association with organized crime.

Childcare responsibilities fall predominantly on women, limiting their ability to seek and maintain employment, especially when support infrastructure such as daycare or childcare systems are non-existent.

Gender discrimination and the care work that falls on women are two critical factors limiting their employment opportunities when compared to their male counterparts, who are actively sought out by employers, benefiting from transportation systems that take them back and forth between work and shelter spaces, something from which women seem to be excluded.

"The only thing is that here, at least, the men can work, because they take them there and bring them back."

Foreign female focus group participant

"I can't work because I have to be with my children, I can't leave them with anyone else."

Foreign female focus group participant

### 3.8. Access to Services and Resources

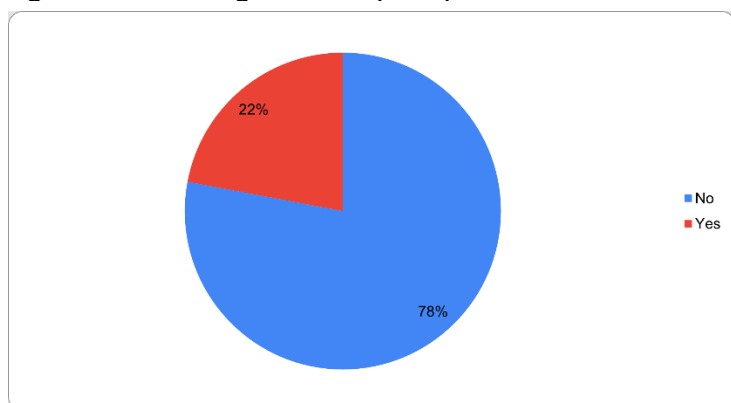
Although organizations and entities work together to provide a safety and support network for people on the move in Ciudad Juarez, the lack of adequate regulation in the spaces that serve vulnerable people has led to problematic situations, such as lack of security and approaches to care that are not adapted to some populations (such as those with gender diversities). Likewise, they are spaces that do not have the adequate infrastructure to provide education to children and adolescents.

In this regard, the organization KIND mentions that among the most urgent needs are the "need for regulation and improvement," which would mean "improving [the] coordination and access to services, attention to human rights, [and] regulation of shelters."

### 3.9. Legal counseling services: misinformation and mistrust

Approximately only one-third of respondents are familiar with the asylum process in the United States, revealing a significant need for more accessible information and guidance on this crucial topic.

Figure 15: Knowledge of the asylum process in the United States.

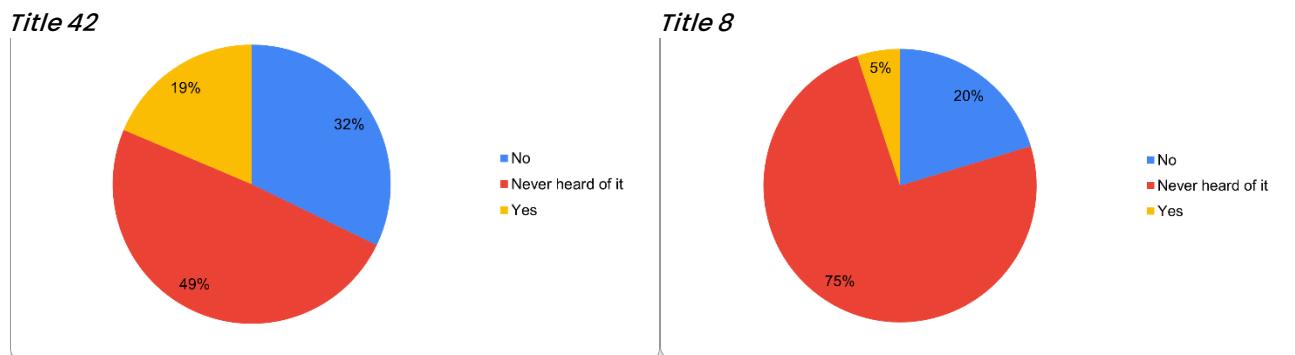


Source: survey analysis

In addition, there is evidence of a widespread lack of knowledge about Title 8 and Title 42. 49% of respondents have never heard of Title 42, and 73% are also unaware of Title 8.

The lack of legal guidance on migration policies is a critical obstacle for women, children and adolescents on the move. People on the move are often uninformed about key processes, such as the asylum application process, and are completely unaware of fundamental immigration policies, such as Title 42 and Title 8, implemented by the United States. This lack of knowledge is compounded by the absence of prior legal advice, leaving them vulnerable to a complex and often adversarial system.

Figure 16: Knowledge about titles 42 and 8.



Source: survey analysis

jal

desert," underscores the urgency of providing specialized and accessible legal advice in a field where laws and procedures are frequently updated and changing.

A significant challenge in the provision of legal services is the skepticism and lack of trust of migrants toward authorities, compounded by previous negative experiences, risks of detention, and extortion. This mistrust limits the accessibility and effectiveness of legal services, making the mediation of trusted organizations crucial.

Migrants, including children and adolescents, are reluctant to approach the authorities for fear of interruption of their movement, or reprisals. Mistrust extends to interaction with the legal and security system, highlighting the importance of prior legal orientation and the support of specialized organizations. In this regard, more than 90% (29/30) of the entities interviewed confirm that people on the move do not turn to national, state, or local authorities in Mexico if they encounter difficulties during their journey. In addition, delving deeper into the responses, it is observed that more than 30% of the entities (12 out of 30), identify mistrust as the most recurrent issue..



# Recommendations:



In the context of the Ciudad Juárez border and the situation of people on the move, especially women, children, and adolescents, it is imperative to adopt a multidimensional and collaborative approach to address the challenges they face. The following recommendations are addressed to civil society, the U.S. government, and the Mexican government, and seek to improve access to protection, services, and justice for people on the move, with a particular emphasis on the well-being of vulnerable people, particularly children and adolescents.

## 4.1 Improvement strategies.

Providing accurate and accessible information on the rights to education, health, and protection, and the processes for accessing these services, is crucial. Collaboration between different humanitarian and government actors is essential to provide a comprehensive response that addresses the specific needs of children and adolescents, women, and vulnerable groups.

Education, health, and protection services must be adapted to be culturally sensitive and accessible, guaranteeing safe and adequate spaces, especially for gender diversities and people with disabilities.

Access to education, health, and protective services for people on the move requires specialized attention that considers the specific vulnerabilities of each group. This implies coordinated and adaptive efforts to overcome existing barriers.

## 4.2 Recommendations to the U.S. Government

### Review and improvement of CBP One:

- € Adjust the application so that appointments are available as of the initial registration.
- € Conduct a thorough review of the CBP One application with the aim of improving its linguistic accessibility, technological compatibility for low-end devices, and the use of facial recognition.
- € Implement adjustments to ensure transparent assignment of appointments and establish accessible support lines.

### Action protocols for CBP agents:

- € Develop clear and coherent protocols for CBP agents, based on sound legal standards and efficient practices. These protocols should address border situations and seek to reduce discretion and confusion in agents' decisions, especially during entry at unofficial ports.

### Diversification of options for seeking asylum:

- € Invest in systems that allow for the processing of asylum seekers at the border without delay or detention.
- € Provide asylum seekers with support for access to housing, social services, and legal advice.
- € Ensure a fair and effective process for those seeking asylum in the United States.

## 4.3 Recommendations to the Mexican Government

### Legislative adjustments pertaining to kidnapping and human trafficking:

- € Amend the General Law for the Prevention and Punishment of Kidnapping and the General Law for the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Crimes related to Human Trafficking and for Protection and Assistance to the Victims of these Crimes to include specific provisions addressing kidnapping and human trafficking of people on the move.
- € Criminalize kidnapping by traffickers as a specific category of crime, recognizing its complexities and specificities.
- € Provide specialized training to relevant authorities to improve the identification and prosecution of kidnapping and human trafficking cases.
- € Establish specialized units to deal exclusively with these cases and ensure access to support and protection services for victims.

### Regulation of shelters:

- € Revise the Law for the Protection and Support of Migrants and their Families for the State of Chihuahua and the Law for Public and Private Social Assistance for the State of Chihuahua, so as to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for shelters that serve people on the move in Ciudad Juarez.
- € Design minimum standards of security, privacy, and access to services for shelters, with certification and supervision mechanisms.
- € Ensure proportional sanctions in case of non-compliance to protect the rights of people on the move.

#### **Fiscal justice for children and adolescents on the move:**

- € Allocate specific financial resources for the care of people on the move, prioritizing protection and access to basic services for migrant children and adolescents.
- € Highlight the subject of education - Systematization of documents.
- € Develop clear, costed protocols for the early identification of children at risk of being used for irregular crossings, both at borders and in the communities of people in transit.
- € Create a budget, earmarked at state and federal levels, to guarantee access to essential services.
- € Promote the monitoring and control of public resources in the corresponding legislative commissions.

## **4.4. General Recommendations**

#### **Strengthening of binational support networks:**

- € Develop a collaborative binational platform and establish coordination mechanisms between the governments of Mexico and the United States, together with civil society organizations, to expand and strengthen inter-organizational and cross-border support networks. This will provide comprehensive services and an effective response to the needs of people on the move on both sides of the border.

#### **Awareness campaigns:**

- € Implement campaigns to raise awareness of the rights of people on the move and the services available to them.
- € Offer community workshops and informational materials in multiple languages to reach different audiences.

**Recommendations for the media:** In order to fulfill their responsibilities regarding the dissemination of information, the media should:

- € Adopt concrete measures to guarantee the veracity and accessibility of the information they disseminate.
- € Become allies of civil society in the fight against disinformation.
- € Periodically open spaces for civil society organizations to act as sources of reliable information and simplify the content, depending on their audiences.

# Conclusions



The study of the impacts of U.S. migration policies on women, children and adolescents on the move at the border of Ciudad Juárez reveals a complex reality marked by serious human rights violations. The rigidity of these policies, combined with misinformation and the lack of adequate services, has exacerbated the vulnerability of these populations, situations of violence, exploitation, and neglect.

The narratives collected show the urgency of rethinking the focus of migration policies, prioritizing the welfare and rights of people on the move. The implementation of restrictive measures and the reinforcement of borders without considering the root causes of migration and the specific needs of women, children, and adolescents have contributed to exacerbating their situation of risk, making evident the disconnection between the policies implemented and the humanitarian reality at the border.

Precarious living conditions, exposure to acts of violence, and lack of access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and legal counsel are a reflection of a migration policy that has not only failed to protect the most vulnerable populations, but also intensified their lack of protection. The tragedy at the Ciudad Juarez migratory station, with the loss of 40 human lives, underscores the urgent need for an ethical and humanitarian review of current migration practices and policies.

Misinformation about immigration procedures and the mandatory use of technology applications such as CBP One, irrespective of technological, linguistic, and access barriers, have further complicated the landscape for those seeking asylum or protection.

Given this scenario, the importance of placing people on the move at the center of decisions is highlighted. It is crucial to recognize and strengthen their autonomy, allowing them to make informed decisions about their migration process and guaranteeing their right to seek and receive protection. The recommendations presented point towards the creation of more inclusive and humane policies that ensure access to basic



services, protection from violence and exploitation, and respect for the human rights of all people on the move.

This study is a call to action to rethink migration policies as an integral part of the political and legislative agenda in Mexico and the United States, emphasizing the need to address the migratory crisis from a human rights and comprehensive protection perspective. Its implementation reflects a real commitment to the protection of human rights and the well-being of people on the move, thus strengthening compliance with the principles established in current national and international regulations to effectively address the multiple dimensions of this migratory crisis and build a future in which human mobility is a pathway toward safety, especially for women, children, and adolescents.

## Notes

### Testimony of a Young Migrant Woman:

**"It's not easy to be sleeping on the street, you're not here because you want to be."**



Paola\* is a 24-year-old young woman from Venezuela who is migrating alone to the United States in search of a better future. Although she studied up to the fifth year of high school, she had to abandon her studies due to the economic difficulties of the country and her family.

"When the economic situation began and I could no longer continue studying, I started working as a domestic worker in family homes. You see the family and even though you are working, not being able to make even one peso, it is sad. So, you convince yourself that you have to get out of there," says Paola.

### Migratory Passage

Paola has migrated twice. The first time was to Peru, where she worked for five years, then she returned to Venezuela and felt obligated to migrate a second time to the United States. The journey was not easy, Paola entered Mexico on December 22, 2023. During her journey, she met several families who were also migrating, and together they traveled together.

"We had a tent for camping and slept in the street when there was no other alternative. Sometimes we found a shelter or refuge and they received us well, but almost always we were on the street sleeping," mentions Paola.

Like Paola, more than [75,000 girls, adolescents, and women](#) have entered Mexico by irregular means in the first two months of 2024, according to the Mexican Government's Monthly Bulletin of Migration Statistics, and are in a situation of great vulnerability, facing specific risks and particular needs during their journey.

"While we were camping, around 10 p.m., some unknown men arrived. They were not migration officials, nor the police. They took us all out of the tent and searched us. They told us we had to leave at dawn. That's what we did as soon as the sun came up," says Paola.

### **At the Border**

Paola's goal is to enter the United States. She has been traveling for six months and now that she is at the U.S.-Mexico border, she must decide how to cross it.

To enter the United States legally, migrants like Paola must obtain an appointment through the CBP One application, operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection: "I personally don't want to turn myself in, I want to wait for the appointment. Here I have met people who have been here longer than I have and are still waiting," she says.

According to Paola, the process often takes months, and she is afraid that the Mexican authorities will return her to her country during this wait: "There are people who travel with their families, with a lot of effort and no money, and because they have no papers, they are sent back. It is not the same to be in a house, resting and eating well, as it is to be here, sleeping in the street. You are not here because you want to be," she says.

### **A Better Future**

Paola, like many people on the move, wishes for a better future for herself and her family in Venezuela, she says: "My dream, right now, is to arrive, enter legally, and start working. To have a diploma and have a job. But yes, I would like to study."

Paola encountered Plan International at a shelter and received a card to purchase food, water, and personal and menstrual hygiene items. In Mexico, the international organization provides humanitarian assistance on the southern and northern borders of the country. It also provides key information on available services, as well as specialized orientation for migrants, with a particular focus on girls, adolescents and women.

\*Name changed for reasons of protection.

## Migration policies:

### Compilation of U.S. Migratory Events Part 1

#### U.S. - **Parole** for persons from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua

Initiative that allows people of these nationalities to enter the U.S. under sponsorship and work legally for up to two years. It is not an asylum process.

#### U.S. - Use of **CBP One** application for asylum processes

As of January 2023, asylum seekers from certain countries must use CBP One to schedule appointments at ports of entry. Though not initially mandatory, CBP One is now essential to the asylum process.

#### U.S. - End of **Title 42**

Ended in May 2023, this policy allowed for the rapid removal of asylum seekers under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic, effectively closing ports of entry.

#### U.S. - Reinstatement of **Title 8 + Asylum Ban Rule**

Implemented in May 2023, this rule requires migrants to use legal channels to enter the U.S. and limits asylum for those who do not follow safe routes, with deportation and a 5-year re-entry ban for violators.

#### U.S.A. - **Family Expedited Removal Program (FERM)**

Expedited inspection process for detained families, with credible fear interviews without adequate legal counsel, and expedited deportation in case of a negative outcome.

#### Temporary Protected Status (**TPS**) **Venezuela**

Offers temporary protection and work authorization to Venezuelans in the U.S. before July 31, 2023, with restrictions based on criminal records or prior stays in a third country.

### Compilation of U.S. Migratory Events Part 2

#### U.S. - **"Voluntary Return"** to Mexico without protection control

Strategy that pressures asylum seekers to voluntarily return to Mexico, avoiding formal asylum proceedings under threat of deportation and prohibition of re-entry.

#### U.S. - Militarization - **Operation Lone Star**

Texas initiative to reinforce border security with military deployment and physical barriers, facing criticism and legal action for its impact on migrants and federal law enforcement.

#### U.S. - **"Depressurize"** the border

Agreement to deport people from Venezuela, Cuba, Brazil, Colombia and Nicaragua from the U.S. to Mexico, and from Mexico to their countries of origin or other Mexican regions. Information on the process is scarce.

#### U.S. and Mexico - **Direct deportations to Venezuela**

Resumption of direct air deportations of Venezuelans from the U.S. and Mexico to Venezuela, beginning with a flight of at least 100 migrants in October 2023 following an agreement between Biden and Maduro.

#### U.S. - **SB4** or **Senate Bill 4**

Texas law that criminalizes irregular entry or re-entry into the state, authorizes detainment by police based on appearance, allows deportations and sentences of up to 20 years, and allocates \$1.5 billion to build a wall and border security.

#### Congressional and White House **legislative proposals** in exchange for foreign military funding

These include the tightening of immigration and asylum policies, such as expanding expedited removal, tightening credible fear criteria, implementing a permanent transit ban, a new Title 42-like removal statute, limiting asylum, ending humanitarian parole, and mandatory mass detention, in exchange for foreign military funding.

#### **CBP One** Update

During the past few months of this year, CBP has strengthened fraud prevention controls regarding the use of the application.

As of this latest update, the length of time for requesting an appointment has been reduced from 24 hours to only 12 hours, in addition to limiting registrations to a maximum of 10 travelers per group registration.

The elimination of duplicate registrations and of those that exceed the maximum number of travelers is now indicated.



Until we are all equal

## Acerca de Plan International







Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

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