



July – December 2025

**Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Venezuela**

# Regional Protection Monitoring Report

The ProLAC Initiative is a harmonized protection monitoring system that generates evidence to inform humanitarian responses.



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# Key Findings

Internal displacement remains a protection risk driven primarily by violence and extortion.



- **Internal displacement remains one of the main protection risks in the region, affecting 18 % of the population interviewed.**
- The evidence gathered indicates that **7 % of the internally displaced population or those affected by other situations of violence (OSV) reported having been impacted by explosive devices, attacks on their person or property, and even civilian killings were identified.** These patterns had not previously been identified in earlier ProLAC reports, particularly in countries such as Mexico and Ecuador.
- Theft and extortion remain key drivers of both protection risks and internal displacement: **they affect 12 % of internally displaced persons and almost a quarter (24 %) of the population affected by other situations of violence (OSV).**
- Following displacement, many people face discrimination in host communities, linked to perceptions which associate them with **armed or criminal groups in their places of origin.** This increases their vulnerability, restricts access to livelihoods and services, and reduces the chances of progressing towards durable solutions to displacement.

People in need of international protection continue to face barriers accessing asylum systems and protection as refugees.



- **47 % of households with refugees and migrants in their destination areas reported needing international protection.** However, the obstacles to accessing asylum remain substantial: increasingly restrictive regulations, administrative delays, limited access to information, and policies and practices that undermine due process guarantees.
- The lack of documentation **which proves asylum seeker status or access to international protection exacerbates exclusion** from formal employment, public services, and financial systems, and **increases the risks of fraud and extortion.**
- Among deported households, **more than half (55 %) reported needing international protection and, of these, 53 % had initiated an asylum application.**

# About ProLAC

ProLAC is a regional information management initiative, created by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), with the support of the European Union's Humanitarian Aid. In collaboration with national and international humanitarian organizations, ProLAC offers a harmonized system for protection monitoring and analysis in Latin America and the Caribbean. This system generates robust evidence to strengthen protection and humanitarian responses, promoting more effective and efficient interventions at regional, national, and local levels. To find out more about the ProLAC Initiative or to view our interactive dashboard, visit: [prolac.live](https://prolac.live)

## Methodology

The protection analysis presents the results obtained through ProLAC's harmonized protection monitoring system, based on the Global Protection Cluster's (GPC) Protection Analytical Framework (PAF)<sup>1</sup>. The protection risks examined in this report are based on the 15 risks classified by the GPC, with the addition of the risk of denial, obstacles, and restrictions to accessing international protection.

Data was collected between **1 July and 31 December 2025**. During this period, the following ProLAC Initiative partner organizations participated in data collection: SNPS - Caritas Colombia, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados Venezuela (JRS), Caritas Venezuela, Servicio Pastoral para Migrantes (SPM), Caritas Brazil, Servicio Pastoral para Migrantes Brazil, Caritas Ecuador, Caritas Peru, Centro de Desarrollo Humano (CEDEH), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Derechos Humanos Integrales en Acción (DHIA), Encuentros Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes (SJM), Fundación María Josefa (FMJ), Misión Scalabriniana, Observatorio de Investigaciones Sociales en Frontera (ODISEF).

Data collection was carried out in **11 countries** across the region, covering areas of origin, transit, and destination: Brazil (Acre and Rondônia), Chile (Tarapacá), Colombia (Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Chocó, Córdoba, La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca), Ecuador (Azuay, Carchi, El Oro, Esmeraldas, Guayas, Manabí, Pichincha, and Sucumbíos), El Salvador (San Salvador), Guatemala (Guatemala, Huehuetenango, and San Marcos), Honduras (Cortés and Francisco

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<sup>1</sup> Global Protection Cluster. *Protection Analytical Framework*. Available at: <https://globalprotectioncluster.org/field-support/Protection-Analytical-Framework>

Morazán), Mexico (Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, State of Mexico, and Veracruz), Panama (Chiriquí and Panama City), Peru (Callao, Lima, Madre de Dios, Puno, and Tacna), and Venezuela (Apure, Bolívar, Sucre, Táchira, and Zulia).



Illustration1 : Map of the ProLAC Initiative's scope

The analysis is based on two types of data. The **quantitative data** comprises the results of a **survey** conducted in the aforementioned locations amongst **8,175 households, representing a total of 24,174 individuals** across four categories: persons in transit, people at destination, internally displaced persons, and persons affected by conflict or other situations of violence (OSV).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the **qualitative information** comprises **378 documents derived from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations**, carried out by the teams in each country. To complement and corroborate trends observed in ProLAC's

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<sup>2</sup> People/communities affected by internal conflict or widespread violence who do not move either within or outside their place of origin or habitual residence.

primary sources, secondary sources such as academic and civil society reports, as well as press articles, were also consulted.

### Population surveyed

Of the 8,175 households surveyed (24,174 people), 35 % were households affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence (OSV); 32 % were households at destination (of which 23 % were returnees or deportees); 18 % were internally displaced households; and 15 % were households in transit (of which 32 % identified themselves as 'stranded' at the time of the survey).

The households surveyed were mainly located in Venezuela (28 %), Colombia (24 %), Ecuador (16 %), Peru (11 %), Mexico (7 %), Honduras (4 %), Panama and Guatemala (3 % each), and Brazil and Chile (2 % each).

In terms of nationality, most respondents were Venezuelans (57 %), followed by Colombians (21 %), and Ecuadorians (9 %). Guatemalans and Hondurans also participated, as did people with dual nationality (2 % each), as well as Cubans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Chileans, Mexicans, and Salvadorans (1 % each).

Regarding gender identity, 52 % of respondents identified as female, 48 % as male, and less than 1 % (21 people) preferred not to answer. Furthermore, 2 % reported belonging to the LGBTQI+ community or having diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC).

In terms of ethnic identity, the majority of households (70 %) did not identify with any group. However, 12 % identified as indigenous, 12 % as mestizo, and 5 % as Afro-descendant. Furthermore, 8 % reported having a disability. By age, 59 % were adults and 41 % were children or adolescents.

**Table 1: Data collected during the reporting period**

Country	Household-level surveys	Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations
Brazil	151	5
Chile	192	11
Colombia	1976	91
Ecuador	1343	78
El Salvador	31	2
Guatemala	207	6
Honduras	303	14
Mexico	532	30
Panama	258	10
Peru	891	31
Venezuela	2291	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>8175</b>	<b>378</b>

To view the interactive dashboard of the quantitative results for this period and beyond, please visit <https://prolac.live/en/>

### Limitations

The sampling method used is deliberate and convenience-based, as participants were identified through protection program activities implemented by ProLAC's partner organizations. Consequently, the information presented is not statistically representative, and the results should be interpreted as indicative of trends and patterns in protection risks, rather than as estimations generalizable to the whole population. Furthermore, as data collection took place in areas where the organizations have an operational presence, the sample size varies by region. This distribution affects the relative weight of certain findings, reflecting the dynamics observed in contexts with a higher number of recorded cases. Finally, although the analysis seeks to investigate the causes and effects of protection risks, the available information does not allow for causal analysis or the identification of determining variables. The focus is on identifying plausible explanations to guide program decision-making, targeting public policies, and strengthening the protection and humanitarian response.

# 1. Context

During the second half of 2025, Latin America continued to face major challenges regarding the protection of refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons, and those affected by other situations of violence (OSV). This period was marked by the reconfiguration of displacement patterns that emerged in early 2025, the tightening of migration policies in several countries in the region, and worsening of levels of violence and insecurity.

Between July and December 2025, the decline in mixed migration flows towards the United States and the drop in northbound crossings through the Darién Gap persisted. Similarly, north-south transit along this corridor —known as “reverse flows”, which at the start of the year exceeded ten thousand people<sup>3</sup>— decreased considerably, although it remains an extremely dangerous route.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the United States deported Venezuelans to Venezuela,<sup>5</sup> while the socio-political environment was characterized by increased internal and external tensions, including an escalation of tensions with the United States towards the end of the year.

Against this backdrop, the number of Venezuelans and people of other nationalities who, often without a clear plan, became stranded in transit countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras increased.<sup>6</sup> In these countries, they face high levels of violence and difficulties to access international protection or to regularize their migration status, which further weakens the protection environment for refugees and migrants.

Meanwhile, countries in the southern part of the continent tightened their migration policies: Ecuador approved a reform to the Human Mobility Act that increases the requirements to access international protection and introduces restrictions on entry into the country;<sup>7</sup> while in Peru and Chile, security force operations were intensified to counter irregular migration.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, in October 2025, Brazil adopted a new national policy that emphasizes efforts to coordinate state actions aimed at

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<sup>3</sup> Migración Colombia (2025). Irregular Transit Migration as at 15 August 2025. Available at: [Irregular Transit Migration August 2025](https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/publicaciones-migracion-colombia/migracion-en-transito-irregular-agosto-de-2025). Available at: <https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/publicaciones-migracion-colombia/migracion-en-transito-irregular-agosto-de-2025>

<sup>4</sup> Mixed Migration Centre (2026). Quarterly Mixed Migration Update. Available at: [QMMU-2025-Q4-ES-LAC.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> CNN en Español (16 November 2025). *More than 290 Venezuelans deported from the US arrived in Caracas on a repatriation flight*. Available at: <https://cnnspanol.cnn.com/2025/11/16/venezuela/venezolanos-deportados-eeuu-avion-caracas-trax>

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP. Mixed Movements Monitoring (July – September 2025). Available at: [083ac777-aea3-5b8b-aa1e-e66aecfda379.pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> R4V (2025). Presentation of the Analysis of the Reforms to the Organic Law on Human Mobility.

<sup>8</sup> Mixed Migration Centre. Quarterly Mixed Migration Update, 4, 2025. Available at: [QMMU-2025-Q4-ES-LAC.pdf](#)

protecting the rights of refugees, migrants, and stateless persons, and promoting their social and labor market integration.<sup>9</sup>

During this period, differing patterns of violence and internal displacement were also observed in several countries across the region, with significant impacts in contexts, such as Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

In Colombia, the armed conflict and widespread violence continued to result in confinements, restrictions on movement, and forced displacement. Continuing the trend seen in the first half of the year, between July and December 2025, OCHA reports recorded more than 350,000 people affected by armed conflict and widespread violence,<sup>10</sup> as well as an increase in the recruitment and use of children by armed groups.<sup>11</sup>

In Mexico, internal forced displacement reached record levels in 2024<sup>12</sup> and episodes of violence associated with organized criminal groups<sup>13</sup> (OCGs) continued throughout 2025, creating high levels of risk for communities. In Ecuador, the intensification of OCG activities and the struggle for control of illicit economies led to thousands of new cases of internal displacement during 2025, in a context where insecurity worsened to the point of doubling the homicide rate in a single year.<sup>14</sup>

In Honduras, levels of violence continued to cause internal displacement. It is estimated that at least 21,000 people were displaced between January and

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<sup>9</sup> Scalabrinian Centre for Migration Studies (2025). *Brazilian government establishes National Policy on Migration, Refugee, and Statelessness, focusing on human rights, development, and decent work.*

[The Brazilian government establishes a national policy on migration, refuge, and statelessness, centred on human rights, development, and decent work.](#)

<sup>10</sup> OCHA Colombia Humanitarian Monitor (accessed 18 February 2025). The figure reported by OCHA between January and August 2025 corresponds to 1.4 million people affected by various forms of violence in Colombia.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF (2026). [The recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Colombia quadruples over a five-year period – Colombia.](#) Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/el-reclutamiento-y-el-uso-de-ninos-y-ninas-por-grupos-armados-en-colombia-se-cuadruplica-en-un-periodo-de-cinco-anos>

<sup>12</sup> Ibero-American University (2024). [Forced journeys: Internal displacement in Mexico 2024.](#) Available at: <https://www.alunapsicosocial.org/single-post/traves%C3%ADas-forzadas-desplazamiento-interno-en-m%C3%A9xico-2024>

<sup>13</sup> The definition of organized criminal groups (OCGs) is adopted as 'structured groups of three or more persons, existing over a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, with the aim of obtaining, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit'. This is according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004). United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. Available: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-s.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Ecuavisa (2025). Violence and insecurity are driving the forced displacement of thousands of families in Ecuador. Available at: <https://www.ecuavisa.com/ecuador/la-violencia-e-inseguridad-impulsan-el-desplazamiento-forzado-de-miles-de-familias-en-ecuador-20251219-0054.html> ; ACLED (2025).

Pressure mounts on the Ecuadorian government to tackle organized crime violence. Available at: <https://acleddata.com/es/report/aumenta-la-presion-sobre-el-gobierno-de-ecuador-para-que-control-e-la-violencia-del-crimen>

September 2025, of whom 8,926 were displaced specifically as a result of violence.<sup>15</sup> In Guatemala, new data published in September 2025 highlighted the structural nature of internal displacement, which affects 7 % of the national population and reflects the persistence of this risk factor.<sup>16</sup> In both countries, traditionally places of origin for refugees and migrants, these trends could intensify due to the closure of safe migration routes and the tightening of migration policies driven by the United States.

## 2. Prioritized Protection Risks

ProLAC established five criteria for prioritizing protection risks. The first relates to the frequency with which each risk is identified in the quantitative data collected. Secondly, the severity of the risks was considered, using the Global Protection Cluster's severity criteria tool,<sup>17</sup> adapted to the knowledge and data of the current regional context. Additionally, the impact of the risks, the response capacity of humanitarian and institutional actors, and the potential for collective advocacy around these risks were assessed.

Based on this process, and considering the regional context described, ProLAC's protection monitoring identified the following risks as priorities, characterized by differing impacts depending on the profiles monitored:

1. Forced displacement
2. Attacks against the civilian population and the killing of civilians<sup>18</sup>
3. Robbery and extortion
4. Restrictions, obstacles, and denial of international protection
5. Discrimination and denial of access to resources, opportunities, and services

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<sup>15</sup> NRC (2026). Report on forced displacement in Honduras. Available at: [Informe-NRC-DFI-Honduras2025\\_compressed-1-1.pdf](#)

<sup>16</sup> INE (2025). Newsletter. INE and UNHCR presented data on internal displacement in Guatemala – National Institute of Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ine.gob.gt/2025/09/04/el-ine-y-acnur-presentaron-datos-sobre-desplazamiento-interno-en-guatemala/>

<sup>17</sup> Global Protection Cluster. Protection Risks Severity Criteria. Available at: <https://globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/1910/policy-and-guidance/guidelines/protection-risksseverity-criteria>

<sup>18</sup> According to the Global Protection Cluster, and in line with this, the PAF refers to attacks against the civilian population and unlawful killings. 'Unlawful killings' or 'extrajudicial killings' refer to the arbitrary and intentional deprivation of the life of civilians, perpetrated by State agents, non-State forces or with their acquiescence. The term is used in a broad sense to encompass various forms of lethal violence, including targeted killings and extrajudicial executions (understood as the deprivation of life without due process or judicial proceedings). These acts constitute serious human rights violations and, in contexts of armed conflict, breaches of international humanitarian law. Hereinafter, unlawful killings are referred to as 'killings of civilians'.

## 2.1. Forced Displacement

Forced internal displacement is closely linked to patterns of insecurity, disputes over territorial control, and illicit economies, as well as to the presence of OCGs<sup>19</sup> and armed groups—both state and non-state—that exercise coercion, violence, and the deliberate deprivation of rights. All of this affects people’s lives, safety and integrity.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.1. Internally Displaced Persons and Those Affected by Armed Conflict or Other Situations of Violence (OSV)

**35 % of the population surveyed by ProLAC in the region consists of people affected by conflict or other situations of violence (OSV), while 18 % consists of internally displaced persons.** People affected by the dynamics of violence who remain in their communities reported multiple protection threats such as intimidation and threats (25 %), theft (16 %), restrictions on movement (15 %), gender-based violence (14 %), discrimination (14 %), physical violence (10 %), extortion (10 %), and confinement (7 %).

The following threats were identified as the most common drivers of displacement: **restrictions on movement; extortion; intimidation and threats; recruitment of children and adolescents; forced recruitment of adults; and forced eviction or dispossession of land and homes.** A direct link was also found between displacement and killings, attacks on the civilian population and civilian property, as well as the use of explosive devices.

In Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico, on average, three out of 10 households surveyed reported having been forcibly displaced. In Honduras, 46 % of displaced households reported having been subjected to land dispossession, attributing responsibility to organized criminal groups in 65 % of cases. Those affected also reported intimidation and threats (48 %), extortion (19 %), and physical violence (18 %), 80 % of which was attributed to criminal organizations. A key

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<sup>19</sup> The definition of organized criminal groups (OCGs) is adopted as 'structured groups of three or more persons, existing over a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, with the aim of obtaining, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit'. This is according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004). United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-s.pdf>

<sup>20</sup>ProLAC (2025). *Internal Displacement and Other Situations of Violence in Contexts of Organized Crime in Latin America*. Available at: <https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ProLAC-Desplazamiento-Interno-Contexto-de-Criminalidad-Jul-Oct-2025.pdf>

informant indicated that these organizations constantly harass the civilian population to obtain information about rival groups, which increases fear and a sense of insecurity.

In Guatemala and Mexico, patterns of dispossession and violence associated with the territorial and economic control of criminal organizations were also identified. In Guatemala, 39 % reported having been victims of extortion by organized criminal groups. A key informant reported death threats and intimidation against people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, primarily those with trans experiences, forcing them to flee.<sup>21</sup> In Mexico, these groups exercise control over key productive sectors, and a key informant indicated that many families are forced to leave their homes due to extortion and economic pressure. He also noted that the groups control access to communities through checkpoints, searches of belongings and mobile phones, and surveillance using cameras and drones.<sup>22</sup>

*“Recently, displacement has been linked to clashes between armed groups... but also to clashes with state forces... these force [people] to leave their territories” – Key Informant Interview, Nariño, Colombia.*

In Colombia, 63 % of people reported having experienced forced displacement and 24 % identified it as a risk in their environment. 96 % identified non-state armed groups (NSAGs) as the main perpetrators, followed by criminal organizations (7 %), and state military actors (3 %). Displacement is driven by disputes between armed groups over territorial control, characterized by armed violence, imposition of social control norms, and restrictions on mobility. Direct threats, use of explosive devices, attacks against the civilian population, as well as fear of the recruitment of children and adolescents were also reported, leading to both mass and individual (‘drop-by-drop’) displacement. In Norte de Santander, reports emerged of homes being marked and individuals being singled out for alleged collaboration with armed groups, turning civilians into military targets. In southern Bolívar, notable incidents included eviction orders, targeted killings and the laying of anti-personnel mines (APMs). The increase in fighting between armed groups and government forces further amplified the risk of displacement. In many parts of Colombia, the mere presence of these groups creates a climate of constant fear that forces families to abandon their homes: *“People prefer to leave rather than be caught in the crossfire, be singled out, or suffer reprisals”.*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Guatemala

<sup>22</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Mexico

<sup>23</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Colombia

In Venezuela, internal displacement occurs in a context marked by fragile security conditions in certain localities. The interaction between the activities of various groups present in the territory and the actions of security forces in communities generates tensions that affect the stability of daily life and the mobility of the population. In Ecuador, 43 % of people reported having experienced forced displacement and 7 % identified it as a risk in their environment. 80 % pointed to criminal organizations and 21 % to NSAGs as responsible. Qualitative sources report an increase in extortion, threats of death, targeted killings, and forced recruitment of young people, forcing entire families to abandon their homes.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the high levels of risk, **resilience and family and community support networks** were identified **in host communities**. In Colombia, indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant communities, led by the *Juntas de Acción Comunal*, or community action boards, in Nariño and Bolívar, have developed community-based early warning mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of displacement; in some cases, community leaders support rapid evacuations of people with critical medical conditions or priority healthcare needs, such as pregnant women and infants, although without sustained institutional backing. Similarly, community leaders and indigenous organizations have promoted initiatives to raise awareness of the impacts among institutions and humanitarian organizations.<sup>25</sup>

In Ecuador, communities have developed protection strategies based on mutual support, through neighborhood networks that share information on risks. Other community organization initiatives, such as groups of women's rights defenders who activate care protocols and are familiar with assistance routes, carry out awareness-raising activities and provide support to the most vulnerable people.<sup>26</sup> In Honduras, support networks among families, churches, and local organizations provide temporary protection to displaced people.<sup>27</sup> Although fear limits reporting or the formal seeking of help, many people turn to civil society organizations that offer training on rights and protection. However, these community capacities face significant limitations in terms of coverage, resources, and sustainability, which restricts their scope given the scale of internal displacement in the region.

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<sup>24</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Ecuador

<sup>25</sup> ProLAC (2025). Based on several key informant interviews and focus group discussions in Nariño and Bolívar, Colombia.

<sup>26</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, El Oro, Ecuador

<sup>27</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

## 2.2. Attacks against the Civilian Population/Property, Killings, and Use of Explosive Devices

*‘There are few of us left. Most people have been displaced by threats, extortion, or because they had to close their businesses. Even so, we carry on living day by day. All this is a fight between gangs who want to take over the territory, and we’re caught in the middle. The bombs sound as if they’re exploding right outside the houses. It’s now part of daily life’ – Key Informant Interview, Machala, Ecuador*

**7 % of the surveyed population, mainly in Colombia and Ecuador, reported having been affected by explosive devices, attacks on their person or property, and even civilian killings were identified.** When breaking down this percentage by country, 9 % of the internally displaced or OSV-affected population surveyed in Colombia reported such impacts, while in Ecuador the proportion stood at 3 %. In Colombia, these protection-related threats were recorded in Norte de Santander, Arauca, Antioquia, Córdoba, Nariño, Putumayo, Casanare, Bolívar, and Valle del Cauca, while in Ecuador, they were recorded in the provinces of Manabí, El Oro, Esmeraldas, and Guayas. Although data from household surveys suggest that these threats are concentrated in certain areas, case records and qualitative evidence indicate that similar acts of violence also occur in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and Venezuela, particularly in relation to attacks targeting the civilian population or their property and killings of civilians by organized criminal groups.

The perpetrators of these threats are diverse and vary according to the region and local dynamics of violence. These variations in **perpetrators are linked to contexts of internal conflict, territorial disputes, extractive activities, and control of the drug trade.** In Colombia, NSAGs are the most frequently cited perpetrators, and in some cases, state military actors are mentioned, particularly in relation to the impacts of clashes between state forces and NSAGs.<sup>28</sup> In Ecuador, more than half of the mentions refer to OCGs, and state forces are also identified. In Venezuela, NSAGs are particularly mentioned in border areas with Colombia. However, in states with mining activities, OCGs are frequently cited, sometimes in alliance with other actors.

**These attacks and killings of civilians form part of territorial control strategies implemented by the various NSAGs or OCGs.** Protection threats in conflict contexts or OSV not only seek to control the territory and its resources but **also work as mechanisms of intimidation to subject the population to extortion or even force**

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<sup>28</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Norte de Santander and Antioquia, Colombia

**them to participate in illicit activities.**<sup>29</sup> One of the greatest concerns regarding internal displacement is the invisibility of its causes. Many of the people forced to leave their homes do not report this as a direct result of violence for various reasons; instead, they state that their displacement is due to 'economic' or family reasons.<sup>30</sup>

*'The night before last, a man was shot three times outside his home while repairing cars. The message they sent to the community was that the man, a mechanic by trade, was repairing vehicles belonging to [armed group]'*  
– Key Informant Interview, Nariño, Colombia

The murders and attacks against civilians and property are neither indiscriminate nor random. In many cases, as noted above, they are directed at:

- people who are unable to pay extortion demands or who refuse to do so;
- young people who refuse recruitment; and
- people or communities perceived as a threat by NSAGs or OCGs, either because they have approached the authorities, because they are suspected of doing so, or because they are considered to support a particular side.

Similarly, women, social and community leaders, environmental activists, and indigenous authorities face heightened risks. For example, in Nariño, Colombia, a key informant highlighted the murder of people who were unable to pay extortion demands;<sup>31</sup> in Cortés, Honduras, a female leader reported having been the victim of several attacks and the murder of two brothers after denouncing acts of corruption;<sup>32</sup> and in Chihuahua, Mexico, a family recounted how cartel members fired shots at their home and those of other relatives.<sup>33</sup> In Ecuador, interviewees and focus group participants reported that their communities had witnessed clashes between gangs, murders, attacks, and even the use of explosive devices.<sup>34</sup>

Of the total households reporting impacts from killings (69 households), 52 % attributed responsibility to NSAGs and 20 % to OCGs. In Colombia, all cases were attributed to NSAGs, while in Ecuador the main responsibility lies with OCGs (41 %). The analysis highlights, particularly in Colombia, a high exposure of **indigenous**

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<sup>29</sup> ProLAC (2025). *Internal Displacement and Other Situations of Violence in the Context of Organized Crime in Latin America*. Available at: <https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ProLAC-Desplazamiento-Interno-en-Contexto-de-Criminalidad-Jul-Oct-2025.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Chihuahua, Mexico

<sup>31</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Nariño, Colombia

<sup>32</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Cortés, Honduras

<sup>33</sup> ProLAC (2025). Focus Group Discussion, Chihuahua, Mexico

<sup>34</sup> Based on four interviews with key informants in Esmeraldas, Machala, and Carchi, Ecuador, in July, October and November 2025.

**authorities to the risk of civilian killings.** The presence and territorial control exercised by the NSAGs create direct threats against these authorities, insofar as these actors impose power dynamics and resort to lethal violence or coercion when they perceive breaches of established agreements or a loss of control.<sup>35</sup> In Colombia, 30 % of households reporting murders identified as indigenous persons and 6 % as Afro-descendants; in Ecuador, 27 % corresponded to Afro-descendant households, suggesting that **ethnic affiliation constitutes a factor of greater exposure and vulnerability** in contexts where NSAGs and OCGs exercise territorial control.

Overall, the analysis shows that attacks on the population, murders and use of explosive devices do not occur in isolation, but rather follow patterns of targeted violence linked to the dynamics of territorial control. These patterns have varying impacts: some people are forced to become internally displaced, while others remain in their communities, compelled to remain silent to protect themselves and their families, while exposed to constant risk.

## 2.3. Robbery and Extortion

Robbery and extortion were identified as a widespread protection risk in the region, **affecting 23 % of those surveyed.** This risk occurs in urban, peri-urban, rural, and border areas, with some variations depending on the local context. The most frequent protection threats linked to this risk are intimidation, kidnapping and gender-based violence (GBV).

### 2.3.1. Persons in Transit

Refugees and migrants in transit face a high level of exposure to theft and extortion along migration routes, particularly at border crossings, informal routes, checkpoints, and areas controlled by armed groups. According to the data collected, **46 % of persons in transit who reported having suffered some form of abuse indicated that they had been victims of theft and/or extortion. Peru was the country where this risk was identified most frequently, reaching a rate of 49 %.** The data reveal that the dynamics of theft and extortion do not occur uniformly but rather take multiple forms and have differing impacts depending on individuals' characteristics.

As shown in the graph, **men report a higher incidence of robbery and extortion (56 %) compared to women (44 %).** Among men, the incidence of extortion by OCGs is

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<sup>35</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Córdoba, Colombia

particularly high among those living on the streets (36 %), followed by men aged 18 to 35 (28 %). Among women, although to a lesser extent, a higher incidence is also observed among those living on the streets (25 %) and those aged 18 to 35 (22 %). In Peru, this figure rises to 73 %, concentrated particularly in Tumbes (on the border with Ecuador) and Tacna (on the border with Chile). 45 % of cases **involve armed groups and/or traffickers** as perpetrators, and **32 % point to state actors, whether military or civilian**.

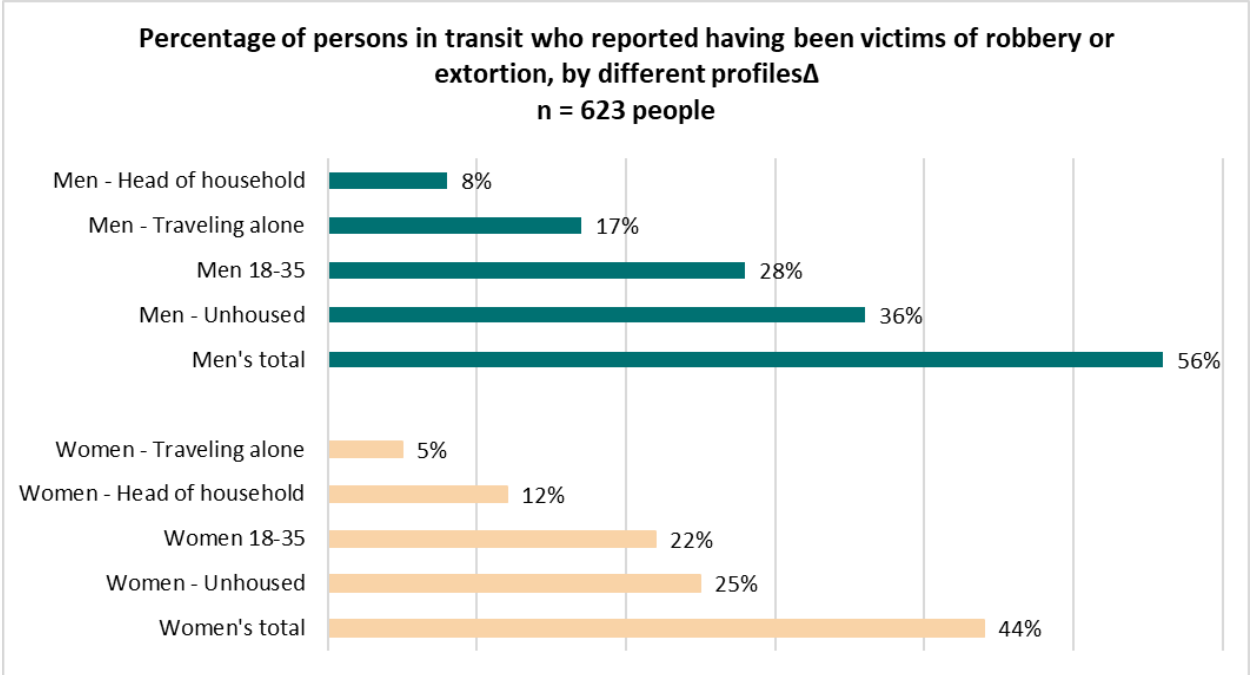


Figure 1. Percentage of persons in transit who reported having been victims of theft or extortion, by different profiles  
 Δ Multiple-choice question; a respondent may have more than one vulnerability. Reading example: 56 % of persons in transit who reported having been victims of theft or extortion are men.  
 Source: Data collected through the ProLAC Initiative Household Survey, July to December 2025. Transit Profile.

In Ecuador, persons in transit remain exposed to this risk, mainly when crossing the border province of Carchi (bordering the department of Nariño in Colombia). In this Colombian region, 54 % of people reported having been victims of robbery and/or extortion by OCGs. In Mexico, robbery is also a recurring issue: eight out of 10 people who reported these threats indicated that they occurred in Chiapas and Tabasco, both states bordering Guatemala, where the majority identified OCGs as the perpetrators.

Robbery and extortion **are not perpetrated solely by OCGs; in some contexts, state actors are also involved**. During monitoring, practices of extortion and robbery were documented in border areas and at checkpoints, where police, military, and

immigration officials made the entry or transit of people through certain territories conditional upon the payment of sums of money.

*“As soon as you cross from Guatemala into Mexico, you’re subjected to yet another extortion. Out of fear, first and foremost, and because we needed to keep going, we agreed, but further on, others were waiting for us”*

*- Key Informant Interview, Chihuahua, Mexico*

These practices reinforce mistrust in the authorities and the perception that reporting incidents of theft and extortion is pointless, which only contributes to impunity and the continuation of the risk. Only 2 % of persons in transit who were victims of theft or extortion filed a report with the authorities. Among those who did not report it, the main barrier was the perception that it did not seem important or that they would not obtain justice (56 %).

The demand for payments constitutes a mechanism of coercion used by various actors to control people’s mobility, restricting their right to free movement. These arbitrary and high charges force people to submit or interrupt their journeys.<sup>36</sup> To avoid extortion, some travelers reported restricting their movements (36 %) or hiding (3 %). A quarter of those who reported extortion (27 %) attempted to negotiate with the perpetrators. To cope with the economic impact of constant extortion, persons in transit reported reducing the number of meals they ate (38 %) or borrowing money (27 %). In 26 % of cases, persons in transit reported having slept on the street.

**These dynamics also affect refugees and migrants in transit who are returning to their countries of origin**, who also reported that extortion is part of the conditions imposed by OCGs and even by some state actors. It is evident that this risk persists throughout the entire migration route, both during journeys to destination countries and during returns to countries of origin.

The impact of robbery and **extortion is exacerbated by their convergence with other protection threats, particularly GBV and kidnapping**. Extortion is closely linked to GBV: women in transit face sexual violence, harassment, sexual exploitation, and even trafficking. Perpetrators use threats of sexual, physical, or lethal violence as a means of control and subjugation. These threats increase when women are

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<sup>36</sup> ProLAC (2025). Focus Group Discussion, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. September 2025

forced to sleep on the streets due to a lack of resources, exposing them to multiple forms of GBV in public spaces, especially at night.

*“The streets at night are no good; they’re far too dangerous, because men with bad intentions are always approaching you, thinking you’re an easy girl, or whatever, or they say, ‘Let’s go to my place,’ but with other intentions” – Focus Group Discussion, Lima, Peru*

In **Mexico, serious concerns persist regarding the high incidence of kidnappings for ransom targeting persons in transit.** Nearly half of those who reported having suffered threats indicated they had been victims of kidnapping. In some shelters, it was estimated that up to nine out of 10 people have faced this threat.<sup>37</sup> These findings show that robbery and extortion are very common and trigger other threats to safety throughout the entire migration route. Limited trust in the authorities highlights the urgency of strengthening protection measures to ensure the safety of refugees and migrants in transit.

### **2.3.2. Persons at Destination**

**28 % of refugees and migrants at their destinations reported having experienced theft and/or extortion.** Unlike the situation observed among persons in transit, the profile of the perpetrators varies significantly, **with members of the host community being the main perpetrators (37 %).** This pattern is observed in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, although with variations depending on the national context. In Mexico, half of respondents identified OCGs as the main perpetrators, followed by actors from the host community. In Peru, 47 % identified civilian state actors, while in Venezuela, 45 % —mainly returnees— blamed military actors. In both countries, the host community is the second most frequently mentioned group.

More than **73 % of those who reported these threats indicated that they occurred in public spaces, public institutions, shelters, around their workplaces, on public transport, at security checkpoints, and in digital environments.** This widespread exposure directly affects perceptions of safety: 85 % of people in affected households expressed fear of encountering new risks in their current location, with theft being the main concern and extortion the fourth.

The recurring identification of members of the host community as perpetrators suggests dynamics of insecurity that **affect local integration processes.** At the same

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<sup>37</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Chihuahua, Mexico

time, the high proportion of mentions of civilian state actors in Peru and military personnel in Venezuela raise serious concerns about abuse of power, impunity, and barriers to accessing protection and reporting mechanisms. These barriers are further reinforced by corrupt practices that hinder regularization processes or access to asylum applications. In Mexico, for example, some people reported that immigration officials demanded irregular payments to 'expedite' their paperwork and obtain migration permits,<sup>38</sup> a finding also corroborated by secondary sources.<sup>39</sup> **Only 14 % of those who experienced theft or extortion filed a complaint.** Among those who did not, the predominant perception was that justice would not be served (45 %), followed by fear of reprisals (26 %), or stigmatization by the authorities (18 %), suggesting a significant under-reporting of these cases.

The returned population reports similar risks. However, unlike refugees and migrants in host countries, they more frequently resort to negotiating with the perpetrators (45 % compared to 11 %). This highlights different coping strategies in contexts where protection options are limited or difficult to access.

The impact of robbery and extortion on families' livelihoods is significant, particularly in households that depend on informal economy and small-scale enterprises, characterized by low and unstable incomes. 72 % of households affected by this crime derive their income from some form of economic activity—occasional work (28 %), self-employment (22 %), and street vending (17 %)— which increases their vulnerability to other protection risks. The qualitative data includes testimonies from people who were forced to abandon their economic activities, causing immediate financial hardship and contributing to the progressive deterioration of their protective environment, including food insecurity, indebtedness, forced displacement, and greater exposure to labor exploitation.

In areas where internally displaced persons, persons in transit and those who have reached their destination converge—such as Cortés (Honduras), Nariño (Colombia), or Manabí (Ecuador)— extortion forms part of broader dynamics of territorial control exercised by armed groups or organized criminal groups, creating additional protection risks. These may include attacks against the population, intimidation, physical violence, or the risk of displacement to avoid the activities of these groups. The situation is particularly worrying for deported or returned persons, who often

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<sup>38</sup> ProLAC (2025). Focus Group Discussion, Mexico City, Mexico

<sup>39</sup> Infobae (31 July 2025). *Activist denounces extortion of migrants by COMAR*. Available at:

<https://www.infobae.com/mexico/2025/07/31/activista-denuncia-extorsion-a-migrantes-de-parte-de-la-comar/>

return to the very same contexts of violence that prompted their initial departure and find themselves facing limited opportunities for integration and a lack of specific policies to guarantee their protection.

### 5.3.3 Internally Displaced Persons and Those Affected by Conflict or Other Situations of Violence (OSV)

*“The thing is, nobody stays; anyone who decides to stay has to submit to these people who demand ‘protection money’. Those who have left, because they can no longer pay, receive death threats” – Key Informant Interview, El Oro, Ecuador*

**Robbery and extortion affect 12 % of internally displaced persons and almost a quarter (24 %) of the population affected by conflict and/or OSV.** The scale and scope of this phenomenon vary significantly depending on the national and local context. In some countries, extortion is one of the main causes of internal displacement,<sup>40</sup> within a framework where organized crime and disputes over territorial control lead to recurrent forced displacement. In other contexts, people remain in affected territories, forced to adapt to the conditions imposed by organized criminal groups, and in some cases by state actors, in order to protect their lives, those of their families, or to maintain their daily activities.

As noted in ProLAC’s report [Internal Displacement and Other Situations of Violence in Contexts of Organized Crime in Latin America](#), extortion is closely linked to a range of protection-related threats such as intimidation, physical violence and GBV. It can also **lead to direct attacks on the civilian population and their property, damage caused by the use of explosive devices, and the killing of civilians**, particularly when people are unable to pay or refuse to comply with the financial demands imposed by organized criminal groups.

In Ecuador, 5 % of respondents reported having been victims of these protection-related threats, although qualitative data suggests the scale may be greater and that threats associated with extortion also affect people in other countries in the region. Interviews with key informants reveal that extortion is sustained over time and is accompanied by repeated death threats and attacks against individuals and their

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<sup>40</sup> ProLAC (2025). *Internal displacement and other situations of violence in contexts of organized crime in Latin America*. Available at: <https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ProLAC-Desplazamiento-Interno-en-Contexto-de-Criminalidad-Jul-Oct-2025.pdf>

property. In one of the cases identified in Honduras, the interviewee reported that, after years of extortion payments, they were forced to close their business and suffered attacks on their vehicle after the criminal group searched their assets and properties.<sup>41</sup>

In Mexico, key informants indicate that “*cobro de piso*” (protection money), as extortion is commonly known, affects several states across the country and is accompanied by serious threats against small business owners, including intimidation of owners of “*tienditas de abarrotes*” (small grocery shops).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, focus group participants reported death threats, attacks on their homes and vehicles, use of explosives, and killings of civilians linked to extortion.

*“We have heard of some cases of extortion and robberies within our community. There was the case of women neighbors who ran clothing businesses and were called and threatened that if they did not pay a ‘vaccine’ [protection money] of \$1,000, bombs would be planted. A neighbor who runs a shrimp farm was also asked for a \$5,000 ‘vaccine’, but as he did not pay, a bomb was planted at his house” – Focus Group Discussion, Machala, Ecuador*

These **attacks work as mechanisms of collective punishment and warning, seeking to reinforce territorial control and ensure continued payments from the population.** Furthermore, this violence is perpetrated within the communities themselves, and in some cases, the perpetrators are part of the community, which intensifies fear, tears apart the social fabric, and weakens support networks. As a result, many people are forced to close their businesses, make multiple payments, or become internally displaced to safeguard their lives.

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<sup>41</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Honduras

<sup>42</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Mexico

## 2.4. Denial, Obstacles, and Restrictions on Access to International Protection

*“The population faces considerable uncertainty and doubt, and a government and public institutions that are not reaching out to them. The new regulations facilitate deportation and the removal of people... The current outlook is not positive, and I see that same uncertainty in people who do have documentation” – Key Informant Interview, Lima, Peru*

Denial of, or obstacles to, effective access to international protection continues to be one of the most significant protection risks for refugees in Latin America. This risk is exacerbated by **US migration policies and departures driven by a climate of fear among the population residing there or hoping to settle in the country.** Furthermore, this risk is evident primarily through the difficulty of applying for asylum at border points, administrative barriers (such as excessive delays in procedures), institutional practices that restrict timely access to protection mechanisms, and, in the most serious cases, deportation or refoulement, including through institutionalized practices of returning people in need of international protection.

**47 % of households with refugees and migrants at destination reported having international protection needs.** Compared with the previous analysis period (October 2024–January 2025), ProLAC observes an increase in the percentage of households reporting that they had applied for asylum. From July to December 2025, the figure stood at 56 %, whereas in October 2024–January 2025, it was 44 %.

This increase occurs against a backdrop of a reconfiguration of the destination countries for the refugee and migrant population,<sup>43</sup> in which many people have faced restrictions on entering the United States or have been deported, remaining in countries previously considered merely part of the migration route, such as Ecuador, Honduras, and Mexico, or countries that were not among the main destination options. Among the households in transit surveyed in South America who indicated that their intention for the coming month was to reach another country, **41 % cited Brazil as their destination—a country that had not previously been identified as a predominant destination— followed by Chile at 28 %. Meanwhile, households in transit in Central America and Mexico reported Colombia as their main intended destination (56 %).** Although Mexico is not frequently mentioned as a destination in

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<sup>43</sup> ProLAC and MMC (2025) *Migration dynamics and protection risks in north-south return movements in the Americas*. Available at: [https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ProLac\\_MMC\\_Migration-dynamics-protection-risks-Americas.pdf](https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ProLac_MMC_Migration-dynamics-protection-risks-Americas.pdf)

the surveys, ProLAC's protection monitoring reveals significant changes in mobility dynamics within the country, compared to the previous regional analysis (between October 2024 and January 2025). In the previous period, 71 % of those surveyed were in transit and 26 % at their destination; in the current period, 76 % are at destination and only 7 % in transit. This change suggests that people are staying longer in Mexico and that there is increased interest in applying for international protection in the country, rather than continuing the journey to the United States. Among households at destination in Mexico, 82 % reported having applied for international protection. Although the percentage increase compared to the previous period (77 %) is not significant, the absolute number of cases recorded by monitoring shows a 204 % increase.

However, access to international protection has been restricted by multiple barriers. In household surveys, the most prominent barrier is a lack of information or unfamiliarity with the procedure (41 %). Other barriers, such as obstacles imposed by the authorities and fear of interacting with them (3 %), appear less frequently, but are highlighted repeatedly and consistently in the qualitative data, which points to their impact in a context of the securitization of migration flows. Key informants in several countries indicate that, from the moment people attempt to cross borders in search of refuge, they face enormous obstacles, including from state agents.

At the regional level, among households that have not applied for international protection, two in 10 are single-parent households, mostly headed by women, and three in 10 have at least one person with a serious medical condition or disability. This situation is particularly worrying because, as highlighted by qualitative sources in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, in many host countries people face limited access to health services, including specialist medical care. This is due, on the one hand, to the lack of documentation required by some national regulations and, on the other, to the discretionary application of these rules by public officials, even in cases where the regulations guarantee access to the health system regardless of immigration status.

*“The hardest part is getting into the country, because either you get robbed or the immigration police themselves put you in prison. If you come with an advisor [smuggler], nothing happens to you, which is why we believe a payment is involved so that the police don’t do anything to those who cross with an advisor. The ‘advisors’ are in charge of paying bribes to tell the police who is allowed through” – Focus Group Discussion, Lima, Peru*

**Upon entry into host countries, public migration and asylum policies pose a risk of refoulement for those in need of international protection.** In Peru, this is particularly linked to immigration enforcement operations and joint interventions between the National Police and immigration authorities, within the framework of the implementation of the Exceptional Administrative Sanctioning Procedure (PASEE according to its acronym in Spanish). ProLAC’s protection monitoring has documented cases of people who were reportedly deported despite having evidence of their asylum applications or migration documentation,<sup>44</sup> which reinforces the perception of risk and legal uncertainty among the refugee and migrant population. Added to this are the difficulties in entering Peruvian territory, particularly in border areas, where extortionate practices are reported to be committed by officials who make entry into the country conditional and expose people to additional protection risks.

*“I was actually afraid to come to the meeting, as they are deporting people. My husband is undocumented in the country... [If] he is late coming home, I’m afraid they’ll deport my husband. When they carry out raids, they round up everyone without papers and take them away” – Focus Group Discussion, Lima, Peru*

In Chile, several key informants expressed concern about rapid expulsions at the Colchane border, or “*reconducciones*” or pushbacks,<sup>45</sup> and about the implementation of Law 21.655. This law has strengthened the regulatory framework for migration control and introduces additional restrictions on access to the asylum procedure, including a seven-day deadline for formalizing the application and limitations linked to prior stays in third countries. These provisions not only hinder access to international protection but also increase the risk of expulsion contrary to the principle of non-refoulement. Similarly, in Ecuador, reforms to the Organic Law on Human Mobility have been announced which strengthen immigration controls and

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<sup>44</sup> ProLAC (2025). Focus Group Discussion. Lima, Peru

<sup>45</sup> ProLAC (2025). Based on four key informant interviews in Tarapacá, Chile, in November and December 2025.

tighten certain entry and residence requirements, which could create barriers to entry into the country and, in practice, affect access to the asylum system.<sup>46</sup>

*“Border police are the main obstacle, as are public officials, particularly regarding access to asylum and information. I think the issue of asylum is also being overlooked, because the military are not trained in asylum matters. The military are trained in human trafficking... If the PDI (Chilean Investigative Police) were already restricting it, what is left for the military?” – Interview with key informant, Tarapacá, Chile*

At the same time, in countries such as Honduras, asylum applications continued to rise without the institutional capacity to process them growing at the same rate.<sup>47</sup> In Mexico, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR)<sup>48</sup> continues to have limited capacity to meet the demand for applications, leaving many people at risk of immigration checks and administrative detention, particularly those lacking documentation proving their status as asylum seekers. In this context, many families express fear of encountering police or immigration authorities, in a situation marked by obstacles and delays exceeding the three-month period established for obtaining these documents. Subsequently, the process can take over a year before a decision is issued. The absence of this documentation often leads the authorities to perceive asylum seekers as being in an irregular immigration situation, exposing them to deportation proceedings.<sup>49</sup>

The possibility of deportation entails various risks for individuals, as it exposes them to the prospect of returning to countries where their lives and safety could still be at risk. As shown in the following chart, among deported households, **more than half (55 %) reported needing international protection, of whom 53 % had initiated an asylum application, mainly in the United States, Mexico, Chile, and Panama; 7 % of these cases were recognized refugees and 10 % had a scheduled appointment.** Although the majority of deported households who do not hold the nationality of the country to which they have been deported reported needing international protection, only 12 % have applied for asylum in their current country.

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<sup>46</sup> R4V (2025). Presentation of the Analysis of the Reforms to the Organic Law on Human Mobility

<sup>47</sup> El Heraldo Honduras (2025). *Asylum applications on the rise in Honduras*. Available at: <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/aumento-solicitudes-refugio-honduras-migracion-estados-unidos-OA28289766>

<sup>48</sup> IOM (2025). DTM Mexico Summary September – December 2025. Available at: [https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1686/files/documents/2026-02/2512-sintesis-dtm-nacional-sep-dic\\_0.pdf](https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1686/files/documents/2026-02/2512-sintesis-dtm-nacional-sep-dic_0.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> ProLAC (2026). *Protection Analysis: Mexico, July–December 2025*

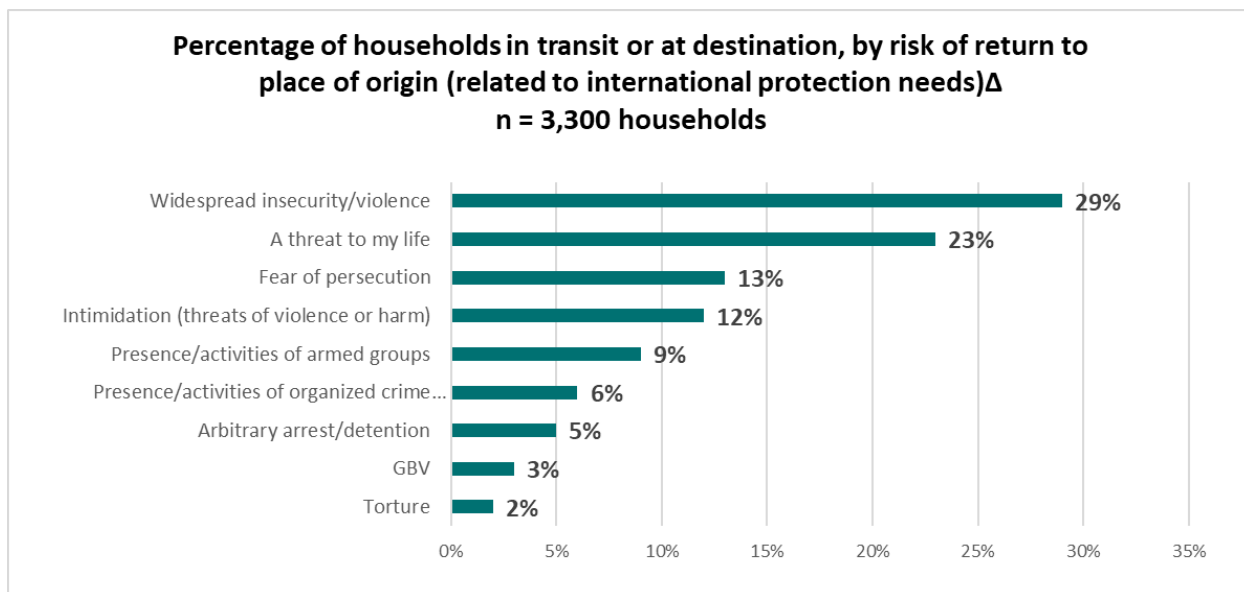


Figure 2. Percentage of households in transit or at destination, by risk of return to their place of origin (related to international protection needs).

<sup>Δ</sup> Multiple-choice question; a respondent could select more than one option. Reading example: 29 % of households cite 'widespread insecurity/violence' as a risk of returning to their place of origin.

Source: Data collected through the ProLAC Initiative Household Survey, July to December 2025.

Deportations occurred from the US (71 %), Mexico (18 %), Panama (3 %), Peru (3 %), Chile (2 %), and Bolivia and Costa Rica with 1 % each. At the time of the survey, these individuals were mainly in Honduras (39 %), Mexico (14 %), Venezuela (12 %), Guatemala (11 %), Colombia (11 %), Peru (9 %), as well as Panama and Ecuador (2 % each). According to the survey data, **5 % of the population in their destination country have been deported, while 17 % have returned to their country of origin.** The differences between those deported and those who have returned are significant: all those who have returned hold the nationality of the country where they are currently located (almost all Venezuelan); in contrast, **38 % of those deported were sent to third countries, mainly Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Guatemala, and Ecuador.**

*"One of them went to the United States; they didn't give him the option of asylum and sent him back [deported him]. It's been about seven years since his father was killed and they were forced out of their home. When he returned, people [criminal groups] arrived, saw him and went to threaten him the next day. They recognized him. So, he had to go into the shelter; he couldn't go back" – Key Informant Interview, Guatemala City, Guatemala*

Among those deported, just over half (60 %) were single men, half of whom were Honduran. By comparison, only 21 % of returned men were travelling alone. Furthermore, 7 % of the deported population reported having no documents, and in half of these cases, people stated that their documents had been confiscated by the authorities.

In the face of practices that may violate international refugee law and even lead to refoulement, UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and civil society — particularly through legal assistance— play a key role in promoting and protecting refugees' rights. These organizations take administrative or legal action to halt deportations.<sup>50</sup>

*“We try to ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is upheld in substance, even in cases where the asylum application has been rejected, when it is clear that the individuals in question are in need of international protection” – Key Informant Interview, Tarapacá, Chile*

## 2.5. Discrimination, Stigmatization, and Denial of Resources, Opportunities, and Services

Across the region and among all monitored populations, the threat of **discrimination emerges as the third most frequently reported protection threat, with 19 % of households reporting having experienced at least one incident**. Furthermore, 10 % of households reporting a protection threat stated that they had experienced an incident of denial of resources, opportunities, or services. While discrimination and denial of resources, opportunities, and services is experienced by all groups monitored by ProLAC, it manifests itself differently among refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, compared to internally displaced persons and people affected by OSV.

### 2.5.1. Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants at Destination and in Transit

Discrimination, stigmatization, and denial of resources, opportunities, and services are some of the most significant risks among the refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant population, both at destination and in transit, affecting their ability to integrate effectively. For example, **40 % of households at destination who reported having**

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<sup>50</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Tarapacá, Chile

experienced a protection threat reported at least one incident of discrimination, while among households in transit this proportion was 30 %.

Discrimination remains the main protection threat for these populations in almost all the countries monitored, with the highest levels in Brazil (64 %), Ecuador (59 %), and Chile (50 %).

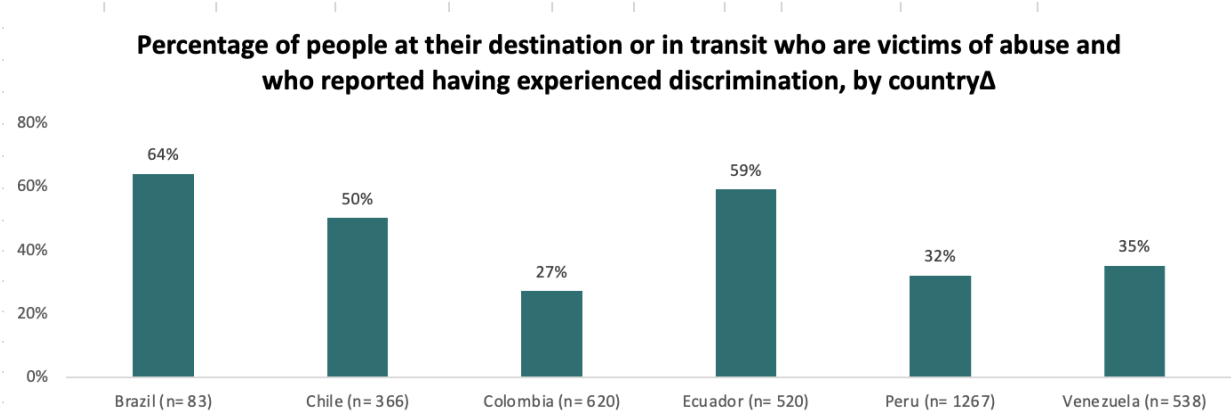


Figure 3. Percentage of people at destination or in transit, victims of an abuse and reported having suffered discrimination, by country.

Δ Multiple-choice question; a respondent could select more than one form of abuse. Reading example: In Ecuador, 59 % of people at destination or in transit who reported having been victims of some form of abuse said they had suffered discrimination.

Source: Data collected through the ProLAC Initiative Household Survey, July to December 2025.

The high percentages in **countries** such as Ecuador and Venezuela could indicate **key changes in national contexts, including an increasingly securitized approach that perpetuates barriers to the effective integration of refugee and migrant populations**, as well as limited institutional capacities to receive returnees or deportees. For example, in Ecuador, reforms to the Organic Law on Human Mobility reflect an approach that links international protection with state security considerations.<sup>51</sup> In Ecuador, the population of persons in transit and at destination consisted mainly of Venezuelans (56 %) and Colombians (34 %), groups that reported incidents of discrimination. However, this discrimination becomes more pronounced when factors of nationality and ethnicity are combined. For example, among Colombians who reported discrimination, 57 % identified as Afro-descendants.

<sup>51</sup> R4V (2025). Presentation of the Analysis on the Reforms to the Organic Law on Human Mobility

*'I have felt threatened when, on occasion, Ecuadorians look at me differently and when they have made negative comments about Venezuelans' – Focus Group Discussion, Manabí, Ecuador*

In Venezuela, discrimination was reported mainly by returnee households, a group representing 41 % of the households covered by the protection monitoring in this country. Qualitative data suggest the existence of practices and dynamics that may be influencing these households' access to programs such as food distribution and school services, among others; in some cases linked to perceptions of their levels of need<sup>52</sup> or due to a lack of spots.<sup>53</sup> This is also reflected in the quantitative data: 27v% of returned or deported households in Venezuela reported at least one incident of denial of resources, opportunities, or services, compared to 20v% of non-returned or non-deported households. These trends illustrate an already strained public system, which faces new demands due to the arrival of returned or deported persons.<sup>54</sup>

The **high rates of discrimination reported in Brazil and Chile are particularly worrying, as both have recently become destination countries** for households in transit in South America. Data on previous mobility shows that, among those who had previously resided in these countries, discrimination was a significant factor in the decision to leave. In Brazil, it was the third most common reason for leaving the country (12 %), while in Chile it was the fourth most frequently cited reason (19 %). In the case of Chile, moreover, a lack of integration, access to international protection, or migration regularization were cited by 21 % of households as a reason for leaving the country, highlighting the challenges to integration, which are often linked to discrimination. In Chile, 79 % of people at their destination or in transit covered by ProLAC monitoring do not have any migration permit, the second-highest proportion in the region, after Mexico (85 %). This lack of documentation increases barriers to accessing services, opportunities, and resources, which often results in their denial.

Across the region, 14 % of households at destination and in transit who reported having experienced a protection threat indicated that **they had been denied access to resources, opportunities, and services**. This is observed primarily in access to basic rights and public services, particularly as in several countries in the region there

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<sup>52</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Táchira, Venezuela

<sup>53</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Maracaibo, Venezuela

<sup>54</sup> ProLAC, Mixed Migration Centre (2025). *Migration dynamics and protection risks in north-south return movements in the Americas*. Available at: [https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ProLac\\_MMC\\_Migration-dynamics-protection-risks-Americas.pdf](https://prolac.live/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ProLac_MMC_Migration-dynamics-protection-risks-Americas.pdf)

are gaps between what the law guarantees and the actual exercise of rights. Although some States guarantee access to health and education regardless of immigration status, the actual exercise of these rights often depends on the discretion of officials and a lack of awareness of the regulations, both among the refugee and migrant population as well as among the staff responsible for providing care.<sup>55</sup>

In countries such as Chile, Ecuador, and Mexico, qualitative data indicate that, even though the law guarantees access to healthcare services regardless of immigration status, this access depends on the discretion of officials, who often deny access to care. This is particularly evident in cases of medical emergencies, where staff frequently demand documentation, request a temporary identification number for healthcare or proof of address,<sup>56</sup> despite the fact that these demands are considered improper practices. **In the most serious cases, these barriers have led to other protection threats**, such as extortion, where guards demand money from refugees, migrants, or asylum seekers to allow them to enter healthcare centers.<sup>57</sup>

*“At one point we had documented that, if the guards saw an opportunity to get money out of someone, they would do so; they would extort them. They would say things like ‘give me 5, 10, 20 pesos and I’ll give you the ticket so you can get through’. There is also a reluctance on the part of healthcare staff to treat migrants; they do not like doing so” – Key Informant Interview, Tapachula, Mexico*

Even when people do manage to access medical care in hospitals and health centers, they report degrading treatment and xenophobic remarks.<sup>58</sup> Similar situations occur in other public institutions. For example, in Chile, cases were mentioned at the Civil Registry, which refuses to issue identity documents even when legal requirements have been met.<sup>59</sup> In Mexico, focus groups speak of humiliating treatment of asylum seekers by some COMAR officials,<sup>60</sup> as well as shortcomings in the care provided to

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<sup>55</sup> Fundación Madre Josefa (2025). Protection Snapshot: Chile, Tarapacá Region, July–December 2025. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/u0rpdqrd/snapshot-monitoreo-de-proteccion-fundacion-madre-josefa-julio-diciembre-2025.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Danish Refugee Council (2025). Protection Monitoring: Mexico, Snapshot September–December 2025. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/vbbf1vdr/mex-snapshot-sep-dic-2025-esp.pdf>

Madre Josefa Foundation (2025). Protection Snapshot: Chile, Tarapacá Region, July–December 2025. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/u0rpdqrd/snapshot-monitoreo-de-proteccion-fundacion-madre-josefa-julio-diciembre-2025.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Tapachula, Mexico

<sup>58</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Lima, Peru

<sup>59</sup> Fundación Madre Josefa (2025). Protection Snapshot: Chile, Tarapacá Region, July–December 2025. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/u0rpdqrd/snapshot-monitoreo-de-proteccion-fundacion-madre-josefa-julio-diciembre-2025.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> ProLAC (2025). Focus Group Discussion, Mexico City, Mexico

non-Spanish-speaking asylum seekers due to a lack of resources to adequately serve this population.<sup>61</sup>

These findings are also reflected in the quantitative data: incidents of **discrimination and denial of resources, opportunities, and services are perpetrated mainly by the host community (73 %) and by civilian state actors (23 %); and occur most frequently in public places (58 %) and public institutions (29 %).**

*“Access is guaranteed in health, education, and regularization, but its actual exercise is subject to the discretion of officials and a lack of regulatory knowledge among both the population and the professionals providing care; this ultimately results in migrants facing discrimination, unequal treatment, and bureaucratic barriers” – Key Informant Interview, Tarapacá, Chile*

Discrimination and the denial of resources, services and opportunities result in limited access to health services (22 % of households at destination or in transit reported having no access) and to education (41 % of school-age children and adolescents were not attending school). These limitations leave private services and those provided by civil society and international cooperation as the only remaining providers. In this context, these organizations have taken on a key role in safeguarding rights, accompanying people to medical appointments, actively managing care within health services, and initiating legal proceedings such as constitutional appeals or guardianship orders.

Furthermore, in light of the discrimination and the denial of access to basic rights and services, some people are forced to urgently seek mechanisms for immigration regularization and access to documentation, as reported by ProLAC partners in Chile<sup>62</sup> and Mexico.<sup>63</sup> However, when administrative barriers become insurmountable, many people are left vulnerable to scams. 4 % of households in destination and transit countries that reported protection threats also indicated that they had been victims of scams, generally linked to hiring so-called lawyers or acquiring fraudulent regularization documents that people believe to be genuine and that will protect them against the risk of detention or deportation.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Danish Refugee Council (2025). *Protection Monitoring: Mexico, Snapshot September–December 2025*.

Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/vbbf1vdr/mex-snapshot-sep-dic-2025-esp.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Fundación Madre Josefa (2025). *Protection Snapshot Chile, Tarapacá Region, July–December 2025*. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/uOrpdqrd/snapshot-monitoreo-de-proteccion-fundacion-madre-josefa-julio-diciembre-2025.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Danish Refugee Council (2025). *Protection Monitoring: Mexico, Snapshot September–December 2025*. Available at: <https://drc.ngo/media/vbbf1vdr/mex-snapshot-sep-dic-2025-esp.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> ProLAC (2026). *Protection Analysis: Mexico, July–December 2025*.

Furthermore, incidents of discrimination and the denial of services erode trust in state institutions and occur within a **regional context marked by an increase in restrictive rhetoric and measures towards refugees and migrants**.<sup>65</sup> Qualitative data point to growing resentment in host communities towards refugees and migrants, reflected in the refusal to rent out homes, refusal of service in restaurants, and xenophobic comments in public spaces. Key informants also indicate the spread of narratives in which refugees and asylum seekers enjoy *'privileges'* that host communities do not have.<sup>66</sup> In some cases, these perceptions have even led to calls for humanitarian actors to cease their operations in certain areas, based on the mistaken belief that they *"only supported foreigners and, moreover, were the ones encouraging foreigners to keep coming"*.<sup>67</sup>

### 2.5.2. Internally Displaced Persons and People Affected by Conflict or Other Situations of Violence (OSV)

*"Regarding the relationship between people who live here and the neighboring neighborhood, there was a lot of hostility at first. They said we were troublemakers because we came from a troubled neighborhood" – Key Informant Interview, Esmeraldas, Ecuador*

Discrimination and the denial of resources, services and opportunities also affect internally displaced persons and communities affected by OSV. As highlighted in ProLAC's thematic report on [\*Internal Displacement and Other Situations of Violence in Contexts of Organized Crime in Latin America\*](#), discrimination often arises as a consequence of internal displacement, manifesting itself in the stigmatization of displaced persons within host communities. **Fear and the perceived association of displaced persons with armed or criminal groups is reflected in discriminatory comments**, as well as in the denial of or the imposition of barriers to access to resources, opportunities and services.

Of the total population internally displaced persons or those in contexts of OSV who reported a protection threat, 16 % indicated they had suffered some form of

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<sup>65</sup> Radio UChile (2025). [Kast toughens stance on migration and issues 102-day ultimatum to undocumented migrants](https://radio.uchile.cl/2025/11/30/kast-endurece-discurso-migratorio-y-da-ultimatum-de-102-dias-a-extranjeros-irregulares/). Available at: <https://radio.uchile.cl/2025/11/30/kast-endurece-discurso-migratorio-y-da-ultimatum-de-102-dias-a-extranjeros-irregulares/>

<sup>66</sup> El País (2025). [Daniel Noboa draws inspiration from Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric to deport Colombian prisoners from Ecuador](https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-07-31/daniel-noboa-se-inspira-en-el-discurso-antimigracion-de-trump-para-deportar-presos-colombianos-desde-ecuador.html?event=regonetap&event_log=regonetap&prod=REGCRARTCLB&o=cerradoclb). Available at: [https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-07-31/daniel-noboa-se-inspira-en-el-discurso-antimigracion-de-trump-para-deportar-presos-colombianos-desde-ecuador.html?event=regonetap&event\\_log=regonetap&prod=REGCRARTCLB&o=cerradoclb](https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-07-31/daniel-noboa-se-inspira-en-el-discurso-antimigracion-de-trump-para-deportar-presos-colombianos-desde-ecuador.html?event=regonetap&event_log=regonetap&prod=REGCRARTCLB&o=cerradoclb)

<sup>66</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Carchi, Ecuador

<sup>67</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview. Desaguadero, Peru

discrimination or denial of resources, opportunities, and services. Most of these incidents were recorded in Colombia and Ecuador. Given that **forced displacement was mostly perpetrated by NSAGs (72 %) or organized criminal groups (29 %), avoidance, stigmatization, and mistrust towards displaced persons are often associated with the fear of attracting these same dynamics of violence to host communities.**

*“In the case of displaced people, stigmatization is very common; there is always curiosity on the part of the host community and sometimes they are categorized as problematic individuals, which prevents trust from being built” – Key Informant Interview, Cortés, Honduras*

Although most displaced households described their relationship with the host community as good (45 %) or acceptable (34 %), the most frequently cited factors affecting that relationship were mistrust (65 %), insecurity or widespread violence (26 %), and discrimination or xenophobia (18 %).

In Venezuela, discrimination and denial of resources may also be linked to political affiliation. Various qualitative sources across the country have reported that access to public services, such as food or gas distribution programs, is denied particularly to people perceived as part of the political opposition.<sup>68</sup> This is consistent with quantitative data: denial of resources, opportunities, and services was the third most frequently reported protection threat in the country (17 %), after forced displacement and robbery (18 % each). These dynamics intensified against a backdrop of heightened political tensions between Venezuela and the United States towards the end of the year, as well as the tightening of territorial control measures in various regions of the country.<sup>69</sup>

Discrimination in contexts of OSV and internal displacement exacerbates pre-existing inequalities and stereotypes, **disproportionately affecting already marginalized groups.** 9 % of those who mentioned some form of abuse reported having suffered discrimination. Of this total, 8 % belonged to populations with diverse SOGIESC; 15 % had a serious medical condition or a chronic illness, 10 % had a disability, and 8 % were from single-headed households.

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<sup>68</sup> ProLAC (2026). *Protection Analysis: Venezuela, July–December 2025*

<sup>69</sup> ProLAC (2026). *Protection Analysis: Venezuela, July–December 2025*

In Ecuador, internal displacement also affected refugees and migrants who were forced to move within the country or to live in situations of forced displacement. 74 % of them lacked migration documentation. In Ecuador and Venezuela, discrimination and denial of resources, services, and opportunities were particularly high among survivors of GBV, at 23 % and 34 %, respectively. Venezuelans, both within and outside the country, experienced higher rates of discrimination and denial of services: among those who reported threats to their safety, 17 % stated they had experienced discrimination, 11 percentage points more than other nationalities.

As is the case with discrimination against populations in transit and at destination, discrimination against internally displaced persons or households experiencing other forms of violence can trigger secondary displacement. Given that 94 % of internally displaced households reported risks should they return to their places of origin, such as threats to life (54 %), widespread violence or insecurity (43 %), and the presence or activities of armed groups (41 %), integration into host communities is essential. However, **26 % of displaced households reported having been displaced more than once**. Although to a lesser extent than intimidation or threats of violence and widespread violence or insecurity (reported by 45 % and 44 %, respectively), fear of persecution (15 %), and discrimination (8 %) also influence secondary displacement. In response to these incidents, refugees and migrants in transit and at destination, as well as internally displaced persons and those experiencing other situations of violence, have turned to the ombudsman's office. Some people reported these incidents to the ombudsman's office, which provided support to facilitate access to services when these had been unduly denied.<sup>70</sup> However, these capacities are not widely known among the population and, in many contexts, are not easily accessible.<sup>71</sup>

**Humanitarian organizations, civil society, and the church remain essential resources** for countering discrimination and the denial of services, resources, and opportunities. While civil society organizations often provide services to people who are frequently and arbitrarily denied access by state institutions, their work goes beyond this. These organizations also strengthen the capacities of the people concerned in relation to their rights and obligations and help to counter misinformation and discriminatory discourse.

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<sup>70</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Lima, Peru

<sup>71</sup> ProLAC (2025). Key Informant Interview, Azuay, Ecuador

*“Sometimes churches help you more than government offices; at least they give you guidance” – Focus Group Discussion, Tarapacá, Chile*

## 3. Recommendations

### To State Bodies

- **Recognize and protect internally displaced persons, guaranteeing their access to humanitarian aid, protection, justice, and reparation.** In countries where there is no legal framework for protection against forced internal displacement, States should consider enacting and promulgating regulations in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- **Collect and analyze official data on forced internal displacement at State and national levels,** including causes, profiles, and impacts, disaggregated by age, gender, and other diversity factors, to better understand the risks and their differentiated impacts.
- **Adopt legal, administrative, and operational measures to ensure effective access to international protection, respecting the principles of non-refoulement and non-punishment.** This involves increasing capacity to receive asylum applications, particularly at border points, improving access to information on the procedure, increasing capacity to process applications, and ensuring that these are processed diligently and with due process guarantees. This includes the allocation of an adequate number of trained staff, the provision of interpretation and translation services, and the implementation of accessible mechanisms for disseminating clear, inclusive, comprehensible, and transparent information on the procedures and rights associated with asylum applications.
- **Promote and streamline mechanisms for temporary protection and migration regularization** for persons in need of international protection and vulnerable migrants who do not meet the criteria for recognition as refugees, with a human rights-based approach and ensuring that such alternatives do not impede or replace access to asylum.
- **Strengthen accessible, multilingual information systems** and carry out awareness-raising campaigns targeting refugees and migrants, people in need of international protection, and those affected by internal displacement, as well as host communities, to promote a better understanding of social and

community dynamics, prevent stigma, and ensure that those affected have access to reliable and up-to-date information.

## To United Nations Agencies and Humanitarian Organizations

- **Coordinate joint campaigns with State institutions** to advise internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers on their rights and the available protection mechanisms, supporting their timely access to essential services.
- **Strengthen the capacities of State officials** and other service providers at different levels in the design and implementation of protocols and care pathways for internally displaced persons.
- **Strengthen the capacities of State officials regarding human rights standards**, particularly for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.
- **Implement joint campaigns with States** to eradicate all forms of discrimination against the refugee and migrant population.
- **Expand the scope of legal aid programs for the affected population** in order to better guarantee their rights, particularly regarding access to international protection, regularization mechanisms, and registration and reparations for internally displaced persons.
- **Maintain and strengthen efforts to monitor and generate evidence on the situation of internally displaced persons, as well as access to rights for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.** Promote joint advocacy for the guarantee of rights through coordinated and collaborative actions between civil society organizations, humanitarian organizations, and States.
- **Strengthen regional coordination among protection actors** to coordinate efforts around a common, coherent, and complementary program approach, enabling progress towards more comprehensive and sustained responses to identified protection needs and risks.

## To Donors

- **Support protection and assistance programs for refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons**, with a focus on legal assistance, guidance on international protection, migration regularization processes, integration and reintegration, access to services and information, and protections for internally displaced persons, including justice and reparation mechanisms.

- **Contribute to the official recognition of internal displacement** through dialogue, bilateral cooperation, and the exchange of good practices, while respecting the sovereignty of States.
- **Continue to fund protection programs in the region, particularly those with a localization approach.** Provide timely, predictable, multi-year, and long-term funding for local civil society organizations, which are often the first to respond to gaps in access to rights.
- **Encourage and support coordination and collaboration initiatives among humanitarian organizations** to facilitate joint protection analysis and responses adapted to regional dynamics.



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