



2018

MIGRATION TO AND THROUGH MEXICO

FACT SHEET

W | Wilson
Center

MEXICO INSTITUTE

MEXICO continues to be a growing destination for migrants. In the first month of 2019, the National Migration Institute of Mexico (INM) registered record numbers of migrants who transit through or who seek to stay in Mexico. Central American asylum seekers, Venezuelan refugees, and many other regular and irregular* migrants come to Mexico in the hopes of finding economic prosperity, personal security, and a better life than what they left behind.

To provide a comprehensive look at migration to Mexico, here is a look at the latest data from 2018.

*Irregular migrants are people who enter a country, usually in search of employment, without the necessary documents and permits.

Number of irregular migrants registered in each state by INM officials in 2018

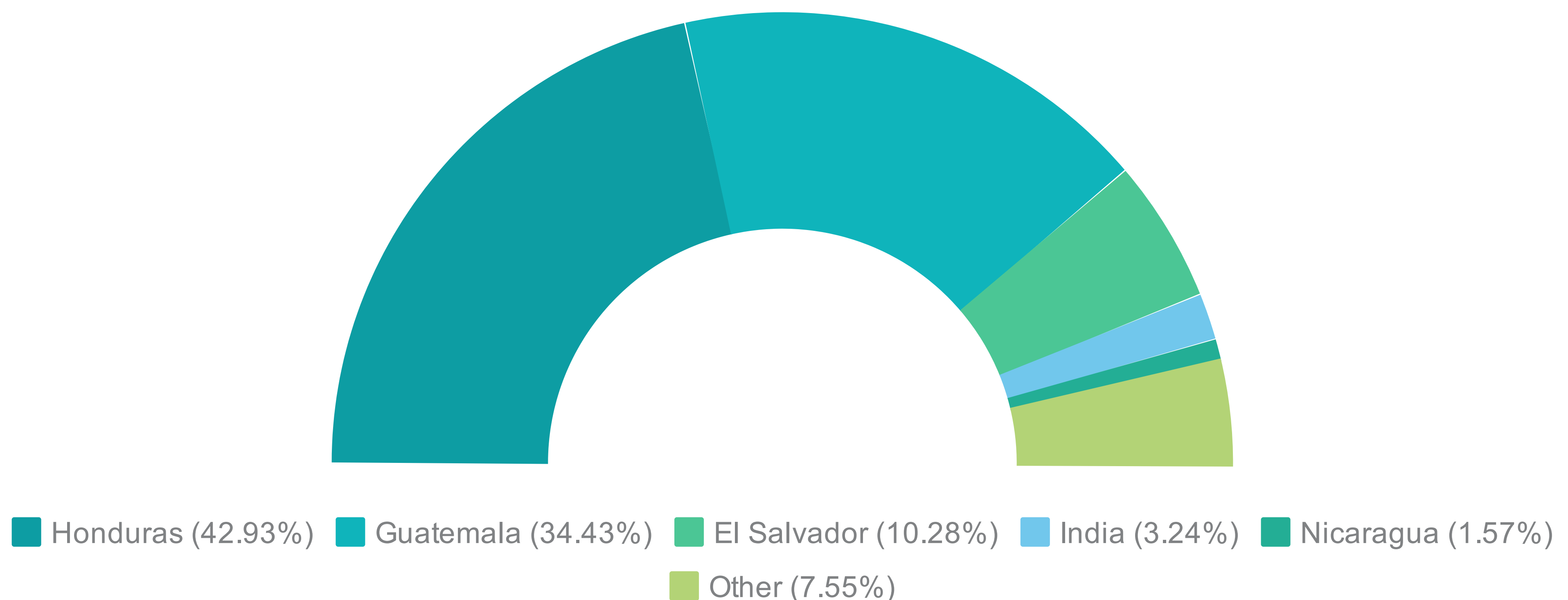
Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



MEXICO'S southern Border States register the largest number of migrants due to the high volume of Central Americans from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras who cross the border on foot or by vehicle. Chiapas encounters the largest number of migrants because of well-established migratory routes and networks to this state from Central America. Although southern states like Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz encounter the bulk of migratory flows, the final destination for most migrants is usually in other parts of Mexico or in the United States.

Top migrant nationalities registered by INM officials in 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018

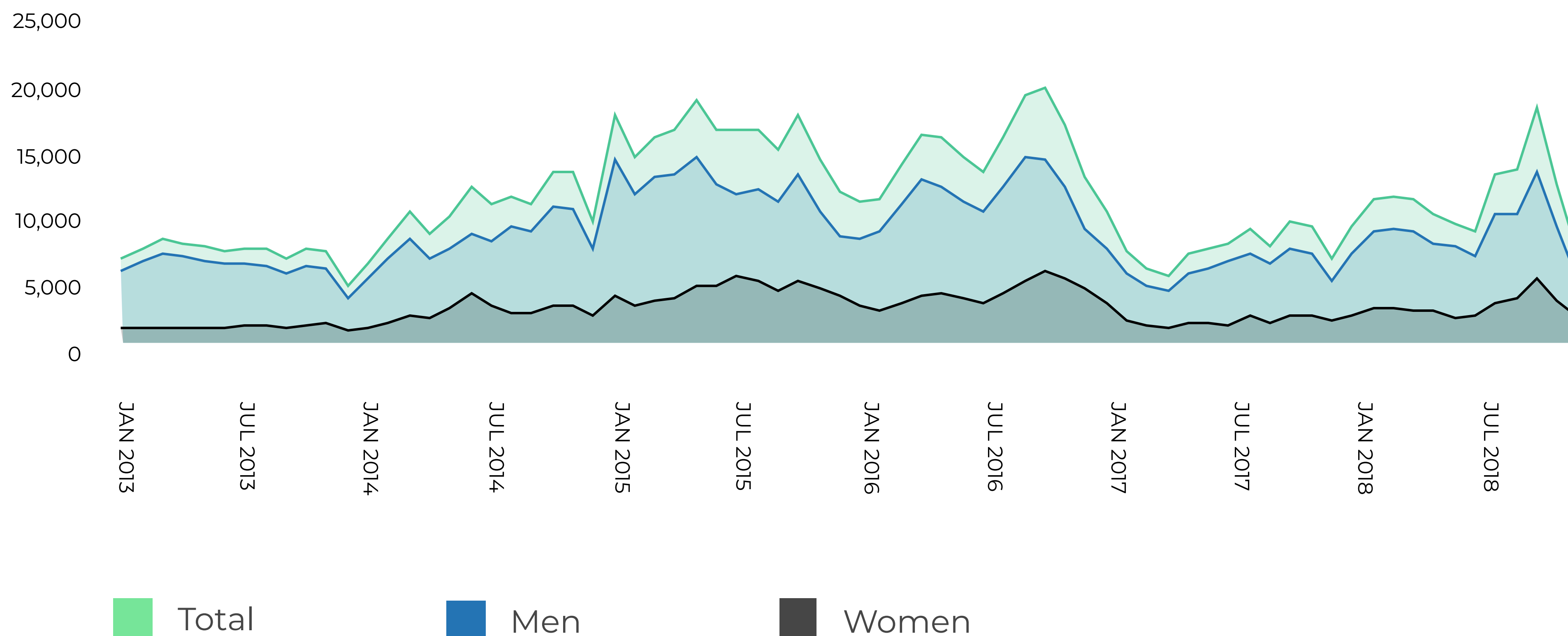


GENDER AND AGE

33,673 of apprehended migrants in 2018 were women. **104,939** were men. **31,717** were adolescents between the ages of 12-17, and **15,429** were under the age of 11.

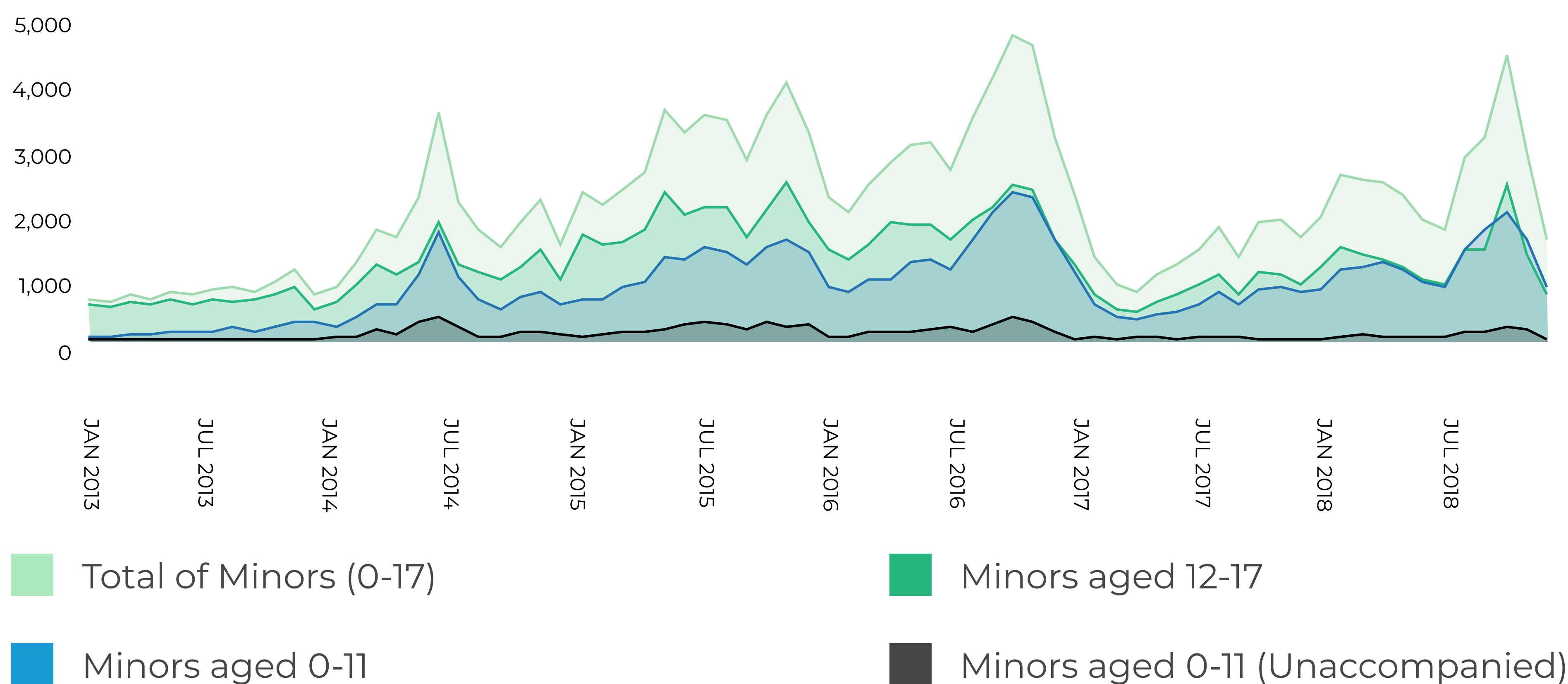
Gender distribution of foreign nationals registered by INM officials from 2013 to 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2013-2018



Age distribution and status of minor foreign nationals registered by INM officials from 2013 to 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2013-2018



WHILE Mexico's border has been traditionally porous, migrants who cross without documentation can be subjected to removals. The implementation of the Southern Border Program in 2014 increased Mexico's capacity to apprehend, detain, and deport migrants who enter the country without documents. In 2018, **112,317** migrants were deported back to their home countries from Mexico.

Migrants deported from Mexico by state in 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



IN 2019, the new administration under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is changing the way government responds to migration flows. The National Migration Institute is undergoing a restructuring to open legal avenues for people who want to remain in Mexico and provide documentation, access to social services, and jobs. Mexico has also signed on to the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**, an agreement that covers all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

In January of 2019, the government of Mexico established a new policy for the entry of migrants into national territory by fast-tracking a “visitor for humanitarian reasons” card, a type of humanitarian visa, which allows migrants the right to work in Mexico and travel freely in the country. The Mexican government provided over **15,000** cards for Central Americans in Mexico to encourage safe and orderly migration.

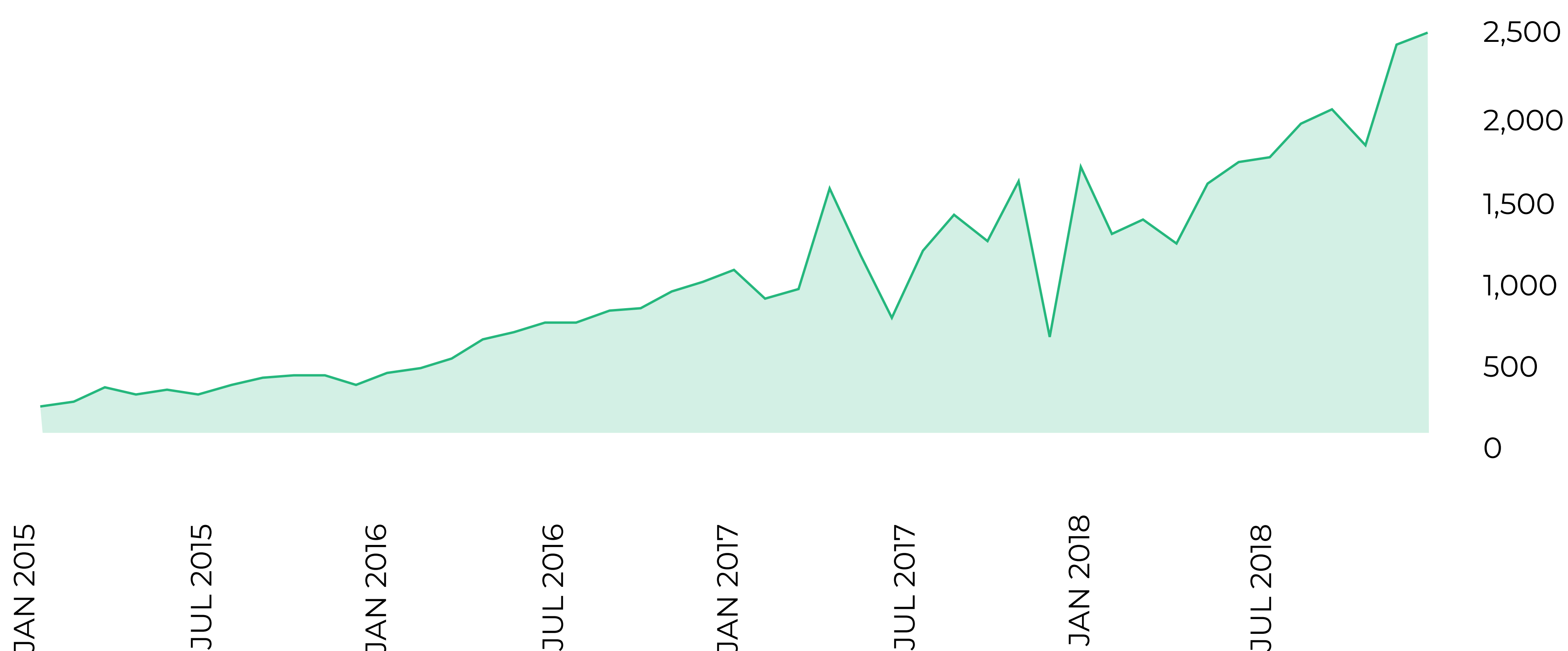
This new way of registering migrants who enter into Mexico allows the National Migration Institute to have better data around migration flows, and helps to construct policies that can help with the integration of migrants who choose to stay in Mexico. However, this fast-track humanitarian visa was cancelled, which could present new challenges for migration management.

HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION

A refugee or asylum seeker is a person who has fled his or her country to escape conflict or persecution and are entitled to specific legal protections. In Mexico, an asylum seeker is someone who is applying for refugee status. Mexico has seen a thirteen-fold increase in asylum requests since 2013—from **1,296** to **17,116** in 2018—the highest number in recorded history. This trend is likely to continue as Mexico continues to encourage migrants to apply for asylum in Mexico. In January and February of 2019, there was a **185% increase** in the number of people seeking asylum in Mexico compared to the same period in 2018. Under international standards, countries are free to deport migrants who arrive without legal papers, but cannot do so with refugees.

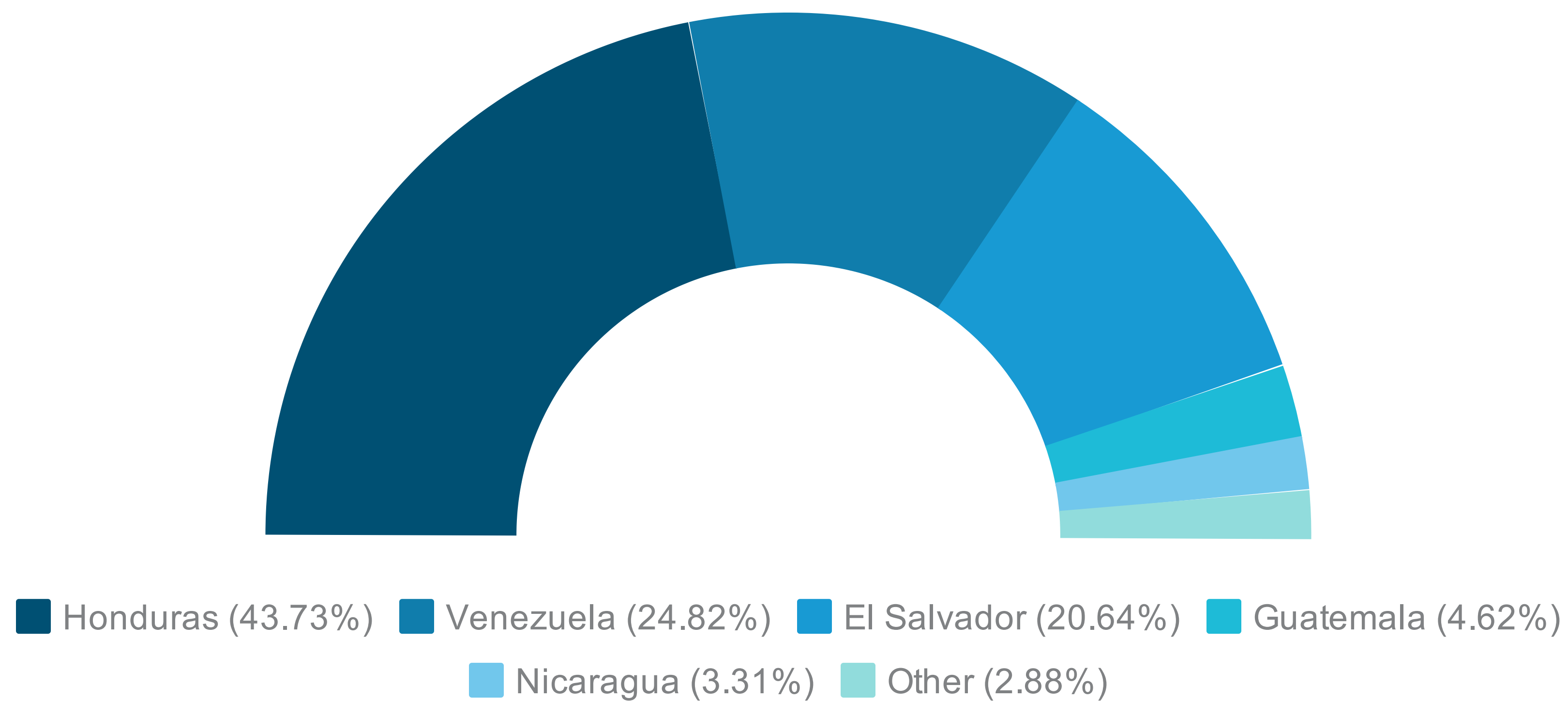
Asylum requests in Mexico from 2015 to 2018 (monthly)

Boletín Estadístico de Solicitantes de Refugio en México, Unidad de Política Migratoria, Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados, 2015 – 2018



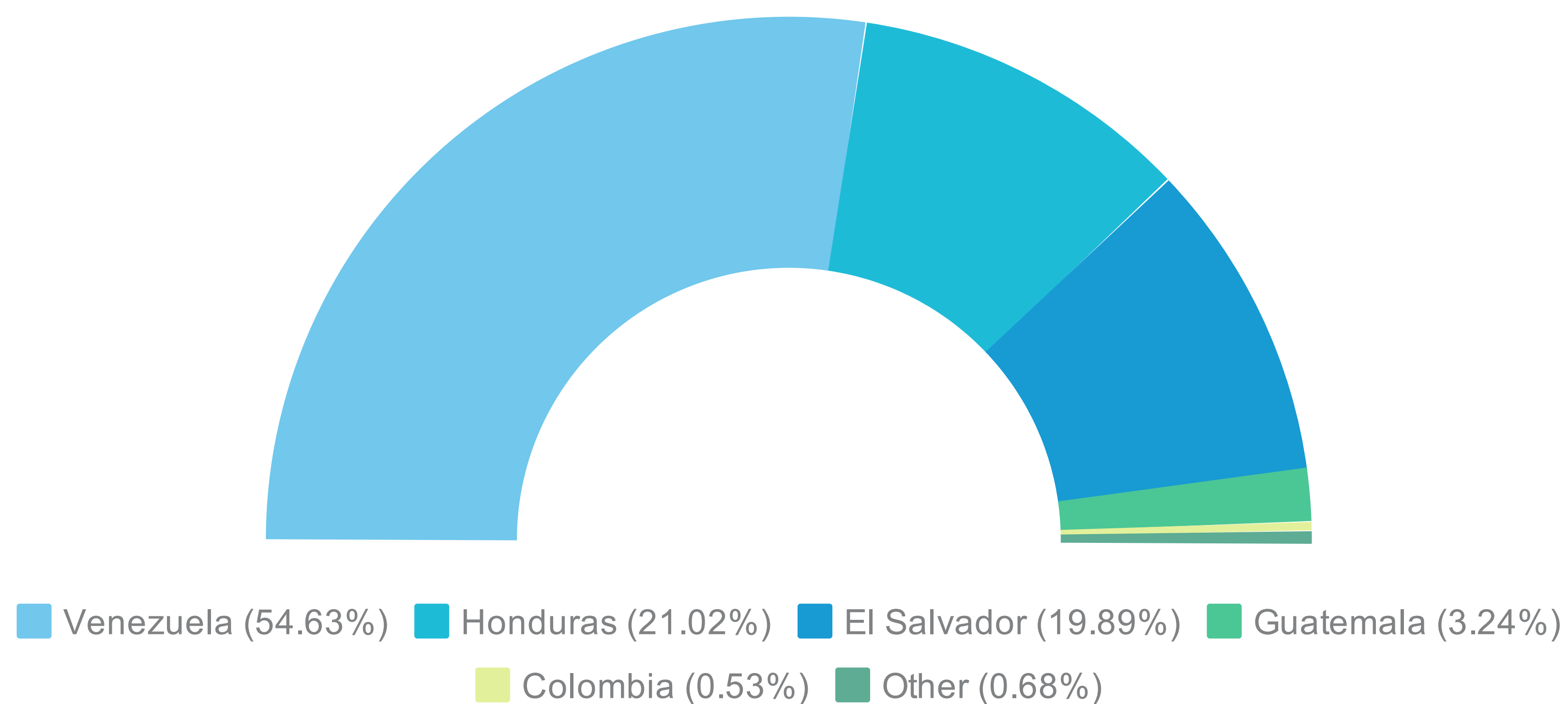
Top nationalities of asylum seekers in 2018

Boletín Estadístico de Solicitantes de Refugio en México, Unidad de Política Migratoria, Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados, 2018



Top nationalities granted refugee status in 2018

Boletín Estadístico de Solicitantes de Refugio en México, Unidad de Política Migratoria, Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados, 2018



WHILE Central Americans make up a significant portion of asylum requests, in 2018, Venezuelans occupied the second highest number of asylum requests in Mexico and the highest number of granted asylum claims. As the crisis in Venezuela continues, these numbers are likely to sustain or increase. The need for long-term integration measures for refugees will be essential as Mexico begins to process and grant more asylum requests.

1,327

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS IN 2018

The growing number of asylum requests presents a major challenge for Mexico to process these asylum claims efficiently. The INM and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) signed an agreement to establish coordination mechanisms to streamline the transfer of the applicants for refugee status between the INM and COMAR and reduce inefficiencies in the process of gaining refugee status.

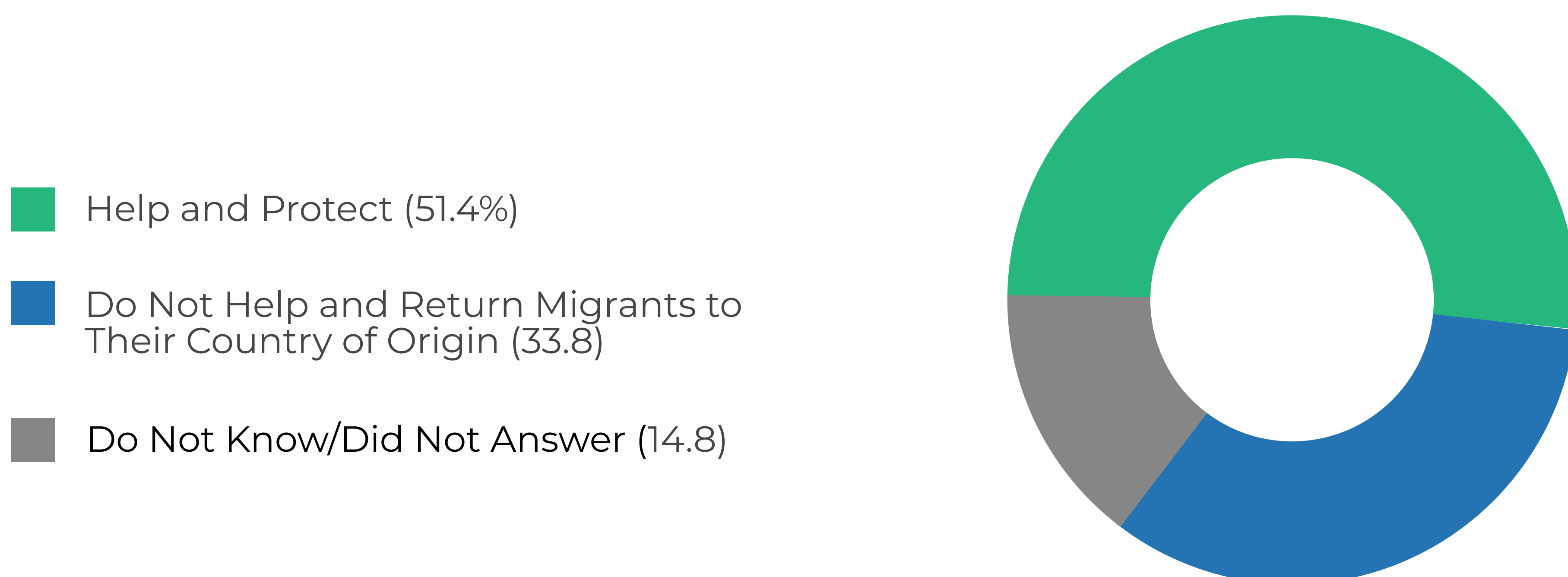
Other challenges to refugee integration include access to the job market, safety, cultural and language differences, and xenophobia.

MEXICAN PUBLIC OPINION OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANTS

Polling data conducted by Mitofsky, UNICEF, and the INM show that the majority of Mexicans are welcoming of Central American migrants. However, there is a large portion of Mexicans who hold a negative or unwelcoming view of Central American migrants.

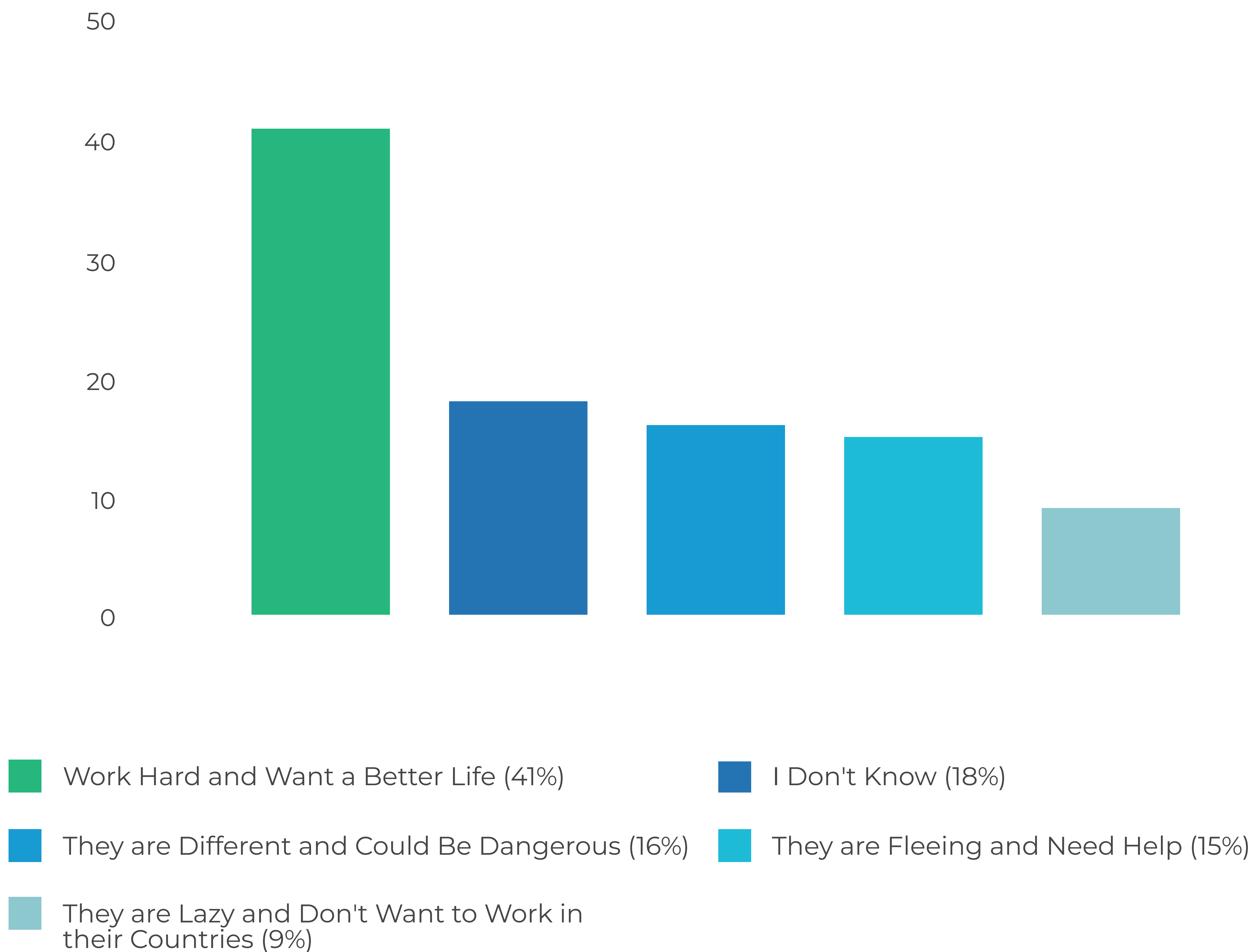
Attitudes of Mexican citizens 18 years and over toward Central American Migrant Caravans in 2018

Caravana Migrante, Encuesta Nacional en Vivienda, Octubre 2018, Consulta Mitofsky



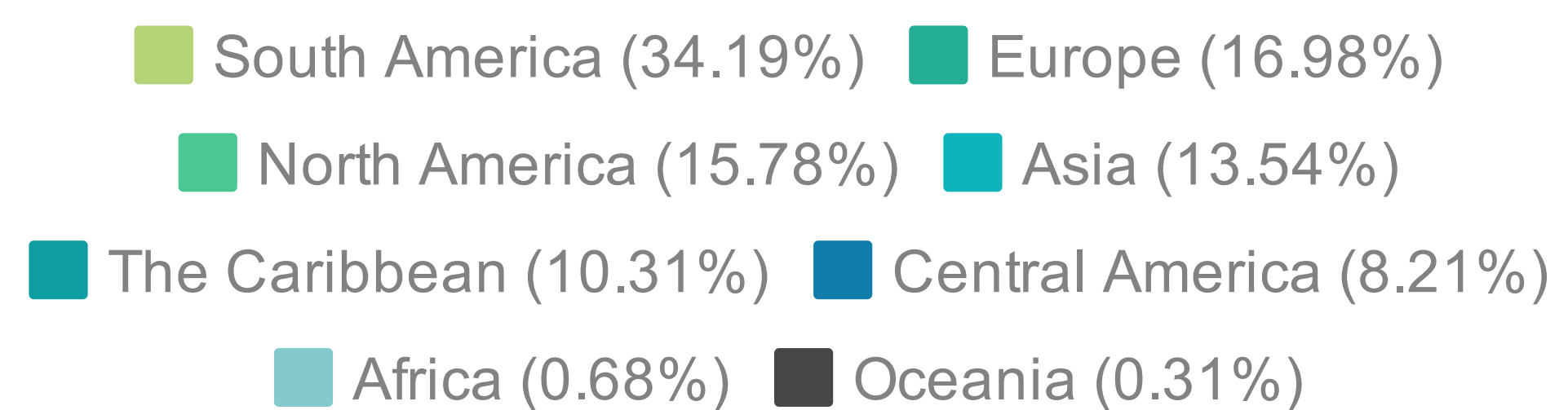
Attitudes of adolescents toward Central American migrants in Mexico in 2018

OpiNNa Dime: "Derechos Sin Fronteras," Reporte De Resultados, 2018



Stronger measures to combat xenophobia are needed to ensure migrants and refugees who decide to stay long-term are met with acceptance. Organizations like Mexico's National Center for Human Rights (CNDH) are calling on governments to take greater strides in tackling xenophobia towards migrants.

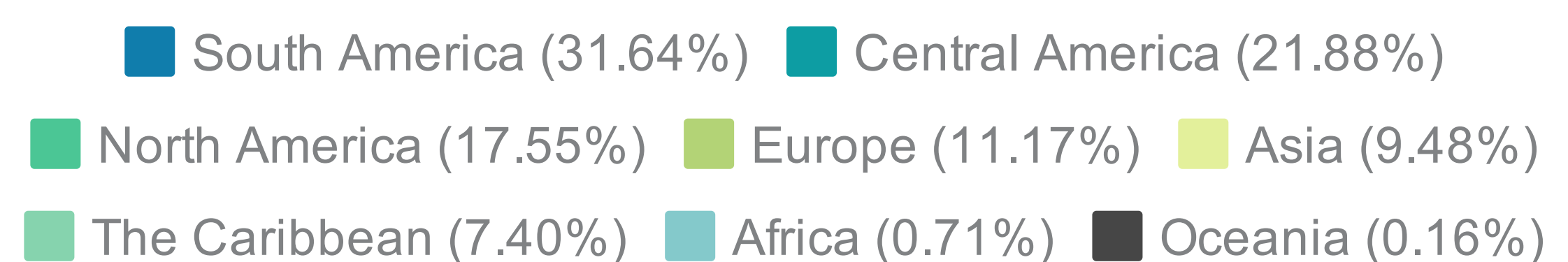
Temporary Residence Cards granted to foreign nationals in Mexico by region in 2018
Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



TEMPORARY & PERMANENT IMMIGRATION TO MEXICO

Asylum is not the only legal pathway for foreigners to come live in Mexico. For example, in 2018, **10,714** Guatemalans and Belizeans received Border Workers Visitor Cards to work in southern Border States. People from all over the world can work and live in Mexico by applying for a temporary resident or permanent resident visa.

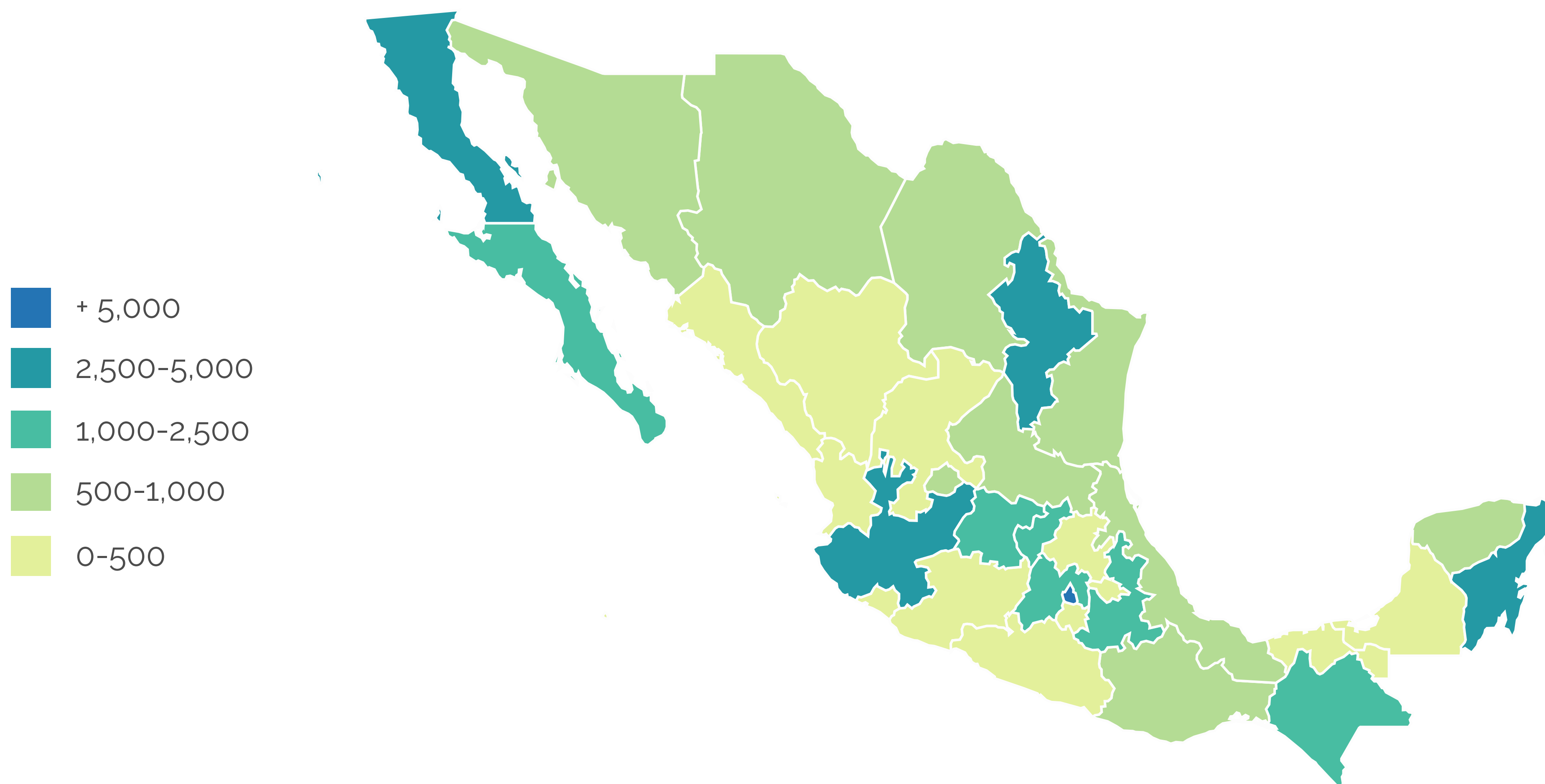
Permanent Residence Cards granted to foreign nationals in Mexico by region in 2018
Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



IMMIGRANTS who reside both temporarily and permanently in Mexico are increasingly diverse and come from all over the globe to work and live throughout Mexico's many states.

Temporary Residence Cards issued by state in 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



* 3,222 additional Temporary Residence Cards were issued at the National Migration Institute's central offices.

Permanent Residence Cards issued by state in 2018

Boletín Estadístico, Unidad De Política Migratoria, 2018



* 3,152 additional Permanent Residence Cards were issued at the National Migration Institute's central offices.

WHILE temporary and permanent residents reside all over Mexico, the majority of these cards are issued in Mexico City, where the Migration Policy Unit and the National Migration Institute headquarters are located.

MEXICO occupies an important role as an origin, transit, and destination country for thousands of people each year. While there are increasing geopolitical, social, economic, and cultural challenges related to migration, the movement of people from one country to another is a global phenomenon that can provide myriad benefits to the country if the right policies and legal pathways are used.

Sources:

BOLETÍN MENSUAL DE ESTADÍSTICAS MIGRATORIAS, UNIDAD DE POLÍTICA MIGRATORIA 2013 – 2018

BOLETÍN ESTADÍSTICO DE SOLICITANTES DE REFUGIO EN MÉXICO, UNIDAD DE POLÍTICA MIGRATORIA, COMISIÓN MEXICANA DE AYUDA A REFUGIADOS 2013 – 2018

CARAVANA MIGRANTE, ENCUESTA NACIONAL EN VIVIENDA, OCTUBRE 2018, CONSULTA MITOFSKY

OPINNA DIME: "DERECHOS SIN FRONTERAS," REPORTE DE RESULTADOS, 2018