



## More migrants coming through Mexico from far-flung countries: analysis

By Mark Moore

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The number of migrants coming to the US from Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries has shifted to people making the journey from as far away as Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela in the last few years as the Biden administration struggles to handle the surge at the border, a new analysis finds.

Traditionally, the bulk of migrants setting out for the southern border came from Mexico and the countries that make up what's known as the Northern Triangle — Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

But those numbers have shifted to Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela and Nicaragua in recent years — representing a dramatic increase of 11,000% since 2007, according to the analysis of Border Patrol statistics by CNN.

“US Border Patrol encounters still show more migrants from Mexico attempting to cross the Southwest border in July than from any other individual country. But so far this fiscal year, for the first time, encounters with migrants from outside Mexico and the Northern Triangle are outpacing encounters with migrants from either of those regions ,” the report said.

According to the analysis, 732,661 migrants from outside Mexico and the Northern Triangle have arrived at the border in fiscal year 2022, which ends on Sept. 30, compared to 630,442 from Mexico and 683,894 from the Northern Triangle.

In 2020, the number of migrants from the “other” countries was only 43,715.

The nearly 178,000 Cubans who were stopped along the southern border between October and July already exceed the number who fled the communist island nation during the massive Mariel boatlift of that began in April 1980.

About 125,000 freedom-seeking Cubans crammed onto vessels bound for Florida before the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro ended the exodus six months later.

The analysis, which builds on an earlier examination by David Bier of the Cato Institute, said one of the problems the shift poses for enforcement efforts at the border is that migrants from outside Mexico and Central America are less likely to be removed under Title 42 health precautions.

Only 4% of migrants from those other countries encountered by border officials were expelled under Title 42, the study found.

US immigration policies have historically been created to deal with migrants from Mexico, but the shift in numbers makes it more difficult to deport people to other countries under Title 42, Doris Meissner, the director of immigration policy at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, told CNN.

She said the strained relations between the US and these other countries complicates matters even more.

“These populations ... require different kinds of responses,” Meissner said. “We have not established an asylum system that is in any way up to the level of the challenge that this change brought about.”

The Trump administration began to address the changing immigration picture, but what President Biden has encountered is entirely different.

And even though the administration is working to address the root causes of migration – like rising violence, political instability and economic uncertainty — the measures don’t go far enough, Bier said, noting that they need a different playbook.

“There are as many answers as there are countries represented in that group,” he told CNN.

The rise in migration from Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia and Nicaragua can be attributed to a number of factors, Meissner said.

A new air route opened between Cuba and Nicaragua, dwindling economic conditions in Venezuela and the high cost of inflation in Colombia all play a role as does politics.

“Rising repression under the Ortega regime, especially during the recent presidential election, has cemented the belief among many Nicaraguans that the country’s political turmoil will not be resolved in the short term,” Meissner says.

The shift in migration is being felt by border officials on the ground.

Yuma Border Patrol Sector Chief Chris Clem told CNN that his agents are feeling the strain.

“The countries we’re receiving now — those nationalities are flying in, arriving to the border, and they’re having to be processed and there’s just so many of them that it is posing a challenge to the workforce,” he said.

Meissner and Bier said the changing face of migrants heading to the southern border shows the importance of overhauling US immigration policy.

“Many, if not most, of these people are not likely to be eligible for asylum, even though they’re fleeing very difficult conditions,” Meissner said. “We desperately need to have Congress address the immigration laws and make it possible for there to be other legal pathways to come to the US.”

Bier said the trend could go on for years unless action is taken to corral it.

“It’s entirely plausible to think that this could continue for many years because we don’t have the infrastructure to expel people as fast as they come in,” Bier said.