

**COMMUNICATION AND
INFORMATION IN**

THE DARIÉN GAP

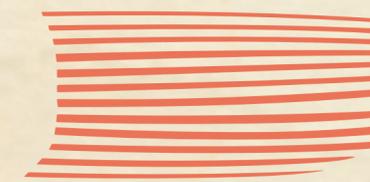
**A Bridge Between Migrants
and Host Communities**

**ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION
ECOSYSTEM**





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investigating how the information ecosystem operates in the Darién Gap border region is crucial—not only because communication processes reveal historical gaps and structural voids in the region, but also because useful and effective communication spaces can respond to the diverse circumstances these populations face in humanitarian crisis.

This research intends to show the relationship of migrant and host populations in the Darién Gap (on the Colombian side of the border) with media and information channels, as well as the latter's contribution to the affected population's most immediate needs. This report is the result of a project developed in alliance with Sinergias - Alianzas Estratégicas para la Salud y el Desarrollo Social, SentARTE - arte con sentido, and Internews.

The project sought to generate information tools to respond to the mental health crisis exacerbated by COVID-19 and migration and took place from June to September 2023 in the Darién Gap region (specifically in the Necoclí, Acandí, and Capurganá regions).



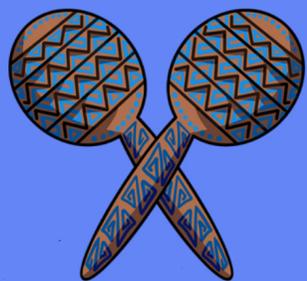
The latter are Colombian towns that have become key geographic areas during the last decade for migrants traveling on their way to other countries located in the northern part of the continent.

The Darién Gap region includes Panamanian and Colombian territories inhabited by the Guna and Emberá Indigenous people.

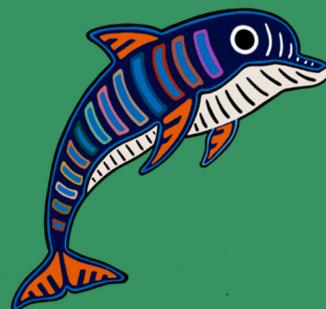
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Consisted of an observational cross-sectional, mix-method study, carried out in three parallel stages: review of secondary data on actors and information related to migration; a qualitative process that included 15 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups including the migrant and host populations, as well as at official institutions and organizations present in the towns of Necoclí, Acandí and Capurganá. Finally, the methodology included a survey distributed to the migrant and host populations, which garnered 170 responses. The populations in these three towns are largely Afro-Colombian and primarily relied on agriculture and tourism as sources of economic revenue prior to the massive influx of migrants four years ago.

Some of the **STUDY'S MAIN FINDINGS**



Surround the migration population's information interests, particularly surrounding transit logistics.



The study also identified the most-used media sources and information channels, such as “word of mouth” communication, instant messaging services, and social media platforms.



However, local information production was scarce, and local initiatives faced various challenges.

Some of the **STUDY'S MAIN FINDINGS**



The differential research approach focused on the importance of information related to healthcare, given that **74%** of the people surveyed expressed interest in receiving this relevant information content in a context of humanitarian crisis.



Furthermore, **76%** of respondents emphasized the importance of generating clearer and less technical information that is easier to comprehend for a diverse audience.

MOST SIGNIFICANTIVE SUGGESTIONS:



There was an emphasis on the importance of media addressing the migration crisis with a local approach and incorporating the voices of the population. This is considered a strategy to stimulate the production of localized and contextualized content.



At the same time, the need to create audiovisual content stood out with 70%, this type of content being what most of the surveyed population prefers.

MOST SIGNIFICATIVE SUGGESTIONS:



There was mention of a need to generate clear information about health risks and places for consultation which can be shared through the most used media and channels.



Finally, a recommendation to train individuals involved in the migration chain, on how to handle first aid and mental health situations, as well as the routes and points of basic medical care in the territory.

1. INTRODUCTION



Understanding the communication needs of the migrant and host communities is crucial to generate spaces for useful, effective communication that can respond to the diverse situations these communities face.



With the support of the [Center for Disaster Philanthropy \(CDP\)](#), [Sinergias - Alianzas Estratégicas para la Salud y el Desarrollo Social](#), [SentARTE - arte con sentido](#), and Internews initiated a project focused on creating information tools with a “One Health” approach. This project aimed to respond to the mental health crisis exacerbated by COVID-19 and the increasing numbers of migrants crossing the Colombian-Panamanian territories in the Darién Gap to ensure the long-term wellbeing of these diverse communities.

Titled *Mental Health, Journalism, and Migration in Colombia: Critical Information to Respond to the Crisis Among Migrant and Host Communities in Colombia Exacerbated by COVID-19*, the project took place from June to September 2023 in the Darién Gap region. **The research specifically focused on Necoclí, Acandí, and Capurganá, with the key goal of understanding how the region’s information ecosystem operates in the face of migration and rising healthcare needs.**

This report collects the research’s main results and recommendations from a process conducted using a methodology grounded in the Information Ecosystem Framework (IEF) and carried out in Necoclí, in the Antioquian part of Urabá, and Acandí, including the small town of Capurganá, in the Chocó department. .



1.1 TERRITORIAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION IN THE DARIÉN GAP REGION.

The Darién jungle, which connects Colombia and Panamá, covers an area of 17.014 km². It is considered one of the swampiest jungles in the world, and it is “the third biggest forest in Central America¹.” “This region has been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve due to its biological richness and to the communities that preserve ancestral traditions.”²

This border jungle represents a crucial passage on the migratory route to North America. On the Colombian side, the towns of Acandí and Necoclí play a key role in the migration route. The region attracts diverse migrants from neighboring countries, such as Venezuela, Haiti, Ecuador, Chile and Brazil, as well as from distant places like China, India, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Somalia, and Bangladesh, all seeking to reach the United States and Canada.

Acandí, which means “river of the axe” in the Indigenous Dulegaya language (“Aggandi”), was founded in 1908. The town is in the northernmost tip of Chocó, on the shores of the Caribbean Sea and bordering the Central American country of Panamá. It has a population of 15,604 inhabitants: 54% reside in rural areas, and 46% in the urban center; 87% is Afro-Colombian, and 1% is Indigenous.³ The economy is based on mining, agriculture, livestock, and tourism. Access to this town is primarily by air and river. Capurganá means “land of chili” in the Dulegaya language means and is a territory ancestrally inhabited by the Gunadule Indigenous people. It is a district of Acandí located 15km from the urban center and was founded in 1856. Capurganá has 1,800 inhabitants, and its economy is primarily based on tourism, artisanal fishing, and agriculture. Access to this district is mainly by air and river.

Necoclí is a town located in the Urabá subregion of the department of Antioquia. This territory’s name means “land of pineapples” in the Dulegaya language and was ancestrally called “ossigana” by the Gunadule Indigenous people. Here, in the year 1502, the first Spanish settlement in the Darién was founded and called San Sebastián de Urabá. It has a population of 44,811 inhabitants⁴: around 59% are Afro-Colombian, 37.5% are mestizo, and 3.5% are indigenous. Its economy is based on agriculture, livestock, tourism, and mining. The main access routes are by river and land.



- 1 Wildlife Conservation Society. (2019) About the 5 biggest forests in Mesoamerica, Darién. *Wildlife Conservation Society*. <https://programs.wcs.org/gcf-the5greatforests/es-es/-Sobre-Los-5-Grandes-Bosques-de-Mesoamerica/El-Darién>
- 2 Wildlife Conservation Society. (2019) About the 5 biggest forests in Mesoamerica, Darién. *Wildlife Conservation Society*. *Wildlife Conservation Society*. <https://programs.wcs.org/gcf-the5greatforests/es-es/-Sobre-Los-5-Grandes-Bosques-de-Mesoamerica/El-Darién>
- 3 Socioeconomic Profile DANE (2020). *Socioeconomic Development Index*. Gov.co. <https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Desarrollo%20Territorial/Portal%20Territorial/Bioceanica/Muns/Acandi-CHOCO.pdf>
- 4 The health situation analysis from the Planning Subsecretariat for Health Care -Government of Antioquia (2022) <https://dssa.gov.co/images/asis/fichas/2022/Necocli.pdf>

1.2 MIGRATION CONTEXT IN COLOMBIA

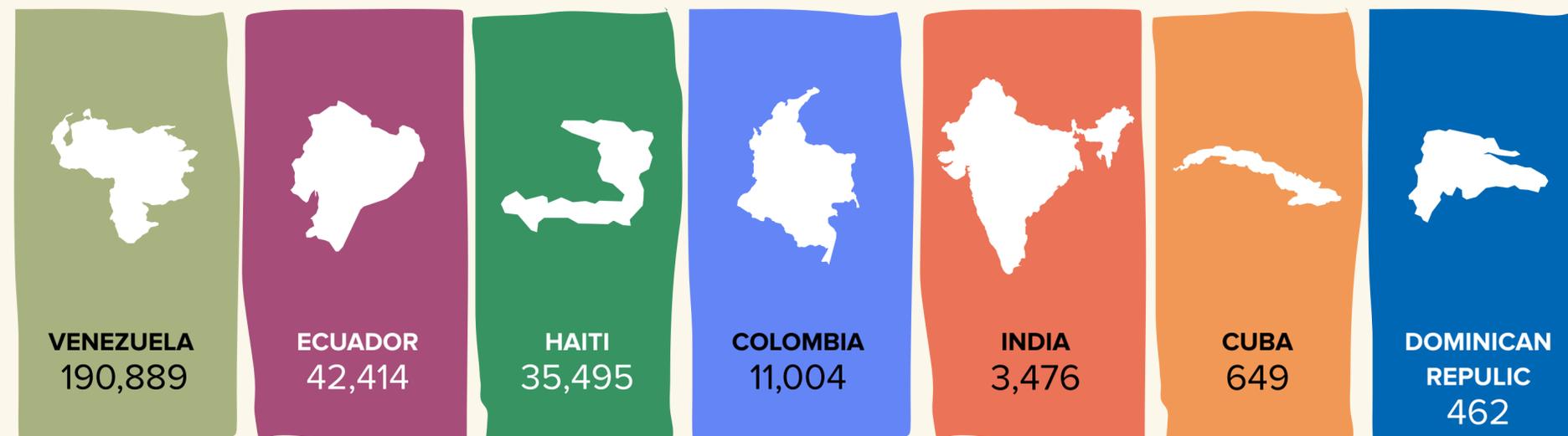
According to Migration Colombia’s 2021 data*, 4,246,825 migrants entered, and 4,460,624 exited the country.⁵

In the Darién Gap region specifically, there was a high rate of migration flow, with up to 320,000 individuals traveling from January 1 to August 28, 2023, according to statistics from Panama’s Ministry of Public Security.

⁵ Special Administration Unit Migration Colombia (2022). *Annual Bulletin of Migration Flow Statistics*. Migration Colombia. [gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/000049/2445_boletin-estadistico-flujos-migratorios-2021.pdf](https://www.gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/000049/2445_boletin-estadistico-flujos-migratorios-2021.pdf)

* The figures provided by Migration Colombia are outdated, so for the purpose of creating an overview of individuals in migration status who have entered and left Colombia, we used the most recently recorded data.

Table 1:
Country of origin of registered migrants in the Darién Gap: 2023



Source: Panama’s Ministry of Public Security.

Note: In Colombia, certain legal mechanisms exist for migrants to obtain entry and residence permits in the country, available in the Annex: Legislative and Normative Context of Migration Colombia.



1.3 IMPACTS AND RISKS FOR MIGRANT TRANSIT IN THE DARIÉN

Migration through the Darién has generated a humanitarian crisis with serious impacts on the region, ranging from the overload of local resources to health risks and challenges for both migrants and the local population. The risks and challenges escalated in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

Among such risks, it is important to highlight:

Overload of local resources: the border towns in the region are facing challenges due to the massive arrival of migrants, leading to the collapse of basic services and a lack of capacity to meet the needs of this population.

Mixed economic impact: the local population has seen an opportunity for income through the sale of goods and services to migrants, but it has also experienced an increase in the prices of supplies and services due to the constant flow of dollars.

Presence of organized armed groups: migrants face serious risks due to [the presence of organized armed groups \(OAG\)](#), such as the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia – AGC or Clan del Golfo, and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN, which are accused of allegedly subjecting the migrant population to labor and sexual exploitation, as well as forced recruitment, especially of women and minors. These organized armed groups generate income through the control of border zones.

Healthcare issues: migrants and the local population face barriers to accessing adequate healthcare, including a lack of healthcare professionals, long distances between healthcare centers, and discrimination based on language and legal status.

Vulnerability of specific groups: migrant women, especially those travelling alone, pregnant, breastfeeding, or with disabilities, are more susceptible to gender-based violence.⁶ Migrant children are victims of labor and sexual exploitation, forced recruitment, especially by armed groups. They also face extortion, abuse, and discrimination.

⁶ Murfet T. y Baron R. (2020). Una emergencia desigual: Análisis Rápido de Género sobre la Crisis de Refugiados y Migrantes en Colombia, Ecuador, Perú y Venezuela [An Unequal Emergency: Rapid gender analysis on the crisis of refugees and migrants in Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Venezuela]. CARE. https://www.care-international.org/files/files/RGA_ESP_Venezuela_final_compressed.pdf



Deaths and disappearances: the Migrantes Desaparecidos Project (of the OIM) indicates that between January and October 2023, a total of 37 people have gone missing or died in Darién. However, there is likely an underreporting of data, so the actual total number of deceased or missing individuals in this area is uncertain.⁷

Climate change: According to the World Bank, by the year 2050, it is projected that 17 million people in Latin America will migrate due to climate change, driven by the impacts on their ways of life and the habitability of their territories. Currently, La Niña and El Niño phenomenon affect the transit of people passing through Colombia in different ways.⁸

7 Organización Internacional para las Migraciones [International Organization for Migrations] (2023). Proyecto Migrantes Desaparecidos [Missing Migrants Project]. https://missingmigrants.iom.int/es/region/las-americas?region_incident=4041&route=3876&year%5B%5D=11681&incident_date%5Bmin%5D=01%2F01%2F2023&incident_date%5Bmax%5D=10%2F30%2F2023

8 Banco Mundial. Climate Change Could Force 216 Million People to Migrate Within Their Own Countries by 2050. (2023) Press release. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>

1.4 GAPS IN MIGRATION REGULATIONS

The article “The Face of Migration No One Is Talking About: The Impacts of Transit Migration in the Ungoverned Regions of Urabá and Darién”⁹ (published in 2019 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia) highlights that although the transient migrant phenomenon leads to a violation of rights, current institutional regulations have been insufficient. Laws have been focused on the migrant population with a vocation for settlement and in scenarios where this phenomenon is seen on a large scale, such as the city of Cúcuta. The lack of recognition and regulations that cover the transient migrant population leaves a gap in the protection of human rights and consequently leads to an increase in violations of these rights. The article mentions that in 2019, a migration law project that began also failed to include the transient migrant population.

In this context, it is essential for organizations and authorities to work towards improving the protection of migrants’ human rights. This includes ensuring their access to information, services, and humanitarian assistance.



9 Severiche, H., Méndez, O., Granados, M., Herrera, N., Perea, C. (2019). The face of the migration no one is talking about: the impacts of transit migration in the ungoverned regions of Urabá and the Darién. Cancillería - Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia. https://cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/FOTOS2020/2019_h_angulo_et_al_migracion_de_transito_en_uraba_y_darien.pdf



2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



This research aims to understand the relationship between the migrant and host populations in the Darién Gap (from the Colombian side of the border) with local media and information channels, as well as the contributions the information channels provide surrounding their most immediate needs. The methodology involved an observational cross-sectional study with mixed methods conducted between July and August 2023.

Three parallel processes took place:

1. **A review of secondary data** on actors and information about migration in the territory.
2. **A qualitative process**, involving 15 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups (two in Necoclí and three in Capurganá) with the migrant and host populations, as well as official institutions and organizations present in the towns of Necoclí, Acandí, and the district of Capurganá.
3. **A survey conducted with the migrant and host populations** at the Abel Pachecó shelter in Capurganá and on Tortuga beach in Necoclí (167 surveys).

The instruments were designed jointly by the Sinergias and SentARTE teams and were reviewed and approved by the Internews team. Researchers conducted a codebook to conduct qualitative analysis based on the designed instruments and the results of interviews and focus groups, incorporating emerging categories throughout the analysis. They recorded interviews and focus groups, and they later transcribed and manually coded the audio recordings. Subsequently, they carried out a categorical analysis.

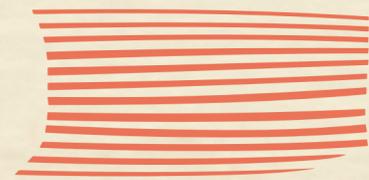
The survey instrument had 35 variables and was applied using the Kobo Toolbox software. The survey team, composed of members from the Sinergias and SentARTE organizations and their respective territorial links (in Acandí, a local and former migrant in the United States, and in Necoclí, someone from the Córdoba department who has lived in the town for more than 10 years), was trained online to unify the collecting criteria. The team collected data on mobile devices and then uploaded it to the cloud, where they stored it during the project's duration

and later deleted. They downloaded the database in an Excel format and then imported into the Stata software, version 15, for simple frequency analysis. In agreement with Internews, the sample size included 150 to 200 surveys. Finally, the team triangulated information from interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Informed consent was obtained for the application of all data collection instruments; surveys were recorded on digital format, while each session of the focus groups and interviews audio recorded.



3. KEY FINDINGS



The main information needs of the migrant population are related to their transit through the Darién.

IN THE RESPONSES, THE FOLLOWING TOPICS STOOD OUT:



Weather forecasts



Necessary elements for their migratory journey



The amount of money required to cover the expenses of the travels

THE MIGRANT AND HOST POPULATIONS ARE INTERESTED IN VARIOUS TOPICS:



staying in touch with family and friends



obtaining information about their country of origin



staying informed about news in general



seeking humanitarian and migration-related information



Access to both their information needs and their interests is a challenge in this information ecosystem.

46.7% of surveyed individuals access the internet through rechargeable or prepaid plans on their own devices.

19% use community spaces with free access.

This indicates challenges in regular connectivity, so campaigns or information that are only available in digital spaces may not be reaching their target audience.

Additionally, the participants expressed that:



90% REQUIRE INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR BASIC NEEDS, 88% about access to medical services, and 86% of surveyed individuals seek information about safety in the town they are passing through.



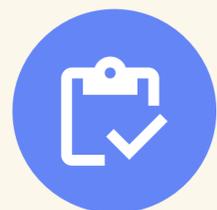
77% EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESENTING INFORMATION THROUGH NON-REVICTIMIZING AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE.





BOTH THE MIGRANT AND HOST POPULATIONS ARE INTERESTED IN ACCESSING RELIABLE AND VERIFIED INFORMATION TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THOSE IN NEED.

Furthermore, support from official institutions, humanitarian organizations, and local media to produce local information is crucial to achieving this goal.



65% CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT TO CITE AN OFFICIAL SOURCE TO SUPPORT INFORMATION,

while 35% prefer citation from more than one source to verify information. Additionally, 42% value feeling close to or able to identify with the person or medium providing information, which can increase credibility.



70% OF SURVEYED INDIVIDUALS PREFER TO RECEIVE INFORMATION IN A VIDEO FORMAT,

allowing for a visual and dynamic presentation of information. At the same time, 75% highlight the importance of using clear and non-technical language, facilitating understanding for a diverse audience.



MIGRANT POPULATION HAS LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS,

fearing that their transit may be affected.



56% OF THE HOST POPULATION STATED THAT THEY PREDOMINANTLY RECEIVE NEGATIVE INFORMATION ABOUT MIGRATION,

which can perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination. Furthermore, they signal the growth of hate speech and rejection towards the migrant population.



IN CONTRAST, ONLY 12.4% OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION REPORTS RECEIVING NEGATIVE INFORMATION ABOUT MIGRATION,

and a significant 38.8% say they receive positive information. This may explain why more people are deciding to migrate and travel through the Darién Gap on their journey.



THE DARIÉN GAP REGION HAS A VERY LOW SUPPLY OF LOCAL INFORMATION PRODUCTION.

Three main regional initiatives emerged: Necoclí TV, Necoclí Stereo, and NotiAcandí. Additionally, several media outlets had to stop production due to a lack of economic resources, indicating a potential information blackout zone.



THE INFORMATION PRODUCED AROUND MIGRATION IN THE DARIÉN GAP IS STILL LOW, especially that aimed at guiding the needs of the migrant population..



THE MOST USED CHANNELS/ MEDIA SOURCES TO ACCESS INFORMATION ARE "WORD OF MOUTH", INSTANT MESSAGING SERVICES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA. Traditional media such as television and radio are not widely used by the migrant population, largely because access is difficult.



ALTHOUGH "WORD OF MOUTH" IS THE MOST USED MEDIUM, respondents expressed reluctance surrounding this channel, especially the information comes from individuals who belong to institutions. This is due to the fear that there may be legal consequences for migrants and/or that the ability to continue their journey may be limited.



NEARLY ONE FIFTH OF THE STUDY S PARTICIPANTS SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OR MESSAGING SERVICES, which limits the privacy and security of information shared through these channels.



ALTHOUGH THERE ARE INFORMATION POSTS IN THE AREA AIMED AT THE MIGRANT POPULATION, as well as billboards and brochures in various languages, these posts are not currently located in areas visited recurrently by the migrant population, and at times, there are elements that obstruct people's abilities to read the information.



IN ADDITION TO MEETING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION RELATED TO TRANSIT, it is necessary to establish information fluxes to access timely healthcare services. Humanitarian organizations are also needed to implement projects in the area, along with authorities and official institutions that can provide support to the population and offer preventive healthcare information surrounding the risks associated with the journey

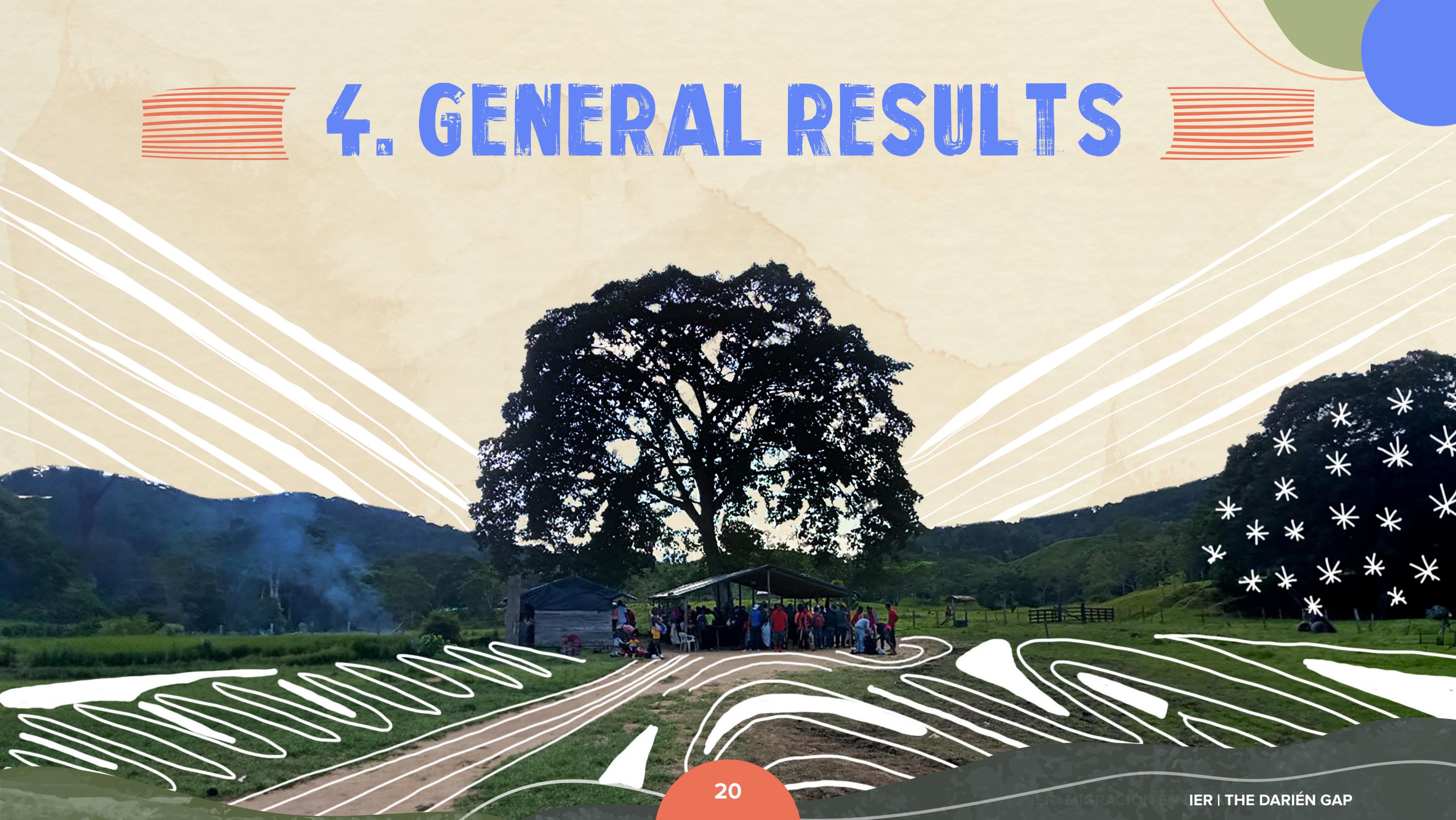
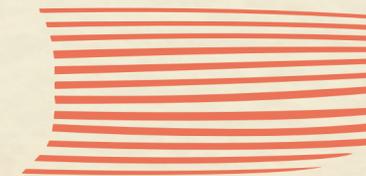


74% OF PARTICIPANTS ARE INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION.





4. GENERAL RESULTS



This Information Ecosystem Research (IER) aimed at defining *the relationship between migrant and host populations with media and information channels to examine how this information may or may not impact their most immediate needs along the migratory route in the Darién, and specifically in the towns of Necoclí and Acandí, including the Capurganá district. To study this relationship, the research team conducted 205 surveys with the migrant and host populations in both towns. Of these, the research team excluded 38 surveys from the analysis due to gaps in more than 10% of the responses and conducted the final analysis based on 167 surveys.*

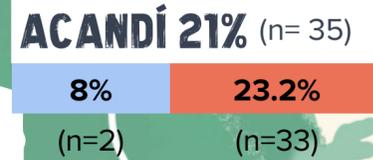
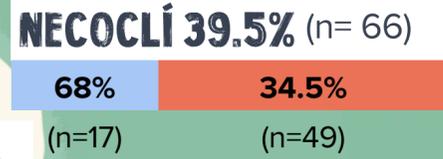


Additionally, the research team conducted five focus groups: three in the town of Acandí and two in the town of Necoclí. In each town, a focus group was held with the host population, attended by individuals closely connected to the migrant population, and a focus group with the migrant population. Furthermore, 14 interviews were conducted with both migrant and host populations and with media outlets present in the area. The objective was not only to analyze the migrant population's access to information, **but also to understand the informational needs in the region and the limitations faced by these media outlets, most of which are community-based.**

The table below shows the characteristics of the surveyed population:

Infographic:
Basic data of the surveyed individuals

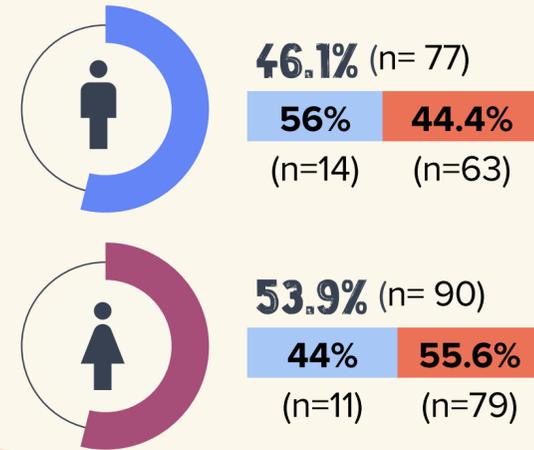
LOCATION OF SURVEY ADMINISTRATION



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

	Colombia	18.6% (n=31)	96% (n=24)	4.9% (n=7)
	Ecuador	2.4% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	2.8% (n=4)
	Equatorial Guinea	0.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0.7% (n=1)
	Haiti	0.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0.7% (n=1)
	Perú	0.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0.7% (n=1)
	Venezuela	77.3% (n=129)	4% (n=1)	90.1% (n=128)

GENDER

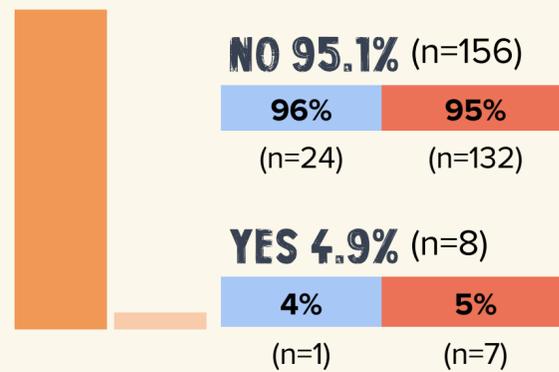


TIME IN CURRENT TOWN

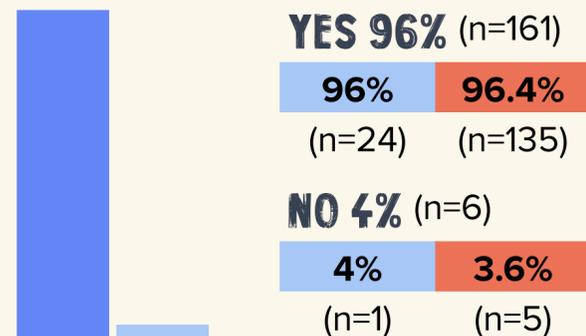
1 and 3 days	54.9% (n=91)	0% (n=0)	64.1% (n=91)
4 days and 1 week	10.2% (n=17)	0% (n=0)	12% (n=17)
1 and 2 weeks	6.0% (n=10)	4% (n=1)	6.3% (n=9)
2 weeks and 1 month	12.0% (n=20)	0% (n=0)	14.1% (n=20)
1 month and 1 year	3.0% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	3.5% (n=5)
1 and 5 years	4.2% (n=7)	28% (n=7)	0% (n=0)
+ 5 years	10.2% (n=17)	68% (n=17)	0% (n=0)



PERSON WITH A DISABILITY



LITERACY (READING/WRITING)



AGE GROUP

18 to 25 years	47.3% (n=79)	20% (n=5)	52.1% (n=74)
26 to 35 years	30% (n=50)	40% (n=10)	28.2% (n=40)
35 to 50 years	18% (n=30)	20% (n=5)	17.6% (n=25)
+ than 50 years	4.7% (n=8)	20% (n=5)	2.1% (n=3)

Fuente: Sinergias/SentArte, 2023

Table 2

Characteristics of the interviewed and population and focus groups participants

INTERVIEWS N=15 		
	n	%
Men	12	80%
Women	3	20%
Type of population		
Migrant	1	6.7%
Officials from public institutions	2	13.3%
Humanitarian organizations staff	2	13.3%
Guides, transporters, and others	2	13.3%
Healthcare staff	1	6.7%
Media	4	26.7%
General population	3	20%
Place of implementation		
Necoclí	7	46.7%
Acandí	6	40%
Capurganá	2	13.3%

Source: Sinergias/SentArte, 2023

Table 3

Characteristics of the population participating in the focus groups

FOCUS GROUPS N=32 		
	n	%
Men	18	56.3%
Women	14	43.7%
Type of population		
Migrant	26	81.3%
Host	6	18.7%
Place of implementation		
Necoclí	8	25%
Acandí	5	15.6%
Capurganá	19	59.4%

Source: Sinergias/SentArte, 2023

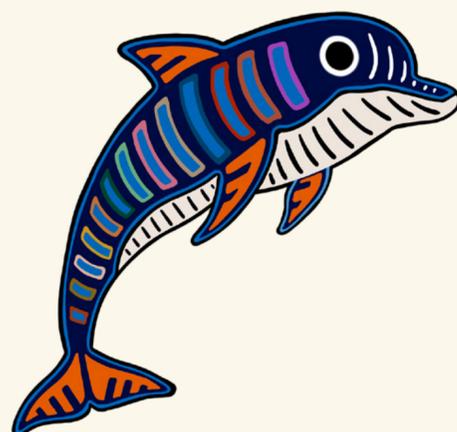
As evidenced by Table 1, most surveyed migrant individuals are of Venezuelan nationality (77%), aligning with the proportion of individuals of this nationality in the official figures in the introduction. It's important to note that the survey primarily targeted Spanish speakers, introducing a bias when assessing the information needs of migrants who do not speak Spanish fluently. The results presented reflect the perceptions of both migrants and host individuals, although most of them are migrants who stay in the towns for less than three days; this transit situation also influences the type of information and the means or devices through which people can access it in this context.

The study exclusively focused on adults, so there is no information regarding the dynamics of information access for children and adolescents. Finally, the sample of the migrant population is much more robust, as the research team only 25 surveyed individuals among the host population. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from the host population cannot be generalized.

4.1 INFORMATION NEEDS

Regarding information needs, we aimed to gather information from individuals belonging to both the migrant and host populations in both towns, focusing on their immediate information needs. Among the key findings, we discovered that the migrant population seeks access to information that allows them to continue their journey: weather forecasts, necessary elements for their migration route, and the amount of money required to cover travel expenses.

Secondly (among 82% of surveyed individuals, and especially migrants), there is an interest in accessing information provided by humanitarian organizations and local authorities.



There should indeed be information available on the website of the Acandí's Mayor's Office for travelers or migrants, so they can access the phone numbers of the main authorities in town. Because there they don't have [...] the number to contact a healthcare post or [...] the administrators in charge of the shelter, for example.

Police Officer
Acandí, August 2023

The surveyed individuals state that their information need primarily relates to their necessities, such as access to medical services, security in transit areas, information for their stay, details about humanitarian organizations in the area, and the services offered there, among others. **However, Internet access always poses a challenge to obtaining this information** (see Graph 1). The host population also recognizes the need to strengthen communication channels and media, as well as the information disseminated through them, to facilitate the migration experience. This is evident in Graph 15, which illustrates the interest of the host population in being able to share relevant information.

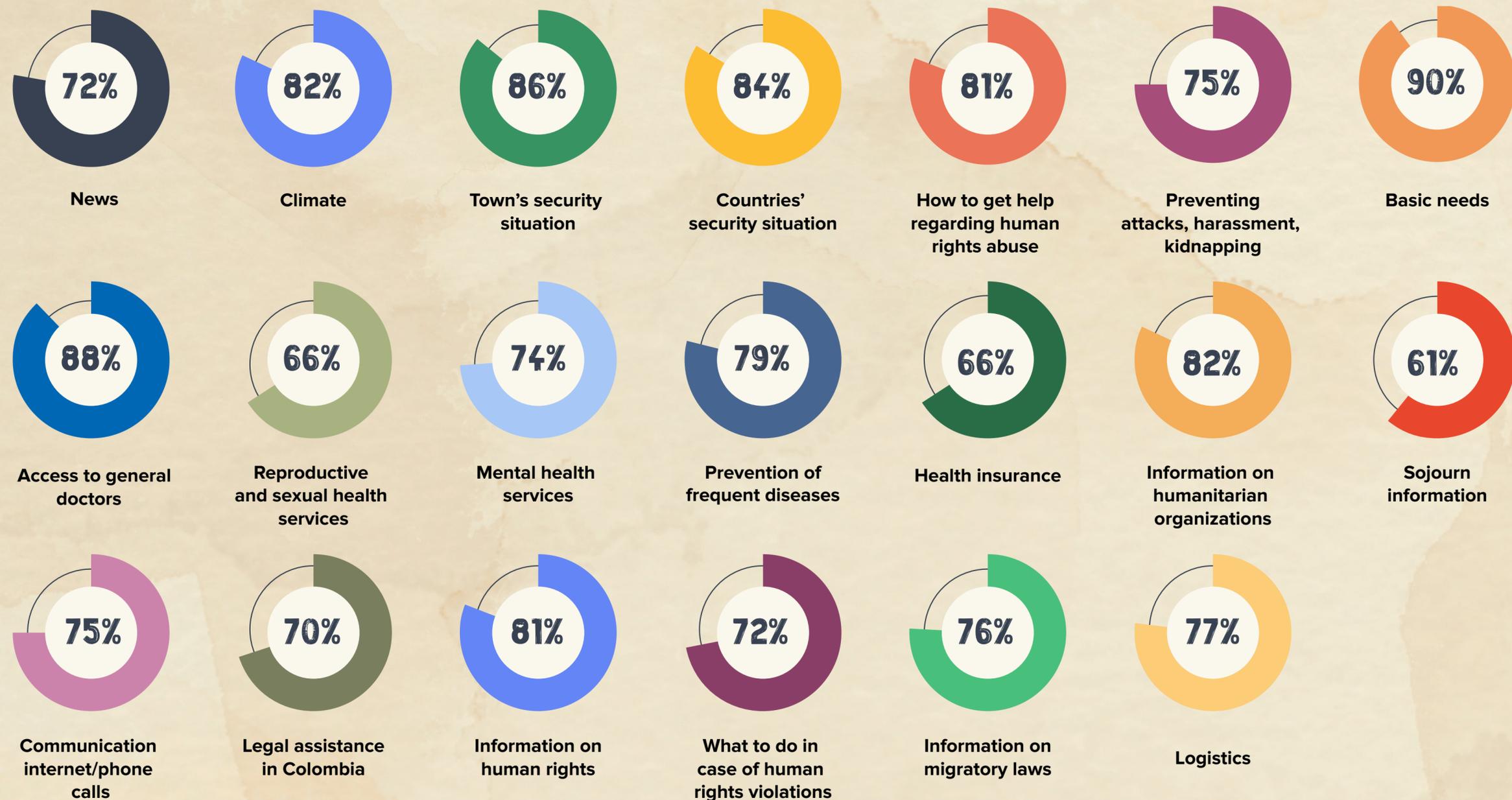
Primary information needs are met using social media, messaging services, and through “word of mouth” (see Graph 2), which, according to the research data, is the most effective way for migrants to discover humanitarian organizations and approach them to find answers relating to their needs. .

All the NGOs that are here, I mean, the “word of mouth” is involved in all of them, UNHCR, IOM, HIAS, Red Cross. All of them guide you [...] not necessarily through a media outlet like television or radio.

Venezuelan migrant residing in Necoclí
Focus Group with Migrant and Refugee Population
in the information ecosystem
Necoclí, August 23, 2023

Graph 1

Information needs of those surveyed. Darién, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

As evidenced in the focus groups conducted with the migrant population, accessing information about available humanitarian services in the area and throughout the transit route across the continent is a challenge for this population. A more effective approach to addressing this issue would be establishing various communication channels and information dissemination methods beyond “word of mouth” or those in digital spaces. Upon examining the results regarding channels to access information and trust surrounding information received, a challenge emerges in access to information from reliable, verified, and consistent sources.

For the migrant population, “word of mouth” is not a highly trusted channel because it requires approaching local institutions and organizations to access verified information. This approach is complex; according to interviews and surveys, migrants perceive this as risky and fear-instilling. Fears include being deported, being deprived of freedom in a foreign country, facing economic sanctions, and being charged for legal advice, abuse of authority, and exposure of privacy. Local organizations have also identified this situation, pointing out not only the need to provide information about transit, but also to address other important issues such as healthcare, safety, or environmental care in the areas. However, this is hindered due to the short duration of a migrant’s stay in this territory.

Here we have the police, the Mayor’s office. The institutions are there, the ICBF is there, but, what is the problem? That the migrant is afraid of institutions, not because they’ll put them in jail, but because they are distrustful. So, as I said, information, most of it, and I know this because of my vast experience with these cases, is provided by the intermediary. And it’s not the lack of institutions, it’s just that the migrant does not approach the institutions. They want to cross the Darién, and they see the migration official, the police, the ICBF, the PAHO, and the organizations themselves as an obstacle.

Local Journalist
Acandí, August 2023

Being a population in transit, they want to get through this challenging step as quickly as possible. So, in the case of Necoclí, for example, the Red Cross provides information about health, but they show very little interest. I believe it would be ideal to seek a strategy that manages to capture their attention.

Member of a state institution present in the area
Acandí, August 2023

The previous quotes highlight the need to establish mechanisms to strengthen trust between the migrant population and institutions, as the latter can potentially become one of the primary sources of reliable and secure information for migrants.



4.2 LOCAL MEDIA IN THE DARIÉN GAP

According to the Fundación para la Libertad the Prensa (FLIP) [Free Press Foundation], Chocó is a region in which 53% of the population lives in towns within silenced zones.¹⁰ Despite having 45 media outlets, these are centered in main cities and towns, which limits their reach to rural and remote areas.¹¹ Antioquia, on the other hand, is the largest department and has 253 local media sources.¹² Of these, only 4.7% are digital, and 21% are print. On average, between 20% and 30% of these media outlets offer local news, except in the Eastern region, where 50% offers local news. However, 31% of the population lives in areas without local news media, leaving only 29 out of 114 municipalities with adequate information outlets available.

¹⁰ Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa – Study Center (2017). Information Cartographies. FLIP. <https://flip.org.co/cartografias-informacion/content/choco#firstPage>

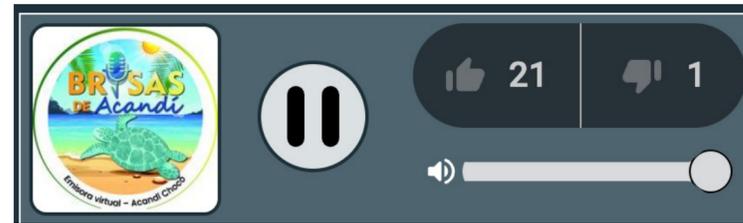
¹¹ CDAC Network (2022). Colombia. Media Landscape Guide. Square Space. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60996b757eb6521a42f3839d/t/624b32c10b467b2040df5c26/1649095363739/Colombia_Media_Landscape_Guide_Es-CDAC.pdf

¹² Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa – Study Center (2017). Information Cartographies. FLIP. <https://flip.org.co/cartografias-informacion/content/antioquia>



In the Antioquian Urabá region, 24% of the population lives in towns with local news media, which corresponds to eight out of the 11 towns in the region. 10% of the radio stations belong to the Police Forces and most local media are funded through commercial advertising. Journalists often feel censored when addressing topics related to the armed conflict. This situation is reflected in the Darien Gap, especially in Acandí and Necoclí.

In Acandí, there are only two main local media outlets: NotiAcandí and the radio station Brisas de Acandí. NotiAcandí uses social media to disseminate news and produces a weekly news program along with investigative report videos. It has around 30,000 followers on Facebook and 85,000 on TikTok. It covers all types of local topics of community interest and has been identified as the main local media outlet in the town by this research team. [The virtual radio Brisas de Acandí](#), established in 2023, is mainly dedicated to music programming and seeks to highlight cultural diversity, traditional music, and local stories from Acandí. **In Acandí and Capurganá, the lack of economic support has led to the suspension of several local media outlets such as Caribe Stereo, Acandí Stereo, La Voz de la Pocinga, and the Capurganá radio station.** Social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp groups, are key sources of information. However, the lack of media diversity creates challenges, such as the inability to verify information and the spread of misinformation.



See Annex – Presence on social media of media outlets in Acandí and Capurganá.

In Necoclí, according to the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP), there are five media outlets, including a subscription television channel, radio, newspaper, and a digital media outlet.¹³ **However, in this research, we found that, like in Acandí, some media outlets have ceased operations due to lack of economic support and human resources.**

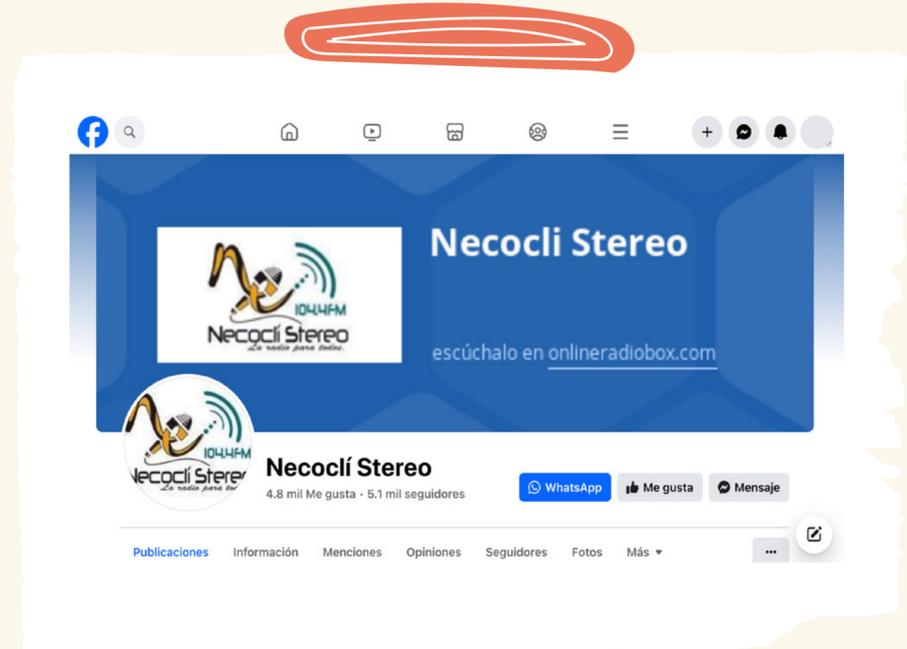
One of the media outlets we identified in the town is Necoclí TV, which is a subscription television operator and has a local television channel with approximately 600 subscribers. This outlet has faced challenges such as lack of corporate support and scarcity of communication and audiovisual creation professionals in the town. Despite these obstacles, they continue to broadcast third-party programming and produce their own content, including the program “El Café de las 6.”¹⁴



¹³ Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa - Centro de estudios (2017). Information mapping. FLIP. <https://flip.org.co/cartografias-informacion/content/urabá-antioqueño#>

¹⁴ YouTube channel of Necocli television. <https://www.youtube.com/@necoclitelevision>

Another important local media outlet is Necoclí Stereo,¹⁵ a community radio station that has played a valuable role in the community by disseminating a wide range of topics, including politics, culture, and sports. Their morning programs encourage social participation, allowing them to address various issues affecting the town and keeping the audience informed. In Necoclí, like in Acandí, the lack of media diversity creates disadvantages for the local population because they cannot compare and contrast information, leading to an increase in misinformation. See Annex – Presence on social media of media outlets in Necoclí.

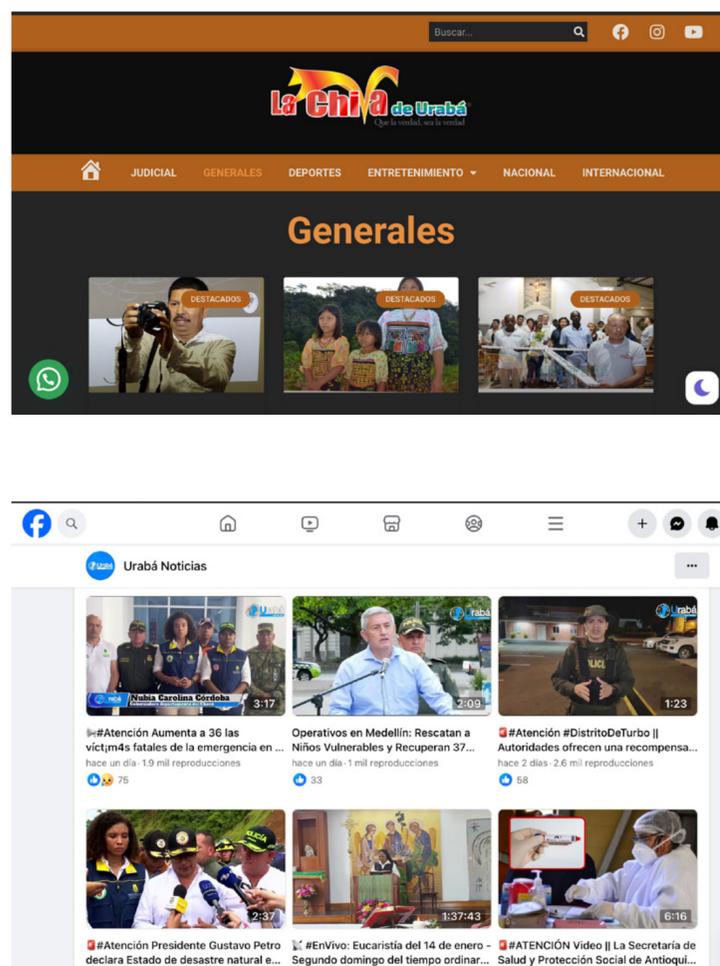


¹⁵ Facebook page of Necocli Stereo. <https://www.facebook.com/NecocliStereo104.4FM?mibextid=LQQJ4d>

4.3 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RELATIONS WITH MEDIA/CHANNELS

Access to information in the towns of Necoclí and Acandí, including the Capurganá district, emerges as a vital issue in the migratory context of this region, where migrants converge in search of new opportunities, facing significant challenges in the dissemination of accurate and reliable information. Through this investigative process, a series of patterns and problems arose related to information and its impact on the security and well-being of migrants. The lack of clear and precise information in the region, as well as the circulation of misinformation on migration issues, are recurrent problems. This often leads to misunderstandings, economic exploitation, and healthcare risks for migrants.

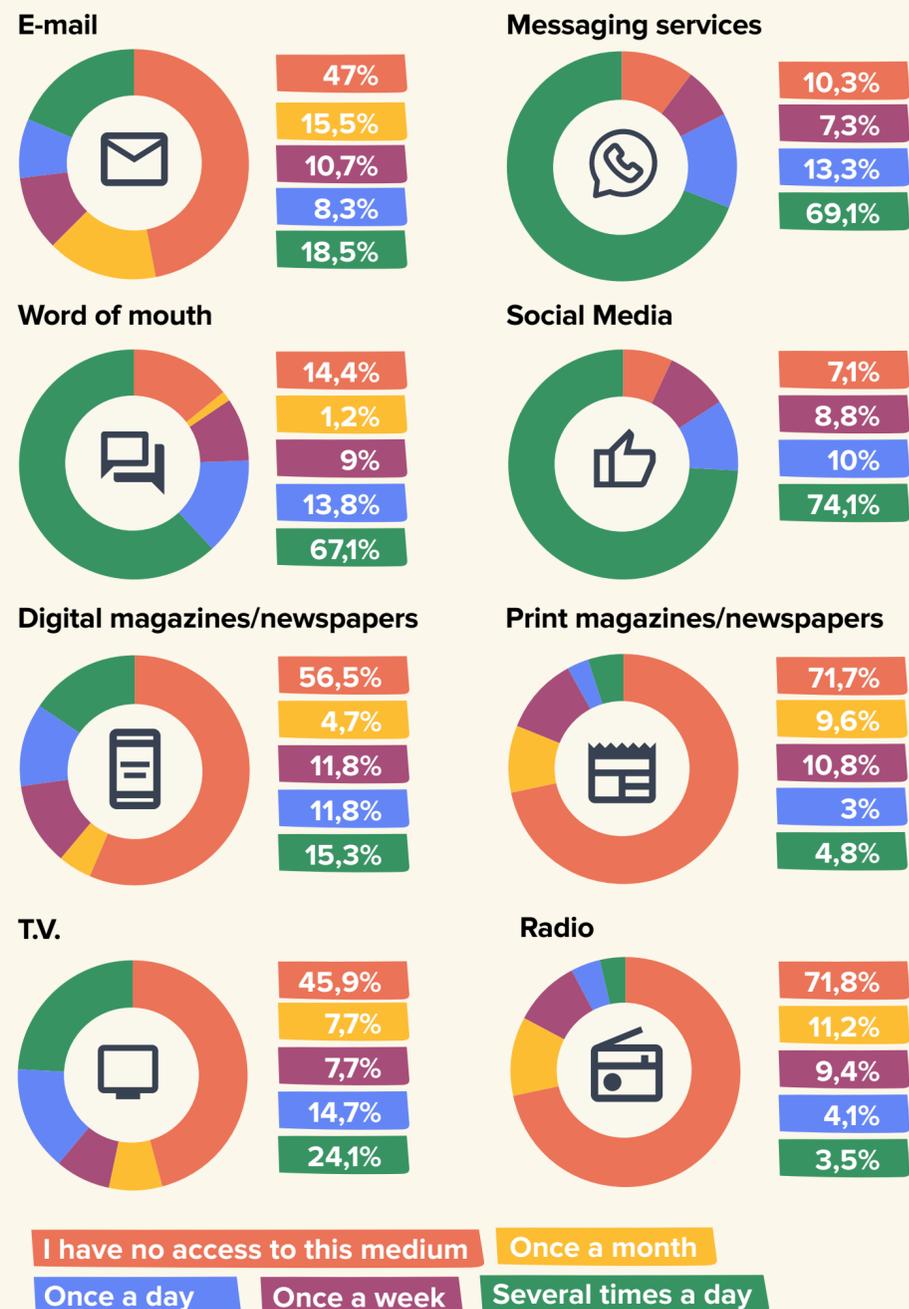
In this research, we identified that the channels most used by migrants and the host population to access information in the territory are social media (74.1%), instant messaging services (69.1%), and “word of mouth” (61.7%).



In Urabá, digital media outlets like La Chiva de Urabá and Urabá Noticias stand out, using their websites and social media to disseminate relevant information for the region. **These media outlets have provided extensive coverage of migration issues in the Antioquia part of Urabá and have highlighted success stories of migrants in the area.**

Graph 2

Frequency of use of communication channels/media.
Darién Gap, 2023.



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

According to the people interviewed, it is essential to resort to the local population or other migrants to obtain information about humanitarian assistance.

Word of mouth happens with organizations like the Red Cross, OIM, ACNUR. There is no specific organization of which I can say: let's go there, you'll find this or that sort of help. Word of mouth is not an entirely verified information source, because as word gets around, the information is altered, it changes from one version to the next; that is why no specific information is given..

Venezuelan migrant residing in Necoclí
Focus Group: Migrant and Refugee Population in Information Ecosystems
Necoclí, August 23, 2023

This lack of information and the confusion generated by word of mouth also implies a challenge for the security and integrity of migrants, who are exposed to situations of abuse and scams perpetrated by intermediaries.

I have seen the NGO information spots in Turbo and Necoclí. The Red Cross is there, and also UNICEF, where you can get information. What happens with the migrant? Particularly in Necoclí, the intermediary abuses the migrant; they charge more for a ticket and scam them with false taxes. Disinformation is quite significant, although several entities have used the billboards.

Journalist from Acandí
Interview with Media Outlets
Acandí, July 4, 2023

In addition to “word of mouth,” migrants use social media as a source of information on migration routes and their passage through the region. **25.3% (43 out of 170) of the surveyed individuals are part of groups on social media or messaging services that provide information related to migration or transit issues.** These groups have varied content but are also exposed to the circulation of misinformation, posing a challenge to the safety of migrants.

I belong to various Facebook Darién groups, but these groups do not tell the truth. So, what are we looking for? A group that tells the truth, that offers quality service and being able to say: “yes, this group told me that I can pass through, and it will take me X amount of days.” And there’s the cost; because even the price is wrong on their posts, and people coming here are fooled and end up staying.

Venezuelan migrant residing in Necoclí
Focus Group: Migrant and Refugee Population in Information Ecosystems
Necoclí, August 23, 2023

Many migrants face challenges due to the misinformation they receive through various communication channels. This inaccurate information leads to serious consequences, such as problems on routes and misunderstood costs.

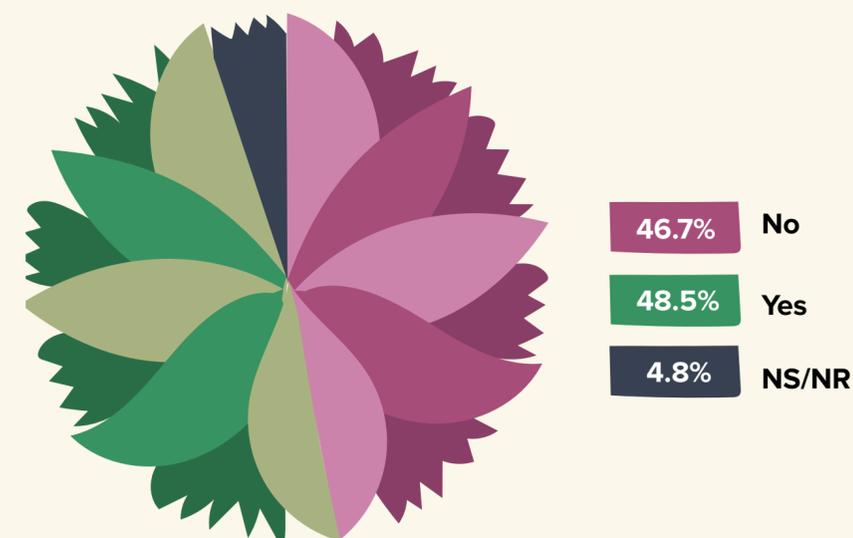
They arrive very misinformed. We have come across very desperate people in tough situations. In March, we found a case of a young man who was in a crisis, a depression [...] He thought that he would come here, cross the Darién jungle with no problems at all, but he didn’t know that he would encounter the sea, and that he would have to pay a certain amount to cross, and that after that the guide would also charge him money.

Woman member of the host population
Focus Group: Host Population in Information Ecosystems
Necoclí, August 19, 2023

We also found that 48.5% of the surveyed individuals have been aware of the impact of incorrect information in the Darién Gap, leading to abuse, scams, and theft by intermediaries.

Graph 3

Awareness of inaccurate or misleading information. Darién Gap, 2023



Fuente: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

I’ve heard of cases where migrants have been robbed, scammed, and cheated, [...] there was even national news about some people being robbed and killed over there on the coast of Urabá in the Chocó region [...] This has happened, but it seems like it’s been somewhat under control.

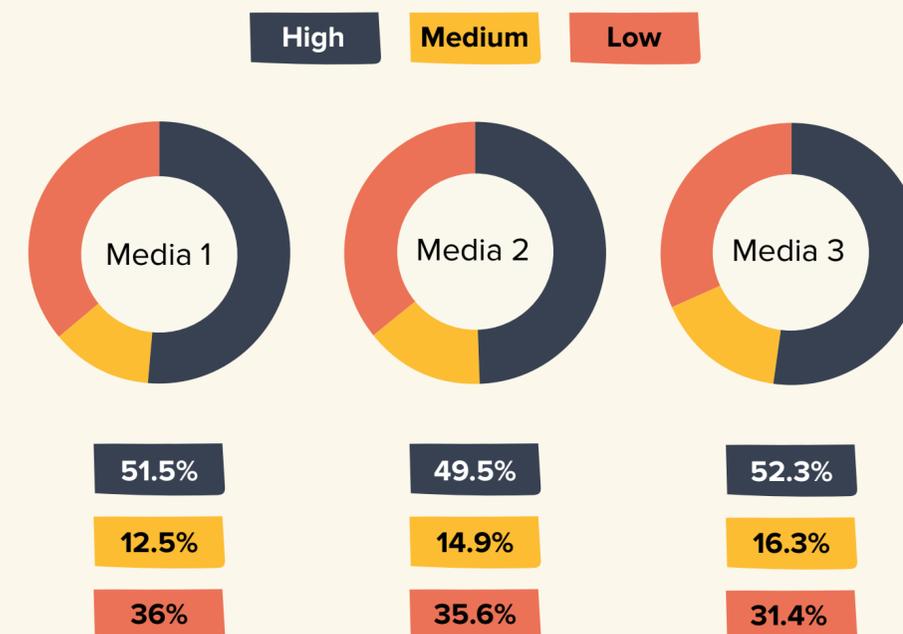
Representative of a media outlet from Necoclí
Interview with Media Outlets
Necoclí, August 23, 2023

When inquiring about the most consulted channels, 42% of migrants and 40% of host community members mention using WhatsApp as their main source of information through groups and instant messaging, followed by Facebook and Instagram; other media such as TikTok and “word of mouth” are also mentioned.

Despite these being the most used channels, approximately one third of respondents have low levels of trust in social media and messaging services, as shown in Graph 4.

Graph 4:

Trust in main media/channels consulted by the migrant and host populations. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

This mistrust may be due to factors previously discussed, as surveyed individuals mention the high circulation of misinformation, scams, and thefts that occur through the use of these channels and media outlets that disseminate information on social media accounts.

Table 4:

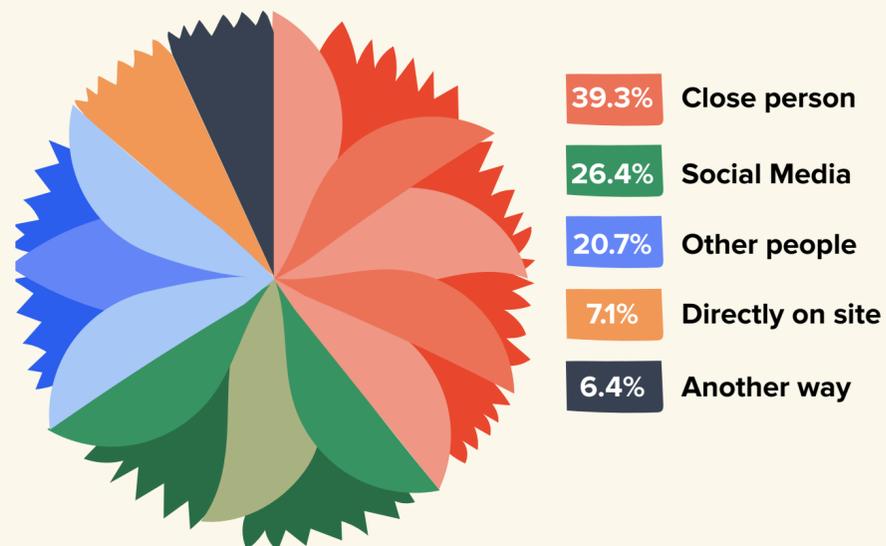
Main media/channels consulted by the migrant population and the host population. Darién, 2023

	Host Population				Migrants				
	Media 1 n=(25)	Media 2 n=(25)	Media 3 n=(23)	Consolidated n=(73)	Media 1 (n=139)	Media 2 n=(134)	Media 3 n=(127)	Consolidated n=(400)	
WhatsApp	40%	28%	9%	26%	WhatsApp	42%	21%	11%	25%
Facebook	20%	24%	22%	22%	Facebook	26%	40%	9%	25%
Notiacandi	32%	0%	0%	11%	TikTok	3%	10%	11%	8%
Instagram	0%	8%	13%	7%	Instagram	2%	4%	13%	6%
Caracol	0%	12%	9%	7%	Word of Mouth	3%	1%	11%	5%
Google	4%	4%	9%	5%	Youtube	1%	1%	6%	3%
RCN	0%	8%	9%	5%	Caracol	2%	4%	2%	3%
Youtube	0%	8%	4%	4%	RCN	1%	3%	2%	2%
Word of Mouth	0%	8%	4%	4%	Notiacandi	4%	1%	1%	2%

Source: Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

Graph 5

Way of contacting guides/intermediaries or organizations for the journey. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

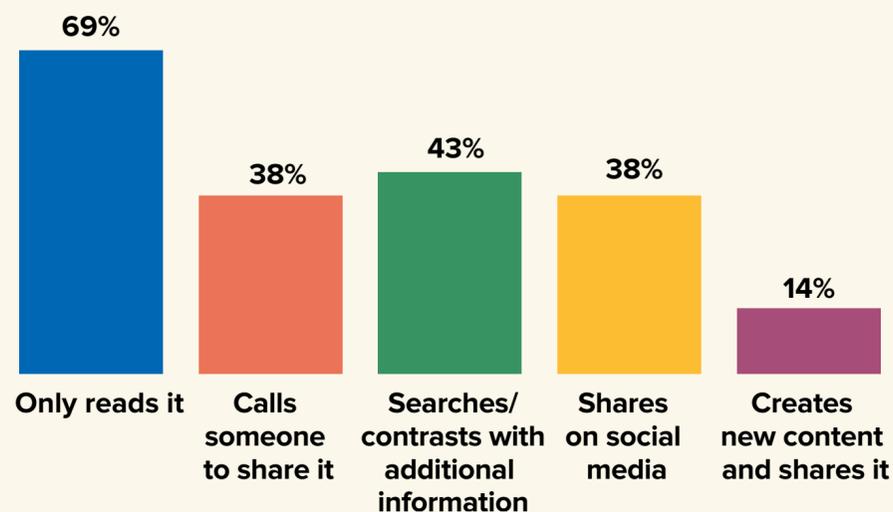
Data shown in Graph 5 underscore how personal recommendations, social media, and “word of mouth” communication once again play a significant role in migrants’ choice when seeking guides or intermediaries for their journey.

Regarding how both the migrant and host populations interact with the information they receive, 69% of the interviewed individuals simply read information without verifying it. However, 43% seek to verify the accuracy of the information, while 38% share it on social media or directly communicate with others to disseminate it.

This highlights the importance of “word of mouth” as an information channel among individuals interested in migrating. Additionally, 14% use the received information as inspiration to create new content (see Graph 6). This diversity of responses emphasizes the importance of comprehensively addressing the informational needs of this population by providing reliable content and fostering greater participation and collaboration in the dissemination of relevant information. This can contribute to informed decision-making and increased security for individuals considering migration in the region.

Graph 6

Actions taken by the surveyed population surrounding the information they receive. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

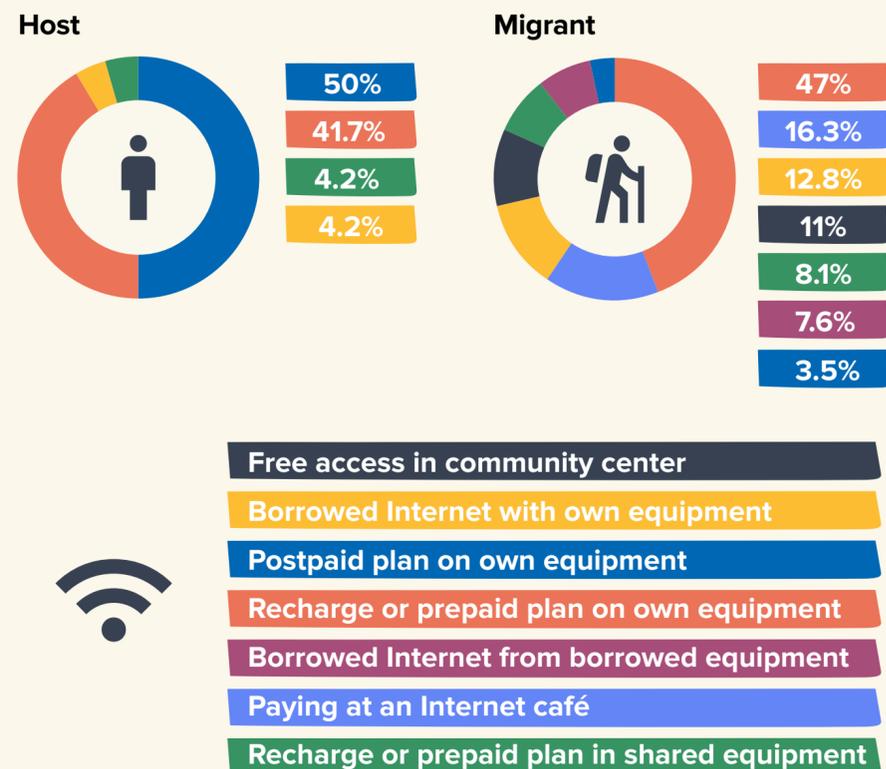
Access to devices for obtaining information is a critical issue for both the migrant and host populations in the area. 46.7% of the surveyed individuals access the Internet through prepaid or recharge plans on their own devices, while 19% use community spaces for free access. 7.9% rely on borrowed devices, raising concerns about data security and privacy, and only 1.2% use Internet café services (see Graph 7). These difficulties are more pronounced among the migrant population compared to the host population.

It is essential to address these digital divides to ensure fair access to information. It is advisable for local organizations and media to create content in light and easily accessible formats, considering the population’s limited connectivity. Additionally, using billboards and in-person approaches would reach them more effectively.



Graph 7

Services and devices through which the surveyed population accesses the Internet. Darién Gap, 2023



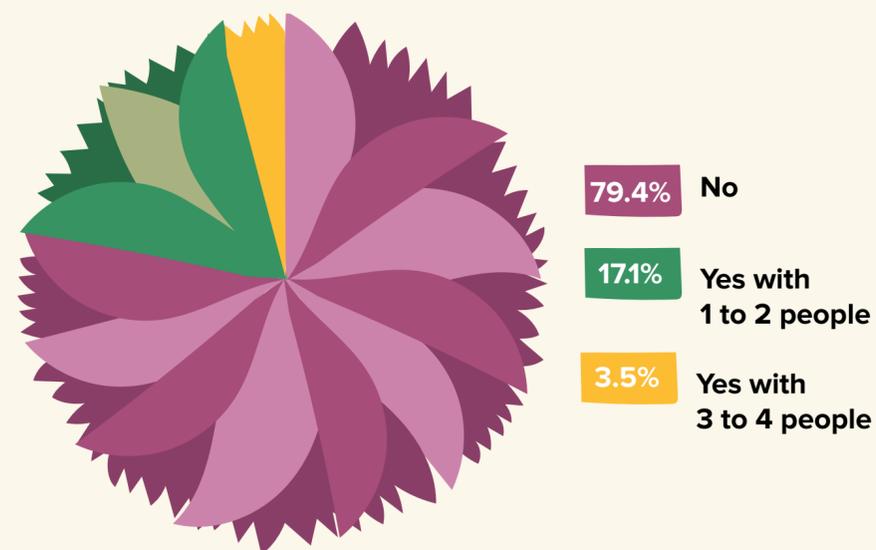
Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

Due to the lack of access to the Internet from personal devices, 17.1% of the surveyed individuals share their connection device with one or two people, while 8.4% share their device with three or four people. About one fifth of the surveyed individuals share their social media accounts. However, 79.4% have their own device to independently access information (see Graph 8).

Sharing devices and social media accounts can limit access to confidential information or jeopardize the handling of their data and sensitive or private information related to topics such as sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and cases of gender-based violence.

Graph 8

Shared use of accounts on social media. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

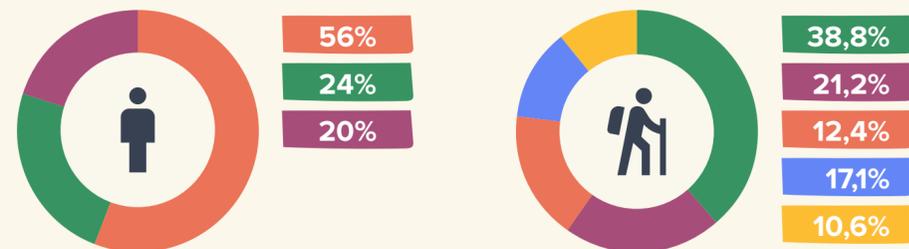
The lack of accurate information and the prevalence of misinformation on migration issues pose a risk for the communities involved and increase their vulnerability. Although “word of mouth” remains the most used channel, its effectiveness comes into question. **Social media and messaging apps are popular channels, but one third**

of people distrust them. The safety and well-being of migrants are at risk due to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, exposing them to abuse. **The host population also expresses a negative perception* around migration (56%), perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination; furthermore, it signals the growth of hate speech and rejection towards the migrant population.** It is essential to generate accurate information to promote understanding and prevent discrimination. In contrast, among the migrant population, only 12.4% say they receive negative information about migration, and a significant 38.8% say they receive positive information, which may explain why progressively more people decide to migrate and pass through the Darién Gap along their journey (see Graph 9).

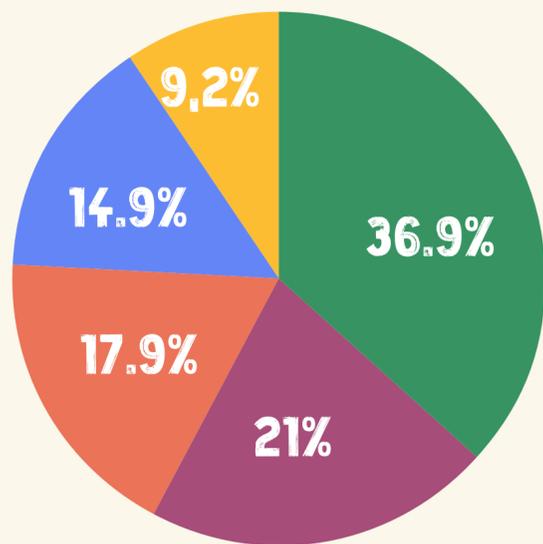
* For the purposes of this research, we established that negative information parameters, for both host and migrant populations, refer to discouraging news, data, and opinions that reinforce stigmas and generate discrimination. This includes details about dangers along the journey, “bad” behaviors of migrants within the territory, and unfavorable updates in terms of safety or legal issues that hinder migrants from continuing their journey. On the other hand, positive information refers to favorable aspects of the journey (costs, facilities along the way, among other), as well as information about policies to regulate transit, the possibility of legally establishing migrants within the country, and measures taken by governments and relevant entities to safeguard the safety and well-being of both host and migrant populations.

Graph 9

Perception of received information about migration by type surveyed. Darién Gap, 2023



TOTAL:



NS/NR Not applicable Positive Negative Neutral

Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

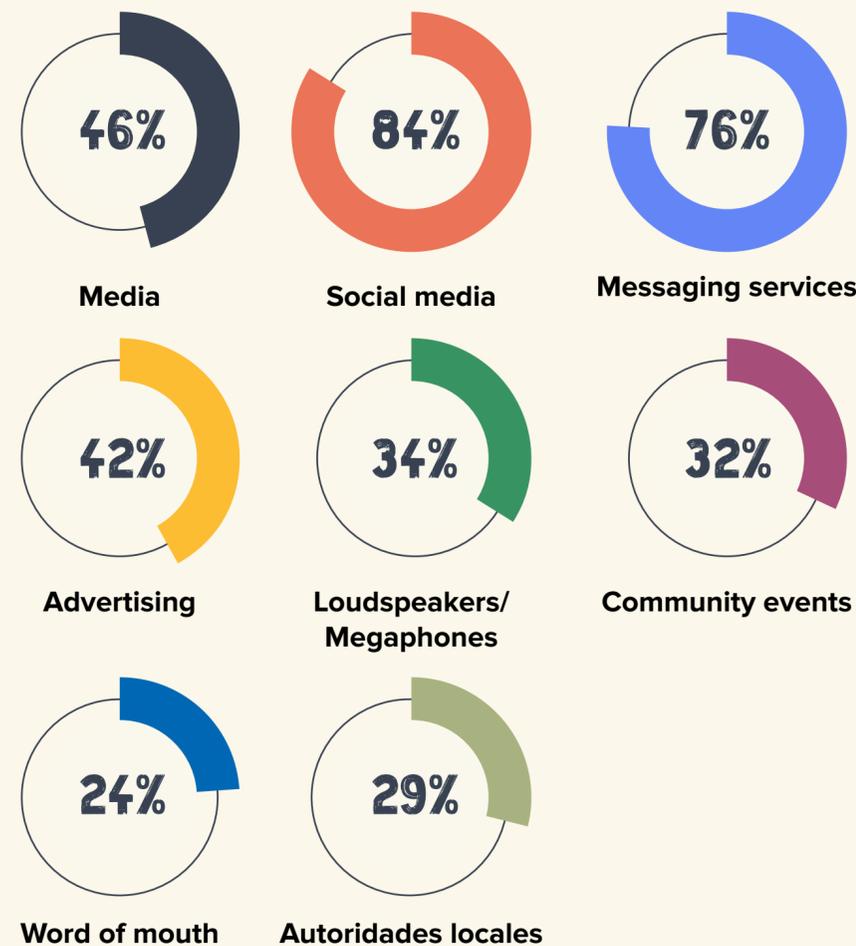
84% of surveyed individuals consider social media the most effective channel for receiving relevant information in the digital age. 76% prefer messaging services, indicating a preference for personal communication.

Despite this, traditional media outlets are still relevant for 46% of the respondents. Additionally, certain audiences consider methods such as advertising, public announcements, community events, and information from local authorities effective.

Despite its wide usage, only 24% consider “word of mouth” effective due to barriers of fear, potential legal repercussions, or limitations in transit. The challenge is to effectively combine these channels to ensure the delivery of accurate and useful information, considering limited access to the Internet and the fact that many people share devices and social media accounts. Ensuring the dissemination of accurate and timely information to both migrant and host populations is crucial, given the variety of preferred channels and the relevance of traditional and local methods in certain contexts.

Graph 10

Best media and channels to receive information. Darién, 2023



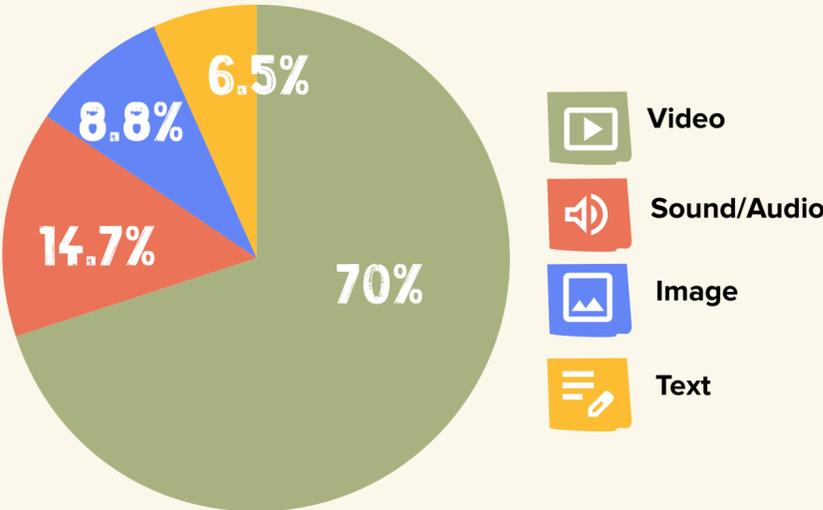
Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

The most effective format for receiving information, according to 70% of the respondents, is video, which presents information visually and dynamically.

14.7% prefer audio formats, while 8.8% opt for information accompanied by clear images, such as infographics. Only 6.5% prefer text. These results suggest that most migrants find audiovisual media more useful for accessing information. It is important to note that those surveyed are Spanish-speaking, and preferences may vary for non-Spanish-speaking migrants (see Graph 11).

Graph 11

The most effective formats for receiving information about needs and interests. Darién Gap, 2023.

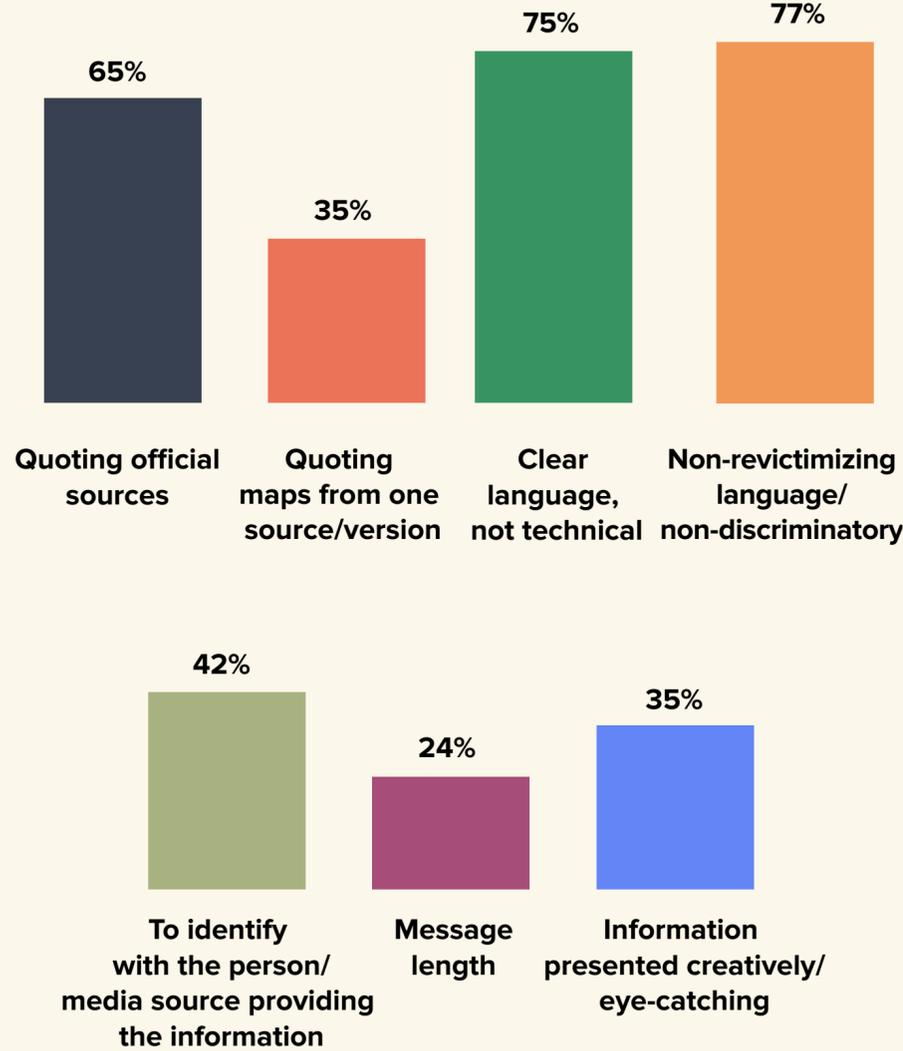


Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

The surveyed individuals value certain characteristics in information delivery. 77% emphasize the importance of presenting information with non-revictimizing or discriminatory language, respecting the experiences of the migrant population and avoiding stigmatization. 75% underline the relevance of using clear and non-technical language, facilitating comprehension for a diverse audience. 65% consider it important to mention an official source to support the information, while 35% prefer citing more than one source to verify the information. Additionally, 42% value feeling close to or able to identify with the person or medium providing the information, which can increase credibility. 35% find it relevant for the information to be presented in a captivating or creative way to garner their attention, while only 24% consider the length of the message important. These aspects are crucial to ensure that information reaches the migrant population adequately and effectively, contributing to their well-being and safety during their journey (see Graph 12).

Graph 12

Desired characteristics in the information received by the surveyed individuals. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

In terms of the topics of greatest interest for both for the migrant population and the host population, the following trends emerged:

Both the migrant population and the host population show a strong interest in various topics that they seek out through various communication channels. These topics include staying in touch with family and friends (79%), obtaining information about their country of origin

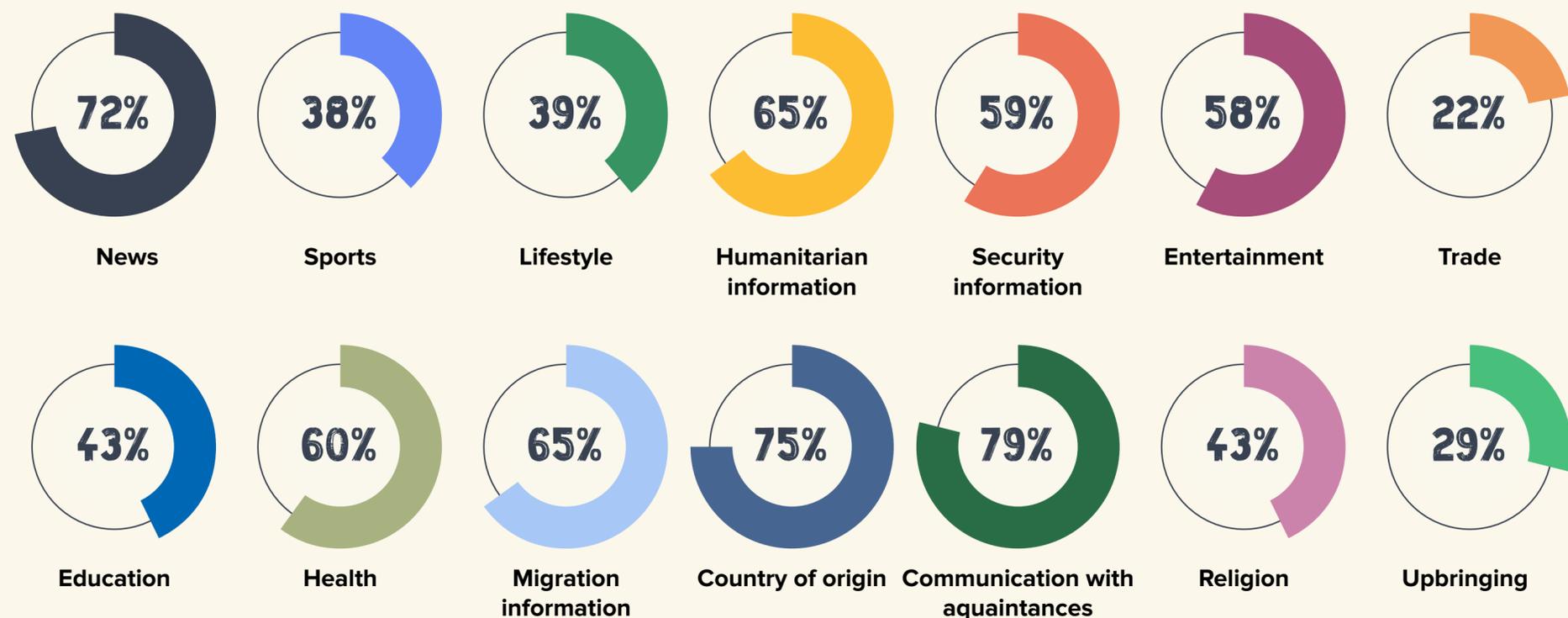
(75%), staying informed about news in general (72%), and seeking humanitarian and migration-related information (65%). In addition to these topics, they are also interested in security, entertainment, education, lifestyle, and health; the latter is essential to enable the migrant population to preserve their well-being and prevent illnesses, as well as to facilitate their access to medical services in unfamiliar environments (see Graph 13).

The research team also looked into potential adjustments necessary to communicate this information more effectively. Although they expected responses to center around the population's own needs, the majority of respondents referred to adjustments or changes that would optimize the information, thus facilitating the understanding of others who might be going through similar situations, such as foreigners who might wish to travel through this area and who, lacking information in other languages, could become lost or confused. **Among the respondents, 75% selected the use of images and pictograms such as infographics, illustrations, and visuals to facilitate greater understanding, followed by translation of information into foreign or Indigenous languages.**

These types of materials can be shared through channels predominantly consumed by this population, such as social media groups, to increase information access. Additionally, versions of these materials in other languages could extend their reach to non-Spanish-speaking migrants. Finally, 49% of respondents would make modifications regarding the use of braille and larger print to support people with low vision capacities (see Graph 14).

Graph 13

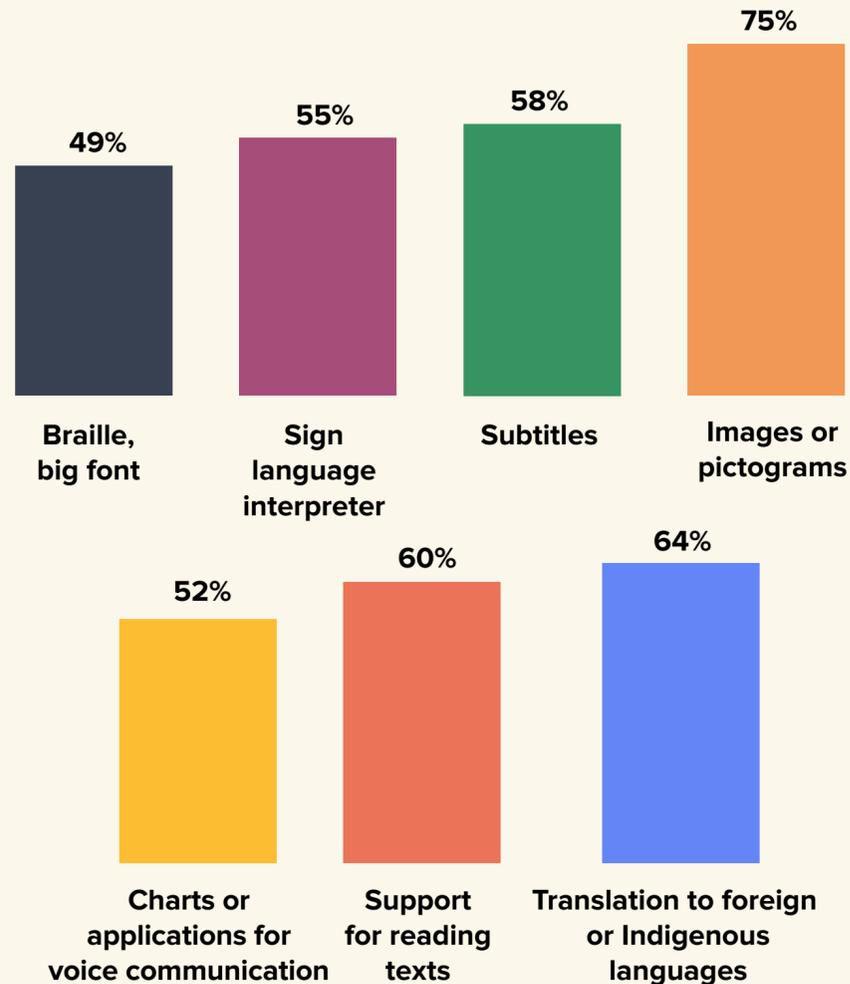
Topics of greatest interest. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

Graph 14

Necessary adjustments for the information to be more effective. Darién, 2023



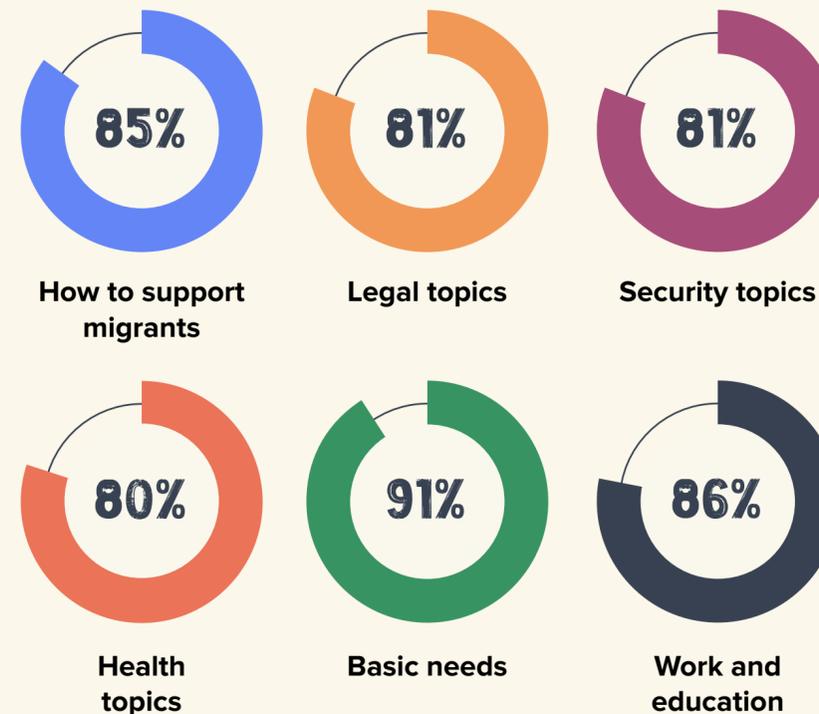
Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

The researchers consulted the host population about their interest in learning about migration-related topics.

A total of 25 respondents participated in surveys; Graph 15 shows a high interest level in accessing information about migration issues, mainly regarding basic needs. Migration-related information emerges as the issue area in which the two populations most frequently intersect and face common challenges. It is essential to continue providing this type of information to meet the significant needs of the host population.

Graph 15

Migration topics of interest to the host population. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

4.4 PRODUCTION OF LOCAL INFORMATION

In the towns that served as focus areas for this research, there is a concerning environment regarding local information production.

for this research, there is a concerning environment regarding local information production. This reality is largely due to a lack of support and financial resources allocated to local media, leading various outlets to halt their operations, as mentioned in Section 4.2. The disappearance of these radio stations and local media represents a tangible loss for the community, as these outlets played a vital role in disseminating local information, promoting culture, playing regional music, and connecting the residents of Acandí and Capurganá. However, it is encouraging to note that some local media outlets have managed to adapt to the changing needs of their environment and have emerged as prominent information sources in the region.

The importance of local media cannot be underestimated, as they play a fundamental role in disseminating relevant information to the community. Local information production requires constant investment in human and technical resources to ensure the dissemination of accurate

and up-to-date news. Lack of funding can result in a shortage of media outlets, thereby reducing access to local information, which negatively affects both migrant and host populations in terms of knowledge about community issues, civic participation, and informed decision-making.

In the town of Acandí, local information production is mainly carried out by a recognized and digital native media outlet: NotiAcandí. This media outlet has supported migrant populations, as it consistently provides information about migration routes in Acandí and Capurganá. Through its TikTok and Facebook channels, for example, it broadcasts interviews with migrants who have crossed the Darién jungle. Similarly, it maintains constant communication with municipal institutions to inform the host population about situations occurring in the migration passage. This media outlet has tried to survive without support from the government or institutions.



NotiAcandi has endured over time due to its resilience and self-management. For example, if a media outlet lacks support from the Mayor's Office, it has no one to assist it, it has nothing. One must seek a company or corporation willing to pay for advertisements to be able to support itself, so it's difficult.

Journalist from Acandí
Interview with Media Outlets
Acandí, July 4, 2023

Despite the challenges related to funding, **NotiAcandí has managed to establish itself as a prominent point of reference for information in the region.** This media outlet has become the most reliable source of information for both residents and migrants passing through the territory. Furthermore, its work related to the migrant population has garnered international recognition. Recently, its leader, Yolvis de la Cruz, served as a field producer in Colombia for the documentary *Darién, el infierno de los migrantes*, produced by the Chilean media outlet 24 horas TVN.¹⁶ This achievement demonstrates the impact and relevance of NotiAcandí in covering migration issues in the region.

Recently, the virtual radio station Brisas de Acandí established itself in the town. This station, with a clear focus on musical programming, aims to highlight the cultural diversity present in the region. Additionally, it aims to promote and celebrate traditional music, which is a fundamental component of Acandí's local identity. During this research, coinciding with the electoral period, Brisas de Acandí decided to incorporate a political angle into its programming. This initiative reflects the importance of political events and their impact on the local community, offering listeners a broader and more comprehensive perspective of the reality around them.

The situation in Necoclí is similar to that described above in Acandí. However, Necoclí has more media outlets dedicated to local information production, such as Necoclí TV, the online news journal El Nuevo Horizonte, and Necoclí Stereo. These three media outlets have focused mainly on the host population, addressing the impacts migration has generated in the region. In addition to offering information, **they have assumed the role of denouncing and revealing possible cases of misinformation that may arise as people migrate through Necoclí.**

¹⁶ Documentales 24: "Darién, the hell of migrants" (2023, abril 24). TVN Chile. https://youtu.be/ihH_kR3LLvM?si=mTtEySRuCUml6hcQ

The radio station has done important social work because we have publicly spoken about the problems and everything that goes on daily in our town concerning politics, culture, sports; we address every topic. [...] The station shares information from other media sources, so that the community and the migrants who have access to radio on the beaches are informed.

Representative of Necoclí Stereo
Interview with Media Outlets
Necoclí, August 27, 2023

Necoclí Stereo, a radio station with a 15-year history in the town, stands out for its diverse programming that goes beyond music. It focuses on giving voice to the people of Necoclí through public opinion programs broadcast daily in the morning hours. This station reaches a wide audience, and it is common to hear it on the beaches, in businesses, and in other local spaces. **Necoclí Stereo's commitment to providing a space for public opinion reflects its role as a community media outlet.** Thus, it allows local residents to express their views and actively participate in the discussion of issues affecting the community. This citizen participation in media plays

an essential role in the democratic life of the town and contributes to the formation of an informed and engaged community.

On the other hand, the television channel Necoclí TV has existed for approximately 20 years in the town. This channel is mainly dedicated to broadcasting movies, entertainment programs, and some local productions. In addition to its function as a television channel, Necoclí TV is part of a telecommunications company that provides Internet and subscription television services (ISP) in the town. A subscription is required to access Necoclí TV content. **However, Necoclí TV has expanded its reach through online streaming, allowing it to broaden its audience, reaching viewers outside the area and providing the opportunity for wider access to its content.**



During the pandemic, [...] with the rise of virtual activities and live streaming becoming very popular, we started delving into streaming ourselves. We began acquiring equipment and getting trained in the technology. We had more time available because we were somewhat confined, but remember that the telecommunications sector had special permits to go out and report. That's when we started a news program where we would do a weekly summary.

Representative of Necoclí TV
Interview with Media Outlets
Necoclí, August 23, 2023

Unfortunately, the news program produced by Necoclí TV had to suspend its broadcast this year due to various factors, including funding problems. Despite this setback, the channel remains committed to producing relevant content for the local community through programs like [“El Café de las Seis”](#). This initiative allows them to continue generating content of interest and relevance to residents, thereby maintaining a valuable news service despite the challenges faced.

In addition to these media outlets, the newspaper **El Nuevo Horizonte** is also present in the town of Necoclí. **This newspaper has adapted its format and, following the pandemic, has focused its efforts on digital content production.** The producers of this media outlet, who also have ties to Necoclí Stereo, have addressed a wide variety of topics and have been committed to journalism for a considerable time. This adaptation to the digital format has allowed them to continue informing and connecting with the local community in a shifting media environment. However, this transition to the digital format also poses significant challenges in a region where Internet access is still a hindrance for many residents.

Yes, the Internet is deficient here in the urban area, so you can imagine what it's like in rural areas. In fact, you can't even make phone calls. There are people who participate in radio through calls, like this morning, and we don't understand why there's no signal, even though it's a phone call.

Representative of El Nuevo Horizonte
Interview with Media Outlets
Necoclí, August 27, 2023

It's crucial to highlight that the lack of connectivity in the region poses significant challenges for all local communications processes. However, in these two towns, including the district of Capurganá, a considerable portion of local production is oriented towards digital platforms, thus becoming one of the most effective communication channels in the area, which the migrant population accesses before and during their journey through the region. The reason behind this trend is the growing penetration of mobile devices and the relative accessibility of these platforms, even in the absence of robust Internet infrastructure. Therefore, despite connectivity limitations, digitalization has become a key strategy for reaching both the local and migrant audience before, during, and after their transit.

In conclusion, local information production faces substantial challenges stemming from the lack of financial support and resources for local media. This has led to the closure of several local media outlets over time, representing a significant loss in terms of access to reliable local information and the promotion of regional culture. However, the cases highlighted above stand out, despite financial obstacles, as important information pillars in the region. Their success underscores the importance of local media and their ability to adapt to the community's changing needs.

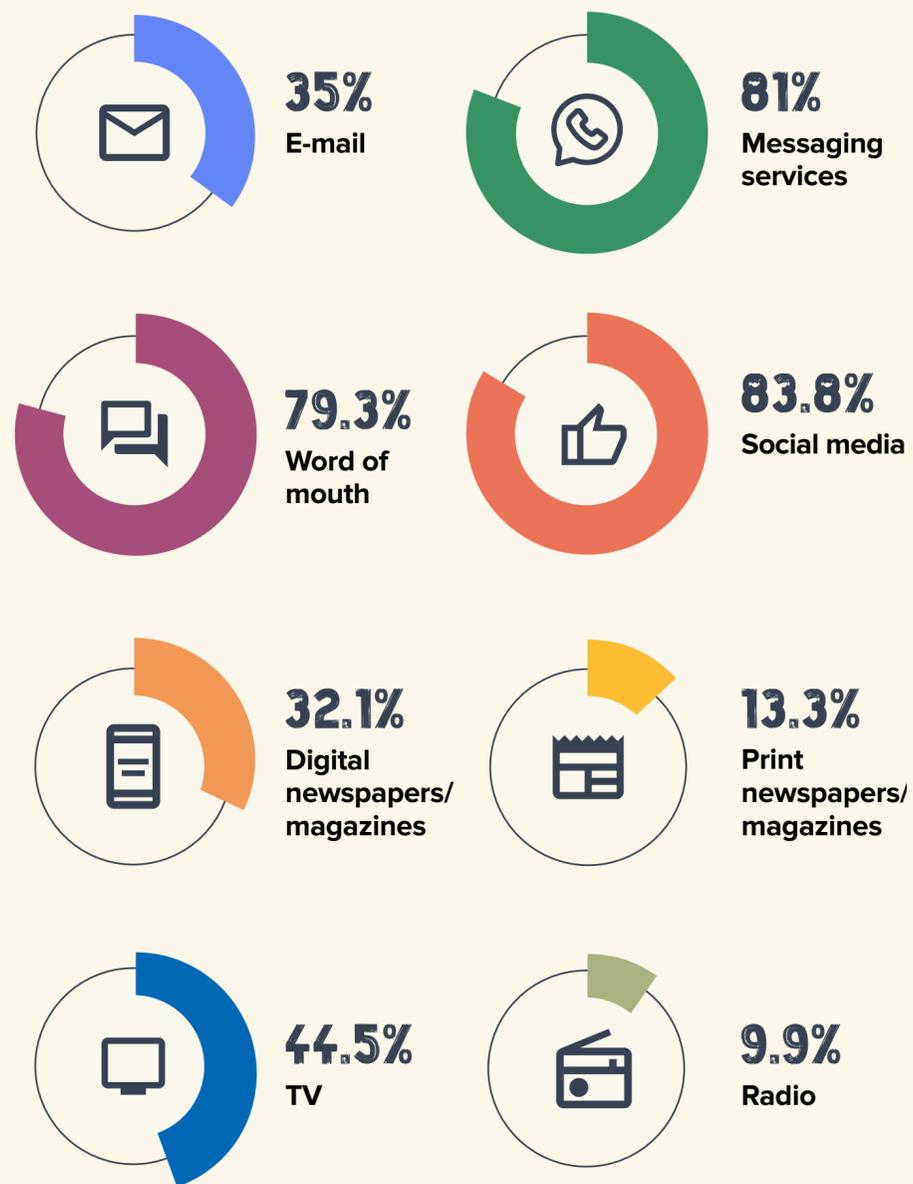
Despite its difficulties, it is encouraging to see that **digitization has become a key strategy to reach both local and migrant audiences through digital platforms. This trend demonstrates the ability of local media to innovate and adapt in challenging environments,** and particularly that of the individuals who run these media outlets without any financial support. Despite a lack of training as social communicators or journalists, they have engaged in journalistic activities out of love and commitment to their community and in response to the needs for access to local and national information. Ultimately, the survival and strengthening of local media in these regions largely depend on financial support, as well as the implementation of training and capacity-building programs in social communication, journalism, and audiovisual production at regional universities. Additionally, investment in human and technical resources is necessary to ensure the continuity of local information production.

4.5 HEALTHCARE INFORMATION NEEDS AND ACCESS



One of the central points of this research is to investigate how the migrant population accesses information and subsequently healthcare services. **Individuals primarily use messaging services, social media, and word of mouth for healthcare information, as is the case for general information (see Graph 16).**

Graph 16
Media/communication channels used to access healthcare information. Darién Gap, 2023



Source: IER applied by Sinergias/SentARTE, 2023

The interviews with shelter staff demonstrate that these locations have medical services and provide information to migrant individuals. Once again, word of mouth prevails as the primary mechanism for sharing medical information.

So, we assess the physical condition in which people arrive. If they arrive pregnant, or with many children, if they are sick, or they tell us themselves, they provide us with information. We take them to the healthcare post, where the doctor or nurse is, and they receive attention. The doctor says: well, you're so many weeks pregnant, you can continue the journey, or you can't [...] The doctor can provide information and primary care. When things are serious, we ourselves get in touch with the doctor, we take them to the hospital here or to the second-level hospital in Turbo or Apartadó.

Shelter staff
August 2023

Arriving to the shelter already gives them free access to healthcare services, even for people from outside. The migrant population living here in Acandí also has the right to receive medical care. [...] Their guides have full knowledge; for example, they can guide a patient, tell them there is another healthcare post up there. And at the border, there is another healthcare post, and they have access to this for free. So that's where the communication center comes in.

Shelter doctor in Acandí
Interview at the healthcare post located in an Acandí shelter
August 2023

However, although there are healthcare points in the shelters around Acandí and Capurganá, focus group discussions revealed that this information is not always widely known, and migrants only have contact with the healthcare personnel there if they actively seek it.

The issue of the migrant population's mistrust towards local institutions and organizations also affects timely access to information and healthcare services. Several testimonies show how people prefer not to seek healthcare services out of fear or lack of awareness.

Yesterday, because my child was sick, I found out that there was a nurse here. I didn't know there was one, but I asked another migrant companion.

Migrant population member
August 2023

I heard about a case, but we only found out a week later chatting with the doctor because unfortunately, cases arise, and due to fear, due to pressure from armed groups, or the authorities, people don't report to avoid trouble. A Haitian woman had a baby and left; she arrived at one of the rest points and was there in the hospital, fortunately.

Police Officer
August 2023

Overall, there is little information available to migrants on how to access healthcare services; several express having "endured" their ailments due to lack of knowledge about where to seek help.

On the way here, I didn't have the chance to learn where to turn when I suffered a toothache at a certain moment, and I thought: I'm in a foreign country, I know I must pay for my medicine. Now, what do I do with this tooth? It was intense pain, and I didn't know what to do or where to go.

Necoclí migrant
August 2023



[...] someone who is passing through doesn't know it and doesn't know where to find help. Many times, someone arrives sick, they take them to the hospital, they don't receive attention, and they don't know that they should receive attention, because the town has the resources to take care of vulnerable people who don't have a card, and they must see them whether they want to or not. But those who are there don't know it, and a person without knowledge is helpless.

Focus group: Refugee and migrant population
in the Information Ecosystem Research
Necoclí
August 2023

As observed in Graph 8, regarding healthcare information needs, **88% of individuals reported needing information about general medical services; 79% are interested in learning about common diseases in the area; 74% are interested in knowing more about mental health, and two thirds of the surveyed individuals are interested in sexual and reproductive health services.**

Similarly, regarding vulnerability during transit through the Darién Gap, the international organization [World Visión](#) pointed out in a report published in 2022 that girls, women, pregnant and lactating women, as well as the elderly and

people with disabilities, are the most predisposed to all kinds of risks. According to interviews, the host population has also identified that these groups are the ones who have required the most information and timely access to healthcare services.

Do you know who has died the most on this journey? Women and children, especially children. So, we have to be very careful about that. When I see families like that, when I'm at a shelter, I try to make them see that we have nothing here, so they go back. But I do it mostly for the children because they don't know where they're going [...] and they are the ones who suffer.

Shelter staff
Capurganá, August 2023

You talk about gender-based violence, create routes where women feel confident to report the violence they experience during transit, and where they are informed of the risks they face when crossing the Darién Gap. Lastly, training people on what to do in cases of death has been discussed, to dignify the journey.

NGO staff
Acandí, August 2023

Cases of dehydration and malnutrition in the migrant population have also been frequently addressed at healthcare points in the area.

Migrant individuals often arrive with a high rate of malnutrition due to poor diet during their journey. Sometimes they also arrive with high rates of dehydration or have trouble because they eat certain foods that have gone bad when trying to ration.

Healthcare personnel
Necoclí, August 2021

Many of these risks and situations that many migrants face could be mitigated with access to timely and clear information on how to prevent and manage them.

5. BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE JUNGLE.

MIGRATION STORIES. VOICES AND SOUNDS OF A JOURNEY.

In the development of this IER, a communication project called **Entre el mar y la selva. Historias de migración. Voces y sonidos de una travesía [Between the Sea and the Jungle: Stories of Migration. Voices and Sounds of a Journey]**,¹⁷ emerged, initially carried out in the town of Necoclí. Its purpose is to collect voices, testimonies, and experiences in audio formats about migration in the Darién Gap region, calling for the participation of both the migrant and host populations.

This process aims to generate testimonies from migratory experiences of people who have travelled through the Darién Gap region, sharing advice, recommendations, and relevant information for other transit processes along this route.

To gather these stories, we have conducted interviews and meetings with both migrant and host populations in Necoclí. Similarly, we have placed stickers in areas of the town most frequented by migrant populations with a QR code that links to the project's website. Through this QR code, we have been able to engage in dialogue with some migrants currently in town. Overall, the most recurring concern that we receive on the website revolves around finding options to leave Necoclí and continue their migratory journey towards the Darién Gap.

We invite you to explore this process:

<https://sentarte.co/entre-el-mar-y-la-selva>



¹⁷ SentARTE - Arte con Sentido. <https://sentarte.co/entre-el-mar-y-la-selva>



6. RECOMMENDATIONS /SUGGESTIONS



6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS



GENERATE CLEAR INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTH RISKS AND MEDICAL CONSULTATION SPOTS

that can circulate through the most used media channels identified in this research, such as social media applications and messaging services. This is crucial because ignorance regarding access to different healthcare services can lead to unnecessary risks along the journey, further endangering people's lives.



TRAIN THOSE INVOLVED IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS TO OFFER FIRST AID;

know how to initially deal with key issues such as dehydration; be able to accompany and handle certain situations that compromise mental health, as well as provide information about routes and points of basic medical attention in the territory. It is also important to inform about the current

legislation of the General System of Social Security in Health regarding healthcare for migrant populations.



MITIGATE MISINFORMATION THAT CAN ARISE FROM WORD OF MOUTH, AS ONE OF THE PREFERRED CHANNELS, BY PRODUCING INFORMATION IN ANALOG FORMATS

distributed in places frequented by migrants, such as the parish park, supermarkets, and ports of speedboat companies in Necoclí. These materials should include precise, concise information and use non-revictimizing language. It is important to place them in locations not obstructed by tents or kiosks.



GENERATE INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR WORK IN THESE TERRITORIES,

designed to be disseminated through the most used channels and media sources among these populations and in their preferred formats. This can be done through social media platforms, mainly WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok, using short videos and simple infographics.



PLACE MAPS IN TRANSPORTATION TERMINALS, SQUARES, PARKS, PORTS, AND SHELTERS

where humanitarian organizations are located. These locations are key meeting points for migrants. The maps' visibility in these strategic points can significantly increase awareness and access to information.



IMPLEMENT ANALOG INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS WITH LOCALIZED LANGUAGE AND THE INCLUSION OF LOCAL INDIVIDUALS

who can promote the services provided by different humanitarian organizations. Consider implementing incentives to encourage participation from the migrant community in creating content. These incentives may include community recognition, additional training, or even symbolic compensations.



IMPLEMENT PARTICIPATORY DIGITAL FORMATS THAT ALLOW MIGRANTS TO BE CONTENT CREATORS.

This strategy has the potential to strengthen “word of mouth” communication within the migrant community, generating a higher level of trust. Thus, the voices and perspectives of migrants who must wait in the territories to continue their transit could be included. Given their widespread distrust in institutions, empowering migrants to serve as information architects can be key to establishing more effective communication channels.



ESTABLISH DISSEMINATION CHANNELS WITH LOCAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATORS

that share information about the support available not only for migrants, but also for the host population.



INCLUDE RESIDENTS OR MIGRANTS WITH A DESIRE TO RESIDE IN NECOCLÍ AND ACANDÍ IN WORK TEAMS TO PROVIDE TIMELY AND ACCURATE INFORMATION.

It is essential to have individuals who possess comprehensive knowledge of the territory, its risks, its opportunities, and best adaptation strategies, especially for those who decide to stay or must spend months in these places before crossing the Darién jungle.



TRAIN PERSONNEL THROUGH THE CREATION OF ALLIANCES WITH ORGANIZATIONS FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

at the national and regional levels to improve communication about their work and content creation on various platforms, tailored to the communities.



WE APPLAUD THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN RECENT MONTHS,

but we recommend including and developing communication strategies to ensure that migrants and host community members fully utilize these services.



6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS TO INCENTIVIZE INFORMATION LOCAL PRODUCTION.

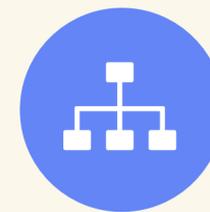
While local collectives and media outlets have emerging processes, they have declined due to lack of resources to continue. Financing and supporting the creation of these local content creation spaces would be a key strategy to mitigate the information vacuum that the Darién Gap is currently facing.



Although the research team identified approximately four billboards during field visits with general information in English and Spanish aimed at the migrant population, in the case of Acandí, they were in minimally frequented places and covered by bushes.

MIGRANTS ABILITY TO ACCESS CONTACT INFORMATION FOR LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, HEALTHCARE SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA IS VITAL TO ENSURE THEIR SAFER AND MORE DIGNIFIED TRANSIT.

It is advisable to strategically place billboards in the busiest locations, such as the shelters in Acandí and Capurganá. Furthermore, the billboards should be available in the migrant population's three most used languages in this territory.



COORDINATION AND INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN THE NEW ADMINISTRATIONS OF ACANDÍ AND NECOCLÍ ARE VITAL TO ENSURE THE DIGNIFIED TRANSIT OF MIGRANT PEOPLE

and to also address the needs of residents, thus supporting a high quality of life in the territory.



ENSURING INTERNET ACCESS IN THE TERRITORIES WHERE THE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

is essential to keep people informed and to meet their information needs. Additionally, connectivity allows them to access public information to prevent rumors and misinformation that may harm or affect social cohesion.

6.3 MEDIA



MEDIA OUTLETS, BOTH INTERNATIONALLY AND LOCALLY, SHOULD EVALUATE THE COVERAGE AND THE NARRATIVES THEY PRESENT

when addressing the transit of people through the Colombia-Panama border in Acaandí and Capurganá. It is crucial to amplify voices and stories, moving away from an exclusive focus on suffering and revictimization of the population. It is essential to adopt an approach that holds authorities and other involved actors accountable while highlighting the work of organizations providing support, so that those in need can access these resources.



ADDRESSING THE MIGRATION CRISIS FROM A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE WITH THE VOICES OF THE POPULATION THEMSELVES

would support the production of localized and contextualized content, representing narratives specific to this reality.



IT IS KEY TO CREATE SHORT AND CONCISE AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT TO EFFECTIVELY CONVEY INFORMATION,

responding to the consumption needs communicated by participants. For example, this could include utilizing social media platforms that prioritize video formats and consider Internet access challenges. Humanitarian organizations and official institutions ought to support training processes in communication and content creation.



ESTABLISHING TRANSNATIONAL STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE MISINFORMATION SURROUNDING MIGRATION IS IMPORTANT.

Generating information that reaches migrant individuals before embarking on their journey towards the Darién Gap, Necoclí, and Acaandí is crucial.



CONTENT RELATED TO MIGRATION SHOULD ALSO BE ADAPTED INTO DIFFERENT LANGUAGES,

including Indigenous languages, as this was one of the identified areas for improvement by surveyed individuals. Analyzing the nationalities traveling most frequently through the Darién Gap would help to determine relevant languages, facilitating more migrants' abilities to better comprehend information.



GENERATING FREELY ACCESSIBLE AND EASILY DISTRIBUTABLE CONTENT THROUGH INSTANT MESSAGING PLATFORMS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS,

which also allow for easy person-to-person transmission, is important, considering that many lack Internet access.



IT IS IMPORTANT THAT CONTENT COVER TOPICS THAT PREVENT HEALTH IMPACTS

exacerbated by climate change, such as dehydration, with a focus on infants and elderly adults.



MEDIA OUTLETS SHOULD CONSIDER TRAINING PART OF THEIR TEAM IN HEALTH JOURNALISM, SO THAT THEY HAVE A TEAM CAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE DEMAND FOR HEALTHCARE INFORMATION IN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS CONTEXTS.

This would respond to the need expressed by 74% of surveyed individuals regarding this topic. Additionally, it would help counteract health misinformation circulating through word-of-mouth and messaging applications, identified as the main sources of misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



6.4 HEALTH PERSONNEL

(HEALTHCARE CENTERS AND HEALTH NGOS)



The journey through the Darién jungle is exhausting and can lead to health problems that endanger people's lives.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HEALTHCARE SERVICES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT CONTROLLING UNDERLYING CONDITIONS

such as diabetes, hypertension, heart failure, or lung diseases, among others, and to have necessary medications during transit to avoid complications. This information should focus on prevention rather than creating obstacles to the journey's continuity.



IT IS CRUCIAL TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ALL MEDICAL PERSONNEL ABOUT THE HEALTHCARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO MIGRANT POPULATIONS WITHIN THE GENERAL SYSTEM OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN HEALTH.

Often, people don't seek healthcare services even when they're available in the area due to lack of information. This is especially important for pregnant individuals who have guaranteed access to comprehensive care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. Seeking prenatal care before transit can help identify potential risks and mitigate them as much as possible.



SIMILARLY, PRODUCING INFORMATION FOR BOTH MIGRANT AND HOST COMMUNITIES REGARDING ROUTES, CONTACTS, AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN THE AREA IS ESSENTIAL.

This strategy helps to strengthen local

healthcare institutions in general, not just in relation to the current migration situation.



BOTH MIGRANT AND HOST COMMUNITIES NEED TO ACCESS INFORMATION AND TOOLS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH.

Collaboratively, humanitarian organizations and media outlets can generate content about existing services and provide training on community mental health first aid.



PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT BASIC GUIDELINES FOR ASSEMBLING A MEDICAL KIT THAT TRAVELERS MIGRATING CAN CARRY IS IMPORTANT.

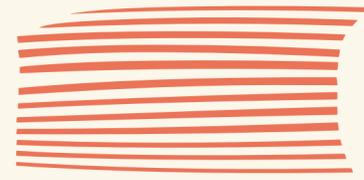
Additionally, communicating strategies for water purification procedures and combating dehydration is essential. Information about food preservation to prevent food poisoning and how to protect oneself from the sun should also be provided.



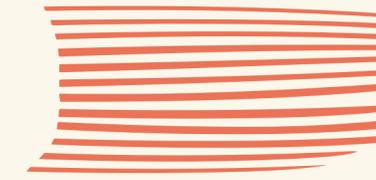
LASTLY, IN CASES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD HAVE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON IDENTIFYING VIOLATIONS, ACTION ROUTES, AND TIMELY SUPPORT.

This allows migrant individuals or host communities to provide initial support in such cases and then refer them to appropriate institutions.





7. CONCLUSIONS



Although the interviewees and surveyed migrant population members have nationality profiles like those documented in official migration data, **it is worth noting that the research findings discussed are focused on Spanish-speaking adults.** It is necessary to delve into the information ecosystem in which non-Spanish speakers, children and adolescents participate; the present study lacked the scope to study their information needs.

The migrant population stays for a short time in the towns of Necoclí and Acandí, so their information needs focus more on immediate needs on topics such as access to medical services, security on their route, humanitarian organizations, human rights, and migration laws, among others. These needs must be effectively addressed to ensure the well-being and safety of these communities. However, it is necessary to generate other information access options that may be useful at other times during transit, ensure that the population knows about the channels and assistance available, and ensure that they know how to access them when required.

Given the transit conditions, the migrant population primarily relies on social media, messaging services, and word of mouth as communication channels. Communication strategies should take this into account while continuing to use billboards and flyers. The population uses more traditional media, such as television, radio, and print newspapers, much less frequently.

The host population expressed an interest in learning more about the services available to migrants in the territory and strategies to guide this population on various topics, such as humanitarian aid organizations, medical services, and legal support, among others. It is important that information content also focus on the host population, as this can help to strengthen support networks for migrants in the territory.

When analyzing access to healthcare information, it is evident that migrants lack knowledge, which prevents them from accessing medical services. At the same time, many have reservations and distrust, given that

the personnel providing these services may recommend postponing the journey, which is not an option for many migrants. Word of mouth remains the main way to access this information. However, both medical services that are part of the General System of Social Security in Health (SGSSS) and the migrants lack clarity about the mechanisms to attend to this population.

Addressing the present challenges and narrowing the communication gap in the region requires effective collaboration between organizations, the media, governments, and the local community to ensure that migrants receive timely information and the support they need to ensure their safety and well-being during their transit through the territory.

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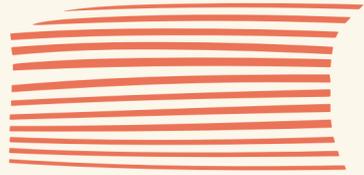
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