



Migration Governance Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean

Human Mobility Governance Series



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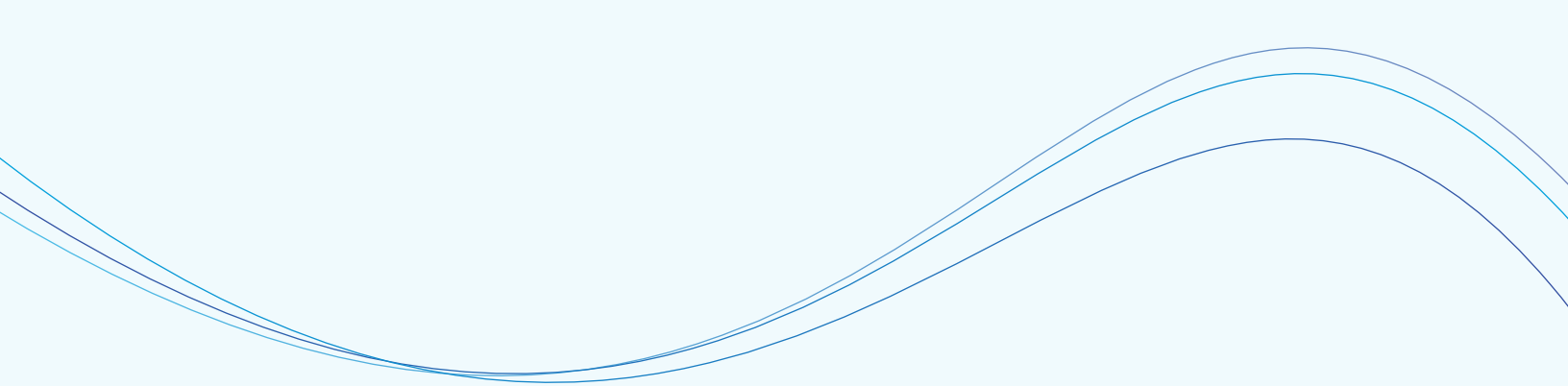
Migration Governance Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean

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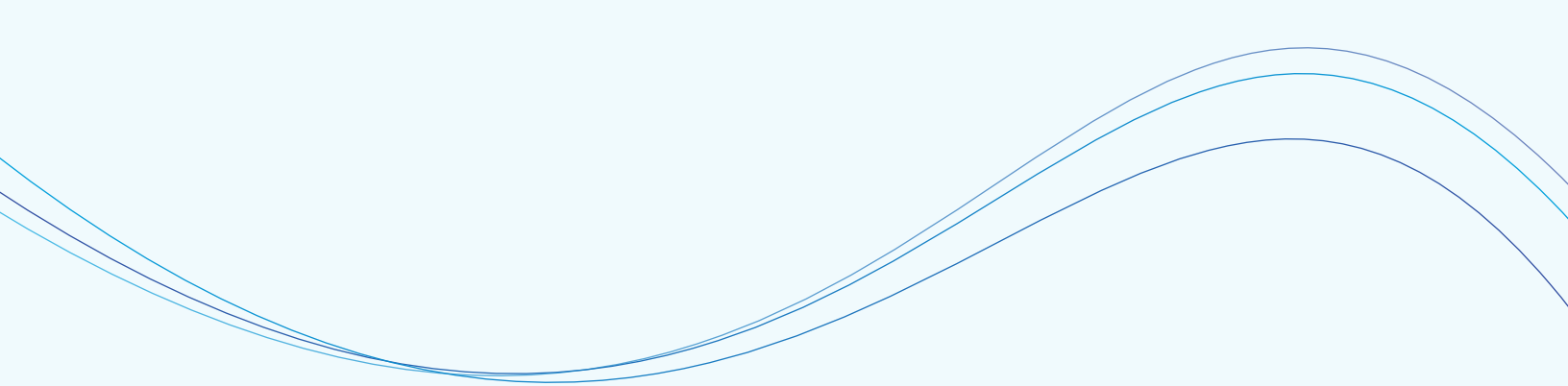
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CONTENTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations	9
Executive Summary	10
Introduction and Methodological Notes	14
1. Understanding Migration Governance	18
1.1. Migration governance in LAC: core areas, models, and categories	18
1.2. Migration governance and its relationship with the SDGs	20
1.3. A global perspective on migration governance	21
1.3.1. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	21
1.3.2. The Global Compact on Refugees	22
1.4. Regulatory frameworks and standards developed in Latin America and the Caribbean	23
2. Multilateral Migration Management in LAC	24
2.1. Migration governance in the regional context	24
2.2. Bodies, processes, arrangements, and agreements for migration governance	25
2.2.1. UN bodies supporting the development of migration governance and institutional frameworks	25
2.2.2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs	26
2.2.3. Regional integration processes with a focus on migration management	26
2.2.4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement	27
2.2.5. Ad hoc mechanisms that address subregional situations of migration and forced displacement	28
2.2.6. Declaration-based collaboration mechanisms	29
2.2.7. Migration-related cooperation schemes between LAC and other regions	30



3. Institutional Migration Governance Practices in LAC	31
3.1. Classification of functions, roles, and institutional sectors	32
3.2. Migration policy practices	36
3.2.1. Policy design and strategic direction	38
3.2.2. Implementation	39
3.2.3. Coordination and interinstitutional alignment	40
3.3. Border migration control practices	41
3.3.1. Border migration control	43
3.3.2. Immigration services	44
3.4. Institutional practices in connection with international protection, nationality, and regularization mechanisms	45
3.4.1. Asylum and recognition of refugee status	48
3.4.2. Statelessness	50
3.4.3. Regularization of legal status	52
3.4.4. Nationality	53
3.5. Practices relating to assistance to nationals living abroad and returning migrants	54
3.5.1. Consular assistance	56
3.5.2. Passport issuance	57
3.5.3. Support for return migration	58
4. Distinctive Features of Migration Governance across LAC Subregions	60
4.1. The Caribbean: a diaspora-oriented approach to migration governance	60
4.1.1. Diasporas as drivers of development	61
4.1.2. Citizenship-by-investment	62



4.2. Central America and Mexico: challenges in managing mixed migration movements.....	63
4.2.1. Transit migration and bilateral conventions.....	64
4.2.2. Managing return migration.....	64
4.3. South America: New institutional dynamics for receiving migrants.....	67
4.3.1. Responses to migration from Venezuela.....	68
4.2.2. Reforms in migration governance institutions.....	68
Conclusions.....	71
Recommendations to States.....	73
Annex. International Organizations Supporting the Development of Migration Governance and Institutional Frameworks in Latin America and the Caribbean.....	75
1. UN bodies supporting the development of migration governance and institutional frameworks.....	75
2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs.....	76
3. Regional integration processes with a focus on migration management.....	76
4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement.....	78
5. Ad hoc mechanisms that address subregional situations of migration and forced displacement.....	79
6. Declaration-based collaboration mechanisms.....	80
7. Migration-related cooperation schemes between LAC and other regions.....	81
References.....	82

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Migration management: core areas	19
Figure 2. Thematic areas of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	22
Figure 3. Institutions with a migration policy mandate in LAC, by role and sector	36
Figure 4. Number of institutions with a migration policy mandate in LAC	37
Figure 5. Institutions involved in policy design and strategic direction by sector	39
Figure 6. Institutions involved in implementation by sector	40
Figure 7. Institutions involved in coordination and interinstitutional alignment by sector	41
Figure 8. Institutions with a migration control mandate in LAC, by role and sector	42
Figure 9. Number of institutions with a migration control mandate in LAC	43
Figure 10. Institutions involved in border migration control by sector	43
Figure 11. Institutions involved in immigration services by sector	45
Figure 12. Institutions with a mandate for international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status in LAC, by role and sector	46
Figure 13. Number of institutions with a mandate for international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status in LAC	48
Figure 14. Institutions involved in asylum and the recognition of refugee status by sector	49
Figure 15. Institutions involved in statelessness by sector	51
Figure 16. Institutions involved in the regularization of legal status by sector	52
Figure 17. Institutions involved in nationalization by sector	54
Figure 18. Institutions in LAC with a mandate for assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants, by role and sector	55
Figure 19. Number of institutions in LAC with a mandate for assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants	56
Figure 20. Institutions involved in consular assistance by sector	57
Figure 21. Institutions performing the role of passport issuance by sector	58

Figure 22. Institutions involved in supporting return migration by sector	59
Figure 23. Government sectors involved in migration management in the Caribbean	61
Figure 24. Government sectors involved in migration management in Central America and Mexico	63
Figure 25. Irregular transit through the Darién	64
Figure 26. Returning migrants from northern Central America	65
Figure 27. Government sectors involved in migration management in South America	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. UN institutions and their migration governance objectives	26
Table 2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs and their objectives	26
Table 3. Regional integration processes, objectives, and members	27
Table 4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement, objectives, and members	28
Table 5. Ad hoc migration and forced displacement mechanisms, objectives, and members	29
Table 6. Declaration-based mechanisms, objectives, and members	30
Table 7. Interregional cooperation mechanisms and their objectives	30
Table 8. Institutional analysis categories for migration governance in LAC	33
Table 9. Sector categories for migration governance in LAC	34

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1. Reforms to the institutional framework for migration in El Salvador.....	38
Box 2. Uruguay: institutional coordination to facilitate the migration process.....	39
Box 3. Training programs for migration authorities on human rights and migrants' rights.....	44
Box 4. Brazil's prima facie recognition of refugee status for Venezuelans.....	50
Box 5. Best practices for the eradication of statelessness and the risk of statelessness in Colombia	51
Box 6. The regularization of the Venezuelan population	53
Box 7. Haiti: The Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad (MHAVE)	62
Box 8. Return migration in countries of northern Central America in 2025	65
Box 9. The <i>México te abraza</i> program for returning migrants	66
Box 10. Climate change: an emerging issue in migration governance.....	70

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CIDI	Inter-American Council for Integral Development
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTIQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other identities
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MHAVE	Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad
MIRPS	Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework
OAS	Organization of American States
RCM	Regional Conference on Migration
RIAM	Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities
SACM	South American Conference on Migration
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SICA	Central American Integration System
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Executive Summary

Migration governance in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has moved toward a regional paradigm that centers on migrants' human rights and promotes safe, orderly, and regular migration.

This transformation reflects the growing complexity of migration patterns in the region. It is evident in both the creation of temporary legal protection mechanisms and the active involvement of institutions that were not previously central to migration management but now play a significant role in recognizing and safeguarding migrants' rights.

However, ongoing structural challenges limit effective responses to the complex nature of contemporary migration movements. These include institutional fragmentation and the need to reinforce intersectoral coordination mechanisms, which play a vital role in facilitating the sustainable integration of migrants in destination countries.

To advance understandings of this issue, the Migration Unit at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), working in collaboration with the Department of Access to Rights at the Organization of American States (OAS), is publishing this study of the institutional architecture of migration governance in LAC countries. The publication also analyzes how actively states engage in regional integration and dialogue forums and processes that directly address the migration agenda.

The ongoing work of mechanisms such as the Quito Process, the Regional Conference on Migration, the South American Conference on Migration, and the Cartagena Process are fundamental to developing better articulated responses, promoting shared principles, and strengthening coordinated regional migration governance.

The methodological design was based on a comparative approach that entailed mapping more than 200 migration institutions in LAC. This process centered on a review of the information available on the official websites of each of the 32 countries observed and an analysis of the legislation in force in each. The official websites of regional and subregional bodies were also analyzed, as were those of the international organizations developing initiatives to strengthen migration governance. To make this data collection process more participatory, in 2023, states were invited to review, clarify, and validate the study's findings. However, the response rate was low.

The institutions identified were compiled in the Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles, which classifies them into broad categories (main functions) and more detailed subcategories (specific roles). This institutional information was also made publicly available through the IDB's DataMIG platform, an online, open-access data site available at <https://datamig.iadb.org/en/institutional>.

To organize the information that was gathered, the institutions in question were grouped into four broad categories based on their primary migration governance functions:

1. **Migration policy.** This category includes the institutions responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating migration policies. Three key roles were identified within it:

- Policy design and strategic direction.
 - Implementation.
 - Coordination and alignment.
-

2. **Border migration control.** This category includes the institutions responsible for monitoring, verifying, supervising, and authorizing the entry, stay, or departure of individuals. It comprises two subcategories:

- Border migration control.
 - Immigration services.
-

3. **International protection, nationality, and regularization mechanisms.** This category comprises the institutions responsible for processing and granting different migration statuses, including:

- Asylum and recognition of refugee status.
 - Statelessness.
 - Migration regularization.
 - Nationality.
-

4. **Assistance to nationals abroad and returnees.** This category covers institutions that provide services to citizens living abroad or returning to the country, including:

- Consular assistance.
- Passport issuance.
- Support for return migration.

As outlined in the introduction and methodological notes, the institutional classification also took into account the government sector to which each institution belonged. This aspect is key to understanding the approaches, priorities, and responsibilities assigned to each stakeholder in the state apparatus. Identifying the sector to which each function and role belongs makes it possible to map their location within the administrative system and understand the underlying logic that guides their actions, as well as potential points of alignment or tension among the different stakeholders in the migration system.

By analyzing these organizational and legislative structures, this study shows how states have organized their institutional responses to the challenges of migration, revealing both similarities and differences across these models. By doing so, it identifies patterns, trends, and specific aspects of migration management in LAC.

Broadly speaking, the following major trends were observed in the configuration of migration governance institutions in LAC:

- **In the most common model, the design, implementation, and coordination of migration policies were divided between the home affairs and foreign affairs sectors,** reflecting the significance of national sovereignty in migration management. This configuration was consistently observed across different migration policy roles, albeit with variations depending on administrative traditions, government structures, and each country's specific policy priorities.
-

- **National coordination and articulation mechanisms have been established to manage migration.** Most countries have established formal mechanisms for migration coordination, such as national councils, intersectoral commissions, and working groups with a focus on developing migration policy, protecting the migrant population, and combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling, among other things.

- **Migration control is primarily overseen by specialized units or departments belonging to the home affairs sector.** However, in some institutional models, this function falls to the security and defense sector or, more unusually, the foreign affairs or executive branch. This range of institutional models reflects different understandings of the nature of migration control and may influence its connections with specific state functions such as security, diplomacy, and governance in general.

- **Procedures for the international protection of refugees have become institutionalized.** Systems of asylum and protection for refugees have been strengthened through the creation of official bodies, such as commissions or committees—often known as national refugee committees—to ensure technical and operational efficiency in decision-making. All the same, there are ongoing challenges in protecting people experiencing statelessness, as half of LAC countries lack legislation on the issue.

- **The implementation of extraordinary regularization mechanisms is a clear trend in the region.** This has led to changes within institutions and greater alignment among sectors, as well as the creation of ad hoc legal frameworks that go beyond traditional regulatory structures.

- **Assistance for nationals living abroad and return migrants has undergone significant institutional diversification and specialization.** Although these institutions remain concentrated in the foreign relations sector, they have gone from performing typical consular functions to actively participating in the design and implementation of diaspora policies and programs to manage the safe return of nationals. The widening of these institutions' mandates has become particularly significant over the last year, amid a global context marked by rising return migration and growing state interest in strengthening transnational ties as part of their development and migration governance strategies.

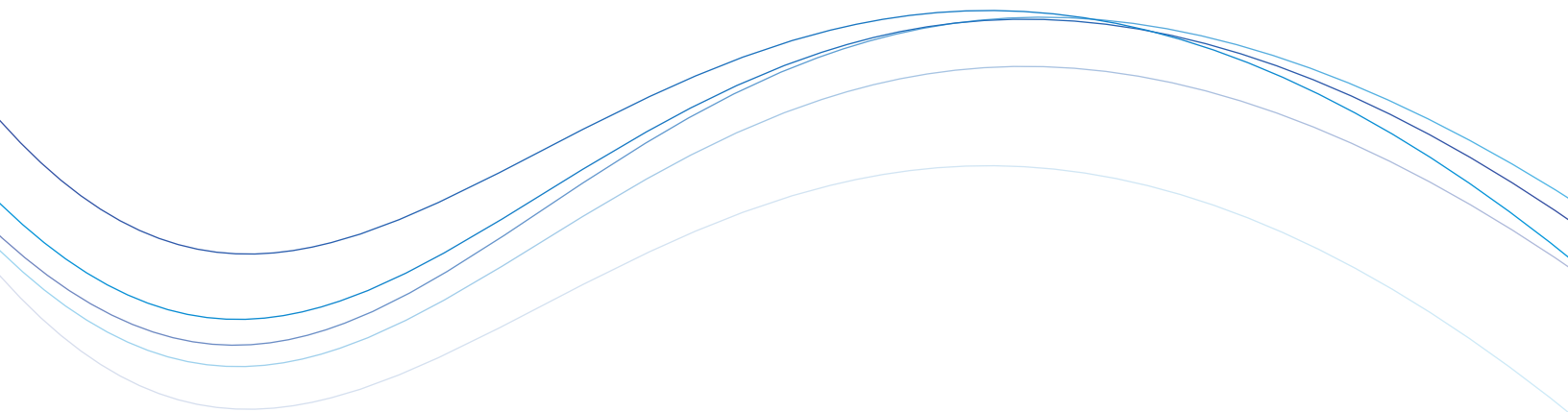
- **Institutions have adapted differently in LAC's subregions in response to specific migration profiles and geopolitical contexts.** For example, in the Caribbean, the main focus of migration governance is strengthening ties with diaspora communities and, in some countries, attracting foreign investment through schemes such as citizenship-by-investment programs. In contrast, in Central America and Mexico, the movement of people toward North America has led governments to prioritize the management of transit migration and the development of programs and agencies focusing on the returning population. In South America, meanwhile, several countries have reformed their migration institutions in response to increased intraregional migration, particularly from Venezuela.

- **Structural challenges such as institutional fragmentation remain an issue.** This is reflected in the duplication of functions and overlapping mandates across sectors, as well as in institutional instability stemming from a regional context marked by frequent changes in government and shifting political agendas. Moreover, there is an ongoing need to strengthen policies by adopting intersectional approaches that provide more effective responses to the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by migrants.

- **A new migration governance paradigm is emerging that seeks to balance security considerations with the protection of migrants' rights.** Alongside the rise in extraordinary regularization processes and the strengthening of regional coordination mechanisms, this shift is positioning LAC as a model for best practices in migration management. The strategies implemented in the region reflect a growing commitment to integrated approaches that prioritize the protection of human rights without overlooking security concerns. Furthermore, they position LAC as a key setting for political innovation and multilateral cooperation on migration matters.

Against this backdrop, this study offers a comprehensive mapping of the institutional architecture of migration management in LAC, identifying both overarching trends and specific factors in its configuration. Its findings are valuable inputs that can be used to strengthen existing institutional frameworks and guide future reforms.

Future research could delve deeper into the implications of certain migration institutions being attached to specific sectors of the state. Continuing and strengthening these efforts is key to advancing a regional model of migration governance that prioritizes migrants' rights.



Introduction and Methodological Notes

The migration profile of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has changed significantly over the past decade, driven especially by the exodus from Venezuela, the increase in mixed flows in Central America, and migration from south to north both within the region and beyond it.

Migration in LAC has been significantly impacted by the health crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the effects of border closures on human mobility (Vera Espinoza et al., 2021). Combined with the complexity of the region's overall context and evolving migration trends, these factors have required states to undertake significant efforts to address the assistance and integration needs of the migrant and refugee population.

This study was produced by the IDB's Migration Unit in collaboration with the OAS's Department of Access to Rights. It is a comparative overview of the legal and administrative structures of the institutions involved in migration governance in the 26 LAC states that are IDB borrowing members and the 6 OAS member states that belong to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) but are not IDB borrowing members: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

This publication is part of a series developed by the IDB's Migration Unit focusing on migration governance in LAC, which began with *Migration*

Policy Regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean Immigration, Regional Free Movement, Refuge, and Nationality (Acosta and Harris, 2022b). For the OAS and its Department of Access to Rights, this joint initiative with the IDB aligns with their mandate to publish knowledge products that complement the work on the institutional frameworks for migration carried out by the OAS Committee on Migration Issues (CAM), in connection with the technical note "Regional Migration Governance in the Americas" (OAS, 2023).

The importance of a regional overview of migration governance in LAC

This study's main aim is to contribute to comparative understandings of the institutions involved in migration management across LAC states. To this end, it analyzes mandates established through institutional standards or regulations to identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in managing migration policy at both the national and regional levels. It also examines how far state agencies are involved in the spaces and processes for regional integration and dialogue that have been created to strengthen and improve existing institutions.

It uses a comparative methodology to define a set of best practices whose implementation could foster innovation within the institutions that handle migration-related issues in LAC countries while also bringing about significant transformations that would extend beyond these institutions in each of the countries in question. Another of the study's

aims is to identify how states participate in regional and subregional coordination and cooperation agreements on migration management.

One of this study's main products is the **Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles**, an open-access online resource available to all stakeholders in migration management. The matrix presents the results from the data compiled for this study and highlights the main trends across the 32 countries included.

Methodology and construction of the Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles

The methodology used to construct the matrix was based on a systematic mapping exercise that identified and categorized the government institutions with migration governance responsibilities across the 32 LAC countries. To organize this information, the exercise established general categories (primary functions) and subcategories (specific roles).

The institutions were identified based on 4 overarching functional categories, each broken down into 12 specific roles. The functional categories are as follows:

- **Migration policy**, which encompasses the roles of (i) policy design and strategic direction; (ii) policy implementation; and (iii) coordination and interinstitutional alignment.
- **Border migration control**, which includes (iv) border migration control and (v) immigration services.
- **International protection, nationality, and regularization mechanisms**, which covers (vi) asylum and recognition of refugee status; (vii) statelessness; (viii) regularization of legal status; and (ix) nationality.
- **Assistance to nationals abroad and returning migrants**, which comprises (x) consular assistance; (xi) passport issuance; and (xii) return.

The methodology also implied identifying the sector to which each of the surveyed institutions belonged. **Seven sectors were defined for this purpose:**

- **home affairs**, responsible for matters relating to domestic governance and the exercise of constitutional principles and guarantees;
- **foreign affairs**, which oversees migration diplomacy and provides assistance and protection to nationals abroad;
- **justice**, responsible for safeguarding the human rights of migrants and ensuring nondiscrimination, among other mandates;
- **labor**, which is tasked with protecting and promoting the labor rights and employment opportunities of all workers, including migrants;
- **security and defense**, which carries out security functions primarily related to the movement of people across borders and the control of entry into and exit from the national territory;
- **the executive branch**, which typically establishes the overarching guidelines and strategic direction of migration policy; and
- **special sectors**, which perform specific functions related to migration management.

Using the methodological process described above, 32 country profiles were created, documenting the migration governance institutions identified in each case, along with their main functions, specific roles, and corresponding sectors.

The 32 countries were divided into subregional groups based on geographic criteria to analyze their political and institutional structures. This classification process allowed common patterns and specific trends to be identified in each area of study, which, in turn, enabled a comparative analysis of migration governance systems. This subregional approach also made it possible to examine the impact of shared geopolitical contexts and to assess how countries engage in forums for regional dialogue, consultative processes, and integration mechanisms.

The countries included in the study were classified into the following subregional groups:

- **Central America and Mexico.** The Central America subregion includes the following countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Dominican Republic was also included in this group because it is a member of the Central American Integration System (SICA), along with Mexico, in order to establish comparable variables and carry out comparative analyses.
- **Caribbean.** This subregion includes Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.
- **South America.** This subregion encompasses Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The matrix maps more than 200 government agencies with direct responsibilities for migration matters and that perform specific roles in this sphere. The information described and analyzed in this study is based on information sources consulted and compiled through June 2025.

The main sources were the official websites of the 32 countries included in the study, where migration-related regulations, provisions, and decrees are published. Although it was not possible to ascertain whether these websites were fully up-to-date or accurately reflected the official names of the government structures in place at the time of publication, they were the primary sources used to identify and classify migration governance institutions in LAC. To complement these sources, the official websites of the 14 regional and subregional institutions that implement and promote the migration agenda were also consulted, as were those of international organizations that conduct research and help design or develop migration policies or guidelines. The latter include the International Organization for Migration

(IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Central American Integration Observatory.

Data was also gathered from official sources provided in response to queries sent to OAS member states through their permanent missions in 2023. This open, participatory process allowed states to review and supplement the information gathered from institutional websites and to indicate which agencies comprise their migration governance structures and which sectors they belong to. Although the response rate was low, in some cases these queries enabled the research team to confirm or refine the information gathered through the document review stage.

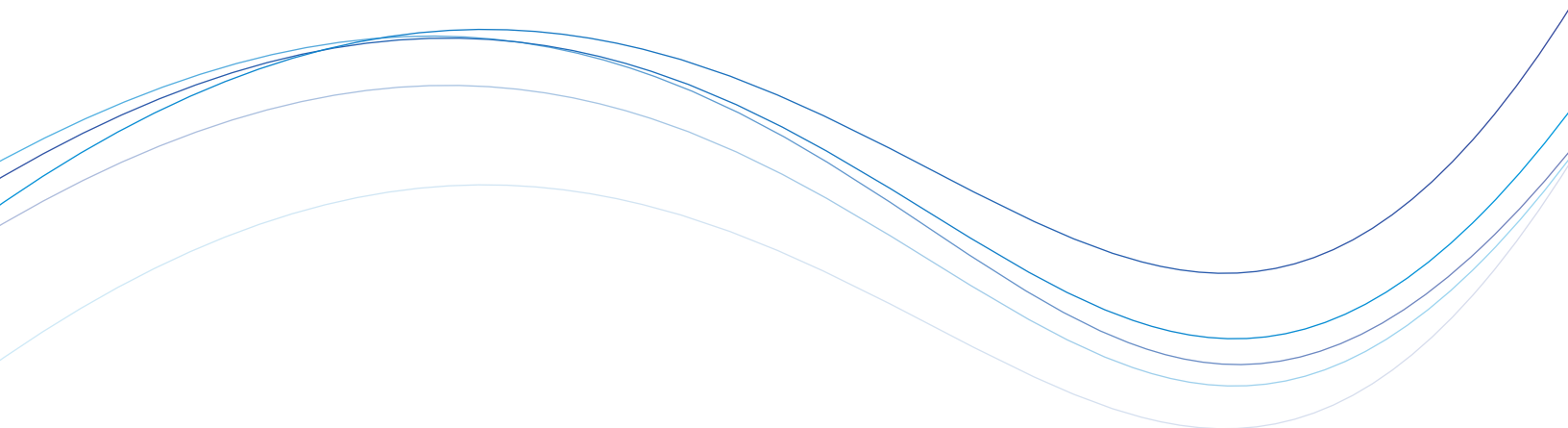
This process functioned as follows: after an exhaustive initial review of the information on each country's migration governance institutions, the OAS Department of Access to Rights sent a *note verbale* to each member country's permanent mission, requesting that it be forwarded to the relevant government office to verify the information provided. Guidelines were included to facilitate the review process, and a deadline for receiving comments and feedback was established.

By carefully reviewing the insights obtained through these channels, the team sought to ensure that the information gathered was accurate, complete, and relevant. The involvement of states in this process also reinforces the accuracy and credibility of the study's findings.

The matrix contains an initial set of visualizations that provides information on each state agency or institution. This includes the institutional organizational chart, the officials responsible for each area, their respective units, and other relevant information, all organized by country and subregion. A second set of visualizations presents the laws, regulations, decrees, and administrative orders that establish these bodies and define their respective functions. The matrix also includes links to data sources on the official websites of the regional and subregional institutions included in the study.

This study analyzes migration governance in LAC based on the Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles. **Chapter 1** presents the conceptual framework, outlines the governance models adopted in the region, examines how institutional frameworks relate to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reviews the regulatory frameworks and standards for migration governance developed at both the global level and within LAC. **Chapter 2** examines the bodies, mechanisms, processes, and declarations adopted in the region as instruments

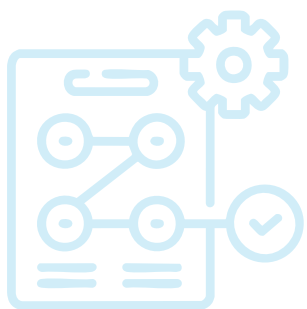
for collaboration and regional integration among states. **Chapter 3** presents the research team's analysis based on the matrix and includes findings on practices related to migration policy, border migration control, international protection, regularization mechanisms, and assistance to nationals abroad and returning migrants. Finally, **chapter 4** contains the findings for and specific characteristics of the three LAC subregions: the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, and South America.



1. Understanding Migration Governance

LAC countries have followed different paths in building and consolidating their migration governance institutions. These efforts have been reinforced by a range of global and regional international frameworks that have provided guidance for states as they work to strengthen migration management.

This chapter examines the theoretical foundations of migration governance, including shared governance and multilevel governance. These approaches are rooted in the objectives and commitments set out in global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) and the subsequent global compacts on migration: the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (UN, 2018b) and the Global Compact on Refugees (UN, 2018c).



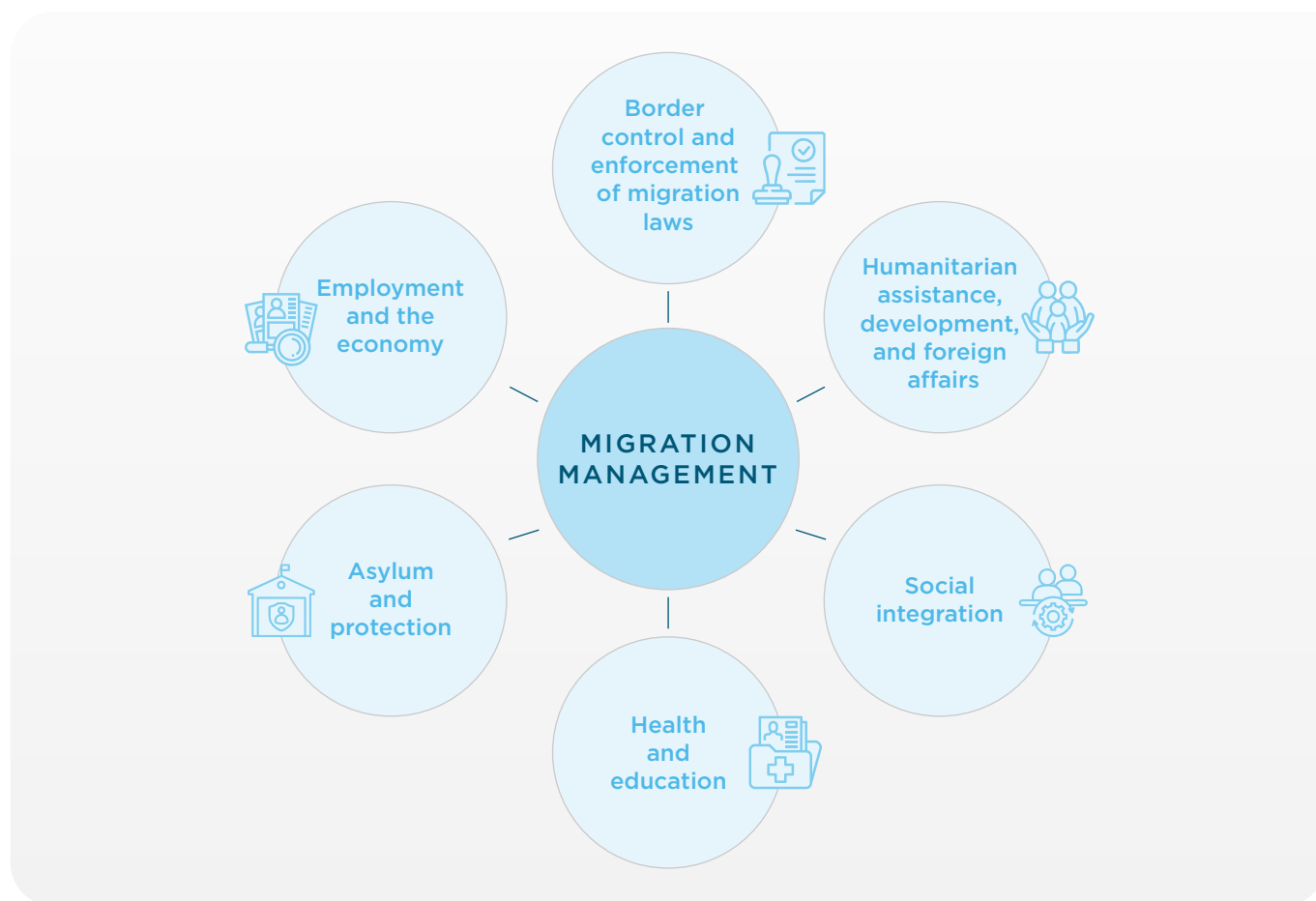
1.1. Migration governance in LAC: core areas, models, and categories

Migration governance is the set of regulations, laws, policies, traditions, and specific organizational structures—spanning the subnational, national, regional, and international levels—that govern the management of migration flows. This vision also encompasses the processes that regulate and guide states' responses to migration in all its forms, taking into account rights and obligations and promoting international cooperation.¹ “Multilevel governance” refers to the interaction among the regional, subregional, and national levels of governance.

Based on the multidimensional, cross-sectoral perspective that should guide migration management, this study identifies six core areas that are described in **figure 1**: (i) border control and the enforcement of migration laws; (ii) humanitarian assistance, development, and foreign affairs; (iii) social integration; (iv) health and education; (v) asylum and protection; and (vi) employment and the economy.

¹ IOM, Key Migration Terms, <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

FIGURE 1. Migration management: core areas



Source: Authors based on data from IDB (2020).

These core areas can be interpreted through three principles that lend legitimacy to migration governance: equity, legality, and transparency. According to Lelio Mármora (2023), equity refers to civil society’s participation in shaping and managing migration policies, as well as in promoting the social inclusion of the migrant population. Legality refers to the legal bases that give migration policies legitimacy, whether through unilateral state legislation or shared regional and international agreements. Transparency is essential for building trust among stakeholders and preventing the arbitrary implementation of migration policies. In other words, it requires that migration-related information and regulations be readily accessible to both citizens and migrants.

There are three levels to shared governance: bilateral consensus, regionwide multilateral consensus, and institutionalized intergovernmental consensus. Other factors that influence the overall quality of migration governance include transparency, access to information, and administrative efficiency.

Based on this framework, Mármora (2023) puts forward three governance models: (i) the migration securitization model, which centers on national security concerns in the host state and emphasizes border control; (ii) the shared-benefits model, also known as the “win-win” approach, which holds that migration can generate advantages for both origin and destination countries; and (iii) the human development model, according to which migration policy is based on the human rights of migrants.

Iker Barbero (2012) argues that migration governance can be interpreted at three levels: global, national, and local. Each of these can in turn be analyzed through four categories: sphere of interest, risk, institutional design, and regulatory model. From this perspective, multilevel governance concerns the interaction and relationships between these different levels.

Building on this, it could be said that in the Latin American context, migration governance is shaped by a diverse regulatory framework that can be ordered from most to least binding as follows: (i) treaties, conventions, or pacts; (ii) domestic regulations; (iii) soft-law instruments, and (iv) platforms for dialogue that help establish the migration governance agenda and drive institutional reform and renewal and cooperation among states.

This agenda is dynamic and takes shape through regional consultative processes, which “seek to debate migration issues at the multilateral or regional level and to forge alliances among countries of origin, transit, and destination” (Degila and Valle, 2022).

1.2. Migration governance and its relationship with the SDGs

The SDGs set out in the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) incorporate migration as a cross-cutting issue, addressing mobility and displacement through a holistic lens. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the different forms of vulnerability that migrants experience—from the time they leave their country of origin, during transit, upon arrival in the destination country, and at times on return—but also views them as agents of change and development (IOM, 2018).

The intersectional approach makes it possible to identify the different effects that migration has on women, men, children and adolescents, people with serious health conditions, those in need of special protection, older adults, and the LGBTIQ+ population, and other specific groups.

Additionally, recognizing the infrastructure that surrounds migration reveals the interactions among networks and organizations of migrants and refugees, state institutions, and communities in both origin and destination countries. These take the form of flows of remittances, knowledge, and political ideas, and also point to migrants’ potential as agents of change (Faist, 2008). In this regard, the inclusion of migration in the SDGs clearly signals the urgent need to advance a more robust migration agenda, supported by collaboration among states and other organized stakeholders, to foster broader engagement and ensure coordinated joint efforts.

SDG 10 is to “reduce inequality within and between countries,” while target 10.7 specifically seeks to guarantee “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration” and “the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” This should translate into institutional strengthening and the upgrading and modernization of regulatory frameworks to achieve comprehensive, holistic responses to migration, as are described in [chapter 2](#). The connection between the SDGs and migration calls for multilevel governance across sectors, the engagement of all stakeholders, and approaches that recognize the differentiated impact of migration on various social groups. Such cooperation will help improve migration policies and enhance development outcomes for both states and individuals.

At the regional level, various institutions operating with the OAS have contributed positively through their responses to intraregional migration dynamics, creating spaces that:

- Favor freedom of movement and labor migration.
- Refine or develop standards for those with international protection needs, as in the cases of *Habbal and others v. Argentina* (IA Court, 2022), *Expelled Dominicans and Haitians v. the Dominican Republic* (IA Court, 2014), and *Vélez Lóor v. Panama* (IA Court, 2010).
- Generate advisory opinions, such as OC18/03, *Legal Status and Rights of Undocumented Migrants*, issued by the IA Court (2003).

→ Develop general soft-law standards,² such as the Inter-American Principles on the Human Rights of All Migrants, Refugees, Stateless Persons, and Victims of Human Trafficking (IACHR, 2019a) and the report “Due Process in Procedures for the Determination of Refugee Status and Statelessness and the Granting of Complementary Protection” (IACHR, 2020).

→ Address specific situations, as illustrated by reports such as “Forced Migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica” (IACHR, 2019b) and “Internal Displacement in Countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America” (IACHR, 2018).

Although instruments such as these reports and the inter-American principles established by the IACHR are not binding, they are extremely valuable, as they provide guidance for interpreting regional treaties on migration and implementing protection-related policies and actions, and prompt migrant-centered improvements in migration management.



1.3. A global perspective on migration governance

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) set out broad guidelines for migration management, including the importance of strengthening institutions and updating regulatory frameworks. In 2018, the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (UN, 2018b) and the Global Compact on Refugees (UN, 2018c) were signed. Both are soft-law instruments that represent a global commitment to coordination among states regarding migration flows. To this end, their main objectives include improving institutional capacity to respond to migrant and refugee flows.

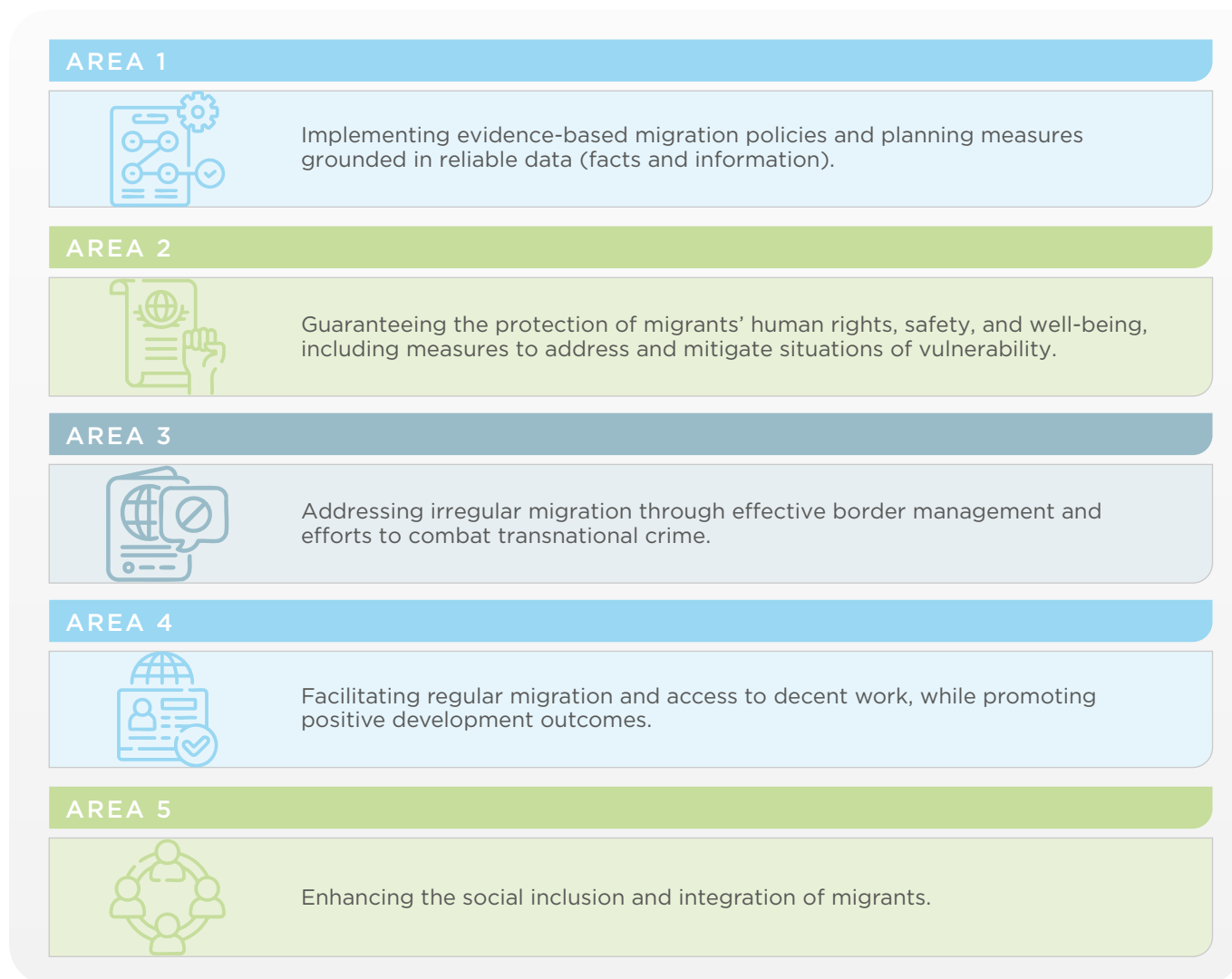
1.3.1. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was signed by more than 150 countries in December 2018 (UN, 2018b) and contemplates strengthening the institutions involved in migration management, **primarily through the following three principles:**

- **International cooperation.** Migration cannot be addressed unilaterally by any single state but instead requires international dialogue and cooperation.
- **Whole-of-government approach.** Migration-related issues cannot be handled solely by a single legislative sector. Solutions need to be vertically and horizontally integrated, including all sectors and levels of government.
- **Whole-of-society approach.** This seeks to bring together a wide range of stakeholders—including migrants, local communities, diasporas, civil society, the private sector, the legislative branch, academia, trade unions, and national human rights organizations—to address all aspects of migration.

² In the sphere of public international law, “soft law” refers to legal instruments that, while not legally binding, contain guiding principles that may pave the way for future legislation on a given topic and thus contribute to the development of normative frameworks. Unlike treaties, conventions, and customary international law, soft-law instruments are not recognized as sources of international law and are thus not binding (see, for example, article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice). However, they are still important because they offer interpretive guidance that supports more effective implementation of international obligations.

FIGURE 2. Thematic areas of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration



Source: Authors based on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Two objectives of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration are particularly important to this report. Objective 11 states that managing borders in an integrated, secure, and coordinated manner will require “promoting bilateral and regional cooperation,” which will make it possible to safeguard the security of states, communities, and the migrant population. Likewise, objective 23 points to the need for “enhanced international cooperation, a revitalized global partnership and, in the spirit of solidarity, reaffirming the centrality of a comprehensive and integrated approach to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and recognizing that we are all countries of origin, transit and destination” (UN, 2018b).

Figure 2 shows the five cross-cutting thematic areas that underlie the 23 objectives of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Since its establishment, countries have adjusted their governance structures and strengthened their regulatory frameworks and migration policy in line with these objectives. At the same time, dialogue between countries through various arenas for international cooperation has become more important.

1.3.2. The Global Compact on Refugees

The Global Compact on Refugees is an inter-governmental agreement adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018. Signed by 181 states,

it includes strengthening institutional capacities at different levels of government among its main objectives.

Although not legally binding, the Global Compact on Refugees is innovative in that it promotes the establishment of mechanisms to provide a comprehensive response to the specific needs of refugees, particularly at the national level. It does so through institutional and operational arrangements while also recognizing that states may seek assistance from support platforms to reinforce these national mechanisms.

The regional and subregional mechanisms included in the Global Compact on Refugees include solidarity conferences and other long-term solutions such as resettlement. It also proposes openness to complementary forms of entry, such as visas, corridors, and other types of entry on humanitarian grounds, with a view to providing quicker, more effective responses to forcibly displaced people.



1.4. Regulatory frameworks and standards developed in Latin America and the Caribbean

Migration governance in LAC stems from a range of sources: treaties, conventions, agreements and compacts, and domestic legislation. Other instruments that provide interpretive guidance and policy direction include nonbinding or soft-law instruments and regional dialogue platforms, which have evolved alongside shifts in the migration paradigm over the last 20 years in response to new dynamics. As a result, various reforms have been implemented, new migration laws have been passed, and a range of public policies have been set in motion in response to specific dynamics in intra- and extraregional migration.

The Migration Policy Regimes Database (Acosta and Harris, 2022a) provides comparative results on the migration policy regimes of the 26 IDB member countries. The analysis of these results points to the existence of a Latin American migration policy regime that is characterized by broader rights for the migrant population (Acosta and Harris, 2022b). The authors draw attention to the proliferation of extraordinary or ad hoc regularization schemes in various LAC countries, largely in response to migration from Venezuela. Given these circumstances, freedom-of-movement agreements could chart a course for migration governance in the region.

These new legal frameworks and ad hoc processes affect migration governance at the regional, subregional, and national levels. At the national level, they have prompted the creation and reform of institutions for migration management, while at the multilateral level, they have also led to the adoption of new mechanisms and the establishment of new forums for dialogue.

2. Multilateral Migration Management in LAC

Historically speaking, LAC has been characterized by significant migration movements within countries and across international borders.

For many years, migration was managed by individual states and understood as part of their exercise of sovereignty and border control. The different policies implemented gradually incorporated demands from various sectors and stakeholders, including host, migrant, and diaspora communities, as well as migrant workers. This process led to a consolidation of practices, guidelines, and regulations that reflect the specifics of each process: the regularization of migrants, the regulation of labor migrations, and security-focused border migration control. All of these developments helped lay the groundwork for policies that were initially established through bilateral arrangements and, to a lesser extent, within multilateral forums.

Over the years, new transnational networks have emerged, characterized by multiple, complex dynamics involving migrants in both origin and destination countries, the emergence of migrant and refugee groups, and the development of migration-related infrastructure (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992).

The dynamics that have arisen through the interaction of migrant communities have raised the profile of migration, which has become a core issue in states' agendas and the focus of initiatives

that have produced a range of formal arrangements and institutions promoting regional integration. All of these developments have accelerated the consolidation of specific migration-related instruments that respond to both state governance priorities and the rights and needs of migrants.

2.1. Migration governance in the regional context

Regional integration in LAC is closely tied to migration management, given that migration has primarily responded to employment-related, economic, and political factors. Migration is a multicausal phenomenon entailing both opportunities and challenges for receiving countries. This has prompted the creation of more efficient systems for responding to migration dynamics, the development of policies aimed at socioeconomic integration, and the strengthening of institutional frameworks to ensure the rights of migrants and refugees are respected and protected.

Over the last 20 years, LAC states have created various regional and subregional bodies to respond to demands or specific objectives, such as promoting labor and economic migration, coordinating strategies for secure migration management, or cooperating to strengthen and modernize existing migration management through capacity-building, formal processes, and best practices.

At the same time, regional dialogues and other such processes have been consolidated, serving as platforms for coordination and the exchange of comparative experiences. These mechanisms have given rise to guidelines for future policies to address shared challenges and opportunities around migration management and the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees, which will be covered in more detail in section 2.2.2.

2.2. Bodies, processes, arrangements, and agreements for migration governance

Based on the principle of international cooperation enshrined in the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, LAC states are approaching migration management as a shared issue that requires collaborative efforts across origin, transit, and destination countries. New spaces for cooperation and exchange have arisen in response to the varied dynamics of migration flows within and beyond LAC, as well as to the patterns identified in countries' responses to managing the challenges, opportunities, and possibilities they bring. These have been gradually replicated at the national level and subsequently scaled up to the regional level.

However, this process does entail some challenges. In a technical note, the Department of Access to Rights at the OAS observes that “there are international and regional processes in place to address migration and forced displacement, but these are fragmented into a series of formal and informal institutions that handle different types of migration in line with the priorities of each state” (OAS, 2023).

A comparative review of working groups across various subregional cooperation mechanisms

on migration and international protection has identified 31 such groups at the regional level, addressing issues ranging from the socioeconomic inclusion of migrant and displaced populations to the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking. They also tackle issues such as the strengthening of asylum systems and protection against sexual exploitation. This analysis reveals that while three subregional arrangements and the Los Angeles Declaration all address human trafficking, only one includes international financing for host communities (Muñoz-Pogossian and Chaves-González, 2023). This points to a need for better coordination and strategies to avoid the duplication of efforts, as recommended in this report.

The following sections describe the bodies, committees, working groups, and institutions established in LAC to manage migration. These are grouped based on their objectives and founding purposes, and the main objectives of each category are outlined. The list includes those bodies whose intergovernmental coordination agendas encompass guidelines or mandates for designing agreements and institutional frameworks, enabling them to advance efforts to manage migration and forced displacement.

The [annex](#) contains more detailed information on the history, background, and operations of each of these bodies.

2.2.1. UN bodies supporting the development of migration governance and institutional frameworks

The UN system contains international and intergovernmental institutions that promote migration, respond to crises, and provide support and technical assistance to states and other organizations on migration-related issues, including assistance to displaced persons and refugees.

TABLE 1. UN institutions and their migration governance objectives

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	To provide technical assistance and support for the development of migration management policies, including training for local governments, capacity-building for program development, and migration data and information management.	175 states ³
The UN Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR)	To support governments in developing protection standards and capacities and in promoting the rights of refugees, displaced people, and stateless people through institutional strengthening and the implementation of lasting solutions.	UNHCR works in 137 countries in five global regions (UNHCR, 2025). However, it has a direct mandate over states that have signed and ratified the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

TABLE 2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs and their objectives

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
OAS Committee on Migration Affairs (CAM)	To provide mechanisms for cooperation, technical assistance, and monitoring to strengthen migration institutions and improve coordination among states.	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

2.2.2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs

These institutions focus on strengthening and modernizing the structures that manage migration and asylum services by reviewing, monitoring, and improving capacities and processes under specific migration-related mandates.

2.2.3. Regional integration processes with a focus on migration management

These are institutions that share the objective of strengthening regional integration by establishing cooperation mechanisms in specific geographic regions to address shared migration-related issues, challenges, and interests. The primary purpose of most such institutions is to agree on arrangements for labor and economic mobility, as well as border management.

³ IOM, Member States, <https://www.iom.int/member-states>.

TABLE 3. Regional integration processes, objectives, and members

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
Andean Community	Promote labor and economic mobility.	Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.
Caribbean Community (CARICOM)	Promote labor and economic mobility.	Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Monserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Associate members: Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Curaçao, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.
Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)	Promote labor and economic mobility.	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. ⁴ Associate members: Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname.
Pacific Alliance	Promote labor and economic mobility.	Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.
Forum for the Progress and Development of South America (PROSUR)	To coordinate safe migration management, border control, public health security, and efforts to combat human trafficking.	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, and Suriname.
Central American Integration System (SICA)	Coordinate safe migration management.	Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

2.2.4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement

These institutions focus on strengthening and modernizing the structures that manage services related to forced displacement and the migration of specific populations.



⁴ Suspended from MERCOSUR in 2016.

TABLE 4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement, objectives, and members

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
Quito Process	To facilitate information exchange and coordinated action on the following issues: access to education, labor inclusion, and family reunification of migrants; human trafficking; the effects of Covid-19 on migration; and guidance to migrants.	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay.
Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V)	Promote comprehensive solutions regarding assistance and legal support for migrants and refugees from Venezuela, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, accountability to affected populations, and communication with communities, among other things.	Operates in Argentina, Aruba, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

2.2.5. Ad hoc mechanisms that address subregional situations of migration and forced displacement

These mechanisms promote the exchange of information, experiences, and best practices to strengthen protection standards and migrant rights through consultative platforms.



TABLE 5. Ad hoc migration and forced displacement mechanisms, objectives, and members

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)	Facilitate information exchange and actions on regularization, border control and management, and labor migration.	Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the United States.
South American Conference on Migration (SACM)	To establish information exchange and actions on policies regarding diaspora communities, migrants' rights, and outlooks on migration and development.	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Paraguay, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.
Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)	To promote comprehensive solutions to strengthen asylum systems, internal displacement, local governance, and migration. Its priority groups are migrants from Central America and Mexico.	Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama.

2.2.6. Declaration-based collaboration mechanisms

These institutions establish systems based on specific migration agendas through framework agreements that implement systematic action plans and define mechanisms for assigning responsibilities among members.



TABLE 6. Declaration-based mechanisms, objectives, and members

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
The Cartagena Process, originating in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees	To promote comprehensive solutions to strengthen international protection systems for refugees, forcibly displaced people, and stateless people.	Declaration adopted by Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela.
Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection (2022)	To strengthen national, regional, and hemispheric cooperation to create the conditions for safe, orderly, and regular migration and reinforce international protection frameworks.	Declaration adopted by Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay.

2.2.7. Migration-related cooperation schemes between LAC and other regions

These institutions promote the exchange of information, experiences, and best practices with other regions facing similar migration management-related challenges.

TABLE 7. Interregional cooperation mechanisms and their objectives

INSTITUTION	OBJECTIVES	MEMBERS
Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities (RIAM)	To facilitate the exchange of information and experiences regarding training programs for authorities and officials, opportunities for technical cooperation, and the institutions that manage migration.	Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

3. Institutional Migration Governance Practices in LAC

Over time, states have gradually transformed how they manage migration. These changes are reflected in the modernization of migration authorities, the establishment of mechanisms for domestic and international coordination, and the inclusion of sectors that carry out cross-cutting but specific migration-related functions.

This chapter draws on insights from the information on the 32 LAC countries included in this study compiled in the Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles. It begins by explaining the categories (primary functions) and subcategories (specific roles) established to classify each country's institutions. It then presents the sector categories used to identify the areas of government to which migration governance institutions are assigned within the institutional structure. This is followed by a discussion of regional institutional practices in migration governance, focusing on best practices implemented in recent years.

A common pattern emerged: the establishment of migration authorities with representatives from multiple ministries or agencies and of mechanisms to coordinate migration management at the national level, with direct responsibility for the design, implementation, and monitoring of migration policy. The study also identified institutional platforms established by countries through arrangements such as working groups, councils, and committees. These platforms aim to

coordinate strategic, comprehensive action from a public policy perspective, connecting different levels and sectors of government in the areas of service delivery, assistance, and inclusion.

Before exploring these areas in detail, it is important to note that in most countries, these mechanisms and coordinating councils have historically focused on providing support for nationals living abroad, and thus were largely overseen by ministries of foreign affairs. As the region's migration profile has changed in response to new migration dynamics and the global patterns underlying these, LAC countries have established new institutional arrangements seeking to provide more comprehensive responses. Responsibility for these is either shared across sectors or falls under home affairs and is overseen by ministries or secretariats of the interior, or by the offices of the president or vice president.

By recognizing that migration management extends beyond border control and the management of migration flows, LAC states have strengthened domestic and international coordination through a multisector, multidimensional approach. Coordination mechanisms that bring together different levels of government seek to provide timely, comprehensive, and context-specific responses to evolving migration patterns.

For example, Uruguay's National Migration Board is a specialized interinstitutional body that brings together the Office of the President and the ministries of foreign affairs, home affairs, labor and social security, and social development. Its mandate is to coordinate, provide guidance on, and promote

comprehensive migration policies. These legal and institutional shifts have translated into concrete solutions, including initiatives that address all stages of the migration process and enhance capacity-building. In turn, these measures have enabled institutions to adapt their service-delivery systems and support platforms for the migrant population.

3.1. Classification of functions, roles, and institutional sectors

The Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles, the main tool used in this analysis, establishes 4 main categories or functions, which are divided into 12 subcategories or specific roles. These were then used to classify the institutions in the LAC countries included in this study that have a mandate to manage migration, along with their specific responsibilities. The matrix classifies the institutions identified by the study by sector, in order to locate them within each country's institutional structure. As shown in [table 8](#), each category contains subcategories or roles that provide more specific descriptions of the responsibilities assigned to each institution. These subcategories and roles were defined by the authors for the purposes of this study.

The migration policy area covers institutions responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating migration management policies. This includes institutions that deliver services,

provide support, and promote integration at the national level, as well as those responsible for coordinating migration policy. Three subcategories were established based on the role performed by each institution: (i) policy design and strategic direction, (ii) implementation, (iii) coordination and interinstitutional alignment.

The border migration control function includes institutions responsible for controlling the entry and exit of nationals and foreigners, as well as conducting migration checks and implementing formal procedures such as visa issuance and other immigration services. This function includes two specific roles: (iv) border migration control and (v) immigration services.

The third function is international protection, nationality, and regularization of legal status, which covers the institutions responsible for processing applications for refugee status, asylum, and statelessness, as well as other procedures related to the migrant population's legal status and access to nationality. This function comprises four specific roles: (vi) asylum and recognition of refugee status; (vii) statelessness; (viii) regularization of legal status; and (ix) nationality.

Finally, the function of assistance to nationals abroad and returning migrants encompasses institutions that provide consular services and assistance to these two groups. It includes three subcategories: (x) consular assistance; (xi) passport issuance; and (xii) return.

TABLE 8. Institutional analysis categories for migration governance in LAC (1 of 2)

MAIN FUNCTION	DEFINITION	ROLE	DEFINITION
Migration policy	Institutions responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating migration management policies.	Policy design and strategic direction	Institutions or agencies responsible for designing and defining the strategic direction of migration policies and monitoring their implementation.
		Implementation	Institutions or agencies responsible for implementing plans, programs, and projects providing services for and promoting the integration of the migrant and refugee populations.
		Coordination and interinstitutional alignment	Institutions or agencies that coordinate or align migration management policies at the national level, including councils and commissions.
Border migration control	Institutions responsible for controlling the entry and exit of nationals and foreigners, as well as migration checks and formal procedures.	Border migration control	Institutions responsible for controlling the entry and exit of nationals and foreigners, as well as migration checks and formal procedures.
		Immigration services	Institutions responsible for immigration services, including the issuance of temporary and permanent residence permits, migration documentation (identity documents), and visas for purposes such as work, study, and family reunification, among others.
International protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status	Institutions responsible for processing applications and other procedures concerning people needing international protection and the regularization of their migration status.	Asylum and recognition of refugee status	Institutions whose functions relate to international protection processes for refugees and asylum-seekers, including complementary protection.
		Statelessness	Institutions whose functions relate to international protection processes for stateless individuals.
		Regularization of legal status	Institutions responsible for providing temporary protection for migrants or arrangements for legal stays through humanitarian visas or other exceptional permits, such as amnesties.
		Nationality	Institutions responsible for granting nationality to foreigners who apply for it.

TABLE 8. Institutional analysis categories for migration governance in LAC (2 of 2)

MAIN FUNCTION	DEFINITION	ROLE	DEFINITION
Assistance for nationals living abroad and returning migrants	Institutions responsible for providing consular assistance to nationals living abroad and returning migrants.	Consular assistance	Institutions responsible for providing service and assistance to nationals living abroad.
		Passport issuance	Institutions responsible for issuing passports.
		Support for return migration	Institutions responsible for public policies targeting the returning population.

Because the institutional architecture for migration governance varies significantly across countries, a standardization process was necessary to classify the institutions identified into sectors. These differences reflect the ways states exercise their sovereign powers over people and their territories (*iubeo ergo sum*) (Salmón, 2018).

The following categories were used to classify the areas of government identified as common to all LAC countries: (i) home affairs, (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) justice, (iv) labor, (v) security and defense, (vi) executive branch, and (vii) special sectors. Although the specific names for these areas vary across countries, they perform similar functions, as shown in table 9.

TABLE 9. Sector categories for migration governance in LAC (1 of 2)

SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
Home affairs	In most states, this sector has direct authority over matters relating to domestic political governance and the full exercise of the principles and guarantees established in their constitutions. Jurisdictions with different political systems—such as the LAC countries that are part of the Commonwealth ⁵ —have legal and political systems grounded in constitutional documents or special agreements.
Foreign affairs	This sector has authority over migration diplomacy and provides assistance and protection to nationals abroad. It tends to coordinate policy development with other areas of government. It is usually also the sector with the greatest involvement in international forums and platforms that address these issues at the regional and global levels.
Justice	This branch of the state is responsible for safeguarding migrants' human rights and ensuring nondiscrimination, supervising guarantees of due process in asylum procedures, and determining refugee status, among other functions.

⁵ The Commonwealth of Nations is a group of countries with historical ties to the British Empire that was created to include all states that were formerly British colonies. Over the years, many of these countries have become independent nations but maintain economic, political, and cultural ties with the United Kingdom. The LAC countries that are part of the Commonwealth have developed similar parliamentary systems to manage their affairs of state, although the British monarch remains their head of state. The Commonwealth countries included in this study are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

TABLE 9. Sector categories for migration governance in LAC (2 of 2)

SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
Labor	This sector's mandates include protecting and promoting the labor rights and employment opportunities of all workers, including migrants, through work visas and policies promoting protection, social security, and labor inclusion.
Security and defense	This sector plays a key role in migration management by handling security issues related to the movement of people across borders, including controlling entries and departures. It also cooperates with other areas of government on migration-related issues and the crimes of migrant smuggling and human trafficking.
Executive branch	This is the office led by the highest-ranking member of government, such as the president or prime minister. Its primary migration-related function is to establish the guiding principles for the country's migration policy. It often has the authority to grant nationality and implement migration amnesties or regularization processes. In some countries, the executive branch oversees programs promoting migration and citizenship, as is the case in some Caribbean states. There are also countries in which the office of the vice president is directly involved in migration-related matters, such as interinstitutional coordination and the development of immigration promotion policies.
Special sectors	Some states have used constitutional charters or domestic legislation to establish special authorities or agencies to manage migration-related issues. These tend to function autonomously, as is the case with Ecuador's National Council for the Freedom of Human Movement. This group also includes government agencies that have been assigned specialized migration management mandates, even if they are not officially migration authorities. These include, for example, the National Civil Registry in Colombia, which oversees applications for recognition of statelessness. The specific issues handled by these bodies include access to citizenship or nationality; electoral rights; access to social rights such as work, health, and employment; and the protection of human rights. ⁶

⁶ Ombud's offices are examples of these institution that have come to play a significant role in migration management because they defend human rights; intervene in cases of abuse, discrimination, or conflicts in which rights are being undermined; and ensure that authorities comply with the human rights legislation and standards in force.

3.2. Migration policy practices

In most of the LAC states included in this study, the government sectors that oversee migration policy are home affairs and foreign affairs.

In the vast majority of cases, these sectors are responsible for the design, strategic direction, and implementation of migration policies, often with support from other sectors. Moreover, the institutional architecture of many countries now includes national-level forums for coordination and interinstitutional alignment that bring together different institutions with migration-related mandates.

FIGURE 3. Institutions with a migration policy mandate in LAC, by role and sector (1 of 2)

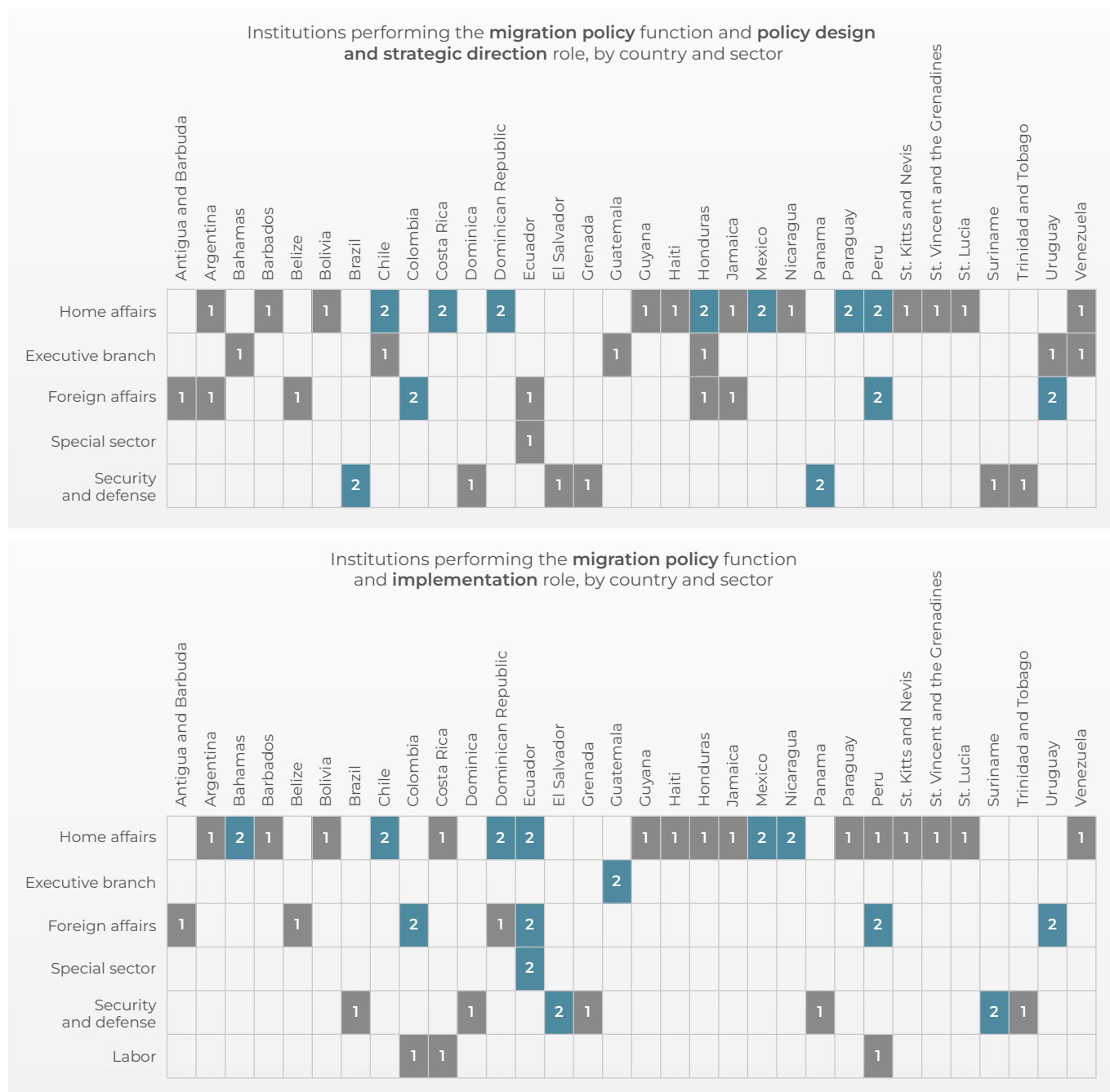


FIGURA 3. Institutions with a migration policy mandate in LAC, by role and sector (2 of 2)

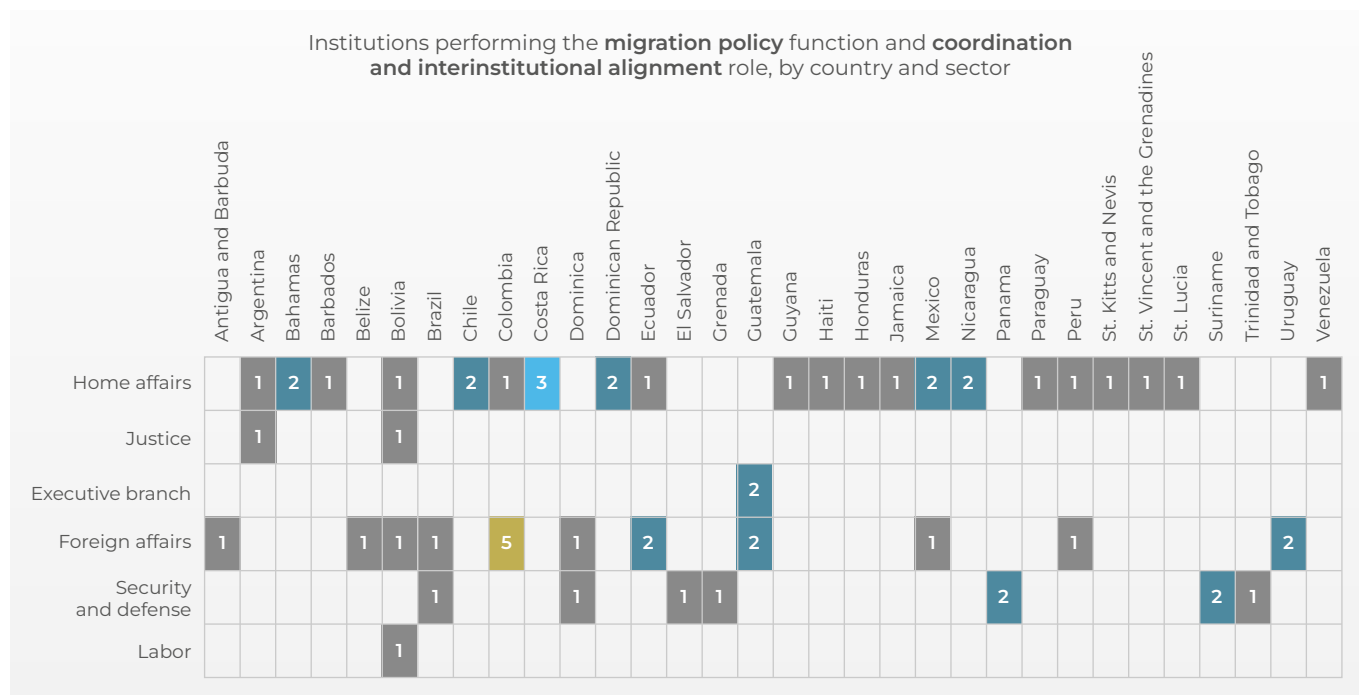
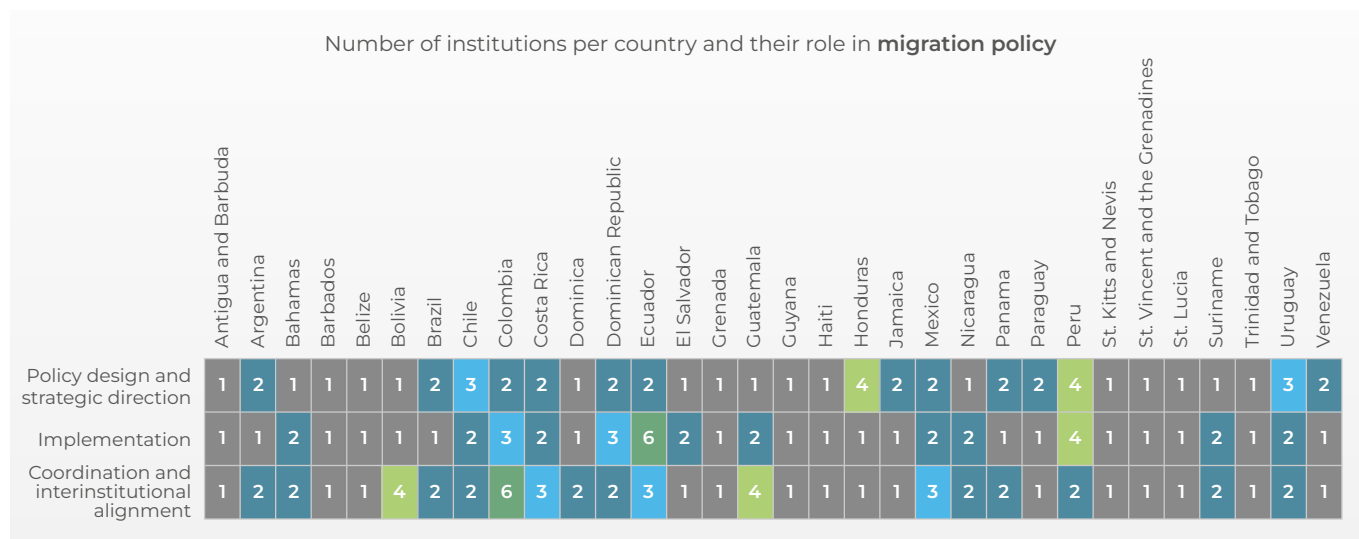


FIGURE 4. Number of institutions with a migration policy mandate in LAC



Examples of these include the Dominican Republic's National Migration Council and Panama's Advisory Council on Migration. The nature of these forums varies: some perform an advisory role, while others have a more direct influence on migration policy design.

Figure 4 shows that the number of institutions performing the migration policy function in LAC is growing. In countries such as Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico,

Peru, and Uruguay, broad, varied structures have emerged, in which two or more institutions are tasked with performing one of the roles associated with the migration policy function.

The involvement of multiple institutions demonstrates an approach that recognizes migration as a multisectoral issue requiring coordinated engagement by a wide range of government and specialist stakeholders.



BOX 1. Reforms to the institutional framework for migration in El Salvador

In response to the migration-related challenges currently facing El Salvador, the government has decided to adapt and reform its organizational structure by issuing a decree establishing the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility. This new institution plays a key role in both delivering services to nationals abroad and assisting migrants within the country. The launch of the Attachés for Diaspora Affairs initiative (Ministerio de Cultura de El Salvador, 2022) also promotes forums for collaboration with Salvadorans living outside the country. Projects developed through this initiative have included health and education campaigns and the promotion of cultural spaces in partnership with Salvadorans in the United States and Cape Verde (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de El Salvador, 2023 and 2024).

El Salvador has also signed the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), which focuses on four priority areas: protection, health, education, and employment. This process has entailed facilitating and strengthening dialogue with the Committee of Migrant Workers to consolidate progress on the protection of migrants' rights and diaspora assistance.

Finally, in 2023, the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Mobility was created, comprising 45 institutions. Deemed an essential part of migration governance in El Salvador, the mechanism's main focus is to design an implementation plan for the Pact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, with the aim of aligning joint actions targeting the migrant population and their families.

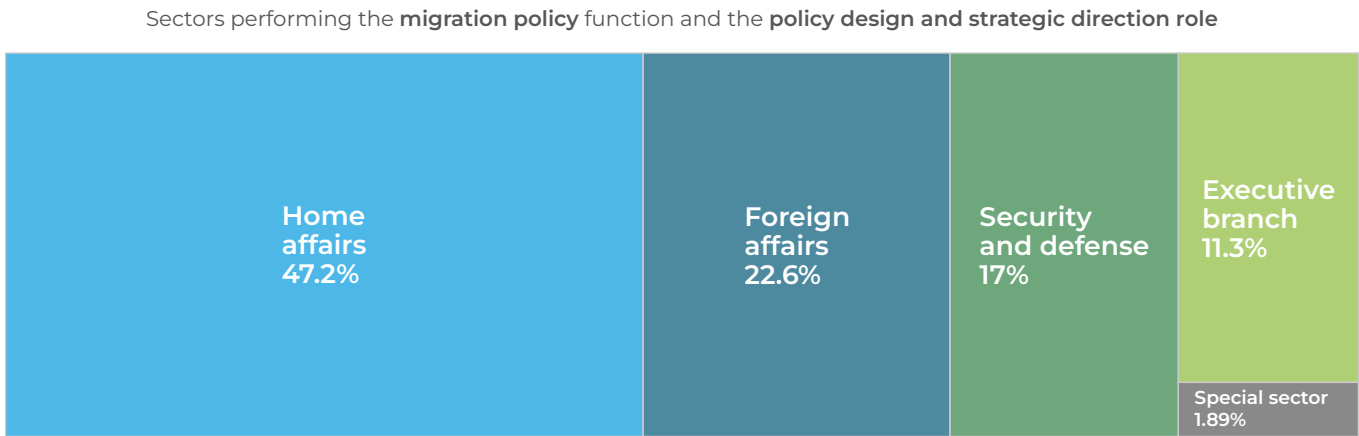
3.2.1. Policy design and strategic direction

The study identified 53 institutions involved in the design and strategic direction of migration policies in LAC. Specifically, this role has been assigned to three or more institutions in Chile (3), Honduras (4), Peru (4), and Uruguay (3), reflecting migration governance arrangements in which multiple institutions are involved.



The analysis also revealed a clear pattern regarding the sectors involved: the home affairs sector accounts for the largest share, with 25 institutions, equivalent to 47.2% of the total. More specifically, in 12 countries this role is performed exclusively by institutions in the home affairs sector (Barbados, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). Institutions responsible for policy design and strategic direction also fall under the following sectors: foreign affairs (12 institutions or 22.6%), security and defense (9 institutions or 17%), executive branch (6 institutions or 11.3%), and special sectors (1 institution or 1.89%).

FIGURE 5. Institutions involved in policy design and strategic direction by sector



BOX 2. Uruguay: institutional coordination to facilitate the migration process

Uruguay has sought to simplify and streamline migration processes in all areas and services through its migration legislation and infrastructure. Most of the country’s migration-related administrative and management functions fall within the home affairs sector, but decision-making and policy coordination are overseen by the National Migration Board, which includes the sectors responsible for designing and implementing these policies: home affairs, labor, social development, and foreign affairs. Since the passing of the country’s Migration Act in 2008, all services, duties, and responsibilities relating to migration management have been concentrated in just four ministries.

The only exception to this rule is the Electoral Court, an autonomous body that has gradually been assigned tasks such as registering migrants and issuing citizenship and residence certificates, among other functions.

3.2.2. Implementation

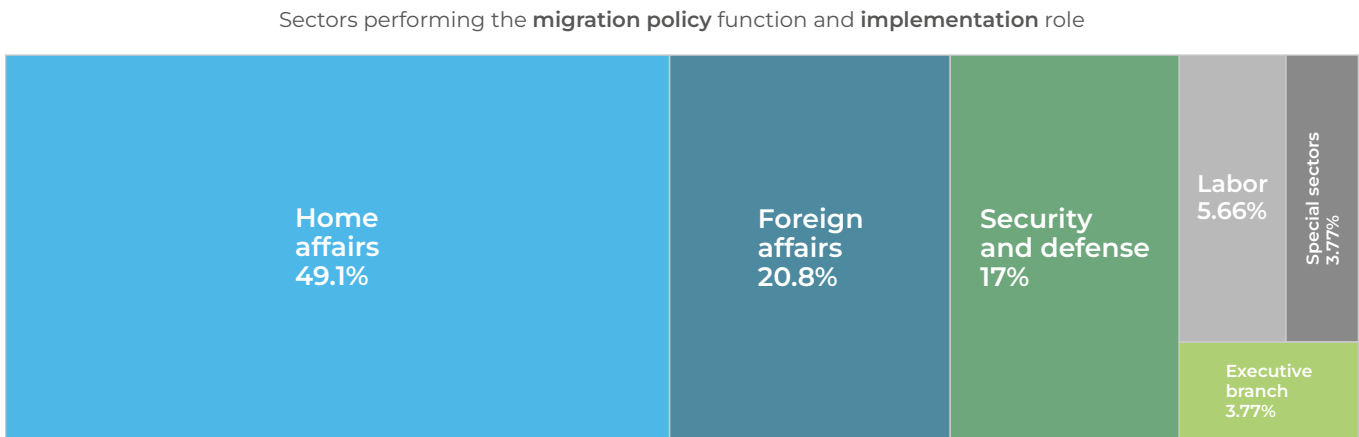
Some 53 institutions are responsible for implementing migration policies. Ecuador and Peru are noteworthy in this regard, as this role was assigned to six and four institutions, respectively. Likewise, as **figure 6** shows, the pattern is similar to that observed for policy design and strategic direction: the home affairs sectors is the most prominent, with 26 institutions (49.1%), followed by foreign affairs with 11 (20.8%), security and defense with 9 (17%), labor with 3 (5.66%), while the executive and special sectors each have only two (3.77%).

Also of note are states that have created specialized institutions to manage migration policy at the sector level (labor and special sectors). This is the case for

countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru, which have implemented labor migration initiatives, and Ecuador, which has done so for education.

In this context of institutional diversification and specialization, it is important to note that most LAC states have taken on legal obligations stemming from their ratification of international human rights treaties. Doing so obligates states to harmonize their domestic regulatory frameworks to guarantee that all people within their jurisdiction can effectively exercise their rights. Such initiatives include designing and adopting public policies targeting both the native-born population and foreign nationals to ensure access to rights and basic services within the legal constraints in force.

FIGURE 6. Institutions involved in implementation by sector



The constitutions of the following eight states now include the right to migrate and recognize migrants as rights-holders on an equal basis with the native-born population: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

3.2.3. Coordination and interinstitutional alignment

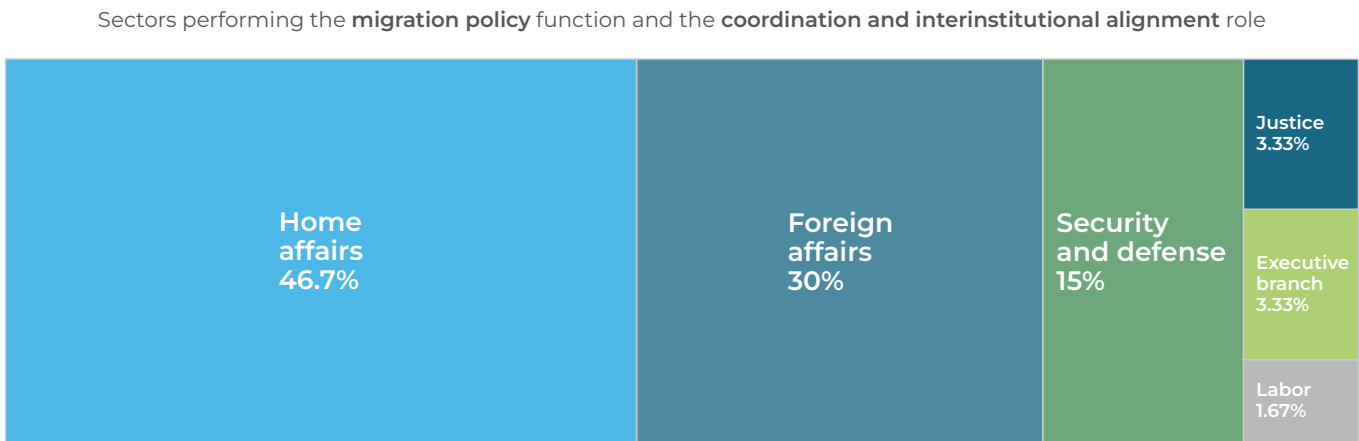
States have developed various coordination and alignment mechanisms to manage migration. This study identified 60 institutions responsible for this role. Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Mexico have all established coordination mechanisms involving three or more institutions.

The configuration of these sectors follows similar patterns to those observed for the design and implementation functions. The largest share falls under the home affairs sector, with 28 institutions (46.7%), followed by foreign affairs, with 18 (30%); and security and defense, with 9 (15%); while justice and the executive branch have a minimal presence with just 2 institutions each (3.33%).

In terms of institutional architecture, 19 of the 32 states observed have regulatory frameworks or public policies whose provisions include the establishment of formal mechanisms for coordination and interinstitutional alignment. These mechanisms typically cover areas such as migration policy, the recognition of refugee status or statelessness, the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling, return migration, and protection, as well as support for the refugee and migrant population. In contrast, Guyana, Suriname, and several Caribbean countries do not yet have targeted regulatory frameworks that establish institutions dedicated exclusively to this role.

As [figure 7](#) shows, these coordination spaces span multiple government sectors. In some coordination and alignment settings, certain functions overlap across institutions. This occurs when the administrative decisions or legal instruments that create or restructure public bodies assign similar mandates and roles to different government units, which may or may not fall within the same ministry but do not necessarily coordinate effectively or engage in discussion on policy development or the efficient allocation of available resources.

FIGURE 7. Institutions involved in coordination and interinstitutional alignment by sector



3.3. Border migration control practices

Broadly speaking, border migration control refers to the state’s capacity to verify, monitor, enforce, or authorize the entry, stay, and departure of both citizens and foreign nationals. This function mainly falls under the remit of the home affairs sector and includes the regulation of these movements through standards or legislation that coordinate and define the functions of the institutions responsible for implementing them.

In LAC, the border migration control is carried out by a wide variety of institutions. As is explained in more detail in the rest of this section, in some countries, the roles that make up this function fall under the remit of just one or two institutions, while in others they have been allocated to four or five. This variation in the number of institutions involved reflects the different approaches states take to authorizing, monitoring, and enforcing migration flows. In this sense, the decision to assign these mandates to multiple institutions may be a response to the operational complexity of managing these flows.

FIGURE 8. Institutions with a migration control mandate in LAC, by role and sector

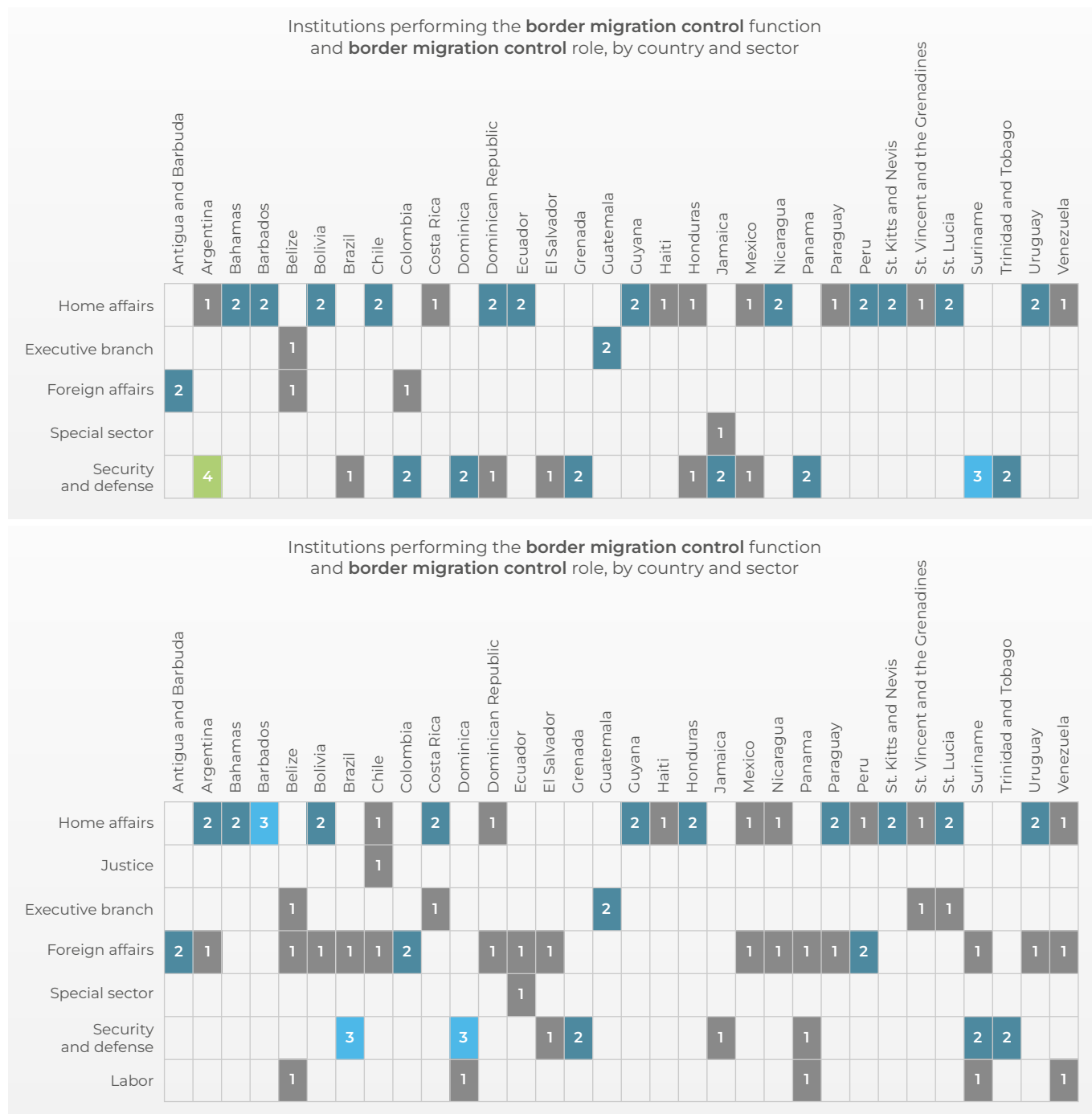
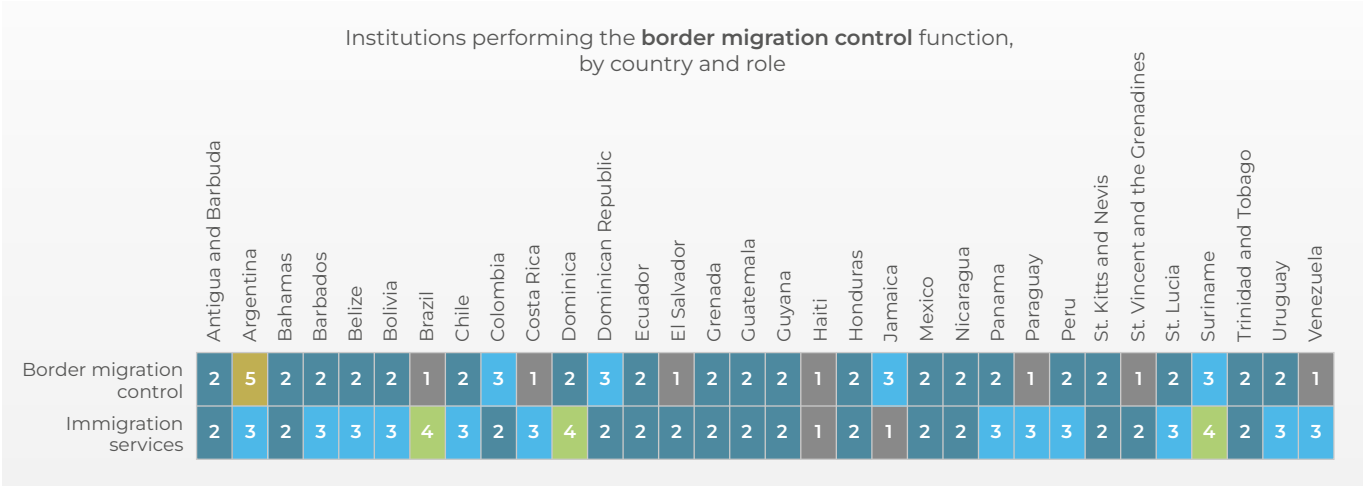


FIGURE 9. Number of institutions with a migration control mandate in LAC

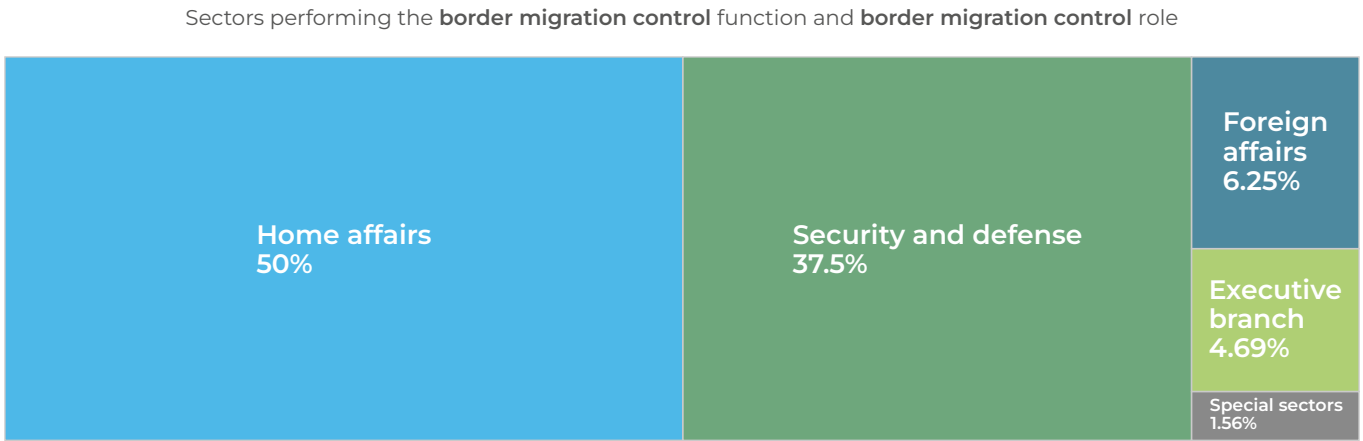


3.3.1. Border migration control

There are 64 institutions in the region specializing in border migration control, which speaks to the strategic importance of this role in migration governance. The countries with the most institutions operating in this field include Argentina, with five, followed by Colombia, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Suriname, with three each, along with particularly robust monitoring mechanisms. In several states, this role is performed by specific national units or departments that are generally part of the ministry of home affairs.

Of the total number of institutional arrangements analyzed, 32 operate under the umbrella of the home affairs sector (50%), 24 within security and defense (37.5%), 4 within foreign affairs (6.25%), 3 within the executive branch (4.69%), and 1 within a special sector (1.56%). Although in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, and Mexico, the remit for migration control tends to lie with the ministry of home affairs, the security and defense sector also plays a key role in supporting implementation, particularly through the police force.

FIGURE 10. Institutions involved in border migration control by sector



BOX 3. Training programs for migration authorities on human rights and migrants' rights

In recent years, several states have strengthened their border control systems while also making progress on implementing best practices that favor safe human mobility in ways that uphold human rights.

Several states that are part of the Andean Community, the Central American Integration System, the SACM, and MERCOSUR have invested in training programs for administrative and police personnel involved in managing migration control. These efforts have emerged in response to recommendations from the treaty bodies of the Inter-American System to implement guidelines or initiatives agreed upon within regional or subregional forums and mechanisms for dialogue. These initiatives are particularly well developed in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, where airport security staff, police forces, and migration control personnel all receive training.

International organizations such as UNHCR and the IOM play important roles in this context by implementing projects, programs, and specialized training workshops for government officials, civil society organizations, and migrant and refugee populations. These initiatives seek to strengthen technical capacities regarding the protection and rights of people in movement, incorporating rights-based, intersectional, and intercultural approaches.

Another important instrument in this regard is the Quito Process, which was created to address the challenges posed by migration from Venezuela. One of its core priorities is strengthening national capacities through sustained dialogue and effective coordination between countries and organizations. The 7th Joint Declaration of the Quito Process, known as the Lima Chapter (2021), highlighted the support provided by the Group of Friends Countries and the Asylum Capacity Support Group in advancing this objective.

3.3.2. Immigration services

In recent years, states have concentrated their efforts on improving the migrant population's access to up-to-date information about their rights and the services available to them. At the same time, they have strengthened their institutions by digitalizing administrative procedures, decentralizing services through mobile units, and streamlining procedures for labor migration, special visa schemes, and work permits.

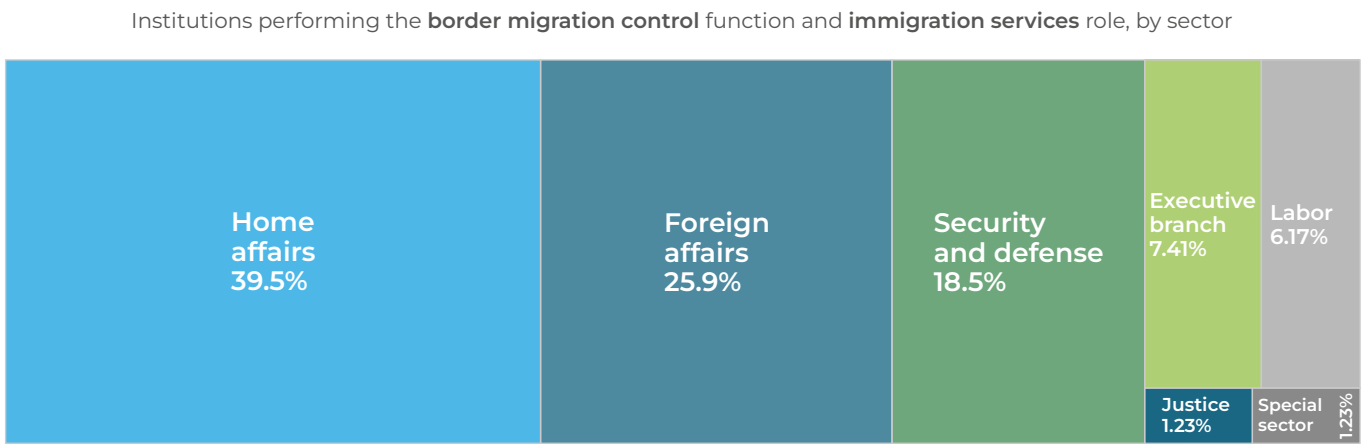
Institutions performing the immigration services role are tasked with issuing visas and identity documents for foreigners, residence permits, and

extensions or renewals of these, as well as other immigration-related administrative procedures.

These efforts have mainly fallen within the home affairs sector, with support from foreign affairs for more effective implementation.

In LAC, 81 institutions have a mandate to provide immigration services. As [figure 11](#) shows, of the total number of institutional arrangements analyzed, 31 are within the home affairs sector (39.5%), 21 within foreign affairs (25.9%), 15 within security and defense (18.5%), 6 within the executive branch (7.41%), 5 within labor (6.17%), and 1 each within justice (1.23%) and special sectors (1.23%).

FIGURE 11. Institutions involved in immigration services by sector



3.4. Institutional practices in connection with international protection, nationality, and regularization mechanisms

Current migration dynamics are shaped by a complex web of overlapping drivers. These include the pursuit of better working conditions or development opportunities, as well as forced displacement in response to multiple factors associated with inadequate protection in countries of origin. Although some states have adopted progressive legislation to guarantee migrants’ access to rights, significant asymmetries persist across legal and policy frameworks throughout LAC.

The need to address diverse new migration flows across the region—driven by factors such as Covid-19, natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies, or political instability—has led states to implement more reactive, expedited responses. Addressing migration by applying a human rights–centered approach to reception and admission processes has led to the creation of regularization programs, special visas, and temporary protection schemes, among other measures. As [figure 12](#) shows, the role of regularizing legal status involves multiple sectors, including home affairs, foreign affairs, security and defense, and the executive branch.

Similarly, several states have coordinated programs and promoted technical and financial cooperation with various international organizations in order to better protect people who have been forcibly displaced from their countries of origin. Examples of such schemes include strengthening asylum systems to ensure that any decisions made (largely within the foreign affairs sector) are fair and efficient.

In the same vein, cross-cutting efforts have addressed pathways for integrating migrants into labor markets, with an emphasis on policy strategies that facilitate access to formal employment and promote the recognition of educational and professional qualifications obtained abroad. Other initiatives have focused on access to education systems for children and adolescents, as described in two IDB technical notes: “A Fair Chance for Migrants in the Labor Market” (Kaplan et al., 2023) and “Migration and Education: Challenges and Opportunities” (Elías et al., 2022). Significant progress has been made on these issues, which feature prominently on the agendas of regional dialogue mechanisms. However, one of the main challenges facing states continues to be providing international protection for people forced to flee their countries of origin, such as refugees and stateless people. As [figure 12](#) also highlights, the extent of this challenge is reflected in the limited engagement of government sectors in addressing statelessness.

FIGURE 12. Institutions with a mandate for international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status in LAC, by role and sector (1 of 2)

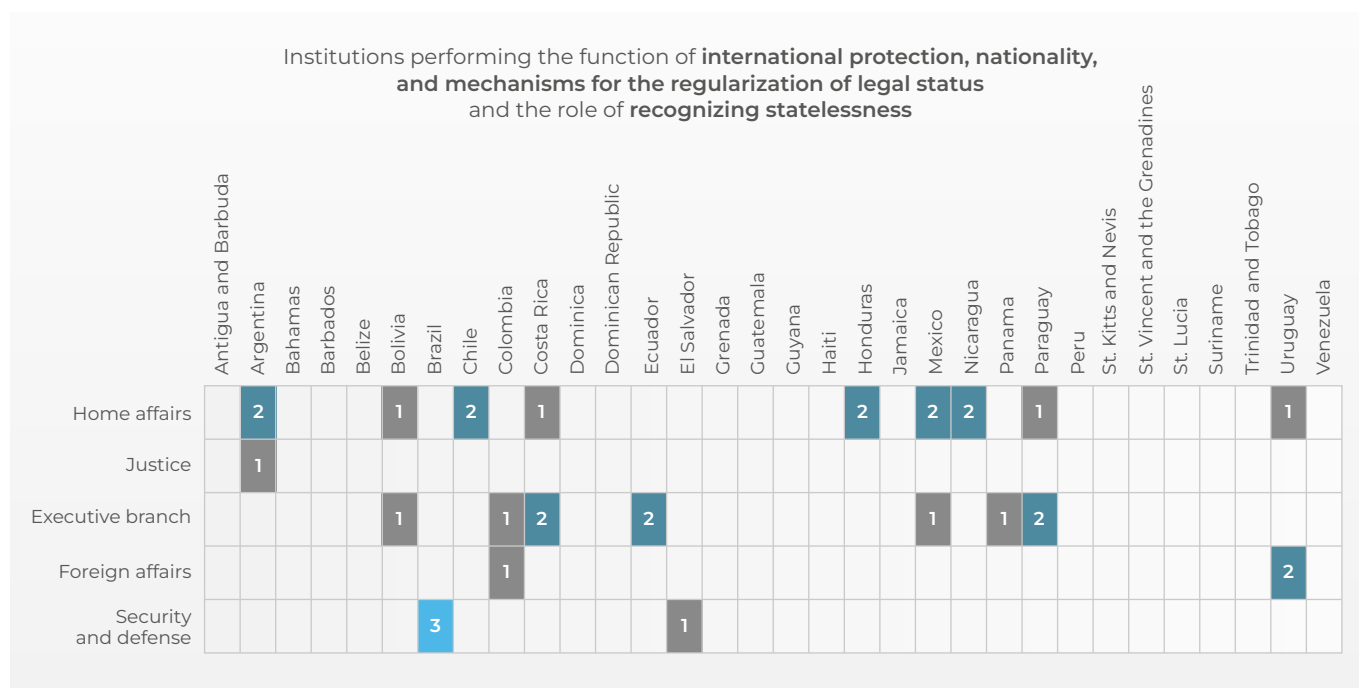
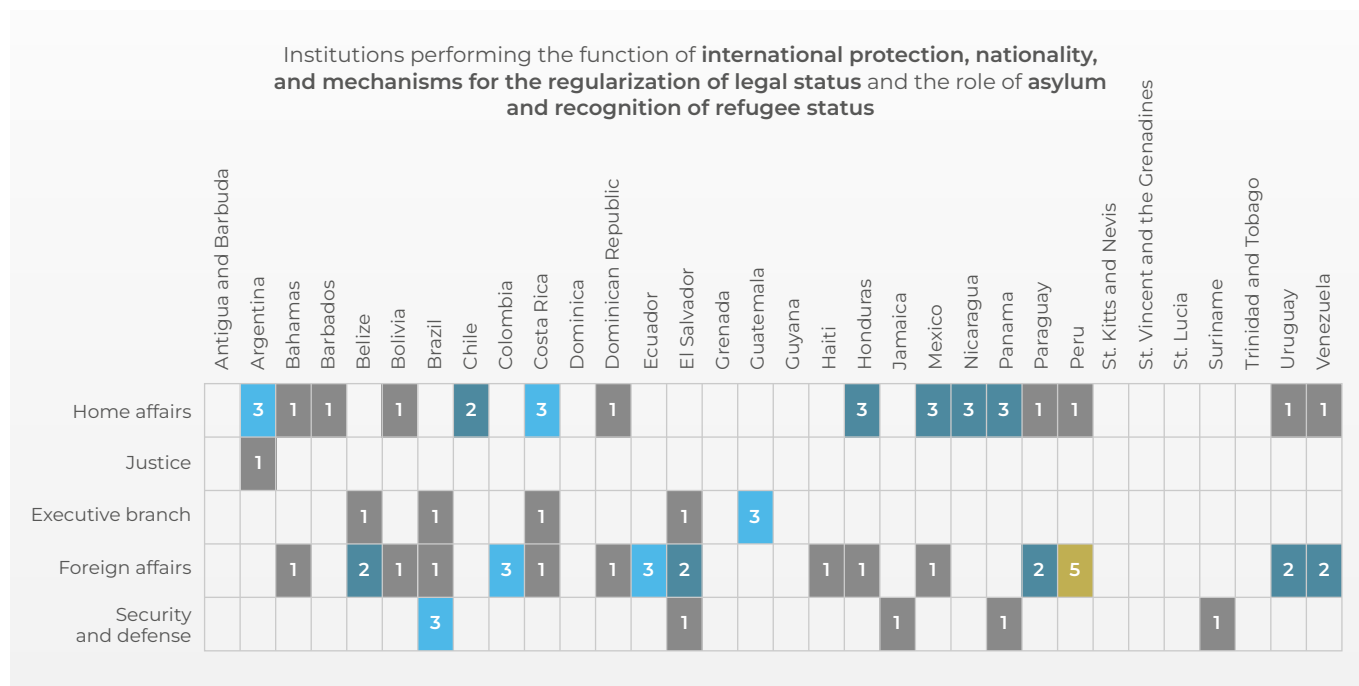


FIGURE 12. Institutions with a mandate for international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status in LAC, by role and sector (2 of 2)

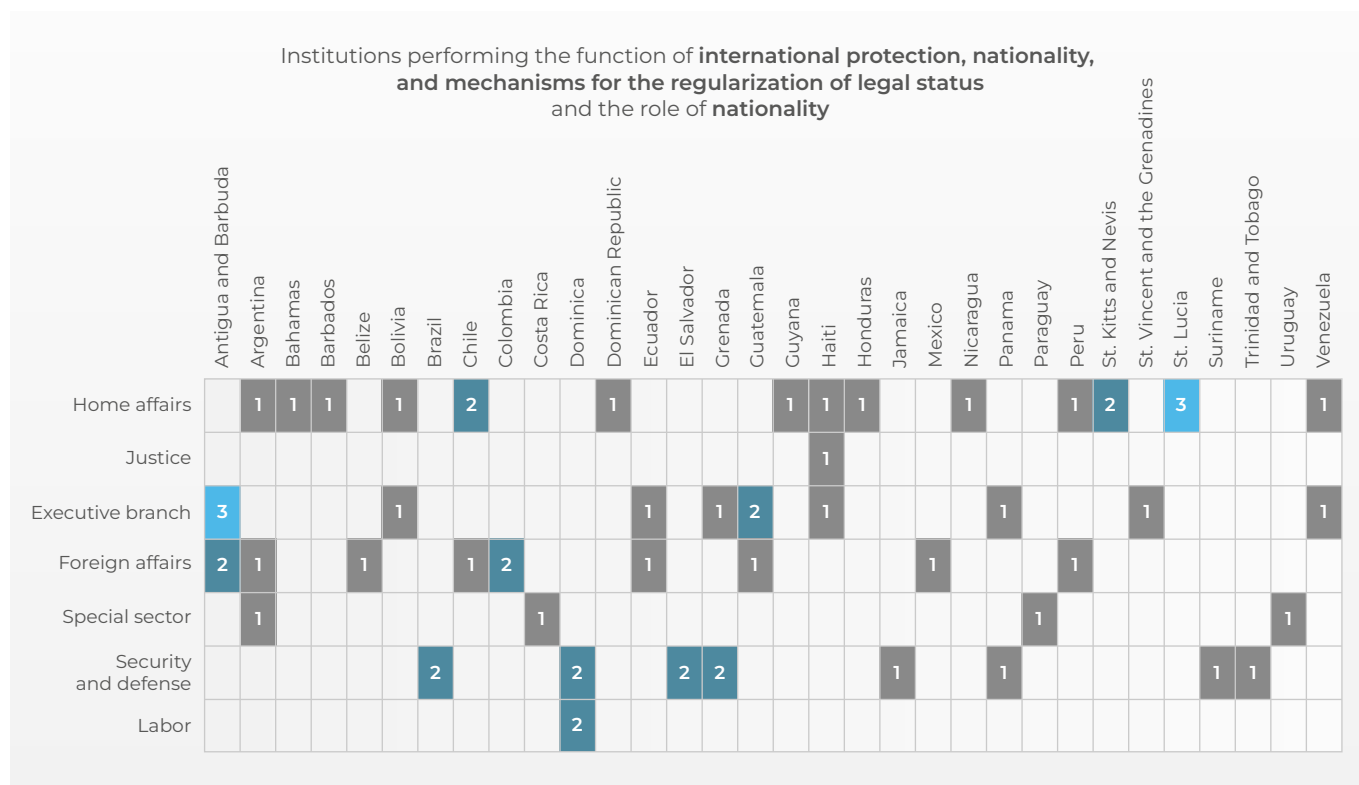
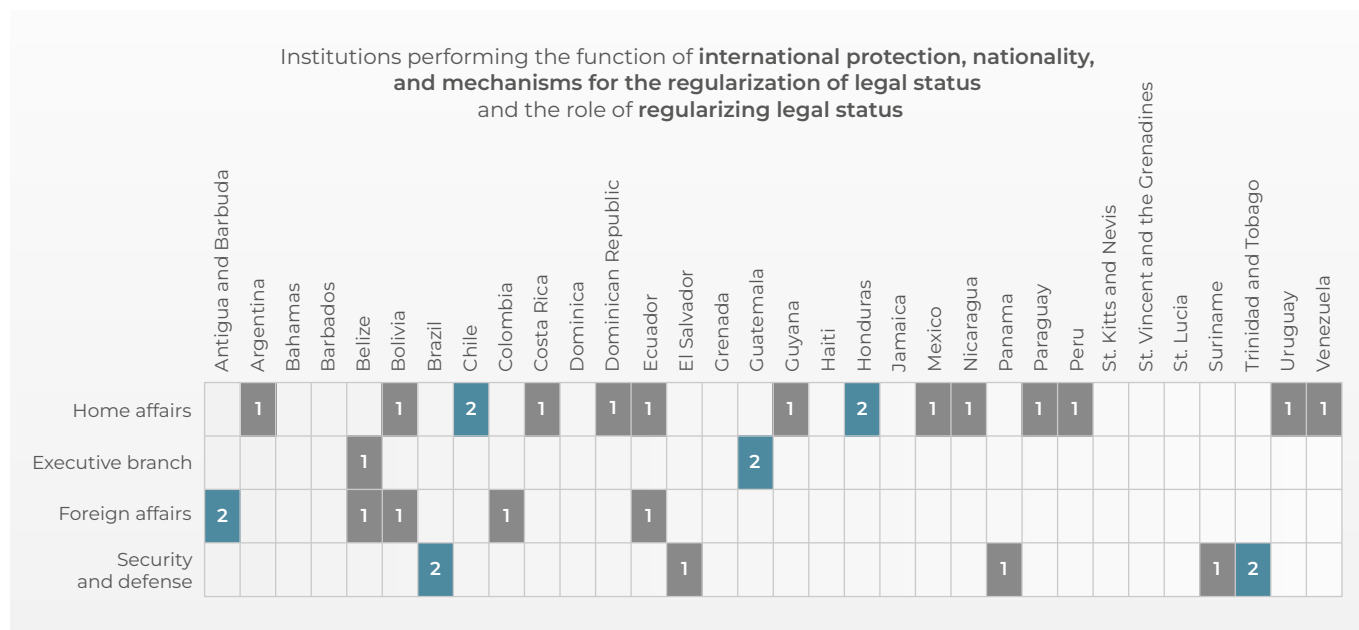


FIGURE 13. Number of institutions with a mandate for international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status in LAC

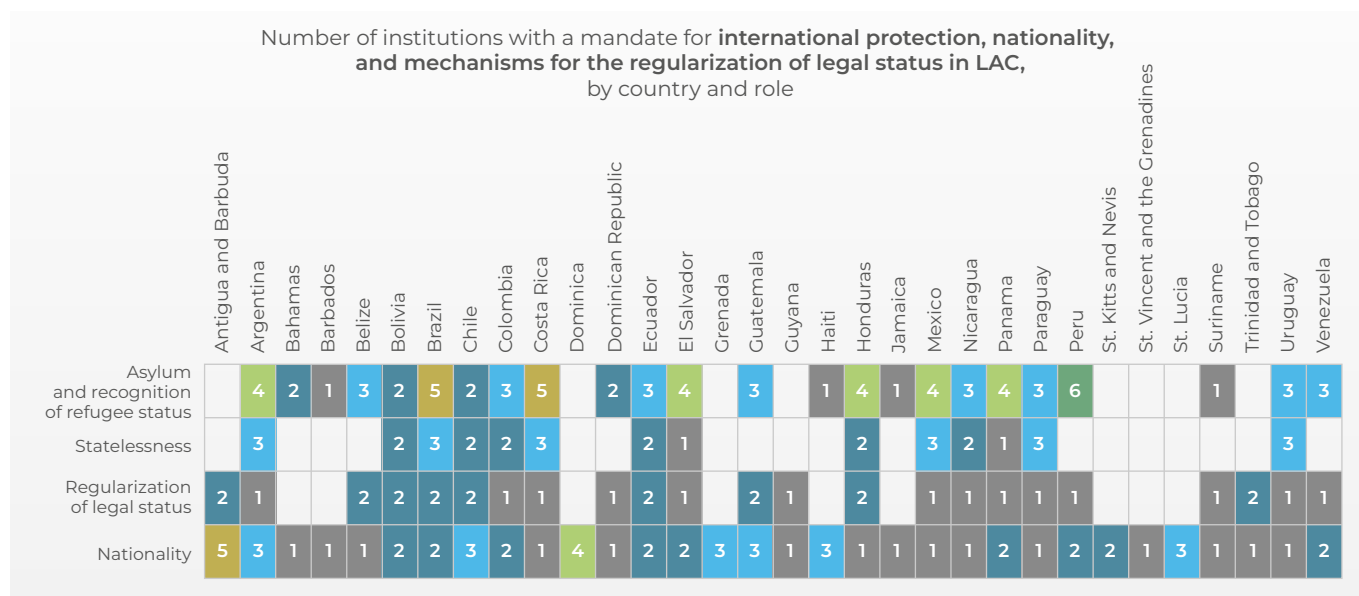


Figure 13 shows that the distribution of functions related to international protection, nationality, and regularization mechanisms across institutions varies significantly. The role of asylum and the recognition of refugee status is spread across the largest number of institutions: in countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, and Peru, it has been assigned to up to five or six institutions. In contrast, other roles involve far fewer institutions; notably, statelessness falls under the remit of a single institution in most countries.

3.4.1. Asylum and recognition of refugee status

The legal framework governing asylum has traditionally been used to provide protection for people who have been forced to leave their countries of origin. This situation arises when states are unable or unwilling to provide the protection required to safeguard the fundamental rights of their nationals. In this context, international law provides a binding legal framework that defines refugee status and establishes concrete obligations for the protection of refugees. The most important such instruments are the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which expands the geographic and temporal scope of the definition of a refugee.

In all, 27 of the 32 LAC states analyzed in this study have ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and adapted their legal frameworks to ensure the full exercise of the right to seek and receive asylum, in line with the American Convention on Human Rights. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has only ratified the 1967 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

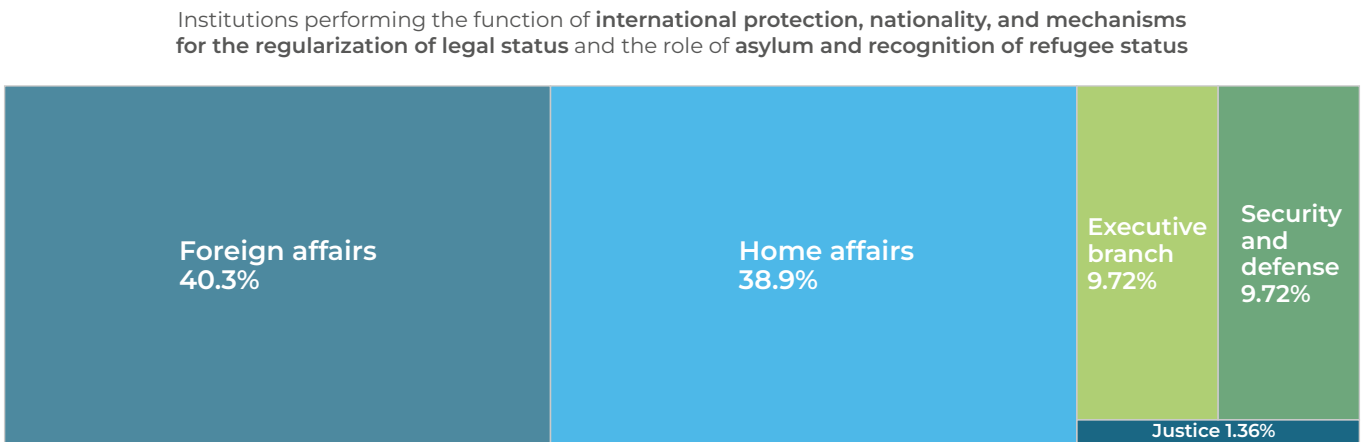
In addition to these frameworks, LAC countries have also adopted broader criteria for the recognition of refugees, thereby strengthening their access to international protection. Several states have incorporated the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees into their domestic legislation, voluntarily transforming what was originally a soft-law instrument into binding, enforceable standards.

From an implementation perspective, 72 institutions were identified as performing functions related to asylum or the recognition of refugee status. In contrast to other roles, the sectors that these institutions primarily fall within include foreign affairs (40.3%); home affairs (38.9%); the executive branch (9.72%); security and defense (9.72%), and justice (1.39%).

One distinctive feature of this role is the establishment of collegiate bodies such as commissions or committees, usually known as National Refugee Commissions. These operate in 20 of the states included in this study: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In El Salvador, the establishment of the Vice Ministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility in 2021 points to how the process of determining refugee status may involve shared responsibility across institutions from different sectors.

Finally, this study found that some countries have not assigned any institution to process applications for international protection or to determine refugee status, despite having ratified the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This is the case, for example, in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. In contrast, although Barbados has not yet ratified the convention, it does have an operational procedure in place: its Immigration Department receives and decides on applications for international protection, with support from and in cooperation with UNHCR.

FIGURE 14. Institutions involved in asylum and the recognition of refugee status by sector



BOX 4. Brazil's prima facie recognition of refugee status for Venezuelans

Through a resolution issued by its National Refugee Committee in 2019, Brazil has implemented a prima facie process⁷ for the recognition of refugee status for Venezuelans who entered Brazil due to the overall deterioration of circumstances in their country of origin. The resolution specifically refers to “grave, widespread human rights violations” (Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, 2019), a criterion contained in the broader definition of refugees in the Cartagena Declaration.

In 2019 alone, more than 21,000 Venezuelans benefited from the decision reached by Brazil's National Refugee Committee. This procedure means that asylum applications from Venezuelan nationals who meet the eligibility criteria were expedited, and the individual interview was waived in clearly well-founded cases.

A key aspect of this process was the interoperability of various government databases, which helped prevent errors and inconsistencies. This made it possible to identify asylum-seekers who met the established criteria, allowing decisions to be made swiftly. This improved administrative procedures and reduced the backlog of applications.

The challenge currently facing Brazil's National Refugee Committee concerns Indigenous Venezuelans, many of whom lack identity documents or passports to prove their nationality or place of residence. As a result, temporary missions have been established along the border with Venezuela to conduct simplified interviews that provide more context for assessing the specific circumstances of this group.

The prima facie procedure has been recognized by regional and international organizations as a landmark in refugee protection in LAC. The policy puts Brazil at the forefront of the humanitarian response. It promotes the socioeconomic inclusion of the Venezuelan population, thus reducing pressure on Brazil's asylum system and positively impacting protection and support systems for Venezuelans now living there.

3.4.2. Statelessness

Statelessness is a condition in which a person's nationality is not recognized by any state. This implies not just a negation of the right to nationality, but also of everything this entails in terms of identity, belonging, and access to rights and services, which has severe effects on individuals' development and their ability to contribute to society. The risk of statelessness means that individuals do not have access to the means and procedures for obtaining identity documents, such as birth certificates, that prove their nationality.

The current international legal framework covers both the definition of statelessness and states' obligations and guarantees for eradicating it. It includes the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. These instruments establish standards and procedures to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect the rights of people affected by it.

At present, 19 LAC countries are party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 16 to the 1961 Convention on the

⁷ The prima facie recognition of refugee status refers to the immediate recognition of this without the need for an full individual assessment process. It is defined in UNHCR International Protection Guideline No. 11 (2015).

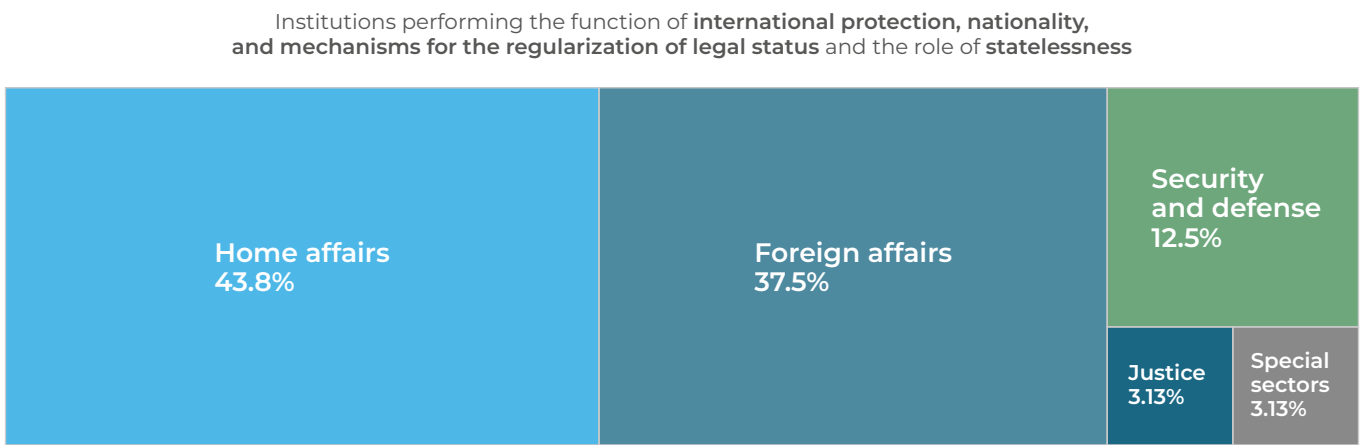
Reduction of Statelessness. Moreover, 28 countries in the region pledged to eradicate statelessness through the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action.

This study identified 32 institutions responsible for determining statelessness. As figure 15 shows, the distribution of these institutions by sector is as follows: 14 belong to the home affairs sector (43.8%), 12 to foreign affairs (37.5%), 4 to security and defense (12.5%), 1 to justice (3.13%), and 1 to special sectors (3.13%).

One significant finding is that most countries in the region (18 in total) do not have institutions

that are specifically mandated with determining statelessness or the risk of statelessness. In the Caribbean, this is true of Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago; in Central America, Belize, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala; and in South America, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela. This lack of a dedicated institution constitutes a significant opportunity for strengthening regional prevention and protection frameworks and capacities in relation to statelessness.

FIGURE 15. Institutions involved in statelessness by sector



BOX 5. Best practices for the eradication of statelessness and the risk of statelessness in Colombia

Colombia's *Primero la Niñez* [Children First] initiative was specifically designed to prevent statelessness among children born in the country to Venezuelan parents, regardless of their migration status. This measure was created through Resolution 971 of 2019, issued by the National Civil Registry Office, and applies retroactively to children born on or after 2015. It was extended in 2021 and then automatically renewed in 2023 for a further two years. In August 2025, the Colombian government approved a further extension through 2027, on the grounds that there is an ongoing risk of statelessness in the country. As of July 2025, nearly 139,000 children had obtained de facto access to Colombian nationality through this initiative.

3.4.3. Regularization of legal status

Migration regularization, the mechanism by which state authorities grant legal residence permits to foreign nationals with irregular migration status, is a key tool for promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of migrants and refugees while also generating tangible benefits for host countries. It makes it easier for individuals to exercise their fundamental human rights and ensures they have access to essential services, the formal labor market, and social protection systems. By doing so, it contributes to social cohesion and economic development.

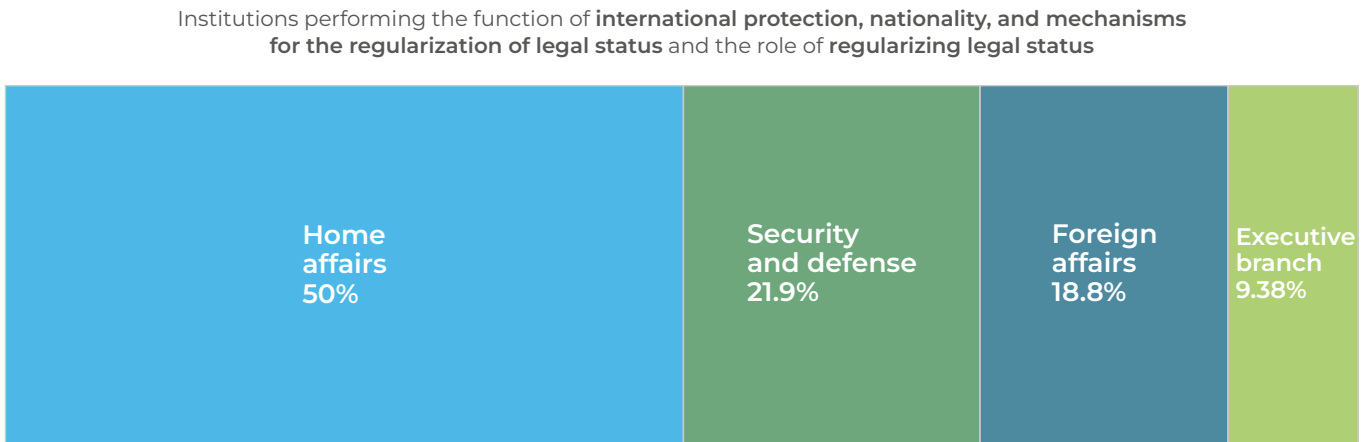
This role is particularly important in contexts of mixed and large-scale migration movements such as those observed in LAC. As a result, strengthening institutional capacities in order to manage regularization effectively has become an essential priority. Not only does this strategy enable states to uphold their international human rights commitments, it also generates positive returns by expanding the tax base, strengthening legal certainty, and promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of the migrant population.

There are 32 institutions in LAC responsible for migration regularization processes, distributed

across 23 countries. As figure 16 shows, half of these institutions belong to the home affairs sector. This role falls exclusively under this sector in 12 countries: Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In five cases—Brazil, El Salvador, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago—the security and defense sector alone is responsible for it. In two countries, Antigua and Barbuda and Colombia, the foreign affairs sector has the sole remit for migration regularization. Finally, in Guatemala, the only institution responsible for this role reports directly to the executive branch.

The diversity of institutions and agencies identified points to a growing trend toward temporary or extraordinary legal protection mechanisms that enable states to respond swiftly to high-volume migration flows. Moreover, the involvement of the home affairs and security and defense sectors suggests that these regularization programs are not exclusively administrative in nature, but also contemplate issues related to national security and migration control. This represents an opportunity for developing legal frameworks that strike a balance between the protection of migrants’ rights and orderly migration governance.

FIGURE 16. Institutions involved in the regularization of legal status by sector



BOX 6. The regularization of the Venezuelan population

Most recent regularization programs in LAC have targeted the Venezuelan population. In some cases, states have had to adapt their institutional frameworks to implement programs by assigning physical, human, and financial resources to the migration authorities responsible for regularization.

The initiatives implemented to promote the regularization of the Venezuelan population include extraordinary mechanisms to grant temporary protection (Selee et al., 2019). Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Peru have all established short- and medium-term temporary permits to regularize and integrate Venezuelan nationals into local labor markets (Acosta and Harris, 2022b). Other countries, such as Peru and Costa Rica, have implemented complementary protection mechanisms by issuing humanitarian visas to asylum-seekers. These programs have enabled applicants to certify their legal residence, thus reducing pressure on national asylum systems.

More specifically, these states are eliminating procedural and document-related requirements to foster broader access to regularization programs. This approach has included waiving the requirement for applicants to present valid passports, enabling more people to regularize their status, given how complex it currently is to renew or apply for Venezuelan passports.

Similarly, some countries have allowed applicants to access regularization programs using only their Venezuelan identity cards to prove their identity. This has benefited states by strengthening safeguards in their migration procedures and applicants by enabling them to obtain identity documents without lengthy, bureaucratic processes. As a result of these policies, large numbers of Venezuelan nationals have been able to regularize their migration status.

Another area of progress in LAC is the implementation of community-based mechanisms, such as the one established through the MERCOSUR Freedom of Movement and Residence Agreement. Argentina was one of the first countries to implement this regularization program, later complementing it in 2021 with a special program for Venezuelan children and adolescents.

3.4.4. Nationality

In most Latin American countries, people acquire nationality by being born in the national territory (*ius soli*) or by naturalization, which is available to foreign nationals who have resided in the country for a given period and meet the criteria established by local law. Unlike other migration-related procedures, which tend to be concentrated in two or three sectors of government, the institutions responsible for access to nationality vary significantly across LAC states and span a broader range of sectors.

This study identified 60 institutions involved in procedures for acquiring nationality in the region.

As [figure 17](#) shows, 18 of these are overseen by migration authorities from the home affairs sector (30%). The executive branch and the security and defense each account for 12 institutions (20%), while the foreign affairs sector is responsible for 11 (18.3%).

In other cases, this role is performed by special sectors, such as civil courts, supreme courts, or electoral courts. This is true of countries such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay, where a total of four institutions (6.67%) provide these services. Finally, naturalization processes also fall within the remit of two institutions (3.33%) from the labor sector (Dominica), and one (1.67%) from the justice sector.

FIGURE 17. Institutions involved in nationalization by sector



3.5. Practices relating to assistance to nationals living abroad and returning migrants

Most of the states analyzed in this study include institutions that provide consular services to nationals living abroad and assist and issue passports to returning migrants. This broad institutional coverage is largely explained by the high levels of emigration from LAC, which has created a need for public policies seeking to maintain ties with diaspora communities and facilitate reintegration processes. Some countries also have institutional frameworks in place to address return migration, which represents progress in specialization and the recognition of return as a distinct aspect of migration.



FIGURE 18. Institutions in LAC with a mandate for assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants, by role and sector

Institutions in LAC performing the function of assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants , and the role of consular assistance by country and sector		Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Bahamas	Barbados	Belize	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Grenada	Guatemala	Guyana	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	St. Lucia	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago	Uruguay	Venezuela
Foreign affairs		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Institutions in LAC performing the function of assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants , and the role of passport issuance by country and sector		Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Bahamas	Barbados	Belize	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Grenada	Guatemala	Guyana	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	St. Lucia	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago	Uruguay	Venezuela
Home affairs		1		2		1					1							2		1			1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1		1	1
Justice									1																								
Executive branch		1				1											1																
Foreign affairs		1	1	2		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1		1	1	1	1		2	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1
Special sector														1																			
Security and defense								1				2			1	1					1										1		

Institutions in LAC performing the function of assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants , and the role of supporting return migration by country and sector		Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Bahamas	Barbados	Belize	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Grenada	Guatemala	Guyana	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	St. Lucia	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago	Uruguay	Venezuela
Home affairs							1							1								1	1		1								
Executive branch																	1								1								
Foreign affairs		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Sector especial						1																											
Security and defense																							1										

FIGURE 19. Number of institutions in LAC with a mandate for assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants

Number of institutions in LAC performing the function of assisting nationals abroad and returning migrants , by country and role																																
	Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Bahamas	Barbados	Belize	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Grenada	Guatemala	Guyana	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	St. Lucia	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago	Uruguay	Venezuela
Consular assistance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Passport issuance	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2
Support for return migration	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1

The distribution of institutions also reveals distinct patterns depending on the role in question. As figure 19 shows, there is a clear trend toward centralization in consular assistance, as all states have assigned this role to a single institution. In contrast, passport issuance and support for return migration show more diverse institutional designs. In most countries, these responsibilities are distributed across two or three institutions.

3.5.1. Consular assistance

Consular assistance is an essential function that protects the rights and interests of a country's nationals abroad. Through their consulates and embassies, states assist their nationals abroad in a wide range of situations, from issuing documents and certifications to providing protection in cases involving arrest, trafficking, violence, or vulnerability. This function is grounded in the 1963 Vienna Convention

on Consular Relations, which recognizes states' right to assist their citizens abroad and establishes host states' obligations to facilitate consular functions. The analysis identified 32 institutions that provide consular services and assistance to nationals abroad. A distinctive feature emerges: a single sector (foreign affairs) accounts for all the institutions in question (100%). This is the only function in this study for which this is true, a situation likely explained by the inherently diplomatic and consular nature of this role.

For example, such institutions include the Consular and Diaspora Division of Barbados's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in the Caribbean; the Department of Consular and Migration Affairs within Guatemala's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Central America; and the Department of Consular Affairs within Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and Worship in South America.

FIGURE 20. Institutions involved in consular assistance by sector



3.5.2. Passport issuance

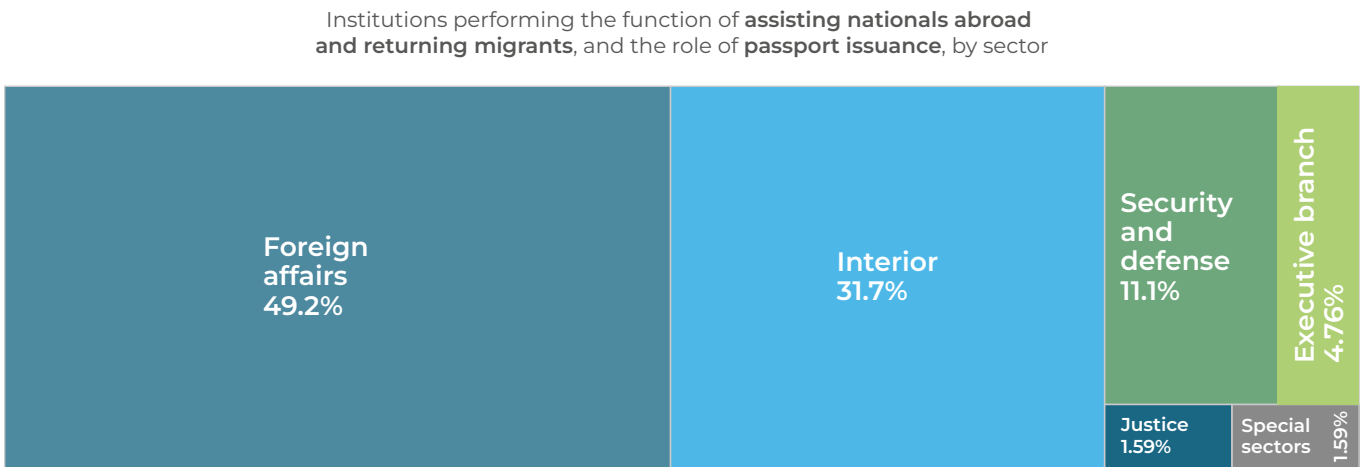
Passport issuance is fundamental for states to guarantee the identity and international mobility of their nationals. Historically, passports have been the primary document for certifying nationality and enabling lawful cross-border travel, making them a key tool for protecting rights abroad. As Torpey (2020) notes, by establishing who can cross borders and in what circumstances, passports reflect the relationship between states and individuals.

The issuance and renewal of passports, both within the national territory and at consular missions, aim to safeguard access to this right, especially for those residing abroad. In the context of large-scale migration movements and forced displacement, states need efficient, secure processes in place to reduce vulnerability and enable citizens to fully exercise their rights and obligations, even while abroad.

In all, 63 institutions are responsible for passport issuance, including those that perform this role within each country and those that do so abroad. As **figure 21** shows, the foreign affairs sector oversees 31 such institutions (49.2%), reflecting its pivotal role in passport issuance as a consular service. Likewise, 20 institutions fall under the home affairs sector (31.7%), and 7 under the security and defense sector (11.1%).

The executive branch oversees passport issuance in LAC countries: Antigua and Barbuda, through the Passport Office; Belize, where this role is overseen by the office of the Prime Minister; and Guatemala, through the Guatemalan Institute of Migration. By contrast, the involvement of the justice sector and special sectors is more limited, with only one institution in each case: Chile’s Civil Registry and Identification Service falls under the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, while Ecuador’s Department of Civil Registry, Identification, and Identity Documents performs this role within a more specialized institutional setting.

FIGURE 21. Institutions performing the role of passport issuance by sector



3.5.3. Support for return migration

Over time, states have developed institutions specializing in the design and implementation of diaspora policies and specific programs to manage the safe, voluntary return of nationals. These institutional developments acknowledge that communities abroad need policies tailored to their circumstances, along with specific institutional frameworks to guarantee their protection.

Supporting return migration is a fundamental aspect of migration governance today, one that requires comprehensive, specialized approaches that can adapt to complex, shifting migration dynamics. From a global perspective, assisting returning migrants and supporting their reintegration should be voluntary, migrant-centered, and guided by principles such as sustainability and confidentiality (IOM, 2018). Achieving this objective requires constant, effective coordination across the different national and international players involved.

All countries included in the study have established institutional arrangements to support return migration. There are 47 institutions specializing in

managing the safe return of nationals. Moreover, countries like the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, and Paraguay have developed more complex arrangements involving up to three institutions.

The distribution of these institutions by sector reveals them to be clearly concentrated in the foreign affairs sector. As [figure 22](#) shows, this sector comprises 37 institutions, representing 78.7% of the total. The home affairs sector accounts for six institutions (12.8%), while the executive branch oversees two (4.26%). One institution falls under special sectors and one under the security and defense sector, each accounting for 2.13%. This distribution reflects growing institutional specialization in response to the complexity of contemporary migration dynamics. Indeed, institutions have been established to focus exclusively on this role. These include, for instance, Colombia’s Intersectoral Committee for Return Migration, the Dominican Republic’s Institute of Dominicans Abroad, Honduras’s National Council for the Protection of Honduran Migrants, Mexico’s Interinstitutional Committee for Comprehensive Assistance for Returning Mexican Families, and Paraguay’s Secretariat of Development for Repatriated Paraguayans and Paraguayan Refugees.

FIGURE 22. Institutions involved in supporting return migration by sector



4. Distinctive Features of Migration Governance across LAC Subregions

Approaches to migration governance vary significantly across LAC subregions.

Central America and Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America each have distinct institutional arrangements and policy orientations shaped in part by the priority population groups they address. Moreover, these arrangements have been influenced by subregional treaties, agreements, and compacts discussed in this section.

This chapter identifies specific features of migration governance across the three LAC subregions. Using the Matrix of Institutional Functions and Roles, it identifies patterns regarding which government sectors are most involved, shedding light on different subregional priorities and approaches to migration governance.

4.1. The Caribbean: a diaspora-oriented approach to migration governance

The Caribbean subregion is made up of 11 countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

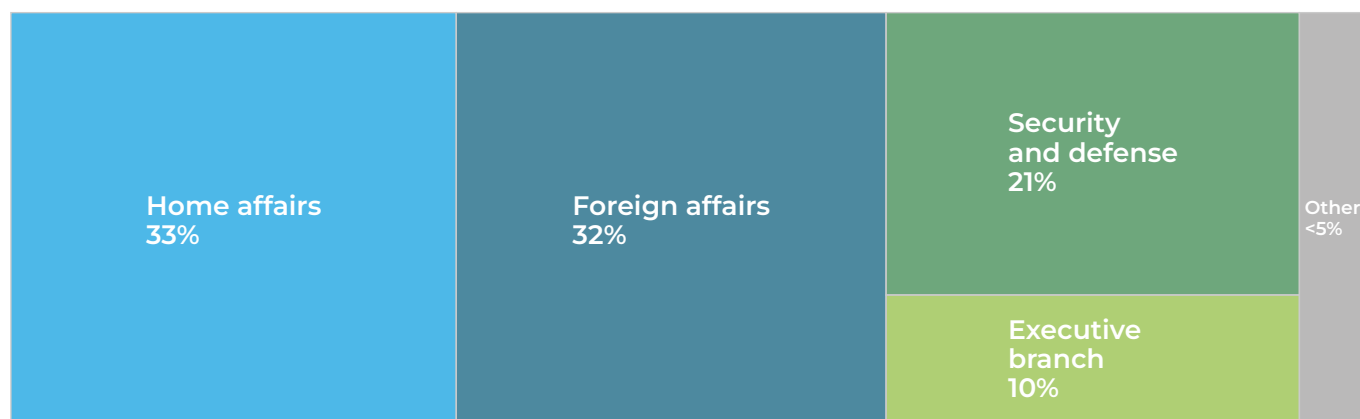
Migration governance in these countries has focused primarily on strengthening ties with diaspora communities and promoting citizenship-by-investment programs, which are run by countries including Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia. This section focuses on both of these aspects of migration governance.

Although emigration has historically been the dominant trend in the Caribbean, intraregional migration and the arrival of migrants from Venezuela have increased the complexity of the subregion's migration dynamics. This has impacted some of the smaller island states (IOM, 2023) and prompted states to rethink their migration governance arrangements and implement more comprehensive approaches.

In this regard, the IDB study *Migration, Integration and Diaspora Engagement in the Caribbean* (Lacarte et al., 2023) notes that prioritizing immigration poses significant challenges due to limited human and financial resources to address it. Despite these constraints, the Caribbean has made some progress in this area.

The institutional breakdown in [figure 23](#) shows that in the Caribbean, most migration governance institutions are concentrated in four sectors: home affairs (33%), foreign affairs (32%), security and defense (21%), and the executive branch (19%); all other sectors account for less than 5%. This distribution

FIGURE 23. Government sectors involved in migration management in the Caribbean



represents a traditional approach centering on national security considerations and diaspora-oriented migration diplomacy. This pattern is consistent with regional strategies that seek to maintain ties with Caribbean communities abroad.

4.1.1. Diasporas as drivers of development

A recent IOM report found that more than 9.8 million Caribbean migrants were living abroad in 2020. This trend owes partly to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, compounded by other impacts of climate change (IOM, 2023). These figures show that diasporas offer opportunities for development, including through remittances, business development, job creation, and the strengthening of social and professional networks (Lacarte et al., 2023). Diasporas constitute a significant force for change in the Caribbean: new skills, multiple connections and networks spanning countries of origin and destination, and knowledge development can help expand opportunities, support development, and foster the exchange of technical capacities in different geographic settings.

The importance of diasporas is reflected in various countries' institutional arrangements:

- **Barbados.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Barbados includes a Consular and Diaspora Division that is responsible not only for traditional consular functions but also for protecting nationals abroad. In this capacity, it advises the government on improving diaspora incentive programs and seeks to build sustainable networks with the Barbadian community abroad and with resettlement groups, among other functions.
- **Jamaica.** The Global Jamaica Diaspora Council has been established to lead work in this area. Its responsibilities include designing and recommending support systems and administrative initiatives to improve collaboration between Jamaicans living in the country and those living abroad.

BOX 7. Haiti: The Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad (MHAVE)

Haiti is the only country in the region with a ministry dedicated to the diaspora. The services provided by MHAVE include information, liaison, guidance, facilitation, integration, and coordination between the diaspora community and Haiti. It was created on November 8, 1994, to strengthen the role of the Haitian diaspora in the country's social and economic life. MHAVE was ratified on October 21, 2004, after previously operating within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship.

The MHAVE provides almost all Haitian state and government services for the diaspora community. Its cross-cutting mandate enables it to function as an interface between Haitians living abroad and the state. It also serves as a facilitator in cooperation efforts.

Its functions include: (i) promoting the participation and involvement of Haitians living abroad in building a stronger democracy in Haiti; (ii) participating in identifying and strengthening existing associations and organizations in Haitian communities abroad; (iii) serving as a bridge between Haitians living abroad and various national institutions; (iv) providing the necessary support to associations and organizations working to defend the rights of Haitians living abroad based in both Haiti and other countries; (v) working to eliminate all forms of discrimination against Haitians living abroad; (vi) fostering the involvement of Haitians living abroad in the country's political, economic, social, and cultural life; and (vii) helping to build ties between Haitian communities abroad and those within the country.

4.1.2. Citizenship-by-investment

Another distinctive feature of migration governance in Caribbean countries is its focus on citizenship-by-investment. This refers to a policy promoted by certain states through which individuals obtain citizenship by making significant investments in the country in question. According to Cohen (2022), in some cases, this mechanism sometimes implies a one-off payment, while in others it requires more substantial commitments.

What sets this approach apart is that it broadens the base on which citizenship is understood, moving away from a form of belonging built primarily around emotional ties. In other words, instead of obtaining citizenship through traditional means such as long-term residence in a country or family ties, this approach revolves around substantial financial investment, such as buying property, investing in local businesses, or contributing to economic development programs.

Laws and regulations on citizenship-by-investment vary significantly across countries. Some have stricter policies, while others apply loose rules. These programs have been in place for only a few years and operate in several Caribbean countries, including Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia. To support these programs, countries have created specific units within their ministries of trade or finance, as is the case in Dominica, where the unit reports directly to the executive branch.

Grenada established a citizenship-by-investment program in 2013 through the Grenada Citizenship by Investment Act, which enables foreign nationals to obtain citizenship in exchange for a significant economic contribution to a designated government fund or through significant investments in real estate projects.

4.2. Central America and Mexico: challenges in managing mixed migration movements

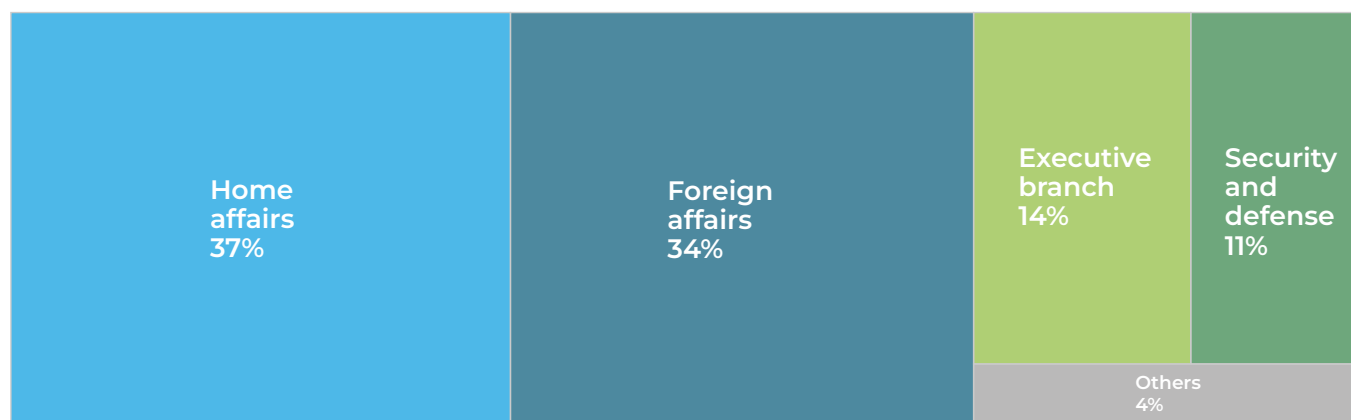
The main historical trend in Central America and Mexico has been emigration to North America. Furthermore, this subregion's geographic location has made it the world's largest migration corridor. At the same time, mixed migration movements in Central America and Mexico are constantly shifting, and some countries simultaneously experience emigration, immigration, transit, and return migration, creating a complex migration landscape that calls for multidimensional approaches to migration governance.

There are two defining features of migration governance in Central America and Mexico. The first of these is transit migration: flows to the subregion

from South America that include people of many nationalities from around the world. The second is return migration, whether voluntary or forced, which has triggered the establishment of special units within ministries of foreign affairs with a specific mandate to provide support and foster the reintegration of returning migrants.

Figure 24 shows that migration governance in Central America and Mexico is concentrated mainly in two sectors: home affairs (37%) and foreign affairs (34%). The importance of the home affairs sector suggests that migration has become a domestic policy priority, reflecting the need to manage increasingly complex mixed migration flows. At the same time, the significant presence of the foreign affairs sector speaks to the importance of international cooperation and consular services in addressing the current increase in large-scale deportations and strengthening reintegration programs for returning migrants.

FIGURE 24. Government sectors involved in migration management in Central America and Mexico



4.2.1. Transit migration and bilateral conventions

One distinctive feature of migration governance in Central America and Mexico is that it is shaped by the specific policies adopted in each country, which, in turn, influence flows between South and North America. These movements are ongoing and highly dynamic.

The most emblematic example is transit through the Darién Jungle between Colombia and Panama. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of people traveling from Colombia to Panama increased by 109%, climbing from 248,784 to 520,085, most of whom were Venezuelan, Haitian, Cuban, and Ecuadorian nationals. The trend shifted again in 2024, as transit decreased to 302,203 people.

The most dramatic decline came in 2025: between January and June, only 2,934 crossed the area, a 94% drop compared to the same period in 2024. Indeed, 2025 also saw reverse flows emerge, with people traveling from north to south across the region. Between January and June 2025, Colombia's migration authority recorded 12,347 entries from Panama through border crossings—a significant figure given that in prior years these movements were almost nonexistent.

Figure 25 shows the annual numbers of people who entered Panama from Colombia through the Darién between 2023 and July 2025. The total for 2025 (2,934) is mainly due to movements recorded in January, when 2,229 people traveled the route.

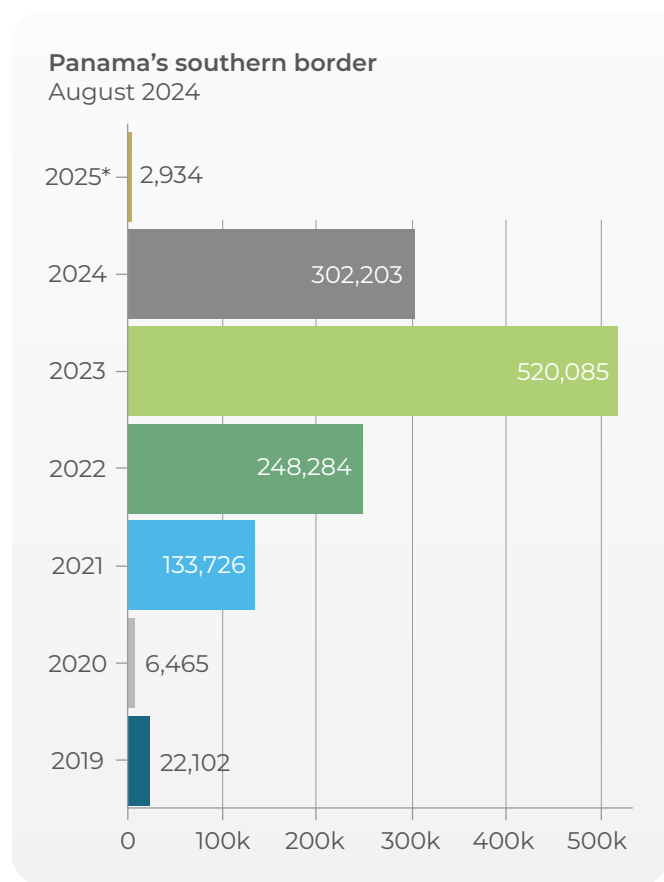
4.2.2. Managing return migration

Migration management arrangements in Central American countries have focused on facilitating the return of their nationals, whether voluntary or the result of deportation and removal. Between January 2020 and June 2025, 661,903 people returned to northern Central America from the United States and Mexico. Although the number of returning migrants fell in 2020 due to Covid-19 border closures (86,000 returns), they rose again in subsequent years. In 2024, for instance, some 123,740 people returned, representing a 44% increase on 2020.

As flows toward the United States have grown and deportations and removals at the border have increased, return migration has become a core issue on migration agendas in northern Central America, and countries have adjusted their institutional setups to better receive and support returning migrants.

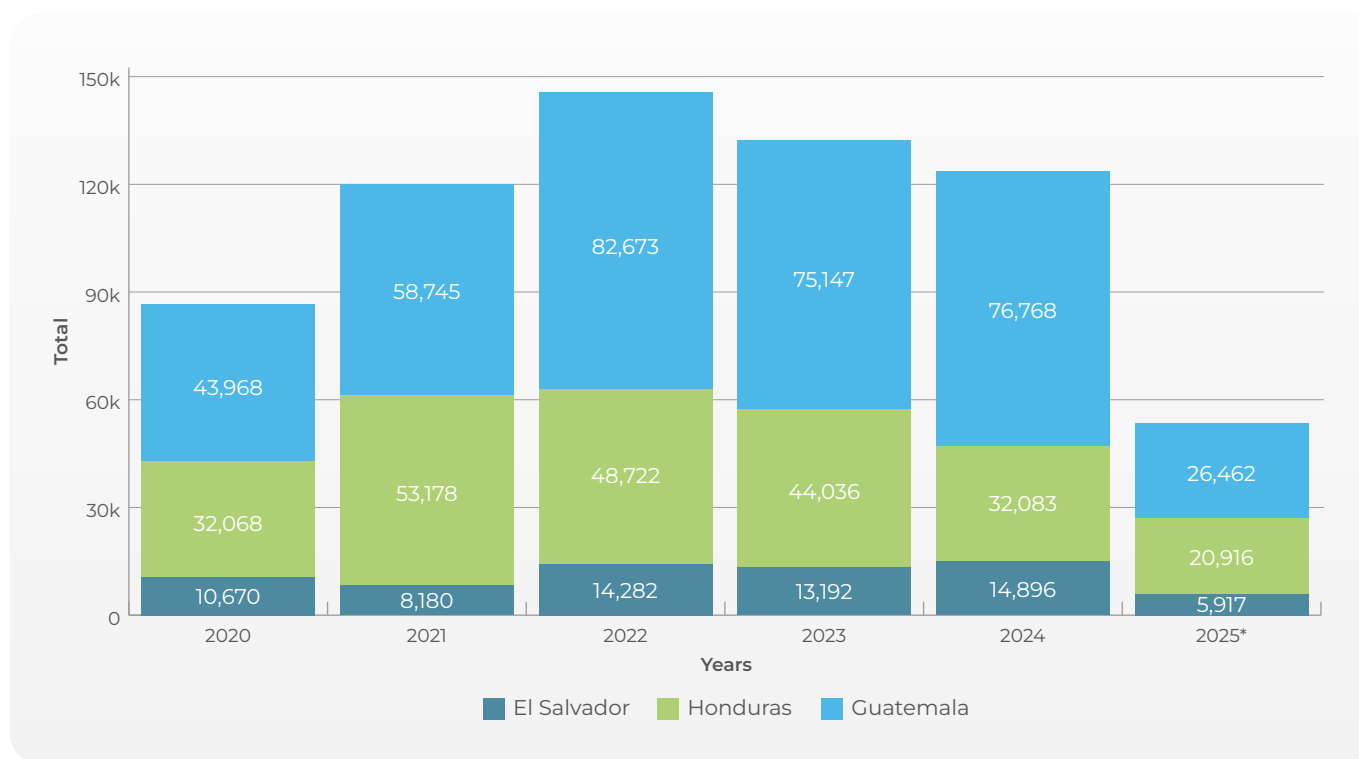
These changes became more significant in 2025 in response to ongoing return migration and changes in the returning population, rising numbers of whom have spent prolonged periods living outside their countries of origin. In Honduras, for example, between January and April 2025, the average time spent abroad prior to return increased significantly, going from 24 to 47 months among men and from 7 to 24 months among women.

FIGURE 25. Irregular transit through the Darién



Source: National Migration Service of Panama.
* Data through July 2025.

FIGURE 26. Returning migrants from northern Central America



Source: Authors based on data from Honduras's Secretariat of Social Development, El Salvador's General Migration Authority, and the Guatemalan Institute of Migration
* Data through July 2025.

BOX 8. Return migration in countries of northern Central America in 2025

The number of returning migrants dropped in 2025: between January and May, some 35,232 people returned, compared to 61,998 in the same period in 2024. This 43% decrease was mainly due to lower returns to Guatemala (59%), while returns fell by 25% in El Salvador and 11% in Honduras. In the April–June quarter, the total number of returning migrants to Honduras remained essentially unchanged (a 0.03% variation compared to the same period in 2024), while in El Salvador, there was a 20.7% decrease. Guatemala's 2025 total also remained considerably lower than in 2024 (11,609 compared to 19,929).

Figure 26 shows how reported returns to Central America from the north have evolved since 2020, including peaking at 145,677 in 2022. Since then, the number of returning migrants remained stable until 2025 when, based on data available through July, a decline emerged, mainly in Guatemala.

Central American countries have established legal frameworks to respond to increasing returns. In Guatemala, the 2016 Migration Code mandated the creation of the Guatemalan Migration System,

coordinated by the Guatemalan Institute of Migration and other agencies assisting returning migrants. In 2025, public and private organizations began offering reintegration services from the newly opened Assistance and Registration Center in Guatemala City. In Honduras, Decree 106 of 2013 established the Law for the Protection of Honduran Migrants and Their Families, creating a special department responsible for operating offices and facilities to support returning migrants. In El Salvador, the Special Law on Benefits and

Protection for the Diaspora Community and People in Movement, which was passed in 2025, strengthens interinstitutional coordination, fosters reinsertion into the labor market, and introduces financial support to facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants.

In addition to these legal frameworks, all three countries have developed programs targeting returning migrants, in coordination with the institutions responsible for promoting social and economic integration. In Honduras, a program called *Hermana, hermano, vuelve a casa* [Brother, sister, come home] includes a cash benefit to help cover returning migrants' travel costs to their places of origin and a large-scale job creation plan, alongside improved consular support. That same month, Guatemala launched its *Retorno al Hogar* [Come Home] program, which provides temporary shelters in strategic locations and promotes economic

reintegration through coordinated work with the private sector and social organizations. El Salvador's National Reintegration Plan for 2025–2029 includes 41 activities and 52 performance indicators. It promotes interinstitutional coordination, provides immediate support services, and includes data management systems to foster evidence-based decision-making.

The subregion also includes examples of best practices around return migration. Since 2021, Mexico has implemented reintegration strategies following the creation of an interinstitutional working group to provide comprehensive assistance to returning Mexican families. More recently, in 2025, the country launched the *México te abraza* [Mexico welcomes you with open arms] strategy, which includes measures to facilitate the reception and reintegration of returning migrants (see box 9).

BOX 9. The *México te abraza* program for returning migrants

México te abraza [Mexico welcomes you with open arms] was created in January 2025 to support Mexicans returning to the country. It articulates interinstitutional initiatives between the federal government and state governments to facilitate the reintegration of this population into their communities of origin. The program involves 34 federal agencies spanning finance, education, health, labor, and local development.

It is coordinated by the Ministry of Government and includes specific measures such as the enrollment of returning migrants in the Mexican Social Security Institute's mandatory contribution scheme, registration with the National Employment Service, cash transfers of MXN2,000 (approximately US\$120) to cover transportation costs, and the establishment of ten assistance centers in municipalities close to the main repatriation points (Government of Mexico).

4.3. South America: New institutional dynamics for receiving migrants

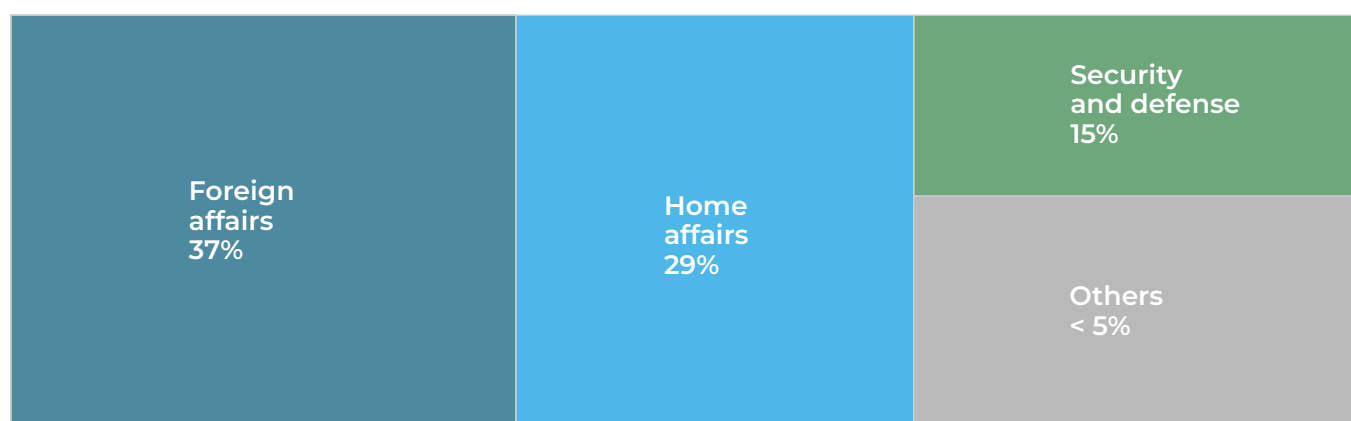
Migration from Haiti and Venezuela explains much of the increase in intraregional flows in South America over the last ten years. Regional migration governance initiatives have emerged in response to emigration from Venezuela (Acosta, Blouin, and Freier, 2019). Migration laws have been enacted and reformed in these countries in response to this situation, and the institutional architecture for migration management has also been modified in some cases. Countries like Colombia have established new units for migration management, including the Migration Colombia Special Administrative Unit, while Chile and Peru have established the National Migration Service and the National Migration Authority, respectively.

Like in Central America and Mexico, the institutions responsible for migration governance in South America are mainly concentrated in two sectors: foreign affairs (37%) and home affairs (29%), as figure 27 shows. In contrast, security and defense and other sectors account for less than 5% of total institutions, indicating lower involvement in migration management.

In this regard, the distribution of institutions across sectors in South America reflects how regional governance has shifted over the last decade in response to the increase in migration flows. The predominance of the foreign affairs sector owes to the creation of new government bodies, such as vice ministries of migration, consular authorities, human rights departments, and offices providing services to nationals living abroad. At the same time, the significant presence of the home affairs sector is evidence of ongoing approaches centering on the regulation and control of migration. This underlines the need to move toward frameworks that combine efficient border management with the protection of the migrant population's human rights.



FIGURE 27. Government sectors involved in migration management in South America



4.3.1. Responses to migration from Venezuela

The increase in migrant numbers from Venezuela, which now stand at over 7.7 million in South America,⁸ has prompted the creation of forums such as the Quito Process, which is discussed in greater detail in the [annex](#) to this report.

Similarly, the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) was created in 2018 at the instruction of the UN Secretary-General, and is jointly led by UNHCR and the IOM. Its function is to coordinate responses to the current wave of migration from Venezuela across 17 countries in the region. This initiative seeks to guarantee migrants' rights by delivering services in nine areas: education, food security, health, humanitarian transportation, integration, nutrition, protection (including legal protection), accommodation, and water and sanitation.

R4V operates through subregional and local platforms under a Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants. This plan is designed annually and establishes actions and budget targets to guarantee support for, assistance to, and the inclusion of the Venezuelan population.

In addition to these regional forums, individual South American states have adapted their legal frameworks by incorporating extraordinary mechanisms that include a variety of temporary and complementary protection arrangements to regularize the migration status of the Venezuelan population, ranging from temporary permits to humanitarian visas. These schemes have incentivized the creation and adaptation of service-delivery and inclusion mechanisms targeting the migrant and refugee populations in some countries, as is discussed in depth in section 3.4.3 above.

4.2.2. Reforms in migration governance institutions

Some states in the region have modified their migration laws and institutional frameworks in the last ten years to strengthen their migration governance bodies. Chile, Colombia, and Peru are notable examples in this regard.

→ **Chile.** The Migration and Alien Affairs Law (Law 21325 of 2021) mandated the creation of the National Migration Service. Article 156 of the law establishes that this will be an autonomous migration management agency operating within the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Security and that it will take on the functions of the Migration Department and the Investigative Police in relation to migration control and alien affairs.

Likewise, article 159 establishes the Migration Policy Council, a cross-sectoral agency whose role is to provide guidance to the Chilean president regarding the design and updating of national policies on migration and alien affairs in response to changing dynamics in the country. The Migration Policy Council is overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Security and also includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Treasury, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Development and the Family, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. The council also stipulates that more representative municipal associations and other state departments should participate in these processes, as appropriate.⁹

→ **Colombia.** After 48 years in which the functions of migration control and alien affairs were overseen in Colombia by the Administrative Security Department, the president of the republic, exercising extraordinary powers granted by Congress, issued Decree Law 4062 mandating the creation of the Migration Colombia Special Administrative Unit. Migration Colombia is a national-level authority with a mandate for migration control and alien affairs, operating within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁸ R4V, Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>.

⁹ In July 2023, the Chilean state adopted a migration policy in alignment with the instruments and structure discussed in this section.

The country's coordination bodies include the National Migration System, established through Law 1465 of 2011 and amended by Law 2136 of 2021. This mechanism brings together government institutions and civil society organizations to coordinate the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the country's Comprehensive Migration Policy. The National Migration System is made up of the National Cross-Sectoral Migration Committee, created in 2003 (Cancillería de Colombia, 2024), the Second Committees of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, and the National Civil Society Working Group on Migration, which includes representatives from the private sector, NGOs, Colombian organizations working abroad, and academic establishments.

→ **Peru.** In 2012, Legislative Decree 1130 mandated the creation of the National Migration Authority, which operates within the Ministry of Home Affairs. This agency is responsible for migration control in Peru, the issuance of travel documents, and the processing of applications for Peruvian nationality. Its strategic objectives are set out in the 2022–2026 Strategic Institutional Plan (Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones de Perú, 2022) and seek to implement initiatives and strengthen the quality of migration services provided to both Peruvian and foreign nationals. The plan also establishes three strategic actions designed to improve these services: (i) automated migration services for Peruvian and foreign nationals; (ii) administrative procedures and services for foreign nationals using digital case files; and (iii) the issuance of travel and identity documents for Peruvian and foreign nationals.

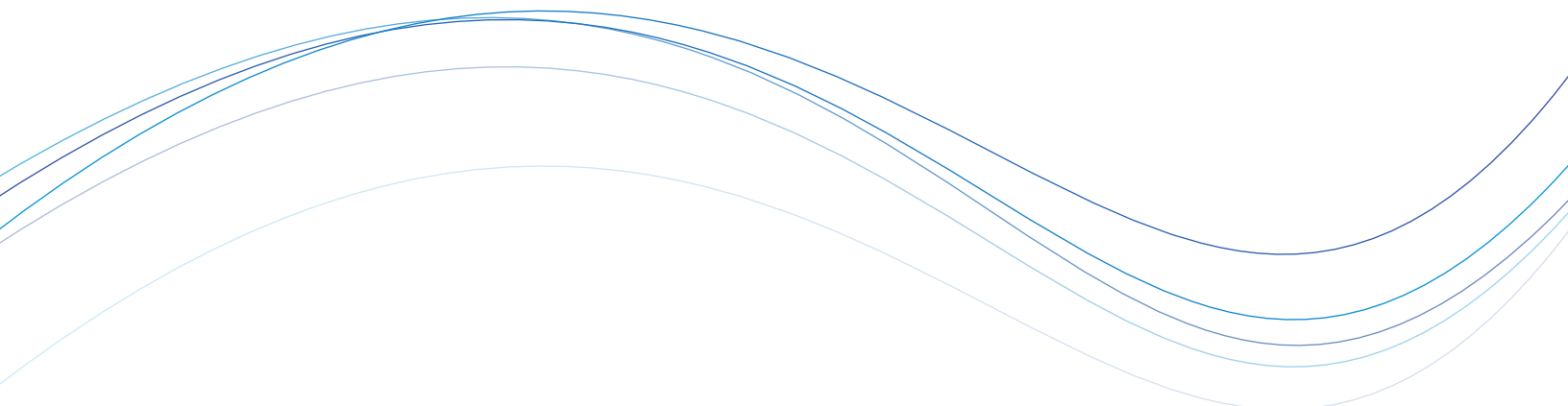
The government departments involved include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which oversees the initiative, the Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women, and the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Production, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Health; the Presidency of the Council of Ministers; the National Tax Administration Authority; the Pension Standardization Office; the Banking, Insurance, and Private Pension Fund Administrators Authority; the National Penitentiary Institute; the Public Prosecutor's Office; the Social Health Insurance system; the Comprehensive Health Insurance system; the MIVIVIENDA housing fund; and the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. The Ombud's Office and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress of the Republic participate as permanent observers.

Peru's coordination efforts include the Cross-Sectoral Working Group for Migration Management, established by Supreme Decree 067 of 2011, which operates under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The group's main function is to coordinate, evaluate, and oversee comprehensive migration management activities. It comprises 23 government sectors, 3 observer bodies, 4 UN agencies, and the 14 civil society organizations mentioned in the previous paragraph.

BOX 10. Climate change: an emerging issue in migration governance

Responding to migration caused by climate change is an emerging issue affecting the Caribbean and Central America and Mexico. The protection-related challenges it poses are not yet reflected in migration governance institutions. However, some regulatory frameworks now contemplate the issuance of special visas in contexts of natural disasters and climate change. These timely, innovative initiatives require migration authorities and institutions to expand the scope of their services. This is particularly true of institutions involved in border migration control and international protection, nationality, and mechanisms for the regularization of legal status.

One of the outstanding obstacles to ensuring more effective protection is establishing a legal regime that protects the rights of people displaced by climate change across international borders (UN, 2022a). Although there is growing evidence of an increase in migration flows driven by environmental change in their surroundings (Muñoz-Pogossian and Chaves-González, 2021), there are no regulatory frameworks to protect the rights of this population. The region has an opportunity to start working in this direction. In this regard, the IA Court and the International Court of Justice have laid important groundwork through the advisory opinions issued in 2025 that recognize states' binding international obligations in relation to climate change. These include specific duties relating to mitigation, adaptation, and international cooperation that could guide the creation of protection schemes targeting climate migrants.



Conclusions

The analysis of the 32 states covered in this study, and the specific patterns observed in the 3 subregions discussed, have made it possible to identify distinctive features of migration dynamics in LAC and the repercussions of both asylum claims and reception processes. The study has also identified public policies that take similar approaches to migration management.

Over the past decade, new legal frameworks and ad hoc processes have emerged that, along with states' participation in forums and mechanisms for dialogue, have had a significant, positive impact on migration governance at the regional, subregional, and national levels.

In all LAC subregions, the keys to effective migration management include coordination across cooperation mechanisms, effective follow-up, and the implementation of guidelines and recommendations.

Notable advances include the Brazil Plan of Action, adopted through the 2014 Brazil Declaration, which reflects an understanding of migration as an integral part of the development process. Another example is the Quito Process, a forum that has continued to draw attention to the current wave of migration from Venezuela while promoting regularization, temporary protection, economic integration, and family reunification for this population.

Another important example is the institutional framework of MERCOSUR, which has helped strengthen member countries' refugee reception processes by supporting their national refugee committees, thus enabling them to adopt a more comprehensive approach.

The RCM and the SACM have facilitated dialogue and the forging of alliances to encourage the consideration of transit migration, destination countries, and key procedures such as border migration control and labor migration. Their recommendations and technical guidance have emphasized actions needed to protect children.

The more recent emergence of the MIRPS has supported innovation in regional collaboration and a more balanced sharing of responsibilities among states in each subregion. It has also enabled partners from outside LAC to contribute to the design and implementation of lasting solutions.

At the national level, the study found a clear trend toward the creation and reform of migration management institutions. In parallel, recent developments in multilateral migration governance have included innovative mechanisms and spaces for dialogue, underlining the trend toward a collaborative approach driven by different international conferences or organizations.

Approaches to institutional design vary across countries. Some countries have positioned their migration management initiatives within the spheres of defense or security, reflecting different attitudes on the spectrum between openness and receptivity and closure and restriction toward migrants or refugees, depending on the specific functions assigned to their migration institutions. Other countries have concentrated a large number of functions in specific migration authorities within the home affairs sector. The core functions of these include coordination, smooth communication, and the capacity to adapt to shifting migration dynamics. However, these arrangements would

still benefit from greater stability across changes in government administrations.

In some Caribbean countries, the offices of the president or vice president play an important role in migration management, creating a more direct chain of authority and framing migration as a matter of national sovereignty or, in many cases, as a way to promote foreign investment.

The proactive approaches and best practices implemented by many governments in relation to diaspora communities merit special attention. These include cultural initiatives and efforts to attract investment in the form of both financial and human capital from nationals living abroad, such as return migration programs with a focus on labor promotion. In some countries, this has required building strategic partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations in which the foreign affairs sector plays a fundamental role. The diversity of approaches LAC states have taken to migration governance is reflected in disparate outcomes in terms of institutional development and improvements in procedures—such as faster regularization processes, document issuance, and expedited interviews, among others—and the adaptation of state institutions to respond to specific objectives such as supporting return migration, integration, or humanitarian response—such as in the case of migration from Venezuela.

One common finding is that while the report highlights a wide range of institutional responses, the duplication of functions or overlapping mandates continues to be an issue in some agencies and areas of migration management.

This may undermine efficiency across migration governance objectives, from policy coordination and implementation to the allocation of resources needed to deliver results. Overall, the analysis confirms that migration management is a complex, continuously evolving field, while underlining the ongoing need for adaptation and collaboration.

Looking at developments in migration governance over the last decade makes it clear that joint work and collaboration across countries as well as between these and institutions and spaces for dialogue and integration has helped consolidate good practices and concrete actions. These were initially driven by a handful of states and later replicated or adapted in other subregions.

Over the past decade, changes in political leadership have caused different migration management models to rise to prominence, including the securitization model (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998; Ibrahim, 2005), the shared development model, and the human development model (Delgado-Wise and Márquez-Covarrubias, 2009). Nevertheless, there is a clear trend toward states adopting or redesigning their legal and institutional frameworks. These frameworks seek to balance security interests and control with the protection of migrants' human rights. In LAC, migrants are viewed not only as beneficiaries of inclusive policies but also as drivers of development (Faist, 2008), given their significant potential to contribute to progress and prosperity. This approach, together with the implementation of extraordinary programs to promote and facilitate the regularization of migration status, sets LAC's migration governance paradigm apart, positioning it as a global model of best practices.

Recommendations to States

The current context in LAC is marked by a variety of complex migration dynamics that require sound institutional responses tailored to each country's specific circumstances, to avoid reactive approaches that are activated only when large-scale migration flows occur. This study describes and analyzes the region's institutional architecture for migration to identify opportunities and challenges in migration governance and institutional performance. Rather than proposing a specific model or prescriptive reforms, the recommendations set out in this section seek to open up spaces for dialogue and shared reflection on the current state of migration-related institutions in the region with a view to continuing progress toward more transparent, rights-oriented systems that are sensitive to the needs of both migrants and host communities.

1. Recognize the different contexts and priorities of each subregion to strengthen migration policies and ensure initiatives align with these contexts. In the Caribbean, this work could include strengthening diaspora engagement strategies and periodically reviewing citizenship-by-investment programs. In Central America and Mexico, a core priority is continuing to build capacity to manage transit and return migration procedures. In South America, there is scope to consolidate existing policies in a way that responds more effectively to the needs for legal protection arising from intraregional flows and large-scale displacement.

2. Recognize the opportunities and advantages offered by intergovernmental platforms and forums for migration management, with a view to generating synergies between states and advancing a regional migration management model. These spaces create favorable conditions for developing and improving joint actions, while encouraging sustained engagement through active participation and follow-up on agreements, collective commitments, and recommendations.

3. Promote coordination and alignment among the different regional and subregional consultative processes working on migration management. These spaces and forums provide valuable opportunities for sharing best practices and experiences that contribute to improving migration management.

4. Strengthen the national refugee committees operating in most LAC countries by increasing financial, human, and technical resources to improve procedures for determining refugee status and ensuring these are efficient, timely, and in alignment with international standards. Another essential task is consolidating regulatory and procedural mechanisms to address cases of statelessness and risk of statelessness more effectively.

5. **Promote the inclusion of transparency and accountability mechanisms in migration policy.** This includes optimizing migration governance information systems to ensure public data is disaggregated and up-to-date. This would enable stronger monitoring and interinstitutional oversight, while safeguarding rights relating to identity protection and the appropriate use of personal data.
6. **Promote comprehensive migration policy frameworks that balance state management objectives**—including security concerns—with the promotion and protection of migrants' human rights. Future research should analyze the impact of assigning migration policy to given ministries or sectors, since placing this mandate under home affairs may lead countries to adopt security-focused responses.
7. **Strengthen interinstitutional coordination mechanisms to ensure that the mandates and responsibilities of each institution involved in migration management are clearly defined.** Doing so can prevent overlapping functions, make legal and operational frameworks more consistent, and improve the efficiency of service delivery and support programs for the migrant population, in line with a collaborative, people-centered approach to governance.
8. **Include an intersectional approach in the design and implementation of migration policies, acknowledging that migration has particular effects on people in vulnerable circumstances.** This might include creating specialized agencies and adopting procedures in key areas such as gender, child protection, and access to social rights like health, education, and employment, in order to respond to these needs more effectively.

Annex. International Organizations Supporting the Development of Migration Governance and Institutional Frameworks in Latin America and the Caribbean

1. UN bodies supporting the development of migration governance and institutional frameworks

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Founded in 1951 as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe, the IOM has expanded its mandate over time. Now an intergovernmental agency within the UN System, it is an international leader on migration issues.

The IOM was created to address the need for effective management of migration flows after World War II, particularly in relation to the resettlement of displaced persons. Today, its core mission is to support the orderly and humane management of migration, promote international cooperation

on migration, help develop practical solutions to migration issues, and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons.¹⁰

The UN Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established by the United Nations General Assembly on December 14, 1950, with a mandate to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees worldwide.

Its main function is to promote solutions that enable refugees, displaced persons, and stateless people to build stable living conditions and plan for the future by providing access to opportunities such as education, integration, and livelihoods wherever they choose to make their home. UNHCR works with governments and other organizations to shape public policies and long-term initiatives.

¹⁰ IOM, Our Work, <https://lac.iom.int/en/our-work>.

2. Multilateral bodies focusing on migration-related affairs

OAS Committee on Migration Affairs (CAM)

The CAM was established by the OAS General Assembly through Resolution AG/RES. 2738 of June 4, 2012, as a permanent commission of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), with a mandate to strengthen the OAS's work on migration issues.

The CAM is the OAS's main forum for addressing migration issues in the Americas, taking into account the different dynamics across the entire migration cycle and the situation throughout the region and taking a human rights- and gender-based perspective. In this context, CAM promotes dialogue and the exchange of experiences and lessons learned by OAS member states on the effective management of migration flows. It also helps identify areas for cooperation and joint action to maximize the benefits of migration while addressing related challenges.

As part of its work, CAM promotes initiatives to strengthen subregional consultative processes on migration. The OAS Department of Access to Rights serves as the OAS's technical secretariat, facilitating technical sessions and advising states on these matters. The CAM's work also informs the commitments that member states include in the OAS General Assembly Resolution on Integral Development, which contains a specific section on promoting and protecting migrants' human rights. More broadly, the OAS Department of Access to Rights promotes political dialogue and regional cooperation and provides technical assistance to member states to strengthen their capacities on migration and international protection.

3. Regional integration processes with a focus on migration management

Andean Community

The regional integration initiative, now known as the Andean Community, was established in 1969 to promote cooperation and integration among member states. One of the core features of the Andean Community is the free movement of people and the mutual recognition of national identity documents among member states.

The Andean Community's strategic agenda includes physical integration and border development. A key aspect of this objective is promoting the construction of Binational Border Management Centers and the implementation of integrated border control strategies.

In 2021, the Andean Community adopted the Andean Migration Statute, marking a major step toward harmonizing migration policies in the region. This statute enables citizens of member states to obtain a two-year temporary residence permit and an indefinite permanent residence permit in other member states. This measure not only seeks to strengthen regional integration but also to provide greater guarantees and opportunities to citizens of the countries that make up the bloc: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

CARICOM promotes the free movement of citizens of its member states within its borders to foster labor and economic mobility and strengthen cooperation through specific agreements. It also facilitates the granting of work permits to foster regional integration.

In early 2023, the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and their CARICOM counterparts agreed on actions under a joint strategy to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling through a biregional operation known as CARISICA, within the framework of the SICA/CARICOM Action Plan. This work was entrusted to law enforcement officials across the police, prosecution services, migration authorities, intelligence services, and armed forces.

In a more recent initiative, CARICOM's incoming chair announced plans for a freedom-of-movement agreement to be implemented in 2024. This underlines CARICOM's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and facilitating mobility among its member states.

CARICOM is made up of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

MERCOSUR

Since its establishment in 1991, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) has played a fundamental role in migration management by promoting the free movement of people across its member states and allowing citizens to cross these borders using national identity documents. To further strengthen regional cooperation, MERCOSUR has adopted a residence agreement that allows nationals of member countries to reside in other member countries for up to two years.

As part of its migration and human rights agenda, the first meeting of the MERCOSUR High Authorities on Human Rights, held in 2005, approved the Niño@ Sur Initiative. Its main objective was to coordinate national efforts and promote regional agreements to support compliance with international human rights instruments for children and adolescents. The initiative also includes a dedicated forum to address the issue of unaccompanied minors and the cross-border movement of adolescents.

MERCOSUR is made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Venezuela joined the bloc in 2012 but was then suspended from it in 2016.

Pacific Alliance

The Pacific Alliance is another important regional cooperation initiative that promotes and facilitates freedom of movement by allowing citizens of member countries to travel within their borders using their national identity documents. The Pacific Alliance has introduced visa facilitation measures for young people participating in working-holiday programs. One of its main achievements is the

launch of a student and academic mobility platform, which promotes the development of human capital through scholarships for students from its four member countries: Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

Forum for the Progress and Development of South America (PROSUR)

PROSUR is a regional integration forum that has launched several initiatives to strengthen migration governance in South America. One key initiative is the Transit of Persons Working Group, which establishes health-related requirements and documentation to facilitate the movement of citizens of member countries.

The working group plays a critical role by setting health rules and protocols that enable more efficient, coordinated management of migration flows across the region. Its work goes beyond human movement, and includes a focus on sharing regulatory and border-related information, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to South American countries.

PROSUR's member states are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, and Suriname.

Central American Integration System (SICA)

SICA is a regional integration mechanism whose core objective is to promote the development of Central American countries across five areas: (i) democratic security, (ii) climate change and comprehensive risk management, (iii) social integration, (iv) economic integration, and (v) institutional strengthening.

This multidimensional approach seeks to address the complex dynamics of Central America.

One of SICA's most important programs is *Alternativas* [Alternatives], which implements concrete actions to support the integration and reintegration of children and adolescents at risk of migrating irregularly within Central America. This initiative is an essential tool for addressing the key drivers of forced migration by promoting viable and sustainable alternatives.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, SICA also implemented initiatives relating to the cross-border movement of people and public health controls. These were extremely successful, helping to keep cross-border movement open while protecting public health.

SICA's member states are Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

4. Specific mechanisms for managing migration and forced displacement

Quito Process

The Quito Process was launched in 2018 in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis. Its main objective is to strengthen regional coordination so that countries can respond jointly to mixed movements originating from Venezuela. The Quito Process has enabled member countries to develop collaborative strategies to address the humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges associated with these movements.

The Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region urges countries, among other measures, “to strengthen reception policies for Venezuelan migrants; coordinate efforts through international organizations; combat discrimination, intolerance, and xenophobia; strengthen legal frameworks to promote and

uphold migrants' rights; and reinforce the role of the Andean Community and MERCOSUR in addressing the movement of Venezuelan nationals in a comprehensive and coordinated manner” (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones de Paraguay, 2023). The IOM and UNHCR serve as the technical secretariat to the Quito Process.

Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V)

The R4V Platform was established in 2018 to coordinate response efforts across 17 LAC countries to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.¹¹ It brings together more than 200 organizations, including UN agencies, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, and NGOs, which coordinate their actions through the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Venezuela. R4V is complemented at the national and subregional levels by local coordination mechanisms.



¹¹ These countries are: Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

5. Ad hoc mechanisms that address subregional situations of migration and forced displacement

Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)

Also known as the Puebla Process, the RCM was created in 1996 with the main objective of promoting regional efforts to strengthen effective migration governance and protect the human rights of people in movement, particularly those in situations of heightened vulnerability, such as women and girls, promoting a paradigm of safe, orderly, and regular migration.

The RCM's member states are: Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the United States. The IOM serves as the RCM's technical secretariat.

The RCM engages with the SACM to promote the discussion of regional migration issues and to exchange information and experiences. This collaboration fosters greater coordination and cooperation across the region and encourages the development of migration legislation that addresses current challenges and strengthens the link between migration and development.

South American Conference on Migration (SACM)

The SACM plays an essential role as a subregional forum for dialogue on migration. It promotes an understanding of migration as a social phenomenon and as a factor that can contribute to the development of both origin and destination countries. Its agenda and spheres of action include identifying and promoting practices that strengthen positive links between migration and economic and social development; engaging with diasporas; defending and protecting migrants' rights; and sharing migration statistics and best practices, a role carried out by the South American Observatory on Migration. The IOM serves as the SACM's technical secretariat.

The SACM and RCM work together to promote the discussion of regional migration issues and to exchange information and experiences. This collaboration favors greater coordination and cooperation across the region and encourages the development of migration legislation that responds to current challenges and strengthens the link between migration and development.

Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)

In 2017, Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama adopted the San Pedro Sula Declaration as a contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees. Through this declaration, they agreed to work jointly to implement the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) to address forced displacement challenges in the region. El Salvador joined the initiative in 2019. MIRPS is a mechanism led by these states to foster regional cooperation among origin, transit, and destination countries. It promotes shared responsibility for prevention, protection, and the provision of durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and returning migrants with protection needs. It also constitutes a concrete application in the Americas of the Global Compact on Refugees and of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework established under the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

Under MIRPS, regional and national actions are organized around four main objectives: (i) strengthening asylum systems and improving mechanisms for receiving and processing applications for refugee status; (ii) responding to the immediate humanitarian and protection needs of displaced persons; (iii) supporting host countries and communities; and (iv) expanding access to lasting solutions for displaced persons.

This regional mechanism includes a Support Platform composed of cooperating states and regional and international organizations, including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Spain, France, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the United States, with Italy and the Holy See participating as observers.

Organizations such as the European Union, ECLAC, the IDB, the World Bank, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) are also involved. MIRPS has also established mechanisms for dialogue with civil society, the private sector, and academic establishments. Its work is coordinated by a pro tempore presidency that rotates alphabetically among member states. MIRPS's Technical Secretariat is jointly led by UNHCR and the OAS General Secretariat through its Department of Access to Rights, all of which contribute through their respective areas of work.

6. Declaration-based collaboration mechanisms

Cartagena Process

The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees was signed in 1984 to provide an innovative, flexible framework for strategically responding to the legal and humanitarian challenges facing LAC regarding international protection. In particular, it recommended adopting an expanded definition of “refugee” to extend protection to people forced to flee under circumstances beyond those covered by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The adoption of the Cartagena Declaration gave rise to the Cartagena Process, a pioneering model of regional cooperation and shared responsibility

focused on advancing solutions. Through this process, the region has adopted ten-year action plans since 2004, including the Mexico Plan of Action (2004) and the Brazil Plan of Action (2014).

In 2024, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration, the Cartagena+40 Process was launched, through which LAC countries will work jointly toward a new regional strategic framework: the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024–2034.

Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection

The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection was launched at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, California, in June 2022. It seeks to mobilize countries in the Americas to work collaboratively to protect the dignity, lives, and human rights of all migrants, regardless of migration status. The Los Angeles Declaration is structured around four main pillars: (i) stability and assistance for communities, (ii) expansion of legal pathways, (iii) humane migration management, and (iv) coordinated emergency response.

To date, the declaration has been endorsed by Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, the United States, and Uruguay.

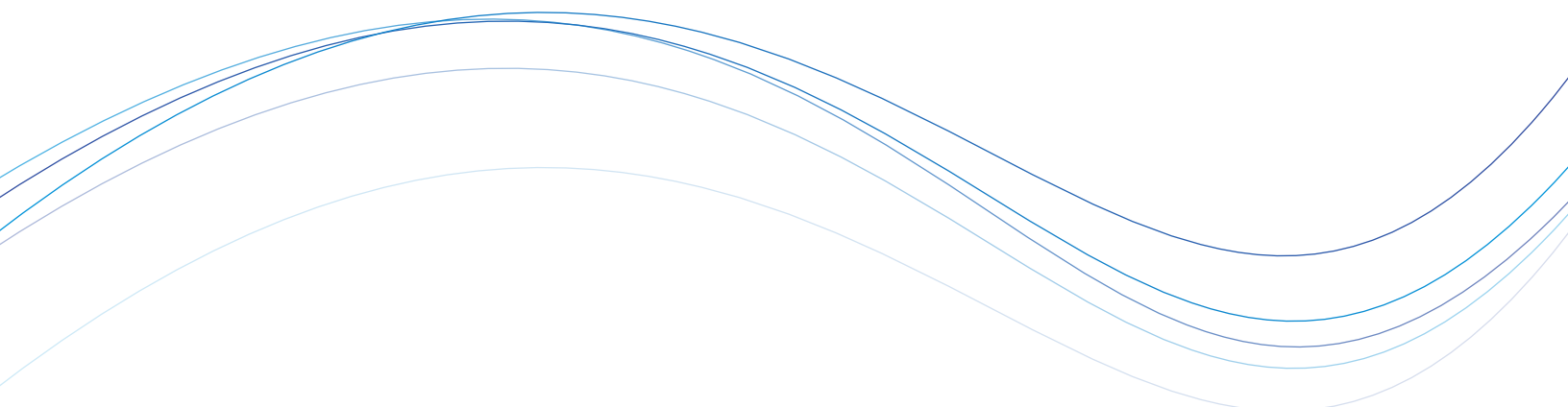
7. Migration-related cooperation schemes between LAC and other regions

Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities (RIAM)

The RIAM was created to consolidate an Ibero-American strategy for cooperation among migration authorities. It serves as a mechanism for exchanging information, experiences, and good practices, and for coordinating specialized technical support across countries. It is made up of 20 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. It also includes seven observer states, six of which are associate members: Andorra, Australia, Canada, China–Hong Kong SAR, Cuba, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The RIAM's specific objectives are to: (i) strengthen technical cooperation on migration; (ii) consolidate mechanisms for information-sharing; (iii) provide training for officials in migration control; and (iv) institutionalize the operational management of migration processes in its member countries. It is grounded in institutional synergies and operates as an informal, nonbinding mechanism.

The RIAM was among the first networks to incorporate forced displacement linked to environmental factors into its agenda. Its shared agenda with other institutions includes a focus on combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking, as well as on preventing and detecting fraudulent identity documents. The IOM serves as its technical secretariat.



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