

Violence, legal status and the limbo of forced migration

Findings of the study “Comparing the life strategies of forced migrants in Colombia, Jordan, Mexico, and Turkey as transit countries (Formove-II)”

Seminar “The Journey of Legal Status: Pathways Toward Citizenship”

1. Research design of the Formove-II project
2. Forced migration encompasses more than just asylum seekers
3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey
4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

1. Research design of the Formove-II project

Stay, return, or move on

Comparing the life strategies of forced migrants in
Colombia, Jordan, Mexico, and Turkey as transit countries (Formove-II)

Research project

funded by German Research Foundation DFG; Ludger Pries/RUB and Stephanie Schütze/FU Berlin as project directors; Dec. 2022 to Dec. 2025.

<https://www.migration-violence.org/>

Team

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Project partners

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Jordan: Christine Huth-Hildebrandt; Bader Madi/German Jordanian University

Mexico: Oscar Calderón Morillon/Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Türkiye: M.Murat Erdoğan/IGAM; Nihal Eminoğlu/Ankara University

1. Research design of the Formove-II project

Data gathering with local teams in 4 countries of transit and six countries of origin:

- **Survey with standardized questionnaire:** 1,200 (4x300) with migration history
- **Autobiographical narrative interviews:** 73
- **Expert interviews and field work:** some 50 interviews

Qualitative analysis of autobiographical narratives:

- 1. Analysis of experienced and narrated migration history**
- 2. Analysis of migration course based on VESPER dimensions**
- 3. Analysis of degree and type of agency, critical junctures**
- 4. Reconstructing sequences of REMOST**

Quantitative analysis of survey data:

- 1. Factor and cluster analysis of REMOST types and VESPER types**
- 2. Calculating associations and regressions of REMOST types with VESPER types comparing macro and micro contexts**

Analysis of macro- and micro-contexts by secondary data, expert interviews and ethnographic fieldwork

1. Research design of the Formove-II project

Overview of basic indicators: four countries of current stay

Country		Colombia	Mexico	Jordan	Türkiye
Population 2024		52.89 Mio.	130.86 Mio.	11.55 Mio.	85.52 Mio.
HDI 2023		0.788	0.789	0.754	0.853
Gini-Index 2023		53.9	43.5	33.7	44,5
Fragile State Index 2024		75.6	69.0	74.3	84.0
IDPs 2024	Conflict/violence	7.27 Mio.	0.39 Mio.	*	*
	Disasters	*	*	*	538,000
Refugees UNHCR 2024		2.8 Mio.	160,000	2.4 Mio. UNRWA 611,000 UNHCR	2.9 Mio.
Stock Immigrants 2024		3.06 Mio.	1.73 Mio.	5.28 Mio.	7.08 Mio.
Share Foreign Pop. 2024		5.8%	1.3%	45.7%	8.1%
Migration regime/ Policy towards Forced Migrants (FM policy)		Gen.Conv.+Cartag.D ecl, 2009: Refugee recogn. 2021: Temp. Prot.Pr. for Colomb. Long intensive trade-off with Venezuela, supp- ortive FM policy	Gen.Conv.+Cartag. Decl., 2011: Ref. Law, antiimmigr.acts, little enforcement capac. From outmigr. and open ref.law toward restrictive transit, civic support, cartels	Not Gen.Conv. but non-refoulm, 1973/2009 Law Resid./Foreign., Mol- and UNHCR IDs, State control, supportive- restrictive FM policy	Europ.Gen.Conv. 2013: Law on Foreigners & Internat. Prot. 2014: Temp. Prot. Status, instrumental supportive- restrictive FM policy

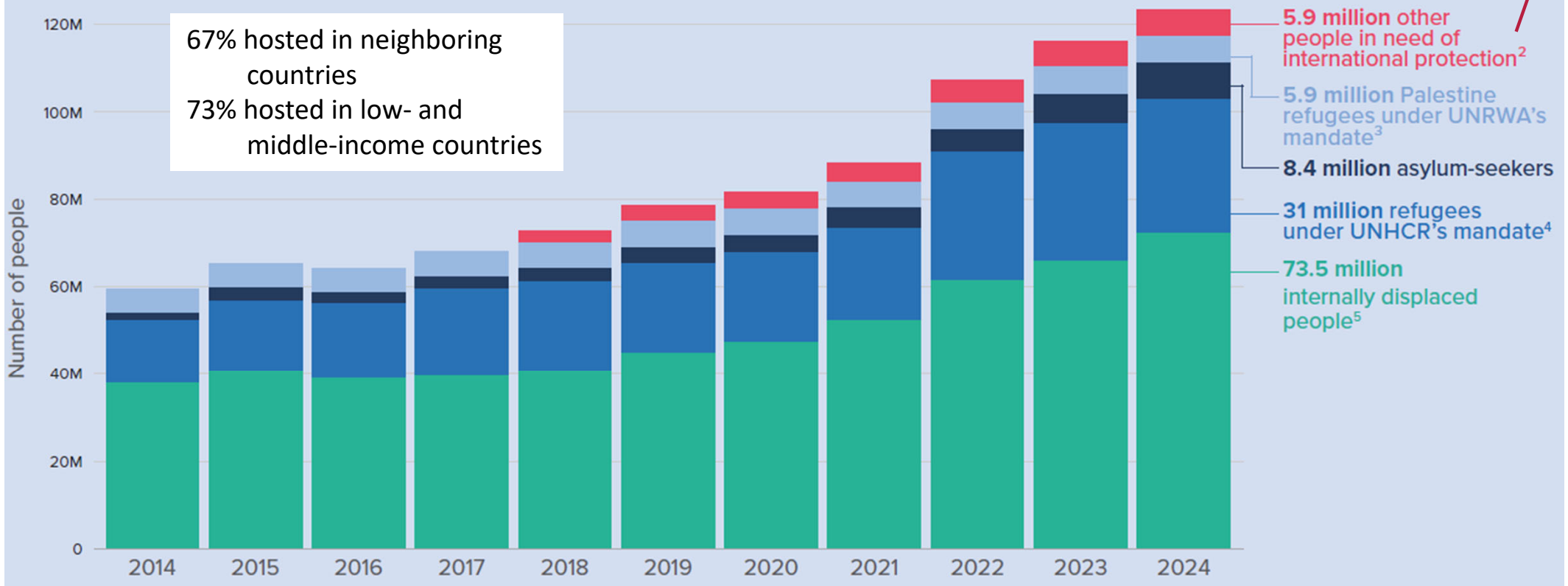
2. Forced migration encompasses more than just asylum seekers

123.2 MILLION

FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE¹

at the end of 2024 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.

- Refugees
- Complementary/
subsidiary protection
- Temporary protection



UNHCR. 2025. Global Trends 2024. Geneva: UNHCR, p. 2

2. Forced migration encompasses more than just asylum seekers

Reasons for leaving place of habitual living by COO (MR=multiple response; n = 1,102)

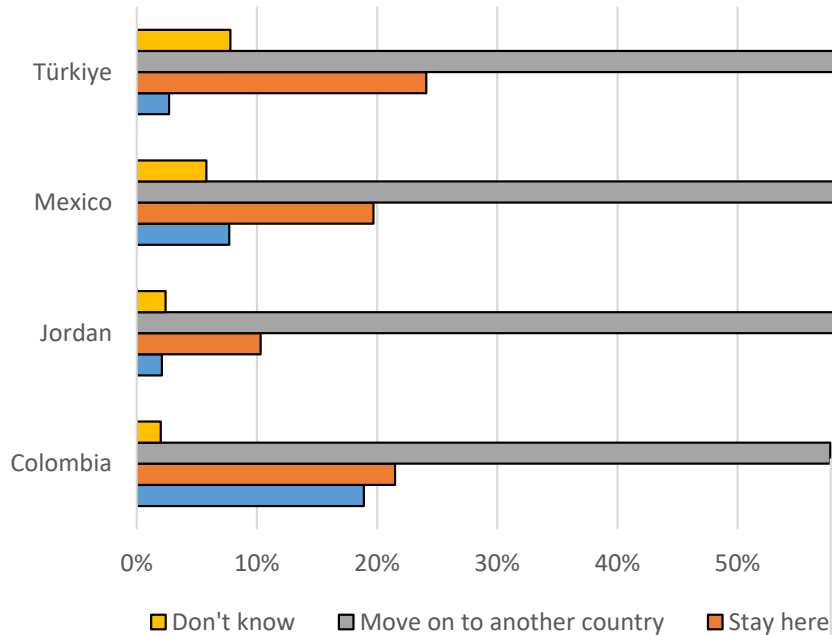
COO	Afghanistan	Ecuador	Honduras	Iraq	Syria	Venezuela	Total/ share
Reasons for leaving							
War/ organized violence	80	1	24	80	348	11	544 (36%)
Individual Violence	6	1	19	8	60	12	106 (7%)
General living conditions	63	21	37	19	259	125	524 (35%)
Discrimination/ persecution	45	0	6	23	33	11	118 (8%)
Family unification	13	1	2	4	89	36	145 (10%)
Education	17	0	4	4	34	2	61 (4%)
Total responses	224	24	92	138	823	197	1,498

Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data-

2. Forced migration encompasses more than just asylum seekers

Biographical aspirations differ from REMOST projects

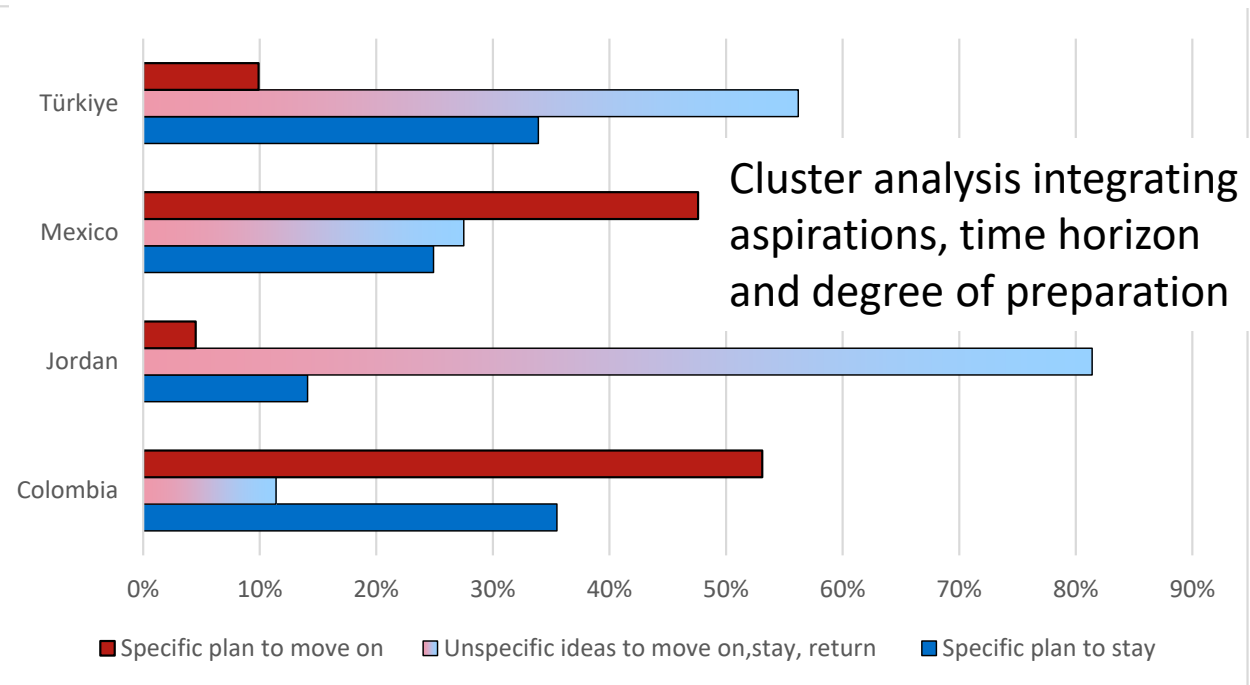
Aspirations to return, move on or stay by country of stay (n = 1,202)



Frequencies: "Would you like to return to your country of origin, stay where you are or move forward to another country"

Unspecific REMOST aspirations differ from specific REMOST projects → forced migrants constantly reorganize their biographical plans in complex processes of moderating different dimensions → our VESPER model

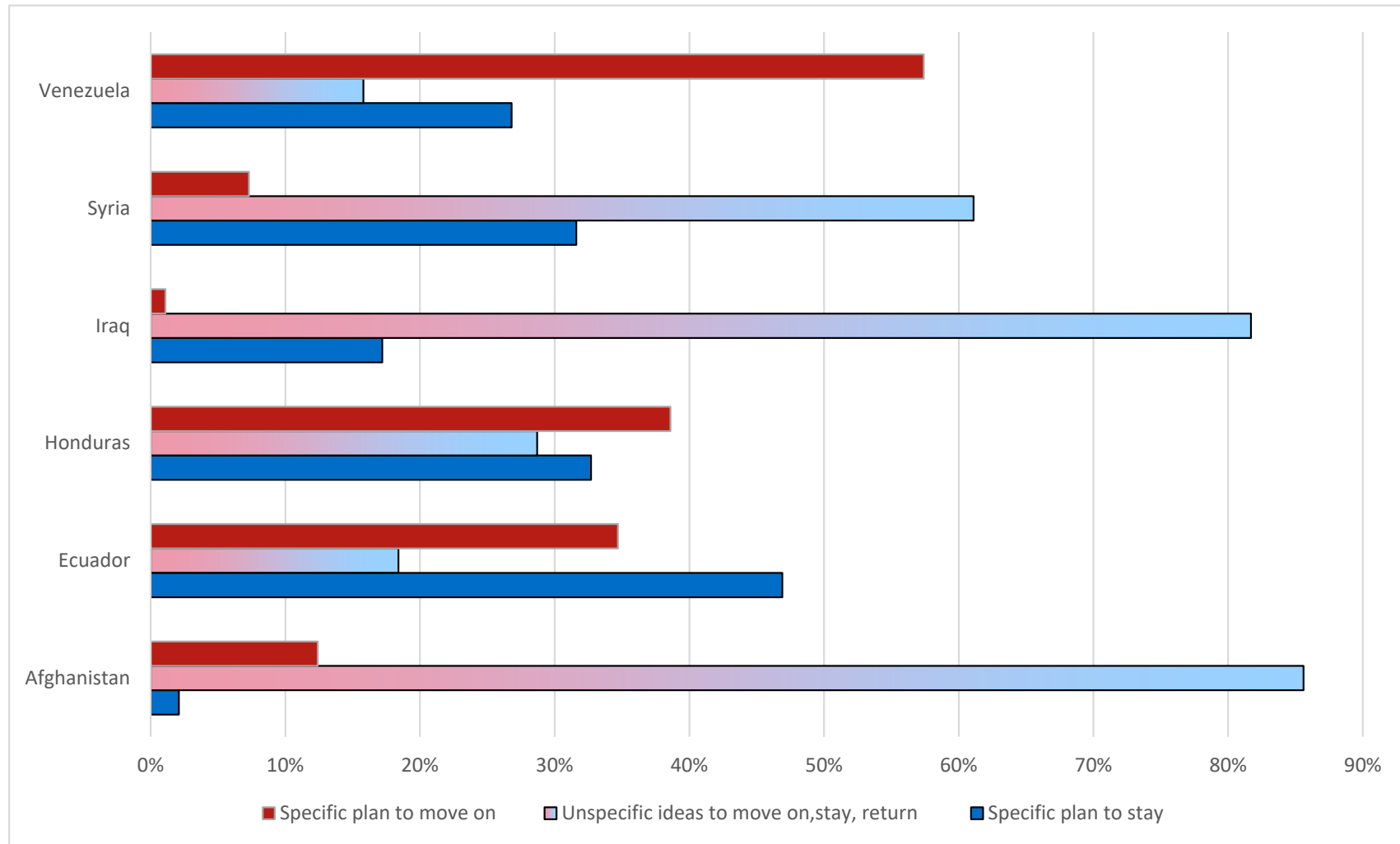
REMOST projects by country of stay (n = 1,199)



Cluster analysis integrating aspirations, time horizon and degree of preparation

2. Forced migration encompasses more than just asylum seekers

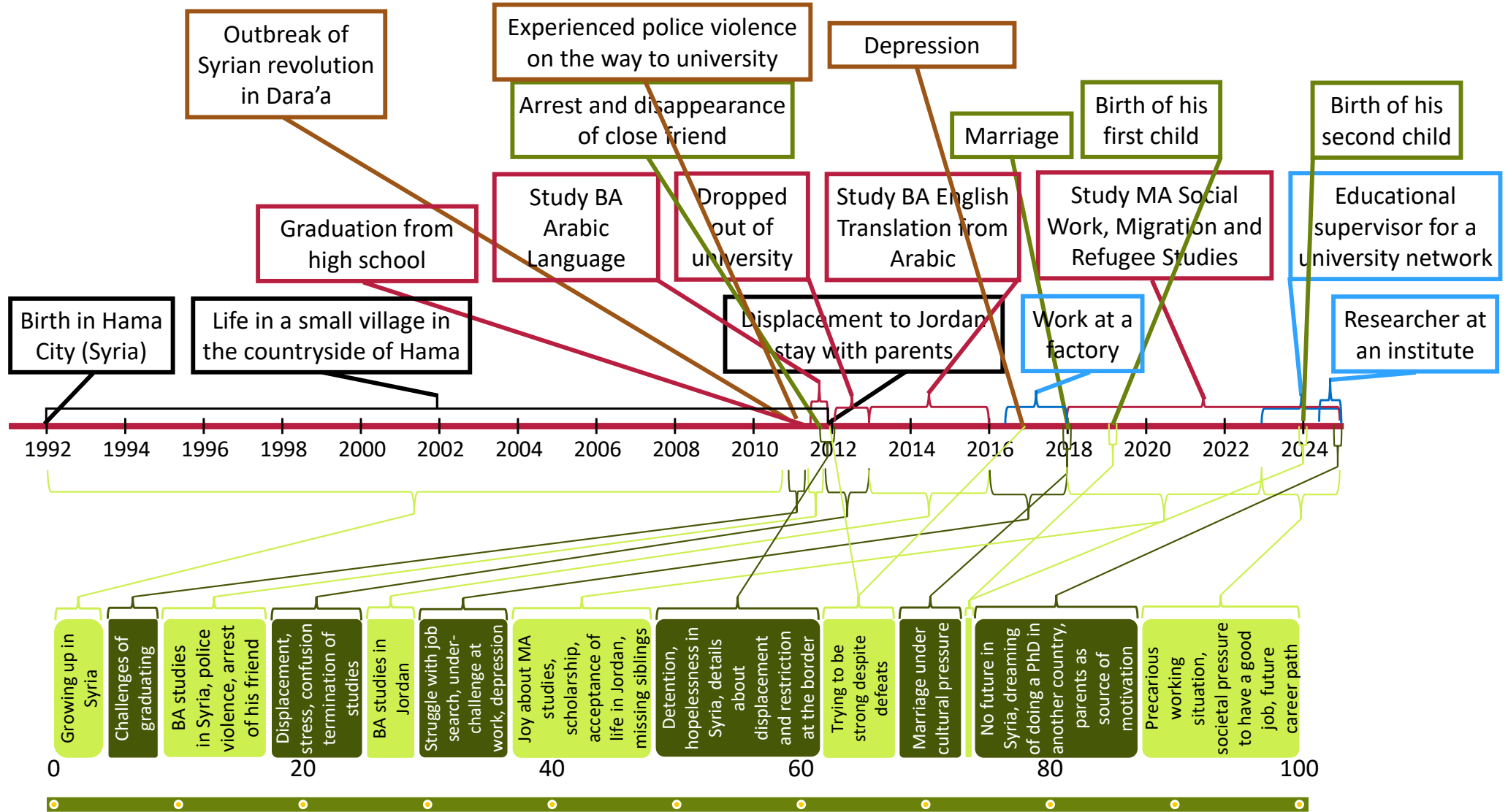
REMOST projects by country of origin (n = 1,199)



Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

Autobiographical narration of Abdullah, Amman, November 2023

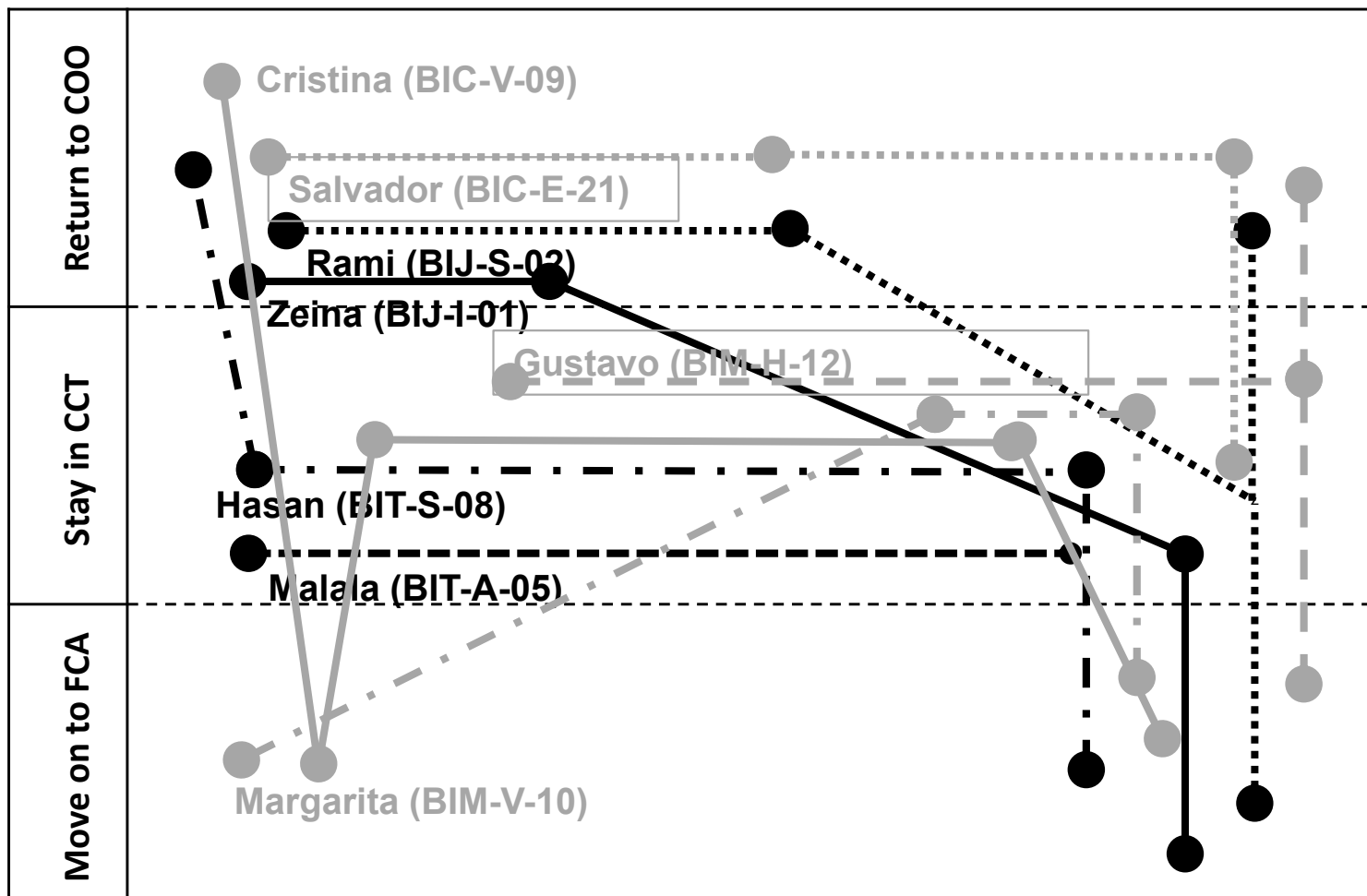


Duration: 79 minutes (BIJ-S-02)

Explanation: black=residence; red=education; blue=work; green=private relations; brown=other

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

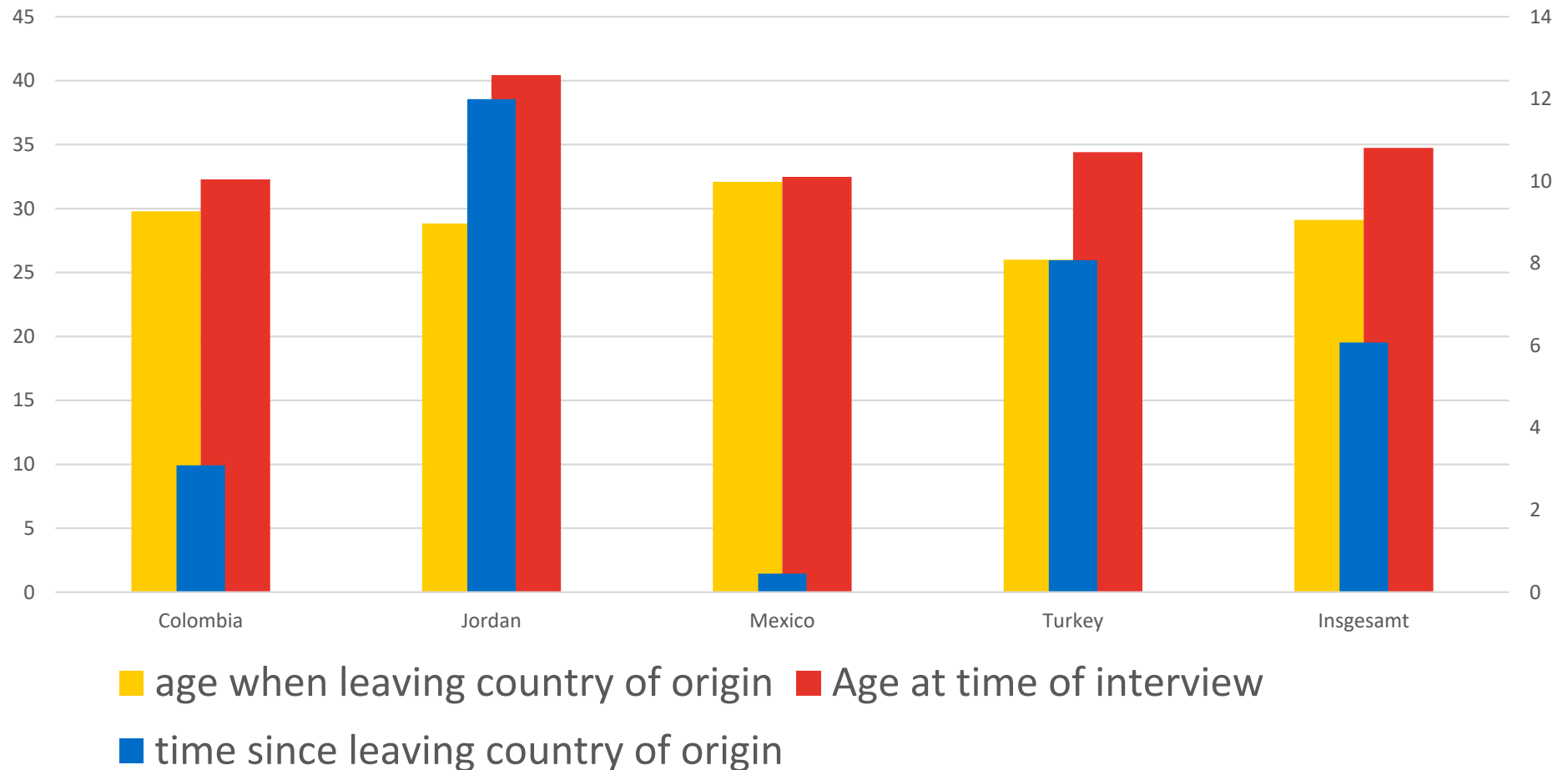
Shifting REMOST projects of 8 interviewees during migration journey



Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

Age when leaving home, at moment of interview (left scale), and time since leaving home (right scale) by CCS (n = 1,203)



Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

Violence Experience (VE) and Planned Time to Stay > 1 year (PTS) by CCS (MR; n = 1,088)

	Colombia		Jordan		Mexico		Turkey		Total	
	VE	PTS	VE	PTS	VE	PTS	VE	PTS	VE	PTS
1 st stay	23%	20%	16%	12%	38%	6%	29%	22%	27% of 1,086	15% of 1,088
2 nd stay	25%	19%	8%	19%	28%	4%	36%	24%	26% of 561	14% of 562
3 rd stay	25%	25%	12%	41%	20%	2%	30%	19%	21% of 240	19% of 238
4 th stay	33%	66%	31%	8%	31%	4%	25%	25%	29% of 102	12% of 101
Total	67	57	63	73	226	31	166	132	522/1,989	293/1,989

Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

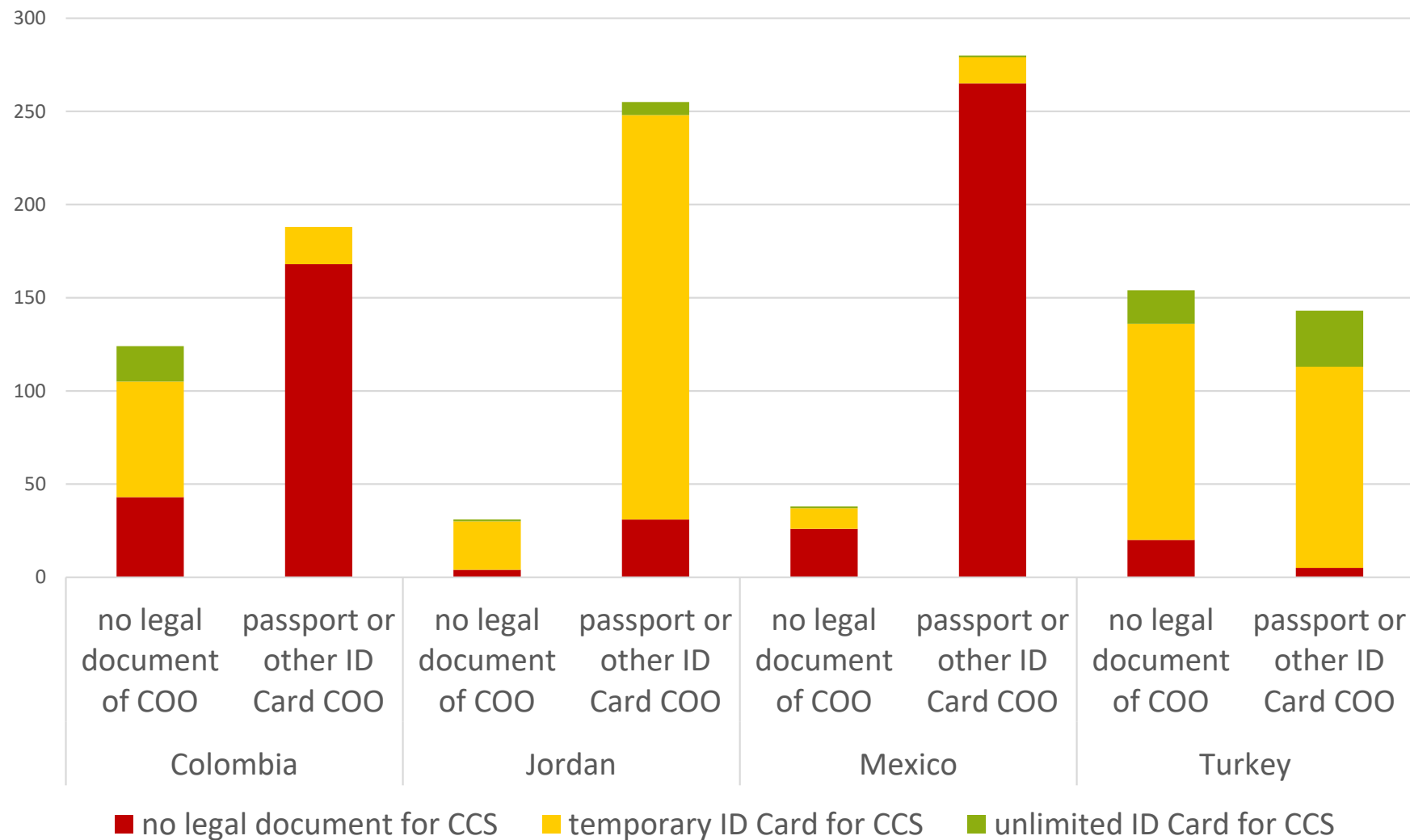
Index of experiences of violence by CCS (MR; n = 1,088)

	Colombia	Jordan	Mexico	Turkey	Total
Detention/abuses by state authorities	58	38	177	138	411
Detention by gangs/organized crime	43	4	75	5	127
Violent/armed attacks by groups	16	1	69	11	97
Imprisonment	16	17	9	32	74
Robbery	114	75	121	157	467
Financial fraud or exploitation	45	134	70	228	477
Physical attacks without weapons	31	27	24	60	142
Household violence, hits, enclosure	21	17	4	8	50
Sexual harassment, abuse or rape	21	17	7	2	47
Verbal violent threats	75	90	57	481	703
Total	440	420	613	1,122	2,595

Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

3. Forced migration involves a long-lasting journey

Legal documents of COO and CCS (MR; n = 1,213)



Source: own elaboration based on Formove-II data

4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

1. Forced migrants regularly spend much time on their journey.
2. Forced migrants face violence, exploitation and discrimination on their journey and in CCS.
3. As forced migration is a long-lasting journey, voice mechanisms and swift access to decent legal employment/economic activities is crucial.
4. Policies for forced migrants have to cover those who want to return, to move on or to stay.
5. A rights-based approach has to fight the instrumentalization of forced migration. Forced migrants need options of regularizing a legal status to make a living.

4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

Some examples and experiences of regularization of migration

Italy:

Regularized domestic workers in 2009 and 2012 (approx. 340,000); then, under Covid-19, regularization primarily for domestic and agricultural workers due to labor shortages

Ireland:

regularization for certain groups since the early 2000s, from 2022 for all those who have been residing irregularly for more than 4 or 3 years

Portugal:

regularization of irregular residents who were in formal employment until 2024, from 2019 even without regular entry; increased social security revenues; during Covid-19, temporary residence permits for persons whose applications for asylum, residence, or work had not yet been decided; after a halt in 2024, regularization by companies made possible in 2025; from 2025, permanent residence for members of the “Community of Portuguese Language Countries” (CPLP)

4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

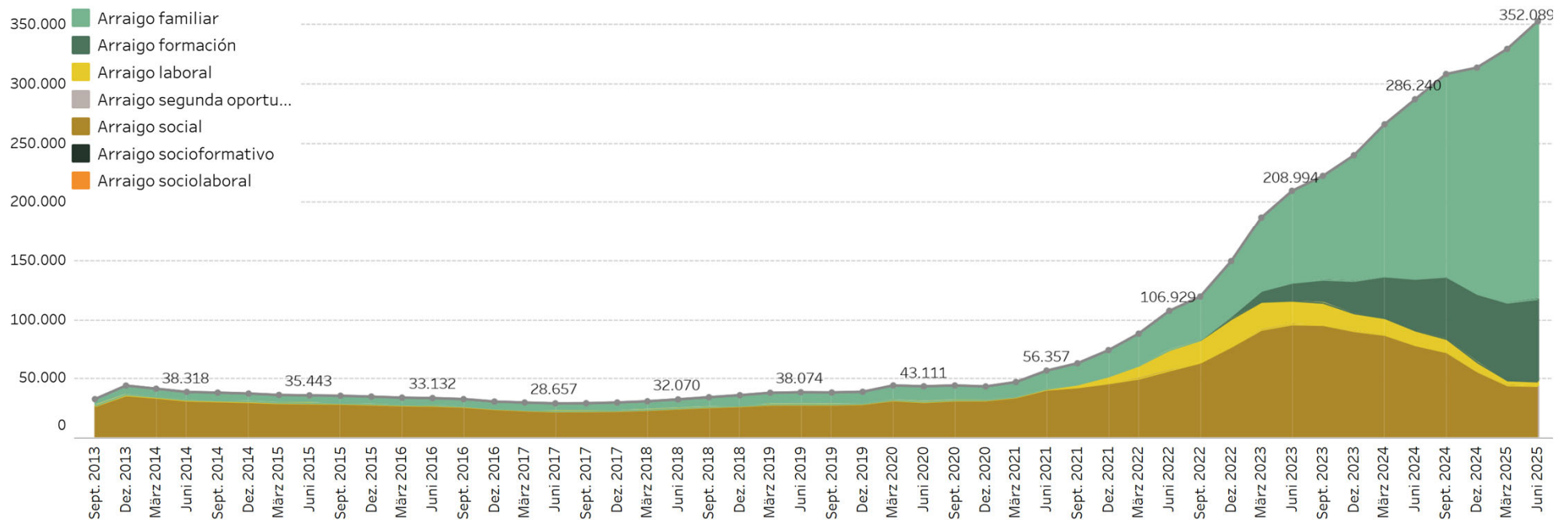
Spain:

1985, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2005 (565,121 regularizations based on employment contracts); estimated to be more than half a million irregular residents in 2025; since May 2025, regularization for one year upon proof of roots (arraigo):
1. second chance, 2. professional, 3. social, 4. educational, 5. family; “Foreigners without a residence permit, registered, de facto resident, working, with a legally binding expulsion order, living legally in Spain” (Sagarra-2024)

Evolución trimestral del número de personas según tipo de arraigo. Sept 2013 - jun 2025

Ambos sexos. Todas las edades

Este gráfico no funciona como filtro, use el menú Fecha y el gráfico según tipo de arraigo.



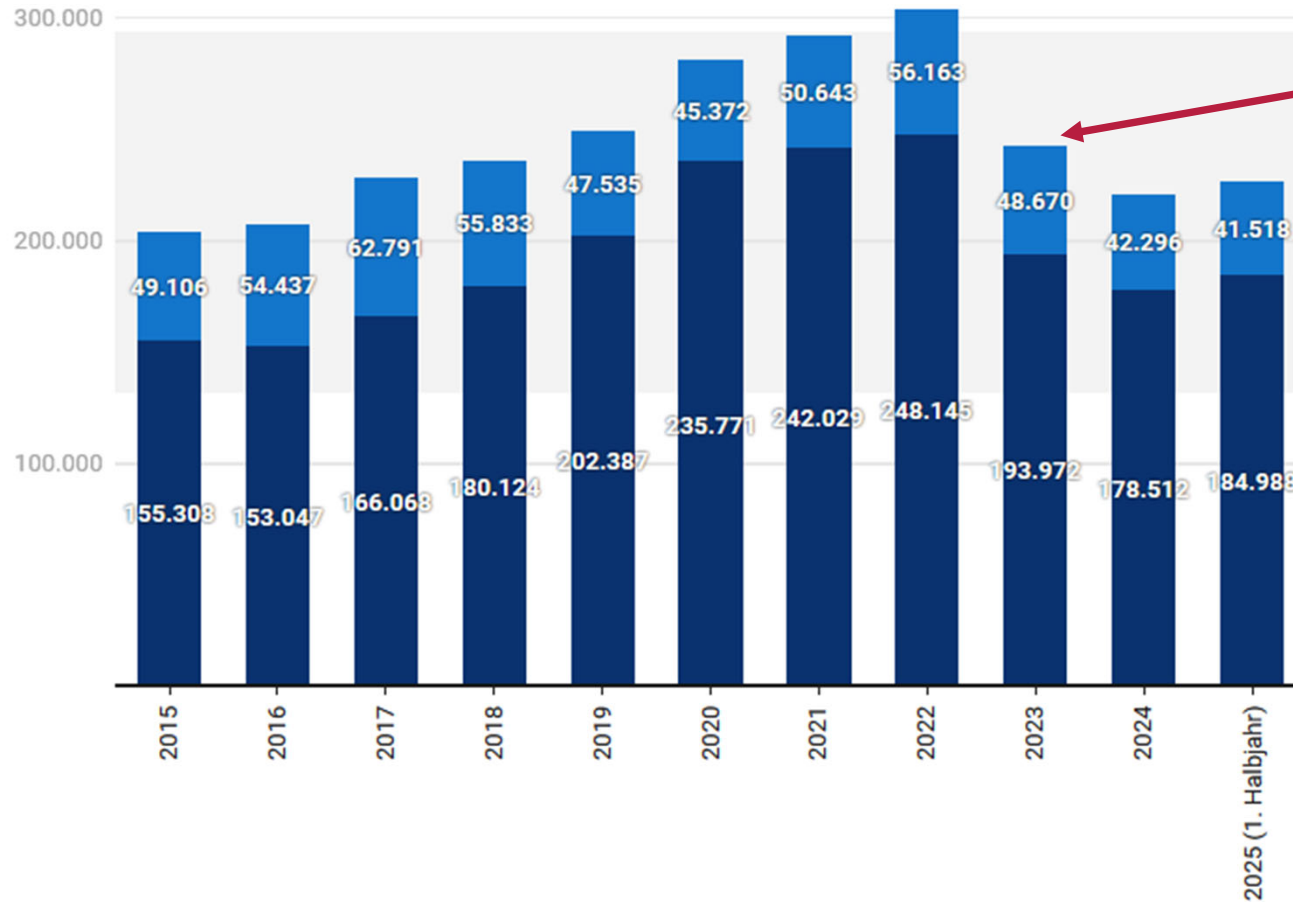
https://www.inclusion.gob.es/en/web/opi/estadisticas/productos_servicios/infografias/arraigo

4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

Germany:

Persons in the 'central register of foreigners' required to leave the country

Dark blue: 'tolerated'; light blue: persons required to depart immediately



Chancenaufenthaltsrecht, Dic. 2022: <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2022/kw48-de-chancenaufenthaltsrecht-923118>

Already in 2005 ways towards residence permit for specific cases of 'tolerated' people according to AufenthG §25

<https://mediendienst-integration.de/en/flucht-asyl/duldung.html>

Die Zahl der "unmittelbar Ausreisepflichtigen" ergibt sich aus der Gesamtzahl der Ausreisepflichtigen abzüglich der Geduldeten.

Grafik: © MEDIENDIENST INTEGRATION 2025 • Quelle: Bundesinnenministerium auf Anfrage, Bundestagsdrucksachen 18/7800, 18/11388, 19/633, 19/8258, 19/19333, 19/27007, 20/1048, 20/5749, 20/8046 • Daten heruntergeladen • Erstellt mit Datawrapper

4. Forced migrants require adapted rights and pathways to regularization

There still is much to do....

- “Provide a clear legal framework that allows refugees to work across a wide array of sectors and occupations, including the right to work and change employers, and recognition of professional licenses and qualifications.
- Allow refugees to move freely, providing flexibility to respond to labor demands.
- Enact legislation whereby refugees have access to banking and finance, to facilitate their legal employment.
- Ensure workplace protections for refugees and local employees.
- Include refugees in public services and social programs.”

World Bank. 2024. Refugee Employment. Perspectives for businesses, policymakers, and intermediaries. Washington/DC: World Bank, p. 72.

Pries, Ludger/Zülfikar Savcı, Berna Ş., 2025: Forced migrants as a neglected group of temporary labor migrants? Empirical evidence from migration trajectories of refugees and migrants in Mexico and Turkey. In: Kuptsch, Christiane/Mieres, Fabiola (eds.), Temporary labour migration: Towards social justice? Geneva: International Labour Organization, pp. 129-149.

Thanks for your attention!