

Report Summary

In 2021, policies on both sides of the US-Mexico border negatively affected women seeking asylum and other protections. With the second year of the Biden administration underway, Trump-era restrictive policies remain in place at the US-Mexico border, exacerbating the situation for women forced to wait at Mexico's northern border for the opportunity to seek asylum in the US. At the same time, under pressure from the Biden administration, the Mexican government continues to step up enforcement to deter migrants and individuals seeking protection at Mexico's southern border, worsening the situation for women stuck there.

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and Instituto para las Mujeres la Migración (IMUMI) have been closely tracking the [impact of both US and Mexican government policies and practices](#) on women seeking protection. Both organizations also conducted interviews with women and families in the fall of 2021, including at migrant shelters in Mexico City and along the US southern border, to hear from women seeking protection to understand the challenges and dangers they face.

Key Takeaways

Both [US President Joe Biden](#) and [Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador](#) recognize that many women are fleeing gender-based violence and persecution in their countries of origin and need access to protection in both countries. Yet WRC and IMUMI found that as a result of current US and Mexican government policies and practices, women seeking protection wait for extended periods – often in precarious and dangerous circumstances – at Mexico's northern and southern borders. [The report](#) *Stuck in Uncertainty and Exposed to Violence: The Impact of US and Mexican Migration Policies on Women Seeking Protection in 2021* details numerous concerns identified by WRC and IMUMI based on what the organizations heard from the women interviewed. For example:

- » WRC and IMUMI spoke with women seeking protection who experienced kidnapping, rape, and trafficking, and who face significant barriers in reporting these crimes. In general, women seeking protection often do not feel safe, and fear that they may be tracked down by their persecutors, or subject to violence at the hands of state or non-state actors.
- » Current policies and practices leave women waiting in squalid conditions in Mexico, where they are sometimes forced to sleep on the street and left with limited access to showers and bathrooms. A number of women struggle to access even the most basic services while waiting in Mexico, including medical care.
- » LGBTQI+, Black, Indigenous, and non-Spanish speaking women seeking protection face additional dangers and discrimination in Mexico, exacerbating the obstacles and challenges they face to access legal protection or other critical services.

Recommendations

IMUMI and WRC are deeply concerned about practices by both governments that normalize human rights violations, including the violation of the right to request asylum. Instead of restrictive policies and enforcement actions that put women and children seeking protection in harm's way, the US and Mexican

governments must strengthen asylum systems in both countries and broaden complementary pathways for protection. The report details recommendations for both the Biden administration and the Mexican government. Most importantly, we urge the following:

The Biden administration should:

- » End the use of Title 42 to expel adults and families to Mexico and their countries of origin via land expulsions and expulsion flights.
- » Restore access to asylum at ports of entry, so that individuals can approach a port of entry and request protection and other relief from inside the United States.
- » Refrain from pressuring Mexico to increase enforcement by immigration and security forces or implementing new visa restrictions for nationalities arriving in large numbers. Focus the [Collaborative Migration Management Strategy](#) (CMMS) on expanding access to protection in the region and complementary pathways to protection, without sacrificing access to asylum at the US southern border.
- » Reverse the expansion and stop further implementation of Remain in Mexico (RMX).

The Mexican government should:

- » Allocate adequate funding to COMAR (Mexico's agency responsible for asylum processing and adjudications) to decrease wait times, open more offices, and hire additional protection officers.
- » Reform the Mexican Refugee Law to allow people to continue their asylum procedures from different parts of the country where they have family and community networks, better employment opportunities, and safer conditions.
- » Ensure that women who have suffered or who remain in danger of violence in Mexico have access to relocation programs and services where they can safely wait for their asylum process.
- » Expedite humanitarian visitor cards for asylum seekers, victims and witnesses of crimes, migrant children, and other vulnerable populations.
- » Refuse to collaborate with the US government on the implementation of policies such as Title 42 and RMX that violate US, Mexican, and international law.
- » Eliminate the use of the National Guard and all armed forces in migration enforcement in compliance with the Mexican Constitution and international law.
- » Increase access to housing for asylum seekers through ongoing support to civil society shelters, including safe spaces for vulnerable groups such as women, families, and LGBTQI+ individuals.

Read the [full report](#).

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Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth who have been displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice. Since our founding in 1989, we have been a leading expert on the needs of refugee women, children, and youth and the policies that can protect and empower them. www.womensrefugeecommission.org.

IMUMI

The Institute for Women in Migration, AC (IMUMI) is a civil society organization based in Mexico City that promotes the rights of women and their families in migration. IMUMI provides legal support to women and their families, collaborates with civil society organizations, academic institutions, and government bodies to ensure issues relevant to women are included in regional migration policy. www.imumi.org.