

METERING UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2019



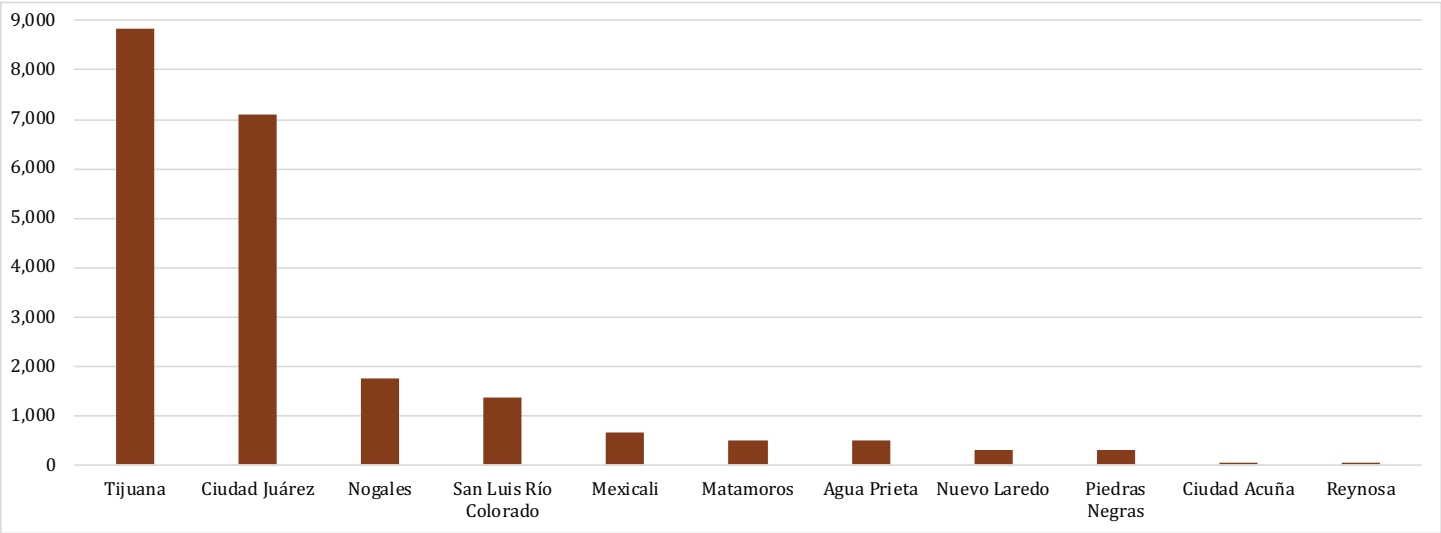
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2018, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers began to be stationed at the United States’ international boundary with Mexico to inform arriving asylum seekers that U.S. ports of entry were full and that they needed to wait their turn in Mexico. Simultaneously, these CBP officials accepted limited numbers of asylum seekers a day—in a process known as metering—often communicating directly with Mexican officials regarding these numbers. As lines of asylum seekers grew longer in border cities, Mexican authorities and civil society groups responded by providing humanitarian assistance and creating informal waitlists.

In December 2018, the Strauss Center at the University of Texas at Austin, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (USMEX) at the University of California San Diego, and the Migration Policy Centre published a report documenting these practices. This report highlighted how metering had spread across the U.S.-Mexico border and described the waitlist systems in eight border cities. It found that 6,000 asylum seekers were waiting along the border in Mexico and that the waitlist process varied in each Mexican border city. Since the report’s publication, there have been changes in every border community. Some of these changes were documented in the February 2019, May 2019, and August 2019 updates, which estimated that 4,800, 19,000, and 26,000 asylum seekers, respectively, were waiting along the border.

Since August 2019, asylum seekers have continued to arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border, although in lower numbers than in previous months. This November 2019 metering update estimates that there are currently around 21,398 asylum seekers on waitlists in 11 Mexican border cities.

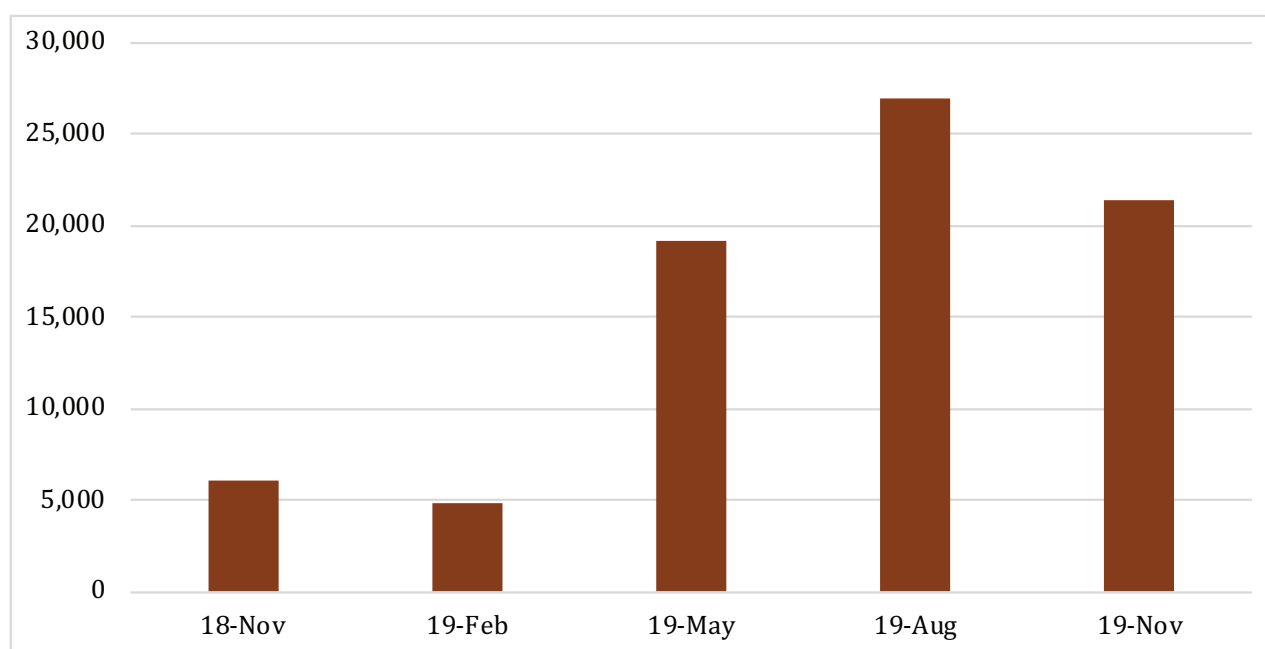
Figure 1: Number of People on Asylum Waitlists (November 2019)



Authors’ elaboration. Data collected from October 27, 2019, to November 6, 2019.

This represents a 21 percent decrease since August 2019 in the total number of people on asylum waitlists, with a downward shift both in the numbers of people arriving at the border and the number of people showing up when their waitlist number is called. For example, in Tijuana, in the last month and a half, only 33 percent of asylum seekers showed up for their numbers.¹ As a result, the current waitlist totals likely overstate the number of people who are still waiting in Mexican border cities, as some people have likely returned to their countries of origin, moved to another port of entry with a shorter waitlist, or attempted to enter the United States undetected.

Figure 2: Number of People on Asylum Waitlists (November 2018 - November 2019)



Authors' elaboration. Data collected from October 27, 2019, to November 6, 2019.

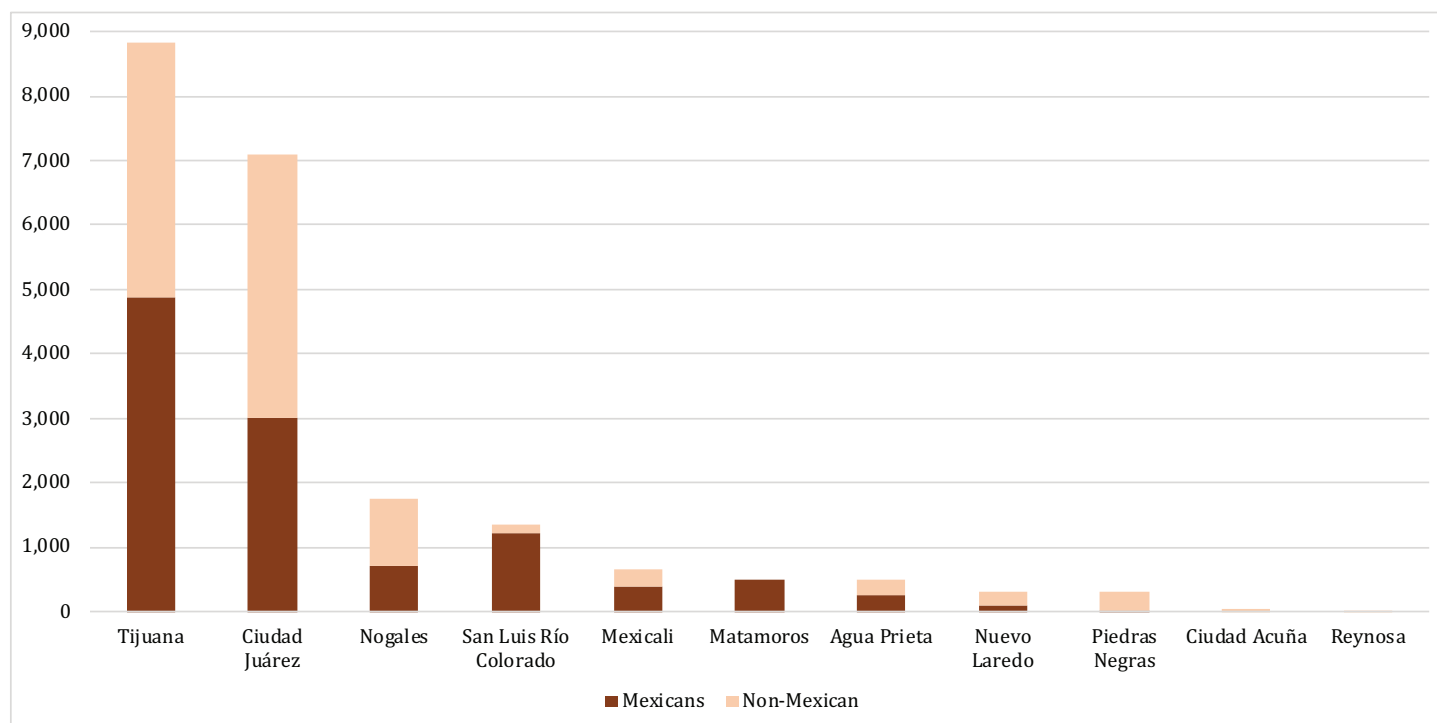
Along some parts of the border, such as South Texas, this downward shift appears to be in large part due to the Trump administration's steps to curb migration and the number of asylum seekers arriving at the border. In particular, the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) have returned all Spanish speaking asylum seekers to Mexico (except Mexicans), after registering their asylum cases in the United States. MPP began in January 2019 in San Diego, but has since spread across the entire border, with individuals being returned to Tijuana, Mexicali, Ciudad Juárez, Piedras Negras, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros. Since MPP's expansion, the total number of asylum seekers arriving at the border has decreased and this overall drop has been reflected in the waitlists.

Additional U.S. and Mexican policies have also contributed to this decrease. The United States has continued to implement the third-country transit asylum bar, which currently blocks anyone arriving in the United States from seeking asylum if they traveled first through another country. While in Mexico, the federal government has increased its immigration enforcement during the past three months. The National Guard (*Guardia Nacional*)

has provided support to the National Migration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migración*, INM), with a resulting increased number of apprehensions and deportations. INM has also stopped providing temporary transit permits to individuals from outside the Western Hemisphere and has begun deporting these individuals back to their countries of origin. These policies make it more difficult for asylum seekers to arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border and sign up on an asylum waitlist.

Yet as U.S. and Mexican policies have become more restrictive for non-Mexican migrants and asylum seekers, the number of Mexicans waiting at the border to seek asylum in the United States has increased. This update counted more than 11,040 Mexicans at the U.S.-Mexico border, making up 52 percent of everyone currently on asylum waitlists in Mexican border cities. These Mexican asylum seekers are predominantly coming from the states of Guerrero, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Veracruz.

Figure 3: Mexican Asylum Seekers Waiting on Waitlists (November 2019)



Authors' elaboration. Data collected from October 27, 2019, to November 6, 2019.

This update aims to highlight changes over the past three months across 14 Mexican border cities. It looks at changes in the asylum waitlist process, the number of asylum seekers waiting in each border city, and current CBP processing levels. The update draws on interviews with government officials, representatives from civil society organizations, and members of the public on both sides of the border.

Figure 4: Mexican Border Cities Covered in the November 2019 Update



Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Matamoros, Tamaulipas <i>National Migration Institute (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM):</i> <i>Non-Mexican list at the Gateway Bridge</i> <i>Asylum Seekers: Mexican lists at the Gateway Bridge and the B&M Bridge</i>	~285 (95 families) <i>Mexican lists Gateway Bridge</i> <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <i>Non-Mexican list Gateway Bridge</i> <input type="checkbox"/> ~225 (76 families) <i>Mexican lists B&M Bridge</i> November 4, 2019	1 to 2 months <i>Gateway Bridge</i> 4 weeks <i>B&M Bridge</i>	1 to 2 families a day <i>Per bridge</i>	<p>There are three list systems in Matamoros divided between the city's two international bridges.</p> <p>INM officials maintain the list for non-Mexicans at the Gateway Bridge. As of November 5, 2019, INM reported that this list did not have any asylum seekers. Mexican asylum seekers also run a second list at the Gateway Bridge. These families are in large part from Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. Individuals on this list stay in a tent camp near the international bridge, alongside asylum seekers who were returned through the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Inside the tent camp, people use the few restrooms that are constructed from plywood, bathe and wash their clothes in the Rio Grande, and charge their phones in a nearby store.</p> <p>The B&M Bridge's list is comprised of asylum seekers from Mexico, and in particular the states of Guerrero, Chiapas, and Oaxaca (there is also one family from Michoacán). A representative from the group maintains the list. This group of asylum seekers alleges that CBP began to process fewer families after the October 10, 2019 protest on the Gateway Bridge that shut down international traffic. According to the waiting asylum seekers, CBP did not process any families for the seven days following the incident. Now, CBP only takes one to two families a day instead of the three to four families that they were accepting prior to the protest.</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Nuevo Progreso, Tamaulipas	0 <i>November 3, 2019</i>	N/A	N/A	
Reynosa, Tamaulipas <i>Senda de Vida migrant shelter</i>	<30 <i>November 2, 2019</i>	1 to 3 days	15 to 20 people a day	<p>The number of asylum seekers in Reynosa has declined over the past three months.</p> <p>When asylum seekers arrive at the Senda de Vida shelter, staff send their paperwork to CBP. Each day, CBP alerts the shelter regarding how many people they will take that day. Currently, the number of people arriving to the shelter is very low, which means that asylum seekers cross into the United States after waiting only for a day or two.</p> <p>There are reports that more people are crossing between ports of entry and attempting to evade Border Patrol. These individuals may have previously sought asylum at a port of entry, but now report not wanting to be returned to Mexico through MPP.</p>
Rio Grande City, Tamaulipas	0 <i>November 2, 2019</i>	N/A	N/A	

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Ciudad Miguel Alemán, Tamaulipas	0 <i>November 2, 2019</i>	N/A	N/A	<p>Currently, there is no asylum waitlist in Ciudad Miguel Alemán and there are no asylum seekers waiting on the international bridge. September 2019 was the last time that asylum seekers were reported to be staying on the bridge.</p> <p>It is not clear what happened to the waiting asylum seekers. There are some reports that the asylum seekers were removed from the bridge and disappeared overnight. Yet other individuals reported that CBP had processed all the waiting asylum seekers.</p>
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas <i>Network of six migrant shelters managing six separate lists (one per shelter)</i>	~300 <i>November 2, 2019</i>	1 to 3 weeks	15 to 30 people a day	<p>The city's six migrant shelters each keep an asylum waitlist. INM contacts a different shelter every day of the week to send people to the international bridge to cross. The shelter order is as follows: Casa Nazareth, AMAR, Barrios de Cristo, Municipal Shelter, Oradel, and Voz de Cielo.</p> <p>During the previous three months, the number of non-Mexican asylum seekers arriving to Nuevo Laredo has declined.</p> <p>On October 28, 2019, Casa Nazareth reported that they had 168 people waiting to seek asylum, with a vast majority from Cameroon. They also reported that they were housing 27 individuals from Mexico.²</p> <p>On November 2, 2019, Casa AMAR reported that the shelter was housing 60 people waiting to seek asylum. Of these 60 people, 56 were of Mexican origin, from the states of Guerrero, Michoacán, and</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas (continued)				<p>Chiapas. On the same day, the municipal shelter reported that 30 people were waiting there to seek asylum. They also reported an increase in the number of Mexicans arriving to the city over the last month.</p> <p>The kidnapping of asylum seekers in Nuevo Laredo has reached extremely high levels. Individuals are kidnapped while entering the city, waiting in local shelters, or after being returned to Nuevo Laredo through MPP.</p>
Piedras Negras, Coahuila <i>Municipal government</i>	~300 <i>October 30, 2019</i>	3 to 4 weeks <i>According to the list manager</i> 2 to 4 months <i>According to waiting asylum seekers</i>	15 people a day	<p>The asylum waitlist in Piedras Negras is run by a member of the municipal government. Some 70 percent of the individuals on the waitlist are from Venezuela, followed by people from Cuba and Honduras. There are seven to eight people from Mexico on the list.</p> <p>There are currently eight shelters in Piedras Negras. These include Casa del Migrante Frontera Digna, which has a capacity for 100 people and is currently housing 70 people; Casa de Tanya, which has a capacity for 40 people and is currently lodging 14 people; and Betel, which has a capacity for 70 people and is currently housing 14 people.</p> <p>There are allegations that asylum seekers can pay US\$1,000 each to move more quickly on the Piedras Negras asylum waitlist. Individuals who reported that they had not paid any money also reported that they had been waiting for months rather than weeks.</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Piedras Negras, Coahuila (continued)				On October 28, 2019, MPP began in Eagle Pass. During the following days, CBP returned approximately 10 people per day to Piedras Negras. The asylum seekers who were returned via MPP are staying in local shelters and also renting rooms. They will have to travel to Nuevo Laredo, which is two hours away, for their U.S. court hearings in Laredo.
Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila <i>Civil Protection (Protección Civil): individuals</i> <i>Grupo Beta: families</i>	<50 <i>November 1, 2019</i>	1 week	2 to 3 people a day	<p>There are currently two asylum waitlists in Ciudad Acuña: one for adults and one for families. Both lists are currently “closed” to new entrants.</p> <p>Civil Protection maintains the list for individuals. Their first list for individuals had been closed to new entrants since April 2019 and the last individual from this list was processed on October 6, 2019. Once this first list was finished, Civil Protection began a second list for the 46 individuals who were still waiting in Ciudad Acuña at the time. This second list is also closed, and currently there are 12 individuals left to be processed. Civil Protection estimates that there are around 12 additional asylum seekers in the city who arrived after the second list began and was closed.</p> <p>The individuals on this list are currently renting rooms in Ciudad Acuña. They are mostly from Cuba and various African countries. Around 12 individuals from Cuba have decided to stay and live permanently in the city.</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila (continued)				Grupo Beta maintains a second list for families, which is also closed to new entrants. There are only four families still in the city waiting to be processed. These four families stay at a city shelter. There are another three to four families that are currently waiting in Ciudad Acuña, but not on the list.
Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua <i>State Population Council (Consejo Estatal de Población, COESPO): Non-Mexican list</i> <i>Asylum seekers: Mexican lists</i>	4,101 <i>Non-Mexican list</i> □ ~3,000 <i>Mexican lists</i> <i>October 29, 2019</i>	6 months <i>Non-Mexican list</i> 1 month <i>Mexican lists</i>	~10 people a day <i>Non-Mexican list</i> ~2 to 3 families a day <i>Mexican lists</i>	<p>There are two list systems in Ciudad Juárez. One system for non-Mexican asylum seekers and another for Mexican asylum seekers.</p> <p>The State Population Council (COESPO) maintains the list for non-Mexicans. COESPO registers asylum seekers in the city and CBP calls them one to two times a day regarding the numbers of asylum seekers that they will process. Some 80 percent of the individuals on the list are from Cuba, 12 percent are from Central America or other countries, and the remaining 8 percent are from Mexico. However, COESPO reports that most, if not all, of the Mexicans registered on their list have switched to the Mexican-only lists at the bridges.</p> <p>The asylum seekers on the COESPO list stay in 16 shelters that are run by local government and religious groups. Asylum seekers report that armed men have targeted the shelters where they are staying.</p> <p>Despite more than 4,000 asylum seekers registered on the COESPO waitlist, the true number of asylum seekers in the city may be lower. For every ten numbers called, the list may advance 100 to 150 spots, given</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (continued)				<p>that many asylum seekers do not show up. COESPO believes that some of these asylum seekers may have crossed the Rio Grande and attempted to enter the United States undetected or returned to their countries of origin.</p> <p>The second list system in Ciudad Juárez is for Mexican asylum seekers. There are three lists for Mexicans, with a separate list for each of the city's pedestrian bridges. Mexican asylum seekers stay in shelters and in camps alongside each bridge. Mexican asylum seekers check in directly with CBP regarding the number of Mexican asylum seekers that will be processed each day.</p>
Agua Prieta, Sonora <i>CAME migrant shelter</i>	~500 <i>October 31, 2019</i>	5 to 6 months	0 to 4 families a day	<p>The CAME migrant shelter runs the asylum waitlist in Agua Prieta. Currently, about half of the asylum seekers on the waitlist are Mexican and the other half are from Central America, Cuba, and Venezuela.</p> <p>Unlike other waitlists along the border, the CAME migrant shelter allows asylum seekers to add their name to the list before arriving in Agua Prieta. Asylum seekers can add their name to list by sending a photo of their identification to the CAME shelter team through Whatsapp.</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Nogales, Sonora <i>Municipal government of Nogales through Civil Protection</i>	1,759 <i>October 29, 2019</i>	2.5 months	8 to 15 people a day	On September 12, 2019, the Nogales municipal government took over the administration of the asylum waitlist and delegated its management to Civil Protection. ³ Currently, there are 710 Mexicans on the asylum waitlist (making up 40 percent of the total number). There are also 573 people from Cuba and 276 people from Venezuela. Many on the list—especially Cubans— are renting rooms in Nogales due to limited space in local shelters.
San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora <i>Casa del Migrante □La Divina Providencia□</i>	1,361 <i>October 27, 2019</i>	3 months	6 people a day	The Casa del Migrante “La Divina Providencia” runs the asylum waitlist in San Luis Río Colorado. Currently, 1,211 people on the waitlist are from Mexico (89 percent), 91 are from Cuba, 28 are from Honduras, 12 are from Guatemala, 7 are from Uganda, 6 are from Nicaragua, and 4 are from Cameroon. There is also one person from Ethiopia and one person from Venezuela.

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Mexicali, Baja California <i>Grupo Beta</i>	651 <i>October 30, 2019</i>	2 months	10 to 20 people a day	<p>Grupo Beta runs the asylum waitlist in Mexicali. On the list, 385 asylum seekers are Mexican (59 percent of the total).</p> <p>Mexicali's 11 main shelters have a capacity for 1,380 people.⁴ There are continued reports that most of these shelters charge asylum seekers for their stay and for donated goods.⁵</p> <p>Over the past three months, the shelter population has declined, since fewer people are being returned to Mexicali under MPP. The people who were returned to Mexicali under MPP were offered a one-way bus trip to the Mexican city of Tapachula, which is on the country's southern border with Guatemala.</p>
Tijuana, Baja California⁶ <i>Grupo Beta / Support from asylum seekers</i>	8,836 <i>November 6, 2019</i>	4.5 to 5 months	20 to 40 people a day	<p>After peaceful protests over the summer, the list in the notebook was digitized. Over the past three months, an estimated 5,700 people have signed up on the asylum waitlist in Tijuana, for an average of 62 asylum seekers per day. Since July 16, 2019, the number of asylum seekers from outside the Western Hemisphere has decreased and constituted only 5 to 7 percent of all sign-ups. Instead, roughly 80 percent of the new sign-ups were people from Mexico. The remaining 12 to 15 percent were of people from other countries in Latin America, including Haiti, Cuba, Venezuela, and Central America.</p> <p>Over the past three months, the rate of people showing up when their number is called has dropped considerably. From August 1, 2019 to September 15, 2019, 62 percent of people were present when their</p>

Metering & Asylum Waitlists: November 2019 (continued)

Port of Entry <i>List Administrator</i>	# of Asylum Seekers on List <i>Date Recorded</i>	Estimated Wait Time	CBP Processing #s	Recent Changes
Tijuana, Baja California (continued)				<p>number was called. However, from September 16, 2019 to November 1, 2019, only 33 percent of people showed up.⁷ On several days, list managers read 300 to 500 names in order to reach 30 or 40 people. This situation has generated confusion, as many people were not present when their names were called and showed up the following day. By contrast, Mexicans show up at a higher rate than other nationalities when their numbers are called.</p> <p>Tijuana's 15 main shelters have a capacity for 1,573 people.⁸ There are reports that some shelters are charging people a small fee per night for their stay.</p>

**The numbers shift every day and should be interpreted as a general range rather than an exact figure.*

ENDNOTES

- 1 In line with previous updates, this update will report total asylum list number in order to maintain a standardized methodology.
- 2 Fernanda Valtierra, “Esperan asilo 168 migrantes,” *El Mañana*, October 28, 2019, [https://elmanana.com.mx/esper - an-asilo-168-migrantes/](https://elmanana.com.mx/esper-an-asilo-168-migrantes/).
- 3 Rafael Carranza, “Nogales, Mexico, takes over asylum list from nonprofits as Trump administration tightens rules,” *Arizona Republic*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/border-issues/2019/09/26/nogales-mexico-takes-control-list-asylum-seeking-migrants/2386225001/>.
- 4 These shelters are currently housing 845 people, including asylum seekers on the waitlists, others returned through MPP, and Mexicans deported from the U.S. 276 of these individuals are Mexican, 577 are Central American, and 11 from other countries.
- 5 Interview with Border Kindness.
- 6 The data provided for the asylum waitlist in Tijuana was collected by a team of Al Otro Lado volunteers during daily visits to the Chaparral port of entry.
- 7 Al Otro Lado calculates these “appearance rates” by dividing the number of people who crossed by the number of names in the book that were read. The figures are complicated by the fact that, every day, Grupo Beta allows a certain number of asylum seekers to cross before their number is called due to “special circumstances.” These special circumstances could include acute medical conditions or due to their time volunteering as list managers. As a result, appearance rates may be even lower.
- 8 Currently, there are 1,194 people staying at Tijuana’s shelters, which includes those on the waitlist, those returned through MPP, and Mexicans deported from the United States. In the shelters, there are 667 people from Mexico, 399 people from Central America, and 110 people from other countries. These 15 shelters have the capacity to hold 1,573 individuals. Interview conducted in Tijuana.⁵