

# AMERICA'S VOICE

## The spread of US-Mexico border disinformation in Central America: Poll Briefing



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# America's Voice Central America Survey:

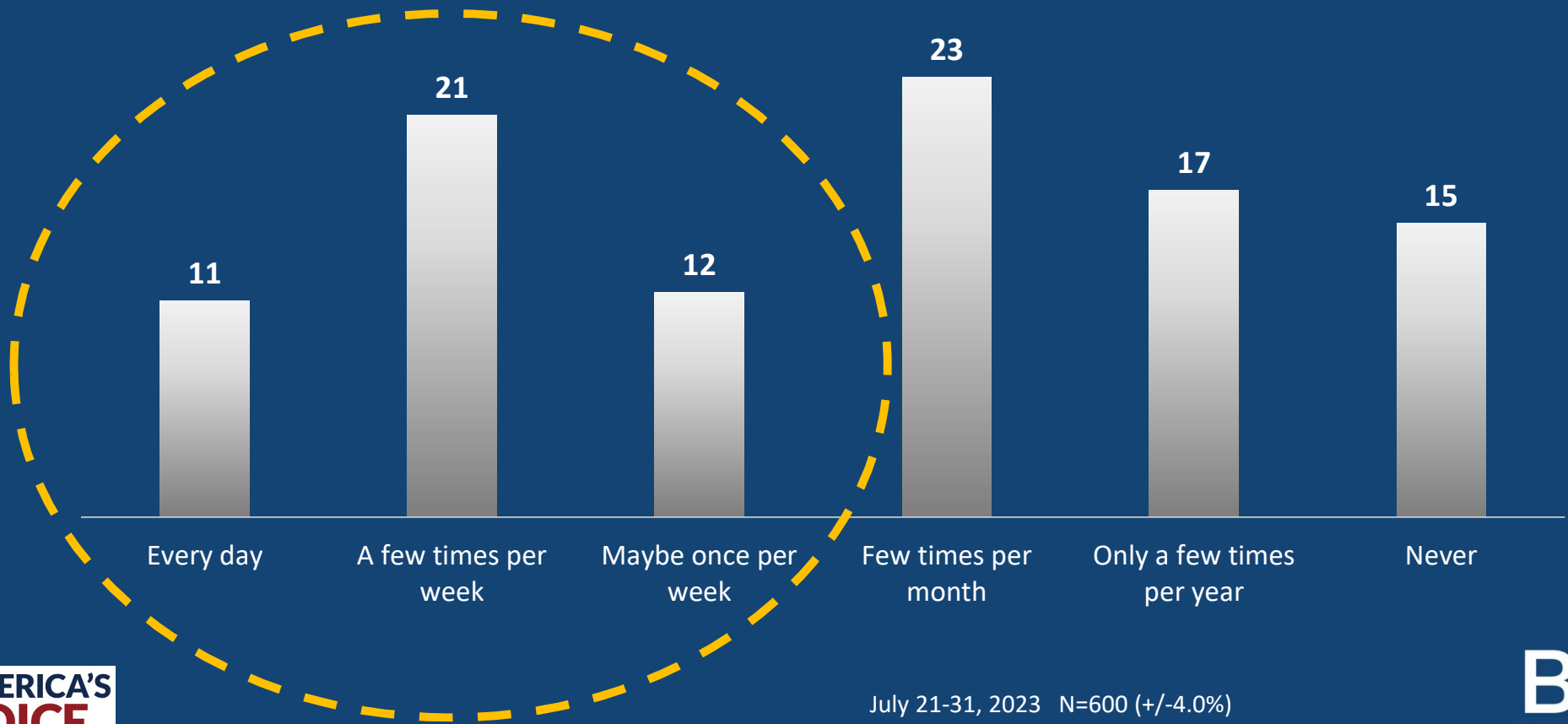
- ▶ Total N=600 Central American residents in key countries  
n=150 in each country: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua  
Respondents ages 16 to 39, representative of primary migration age cohort
- ▶ Margin of Error:  $\pm 4.0\%$
- ▶ Field Dates: July 21-31, 2023
- ▶ Survey interviews were conducted using a blended mode via live telephone and online, exclusively in Spanish language

# Key Takeaways

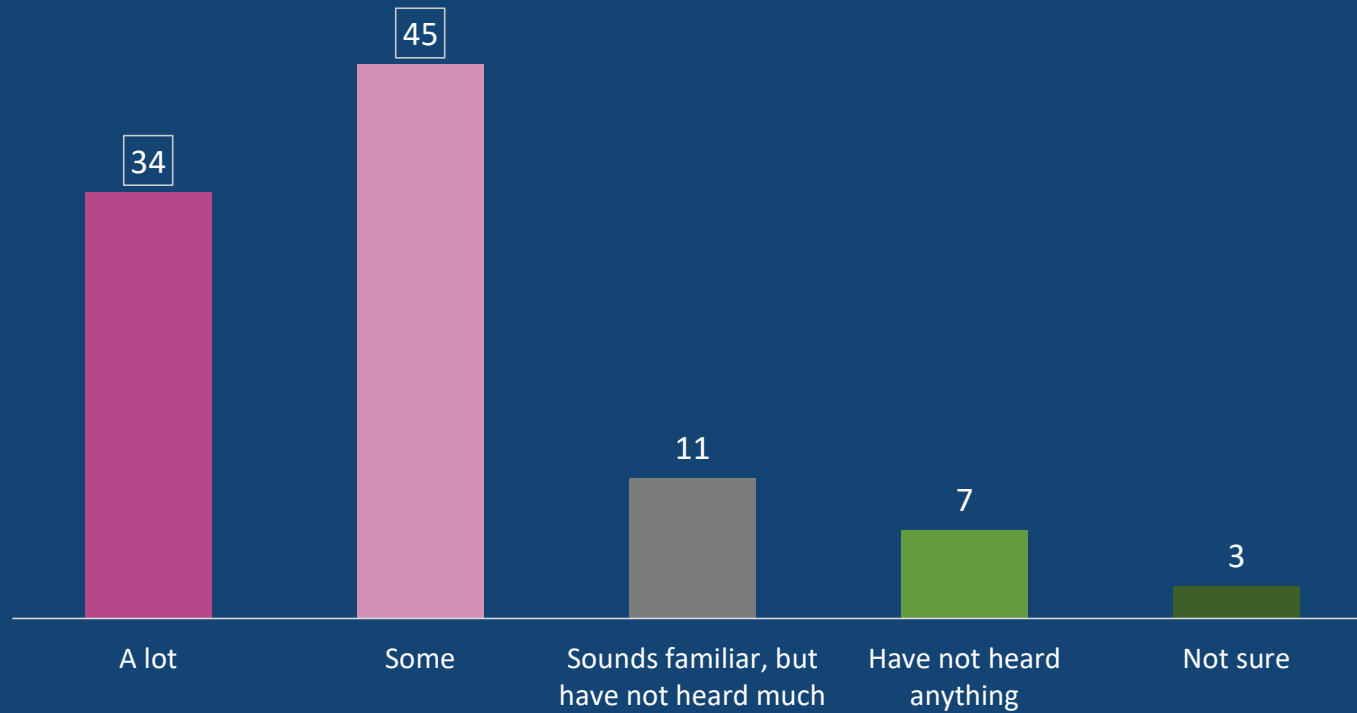
1. Central American residents are highly attuned to information about the situation in the U.S.-Mexico border as well as U.S. immigration and asylum policies, but the veracity of that information varies.
2. Both traditional and social media are highly used and trusted sources of information about the US border.
3. Disinformation about the U.S.-Mexico border is widespread with sizable segments of Central Americans hearing and believing “open border” rhetoric.
4. Rhetoric about “open borders” is encouraging Central Americans to make the journey to the U.S.-Mexico border.

# Central Americans report frequent communication with relatives in the United States – 44% speak with a relative once per week or more

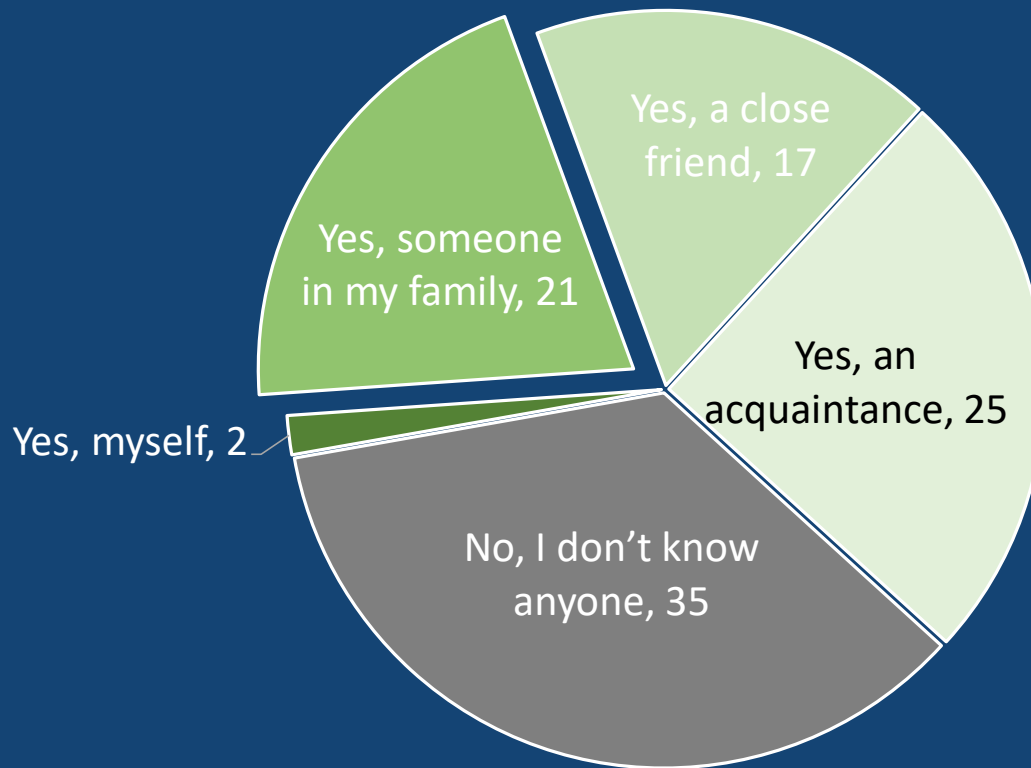
How often do you speak with people in the U.S., whether it's a family member, a friend, or someone you know?



# How much have you heard, read, or seen about the situation at the US-Mexico border?



Do you know anyone who has attempted to migrate to the US and attempt to get asylum?



# America's Voice Central America Survey:

Thinking about news and information you have heard about immigration and the US-Mexico border, please indicate if you have heard any of the following within the last 6 months

	Yes	No	DK
U.S. officials or politicians say the border is open	27%	59%	14%

**16 million in this age cohort**

**4.3 million people**

Survey of residents of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, aged 16-39

# Where did you read or hear a US politician say the “border is open”

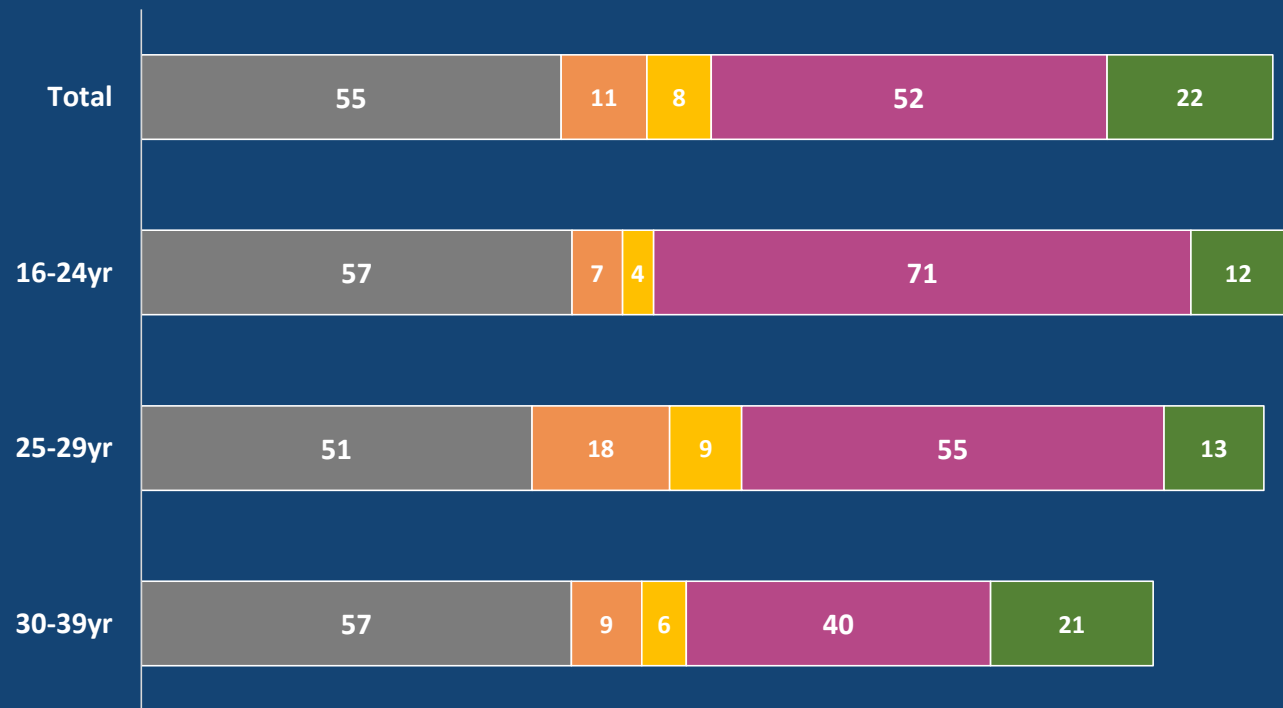
■ Television or radio

■ Newspapers (print or online)

■ WhatsApp messages

■ Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, Telegram or other social media

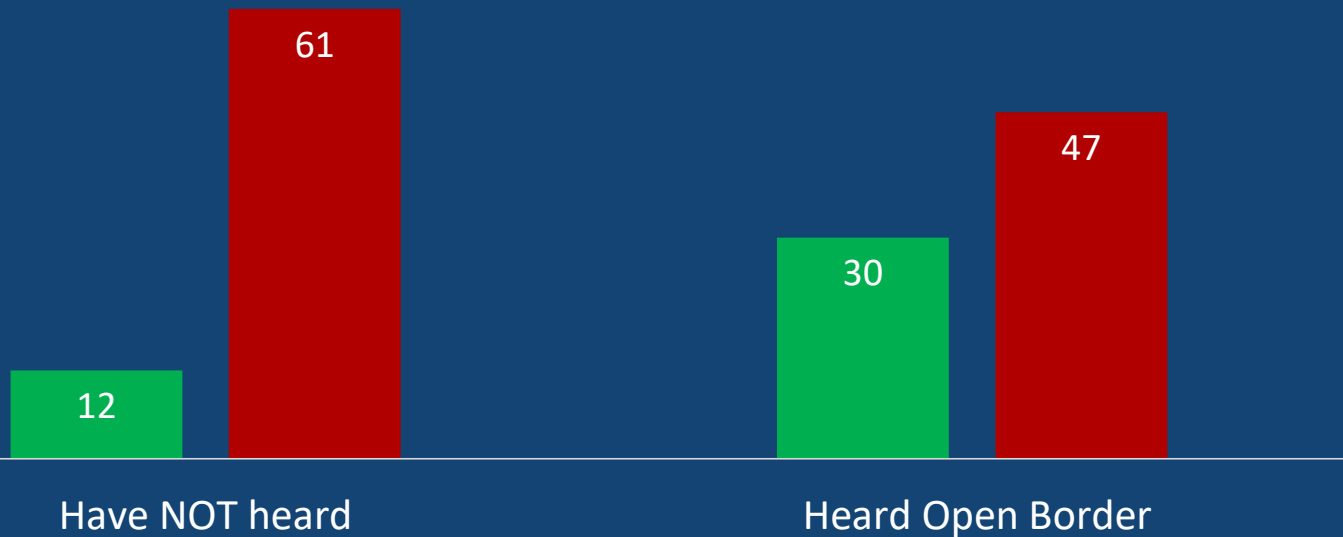
■ A family member or someone I know





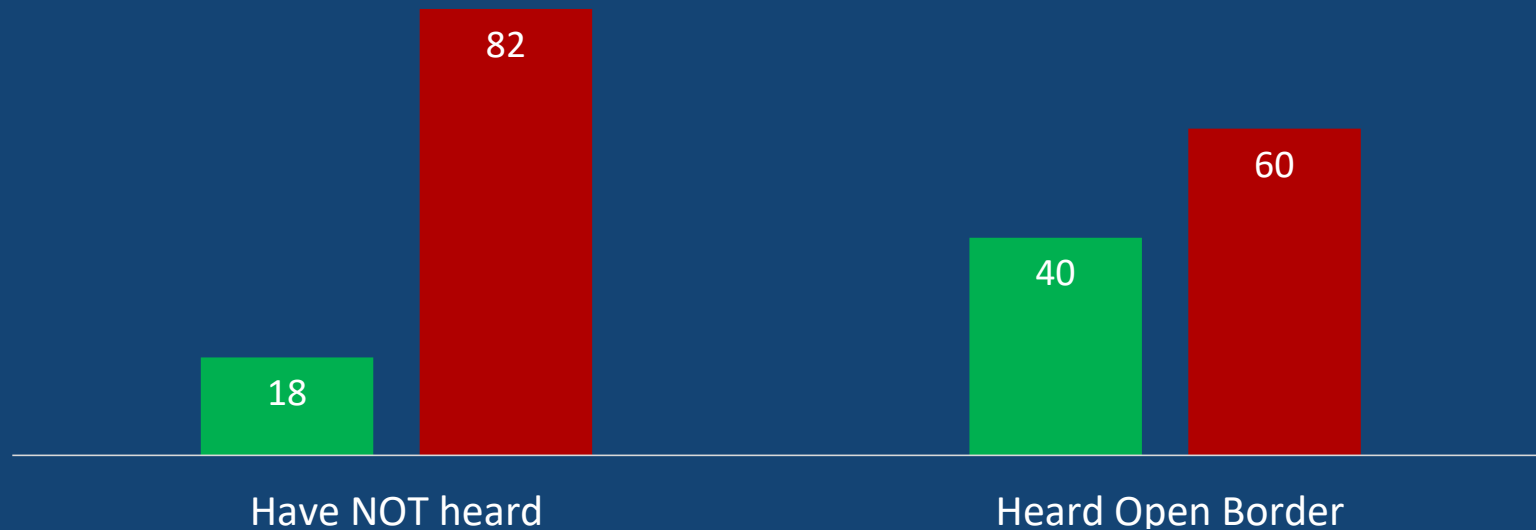
Based on what you know, which of the following do you believe to be true about U.S. border policy?

- The U.S. has policies that allow the border to be open and most migrants can apply for asylum if they make the trip to the border.
- The U.S. has policies that do NOT allow the border to be open and it is very difficult to obtain asylum, even if the migrants have made the long journey.



## Which of the following do you think is truer about U.S. border policy ?

- President Biden is laying down a welcome mat to people across the entire world saying the United States border is wide open
- The border is not open, it has not been open, and it will not be open. Anyone that arrives through unlawful entry into the U.S. will be subject to steeper consequences



# Based on what you just heard, how likely are you to consider making the trip to the United States?

Title has 42 expired and there are over 100,000 illegal immigrants on the other side of the border preparing to cross. The Biden administration is cheering it on, they want more people to come in

The border is not open, it has not been open, and it will not be open. Anyone that arrives through unlawful entry into the United States will be subject to steep consequences

	<u>Total</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	36
Unlikely to consider making the journey	49

	<u>Total</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	25
Unlikely to consider making the journey	63

# Based on what you just heard, how likely are you to consider making the trip to the United States?

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	<u>NOT heard</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	26
Unlikely to consider making the journey	58

	<u>NOT heard</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	18
Unlikely to consider making the journey	70

# Based on what you just heard, how likely are you to consider making the trip to the United States?

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	Heard open
Likely to consider making the journey	52
Unlikely to consider making the journey	34

	Heard open
Likely to consider making the journey	36
Unlikely to consider making the journey	53

# Based on what you just heard, how likely are you to consider making the trip to the United States?

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	<u>Total</u>	<u>NOT heard</u>	<u>Heard open</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	36	26	52
Unlikely to consider making the journey	49	58	34

	<u>Total</u>	<u>NOT heard</u>	<u>Heard open</u>
Likely to consider making the journey	25	18	36
Unlikely to consider making the journey	63	70	53

# Implications

1. Disinformation about the U.S.-Mexico border is widespread with sizable segments of Central Americans *hearing and believing* “open border” rhetoric.
2. All statements presented to respondents were real quotes from American politicians and officials that have been made publicly, and several have become regular talking points regarding the southern border and are widely shared on social media.
3. Rhetoric about “open borders” is encouraging Central Americans to make the journey to the U.S.-Mexico border. These effects are strongest among the 16-24 age cohort, who are most likely to consider migrating.
4. Central American residents are well aware about the dangers of a journey to the border. However, given widespread fear over violence and safety of their family, one key pull factor that influences potential migrants to consider the journey to the United States is “open border” disinformation from politicians
5. In particular, this 600-respondent poll has documented a clear correlation between exposure to false statements about “open borders”, belief it might be true, and the resulting desire to migrate, or encourage friends/family to migrate to the U.S.