

# Spatial and sociodemographic reconfigurations of the migrations from Chiapas to the United States (2009-2016)

## Reconfiguraciones espaciales y sociodemográficas de las migraciones chiapanecas a Estados Unidos (2009-2016)

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### Abstract

During the historical context of the Barack Obama administration and due to the US economic crisis (2008), this article argues that there were spatial and sociodemographic reconfigurations of undocumented migrations from Chiapas to the United States (2009-2016). Based on the review of the Emif Norte (Survey on Migration on the Northern Border), and data on the reception of remittances and Mexicans returned by the US immigration authorities, this text argues that the spatial and sociodemographic changes of these migrations implied dynamics of decreasing demographic volume of migrants, reduction in the reception of remittances, transformations of the places of origin and destination, and changes in the places and costs of border crossings. However, there were also processes of continuity in certain places of origin and destination, and in the profile and employment history of migrants. The contribution of the work is to show the Chiapas migrations as non-static socio-historical constructions and with differentiated spatial dynamics.

**Keywords:** international migration, spatial changes, migrants, Geography of migration, United States of America.

### Resumen

Durante el contexto histórico del gobierno de Barack Obama y debido a la crisis económica estadounidense (2008), este artículo argumenta que hubo reconfiguraciones espaciales y sociodemográficas de las migraciones chiapanecas indocumentadas a Estados Unidos (2009-2016). Con base en la revisión de la Emif Norte y de datos de recepción de remesas y de mexicanos devueltos por las autoridades migratorias estadounidenses, este texto discute los cambios espaciales

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y sociodemográficos de estas migraciones y cómo estos procesos implicaron dinámicas de decrecimiento del volumen demográfico de migrantes, reducción de recepción de remesas, transformaciones de los sitios de origen y destino y cambios de los lugares y costos de cruce fronterizo. No obstante, también acontecieron procesos de continuidad en ciertos lugares de origen y destino, y del perfil y antecedentes laborales de los migrantes. El aporte del trabajo es mostrar las migraciones chiapanecas como construcciones sociohistóricas no estáticas y con dinámicas espaciales diferenciadas.

Palabras clave: migración internacional, cambios espaciales, migrantes, geografía de la migración, Estados Unidos.

## Introduction

Although international migration is not new and has been related to the dynamics of modern nation states (Castles, 2008; Gregory et al., 2009), it is a current and structural part of the global transformations of the contemporary world regarding labor markets, socioeconomic changes, remittances, and cultural transformations, among others (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Lucas, 2014; Vertovec, 2014). According to data from the National Population Council (Consejo Nacional de Población [Conapo]), migration has increased worldwide since the end of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018, 2019*; Conapo, 2014). From just over 77 million migrants in 1960, they increased to more than 257 million by 2017 (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018, 2019*).

Internationally, Mexican migration to the United States of America (USA), especially irregular migration, has been one of the largest in the world (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018, 2019*). In addition, it has a long history of more than a century (Durand & Massey, 2009) and presents a geographic selectivity in the distribution of places of origin and destination (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018, 2019*; Conapo, 2012). However, due to the US economic crisis in 2008, this migration had a turning point and experienced a marked reduction (Ley Cervantes & Peña Muñoz, 2016). The above caused a change regarding the spatial, socio-demographic, and economic features that had characterized it in previous stages.

In this historical context, the objective of this article is to analyze, through the use of data from the Northern Border Migration Survey (Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México [Emif Norte]) and the receipt of remittances and returned Mexicans derived from the effects of the 2008 US economic crisis (reduction of the labor supply, increased costs of irregular border crossing and increased deportations), the spatial and socio-demographic reconfiguration of undocumented migration from Chiapas to the USA during the presidential term of Barack Obama (2009-2017). This work demonstrates that there was a process of reduction in the demographic volume of migrants, a decrease in the receipt of remittances in the places of origin, changes (and relative continuities) in the sites of origin and destination and in the labor background of migrants, as well as transformations in the places and costs of border crossing.

In this context, the research question is: what were the spatial changes in the places of origin, transit, and destination, as well as the socio-demographic transformations of the undocumented migration from Chiapas to the USA during the Obama administration? Using a quantitative methodological strategy (based on the consultation of Emif Norte

and other sources), it is argued that several changes and continuities characterized these spatial and socio-demographic reconfigurations. 1) Among the changes were a decrease in the demographic volume of migrants, a reduction in the receipt of remittances, and spatial changes in border crossing points. 2) However, there were also certain continuities: the socio-demographic profile and labor background of migrants were maintained, as well as similar spatial dynamics (of the places of origin and destination).

This article has the following structure. The introduction presents the objective, scope, and contributions of this work. This is followed by a section with the conceptual framework for the spatial conceptions of migration. Then the article describes the methodological strategy developed. After that, there is a section on the background and studies on migration in Chiapas. Next, the spatial and socio-demographic changes of this migration are presented. Particularly in this section, and according to the following sequence, the processes related to the transformations in the areas of origin of the movements to the USA, as well as the dynamics of the border crossing sites of the Chiapas migration flow and the places of destination in the USA are addressed; finally, the effects of migration to the USA in terms of family remittances in Chiapas are discussed.

One of the contributions of this work is to demonstrate that migration is a changing socio-historical construction with differentiated spatial processes (concerning the places of origin, border crossing, and destination). Different geographies of migration (related to each other) depend on the specific historical stage of migration being addressed.<sup>1</sup>

## Theoretical framework, the spatial dimension of migration

In the context of globalization, international migration, as a process of human mobility across borders and produced by various causes and motivations (Castles, 2008), involve processes of change of residence in a country other than the country of origin (Gregory et al., 2009). By taking into consideration the political, cultural, economic, and other aspects involved in these processes, multiple disciplines have addressed cross-border migration (Castles, 2008; Gregory et al., 2009), from history,

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<sup>1</sup> It also contributes by highlighting that, although economic processes and causes are essential to understanding migration (the needs of migrants, the wage gap, the costs of border crossings and the demand/restriction of labor in the labor market of the destination country), political factors are also relevant to understanding the reconfigurations of these mobilities (such as migration policies of securitization and border closures, the increase in deportations, etc.).

anthropology, and sociology<sup>2</sup> to economics and political science,<sup>3</sup> among others (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015).

Certain approaches from human geography are particularly important for this article (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Gregory et al., 2009). Hardwick (2015) states that the subdisciplines that have addressed migration are population geography, political geography, and ethnic geography. For this author, the integrative procedures of geographical science make it very suitable for the understanding and study of migration patterns, processes, territories, and experiences (Hardwick, 2015, p. 199). Furthermore, for some Anglo-Saxon approaches in geography, the spatial dimension is particularly important in the approach to migration (Gregory et al., 2009).

Thus, migration is conceived as the configuration of processes of cross-border mobilities of different populations and human groups due to different contexts of expulsion and motivations; such spatial transit processes not only involve crossing various international legal boundaries between two or more countries but also imply relocation processes in a country other than the country of origin (Gregory et al., 2009). Furthermore, from this disciplinary perspective, migration is not “naturalized” as a process that occurs and is “inseparable” from the development of certain countries and societies (Picozza & Castillo, 2021). On the contrary, it is understood as spatial dynamics that occur as part of different socioeconomic and political processes (such as, among others, the low levels of development in certain countries, the lack of labor supply and job opportunities, and low wages).

Thus, migration starts from specific places of origin (as a result of certain contexts of expulsion), moves along different transit routes (with various nodes and crossing one or more legal and political/administrative boundaries), and culminates in destination sites, where processes of socio-labor participation and residential relocation take place (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015).

Human geography, particularly in its social aspect, is characterized by spatial/temporal approaches, having approaches to different contexts (local, national, regional, and global), and from the deliberate construction of perspectives with multiple scales (micro, meso, and macro). Particularly, in this case, three main points are considered.

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<sup>2</sup> For historians, one of the points of inquiry has been how migration changes or continues over time, using conceptual devices such as periodization, historicity, long and short duration (Gabaccia, 2015). In turn, and from micro approaches with transnational and relational approaches, certain anthropological studies have investigated the relationship between human mobility processes, sociocultural changes, and ethnic identity in destination societies (Brettell, 2015; Vertovec, 2014). In contrast, sociology has focused, from perspectives such as transnationalism and segmented assimilation, on how human mobility occurs through social networks and what are the dynamics of exclusion, “assimilation” and social “integration” of migrants in the destination societies (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Economics is one of the disciplines that, from various levels (micro, meso, and macro) and with a variety of perspectives (political economy, world system theory, neoclassical economics, segmented markets, among others), has investigated migration in relation to its individual and structural causes, as well as the impacts on labor markets and the productive apparatus in countries of origin and destination (Delgado Wise et al., 2009; Gregory et al., 2009; Lucas, 2014; Márquez Covarrubias & Delgado Wise, 2012; Martin, 2015; Robinson & Santos, 2014). In contrast, for political science, and from perspectives focused on official power and government institutions, the focus has been on the role of the nation state in the administration and control of migration (especially irregular), in the context of border regimes and intricate regional geopolitical frameworks (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Hollifield & Wong, 2015).

1) On the one hand, migration, as a process of spatial mobility of human groups, presents heterogeneous and temporally delimited territorial configurations concerning the places of origin, transit/crossing, and destination.

2) The type of labor market participation and its relationship with the labor background of migrants in their localities of origin.

3) And finally, one of the most outstanding features is the disciplinary production of approaches that intentionally ponder the changing dimensions of human migration in spatial and temporal terms.

From this discipline, the main question would be: what are the socio-spatial patterns and configurations of migration (for a specific historical and regional context), and how are they spatially explained and produced? In this case, the approach focuses on the first part of the question.

## Methodological strategy and sources used

In order to analyze the spatial and socio-demographic reconfiguration of migration from Chiapas to the USA, statistical information derived from the Northern Border Migration Survey (Emif Norte) was used.<sup>4</sup> According to the Emif Norte, in the last 20 years, significant changes have been registered in the migration flows of Mexicans to the USA; until 2007, they were characterized by significant annual increases, but in 2008 they began a process of constant reduction (see Table 1).

The main cause of this drastic change was the severe economic crisis of 2008 in the USA, which affected the traditional employment sectors for Mexican migrants differently in the USA, reducing the labor supply (especially in the construction sector). Furthermore, the number of deportations of Mexicans by US immigration authorities increased. All this strongly impacted the social and economic costs of border crossing for undocumented migrants. However, as of 2017, when Donald Trump assumed the presidency of the USA, a new stage of immigration in that country began, which until then had been characterized by maintaining a certain degree of consent and tolerance. However, Trump's anti-immigrant discourses, policies, and discriminatory measures implied a new policy of rejecting labor immigration in general, especially that of Mexican origin (Picozza & Castillo, 2021).

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<sup>4</sup> This survey has been prepared since 1993 by several academic and governmental institutions, headed by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (El Colef) and with the participation of the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Consejo Nacional de Población, Unidad de Política Migratoria, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación and Secretaría de Desarrollo Social. Since then, it has become a continuous, reliable, and indispensable source of statistical information for the study of Mexican migration (<https://www.colef.mx/emif/>).

**Table 1. Migrants from Mexico and Chiapas bound for the United States and returned by us immigration authorities, 2000-2017**

Year	Migrants bound for the United States			Migrants returned by US authorities		
	National total	From Chiapas	Position at the national level	National total	From Chiapas	Position at the national level
2000	454 707	3 446	24	772 294	32 269	10
2001	405 854	4 472	22	590 733	17 448	14
2002	728 518	36 307	7	536 336	39 258	3
2003	628 175	53 827	4	426 026	36 834	3
2004	542 153	33 786	4	402 448	26 389	5
2005	708 927	60 427	2	479 368	48 745	1
2006	815 569	118 510	1	442 771	31 910	3
2007	855 682	105 419	2	536 255	51 744	2
2008	748 392	83 293	1	513 241	45 761	1
2009	630 449	47 816	4	477 707	31 564	4
2010	492 877	32 534	4	325 449	11 953	13
2011	317 105	23 212	4	238 735	7 760	12
2012	276 145	37 666	1	287 463	10 533	12
2013	280 228	24 066	3	262 226	13 419	7
2014	164 621	6 847	8	193 704	9 072	9
2015	96 136	8 376	2	163 378	6 617	10
2016	75 872	3 619	9	183 575	7 465	10

Source: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020

In the state of Chiapas, during these same years, migration to the USA also presented considerable changes. Although throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had marginal participation in the labor migration of Mexicans to the USA (Villafuerte Solís & García Aguilar, 2014), in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2000-2007), it registered a dizzying increase in the number of people from Chiapas to the USA (Villafuerte-Solís, 2015). In 2006, the flow of migrants from Chiapas to the USA was the highest in the country, surpassing other states with a long tradition of migration to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2006; see Table 1).

After 2008, despite a decrease in the flow of people from Chiapas, it continued to be ranked among the top states nationally.<sup>5</sup> In 2009 it ranked 4<sup>th</sup>; in 2012, it was again the first place nationally; in 2016, it dropped to 9<sup>th</sup> place (see Table 1).

This work focuses on the spatial and demographic reconfiguration of labor migration originating in Chiapas and destined for the USA, in a period that began after the severe economic crisis that affected the USA in 2008 and ended before the implementation of a new openly anti-immigrant policy by the US government of former President Donald Trump (2017-2020).

<sup>5</sup> Each of these phases involves changes and continuities; as migration flows increase or decrease, the sociodemographic and economic characteristics of migrants also change, in addition to the spatial features associated with these movements, both in the places of origin and destination (Castillo Ramírez & González Sánchez, 2018).

This study used the historical series of two databases generated by Emif Norte:<sup>6</sup> 1) Mexican migrants, in this case from Chiapas, whose destination is the USA; and, 2) Chiapas migrants returned by us migration authorities. Although these databases are generated yearly, the information from four specific years (2006, 2009, 2012, and 2016) was analyzed in detail for this work. The last three years cover the period of the administration of us President Barack Obama and the implementation of a new stage in the management of immigration by the us government. At the same time, the first one demonstrates the characteristics of Chiapas migration before the financial-economic crisis.

In processing the information from Emif Norte, this work aimed to highlight the spatial aspects of this migration: the place of origin of the flows, the destinations, and the places of crossing the Mexico-us border. However, other topics were also addressed: the profile of migrants from Chiapas, the characterization of the border crossing, and the description of some features of the migrants returned by the us migration authorities. Moreover, to highlight the particularities of migrants from Chiapas, some of their characteristics were compared with the total flow of Mexican migrants. In this way, it was possible to define how labor migration from Chiapas to the USA has been reconfigured.

Finally, this work also used information on the receipt of family remittances for the state of Chiapas (from 2006 to 2016). It is divided by socioeconomic region (2013-2016) since it is possible to define the differentiated growth and expansion of the places of origin of the migrants by interrelating the number of migrants and the number of remittances received.

## Background on migration from Chiapas to the United States

Mexico-us migration processes, especially those of an undocumented nature, have a long history of more than a century (Durand & Massey, 2009) and have been defined by a structural political/economic asymmetry between the countries involved (Márquez Covarrubias & Delgado Wise, 2012). For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century it has been one of the largest migration globally (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018, 2019*; Conapo, 2014; El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2006, 2013). In the last century, such migration presented clearly defined features. It was cyclical, irregular in nature, with a strong male component (in full productive age), and with a particularly well-defined spatial selectivity in terms of places of origin in Mexico and destination sites in the USA (Conapo 2012; Durand & Massey, 2009; Ley Cervantes & Peña Muñoz, 2016; Passel & Cohn, 2014).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large portion of irregular Mexican migrants heading to the USA came from the west-central part of the country, the “historical migration region” (Conapo, 2012; Durand & Massey, 2009). Southwestern Mexico had very

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<sup>6</sup> Emif Norte identifies different types of migration flows along the northern border of the country: Mexican migrants heading to the USA, Mexican migrants moving to the northern border, migrants coming from the USA, and Mexican migrants returned by us migration authorities. This is a probabilistic sample survey, whose results makes it possible to estimate the volumes of these migration flows and infer the characteristics of the different groups of migrants; it is applied to people 15 years of age and older throughout the year (<https://www.colef.mx/emif/diseno.html>).

marginal participation in Mexican migration. Particularly, Chiapas, during that century, had one of the lowest levels of migration intensity and remittance receipt rates in Mexico.

Migration from Chiapas to the USA began to be investigated much later and with less intensity. However, since the mid-2010s and to date, from various disciplines and through various scalar approaches (local, national, regional), this migration has been more studied (Castillo Ramírez & González Sánchez, 2018; Jáuregui Díaz & Ávila Sánchez, 2007; Nájera & López, 2012; Villafuerte Solís & García Aguilar, 2008).

In this framework, there are certain studies that, considering the deterioration of the productive apparatus and the Chiapas labor market and in the context of the 2000s and 2010s, have addressed irregular migration to the USA from the economic (Villafuerte Solís & García Aguilar, 2008, 2014), demographic (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2006, 2013; Escobar et al., 2006; Jáuregui Díaz & Ávila Sánchez, 2007; López Arévalo et al., 2009; Nájera & López, 2012), and geographical (Castillo Ramírez & González Sánchez, 2018) perspectives. These works have focused on the investigation of three processes: *a*) Historical-structural causes that produced the contexts of migrant expulsion and that are related to the history and development of the agricultural sector in Chiapas; *b*) Sociodemographic characterization of irregular migrants from Chiapas to the USA; *c*) Socio-spatial configurations of migration (on the processes of distribution and differentiation of places of origin and destination of migrants from Chiapas).

On the other hand, there are sociological and anthropological studies that, from local scales and using the life contexts of migrants in various regions of Chiapas (Los Altos, La Frontera, El Soconusco, La Sierra, La Comiteca Tojolabal, and others), have addressed irregular migration to the USA (Angulo, 2008; Aquino Moreschi, 2012b; Burke, 2004; Castillo Ramírez, 2017; Cruz & Barrios, 2009; Rus & Rus, 2014). These investigations, starting from the socioeconomic processes that caused the departure of people from Chiapas, have researched the dynamics of ethnic composition and migration networks (Angulo, 2008; Burke, 2004; Cruz & Barrios, 2009; Rus & Rus, 2008, 2014), and the changes derived from migration in the communities of origin (Aquino Moreschi, 2012a, 2012b; Castillo Ramírez, 2017).

## Spatial and socio-demographic changes in migration

### *Areas of origin of movements to the USA*

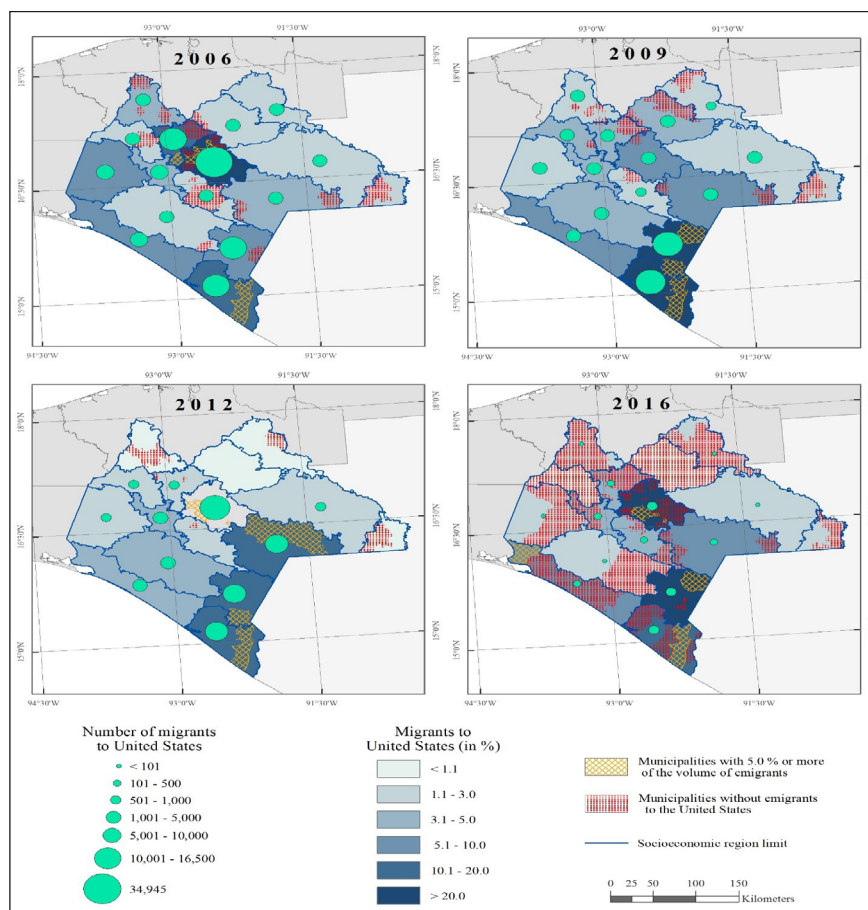
Migration from Chiapas to the USA is a recent migratory process; it was very low throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 2002 it began a rapid increase, which reached its peak in 2006, when it became the highest flow to the USA in the entire country, and then registered a continuous decrease in the volume of migrants, as in the rest of the Mexican states (see Table 1). In Chiapas, the social networks that facilitate movement are not yet fully structured, as they are in other states of the country with a greater migratory tradition.



In the period of analysis, 2009-2016, the flow of people from Chiapas to the USA decreased considerably, from 47.8 thousand people in 2009 to 3.6 thousand in 2016 (see Table 1), which implied a reduction of -13.2% annually, in a national context of a generalized decrease of Mexicans to the northern country (in the same period the total volume registered a reduction of -12.6% annually).

In terms of the areas of origin, three economic regions of Chiapas stand out as those with the highest emigration. Two of them, Soconusco and Sierra Mariscal, are in the extreme southeast of the state, on the border with Guatemala. The third region, Altos Tsotsil Tzeltal, is in the center of the state (see Figure 1). In 2009, these three regions accounted for 56.1% of the total flow, 62.6% in 2012, and 59.6% in 2016. Some municipalities in these regions stood out for their considerable volume of migrants to the USA: in the Soconusco region, Tapachula stood out; in the Sierra Mariscal region, it was Motozintla and Frontera Comalapa; and in the Central region, San Cristóbal de las Casas and Chamula. In 2012 and 2016, these municipalities accounted for more than a third of the total volume of Chiapas residents moving to the USA (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Migrants from Chiapas to the United States of America, by socioeconomic region of origin, 2006-2016**



Source: created by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

Three aspects stand out concerning the distribution of migrants from Chiapas in 2006 (before the 2008 US economic crisis). 1) The three regions above also stood out, although together, they accounted for a smaller proportion of the total outflow (43.5%), indicating that the areas of origin of migrants to the USA were less concentrated. 2) The De los Bosques region (northwest of the Tsotsil Tzeltal Highlands) likewise was the origin of a significant flow to the USA (12.3 thousand migrants, 10.4% in that year), but in the following years it was considerably reduced (in 2016 only 143 people were registered). 3) The Meseta Comiteca Tojolobal region (bordering Guatemala) did not stand out for the volume of migrants it registered in 2006. However, it did in the following years (in 2006, it accounted for 3.4%, in 2012 to 14.0% of the total volume). In this region, the municipality of Las Margaritas stands out (see Figure 1).

The profile of migrants from Chiapas to the USA for labor reasons has changed in recent years. In the first place, the flow continues to be mostly male, and the participation of women, although it has increased in recent years, continues to be low (in 2009, 5.7% of the total flow were women, and in 2016 the percentage was 12.9%). In Chiapas, this gender composition is markedly unequal, considering that in 2016, of the total flow of Mexicans to the USA, 30.3% was composed of women (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020).

Regarding age composition, migrants from Chiapas are predominantly young (in 2009, 67.60% were under 30 years old; nationally, the percentage was 43.8%), although, in recent years, this proportion has decreased (in 2016, it was 59.0%). The share of the population aged 50 and over is also increasing. The average age of migrants from Chiapas increased from 27.4 to 31.6 years between 2009 and 2016 (see Table 2).

Concerning the participation of the indigenous population in the movements to the USA in 2006, more than half of the migrants (55.6%) were people who spoke an indigenous language. Nevertheless, in the following years, that proportion first dropped drastically (in 2009 to only 14.2%) and subsequently increased markedly (in 2016, it reached 42.5%; see Table 2). Although Chiapas is one of the states with the highest proportion of indigenous population in the country (in 2010, 27.3% of its population spoke an indigenous language), in some years, its participation in outflows to the USA has been above the state average.

Respecting schooling, it is generally low. In 2016 only 63.5% had primary education. However, the population with no schooling has been significantly reduced. In 2006 it was 23.1%, while in 2016, it decreased to 7.1%. The population with professional studies increased to 5.8% in 2016. In previous years this proportion was much lower (in 2009, only 0.5% reported these school levels; see Table 2).

Regarding labor characteristics, during the period under analysis, most migrants were part of the employed economically active population (EAP). In 2009, 87.3% were employed in their place of origin; only 2.5% did not have a job, despite having looked for one. In addition, 10.1% were part of the economically inactive population (EIP), of which 4.4% were students, engaged in household chores, or retired.

**Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of people from Chiapas headed to the USA, 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of migrants	118 510	47 817	37 666	3 619
Gender (in %)				
Women	5.7	8.3	4.6	12.9
Men	94.3	91.7	95.4	87.1
Age groups (in %)				
From 15 to 29 years old	72.3	67.6	65.1	59.0
From 30 to 49 years old	26.5	30.7	33.8	29.1
From 50 to 64 years old	1.2	1.7	1.1	3.6
65 years old and over	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2
Average age (number of years)	26.9	27.4	27.5	31.3
Speakers of an indigenous language (in %)	55.6	14.2	28.7	42.5
Last school level passed (in %)				
None	23.1	8.4	10.5	7.1
Primary	57.5	56.1	60.9	63.5
Middle school	14.9	26.9	23.4	17.4
High school	3.7	7.9	4.8	6.3
Technical studies with middle school	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.0
Professional and postgraduate	0.2	0.5	1.0	5.8

Source: calculations by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

This composition was modified by 2016 when the employed EAP decreased to 69.6%, the unemployed EAP increased to 10.1%, and the EIP increased to 20.2% (see Table 3). Thus, migration from Chiapas to the USA has recently incorporated sectors of the population that did not have jobs in their place of origin. These labor characteristics can also be recognized at the national level, although more evidently. For example, in 2016, the proportion of EIP comprised 49.7% of all Mexican migrants to the USA, unemployed EAP was 18.0% and employed EAP comprised only 32.2% (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020).

Agricultural activities remain the most important economic occupation of migrants from Chiapas in their place of origin. In 2016, this category comprised 71.3% of the employed EAP, a proportion that, although reduced (in 2006, it was 80.7%), continues to define the labor characteristics of the flows to the USA. In second place was the service sector, with 16.5%, a proportion that increased compared to that registered in 2009 (7.1%). In addition, the construction sector, with 9.8%, is a proportion that has also decreased (see Table 3). In comparison, at the national level, the agricultural sector only represented 31.9% of the total volume, while 32.9% worked in service sector activities (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020).

**Table 3. Labor characteristics of migrants from Chiapas headed to the USA, 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of migrants	118 510	47 817	37 666	3 619
Employment status in the place of origin (in %)				
Employed economically active population (EAP) <sup>a</sup>	82.7	87.3	93.7	69.6
Unemployed EAP	10.5	2.5	1.0	10.1
Economically inactive population (EIP) <sup>b</sup>	0.9	4.4	0.0	4.5
EIP due to other reasons <sup>c</sup>	5.9	5.7	5.2	15.8
Labor activity sector in the place of origin (in %) <sup>d</sup>				
Agriculture and Livestock	80.7	74.6	75.0	71.3
Manufacturing	2.7	1.2	1.6	1.6
Construction	8.7	14.9	12.9	9.8
Trade	2.3	2.0	4.8	0.7
Transportation	1.6	2.6	2.6	6.9
Food preparation services <sup>e</sup>	1.1	1.1	1.0	5.9
Repair and maintenance services <sup>f</sup>	1.9	1.9	1.4	2.9
Other services <sup>g</sup>	1.1	1.5	0.7	0.8

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Includes people who worked in the last 30 days in the place where they lived and people who did not work but had a job.

<sup>b</sup> Includes the population of students, people engaged in household chores, and retirees.

<sup>c</sup> Includes the population that did not work, were not students, retired, or engaged in household chores.

<sup>d</sup> The percentage is regarding the total employed EAP.

<sup>e</sup> Includes the temporary housing sector.

<sup>f</sup> Includes personal services and domestic employees.

<sup>g</sup> Includes educational, health, professional, financial, leisure, storage, business support, and governmental activities.

Source: calculations by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

Within the service sector, most migrants from Chiapas worked in transportation (6.9% in 2016; basically drivers), food preparation (5.9%), repair, maintenance, personal services, and as domestic employees (2.9%; see Table 3). Low-level and low-paying jobs do not require high school qualifications.

### *Border-crossing areas of the Chiapas migration flow*

The flow of people from Chiapas to the USA has been an undocumented process; until 2012, only a minimal proportion (2.1%) reported having migratory documents to enter the USA. In 2016, although this sector increased to 15.7% (11.9% reported having a passport with a tourist visa), it remained a minor proportion. This figure contrasts with the situation registered by the rest of the flow of Mexicans heading to the USA, as 64.3% (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020) had some migratory document to enter the northern country in 2016. Most migrants from Chiapas cross

into the USA through border cities in the state of Sonora, which in 2009 accounted for 89.0% of the flow. In second place, they prefer the cities of Chihuahua (4.9%) and Baja California (4.1%), and very few did so through Tamaulipas or Coahuila.

By 2016, certain cities in Sonora continued to be the main entry route, although they accounted for a smaller proportion (77.2%); this change increased the flow through cities in other states, mainly those in Chihuahua (8.6%) and Baja California (6.6%). In addition, there was an increase in the flow of people from Chiapas arriving in the USA through the cities of Tamaulipas (to 5.3%; see Table 4), as it was previously a route that was practically not used. The main reason for deciding on the route to the USA was the ease of crossing (in 2009, it comprised 89.6% of the total). By 2016, this continued to be the main reason, but with a lower proportion (64.1%) and migrants who let guides (“coyotes”) decide the location of the border crossing increased (19.2%). These proportions differ from those of 2006 (the year with the highest flow of people from Chiapas headed to the USA), when the main route for border crossing was the decision of the “coyote” (64.3%) and a lower proportion (27.8%) for the ease of crossing (see Table 4).

Most people from Chiapas traveled alone. In 2016 it was 65.2%, which implies that the remaining 34.8% traveled accompanied. Although these proportions registered small variations in 2009, what did change was the number of companions during the trip; in these years, the number of people who traveled in groups to the USA was reduced. In 2009, 10.2 % of migrants traveled in the company of five or more people; by 2016, this proportion had decreased to 2.5%.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, the proportion of people from Chiapas who hired a guide (“coyote” or “pollero”) to cross has changed. In 2009 the figure was 67.5%, but in 2016 it decreased to 39.8%, meaning that 60.2% made the trip without help. In addition, regarding the place where the contact with the guide was made, in 2009, 46.1% had not yet made the deal, another 29.6% hired help in the border crossing city, and 17.5% in the place where they lived. By 2016, this distribution was altered: 29.4% contacted the guide on the trip to the border city, 20.5% in the USA, 20.7% had not yet done so, and 18.5% did so in the border crossing city (see Table 5).

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<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, those who traveled accompanied by one or two people increased from 16.3% to 29.2% in those same years. This situation differs from that of 2006, when only 14.2% of travel was solitary and the majority of those who traveled accompanied did so in groups of 10 or more people (35.2%; see Table 4). For most migrants from Chiapas, 94.0% in 2009, this was the first attempt to enter the USA for labor reasons, although this proportion has been reduced: in 2016 it was 74.9% (see Table 4), which demonstrates the limited migratory experience of the flow of migrants originating in Chiapas.

**Table 4. Characteristics of migrant border crossings from Chiapas to the USA 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of migrants	118 510	47 817	37 666	3 619
Do you have documents to cross?				
Yes	0.3	0.5	2.1	15.7
No	99.7	99.5	97.9	84.3
Which Mexican city will you cross from? (in %)				
From cities in Baja California	5.5	4.1	11.4	6.6
From cities in Sonora	89.5	89.0	84.3	77.2
From cities in Chihuahua	0.3	4.9	0.2	8.6
From cities in Coahuila	3.4	0.9	3.1	0.0
From cities in Nuevo León	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
From cities in Tamaulipas	0.8	0.9	0.9	5.3
Not specified	0.4	0.1	0.1	2.3
What was your main reason for choosing that city to cross from? (in %)				
Proximity to the place where you are going	3.4	3.1	3.9	7.6
Proximity to the place of origin	0.6	0.5	0.6	4.4
Ease of crossing	27.8	89.6	86.0	64.1
Decision to have a guide or <i>coyote</i>	64.3	3.8	8.5	19.2
Support from family and friends	3.1	2.0	0.6	0.5
Other	0.4	0.4	0.2	3.6
How many people are accompanying you on this trip (in %)?				
Alone	14.2	61.4	64.8	65.2
1 or 2	12.6	16.3	19.2	29.2
3 or 4	8.1	12.0	8.1	3.0
5 to 9	29.8	10.2	7.3	2.5
10 or more	35.2	0.0	0.6	0.0
In total, how many times have you crossed into the USA to work or look for work (in %)?				
None	89.8	94.0	91.5	74.9
1 or 2	5.9	4.4	6.5	18.2
3 or 4	1.9	1.2	1.3	3.7
5 to 9	2.4	0.3	0.5	0.0
10 or more	0.0	0.0	0.2	3.2

Source: calculations by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

The difference concerning 2006, when 70.2% of people from Chiapas made contact from their place of origin, stands out. The cost of travel to the USA increased 2.3 times over the period. In 2009, an average of 1 865 dollars was paid, with a little more than half, 51.5%, paying between one thousand and two thousand dollars, and

another 42.5% paying between two thousand and three thousand dollars. In 2016, on the other hand, the average cost increased to 4 418 dollars, and 60.0% paid more than four thousand dollars.

**Table 5. Characteristics of hiring a border crossing guide, 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of migrants	118 510	47 817	37 666	3 619
Did you or will you hire someone to help you cross the border (in %)?				
Yes	88.8	67.5	80.2	39.8
No	10.9	31.9	19.8	60.2
Where did you make, or will you make, contact with the person who will help you cross the border? (in %) <sup>a</sup>				
Where you live	70.2	17.5	11.5	10.8
On the way to the border crossing city	4.5	3.7	0.5	29.4
In the border crossing city	23.0	29.6	46.6	18.5
In the United States	0.3	1.5	3.7	20.5
Not hired (not yet decided)	2.0	46.1	37.7	20.7
No response	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0
How much did you agree to pay? (in %) <sup>b</sup>				
< \$1,000	2.3	2.2	2.2	6.7
From \$1 000 to \$1 999	64.8	51.5	22.0	9.3
From \$2 000 to \$2 999	32.1	42.5	53.9	2.6
From \$3 000 to \$3 999	0.8	1.9	21.2	21.4
\$4 000 or more	0.0	0.2	0.6	60.0
Average cost of crossing the border (in dollars)	1 671	1 865	2 329	4 418

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Percentage of migrants who hired people to help them cross the border

<sup>b</sup> Percentage of the total number of people who paid to cross the border

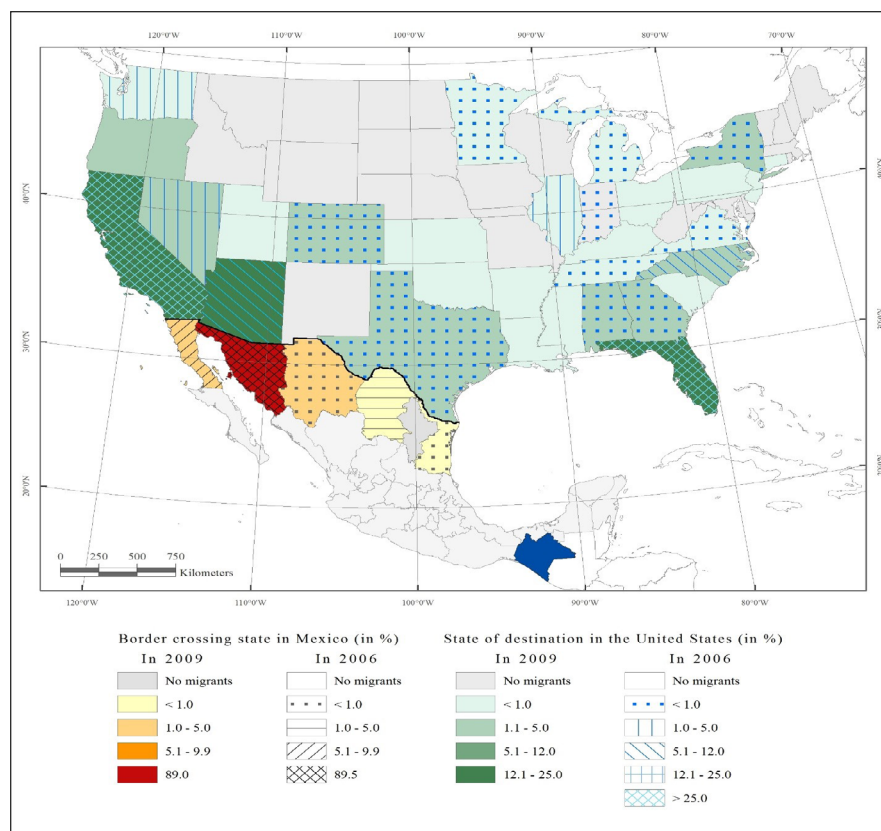
Source: calculations by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

### *Destinations of people from Chiapas in the USA*

The places where people from Chiapas move to in the USA have also changed. In 2009 they went mainly to California (20.6%), Florida (17.0%), and Arizona (14.7%). Other significant destinations were Georgia (3.3%) and North Carolina (3.0%; see Figure 2). By 2016, the top three destinations reduced their share, California to 12.7%, Arizona to 13.5%, and Florida with the largest decrease, to 6.6%. Texas (with 7.3%) and Kansas

(with 5.3%) were added that year. Georgia remained a secondary destination (with 4.3% of the flow), but North Carolina no longer registered migrants from Chiapas (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 2. Border crossing state and state of destination in the United States of migrants from Chiapas, 2006 and 2009**



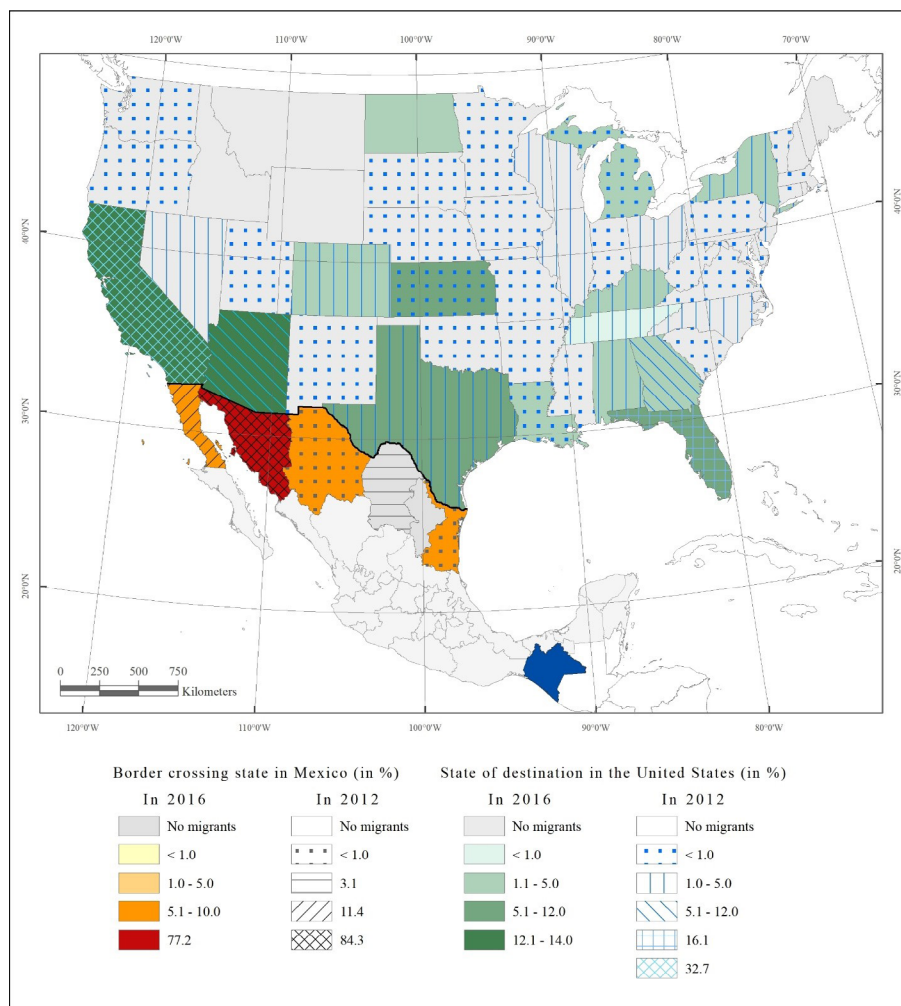
Source: calculations by the author based on information from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019

Moreover, when considering the total number of states to which migrants from Chiapas have gone, between 2006 and 2012, the flow tended to disperse. In 2006 they were distributed in 18 states, in 2009, in 29, and in 2012 in 40 (although 16 received less than 100 migrants). However, in 2016, this dispersion contracted, as they only went to sixteen states (only 8 received more than 100 migrants from Chiapas; see Figures 2 and 3). It should also be noted that the proportion of migrants who do not have a clearly identified destination in the USA has increased. In 2006 it comprised only 5.7% of the total flow; in 2009, it rose to 26.5%, and in 2016 to 35.5% (see Table 6).

<sup>8</sup> The differences with respect to 2006 stand out, when the main destinations were California (with 34.0%) and Florida (with 26.6%), while North Carolina registered 11.8% and Arizona 9.0%, and were secondary destinations.



**Figure 3. Border crossing state and state of destination in the United States of migrants from Chiapas, 2009 and 2016**



Source: calculations by the author based on information from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019

This information is complemented by the proportion of migrants who have a fixed place of arrival at their destination. In 2006 it comprised 92.8%, but in 2009 it dropped to 64.9% and in 2016 to 58.2% (see Table 6). In addition, although the proportion of migrants who already have a secure job at their destination has increased (from 1.7% in 2006 to 16.1% in 2016), migrants who move to look for work in the USA continue to predominate (from 81.4% in 2006 to 53.6% in 2016; see Table 6).

**Table 6. Work and sojourn characteristics of Chiapas migrants in the United States, 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of migrants	118 510	47 817	37 666	3 619
Are you going to any city in particular (in %)?				
Yes	93.6	73.5	89.1	63.2
No	5.7	26.5	10.5	35.5
At your final destination, do you have a fixed place to arrive (in %)?				
Yes	92.8	64.9	73.5	58.2
No	6.9	35.1	26.4	41.8
At your final destination, do you have a secure job (in %)?				
Yes	1.7	4.8	1.4	16.1
No	14.2	12.5	17.5	16.5
The person will cross the border to look for work	81.4	81.4	79.4	53.6
Economic sector in which you plan to work in the USA (in %)				
Agricultural and livestock activities	60.2	30.8	43.7	13.4
Construction	9.0	13.3	14.8	18.6
Industry	4.5	0.9	1.9	0.0
Trade	0.5	2.5	1.8	3.0
Services	0.7	11.2	21.4	3.0
Other	5.6	12.3	10.2	0.0
In any economic sector (not defined)	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.7
Multiple reasons to cross into the USA	1.6	1.1	1.6	13.8
No response	17.3	27.8	0.4	0.0
Expected length of stay in the USA (in %)				
Less than one year	0.4	1.5	2.9	6.6
One year	0.8	9.2	7.3	0.0
Two years	0.9	12.1	12.0	9.1
Three or more years	1.3	7.3	21.7	10.2
As long as possible	92.5	67.2	55.9	66.0
Forever	0.7	0.5	0.1	0.5
No response	3.4	1.7	0.1	7.6

Source: calculations by the author based on information on the flow of migrants from the south to the USA (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

Regarding the economic sector in which they plan to work in the USA, agricultural and livestock activities continue to be the main economic sector, although in recent years it has decreased (in 2006 it comprised 60.2%, 30.8% in 2009, and 13.4% in 2016). The second sector is construction (in 2009, it comprised 13.3% and 18.6% in 2016). However, in 2016 nearly half of the migrants from Chiapas (47.7%) contemplated working in any economic sector (see Table 6).

Considering the expectation of permanence in the USA, most migrants from Chiapas stated that their stay would be for as long as they could (in 2016, the figure comprised 66.0% of the total). The proportion migrating to work in the USA for less

than a year was low (6.6% in that same year, although it increased in previous years), and 19.3% sought to stay a year or more. These values differ from the length of stay expectations of the rest of the Mexican flow to the USA, mainly among those seeking to stay less than one year (26.3%) and one year or more (12.3%; El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020). People from Chiapas will try to stay in the USA longer than other Mexicans.

Throughout the period under analysis, the total flow of Mexican migrants returned by the immigration authorities of the United States increased notably as these authorities implemented an efficient surveillance strategy along the southern border of the United States. This strategy allowed them to identify undocumented migrants, detain them, and deport them (see Table 1). This was also the case for migrants from Chiapas, although with some variations. Thus, in 2006, the number of people from Chiapas returned by the migration authorities was slightly more than a quarter (26.9%); by 2009, it had increased to 66.0%. However, by 2012 it had decreased to 28.0% (in that year, the volume of people from Chiapas heading to the USA increased and was the main outflow at the national level), but by 2016 the volume of returned migrants from Chiapas had doubled (206.3%), as occurred at the national level, although by 2014 it had already surpassed the number of migrants heading to the USA (see Table 7).

In this context, most people from Chiapas were detained before reaching their destination. In 2016 about half (49.4%) were caught in the desert or mountain, another quarter (26.7%) crossing the border, and another significant proportion on the street or highway (12.2%). In comparison, in 2009, the majority (78.4%) were arrested in the desert or mountains. In general, these figures contrast with what occurred in 2006, when the identification of undocumented migrants took place in other circumstances (40.9% occurred in a place other than those considered in the survey and 23.4% on the street or highway; see Table 7).

Regarding the length of stay in US territory, it is noteworthy that most migrants stay a short time, less than a week, before being detained. In 2009 the figure was 92.5%, and in 2016 it decreased to 70.4%, and the proportion of migrants who managed to stay more than a week but less than a month (in 2016 it was 10.5%) and those who managed to stay more than a month, but less than a year (9.1%; see Table 7) had increased. Faced with the authorities' operations in the United States, Mexican migrants have generated strategies that enable them to stay longer in the USA, which implies longer and more dangerous access routes. In terms of the number of times migrants have been captured in the USA, the flow from Chiapas to the USA has changed. First, the number of migrants crossing the border for the first time has been reduced; in 2006, it represented 91.3% and 56.3% in 2016.

**Table 7. Characteristics of migrants from Chiapas returned by the immigration authorities of the United States, 2006-2016**

Indicator	2006	2009	2012	2016
Volume of returned migrants	31 910	31 564	10 533	7 465
Place of arrest by immigration authorities (in %)				
Crossing the border	16.3	11.5	30.2	26.7
Desert or mountain	19.2	78.4	48.5	49.4
Street or road	23.4	4.9	15.7	12.2
Job	0.2	1.7	1.2	0.0
Home	0.0	2.0	1.3	0.2
Other	40.9	1.3	0.0	1.5
No response	0.0	0.2	3.1	9.9
How long the person stayed in the USA (in %)				
Less than one day	29.5	23.5	12.8	18.5
Less than one week	68.6	69.0	59.6	51.9
Less than one month	0.6	1.8	12.9	10.5
Less than one year	0.4	1.6	3.8	9.1
One or more years	1.0	3.8	7.8	0.0
No response	0.0	0.2	3.1	9.9
Number of times captured and returned in their lifetime (in %)				
First time crossing	91.3	82.4	65.1	56.3
One	6.5	13.0	20.8	20.3
Two	1.8	3.4	8.4	9.7
Three or more	0.1	0.9	2.5	7.3
No response	0.2	0.2	3.1	6.4
The person plans to return to the USA someday to work or look for a job (in %)				
The person plans to cross into the USA in the next 7 days	93.8	76.0	23.0	13.3
The person plans to cross into the USA in the next three months	0.0	0.0	10.4	7.6
Yes	2.2	4.3	28.0	17.5
No	4.1	17.9	33.5	48.8
The person does not know	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.0
No response	0.0	1.8	3.4	10.9
Will you return home immediately or remain at the border?				
The person plans to cross into the USA in the next 7 days	93.8	76.0	23.0	13.3
The person will return home	5.3	21.7	64.5	60.8
The person will remain at the border	0.9	2.1	9.1	11.2
Another state, municipality, or locality	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2
No response	0.0	0.2	3.4	10.5

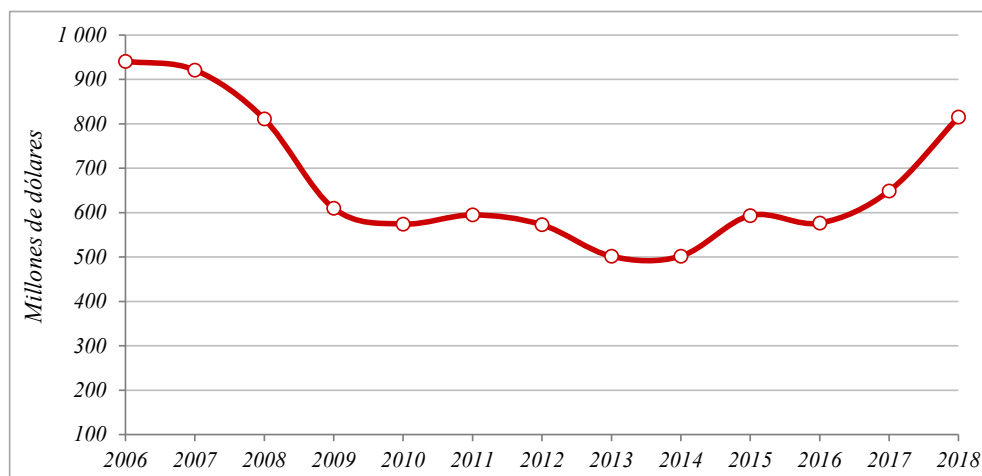
Source: calculations by the author based on information on migrants returned by us immigration authorities (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2019)

At the same time, the proportion of those who have been deported has increased. Since 2012 the proportion of people from Chiapas who have been detained once comprised one-fifth (20.8%), and increasing proportions reported having two (9.7% in 2016) or more deportations (7.3%; see Table 7).<sup>9</sup>

### *The effects of migration to the USA: family remittances in Chiapas*

There was a marked decrease in the receipt of remittances between 2006 and 2009, from \$940.8 million in 2006 (the maximum amount sent to Chiapas and coinciding with the year with the highest flow of people from Chiapas to the USA) to \$609.7 million in 2009. After that, between 2009 and 2012, the volume of remittances fluctuated slightly. In the following two years, it decreased again. In 2013 the lowest volume of remittances was registered (with 501.8 million dollars), but from 2015 onwards, a recovery began, with an increase in remittances. In 2018, the volume of remittances was similar to that received ten years earlier (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Receipt of family remittances in Chiapas, 2006-2018**



Source: Sistema de Información Económica, 2019a

On the other hand, although in some years, Chiapas occupied first place nationally for the flow of migrants to the USA, this situation has not been reflected in the amounts of family remittances received in the state. Chiapas has never been among the main

<sup>9</sup> In terms of the plans of returned migrants from Chiapas, the proportion of people who will attempt to cross again in the next seven days has been dramatically reduced (in 2006 the figure was 93.8%, 76.0% in 2009, and only 13.3% in 2016). However, there has been an increase in the proportion who will seek to cross over a longer period (in 2006 it represented 2.2%, 4.3% in 2009, and 25.1% in 2016). What is striking is the huge proportion of people who will not attempt to re-enter the USA. In 2016 the figure was almost half (48.8%; see Table 7) of the volume of returned migrants from Chiapas. This information is complemented by their plans for what they will do once they are in Mexico, in 2016 it stands out that 60.8% will return home, a proportion that increased notably in relation to 2006 (only 5.3%), and 11.2% will remain at the border, a figure that also increased compared to previous years, and 4.2% will go to a place other than their home (see Table 7).

receiving states. In 2006 and 2009, it ranked eleventh, with a very low amount compared to Michoacán or Guanajuato, states with a long tradition of migrating to the USA. In 2013, Chiapas ranked thirteenth; in 2016, it dropped to twentieth. On analyzing the distribution of family remittance receipt in the interior of Chiapas, it can be linked to the places of origin of migrants to the USA. It should be noted that since 2013, Banco de México has presented for the first time disaggregated information at the municipal level on the receipt of family remittances throughout the country, which is why this topic is limited to the period between 2013 and 2016.

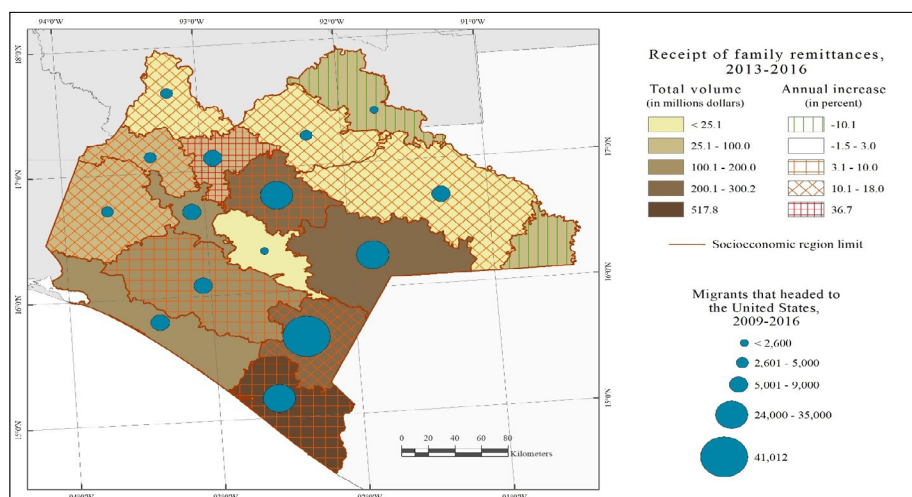
The socioeconomic regions that stand out for receiving the highest volumes of remittances also sent the most migrants to the USA. However, this relationship is not entirely direct. For example, the Soconusco region received USD 517.8 million in remittances in four years, almost double that of the Sierra Mariscal region (USD \$273.7 million).

However, between 2009 and 2016, the number of migrants from the Sierra Mariscal region to the USA (41.0 thousand people, the largest number of migrants in Chiapas) was higher than that from the Soconusco region (34.4 thousand). The Soconusco, Sierra Mariscal, and Meseta Comiteca Tojolobal regions together accounted for 50.2% of remittances received by the state (see Figure 5).

The other region that stands out is the Altos Tsotsil Tzeltal, with 11.1% of the state's total.

The four regions that receive the lowest volumes of family remittances are in the center and north of the state, accounting for 3.2% of the total. For its part, the Mayan region registers a particular situation; it was the region that registered the lowest flow of migrants to the USA (only 1.7 thousand) between 2009 and 2016 and was the only one that recorded a decrease in remittances (-10.1% annually between 2013 and 2016). However, due to the volume of remittances received (4.1%), it ranks above other regions with higher flows of migrants to the USA.

**Figure 5. Receipt of family remittances in Chiapas, 2013-2016, and migrants that headed to the United States of America, 2009-2016, by socioeconomic region**



Source: created by the author based on information from Sistema de Información Económica (2019b) and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al. (2019)

## Conclusions

1) In this work, the dynamics of the spatial and socio-demographic changes of the undocumented migration from Chiapas to the USA (2009-2016) were described, particularly concerning the places of origin, as well as the processes of border crossing sites and destination areas in the USA. Also, the socio-demographic profile of migrants and the impacts of migration were addressed concerning family remittances in Chiapas. One of the article's contributions is the approach to migration from different levels (origin, transit, and destination), which offers a more complex vision of this irregular and cross-border mobility process.<sup>10</sup> The above makes it possible to have a more heterogeneous perspective (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Hardwick, 2015), which moves away from the idea that it is a spatially homogeneous, sociodemographically static, and nonhistorical phenomenon. Conversely, depending on the historical period studied, there are different behaviors in terms of the diverse places of origin (the Chiapas regions), as well as the varied destinations in the USA (a clear selectivity is observed at this point) and changes in the number and profile of migrants.

The above is consistent with what various authors have pointed out concerning how migration is a dynamics with multiple aspects (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Castles, 2008; Vertovec, 2014); and must be treated jointly by various disciplinary perspectives; both in the consideration of the social and political order (Hollifield & Wong, 2015), as well as the temporal (Gabaccia, 2015) and spatial dimensions (Hardwick, 2015). This text contributes to the knowledge of the changing and differentiated geographies of migration at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly concerning the migration flows of Chiapas (on the places of origin and destination).

2) On the other hand, regarding the findings, areas of research related to the proposed approach emerge. One would be to carry out similar inquiries for other states as places of origin of migrants, particularly for the southeast of Mexico (of special interest would be the cases of Quintana Roo, Yucatán, Campeche, and Tabasco). As some migration studies have previously pointed out (*Anuario de migración y remesas México 2018*, 2019; Conapo, 2012; Durand & Massey, 2009), it is necessary to know more precisely what happens in these states that do not have a long history/tradition of migration (Castillo Ramírez & González Sánchez, 2018).

On the other hand, another area of inquiry is to see how, in contexts of precarious socio-material conditions in the places of origin, the alteration in irregular cross-border migration flows is also related to and impacts the growth (and sometimes resurgence) of internal migration processes. In the case of Chiapas, following the reduction of migration to the USA due to the contraction of labor supply (due to the 2008 crisis) and the increase in crossing costs, internal migration processes emerged (Villafuerte-Solís, 2015).<sup>11</sup>

3) Finally, works such as this reinforce the idea of migration as a socio-spatial construction with a marked political/economic and historical character (Gabaccia, 2015; Martin, 2015). Thus, migration, when observed from different scales in the places

<sup>10</sup> However, there are also limits to the study, especially in relation to the scope of Emif Norte since a survey cannot exhaust the complexity of the migration process over time and space.

<sup>11</sup> For example, other previous internal migration processes that were directed toward labor markets in southern Mexico, in Playa del Carmen, and Cancun reappeared (Villafuerte-Solís, 2015; Villafuerte Solís & García Aguilar, 2014).

of origin (at the state level or regions of a state or municipality) (Hardwick, 2015), far from being a homogeneous and static process, is heterogeneous, differentiated, and changing. This work has demonstrated that, beyond behaving as a unit, the different regions of origin in Chiapas had differentiated behaviors in the number of migrants they had.

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