



**Understanding return migration to
Mexico: towards a comprehensive
policy for the reintegration of
returning migrants**

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1. Introduction: motivation of the study

1.1 A new trend in Mexican migration

Mexico is the leading country of origin for U.S immigrants in its history. Annual immigration flows from this country reached their peak in 2000, when 700,000 Mexicans came to this country. In 2007, the peak year, 12.5 million Mexican-born immigrants were living here¹. Their influx had been extremely rapid; a mere 760,000 lived here in 1970.²

Yet, even while the size of the Mexican-born population reached its climax in 2007 Mexican migration flows were already in sharp decline while a considerable number of immigrants were returning or considering a return to their country of origin.

From mid 2005 to mid 2010, the U.S. experienced “zero net migration from Mexico”³ (possibly even negative net migration), a phenomenon that had not been observed since the 1930s when many Mexican migrants were expelled or forced to return to their country of origin as a result of the Great Depression. From 2005 to 2010, 1.37 million Mexicans arrived in the U.S., compared with 2.94 million a decade earlier, from 1995 to 2000.

At the same time, between 2005 and 2010 1.39 million people moved from the U.S. to Mexico. A great proportion of them were returning migrants -- that is, people born in Mexico who had lived in the U.S. at some point but were back in their country of origin with or without an intention to migrate again. In 2010 there were

¹ See: Pew Hispanic Center. *Indicators of Recent Migration Flows from Mexico*. Washington DC., May 30th, 2007. Available at: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2011/09/33.pdf>. Last accessed, December 12th, 2013.

² See: González-Barrera, Ana; and Hugo López, Mark. *A Demographic Portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the U.S.* Washington: DC: Pew Hispanic Center. May 1, 2013. Available at: http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/05/2013-04_Demographic-Portrait-of-Mexicans-in-the-US.pdf. Last accessed December 12th, 2013.

³ Passel, D’Vera Cohn and González Barrera. *Net Migration from México Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Available at: http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/04/Mexican-migrants-report_final.pdf. Last accessed on June 29th, 2013.

985,000 returning migrants, almost four times more than the 2000 figure of 280,000⁴.

Along with the migrants were their U.S.-born family members.. By 2010 the U.S. born population living in Mexico was 739,000, up from 343,000 in 2000. Of those, 570 thousand were under 18 years of age⁵. As experts on Mexican migration explained, the large increase in the number of U.S-born minors in Mexico is a reflection of the fact that many Mexican migrants had settled for longer periods of time in the U.S. than was typical in earlier eras and thus had formed families there.⁶ More than 80 percent of the Mexican immigrant population today has been in the U.S. for more than five years and 51.9 percent has been here for 15 years or more⁷. Thus, as the phenomenon of return migration intensified in recent years, so did the arrival into Mexico of a large number of U.S- born minors. It is estimated that 300,000 such minors moved to Mexico between 2005 and 2010 alone⁸.An additional part of the U.S. population that moved to Mexico in recent years includes young adults, 70 percent of whom, are still living at least with one Mexican parent.⁹

Because of its intensity and the characteristics of the returnee population, the return migration phenomenon that has arisen in recent years presents serious challenges and opportunities for both Mexico and the U.S. It is of the utmost importance both countries, formulate and implement policies capable of addressing it.

The numbers of returnees are still small in relation to the large Mexican-born population that settled in the U.S. in recent decades and still remains there,¹⁰..Yet, the phenomenon is already significant enough to have major implications for Mexico.

This country has been unable to generate enough salaried jobs, that is jobs in the formal economy, for its estimated one million entrants to its workforce¹¹ every year. For years, emigration to the U.S acted as a safety valve compensating for the limitations of its labor market and limiting the danger of social instability posed by unemployment and underemployment,. In practice, Mexico followed what Agustín

⁴ Masferrer, Claudia; Perdizini, Carla; Passel, Jeffrey S.; and Livingston, Gretchen. Chapter 1. Demographics. In Latapí, Agustín Escobar. Binational Dialogue on Mexican Migrants in the U.S. and Mexico. Ciesas p. 5.

⁵ Ibid p. 6

⁶ Ibid. P.6.

⁷ Ibid. Figure 2.

⁸ Ibid. p.8

⁹ Ibid. p.8.

¹⁰ In 2011 the Mexican born population in the U.S. was 11.7 million, representing 29% of the foreign born population and still by far the largest immigrant group to this country.

¹¹ It is estimated that every year Mexico adds around one million new entrants to its workforce, yet its economy only generated around 400,000 to 500,000 new salaried jobs annually. See: See: Gustavo Merino, Policy Forum: Creating More and Better Jobs, OECD-World Bank Rabat, Morocco. May 7, 2008.

Escobar has aptly termed a policy of *Laissez Partir* (“let them go”)¹². This approach consisted of not adopting any policy for discouraging or impeding emigration beyond providing potential migrants with some information on the increasingly great risks associated with illicit border crossings.

Considering that the majority of Mexican migrants who have crossed the border have done so unauthorized, and that migrants have faced considerably higher risks in their journey to the U.S. in recent years from strengthened border enforcement and physical and economic abuse by criminal gangs on the Mexican side, and that the economic returns of migration have diminished as migrants condition in the U.S labor market has become more and more precarious, Mexico cannot maintain a policy of no real policy regarding emigration and return migration. And if the moral imperative does not make a strong enough case for changing course, reality does. The ebbing tide of migration to the U.S. and the rising tide of migration back indicate that fewer and fewer Mexicans consider emigration a viable survival strategy. Furthermore, now that many Mexicans have chosen or been forced to return, there is the need for policies that facilitate the integration or reintegration of the returning population into Mexico’s labor market and society.

At the same time, addressing the consequences of this phenomenon is also of great importance to the U.S., considering that many returnees maintain strong links with this country, including the fact that many of them left family members behind and are parents to American born-citizens many of whom are now residing in Mexico, with the obvious right to return.

Yet, as important as this phenomenon is for the future of both Mexico and the U.S., we still lack the data necessary to understand it well enough to formulate an informed policy. Although some national statistical data from México provide us information on the number, years of return, demographic characteristics, and labor market status of returnees, we still know very little about this population. We do not know very well why Mexican migrant workers who we had assumed would stay in the U.S., especially if they had already established themselves there with their families, are returning to Mexico. Is it because of stricter immigration enforcement in the U.S. at the federal and sub-national levels? Is it because of the deep economic recession and the difficult recovery, which the U.S. has confronted in recent years? Is it because Mexico is creating more economic opportunities that have generated incentives for migrants to return? Is it because of family reasons or just plain homesickness?

There is also still an argument about how much of this migration is forced and how much is voluntary. We know that the U.S. has deported or removed

¹² Escobar Latapí, Agustín. *La Política Social Mexicana y los Migrantes de Retorno*. In Calva, José Luis (editor). *Empleo Digno y Distribución del Ingreso y Bienestar*. Mexico: Juan Pablos Editor/Consejo Nacional de Universitarios.

Mexican immigrants in record numbers in recent years¹³. Yet, we do not know how many of them have remained in Mexico and how many of them have gone back to the U.S., though we know that the intention to return to the U.S. has been diminishing¹⁴. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, between 65% and 95% returned on their own and between 5% and 35% did so as a result of a deportation;¹⁵ the very broad range of this estimate reflects the fact that neither Mexican nor U.S. national statistical data are able to capture where the returnees end up.

Going beyond the reasons of return, there are a number of major questions for which we have only limited hints. We do not know very well what happens to them once they are back in Mexico. Do they return to where they lived before emigrating, or do they go somewhere else? Do they change occupations? Do they use their skills acquired in the U.S., their experiences in U.S. employment and business? Do they pursue opportunities in the formal economy or are they forced to remain in the informal economy where most of them worked before emigrating? Do they bring back capital (savings and other assets)? Do they invest? If so, how? If not, why not? Did their emigration experience change their perceptions of how society does, or might, work? How does their full emigration experience affect their reintegration back in Mexico? Do they want to remain in Mexico or do they want to return to the U.S.? What are the factors that are compelling them or may compel them to stay in Mexico? And what are the factors that may compel or are compelling them to re-emigrate to the U.S.?

In this white paper I attempt to provide some answers – even if only tentative-- to these and other questions crucial to facilitating their successful reintegration into Mexico’s labor market and society. At the same time I argue that to deal with this population we need to look at their full migratory experiences (emigration, immigration, return, and potential re-emigration) and to frame them within the economic and political context they have faced in the U.S. in recent years, including intensive immigration enforcement at the border and in the interior, and an economic recession that fell especially heavily on the Mexican-origin population. These situations created a scenario in which Mexicans migrants who used to cross the border without documents to work in the U.S., reproducing a circular migration pattern that was common among different generations of migrants, suddenly were forced to settle while they also became victims of the U.S. criminal justice system, their families broken apart as they never before, and their connections with their places of origin, interrupted, while they also were unable to effectively integrate into their host society. This in turn, forced or compelled many to return without being

¹³ During the Obama administration 1.4 million people have been deported. See: Cornelius, Wayne. *La política de Control Fronterizo en Estados Unidos: Tendencias y Consecuencias para la Reforma Migratoria*. Presented at the U.S. Catholic Bishops Annual Conference. Los Angeles California, 5 June, 2013.

¹⁴ Passel, D’Vera Cohn and González Barrera. *Net Migration from México Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less*. Op Cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

necessarily ready and prepared to do so, a situation that represents a challenge for their successful reintegration in Mexico's labor market and society.

We also ought to consider the economic and political conditions in Mexico, in which there is the need to reintegrate this population in the labor market at a time when job creation is slowing down, and high levels of corruption and insecurity may discourage returnees from trying to re-adapt to their places of origin but where new opportunities for their economic reinsertion may also be more available.¹⁶ With these ideas in mind, in this white paper we I analyze 1) the characteristics and conditions of the current return population; 2) their immigration experiences and their reasons for returning to Mexico; 3) the ways they are integrating or reintegrating in Mexico; 4) their intention to remain in this country or to re-emigrate to the U.S. and 5) the factors that may be determining or may determine those decisions.

The analysis presented here is based on a major exploratory survey carried out in the state of Jalisco, Mexico from May 2nd to June 6th, 2013 with 601 return migrants. The survey included questions related to the factors and conditions that motivated them to emigrate; their immigration experience and the ways in which this experience affected their decision to return as well as their post-return condition; their prospects for integration or reintegration in Mexico's economy and society; and finally the factors that may lead them to remain in Mexico or to re-emigrate to the U.S.

The questions used in the survey were largely based on previous research on returning migrants in other countries but also considered many additional elements that are relevant to the contemporary U.S- Mexico migration conditions ¹⁷. The survey was carried out in three different geographical locations, including: 1) a large metropolitan area, the city of Guadalajara and its surrounding municipalities; 2) a middle size city, Lagos de Moreno; and 3) a rural area comprising various municipalities of los Altos de Jalisco. The survey was implemented in these locations to capture possible systematic variation within the return migrant population and to identify the ways in which differences in locations affect integration and reintegration experiences but also to allow greater representation and variation of the return population. To complement the information gathered through the survey we also conducted in depth interviews with state officials from Jalisco, municipal authorities from the communities we studied, and some of the migrants. We also

¹⁶ See for example: *For Migrants, New Land of Opportunity Is Mexico*. In *The New York Times*, September 22nd, 2013. Available at: https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v1/url?u=http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/22/world/america-as-for-migrants-new-land-of-opportunity-is-mexico.html?nl%3Dtodayshadlines%26emc%3Dedit_th_20130922%26_r%3D0&k=YAfF6GiShS33y0lMquZmUA%3D%3D%0A&r=9N87TlhpXq9NZEeZGftdFw%3D%3D%0A&m=eOgsa7yGzi27R2uMFVb%2BkkSlseKqd983NrtEfOqKjnY%3D%0A&s=b96de3177f0619378e56046ff023d49f35ef00ff2cb5d96fd3409609e44a9a07. Last accessed on October 28, 2013.

¹⁷ See: Cassarino, Jean -Pierre (Ed.). *Return Migrants to the Maghreb Countries*. Florence: Italy, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. 2008.

interviewed federal officials in the state who interact with returnees, including the head of the *Programa Paisano*, which deals with returning migrants to Mexico, and high-level officials from *Oportunidades* a cash transfer social program targeted to the poor. We also conducted some interviews with employers and with scholars in the state who study return migration.

The next section of this paper provides a brief review of the literature on return migration in general and the Mexican case, and of the current immigration context that has led to the current return migration phenomenon, presenting existing evidence on this phenomenon. In section three, we present the survey design and methodology of the research conducted in the state of Jalisco, showcasing the advantages and limitations of the approach we pursued. In the fourth section we will present some characteristics of the returning migrants necessary for getting a handle on who they are. In the fifth section we describe some aspects of their immigration experience and discuss the reasons for their return. In the sixth section we analyze returnees' prospects for reintegration into Mexico's labor market and society and their intention to remain in Mexico or to re-emigrate. In the final section we discuss the policy implications of the analysis presented here and present some policy directions that may facilitate their integration and reintegration in Mexico.

2. Return migration theory and the new return migration trend to Mexico

2.1.2 Different approaches to understanding return migration

Factors shaping the migration decisions of large populations are numerous and relate to each other in complicated ways. Sparse models seldom capture more than a small part of the broad phenomena we want to understand. In the application of immigration models, caution and humility are always essential. Caution is especially needed in dealing with an immigration phenomenon as new and unexpected as the Mexican return. Indeed, we should probably regard the phenomenon less as a test of how well any model stands up than as a chance to identify portions of existing models that work to some extent and to gather data that suggest some desirable model features we had not previously had reason to conceive. With respect to Mexican return migration, five basic approaches are worth noting as illuminating important aspects of the phenomenon.¹⁸

Neoclassical economics perceives return migration as a possible migrant's preference when the costs of migration increase or the expected returns decrease. From this perspective international migration occurs because of wage differentials

¹⁸ For a more complete perspective on theoretical perspectives see: Cassarino, Jean-Pierre. *Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited*. In *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, Vol. 6. No. 2, 2004: 253-279. See also: Massey, Douglas S. et al. *Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*. In *Population and Development Review* 19, No. 3. September, 1993.

between receiving and sending countries, which encourage people to migrate to places where they can earn higher wages.¹⁹ However changing economic conditions or in the receiving country, wage-discrimination against migrants, or mere homesickness can be factors that compel people to return.²⁰

A contrasting view comes from the new economics of labor migration, which conceives the phenomenon of international migration not from the individual standpoint but from the household perspective. From this point of view, migration is a calculated strategy to achieve specific goals that compensate for market failures in the country of origin²¹. The individual migrates and remits part of her/his income to the family, thus helping to diversify the resources available to the household. At the same time, a returning migrant is a person who has been able to achieve his/her original goals for migrating (e.g. has accumulated enough savings). The person may not have gained major skills because his goal was not to integrate into the host country but to work as hard as possible to save enough money to achieve very specific goals. In this approach, used primarily to analyze temporary labor migration, return is an expected and generally planned action, especially if the rest of the family remains in the home country, and the migrant has a reason to return. Reintegration is facilitated by the fact that the individual has not really lost connection with the place of origin. To the extent that a person is able to achieve upward mobility thanks to migration, return is perceived as a positive outcome that indirectly contributes to development.

Neither neoclassical economics nor the new economics of labor migration tends to pay much attention to the context that determines the decision to return, and the possibilities of reintegrating in great part because they are essentially micro-level decision models. Their focus is either on the individual or the household but not the institutional context that affect decision-making. Issues like these, in contrast, are of major interest for structuralist approaches. For structuralism, migrants who return are able to reintegrate and contribute to development to the extent to which the country of origin has the appropriate capacity and institutions to absorb the skills and financial resources they bring back with them. In most cases, however, they return to a local reality that has not changed much, and thus have a limited innovative and transformative influence over their places and country of origin. Their social status generally does not change much after returning since the economic and power structures they originally left behind have not changed much either. The migrant is neither successful nor a failure. Because conditions at home have probably not changed a lot, planning the return does not make much difference

¹⁹ See: Todaro, Michael P. *A model of labor migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries*. In *The American Economic Review* 59 (1): 138-48.

²⁰ See: Todaro, Michael P.; and Maruszko, Lydia. *Illegal Immigration and U.S. Immigration reform: A Conceptual Framework*. In *Population and Development Review*. 13: 101-114. 1987.

²¹ See: Stark, Oded; and Bloom, David. E. *The New Economics of Labor Migration*. In *American Economic Review* 75:173-178. See also: Constant, A. and Massey, D.S. *Return Migration by German Guestworkers: neoclassical vs. new economics theories*. In *International Migration*. 40 (4): 5-38.

with respect to changes of social status. Those migrants unable to readjust to the social and economic conditions of their home society may consider re-emigrating.²²

A more fluid perspective on return migration is offered by transnationalism, which perceives the migrant as a person able to maintain strong links both to the country of origin and to the country of destination, which provide him/her with tangible and intangible resources she/he is then able to use strategically.²³ Return is not necessarily the end of the migration cycle but in many cases only a stage as the person may chose to re-emigrate, or move back and forth between the two countries. In contrast to structuralism, here return is perceived as more of a planned process, as migrants tend to retain strong ethnic and kinship networks with their places of origin, which encourage them to plan their return. Return generally occurs after a migrant has been economically successful in the host country, the measure of success being the migrant's upward mobility compared to the condition they originally had in their place of origin. Because the migrant has accumulated new skills and may have improved her/his level of education she/he is then able to move up the economic ladder regardless of power structures.

Cross-border social network theory goes beyond transnationalism. This approach considers that the individual has the capacity to mobilize resources that go beyond the ethnic and kinship networks. Through her/his migration experience the individual also develops other types of social relationships that provide her/him with valuable resources for a successful return beyond tangible resources such as financial capital. These include access to information, family support, and support from other social networks including associations in both host and home country. These, along with skill, knowledge and experiences acquired abroad, help increase not only the human capital but also the social capital of the individual, which she/he can mobilize to facilitate her/his successful reintegration. The more the individual is able to prepare her/his return and the more she/he is ready to return, meaning that the individual feels that she/he has accomplished the original goals for emigration or that there are strong good opportunities for her/him in the country of origin, the easier will be her/his process of adaptation²⁴. What this approach thus provides is the possibility of understanding the return process in a more dynamic way. Return is not only voluntary, but also requires the individual to be ready. Furthermore, it distinguishes different types of returnees who differ not only in terms of level of preparation but also in the level of readiness. This approach also considers the relevance of the individual's perception of political and economic

²² Cerase, Francesco P. *Expectations and Reality: A Case Study of Return Migration from the United States to Southern Italy*. In *International Migration Review*, 8

²³ See for example: Portes, Alejandro. *Introduction: the Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism*. In *Global Networks*. 1(3): 181-93. See also: Portes, Alejandro, at al. *The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent research Field*. In *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 22(2): 217-37. See also: Smith, Michael Peter; and Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo (editors). *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. 316 pp.

²⁴ See Cassarino, Jean Pierre. Op cit. p. 273.

circumstances at home that influence the ways that resources are mobilized and used after return.

Applied to the Mexican case, these approaches perhaps capture different stages of the migration phenomenon that may actually overlap. When Mexican migration was primarily circular, from the early twentieth century until the 1970s, Mexicans migrated with very concrete goals and return was just a normal process. They were primarily low-skilled temporary migrants whose goal was to earn enough resources to protect their families and themselves from the uncertainties of life in a country where they did not have access to health services and retirement and enjoyed limited opportunities for upward mobility. To understand this stage, the neoclassical approaches and the new economics of labor migration are probably the most efficient approaches.

However, once Mexicans' settlement became more common, especially after the implementation of the 1986 immigration amnesty, and as a result of greater immigration enforcement at the border, return became a more complex phenomenon. Those who were able to regularize their status and have access to permanent residency and citizenship probably considered less and less often the possibility of return, especially as many of them gradually brought their families with them to the U.S. through the process of family reunification. Regularization and citizenship allowed for upward mobility, both of which facilitated integration into the host country. However, some of them also maintained strong links with their places of origin, both because they still had family there, and also because of the difficulty of integrating into U.S. society and politics. Most of their relationships were with people from their communities and country of origin who lived in the same ethnic enclaves in different American cities. These people probably moved back and forth fairly regularly between Mexico and the U.S. sometimes settling back in Mexico. Many of them, though certainly not a majority, joined migrant associations, such as hometown associations and state federations, and sent collective remittances back home, which helped transform the economic and political conditions of sending regions. The transnational approach is possibly the best one for understanding this population.

There was, however, a wider population that was caught in the middle. Mexican migrants who arrived after the mid 1980s typically wanted, like migrants from an earlier era, to complete a circular migration path through which they would achieve very specific goals such as saving enough resources to return to their country of origin with a capacity to build the life they desired there. Initially, then, these migrants were well described by the new economics of labor migration theory. However, the majority of these migrants were not able to migrate through legal channels since there were very few avenues for them to do so; there was no guest worker program like the *Bracero* program that could facilitate their circular mobility. Temporary guest worker programs such as the H2A and H2B were insufficient, since the H2B, which was for non-agricultural workers had a very tight cap limit, while the H2A which was for agricultural workers had no limit but most

workers were not in agriculture anymore. Forced to migrate irregularly, these migrants were able to find jobs in the U.S. through established and consolidated networks. For a while they were able to travel back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. without many complications. However, by the 1990s, a change of paradigm in the political environment in the U.S. created a new dynamic within the U.S.-Mexico migration phenomenon for which neither migrants nor the theorists of migration were prepared.

Among these frameworks, the most appropriate for trying to capture the current scenario was cross-border social network theory, which was able to distinguish between different types of returning migrants and understood that reintegration into the home country was contingent on the level of readiness and preparation on the part of the migrant²⁵. But this approach, designed to analyze other geographic contexts, was insufficient to explain the extent to which the whole migratory dynamic within the U.S-Mexico context was disrupted by institutional actions that produced a variety of unexpected responses on the part of Mexican migrants, including, 1) the settlement of a migrant population that had traditionally followed a circular migratory pattern; 2) decreasing emigration in a context in which stocks of potential migrants had not clearly diminished; and 3) return driven by a difficult economic scenario and by complex family dynamics and disruptions including separated families. Thus there was the need to consider institutional variables whose prominence in driving return migration had not been consistently analyzed, including stronger immigration enforcement measures in the U.S. that have dramatically transformed Mexican migration dynamics.

2.2 The context that led to the current return migration trend

Increasing settlement during the 1980s and 1990s, followed by decreasing emigration from, and increasing return to, Mexico are clearly intertwined with recent immigration policies in the U.S. that privileged, first, greater border enforcement and, later, interior enforcement combined with large numbers of deportations as a way of regulating unwanted migration. Greater enforcement at the border made it increasingly difficult for Mexican migrant workers without legal documents to move back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. and thus forced them to settle and bring in their families to the U.S. or form their families in this country. At the same time it increasingly discouraged emigration, especially in economic downturns. As the number of Mexicans grew and interior enforcement became more prominent as a response, migrants faced more difficulties finding jobs in the U.S. that would allow them to make a living while also sending remittances to family members who remained in Mexico. Over time this would create new incentives to return, especially for migrants who still had part of their families in Mexico, or whose families were divided as a result of deportations. It also would

²⁵ This is particularly the case of revisionist approaches such as the one presented by Cassarino, Jean Pierre. Op cit.

discourage migration, especially where the benefits of migrating seemed unlikely to match the costs and risks associated with the migration process.

These policies have their origins in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which included provisions to legalize 2.7 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. at the time, three fourths of whom were from Mexico; but also set the foundations of a new a policy trend of relying primarily on enforcement-only measures to regulate unwanted migration, rather than mechanisms that would facilitate the legal arrival of the low skilled workers to meet the demands of employers apart from the H2A and H2B programs, which as mentioned above were insufficient.²⁶ Most of these workers were undocumented. IRCA made it illegal, for the first time in U.S. history, knowingly to hire undocumented workers, requiring employers to verify workers' eligibility for employment. It also called for strengthening enforcement at the border, increasing the funding to achieve this goal.

While these measures did little to decrease unauthorized migration from Mexico during the 1990s, as reflected in its dramatic and steady increase during that decade, they set a new policy precedent for years to come,²⁷ leading the U.S government to spend on immigration enforcement measures a record \$186.8 billion since IRCA was implemented and until 2012.²⁸

During the 1990s most measures focused on border enforcement. Early in that decade the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) adopted a new strategy to reduce the flows of unauthorized migration known as "prevention through deterrence". This strategy consisted of placing agents and resources directly on the border along population centers with the goal of deterring migrants from entering the U.S. It included a series of operations along the border such as Operation Hold the Line in El Paso (1993), Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego (1994), Operation Safeguard in Nogales Arizona (1997), and Operation Rio Grande in South Texas (1997).²⁹

²⁶ IRCA did establish the H-2A and H-2B for temporary agricultural and non-agricultural workers but the number of visas granted through these programs has been so small that they can hardly create a legal path for the arrival of low-skilled migrants into the U.S.

²⁷ Enforcement at the workplace was very limited as most efforts were concentrated in the border. If anything it only contributed to depress the wages of undocumented workers as employers increased their reliance on sub-contractors to reduce the risks associated with hiring them, or paid them lower salaries as a way of transferring to workers the costs of assuming these risks themselves. See Massey, Douglas, and Durán, Jorge...At the same time, greater border enforcement was still inefficient as there was limited strategic planning on what would be the best ways to deter illegal crossings, while at the same time, there were very little consequences for those who crossed.

²⁸ See: Meissner, Doris; Kerwin, Donald M.; Chishti, Muzzaffar; and Claire Bergeron. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery. Report in Brief*. January, 2013. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute. P.

²⁹ See: Carriquiry, Alicia; and Majmundar, Malay, editors. *Options for Estimating Illegal Entries at the U.S.-Mexican Border*. The National Academy of Science. 2012. Pre-publication copy.

Prevention through deterrence would change the dynamics of migration flows from Mexico in a significant way by dramatically increasing the costs and risks for migrants hoping to cross the border. Increasingly, migrants would have to rely on “coyotes” to cross the border, whose fees would rise from \$500 in the 1980s to close to \$6,000 by the end of the first decade of the twentieth first century for those migrants who wanted to cross through ports of entry³⁰. It would also increase the number of deaths since many of them would have to cross through less patrolled, more dangerous places such as the Arizona dessert, and away from the cities. From 1995 to 2012 more than 7,500 migrants died crossing the border.³¹

As migrant crossings moved from the cities into more remote areas, there was the need to increase the number of border patrol officers and to install increasingly more sophisticated technologies and bigger, larger fences to deter migrants. In 1990 there were 3,226 border patrol agents at the Southwest border. By 2011 there were 18,506.³² At the same time, 687 miles of fences were built between 1996 and 2012 while 10 drone airplanes with a cost of \$18.5 million each now patrol the border.³³

Intensification of immigration enforcement produced increases in settlement as migrants gradually realized that it was better to travel less back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico and to bring their family members to the U.S. instead. This was originally proved by research conducted by Douglas Massey and Jorge Duran³⁴.

Though detentions continued to grow, reaching their peak at the beginning of this century, the undocumented flow of migrants remained undeterred. This led the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) to conclude that this was due in great part to its “catch and release” policy, whereby most apprehended Mexican migrants would sign voluntary departure contracts and board a bus back to the border, after which they would try to cross again after a few days.³⁵ A new approach was not introduced to border enforcement, which came to be referred to as “consequence policies”. The Illegal Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, which instituted expedited removal, interior repatriation, and 3-10 year admission bars for migrants who had previously entered without authorization, facilitated this approach. Through expedited removals, non-U.S. citizens present in this country for fewer

³⁰ See: Cornelius, Wayne. *La política de Control Fronterizo en Estados Unidos: Tendencias y Consecuencias para la Reforma Migratoria*. Op. Cit.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Carriquiry, Alicia; and Majmundar, Malay, editors. *Options for Estimating Illegal Entries at the U.S.-Mexican Border*. Op .cit. p. 2-8.

³³ Cornelius, Wayne. *La política de Control Fronterizo en Estados Unidos: Tendencias y Consecuencias para la Reforma Migratoria*. Op. Cit.

³⁴ Durán, Jorge and Massey, Douglass. *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project*. New York, NY: The Russell Sage Foundation. 2004.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 2-10.

than 14 days and located within 100 miles of the border could be removed with limited legal recourse and given a five -year re-entry bar.³⁶

This approach would be applied more broadly thereafter after the attacks of September 11, 2001, which further reinforced a policy framework based on controlling the borders and prosecuting migrants. In 2005 the Justice Department, in collaboration with the USBP, launched Operation Streamline -- first in Texas in and then in most other southwestern sectors controlled by the Border Patrol. The goal of this operation was to subject as many migrants as possible to criminal prosecution. Although most migrant offenses were misdemeanors, which carried very short jail terms, it represented a major shift from policies of the past in which migrants could cross the border again without major consequences.

This policy became a key component of the new intersection of the immigration enforcement system with the criminal justice system that now guides immigration policy. After the creation of the Department of Homeland Security additional programs focused on interior enforcement originally authorized by IIRIRA were implemented as well. These include 1) the authorization to state and local authorities to collaborate with the federal government in arresting and detaining unauthorized migrants through Section 287 (g) of the Immigration Nationality Act (INA), and the Secure Communities Program; and 2) the Criminal Alien Program (CAP) which facilitated the identification, arrest and removal of immigrants who were incarcerated. Funding for all these programs increased from \$23 million to \$690 million between Fiscal Years 2004 to 2011.³⁷

As a result of these programs the number of criminal prosecutions for immigration-related violations rose to an unprecedented rate. More than half of all federal criminal prosecutions since 2008 have been brought for immigration related crimes. These include illegal entry (a misdemeanor), and illegal re-entry following removal (a felony), which are the two most heavily prosecuted immigration crimes.

It is still unclear what effects these policies have had on emigration from Mexico and on return migration. Despite increased enforcement at the border most migrants who wanted to cross it still managed to enter by the second attempt, as Wayne Cornelius has argued³⁸. So these policies by themselves did not stop emigration. What they did, however, was to increase the costs of emigrating to the point that in the context of an economic recession, it may have ceased to make sense for many migrants to pay for the trip considering that they were unsure of finding job opportunities in the U.S. that would compensate for the costs. At the same time, migrants knew that for every crossing they risked being prosecuted and spent time

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Meissner, Doris; Kerwin, Donald M.; Chishti, Muzaffar; and Claire Bergeron. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery. Report in Brief*. Op cit. p. 9.

³⁸ Cornelius, Wayne. *La política de Control Fronterizo en Estados Unidos: Tendencias y Consecuencias para la Reforma Migratoria*. Op. Cit.

in jails or detention centers. Thus why risk if they were unsure of finding jobs that would compensate for this additional hazard?

Increases in interior enforcement, especially more immigration raids under the Bush administration and more worksite enforcement under the Obama administration through the Employment Verification System or e-Verify, also contributed to making it more difficult for undocumented migrants to find jobs. These factors too probably affected the decision to emigrate, as jobs were less available not only because of an economic downturn but also because job opportunities for undocumented migrants diminished as more employment verification discouraged employers from hiring them.

The economic downturn, which affected sectors of the economy in which Mexican immigrants participated at high levels, such as construction, and the heightened difficulty of finding a job for Mexican workers in a context of higher risks of being detained are two factors that have been linked to the sharp decline in emigration from Mexico in recent years. Another factor that may have discouraged emigration are dramatic increases in violence towards migrants on the journey to the U.S. According to Cornelius, 100 percent of all migrants recently interviewed by the University of California San Diego Field Research Program had seen some form of violence or had experienced it themselves on their way to the U.S.³⁹

The violence however, may not be the only factor deterring Mexican emigration. Despite the violence across Mexico and in the border, Central American migrants, keep emigrating to the U.S. reflected in the fact that their emigration numbers are on the rise to an extent sufficient to reinitiate an upward trend in migration flows to the U.S., as reported in a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center⁴⁰. Thus, it is possible that new opportunities and demographic factors in Mexico may also be playing a role in reduced migration flows from Mexico, although that is still unclear and requires more research.⁴¹

With respect to return migration to Mexico, the intersecting of the immigration enforcement system with the criminal justice system for almost a decade seem to have had major unexpected consequences as well. This new policy framework placed in a very difficult position many of the migrants who had arrived

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ According to the study unauthorized emigration from Mexico is not driving an apparent new rise in emigration to the U.S. See: Passel, Jeffrey, Cohn D'Vera; and Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana. *Population Decline of Unauthorized Immigrants Stalls, May have Reverse. Is this the entire title?* Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, September 23, 2013. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic>. Last accessed October 30th, 2013.

⁴¹ The economic recession, difficulties of finding jobs in the U.S., new economic opportunities and shifting demographics in Mexico are all factors that have been suggested as determining declining migration flows from Mexico and even return migration. See: Passel, D'Vera Cohn and González Barrera. *Net Migration from México Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Op cit.

irregularly in the U.S in recent years as it became more difficult for them to travel back and forth, forcing them to settle. As interior enforcement increased, this population was pushed more into the shadows. Record deportations that resulted from this policy approach possibly became a significant factor in driving return migration, not only because they forced many people to leave but also because they also forced family members of the returnees—including spouses and children- with different legal statuses in the U.S, to reunite with them in Mexico. Thus, apart from the still undetermined number of deportees who have chosen to settle back in Mexico there is the need to add an undetermined number of people who have followed them, which very likely includes many of the U.S-born minors that moved to this country in recent years. During the interviewing process we conducted in Jalisco with return migrants, we identified some people that have moved to Mexico who had U.S. citizenship or were green card holders because they were family members of deportees.

It is in part for this reason that family related issues seemed to be a major factor in driving return migration, possibly in combination with economic reasons. As the new economics of labor migration suggest, migrants keep very strong connections to their families in their countries and communities of origin, an issue that has also been emphasized by transnational studies. In the Mexican case family reasons have always been a reason for return, but the situation Mexican migrants have found themselves in recent years seems to have increase the relevance of family related issues as reasons for return though we know that generally undocumented migrants would avoid returning at all costs unless strictly necessary. It seems that migrants for whom traveling back and forth to care for aging parents has become very difficult because of greater enforcement and risks at being prosecuted on the way back. Thus they are possibly forced to move back especially in cases in which they fear that they would not be able to see them again. Above all there are also the migrants who have become visibly homesick possibly because as immigration enforcement increased it became more difficult for them to maintain ties with their families and communities of origin while they also faced a difficult time integrating in and maintaining their jobs as the labor market also closed on them.

In effect, more raids at the workplace, greater employer sanctions and voluntary employment verification through E-Verify, increased the hurdles undocumented migrants already faced in finding jobs⁴². This situation became more acute as the U.S. faced an economic crisis and then a recession. It is quite likely that the economic crisis and the difficulty in finding good-paying jobs have played a role in encouraging return migration more than they had in the past. Research has shown that previous recession contexts (1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) produced

⁴² Wayne Cornelius has shown that the most worrisome aspects of their life in the U.S. among return migrants was workplace raids, followed by driving a car and going to the hospital, although this factor is location specific, meaning that it especially affected migrants that lived in more hostile places for newcomers. See: Cornelius, Wayne. P.17

settlement and a decline in return migration, rather than massive return, as migrants decided to stay longer in the host country than originally planned --an initially counterintuitive idea--because they required additional time to achieve their original goals to complete their migration cycle. The recent recession, however, may have changed this dynamic. It Not only hit very hard those sectors of the economy in which undocumented migrants were highly represented, such as construction, but it also took place in a context in which the labor market had closed more tightly on this population, making it more difficult for them to move to other sectors of the U.S. economy to find other job opportunities. While the recession and the slow recovery may not have produced massive return, it certainly created new incentives for return, especially for people who did not have strong social networks in the U.S to sustain themselves in adverse circumstances⁴³. Evidence that the U.S. economic downturn has played a role in driving return migration to Mexico is reflected in the fact that the return migration accelerated during the years of the economic recession⁴⁴.

In summary, higher enforcement, first at the border and then in the interior, and the subsequent criminalization of undocumented immigrants have shaped migrants' decision to stay or to return by impacting their capacity to move, their family and social relationships, and their conditions in the labor market. The consequences of these policies have become more severe in the context of a deep economic downturn and a difficult recovery. Though migrants have not returned in massive numbers, holding the view that if they can they will remain in their host country as long as possible, these policies have certainly created new incentives for return as they have broken families apart, weakened social safety nets, expanded the sense of nostalgia and homesickness, and increased the obstacles for migrants to find jobs in an already difficult economic scenario. Thus the enforcement only approach, in combination with the economic environment, has directly and indirectly driven the dynamics of Mexican migration of recent years and decades, including return migration, which is the main concern of this paper.

This policy approach, however, is not only helping drive return migration but is also having an impact on the ways returning migrants are reintegrating in Mexico's labor market and society, making it more difficult for them to achieve these goals successfully than in the past. Many migrants are returning without having finished their original goals or their full migration cycle. This is especially the case of those deported and their family members who probably were not planning on returning to Mexico. It is also the case of those who have been compelled to return because of economic hardship, because they needed to attend family needs, or also

⁴³ Ibid. p 18.

⁴⁴ Juan Luis Díaz Ordaz. *Perfil Socioeconómico y de Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Mexicanos de Retorno: Análisis Comparativo entre 2005-2007 y 2008-2012*. Presentation for the Seminario Internacional sobre Migración de Retorno: Instituto de Estudios de América del Norte. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico. May 6th, 2013.

because they have lived most of their lives in the U.S. and had no option but to move to Mexico (e.g. U.S. educated children and youth with or without U.S citizenship).

As cross-border social network theory has suggested, for migrants to reintegrate successfully into their country of origin they need to be ready and prepared for their return. This also diminishes the chances of re-emigration. It is quite possible that many of the current return migrants have not prepared well, and thus may consider the possibility of re-emigrating to the U.S., an issue that we will analyze later. On the other hand, the criminalization of the undocumented population in the U.S. for the past decade has consequently generated a negative perception of them in Mexico. There is evidence that some of them do not return to their places of origin because of the stigma they carry with them⁴⁵. While conducting our research in Jalisco we also found that the U.S. policy of consequences through admission bars has created a new category of migrants in Mexico referred locally in at least in Jalisco as *the punished* (or *los castigados*). These people who received admission bars because of having previously entered the U.S. without authorization or because of other crimes may have a difficult time reintegrating in Mexico, especially if they believe that at some point they would be able to return to the U.S., a situation we found was the case in interviews.

Despite all these factors, the recent return population also comes back to Mexico with new skills and experiences that can help them in their reintegration process and also contribute to this country's development. In contrast to previous generations of migrants, this population worked in varied sectors of the U.S. economy rather than primarily in agriculture, and by having settled down, also interacted more with U.S. society and institutions. This particular situation makes recent returnees more bi-cultural and bi-national than those migrants who returned in the past, and more fully aware of the extent of integration and mutual interdependence of the Mexican and American economies and societies today. With these ideas in mind in the next sections we briefly explore what is known about recent returning migrants beyond what we mentioned already, and present the methodology and results of the survey we conducted in the state of Jalisco.

2.3 What we know about returning migrants

As we have noted, for the past few decades the outmigration of Mexicans to the U.S. increased quite significantly relative to return migration, which had been showing a downward trend for a number of years: a direct consequence of settlement in the host country. For this reason a great part of the scholarly work and data produced on Mexican migrants in recent years focused on understanding migrants' emigration trends; their process of integration in the U.S; and the many ways in which they maintained and reproduced their links and contributed to the

⁴⁵ Masferrer, Claudia; and Roberts, Bryan R. *Going Back Home? Changing Demography and Geography of Mexican Return Migration*. In *Population Research Policy Review* (2012). 31. P. 472.

development process of their country and places of origin. The dramatic increase in return migration of recent years, suggests that we need to study and understand this phenomenon in more detail, especially if we are to design appropriate policies to take advantage of the opportunities and address the challenges it creates.

Yet data on returning migrants is limited and sketchy in great part because there are very few data available for deriving a comprehensive and accurate appreciation of the return phenomenon⁴⁶. In the Mexican case some of the most useful resources to understand this population are the Mexican Census, and the National Survey of Employment and Occupation (*Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo* or ENOE). The census has the advantage of providing information based on a large population sample, (10 percent of the population) and from the national level down to the municipal scale. From the Mexican census we know that between 2005 and 2010 there were 1.08 million returning migrants to Mexico from the U.S. and other countries, though the vast majority, as we have shown, returned from the U.S. Of those, 68.1 percent were male and 31.9 were female⁴⁷ even while the proportion of returning women has been increasing⁴⁸.

We also know that the states that receive the largest number of returning migrants by volume are still traditional sending states, which also happen to be very populated, such as Jalisco, which was the largest recipient of returning migrants between 2005 and 2010 with 9.4 percent of the total. Michoacán had 8.26 percent, and Guanajuato 7.59 percent. However, the geographies of Mexican migration are changing in unexpected ways and the share of migrants returning to those states are diminishing as migrants are returning in higher rates to states that in the past had low levels of outmigration to the U.S. such as Baja California Norte, Baja California Sur, Sonora, Quintana Roo, and Veracruz. ⁴⁹ In some cases such as Sonora and Baja California this is possibly because these states are transit areas for many deportees some of whom may end up settling there after frustrated attempts to cross back to the U.S., or because they find opportunities there. In places like Quintana Roo, it has to do with the fact that many returnees move to that state looking for opportunities in dynamic industries such as tourism. This last situation suggest that migrants are not returning to their places of origin as much as they used to in the past but that they are also looking for opportunities in new return-destination places.

⁴⁶ See: Dumont, Jean-Christoph; and Spielvogel, Gilles. *Return Migration: a New Perspective*. In International Migration Outlook: Sopemi. 2008 Edition. Paris, France: OECD, 2008. p. 163.

⁴⁷ See the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática* interactive data base.

⁴⁸ Data coming from ENOE which differs slightly from the data coming from the Census as it is collected in a different way and more often suggests that the number of women returning has been increasing considerably from less than 20 percent in 2005 to close to 30 percent by 2012. See Juan Luis Diaz Ordaz. *Perfil Socioeconómico y de Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Mexicanos de Retorno: Análisis Comparativo entre 2005-2007 y 2008-2012*. Op cit.

⁴⁹ See: Masferrer, Claudia; and Roberts, Bryan R. *Going Back Home? Changing Demography and Geography of Mexican Return Migration*. Op. cit. p.480.

The Census and ENOE also show that most return migrants have low educational levels as the majority of them, close to 70 percent, have only an elementary and middle school education. However, from 2008, in the wake of the economic crisis, the proportion of return migrants with high school and university degrees increased by a few percentage points.⁵⁰

The ENOE captures data considerably more often than the Census—four times a year—but it has a smaller sample size, especially related to migration, and provides information only at the national level. Despite this fact, this survey is useful in identifying some aspects related to the labor market situation of return migrants in Mexico.

According to this survey, most migrants who chose to return do so during the most productive ages. Of those who returned since 2005 the majority, 54 percent, are between 18 and 34 years of age, while 27 percent are between 35 and 49 years of age. The 50-64 year range is relatively small, reflecting the Mexican population pyramid but also the fact that migrants within this age range are more likely to have obtained access to U.S residence and citizenship and thus to have successfully integrated in this country. Fewer than 3 percent are 65 years of age or older.⁵¹ This survey also suggests that 70 percent of working-age return migrants find jobs in the first three months after returning to Mexico, and 95 percent of them in a year or less.⁵² However, many of them seem to be working in different occupations from those held in the U.S. While in the U.S. construction, education and health services, and hotel and restaurant industries, are the areas of the economy where Mexican migrants concentrate the most. In Mexico they disproportionately return to agriculture, close to 40 percent by 2012, followed by manufacturing, and services in general⁵³. This suggests that while they do find employment many of them are not able to take advantage of the skills and experiences they acquired in their host country. The data collected by the ENOE also show that the majority of return migrants, around 60 percent, are subordinated workers and that from 2005 to 2011, the proportion of those self-employed diminished significantly from 26.4 percent in 2005 to 14.9 percent in 2012 while less than 5 percent are employers⁵⁴. This suggests that migrants are returning with fewer resources to employ themselves and to generate employment than in the past. Furthermore, their income is very low. It is estimated that in 2012 close to 25 percent did not make any income, 64 percent earned between one and three times the minimum wage and only 11 percent earned more than three times the minimum wage⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ Juan Luis Diaz Ordaz. *Perfil Socioeconómico y de Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Mexicanos de Retorno: Análisis Comparativo entre 2005-2007 y 2008-2012*. Op cit.

⁵¹ Ibid. 10. Based on ENOE data 2005-2012.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The ENOE also collects information about the reasons for return though only on a limited basis. Information derived from this survey suggests that most migrants are returning on their own, and the main reason they report is to reunite with their family – around 90 percent of return migrants reported this reason between 2005 and 2012— reinforcing the idea that a number of family related issues have been sparked in the context of higher immigration enforcement.

Other surveys such as the Mexican Family Life Survey (MxFLS), the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), the Mexican Migration Field Research Program (MMFRP), and the Survey of Migration at the Northern Border of Mexico (EMIF-N) are also useful resources that provide similar glimpses of the return population especially in relation to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. The main limitation of these studies is that they are not directly focused on understanding the return population and thus do not provide enough information to fully understand the dynamics and consequences of the recent return migration phenomenon.

Considering the magnitude and relevance of this phenomenon we need to generate new exploratory studies that may be less statistically representative but can complement the information we already have and provide us with a clearer and more comprehensive narrative about this population. A first step in this regard is the survey we implemented in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. In the next section we describe the survey design and methodology, and then we present the results.

3. Survey design and methodology

To better understand the characteristics and dynamics of the recent return population to Mexico we conducted an exploratory non-probabilistic study in the state of Jalisco, Mexico from May 2nd to June 6th, 2013 with 601 return migrants. Our survey sought to address the following questions:

- Who are the returning migrants?
- How many of them were forced to return by force deportation or other removal procedure and how many of them returned of their own volition?
- Why did they return to Mexico?
- What happens to them once they are back in Mexico? Do they return to their places of origin or to different places? Do they use their skills and experiences acquired in the U.S.? Do they bring back capital? Do they invest?
- Did their emigration experience change their perceptions of how society does, or might, work?
- Do they want to remain in Mexico? Or return to the U.S.?

- What are the factors that are compelling them to stay in Mexico or to re-emigrate to the U.S?
- How have their perceptions about reasons to migrate changed overtime?

We chose Jalisco because this state is the largest recipient of returning migrants to Mexico from 2005 to 2010 according to Mexico's census data. Though the geographies of Mexican migration may be changing and many migrants may be returning to non-traditional outmigration states we still need to understand the dynamics of the return population to states like Jalisco that are still capturing the largest share of this population. Furthermore, Jalisco is one of the most economically dynamic states in Mexico, with an export-oriented economy and thus has in principle the capacity to reintegrate the return population better than other places. We thus assumed that this state would provide a good setting for a pilot program on the reintegration of return migrants that could be derived from the result of the study, which was an additional goal.

The definition of the returnee we used is based on the one recommended by the United Nations (U.N.) on the subject but with some slight modifications⁵⁶. For the purpose of this study a return migrant is:

Any person of Mexican nationality who returned from the U.S. to Mexico in the course of the last ten years, resided in the U.S for at least one year, and has been back in Mexico for three months or longer.

Migrants who returned more than ten years ago were excluded from this study both because it is assumed that they were already reintegrated in Mexico and also because they do not reflect recent return migration dynamics. We limited eligible survey respondents to those who had resided in the U.S. for at least a year at some point in order to exclude those who had had but minimal experience and understanding of the U.S. labor market and society that could impact in their reintegration process. Finally, though the U.N definition requires that a return migrant be back for at least one year in his country of origin, in this study we only required people to be back for three months or longer; our objective in shortening this period was to enable us to observe the newest dynamics of the return migration phenomenon.

We implemented a four-stage questionnaire that considered:

- 1) The conditions that motivated return migrants to emigrate in the first place.
- 2) The social, economic and political conditions they faced during their immigration experience, which may have helped increase their social, human and financial capital or impacted their decision to return.

⁵⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Recommendations on Statistics on International Migration. Revision 1*. Statistical Paper Series M, no.58, Rev 1. United Nations New York, 1998.

3) Their situation back in Mexico and their integration into its economy and society.
 4) The conditions that may lead them to remain in Mexico or to re-emigrate to the U.S. The questions used in the survey built on previous research on return migration but also integrated many new elements relevant to the contemporary U.S.-Mexico migration phenomenon ⁵⁷. Thus there are questions about the demographic and social characteristics of the return population; reasons for emigrating from and returning to Mexico; social and financial conditions before leaving, while in the United States, and after return; education skills acquired before leaving, while in the U.S. and after return; and relationships with U.S. institutions and society in the U.S. and with Mexican society and institutions after return. The survey was carried out in three different geographical locations:

- 1) A large metropolitan area represented by the city of Guadalajara and its surrounding municipalities including Zapopan, Tlaquepaque, Tonalá, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos and el Salto.
- 2) A middle size city represented by Lagos de Moreno.
- 3) A rural area represented by the municipalities of Acatic, Teocaltiche, Arandas, Valle de Guadalupe, Encarnación de Díaz, Jalostotitlán, Atotonilco el Alto, San Diego de Alejandría, San Juan de los Lagos, San Miguel el Alto, Unión de San Antonio, and San Julián in *los Altos*, a historical sending region in the state.

The survey was administered in these locations to capture possible systematic variation within the return migrant population and to identify the ways in which differences in location affect integration and reintegration experiences. Reflecting the relative populations of the three locations, we surveyed 300 people in the city of Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, 150 in Lagos de Moreno, and 151 in the rural municipalities of Los Altos. In total we conducted 601 interviews.

In the interest of making our sample as representative as possible, we established gender and education quotas based on Mexican Census data on return migrants in the municipalities we covered from 2005 to 2010. Because the Census data covered only up to 2010 and the survey was implemented in 2013, we employed these quotas more as guidelines than as strict criteria; how close the population distribution of migrants of 2013 is to that of 2010 we do not know.

Table 1 Pre-Established Quota

	Guadalajara	Lagos de Moreno	Rural area
Number of Immigrants required	300	150	150
Male	205 (68.3%)	102 (68 %)	102 (68 %)
Female	95 (31.6 %)	48 (32 %)	48 (32 %)
With Elementary Education	186 (62 %)	93 (62 %)	93 (62 %)
With High School Education	70 (23.3 %)	34 (22.6 %)	34 (22.6 %)

⁵⁷ See: Cassarino, Jean -Pierre (Ed.). *Return Migrants to the Maghreb Countries*. Op cit.

With Higher Education (BA, MS, PhD)	44 (14.6 %)	23 (15.3 %)	23 (15.3 %)
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To limit potential bias in the data collected we gathered our population sample from as many resources as possible, employing a snow-ball technique and relying on the help of local government officials, delegates from federal government programs, employers, religious organizations and NGOs.

To complement the information gathered through the quantitative survey we also conducted in-depth interviews with state officials from Jalisco, including the Directors of Assistance to Migrants and of International Affairs; with municipal authorities from most of the communities we studied; and with some of the migrants. We also interviewed federal officials in the state who interact with returnees, including the head of the *Programa Paisano*, which deals with returning migrants to Mexico, and the head of *Oportunidades*, a cash-transfer social program targeted to the poor and administered by the Ministry of Social Development. Finally, we also conducted some interviews with employers, especially in the region of Los Altos de Jalisco, including the owner of a calling center and the manager of a chicken processing plant, and with scholars from the state who study return migration.

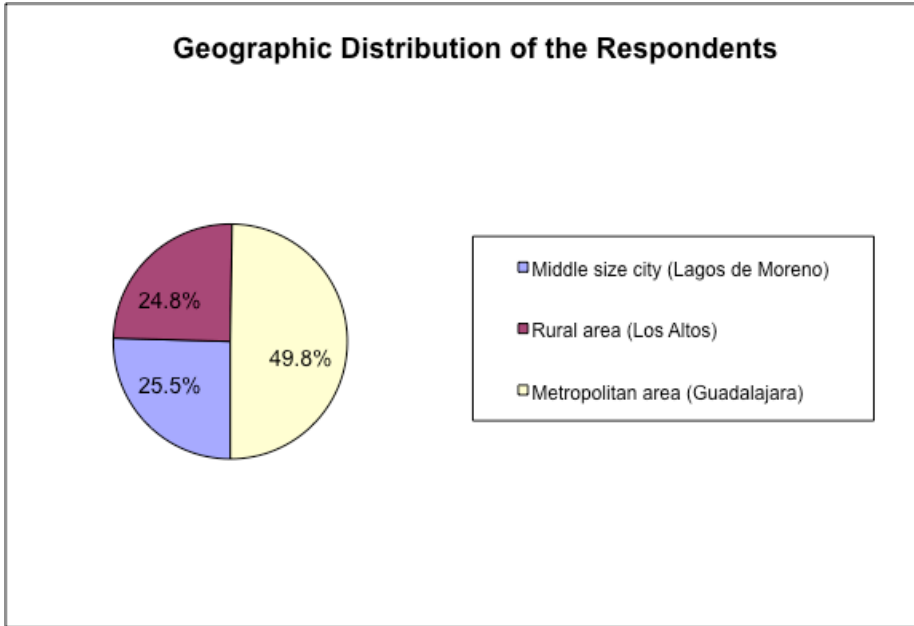
4. General demographic characteristics of the return population

4.1 Locality

As mentioned above, we surveyed 601 respondents in Guadalajara’s metropolitan area, Los Altos of Jalisco, and Lagos de Moreno. Because there were pre-established quotas to guide the survey related to place of origin, gender and level of education, the results of the survey do not vary much from the criteria we originally selected in relation to these topics. As we argued, pre-establishing a quota was intended to make collected data more representative, and to reflect different perspectives among the return population within the state of Jalisco. We determined to have 300 hundred respondents from Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, 150

from Lagos de Moreno, and 150 from the rural areas. Accordingly, 25.4% of the respondents were from Lagos de Moreno, 24.8% from rural areas, and 49.8% from Guadalajara metropolitan area. (See Figure 1)

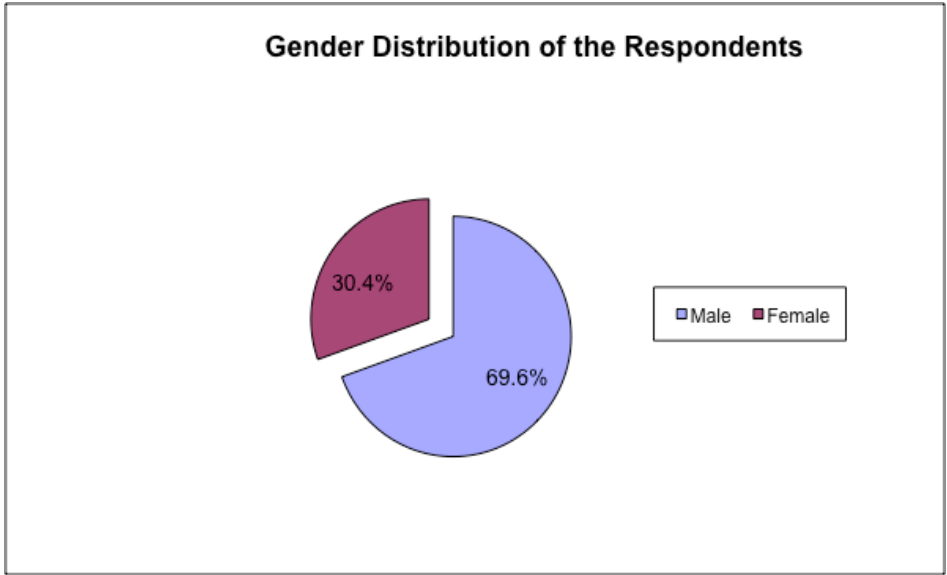
Figure 1



4.2 Gender

With respect to gender, 69.6% of respondents were male, while 30.4% were female, which is consistent with Census data.

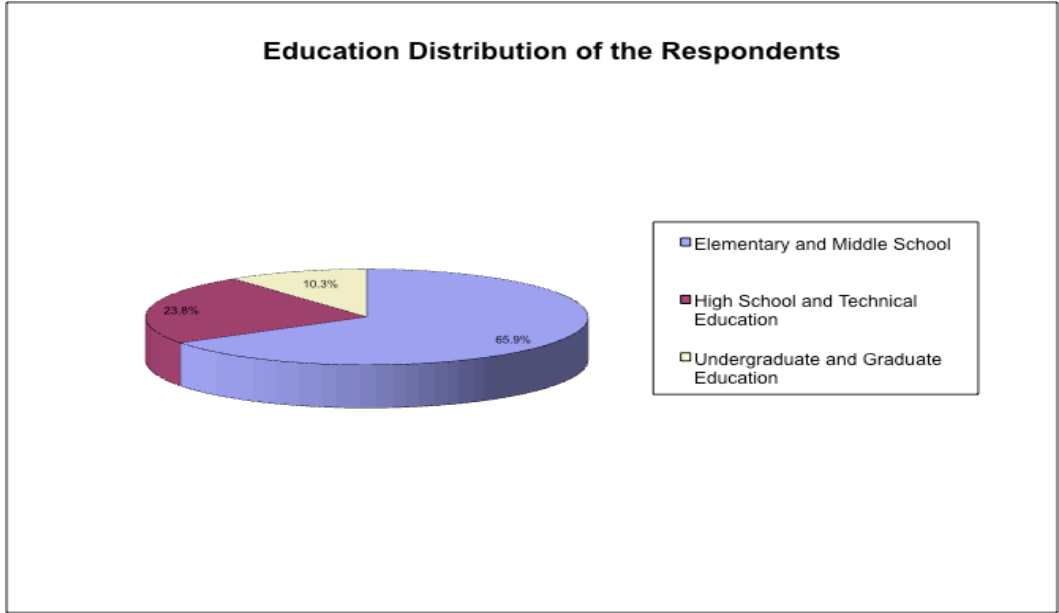
Figure 2



4.3 Education

With respect to level of education there is some variation from the quota pre-established to guide the survey. While it was relatively easy to choose people by locality and gender, it was more difficult to find people to interview who met the education criteria by locality. However, almost 70% of the respondents had not completed high school, which is fairly close to our original goal and consistent with national statistical data on return migrants.

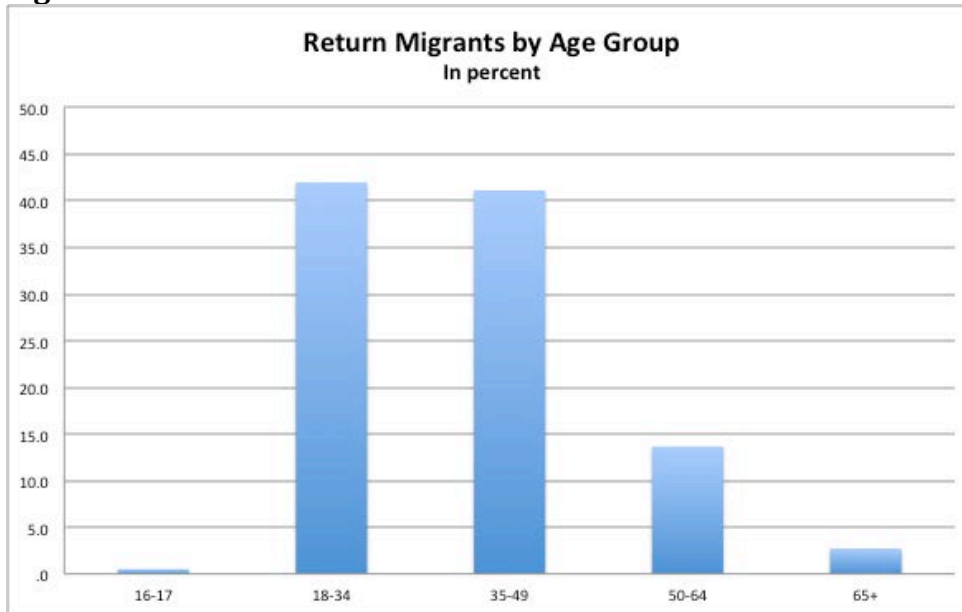
Figure 3



4.4 Age

We did not have age quotas, but we only interviewed people 16 years and older. Accordingly, almost 95% of the respondents were of working age, which is actually more or less consistent with ENOE data after excluding the younger cohort in the calculation, with most respondents in the 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 groups. The 50 to 64 cohort was smaller than either of the younger cohorts. This likely reflects the fact that people within this group age are more likely than younger people to have been able to obtain a legal status in the U.S. as a result of 1986 amnesty and family reunification policies, and thus perhaps less likely to return as they are likely more fully integrated into the U.S. However, even if the 50-64 cohort were under-represented in the survey, the number of respondents from this age group would have been considerably smaller than that of either of the younger groups, as Mexico still has a relatively young population.

Figure 4



5. The immigration experiences and their reasons of their return to Mexico

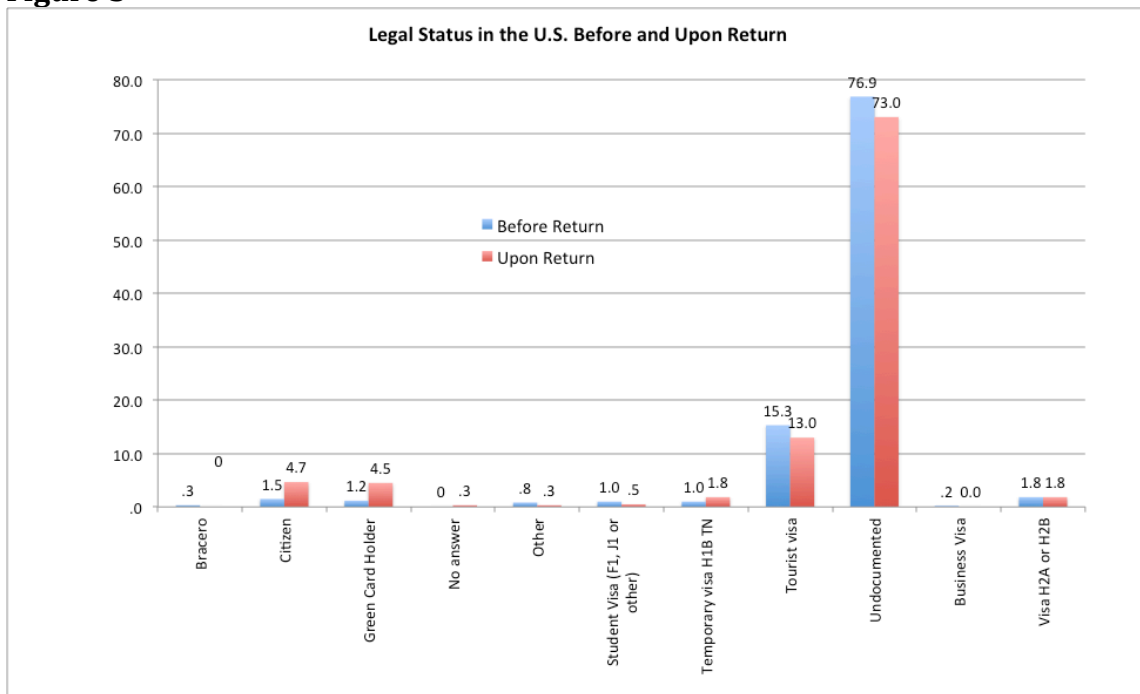
5.1 Who are the returning migrants?

5.1.1 Primarily undocumented with no original intention to settle

We asked the respondents about the legal status they had when they first emigrated to the U.S., and upon return. Reflecting the patterns of Mexican migration of recent decades, we observed that most of the migrants in our survey were

undocumented. However, we also observed that the undocumented were over-represented among respondents relative to their share of the first-generation Mexican population in the U.S.: currently 52 percent of Mexicans in the U.S. are undocumented, while in our survey 73 of our respondents were undocumented at the time of return. The difference is not statistically significant, however. Also remarkable is the number of people who returned as U.S. citizens or green card holders in comparison to the original status at the time of first emigration. This suggests that some U.S. citizens and green card holders have returned, possibly to reunite with family members who were forced to return (Figure 5).

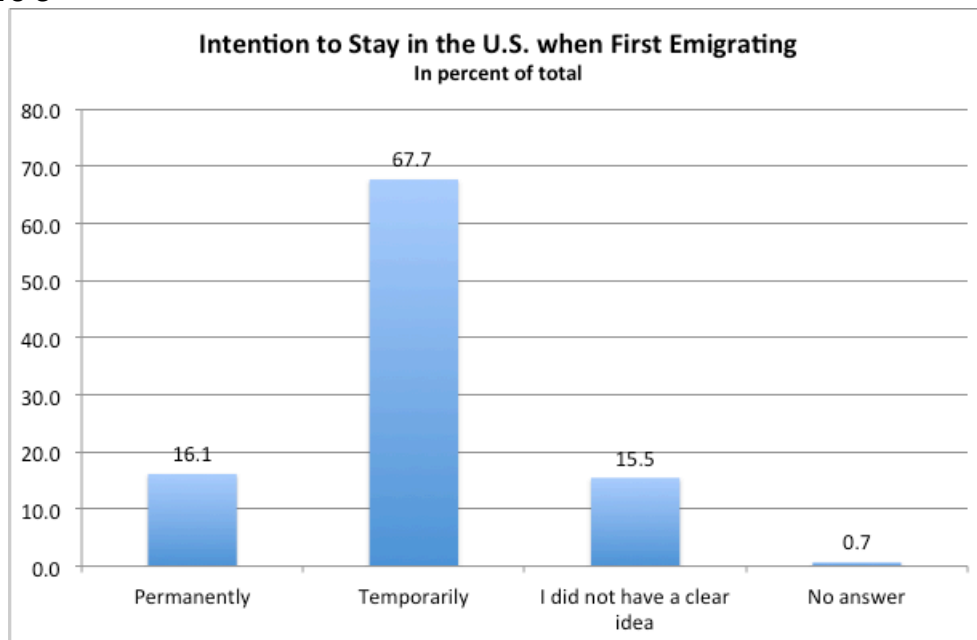
Figure 5



Though the difference between the percentage of undocumented in the survey sample and their percentage in the U.S.-resident population is not statistically significant, the high proportion of undocumented in the sample is consistent with the notion that the recent return migration population is largely made up of people who were caught in the middle of the U.S. immigration system that privileged an enforcement-only approach. They emigrated initially without the intention to settle but were possibly forced to settle because it became increasingly difficult for them to cross the border back and forth as a result of tighter control. As we can see below, the majority of our respondents did not originally have the intention to immigrate permanently to the U.S. Almost 70 percent had the original

intention to be there temporarily when first emigrating, while only 16 had the intention to settle there and the rest did not have a decided intention on this matter. The participants in our survey traveled back and forth to the U.S. for work, or to reside there temporarily, 4.8 times on average, which is another indicator that recent return migrants were primarily circular migrants, as previous generations of migrants to the U.S. had been.

Figure 6



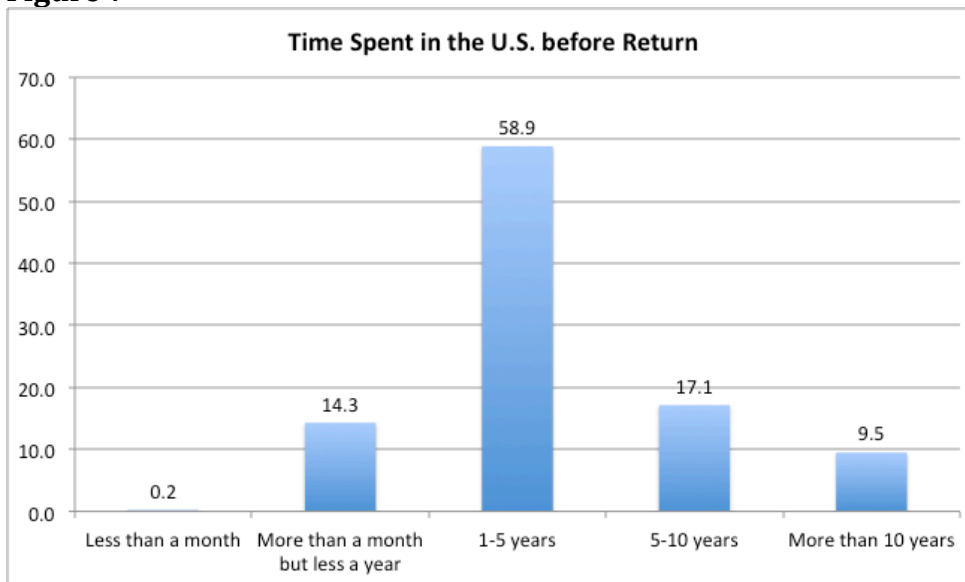
5.1.2 A population that was in the process of establishing roots in the U.S.

As noted above, we selected as respondents only people who had lived in the U.S. for at least a year during their entire migration trajectory. Multiple stays in the U.S. totaling a year or more satisfied this criterion. We asked them, however, to specify how long they had continuously been in the U.S. immediately prior to their latest return. It is interesting to see that close to 60 percent of our respondents were there between one and five years, suggesting that these were migrants who were not seasonally in this country like most Mexican migrants in the past but had settled for a longer period of time, thus establishing roots in the U.S. We should also remember that many of them had lived in the U.S. at various times. Thus it is possible that during their last trip they settled for a longer period of time not only as it became more difficult for them to travel back and forth due to higher risk

associated with the journey across the border but also as the consequences of being detained became more evident. It is interesting to notice that the majority of those who returned had been in the U.S. for less than five years; data available on the Mexican first generation immigrant population in the U.S., by contrast, shows that 80 percent of this population has been in their host country for more than five years⁵⁸. Those who had been in the U.S. for a shorter period of time may have had weaker networks and safety nets to sustain themselves or to survive during difficult times, or may otherwise have been encouraged to return by a relatively low degree of integration in the U.S.

However, it is also interesting to note that a sizable proportion of the return population, close to 27 percent, had been in the U.S. for more than five years. This suggests that even many of those long enough in the U.S. to be assumed to have set down relatively deep roots were forced to return by deportation or similarly grave difficulty. Members of this group of returnees may be particularly likely to wish to re-emigrate.

Figure 7



5.2 Reasons for return

5.2.1 How many were deported? How many returned on their own?

Immigration enforcement in conjunction with a deep economic downturn, affected in very pronounced ways Mexican migrants because of their legal status

⁵⁸ Masferrer, Claudia; Perdizini, Carla; Passel, Jeffrey S.; and Livingston, Gretchen. Chapter 1. Demographics. In Latapí, Agustín Escobar. Binational Dialogue on Mexican Migrants in the U.S. and Mexico. Op cit. Figure 2.

and position in the labor market, forcing many of them to return. Apart from those who returned because of adverse circumstances produced by this scenario there were those who were deported. It is still unknown how many deported migrants decided to remain in Mexico and how many to re-emigrate to the U.S.

The estimates offered by resources based on national statistical data present a very wide range: between 5 and 35 percent of return migrants are deportees. That is to say that among all return migrants 80 percent returned of their own volition with a margin of error $\pm 15\%$ ⁵⁹. Not inconsistent with this estimate, the survey conducted in Jalisco shows that almost 11% of return migrants were deportees .

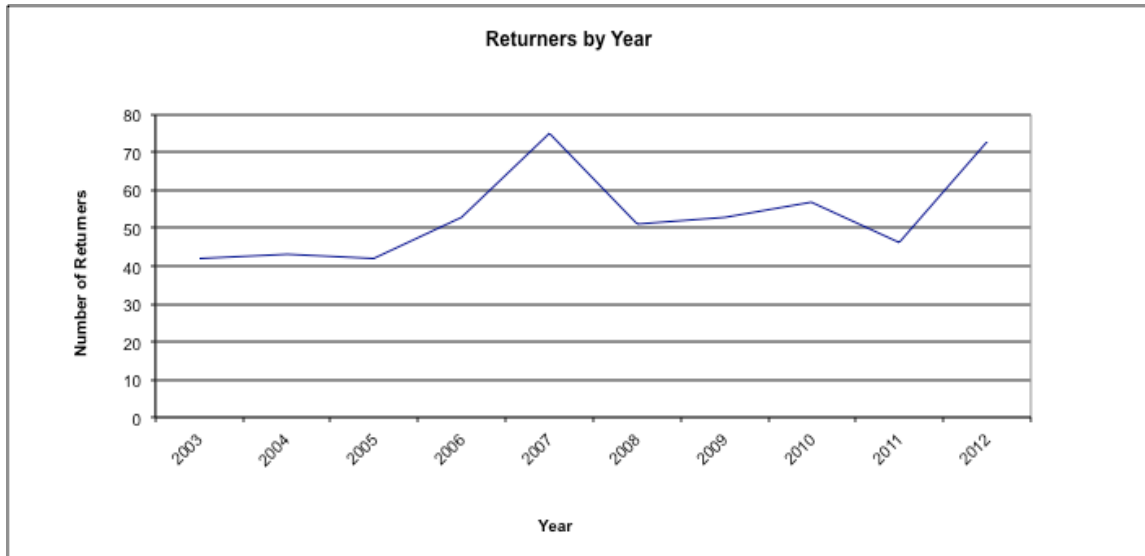
5.2.2 Reasons for return other than deportation

One of the main unanswered questions regarding recent return migration to Mexico is the extent to which the U.S. economic downturn encouraged people to return. We have shown that previous recessions encouraged settlement rather than return. However, because this recession impacted sectors of the economy in which Mexicans were heavily represented and because it occurred at a time when immigration enforcement had increased the difficulty of their moving to other sectors of the economy, it is possible that this recession did more than previous recessions to make it difficult for some migrants to remain in the U.S. This would presumably be especially true for more recent migrants with weaker social networks and safety nets to sustain them during adverse times. Anecdotal evidence we collected while conducting the survey suggests that economic factors were an issue in the decision to return. Some migrants said that they were unable to keep up with payments in the U.S without stable jobs and that accordingly it was simply cheaper for them to return.

A way to observe whether the recession had an impact on the decision to return is to look at year of return. The number of returnees seems to have increased slightly as the economic crisis took off and the economy entered into a recession in 2007. Interestingly enough, however, return migration maintained a steady trend during the following years and an increase in 2012 suggests that thus far recovery has not reversed the trend.

⁵⁹ Passel, D'Vera Cohn and González Barrera. *Net Migration from México Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less*. Op Cit.

Figure 8



A more direct way of assessing reasons for return is simply to ask returnees the reasons for their decisions. In the survey, respondents were asked to identify and rank-order their three most important reasons for return, choosing from twenty-six reasons presented. 49.6 percent of respondents chose only first and second reasons. All economic reasons, if considered as a single choice, would represent the third-most cited reason. 15.5 percent of respondents (93 in total) argued that they returned because of difficulty in finding a job, while 11.3 percent or 68 respondents argued that this was their main reason for return.

Table 2

Return because of difficulty in finding a job in the U.S.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First	68	11.3	73.1	73.1
	Second	14	2.3	15.1	88.2
	Third	11	1.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	93	15.5	100.0	
Missing	System	508	84.5		
Total		601	100.0		

When considering this reason by year of return, however, the data show no statistically significant increase in the percentage of returnees returning for this reason during or since the economic crisis. 22.8 percent of those who reported difficulty in finding a job as a first reason returned between 2003 and 2006, while 46.7 percent did so between 2007 and 2012 when the effects of the economic

recession became more evident and it became more difficult for some migrants to stay in the U.S. without a job that could allow them to make a living. As this admittedly suggestive difference is not statistically significant, it is not possible to draw a clear conclusion on this issue.

The reason for returning most frequently given by survey respondents was homesickness. In total 320 respondents, or 53.2 percent, reported it as their first, second, or third most important reason, and 175, or 29.1 percent, reported it as their most important.

Table 3

Return because of homesickness					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First	175	29.1	54.7	54.7
	Second	98	16.3	30.6	85.3
	Third	47	7.8	14.7	100.0
	Total	320	53.2	100.0	
Missing	System	281	46.8		
Total		601	100.0		

Although this factor is difficult to explain by itself it seems to be related to the factors we mentioned above. As immigration border and interior enforcement intensified and life conditions for migrants became more difficult in the U.S, migrants also became more nostalgic for their places and communities of origin, especially if the links with those places and their families had been severed because of the difficulty of traveling back and forth.

Because this was an exploratory study, we allowed respondents to report other reasons for return beyond the ones offered them. The reasons offered were numerous, covering all the factors we had identified as relevant in driving return migration, including economic and family related issues and issues related with the anti-immigrant environment in the U.S. Participants in the survey, however still chose the category “Other” as the third most important reason for return. To get some idea of the specific reasons making up this large category, we decided to examine the “other” reasons reported by respondents and to assess whether they were related to the answers offered by the survey instrument. It turned out that most of the reasons volunteered by respondents were family-related but more specific than the ones we presented to them. Putting together all the reasons of return into wider categories, we can observe that homesickness and family-related issues can be considered together the most relevant reason for return. This reinforces the argument that immigration enforcement impacted family life and links with communities of origin in a way that encouraged many people to return. Additional research is needed for us to understand in greater detail what

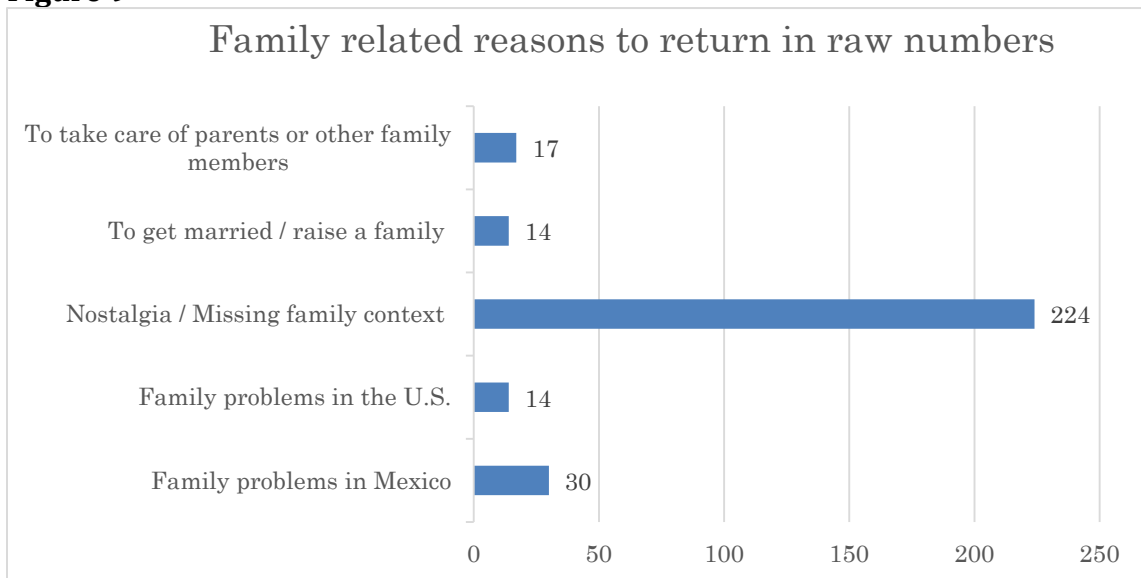
“homesickness” means for return migrants and the ways in which their family lives and their links with their communities of origin were disrupted in recent years.

Table 4

Main reasons for return	Quantity	%
Economic	132	21.96
Migratory /racism/ difficulties in host society	51	8.49
Retirement	10	1.66
Studies	17	2.83
Homesickness and family related	250	41.60
Health related	28	4.66
Other	55	9.15
Number of people who answered	543	90.35

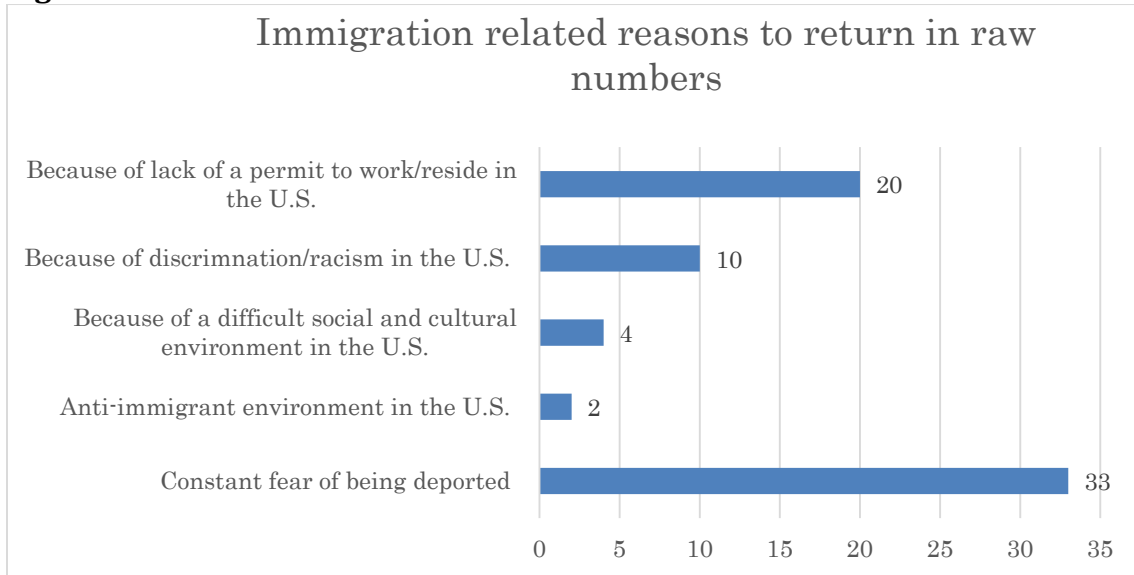
Apart from homesickness, already mentioned, other family-related issues mentioned by migrants as a reason for return include family problems in the U.S., family problems in Mexico, taking care of family members in Mexico, and getting married and starting a new family, possibly the only aspect that does not refer to an adverse situation.

Figure 9



It is interesting to note that only two respondents in total reported the anti-immigrant environment in the U.S. as the main reason for return. Other immigration-related causes reported include not having immigration papers. On this basis, it could be argued that enforcement was not an important reason for return. This argument is undercut, however, by the fact that 33 respondents stated that they returned because of the constant fear of being deported.

Figure 10



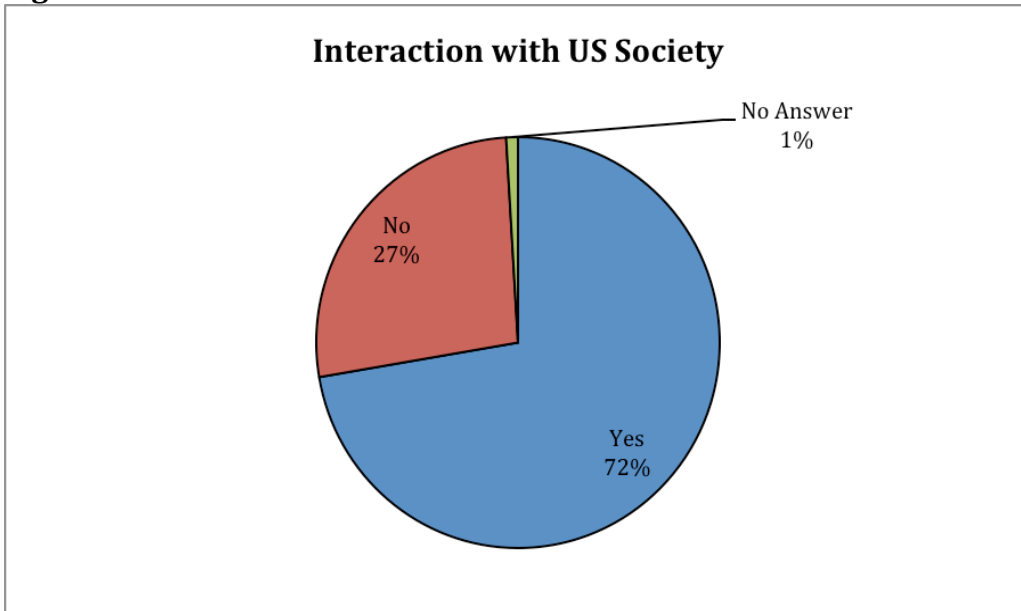
5.3 Relationship with host society and institutions

It is still intriguing however, to see that very few migrants returned because of the anti-immigrant environment in the U.S. or because of the possibly related reason of racism and discrimination. Only 10 people reported either of these last two issues as their main reason for return. This is intriguing given that at least since 2006 one of the policy approaches that has been advocated and pursued at the local and state level in the immigration field has been that of *attrition through enforcement* which has attempted to make life very difficult to undocumented migrants so that they self-deport themselves.

If very few immigrants effectively “self-deported”, this suggests that most returnees felt comfortable in their host society despite attempts by right wing politicians to make their lives miserable in the U.S. This is one of the most interesting findings that emerged from the survey.

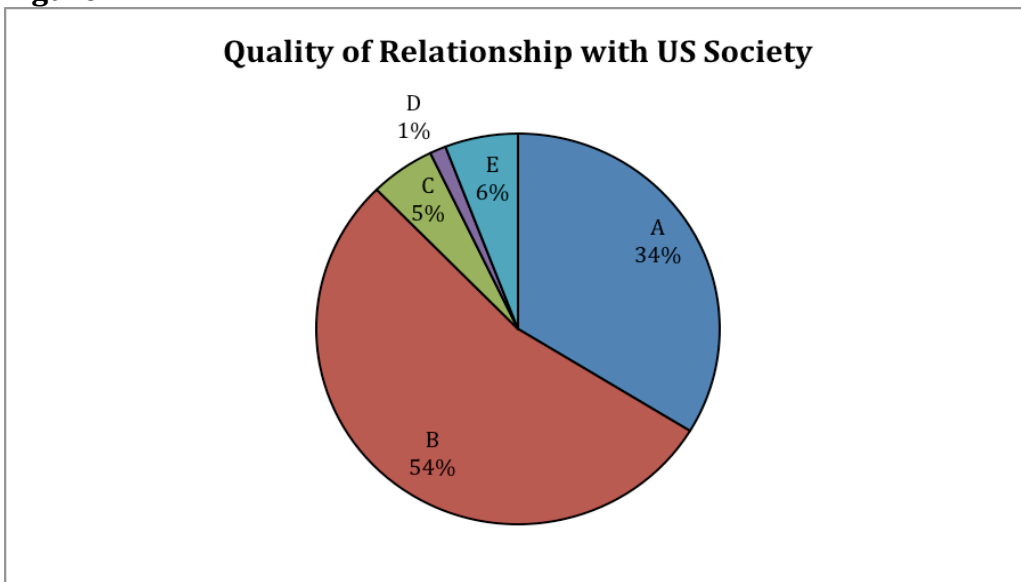
In the survey respondents were asked whether they had had *any* interaction with US society while they lived in the U.S. As can be seen below 75 percent of respondents argued that they did.

Figure 11



When asked about the quality of this relationship most respondents argued that they felt very good or good. Only a very small percentage said that they had some problems or many problems.

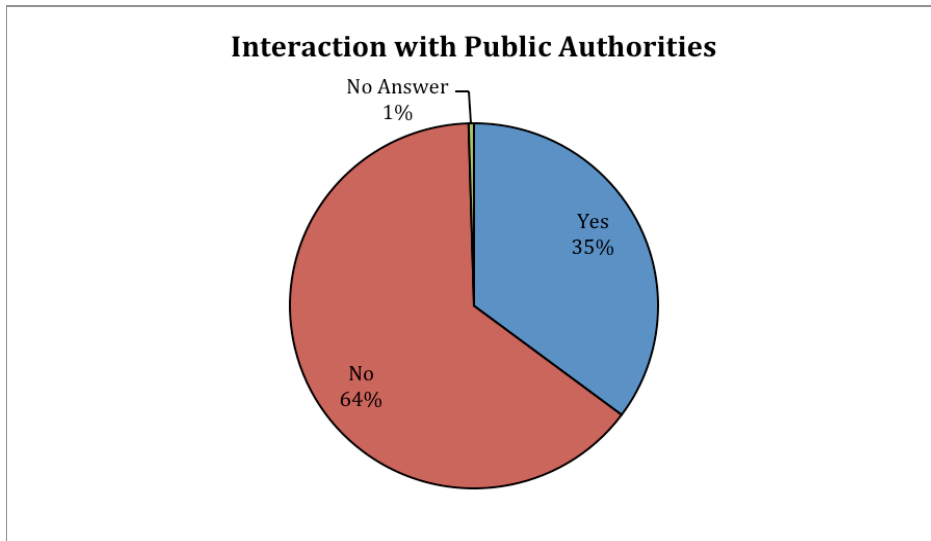
Figure 12



Quality of relationship with U.S. society while in the US. (A) Very good. (B) Good. (C) I had some problems. (D) I had many problems. (E) I do not have an opinion on the subject

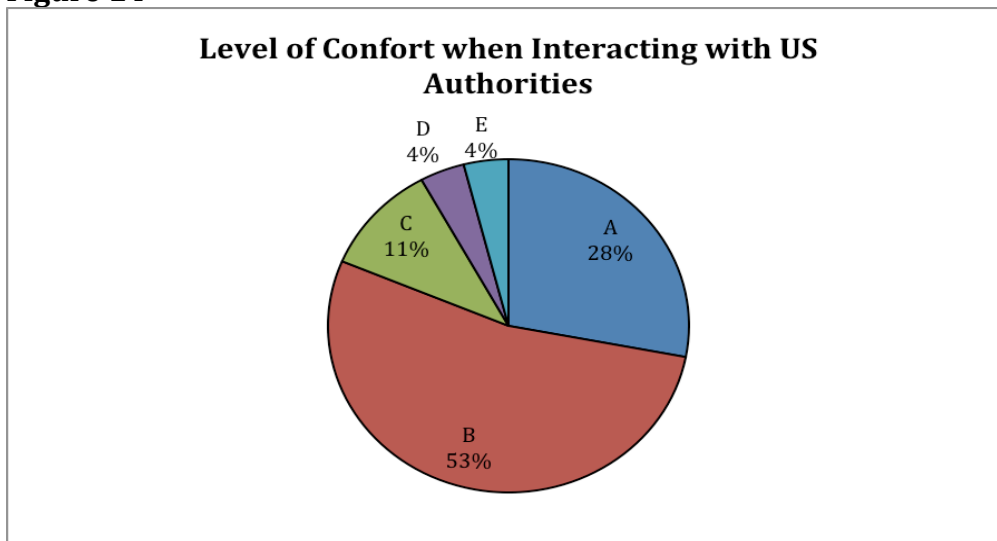
We also asked respondents whether they had interacted not just with U.S. society in general, but with U.S. authorities. Because many of them were undocumented a relatively small percentage, 35 percent, interacted with authorities.

Figure 13



Interestingly, however, of those who interacted with U.S. authorities the majority reported that they felt very good or good about their interactions. Only a small percentage reported having had some problems or many problems with U.S. authorities.

Figure 14



Question G3. Level of comfort when interacting with U.S authorities was ... (A) Comfortable. (B) Good. (C) I had problems with them sometimes. (D) I had continuous problems with them. (E) I do not have an opinion on the subject / NO Answer)

Furthermore, when asked about their relationship with specific groups in the U.S. return migrants report having had positive interaction with most of them. For instance, though non-Hispanic whites are arguably the group that has most strongly supported policies that attempt to restrict migrants' rights, especially for the undocumented, 83.6 percent of our respondents report having interacted with them and the majority, 57.3 percent, claim to have felt very comfortable or comfortable among them.

The level of comfort they felt among non-Hispanic whites is even slightly higher than their level of comfort with Mexican-Americans -- that is, American-born people of Mexican descent. For instance, return migrants report having had slightly less interaction with Mexican-Americans than with whites. 81.7 percent report having interacted with this group and 55.8 claim to have felt very comfortable or comfortable among them. Only 8 percent reported that they did not feel comfortable with them at all.

The only other two groups with whom return migrants felt more comfortable are those made up of people arguably "like them", including other Mexican-born migrants, and other Latin American migrants. This also suggests that most of the returnees may have lived in ethnic enclaves, neighborhoods where most of the inhabitants belong to the same or similar ethnic groups, though many of them may have worked for non-Hispanic white employers (which may explain why they show high levels of interactions with non-Hispanic whites). 98.6 of migrants interacted with Mexican-born migrants and 90.1 percent report having felt very comfortable or comfortable among them. At the same time, 87.3 interacted with other Latin-American migrants, and 70.5 percent report having felt very comfortable or comfortable with them.

With other traditional groups, such as African Americans and Asians, return migrants report much less interaction; and this is probably the most striking though not surprising finding of the survey in this regard. 36.1 percent report having felt very comfortable or comfortable among African-Americans, but 35.7 percent report no interaction with them at all. Only 12.2 percent report that they did not feel comfortable at all among them.

At the same time, 33.8 percent report having felt comfortable or very comfortable among Asians, though 42.7 percent report not having had interacted with them at all. Only 6.6 percent report that they did not feel comfortable at all among them.

5.4 Civic Engagement while in the U.S

Despite the fact that many of them were generally comfortable in their interactions with U.S. society and institutions, return migrants seem to have been part of a fairly disempowered population in the U.S., which is also a reflection of the

fact that the majority of them were undocumented. Asked about membership in a variety of organizations, most of the returnees turn out not to have belonged to any of them. The type of organization in which they participated the most was a sports club: 5.2 percent participated in one. This is followed by a youth or student association (2.8 percent), a union (2.3 percent), an immigrant rights organization (2.3 percent), a charity organization (2.3 percent), and a political party (1.9 percent). Their participation in other types of organization was almost nil, including NGOs, cooperatives, and non-union labor organizations. It is also interesting to note that only 0.5 percent participated in a hometown association (HTA). Studies on transnationalism argue that in recent decades immigrants have empowered themselves by simultaneously participating in the economic and political life of their communities of origin and residence, a situation that has been facilitated through the use of new technologies to communicate with people in their hometowns. Many of these studies have supported their argument by observing how many of them have joined HTAs. This may happen with immigrants who are already integrated into their host society as they have gained access to a legal status and citizenship, and thus are able to move freely from one country to the other.

What has emerged from our research instead, is the image of a community that saw many of its links with its places of origin broken, notwithstanding access to various communication technologies, since they were forced to settle in the U.S. as immigration enforcement at the border intensified and their circular migration cycle was interrupted. This may be why homesickness appears as a very prominent reason for return, along with family-related considerations.

Overall, the limited participation of returnees in any type of organization suggests that they made very limited social capital gains in their host country, understood here as access to social networks that could have provided them with information and other tangible and intangible resources to improve their living conditions there and overcome difficult times. Thus it is possible that many returnees made their decision to return in the context of broken family ties --either because of deportation of family members or because most family members still remained in Mexico—; greater difficulties in finding a job; limited access to a social network and safety net; and a growing threat that they themselves or their family members could be detained and deported.

6. Prospects for reintegration into Mexico's labor market and society and their intention to remain in Mexico or to re-emigrate

6.1 Where do they return?

As we mentioned above there is still much discussion and limited information about the places where migrants settle down after return. Literature on the new geographies of migration suggests that many migrants do not return to their places of origin, because they look for more dynamic economic environments.

The data we collected reflect conditions only in Jalisco, which is nonetheless the largest state of return by volume, and within Jalisco only the dynamics of very specific places, Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, Lagos de Moreno, and rural municipalities of Los Altos. Yet it still provides a glimpse about the places where return migrants chose to settle down.

Though fewer migrants than in the past may be returning to their places of origin, our data suggest that in the places we studied in Jalisco, which includes traditional sending areas, the majority still do. 53.6 percent of our survey respondents returned to the place where they were born. An additional 32.6 percent did not return to the place where they were born, but did return to the place where they were living before going to the U.S., while 4.6% returned to a place other than the place they were born but where family members or people they know reside. This suggests that migrants do tend to go back to places that are familiar to them and in which they maintain links and connections. Only 8.3 percent returned to a place where they thought they could find better employment opportunities while 0.8 percent returned to other places because of unspecified reasons.

All of this suggests that though migrants are people willing to move to new places to find better employment opportunities they still place great importance on their family links and their places of origin or the places where they had been relatively settled, even if these were not their place of birth. In Jalisco, at least, this is consistent with the fact that many of them returned because of homesickness and family reasons. However, it should also not be surprising since family support is in any case crucial for them to reintegrate into the labor market and society. As we shall see later, of the 116 respondents who reported having invested in any project after return more than half (65) stated that they received support (financial or otherwise) from family members to make that investment. In contrast, very few of them (only 8) received support from any institution, with such support consisting primarily of micro-credits. Clearly, any type of policy towards the reincorporation of returning migrants into Mexico's labor market that attempts to generate new employment opportunities for them should consider these facts. Employment opportunities will have to be generated in places and regions from which return migrants come. Encouraging people to move would clearly require strong institutional support that could substitute, at least partially, for the family support many of them currently receive.

6.2 The evolution of migrants' occupations during the migration process

Evidence is inconclusive about the extent to which the migration experience can have a positive impact on the condition of return migrants in the labor market of their country of origin and on their capacity to contribute to its economic development. As noted above, much depends on the level of planning and readiness during the return process, but also on the policy and economic environments migrants face in their host and home countries. Nonetheless, it is generally assumed that if migrants have acquired some skills and new knowledge as a result of the

migration experience, return migration can then have a positive effect for them, and for the economy of their country of origin⁶⁰.

In the Mexican case there is evidence that there has been, historically, a wage premium associated with migration and return. In other words, return migrants have been able to obtain higher wages relative to those they would have earned had they not migrated at all because of increases in their human capital levels and savings that can be applied to productive activities. However, there is also evidence that this premium has been shrinking over time as recent stocks of migrants are drawn from lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, and the educational gap between migrants and those who have remained in Mexico is increasingly smaller.⁶¹

The research presented here does not provide evidence on this matter, since we did not survey those who migrated and those who did not to attain a base for comparison. However, our research provides some data on the evolution in the occupational status of return migrants before, during and after migration for which there exists very limited information. Though our data do not afford statistically significant results they are useful for identifying some trends and informing the debate about the performance of return migrants in Mexico's labor market and their potential capacity to contribute to its economic development.

As we can observe in Table 5, migrants' occupations have varied considerably as a result of their migration experience. Before emigration 14.8 percent of the respondents worked in the agricultural sector, a number that diminished to 5.16 percent while in the U.S. After return only 8.82 percent worked in this sector. It is interesting to notice that the data collected contrast with those from the ENOE, which show that return migrants are working disproportionately in the agricultural sector. One reason for that is that our sample includes a very large urban sample. If we look at the numbers by locality then we can see some differences though in all three of them participation in the agricultural sector diminished after return. Before emigration 48 out of the 151 respondents in the rural area worked in agriculture. Today only 33 of them do. Before emigration 22 out of the 150 respondents in Lagos de Moreno worked in agriculture, while only 14 do so today.

A similar situation appeared in Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, where participation in this sector of the economy was considerably smaller from the very beginning. Before emigration 19 out of 300 respondents worked in agriculture; after return only 6 did so. Though our data cannot allow us to make any conclusion in this regard, in-depth interviews we conducted seem to corroborate that return migrants

⁶⁰ See: Campos Vásquez, Raymundo; and Lara, Jaime. *Self Selection Patterns among Return Migrants: México 1990-2010*. Serie Documentos de Trabajo, Centro de Estudios Económicos, El Colegio de México. Documento de Trabajo IX-2011. p.2. Available at: <http://cee.colmex.mx/documentos/documentos-de-trabajo/2011/dt20119.pdf>. Last accessed: December 1st, 2013.

⁶¹ Ibid. p.3.

are less prone to work in agriculture than they were before emigration. One reason provided was that after having lived a more urban life in the U.S. and worked in other sectors of the economy it is harder for them to work again in agricultural activities, and they will only do so if they have no alternative. The ENOE data suggesting that participation of return migrants in agricultural sector has tended to increase during the past few years as economic growth in Mexico slowed down and the unemployment rate increased⁶² should be understood from this perspective. It is important thing to mention, however, that the ENOE data do not allow us to observe the level of participation of return migrants in the agricultural sector before emigration. Though a disproportionate number return to agriculture it is still possible that a larger number of them worked in agriculture than they did after return. Further research is clearly needed on this matter.

In contrast to agriculture, the utilities and service maintenance sector (janitors, repair services and others), where many respondents worked while in the U.S. though they had a more limited participation before emigration. Before emigration 6 percent of respondents worked in this sector, while 15.64 percent did so in the U.S. After return, 9.82 percent of respondents were working in this sector. Within this sector we can observe significant variations for people performing carpentry jobs. Before emigration 12 people were working as carpenters. In the U.S. 21 of the respondents performed this type of job. After return, only 8 did. Whatever skills they gained in the U.S. in this area, it is clear that only a limited proportion of them were using them after return.

The services sectors represented without a doubt the most important job niche for respondents while they lived in the U.S. Before emigration, 19.8 percent of them worked in this sector of the economy, 41.43 percent while in the U.S., and 25.46 percent after return.

Segregating the services sector by professions we can observe some interesting trends. For example, before emigration fewer than 1 percent of respondents worked as cooks. This number jumped to 12.98 percent while in the U.S. which represented the highest percentage of any occupation performed by respondents. After return, however, only 2.16 percent were working in this profession. Thus yet again, whatever skills they gained in this field, clearly only a very small number were capitalizing on them. One possible reason for this is low demand for people with this experience in the places where they returned. Looking at the data in detail this seems to be the case at least in the rural area of Los Altos, where none of the respondents worked as cook after they returned though 21 of them did so while in the U.S.; and Lagos de Moreno, where only 5 respondents were working in this profession today, while 28 did so in the U.S. In the case of Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, however, this situation is more puzzling

⁶² See: Juan Luis Diaz Ordaz. *Perfil Socioeconómico y de Reinserción Laboral de los Migrantes Mexicanos de Retorno: Análisis Comparativo entre 2005-2007 y 2008-2012*. Op cit.

considering that this area has a lot of restaurants. While in the U.S. 29 respondents worked as cooks but only 8 did so after return.

Two sectors where we do not see much variation in the evolution of occupations during the migratory cycle are manufacturing and construction. Before emigration 12.31 percent of respondents worked in the manufacturing sector, while 13.1 percent did so while in the U.S. and 8.48 percent after return.

In the case of construction, 7.99 percent of respondents worked in this sector before emigration, 8.98 percent did so while in the U.S. and 7.32 percent did so after return. It is interesting to note that those employed in the construction sector were not among the most widely represented group among respondents even though this sector was particularly affected by the economic crisis and that many migrants working in this industry lost their jobs⁶³. One would have expected to find more respondents to have worked in this sector.

The most striking feature of the data on the occupational evolution of respondents is the number of unemployed today relative to the number of them who were unemployed while in the U.S. Before emigration 24.96 percent of respondents were not employed. This is unsurprising in that many of them were young and had not joined the labor force, and in that looking for an employment was a main reason for them to emigrate. While in the U.S. only 4.33 percent of respondents were unemployed. However, after return unemployment numbers were almost as high as before departure, which suggests that many return migrants have been unable to improve their economic condition as a result of migration. Though the data we present are not statistically significant the number of those unemployed is quite large, suggesting that here is the need to explore in more detail this issue and to clarify what is happening in the economies of Mexico and Jalisco to make reintegration the return population into the labor market difficult.

⁶³ Mexicans were the immigrant group most affected by the economic downturn. According to the Pew Hispanic center unemployment among this group increased by 233,000 people from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, while most of the job losses were in the construction sector. That meant that unemployment among Mexicans, which was 391,000 in the first quarter of 2007, increased by 59.6% in 2008. "See: Kochhar, Rakesh. *Latino Labor Report 2008: Construction Reverses Job Growth for Latinos*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. June 4th, 2008. P. 5.

Table 5**Occupations before emigrating, while in the US, and after return**

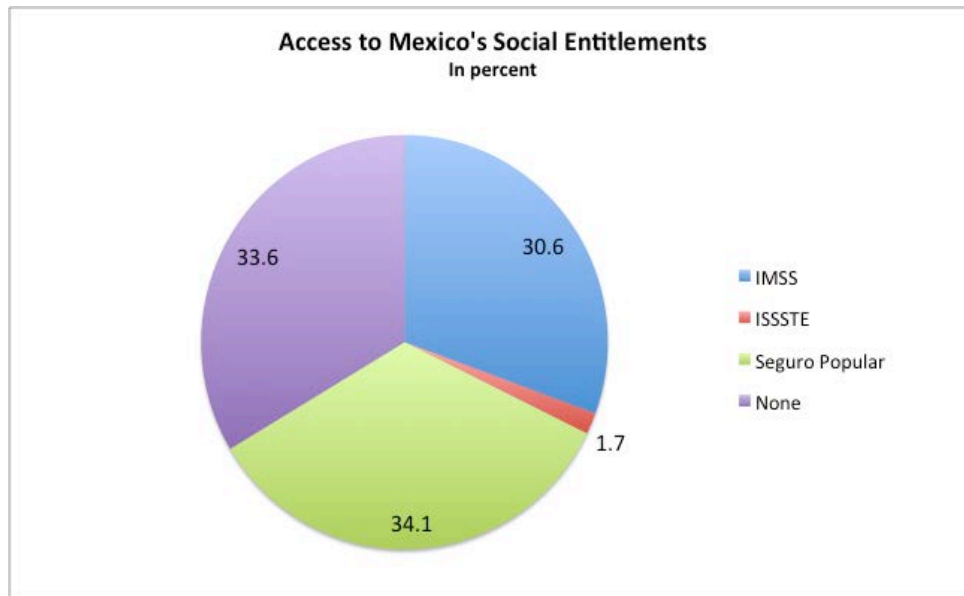
Industry/Position	In Mexico before emigrating		While in the US		After return to Mexico	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture	89	14.80	31	5.16	53	8.82
Mining	1	0.16	0	0.00	1	0.16
Construction	48	7.99	54	8.98	44	7.32
Utilities and building maintenance	36	6.00	94	15.64	59	9.82
Services	119	19.80	249	41.43	153	25.46
Manufacturing	74	12.31	79	13.14	51	8.48
Professionals	7	1.16	3	0.50	31	5.16
Managers	3	0.50	1	0.16	1	0.16
Entrepreneurs	2	0.33	0	0.00	6	1.00
Another (not identified)	70	11.64	40	6.65	74	12.31
Unemployed	150	24.96	26	4.33	123	20.46
Did no answer	2	0.33	0	0.00	5	0.83
TOTAL	601	100	601	100	601	100

6.3 The condition of return migrants in the labor market

Possibly the most effective way to observe the condition of return migrants in the labor market is to identify the number of those who receive benefits from the Mexican Institute for Social Security (*IMSS* or *Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*) and the Institute for Social Security and Services for Public Employees (*ISSSTE* or *Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado*). Apart from employers and those self-employed who register their business or their professional activities, in Mexico those employees who contribute to the social security system, which is divided between these two institutions, belong to the formal economy. The rest of the working population, including those who belong to the Popular Security System (*Seguro Popular*) in which people can register even if they do not work, is part of the informal economy. For instance the Popular Security System is a new social entitlement system created by the Mexican government in 2002 to provide benefits to people who do not have access to IMSS or ISSSTE, a requirement for registration into this system.

As we can observe in Figure 13, 32.3 percent of respondents have access to Social Security benefits including IMSS or ISSSTE and thus have jobs in the formal economy. The rest belong to the informal economy or do not work. It is interesting to notice that despite the fact that the Popular Security System has attempted to become universal a large percentage of respondents – 33.2 percent--do not belong to this system, which means that they are not receiving public health and other benefits. This may be happening because they may have chosen not to pay the fee to belong to this system, because they do not have enough information and do not understand this system or because they do not have the appropriate documents -- participating in this system requires a birth certificate or a Unique Population Registration Code (CURP or *Clave Única de Registro de Población*.)

Figure 15



6.4 Investment capacity

Though many recent return migrants may have gone back to Mexico as a result of adverse or difficult conditions in the U.S or in Mexico, it seems that many of them still have the capacity to contribute to the Mexican economy through their skills or as small investors. Though many respondents have not invested at all, a good number of them --19.3 percent or 116 people-- have invested in small businesses or other activities, as can be seen in Figure 16. These investments include primarily the opening of small food and shoe stores and restaurants and, to a lesser extent, the buying of new property such as land, homes, and cars, or investing in remodeling a home. Though small in peso amounts, the majority of them between \$35,000 to \$70,000 pesos (between U.S \$2700 dollars and U.S. \$5400 dollars) these investments suggest that return migrants do have the capacity to become investors, especially with policies that provide them with know-how and

financial literacy skills. Fully 94 percent of respondents report having been unbanked in the U.S. (not having access to a checking or savings account, much less a credit card) and many likely remain so in Mexico. Providing them with some access to credit after they meet certain requirements would help to support their investment capacity. When asked about what policies would encourage them to invest, respondents predominantly reported access to credit and special support for investment, including technical assistance and legal support, as well as a more favorable investment climate in Mexico. It is interesting also to note that 75 percent of those who invested in a small business are still operating. Furthermore, among those who did not invest at all 275 stated that they would have liked to do so but did not have enough capital, while 69 stated that they considered the possibility very seriously. Only 115 responded that they did not have any interest at all in investing in any business.

Figure 16

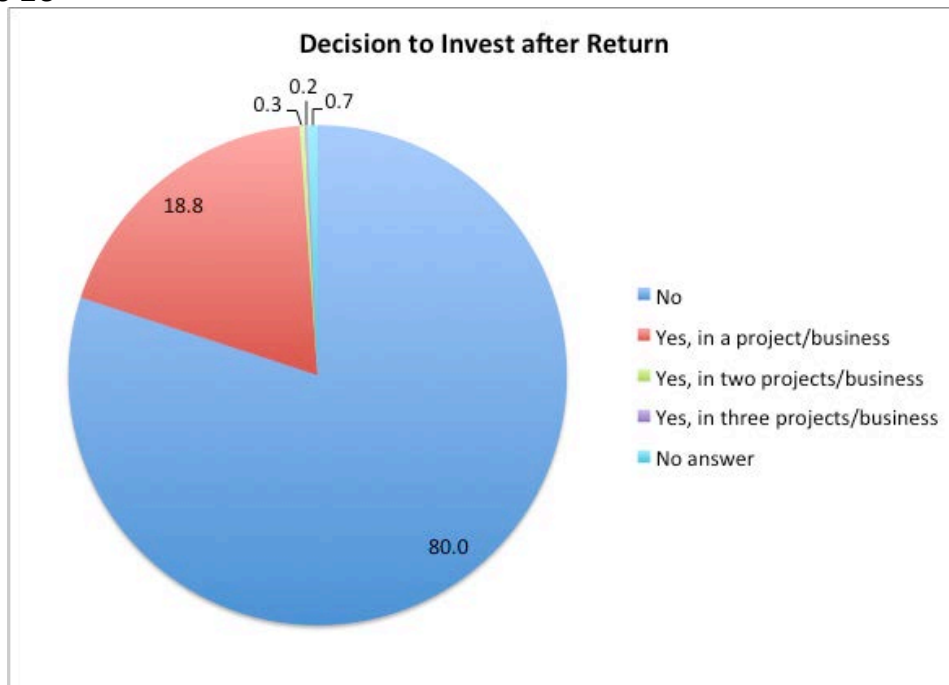
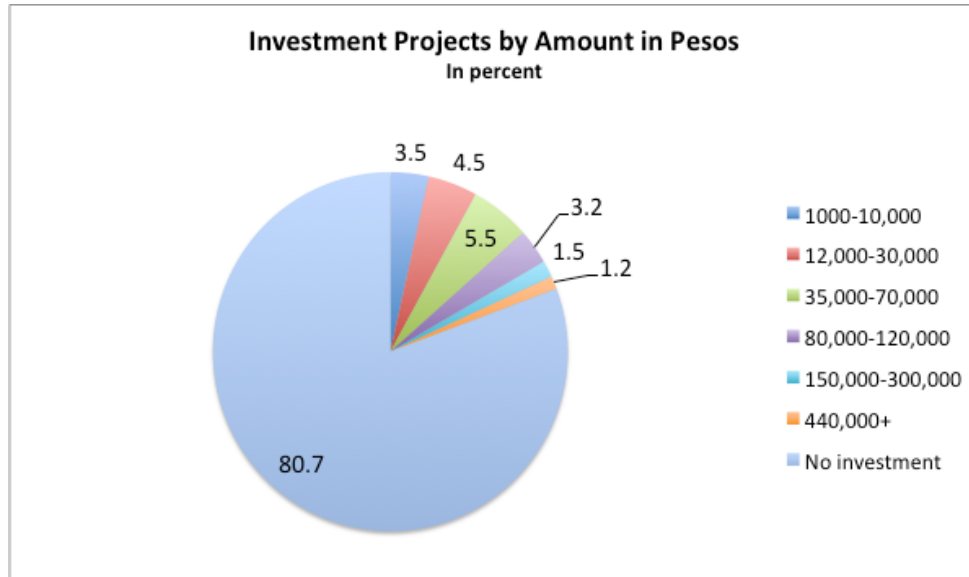


Figure 17



6.5 Changing perceptions about society after return

Our data do not provide us with much detail about the ways migrants' perceptions have changed as a result of migration, but they do afford some interesting insights. When asked whether they have faced adversity in Mexico after return, 54 percent of respondents stated that they have, which suggests that their reintegrating into Mexico's economy and society is not an easy process. The most common adversities they report are low or unsatisfactory salaries, bad working conditions, and expensive housing. Since many of these were the very factors that encouraged them to emigrate in the first place (89 percent of respondents reported that finding job security and improving their financial condition was their main reason to emigrate to the U.S.) it is evident that for a large number of them life conditions in Mexico have not changed a lot. Other important adversities they report include bureaucratic bottlenecks (legal and administrative difficulties), and corruption.

Despite the evidence of a lack of improvement in life conditions, 51.2 percent of respondents report that their economic situation is indeed better than it was when they first emigrated to the U.S. 20.1 percent report that it is worse, and 28.5 percent that is almost the same. Thus, a little more than half perceive their migration experience as having been positive at least in relation to their economic condition.

With respect to their standard of living in Mexico compared to their standard of living while in the U.S., responses give a less definitive conclusion. Only 15.3 percent of respondents report that their current standard of living is much better

than they enjoyed in the U.S. 24.45 percent report that it is a little better, 22.12 percent that it has not changed a lot, 23.13 percent that it is a little worse, and 14.8 percent that it is much worse.

6.6 Intention to re-emigrate to the U.S.

One of the most puzzling issues about recent return migrants is whether they have the intention to re-emigrate to the U.S. or whether they prefer to remain in Mexico. In the past, since most migrants were circular migrants it was simply assumed that after having achieved their main goals through a certain number of trips to the U.S. most migrants would chose to remain in Mexico at some point and retire there.

However, in light of the transformation of recent decades, including the fact that many migrants decided to settle at least for a while rather than traveling back and forth, it is unclear what will happen with recent return migrants. Clearly, many of them established roots in the U.S., both in the communities where they resided and by forming and raising their families there, and thus may be strongly inclined to return to the U.S. However, many others returned because of homesickness and other family reasons, including taking care of aging family members or reuniting with other family members who will not be able to return to the U.S. for a long time, including those who were deported and face an entry bar. For people in those conditions adapting to Mexico back may be the only option available right now, considering that even a comprehensive immigration reform would be unlikely to benefit family members, especially those who were deported.

Among the returnees are young people who were educated in the U.S. and were forced to return for a variety of reasons. For them the future is uncertain, since their adapting in Mexico will be difficult but going back implies a life in the shadows in the U.S. since they are unlikely to benefit from any regularization program, including the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program recently implemented by the administration of President Obama. This program only benefits those who have continuously resided in the U.S. from June 15th, 2007 to the present. Finally, there are also the children of return migrants who hold American citizenship and are formally new immigrants in Mexico themselves. Though they may have dual nationality, they have generally never resided in Mexico. This may be the only major sub-group of returnees with a legal right to return, but how many will opt to return to the U.S. is unclear.

Our data do not give us as fine a grained a picture as we would like of the sub-populations within the return migrant community. They do afford some limited insight, however. Of the 601 respondents, 30.6 percent reported a firm intention to return to the U.S. while 17 percent reported that they might return at some point. In contrast 24.8 percent argued that they are not considering the possibility of going back at all for now, while 17.3 percent said that they never want to return.

It is not completely clear, however, that intention is equivalent to what people actually perceive as possible. In Jalisco, we spoke with a number of migrants who expressed a firm intention to go back but know that they face a long wait because of an entry bar. Many respondents also mentioned, including in in-depth interviews that they intend to return to the U.S. but want to do so legally. These respondents also know that their goal is unachievable in the near future.

6.7 Changing perceptions about reasons to migrate

More enlightening than the reported intentions to re-emigrate are reasons given for wanting to re-emigrate. Of the reasons offered to them, the most frequently reported was that they knew the U.S. already and had the desire to settle there. 68.7 percent of the people who answered this question chose this as their first reason for intending to return. The second and third most common reasons were because of family and personal needs, and because of a lack of future in Mexico, respectively. This suggests a big change from the original reasons migrants had to emigrate in the first place, and also the ways in which recent dynamics within the Mexican migration phenomenon, including settlement, transformed Mexican migrant perceptions.

In the past, knowledge of the U.S., desire to settle there, and family considerations would not have served many migrants as reasons for re-emigrating, as their families were for the most part in Mexico. Settlement clearly transformed many migrants in a variety of ways, and above all allowed many of them to establish roots in the U.S., which may keep them linked to this country for many years to come even if they never choose or are able to go back there. These links made this population and their offspring truly bi-national and may thus help build new and previously non-existent bridges of dialogue between Mexico and the U.S., especially if returnees are able to reintegrate successfully into their country of origin or to re-emigrate to the U.S., this time legally.

7. Policy implications and directions: towards a comprehensive policy for the reintegration of returning migrants to Mexico

The analysis presented above suggests in a variety of ways the characteristics and complexities of the recent phenomenon of return migration to Mexico. Many of today's return migrants started out as circular migrants, following in the footsteps of earlier generations, but were forced to settle in great part because of greater enforcement at the border. In this sense, they can be seen as *caught* behind the frontier, bringing and/or raising families in adaptation to this new reality. Though it is not possible to measure the extent to which enforcement both at the border and the interior, in conjunction with the criminal justice system,

determined migrants' decision to return, it is clear that these factors play a big role in driving recent return migration dynamics.

The impossibility for many migrants to freely travel to their places of origin to visit their families may have generated a strong feeling of homesickness, especially in a context in which their life conditions in the U.S. deteriorated as a result of a historically sharp economic downturn and a more hostile environment towards migrants. It also eventually encouraged many people to return to reunite with their family members, or to attend to family needs including, for example, care of aging parents. To these reasons it is necessary to add the fact that a number of return migrants (11 percent of survey respondents) were actually people who were deported in the context of greater enforcement and settled back in Mexico at least temporarily.

On the other hand, greater enforcement, especially at the interior, made it more difficult for migrants to find jobs and to move to other sectors of the economy in the context of a deep economic downturn in the U.S. Many of them were possibly unable to remain in the U.S. especially as their families broke apart and as they had a limited access to social networks. As we mentioned above, contrary to common assumptions, there is research indicating that migrants tend to settle for longer periods of time in their host country rather than to return to their places of origin in the context of economic recessions. However, it is possible that escalation of enforcement efforts in the interior at the time of the recession changed the incentives for some migrants, effectively forcing at least some of them to return. Therefore, apart from homesickness and family reasons, economic reasons –in particular job loss– was a main reason for return as reflected in the data we collected.

It is also interesting to note, nonetheless, that despite the increasingly anti-immigrant environment in the U.S., especially in some places and regions, very few migrants return for this reason, narrowly considered. Tolerance of unfriendly conditions may have been fostered by relationships established with U.S. society and authorities. One of the most interesting findings of the research we conducted in Jalisco is that most respondents indicated that they felt comfortable or very comfortable when interacting with U.S. society and authorities, though many of them did not interact to a great extent with the latter, possibly because of their legal status.

As unplanned or undesired as return may have been for many of the returnees, they still have the capacity to contribute to the Mexican economy through the experiences and skills they acquired while in the U.S. as well as through the productive use of their savings. Though the data we present regarding the condition of migrants in the labor market are not conclusive, it is clear that many of them are not using the skills they gained while in the U.S. now that they are back in Mexico. In addition, a large number of them work in the informal economy or, most worryingly, are unemployed. The change in life conditions for many has been dramatic: while

only 4.33 percent of respondents in the survey were unemployed in the U.S., after they returned to Mexico the rate increased to 20.46 percent. Clearly any policy towards the reintegration of return migrants needs to identify ways in which the return population can be linked to job opportunities that facilitate the capitalization of any skills that migrants may have gained in the context of their migration experience.

One of the striking findings of our research is that almost 20 percent of the respondents invested in a project or business upon return despite difficulties and a lack of public support. Furthermore, 75 percent were still in business at the time of the survey, though the projects in which they invested were mostly small. This is an encouraging fact. To increase the investment potential of the return migrant population there is a need to design policies that provide them with technical assistance, legal support, financial literacy skills, and greater access to credit.

It is not yet clear how many return migrants want to remain in Mexico and how many want to go back. Clearly, considering current migration flows from Mexico, many of them are not going back for now, notwithstanding the desire to do so. The data we presented suggest that close to 30 percent firmly intend to return. How many of them will be able to realize this intention is still unclear. While many anecdotal accounts suggest that many may try to return after further improvement in the U.S. economy, the main reason for re-emigration respondents chose was related not to economic factors, but to the desire to settle in the country where they had lived and previously decided to settle. In other words, they lived in the U.S. and established roots that go beyond the original economic reasons for which many of them migrated. They learned to like the country and at this point many of them have more elements tying them to it than to Mexico, including the presence of family members, which is a second reason identified by respondents for them to re-emigrate. This is a picture which many U.S. politicians and policy makers are unlikely to recognize and even less likely to like. Curiously enough, however, it is what the U.S. has always expected of immigrants: that they learn to love their adopted country. Evidently many of the people who returned had learned to do so, even while they may never be willing or able to go back.

Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents expressed their intention to remain permanently in Mexico. It rests now with that country, and in this case with the state of Jalisco, where the survey was performed, to attempt to reintegrate this population into its labor market and society in a successful way so that return migrants can become an asset for development rather than a new social problem.