

Determinants of economic and social reintegration of return migrants: the case of Mariscala de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico

Determinantes de la reintegración económica y social de los migrantes de retorno: el caso de Mariscala de Juárez, Oaxaca, México

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Abstract

Return migration is an increasingly contemporary phenomenon within international migratory flows. This study analyzes the determinants of the economic and social reintegration among returned migrants in Mariscala de Juárez, Oaxaca, a Mexican municipality with high migratory intensity. Data were collected through a survey administered to return migrants in this municipality. Using binomial logistic regression models, the study identifies key factors influencing their reintegration into their communities of origin. The findings suggest that factors positively impacting economic reintegration include marital status, educational attainment, English proficiency, and possession of the necessary migration documents to work in the United States. Meanwhile, attributes that increase the likelihood of better social reintegration are associated with the length of time spent abroad. These results highlight the complexities of the reintegration process for return migrants and underscore the evident lack of public policies designed to facilitate their return and reintegration into their communities of origin.

Keywords: Return migration, reintegration, logit model, Mexico.

Resumen

La migración de retorno es un fenómeno contemporáneo cada vez más presente dentro de los flujos migratorios internacionales. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar los factores determinantes de la reintegración económica y social de los migrantes retornados a Mariscala de Juárez, Oaxaca, un municipio con alta intensidad migratoria de México. La información se obtuvo a través de una encuesta aplicada a los migrantes de retorno de este municipio. Mediante la estimación de modelos de regresión logística binomial se identificaron aquellos atributos que influyen en la reintegración económica y social de los migrantes retornados a sus comunidades de origen. Los hallazgos de esta investigación sugieren que los factores que impactan positivamente la reintegración económica son el estado civil, los niveles de escolaridad, el dominio del idioma inglés y contar con los documentos migratorios necesarios para laborar en los Estados Unidos; mientras que los atributos que incrementan la probabilidad de una mejor reinserción social están asociados con el tiempo de permanencia en el extranjero. Estos resultados evidencian la complejidad de la reintegración de los migrantes de retorno a sus comunidades de origen y la evidente falta de políticas públicas diseñadas para facilitar el regreso y la reinserción de la población migrante a su lugar de origen.

Palabras clave: Migración de retorno, reintegración, modelo logit, México.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the complexity that characterizes return migration has gained greater visibility within the dynamics of migratory flows and has emerged as a significant subject of study (King, 2024; Masferrer, 2021; Rivera, 2019; Levine *et al.*, 2016). In Mexico, research on return migration have predominantly focused on: 1) theoretical discussions and analyses aimed at explaining the dynamics of return migration; 2) the classification of the reasons, forms, or types of return; and 3) the labor and sociocultural reintegration of migrants into their communities of origin (Solís, 2018).

Several factors have acted as catalysts for return migration, including crises and their impacts, the tightening of immigration policies in host countries, family pressures, and unemployment. These elements have exposed various challenges, such as the disconnect between migrants' aspirations and comprehensive public policies (origin and destination), fluctuations in remittance flows, the rise of alarmist narratives surrounding return migration or large-scale population movements, and the difficulties associated with economic and social reintegration in places of origin (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean & International Organization for Migration, 2010).

The U.S. government has increasingly enforced stricter immigration control measures, including the removal and return of foreign nationals either living within the country or attempting to enter its territory, based on grounds of inadmissibility and deportation. Mexico is the country with the highest number of individuals expelled from the United States; for instance, between 2009 and 2019, Mexicans accounted for 80 per cent of all recorded removal events. Within this dynamic, there has been a noticeable decline in return cases related to new migrant entries, while removals (immigrants already residing in the United States) have increased (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019).

It is possible that the increase in the number of returnees from the United States is a response to the tightening of labor hiring policies and additional restrictions imposed on foreign workers in the labor market, as well as to enhanced border security measures, including the construction of the border wall. These measures are functioning as migration containment mechanisms, discouraging migration decisions in countries of origin. Although border protection has been a priority of U.S. immigration policy for decades, in recent years, domestic enforcement within its territory has

gained greater significance, altering patterns of migrant integration and stability (Gandini *et al.*, 2015).

Return mobility is a complex process with multiple dynamics that can create challenges and have far-reaching impacts on various levels of society (individual, family, and community) and public governance (local, subnational, national, and international) (Gandini *et al.*, 2015; García & Del Valle, 2016; Masferrer, 2021; Larios, 2024). When this phenomenon occurs on a large scale, it can place a significant burden on receiving communities and migrant families. Additionally, the return of migrants disrupts the flow of international remittances, increasing vulnerabilities in education, healthcare, and housing access (Fonseca *et al.*, 2015).

When migrants return to their place of origin, they must readjust to a new economic and social reality, leading to changes driven by limited innovative influence, acquired knowledge, and resource mobility. If this readjustment does not achieve a certain degree of reintegration, returned migrants are likely to emigrate again (Cassarino, 2004; Mestries, 2015). Several factors influence the reintegration process, including acquired skills, financial capital, investment capacity, the ability to act as agents of change (innovation), the area of settlement (rural or urban), local power dynamics, traditions, and values (Cassarino, 2004).

From an international and macroeconomic perspective, Martin (2014) identifies recruitment, remittances, and return as key determinants of migration, highlighting their uneven effects on economic disparities across different Asian countries and Mexico. Similarly, Ramírez and Aguado (2013) developed a model using national data to further analyze the determinants of labor migration and return in Mexico. Their model considers sociodemographic, economic, and contextual factors as elements influencing migrants' decisions to return.

The return of migrants and their families should translate into “increased attention to the communities of origin, which have traditionally relied on remittances as a fundamental part of their income. Additionally, it is essential to ensure the necessary conditions for their inclusion in healthcare, education, and housing institutions, as well as to guarantee their access to regional markets” (Ramírez & Aguado, 2013, p. 188).

Given the complexity of the dynamics involved in the return process, “it is necessary to gather more information on the factors that contribute to successful reintegration and, consequently, its sustainability” (Fonseca *et al.*, 2015, p. 13). In this context, and with the aim of identifying the attributes that influence the reintegration of return migrants into their places

of origin, this study focuses on examining the extent to which personal characteristics, family dynamics, and the local context affect the economic and social reintegration of return migrants in Mariscala de Juárez, a rural municipality in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca.

To achieve our objective and due to the lack of information on return migration at the local level, we conducted a survey in the localities within the municipality of Mariscala de Juárez. This survey enabled us to gather comprehensive data on returned migrants' perceptions, demographic characteristics, migratory and labor experiences, family and social relationships, health status, and participation in social programs.

Reintegration involves interrelated factors that either increase or decrease the likelihood of success for returned migrants, thereby ensuring greater economic and social stability. The resettlement process in the place of origin is multifactorial, as it occurs within diverse contexts, population groups, local dynamics, the interaction of various phases and institutions within the communities of origin (Cruz & Cuecuecha, 2018). Thus, it can be stated that reintegration patterns are shaped by a variety of dimensions, all of which are linked to different factors that extend from the individual to society (Rivera, 2013; García & Del Valle, 2016; Masferrer, 2021).

A successful return entails reintegration into the community of origin, requiring readaptation across multiple dimensions, including social and economic aspects. Due to their migratory experience, returned migrants have acquired specific knowledge and skills that may facilitate or hinder their adjustment to a new way of life. Several factors influence the readaptation of returnees at the local level, including the presence of well-defined projects, the circumstances surrounding their return, contextual challenges, accumulated capital to support new initiatives, social relationships (individual and familial), and the institutional environment (Cassarino, 2004).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), reintegration is defined as “a process that enables individuals to reestablish the economic, social, and psychosocial connections necessary to support themselves and sustain their livelihood, dignity, and inclusion in civic life” (Sironi *et al.*, 2019, p. 176). The IOM outlines the following components of reintegration: 1) economic reintegration, which refers to the process through which returned individuals rejoin the economic life of their country of origin and acquire the ability to sustain themselves independently; and 2) social reintegration, which encompasses migrants' access to public infrastructure and services in their country of origin, including healthcare, education, housing, justice, and social protection (Sironi *et al.*, 2019). The

reinsertion of a migrant into the social structures of their country of origin “includes both the development of a personal network (friends, family, neighbors) and the establishment of civil society structures (associations, self-help groups, and other organizations)” (Sironi *et al.*, 2019, p. 177).

This article contributes to the discussion on return migration from southeastern Mexico, particularly from communities located in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. The study provides insights that allow for the identification of reintegration patterns in this region and presents the sociodemographic profile of returnees, while also proposing recommendations for local public policies. Our research is quantitative in nature and employs logistic regression models to identify the factors that facilitate the economic and social reintegration of individuals returning to their place of origin.

In addition to the introduction, the article is organized into four sections. The first section describes the contextual aspects of return migration in the municipality under study and how it is situated within broader contexts. The second section outlines the methodological approach followed in the research: data, methods, and a description of the variables used in the estimated models. The third section presents the results and their implications. Finally, the fourth section provides the conclusions.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Mexico is part of the most significant corridor for international migratory flows, led by the primary destination: the United States. The Mexican territory represents the final link in a region traditionally characterized by high emigration rates, which includes countries from Central and South America. In recent years, Mexico has evolved into a nation where various population movements converge, moving in different directions, thus positioning itself as a country of transit, destination, and return (Pardinas, 2008; Gandini *et al.*, 2015; Canales & Rojas, 2018).

Changes in Mexico’s migratory phenomenon have not occurred uniformly over time or across its entire territory. This has led scholars to identify four distinct migratory regions: the north, the traditional region, the south-southeast, and the center (Durand & Massey, 2009; Masferrer, 2021). In recent years, return migration dynamics in these regions have evolved and diversified, reflecting trends such as the increasing return of individuals who have spent extended periods in the United States, the rise in accompanying minors with U.S. nationality, and the growing role of transnational family networks in facilitating human mobility. Today, nearly all muni-

cipalities in Mexico have a presence of individuals who have previously lived in the United States (Masferrer, 2021).

According to data from the Migration Policy Unit, Registration and Identity of Persons (2024)¹, return migration in the south-southeast region has increased over the past ten years. This region includes the states with the highest number of returning Mexicans: Chiapas (1), Guerrero (2), Oaxaca (4), and Veracruz (7). In contrast, the traditional migratory region comprises the states of Guanajuato (3) and Michoacán (5), with Jalisco (9) playing a lesser role, while Zacatecas does not rank among the top ten. Meanwhile, in the central region, Puebla (6) and the State of Mexico (8) stand out.

The state of Oaxaca² has been identified as an emerging federative entity within migratory flows to the United States, as well as in the context of return migration. Across Oaxacan territory, returned migrants are dispersed among small cities, localities undergoing rural-to-urban transition, and rural municipalities where return migration has notably increased in recent years (Masferrer, 2021; Larios, 2024).

Studies on return migration in Oaxaca have examined various geographical and territorial scales. Some analyses consider the state as a whole to provide a general overview, with a growing interest in identifying challenges and integrating elements for the formulation of public policies through a comprehensive approach to local and human development. Additionally, these studies seek to explain and characterize the state's migratory regions (García & Del Valle, 2016; Reyes *et al.*, 2017; Larios, 2018).

Among the Oaxacan regions that have been the focus of research are the Central Valleys and the Costa Chica, where return migration has been associated with youth integration in school, religious conversion, income generation, and variables related to human and social capital that contribute to family well-being within communities (Alvarado, 2019; Quecha, 2014; Reyes & Gijón, 2018). On the other hand, in the Mixteca region, Larios (2024) explores the assessment of municipal governments' migration management and analyzes reintegration strategies for returned migrants. In addition, other studies have limited their analysis to communities with a strong rural identity, considering cultural and ethnic aspects. In this regard, research has examined Zapotec, Mixe, Ayuujk youth, and Afro-descen-

¹ These data do not account for voluntary, independent returns conducted through personal means; they only include those that occur through institutional and assisted repatriation processes.

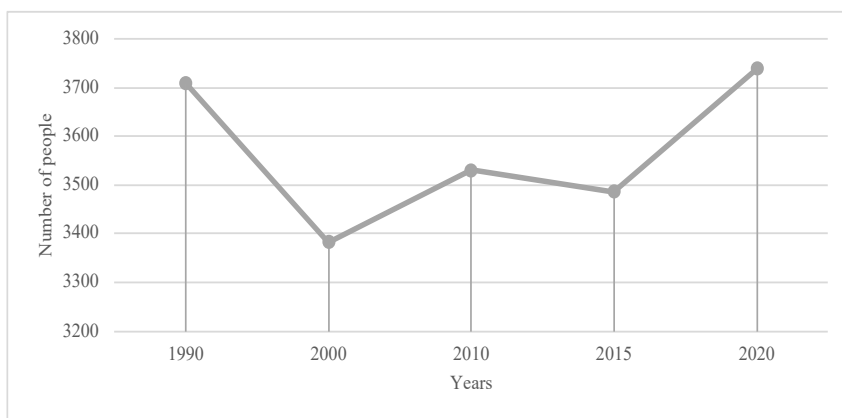
² Oaxaca is a multicultural state, with its population distributed across 570 municipalities, which are grouped into eight regions: Mixteca, Central Valleys, Northern Sierra, Southern Sierra, Coast, Papaloapan, Cañada, and Isthmus.

dant populations, among others (Alvarado, 2019; Jiménez, 2015; Jiménez, 2016; Reyes & Girón, 2018). Similarly, some studies have adopted a perspective centered on municipal territorial demarcation (Salas, 2013).

In the state of Oaxaca, international migration has intensified due to the strong ties and solid migrant networks that facilitate the continuous arrival of individuals to the United States (López, 2015). Migration has contributed to the improvement of various aspects in the sending municipalities, as well as to the daily life and social practices of the migrants (Reyes *et al.*, 2017).

According to official data, Mariscala de Juárez had a total population of 3,739 in 2020, representing 0.09 per cent of the state's population. Of this total, 1,787 were men and 1,952 were women. Twenty-nine percent of the population was between the ages of zero and fifteen, 57 per cent were of working age (15 to 65 years), and 14 per cent were over the age of 65 (INEGI, 2020). Graph 1 illustrates the population trend of the municipality, showing a significant decline between 1990 and 2000, while 2010 saw an increase of 157 in the total population. According to the 2015 Intercensal Survey, the municipality's population decreased by 1.24 per cent over five years, although in 2020, a growth of 6.7 per cent was recorded.

Graph 1: Population Trend in Mariscala from 1990 to 2020



Source: Prepared by the author based on INEGI, Population and Housing Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, and Intercensus Survey 2015.

For over a decade, the municipality has experienced a high level of poverty (CONEVAL, 2010), which has made its population more vulnerable to migration and return processes. This situation is a result of the

economic environment, which does not provide sufficient opportunities for generating income to meet basic needs. Among the main issues requiring attention are extreme poverty, low educational levels, and precarious income conditions (PNUD, 2014).

Poverty is a living condition that restricts the fulfillment of basic needs and hinders full social and economic integration. In Mariscala, there is increasing pressure on the socioeconomic foundation due to the growing demand for employment among young people seeking to enter the local economic dynamic. This situation is highly likely to persist in the coming years (INEGI, 2020). In this context, remittances and migration have functioned as relief mechanisms, helping to mitigate the effects of economic precariousness in the migrants' places of origin (Mora-Rivera & Morales, 2018; Canales, 2006).

In Mariscala, 65 per cent of the individuals aged 15 and older have not completed basic education, indicating that slightly more than half of the population has only attended primary or secondary school. The Human Development Index confirms this reality, revealing that while healthcare coverage is relatively high, access to knowledge acquisition remains limited (PNUD, 2014). Under precarious living conditions, individuals often prioritize earning an income over continuing their education.

According to Cerón and Larios (2020), the inhabitants of Mariscala de Juárez have migrated in search of better opportunities since the late 1950s. However, it was not until the 1990s that the migratory flow began to increase steadily, peaking in 2010 before experiencing a significant decline. Regarding return migration, two periods of sustained growth in the number of returning migrants have been identified. The first occurred between 2002 and 2008, while the second spanned from 2009 to 2012, the year when return migration reached its highest level (Cerón & Larios, 2020).

METHOD, DATA, AND VARIABLES

Methodological Approach

Based on questionnaires administered by the Northern Border College (Survey on Migration in the Northern Border of Mexico, 2017; Module on Training and Labor Reintegration EMIF North) and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) (National Survey of Demographic Dynamics, 2014), a data collection instrument was designed at the municipal level. This instrument, titled the Survey on Return Migration and Economic and Social Reintegration (EMIRR), was implemented in Ma-

riscala de Juárez³, Oaxaca, from March 24 to April 30, 2018, across three localities within the municipality: Mariscala, Guadalupe la Huertilla, and El Fraile.

For the unit of analysis, a sample was estimated under the assumption that 25 per cent of the municipality's population could be return migrants, corresponding to 872 individuals. This estimate was derived from the total population recorded in the 2015 Intercensus Survey, which reported 3,486 inhabitants residing in the municipality. The sample estimation was carried out using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N\sigma^2Z^2}{(N-1)e^2 + \sigma^2Z^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n is the sample size.

N represents the population size (872).

σ is the population standard deviation, set at 0.3.

Z is the confidence level value; for a 95 per cent confidence level, it is equivalent to 1.96.

ϵ represents the acceptable margin of sampling error, which was set at 0.05 for this case.

Based on the formula provided, it was determined that the total sample size should be 119 surveys. However, 124 surveys were administered to account for the possibility that approximately four per cent of them might contain data discrepancies. All of the return migrants surveyed had the United States as their destination, had work experience in that country, and subsequently reintegrated into their community of origin.

Given the absence of prior data on this population and the complexity of their mobility, a non-probabilistic sampling method, specifically chain or snowball sampling was employed.⁴ To facilitate the identification of individuals in a return migration situation, familial and social connections were utilized. Additionally, the search was complemented by the use of social networks, such as Facebook, to contact acquaintances and obtain referrals on returned migrants.

³ On March 3, 2018, a pilot test was conducted in San Martín Texmelucan de Labastida, Puebla, involving three return migrants. The purpose of this test was to implement the survey, identify potential issues, and make the necessary adjustments to ensure its proper application.

⁴ It is based on "the identification of individuals who can provide the best information about a specific experience or event under study, leveraging relationships among experts, under the assumption that they are connected through social networks" (INEGI, 2011, p. 6).

The survey was coded to create a database that would facilitate for statistical analysis and econometric modeling. The EMIRR was structured into six sections, which captured: 1) the main demographic characteristics of the return migrant; 2) the migration experience in two phases: the beginning of migration and return as the stage that completes the migration cycle; 3) employment in the United States; 4) economic and social reintegration within the community of origin; 5) social reintegration and family relationships; and 6) participation in social and health programs. The responses to the items were coded and organized according to the folio number assigned to each registered migrant. In total, 178 responses were structured, distributed across 30 questions.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE ECONOMETRIC MODEL TO IDENTIFY THE DETERMINANTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF RETURN MIGRANTS

Considering the data collected through the EMIRR, two logistic regression models are proposed to identify the factors that influence the likelihood that: 1) migrants with certain characteristics achieve favorable economic reintegration through entrepreneurship; 2) migrants attain social reintegration by becoming beneficiaries of government programs. Both processes are influenced by various factors, including:

Age

It plays an important role in shaping the structure and dynamics of a community, by determining individuals' participation in various areas. In the economic context, age affects access to employment, job stability, and entrepreneurial opportunities. In the social context, it influences community integration, support networks, and the ability to adapt to sociocultural changes. Being within a productive age range allows for a more effective use of individual capabilities. For instance, individuals aged between 25 and 50 are more likely to start a business to support their families.

Sex (gender)

Being male or female can be a variable that differentially impacts the likelihood of starting a business, due to sociocultural and economic factors. Additionally, it affects access to various social programs that are differentiated by this attribute.

Civil status

This variable influences an individual's economic responsibilities. Marriage typically implies greater financial dependents and the necessity to generate income to cover family expenses, whereas being single may entail fewer financial obligations.

Education level

Educational attainment facilitates learning, the acquisition of knowledge, and the development of skills, all of which contribute to more effective business management.

Proficiency in the English language

The ability to speak English may reflect an entrepreneurial mindset, a willingness to learn new skills, face new challenges, and achieve goals. This linguistic ability is particularly relevant in municipalities with a focus on tourism.

Time as a migrant (migration experience)

The duration of stay in the United States influences the migrant's integration, particularly if the individual has spent many years abroad. Those who have spent extended periods overseas often adopt a lifestyle that includes expectations of access to basic services in their home.

Possession of migration documents (Legal status)

Holding documentation that guarantees mobility between the country of origin and the destination country facilitates circular migration. This process not only enables the regular transit of returnees but also provides access to various resources that support their reintegration. In particular, having a stable legal status offers a significant advantage for settling and developing entrepreneurial initiatives, contributing to economic growth at both the individual and community levels.

Time elapsed since return

The number of years a person has spent in the community after their migratory experience can indicate the degree of stability and strength in their reintegration process. If the migratory experience met their expectations or objectives, it is likely that the migrant will consider their migratory cycle

complete. Conversely, if the experience did not fulfill these expectations, the migrant may choose to embark on a new migratory experience.

Training

Participation in training courses can enhance entrepreneurial opportunities. The skills and knowledge acquired through these programs can be applied to income-generating economic activities, contributing to the stability of returned migrants.

Certification

Individuals with a certificate validating their knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes can more easily demonstrate their qualifications, facilitating their pursuit of new challenges.

Intention to return to the United States

The expectation of future migration may influence the decision to establish a business in the community of origin.

Savings at the time of return

Having financial resources upon returning to the country of origin can play a crucial role in determining the feasibility of entrepreneurship.

Children with U.S. citizenship

The presence of children with U.S. citizenship may affect the economic, social, and reintegration decisions of returned migrants.

The binary logistic regression model (Logit) “not only allows for determining the level of association between the variables of analysis with respect to the event under investigation, but also enables the estimation of the specific weight of each category, while controlling for the other variables included in the analysis” (Ramírez and Aguado, 2013, p. 185). In the estimated logistic models, the dependent variable corresponds to the success that returned migrants reported in their reintegration into the community of origin. The two econometric models implemented in the research are explained below.⁵

⁵ The regression analysis was conducted using the Stata 16 statistical software package.

MODEL 1: LOGISTIC REGRESSION (ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION)

To identify economic reintegration in the place of origin, a dichotomous variable is employed, assigned a value of 1 if returned migrants reported having integrated into their community's economic activities through the establishment of their own business, and 0 if they returned for personal or other reasons. In this case, the independent variables included in the analysis are: age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, english proficiency, migratory experience, possession of migration documents, number of years since return, and participation in training courses.

In logistic regression, the dependent variable is transformed as follows: $\ln(p/q)$, where:

p = probability of returning to one's community and establishing a business.

$q = (1 - p)$ = probability of returning to Mexico without starting a business.

Based on this, the equation for the first logistic regression is represented as follows:

$\ln(p/q) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Sex} + \beta_3 \text{Civil status} + \beta_4 \text{Educational attainment} + \beta_5 \text{English proficiency} + \beta_6 \text{Migratory experience} + \beta_7 \text{Migration documents} + \beta_8 \text{Years since return} + \beta_9 \text{Training course}.$

MODEL 2: LOGISTIC REGRESSION (SOCIAL REINTEGRATION)

To assess social reintegration, a dichotomous variable is used, which takes the value of 1 if returned migrants reported having integrated into the social life of their community by being beneficiaries of a government program, and 0 if they returned without being included in any program. In this case, the independent variables included in the analysis are: age, sex, civil status, level of basic education (primary and secondary), years as a migrant (migratory experience), years since return, whether the migrant holds any certification, the expectation of returning to the United States, savings, and having children with U.S. nationality.

In this second logistic regression, the dependent variable undergoes a transformation of the following type: $\ln(p/q)$, where:

p = probability of returning to one's community and being a beneficiary of a government program.

$q = (1 - p)$ = probability of returning to Mexico and not being a beneficiary of any program.

Based on this, the second logistic regression equation is represented as follows:

$$\ln(p/q) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Sex} + \beta_3 \text{Civil Status} + \beta_4 \text{Basic education} + \beta_5 \text{Migratory experience} + \beta_6 \text{Years since return} + \beta_7 \text{Certification} + \beta_8 \text{Expectation of return to United States} + \beta_9 \text{Savings} + \beta_{10} \text{U. S. citizen child}.$$

In each equation, the parameters β_i correspond to estimates of the effect of each independent variable on the logarithm of the odds ratio between success and failure. In this way, the factor $e(\beta_i)$ represents the effect of variable i on the odds ratio. A positive value of β_i corresponds to an $e(\beta_i)$ value greater than one, indicating that this particular category has a positive effect on the odds ratio and, therefore, on the probability of success; namely, returning and reintegrating economically and socially in some form.

RESULTS

Return migration and the sociodemographic profile of migrants in Mariscala

Returnees in Mariscala de Juárez contribute to the broader migratory dynamics of the state of Oaxaca. In 2015, men comprised 73.3 per cent of returnees, while women accounted for 26.7 per cent. Regarding age distribution, approximately 50 per cent of returned migrants were young and economically active. Notably, there was a significant increase in the 40-64 age group, which represented 30 per cent of the returnee population. In terms of education, 80 per cent of returnees had completed fewer than nine years of basic schooling. Additionally, around 72 per cent of returning Oaxacans were married or in a domestic partnership (Masferrer, 2021).

Return migration in Mariscala follows a similar pattern to that observed at the state level. The municipality's returnee population is predominantly male, with women comprising only 20 per cent of the sample. Table 1 provides a summary of the profile of migrants who have returned to this municipality. The data indicate that 76.62 per cent of returnees play a fundamental role within their households, as they are either married or in a domestic partnership. Additionally, 80.64 per cent of respondents serve as heads of household. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of individuals returning to their communities after a migration experience have completed only basic education (primary and secondary levels).

More than 75 per cent of the returnee population in the municipality falls within a potentially productive age range, retaining full use of their

capacities. This group consists of individuals between 21 and 50 years old, with an average age of 43.73 years. The age group with the highest percentage of return migrants corresponds to those between 31 and 40 years old. Regarding language proficiency and comprehension in the country to which they migrated, only eight per cent of returnees are able to write in English. In terms of verbal communication, 0.80 per cent speak English very well, 2.41 per cent speak it well, 17.74 per cent have an intermediate level, 16.93 per cent experience difficulties expressing themselves, and 62.12 per cent have a very low level of comprehension, limited to basic words. Additionally, 60.48 per cent of returnees reported needing to learn English, while 39.51 per cent stated that learning the language was unnecessary, as their social interactions primarily took place with Spanish speakers, or they had access to an interpreter in the workplace.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Profile of Migrants from Mariscal de Juárez

Characteristics	Total	Characteristics	Total
N	124	N	124
<i>Gender</i>	100%	<i>Civil status</i>	100%
Male	80.64	Married	63.87
Female	19.36	Single	12.10
<i>Age Group</i>	100%	Living with a partner	12.90
21-30	14.51	Separated	7.26
31-40	33.06	Divorced	2.26
41-50	29.84	Widowed	1.61
51-60	11.29	<i>Educational Level</i>	100%
61-70	4.83	Primary school (De 0 a 6 años)	50.79
71-80	4.83	Secondary school (7 a 9 años)	30.65
81-90	1.61	High school (10 a 12 años)	16.12
Head of household/spouse	80.64	Professional degree (más de 13 años)	2.42
Other	19.36	<i>Documents for Crossing to the U. S.</i>	100%
<i>Return Preparation</i>	100%	No	86.29
Did not consider return	35.48	Yes	13.71
Save money	34.67	<i>English Language Comprehension</i>	100%
Invest in property	16.13	Very good to Good	3.21
Invest in a business	9.68	Fair	17.74
Other action	4.04	Poor to very poor	79.02

Source: Created by the author based on EMIRR, 2018.

The average length of stay in the United States among returnees was 6.33 years. Specifically, 12.9 per cent of them lived abroad for several months (less than one year), 17.74 per cent stayed for one to two years, 14.51 per cent for three to four years, 16.13 per cent for 5 to 6 years, 12.09 per cent for seven to eight years, and the remaining 26 per cent lived in the neighboring country for more than nine years. Regarding the possession of immigration documents, EMIRR data indicate that 86.29 per cent of respondents did not have any document that would allow them to enter, work, or reside legally in the United States, underscoring the predominantly undocumented nature of migration in this municipality. Furthermore, one in twelve individuals (eight per cent) went to the United States through a labor contract, while three per cent had work permits, 1.6 per cent were U.S. citizens, and less than one per cent had residency permits (0.80 per cent).

Regarding the frequency of migrants' back-and-forth movements, 67.74 per cent of returnees have experienced circular migration, traveling to the United States between one and two times, while 20.16 per cent have undergone this process between three and five times, and 12.09 per cent have entered the country more than six times. Migrants who have crossed the border more than six times include not only those with documentation permitting legal entry and exit, but also individuals who, for many years, have crossed the border undocumented. These migrants have witnessed the increasing enforcement of immigration policies and the growing challenges associated with border crossing each year.

Approximately 65 per cent of respondents expressed their intention to return to the United States at some point in search of new opportunities, regardless of whether they possess legal residency documents. Notably, those with U.S.-citizen children show a particular interest in regularizing their immigration.

The primary reasons migrants cite for returning to their community of origin include family reunification, caring for a sick relative, and experiencing boredom or disillusionment abroad. Deportation and the completion of labor contracts represent two contrasting motives in return migration. Deportees are compelled to return, often closing a migratory cycle under precarious conditions and lacking the necessary resources for reintegration. In contrast, those employed abroad temporarily become circular migrants, alternating periods of work abroad with stays in their home community. Their reintegration depends on how they utilize accumulated resources and the opportunities generated during their time in the United States.

In general, returnees' migration projects tend to be short-term. When their nuclear family remains in Mexico, achieving labor and economic objectives becomes secondary. Family is the most common reason for returning, reflecting strong ties of belonging to the community. Upon their return after a period abroad, migrants rely on their family's social capital to facilitate their reintegration into the labor market and social life.

The primary action migrants took to prepare for their return to the community from the United States was saving money (34.67 per cent). However, 35.48 per cent of returnees did not plan for their return. Some invested in property, while only 9.67 per cent considered starting a business. Similar to the cases in Ameca and Tepatitlán, Jalisco, a high percentage of returnees returned without a work plan, suggesting that the decision to establish a business may have emerged after their return to Mexico (Arroyo & Berumen, 2002).

Most migrants have limited savings and investment capacity because the income they earn in the United States is primarily allocated to housing and family maintenance (Arroyo & Berumen, 2002). The impact of savings varies depending on its use: when directed toward household consumption, its effect is temporary and finite; however, when invested, it may yield more profitable outcomes. In many cases, decisions regarding the return process are driven by family considerations and the fulfillment of essential needs, often at the expense of economic rationality.

The low level of investment by returnees in businesses or ventures may stem from a lack of the necessary skills and knowledge to establish and invest in companies. This may also be linked to their educational background, which is typically characterized by a low level of schooling, generally limited to basic education (around nine years of schooling). Starting from their place of origin without prior work experience presents challenges for many returnees who choose to engage in migratory circuits. In many cases, their primary reason for migrating or returning is not related to starting a business or venture. Although time spent in the United States may provide work experience and training, this is often in sectors with minimal qualification requirements, such as the restaurant industry, agro-industry, construction, services, and manufacturing. Furthermore, the knowledge acquired in these areas is unlikely to align with employment opportunities or labor market integration in their place of origin.

Some returnee migrants have acquired skills and knowledge in business management during their time abroad, partly due to internal mobility within companies, which allowed them to occupy various positions. Howe-

ver, upon returning to their homeland, they still need to enhance their professional training in key areas such as financial management, investment advisory relevant to businesses, and entrepreneurship. It is important to recognize that not all migrants possess an entrepreneurial mindset.

In our case study, the primary goals of migration are focused on homeownership and family support. Migratory experiences aimed at starting a business are rare. Additionally, the cyclical nature of migration is strongly reinforced by established transnational family relationships (Canales & Montiel, 2004).

Another key factor contributing to the limited number of migrants investing in productive businesses is the context of their place of origin and the conditions surrounding reintegration. Structural problems such as poverty and unemployment persist, remaining inadequately addressed by public institutions. As a result, returnees are likely to encounter the same conditions that initially motivated their departure from the community. In addition, local markets are not oriented toward endogenous production, and the potential for investment, including remittances, loses its impact when economic capital is diverted to urban areas due to the consumption of goods not produced within the community (Canales & Montiel, 2004). Consequently, emerging businesses tend to exhibit low productivity and limited multiplier effects, as they are not integrated into value chains and operate within a weakened internal market. Public institutions must promote the revitalization of the local economy by encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting innovation, strengthening collaborative networks, and promoting a business culture. Moreover, it is crucial not to overlook those who seek employment without pursuing self-employment.

Being a migrant: lessons and challenges upon returning

Being a migrant entails leaving one's place of origin to relocate to another region or country. In the case of Mexico, migration to the United States serves as an alternative that allows individuals to confront their conditions of vulnerability and hardship. Migration thus becomes an option of attaining better living conditions and an opportunity to create prospects for a more promising future (Canales, 2006; García, 2008).

In this case study, the migration phenomenon is examined within two interconnected contexts as perceived by returnees: one rural (the town, the place of origin) and the other urban (the city). Each time migrants transition between these environments, they experience changes that intensify over

time. These changes require returnees to adjust their behavior, readapting to new generations, circumstances, lifestyles, ideas, customs, and norms.

Being a migrant involves leaving one's community in search of better opportunities, either individually or as part of a group (e.g., with family). It may also entail embarking on an adventure to live an experience worth sharing; persevering through mixed emotions of nostalgia and sadness when confronting an unknown place, and leaving family behind with the goal of forging ahead.

As a result of their stay in the United States, migrants have acquired new practices and labor skills. However, upon returning to their community of origin, they must undergo a process of reintegration, both economic and social, adapting to existing circumstantial changes. The longer the period of stay abroad, the greater the difficulty in readapting to the local environment. One of the initial steps of social reintegration is returning and reconnecting with family, while economic reintegration typically involves finding employment or starting a business.

When surveyed, returnee migrants recounted their migratory experiences, reconstructing the cycle of their journey. They relived their experiences, starting from the moment they left their community of origin, following the trajectory to their destination, their stay in the United States, and ultimately, their return. This exercise facilitated the identification of two key aspects of being a return migrant:

1. A situation of vulnerability: In this dimension, returnees recall the dangers they encountered while crossing the border, fully aware that they were outside the law. They also reflected on the challenges arising from racism, discrimination, and the negative perceptions held by some people toward them. Furthermore, they experienced a condition of disadvantage due to the language barrier; some even developed a sense of confinement and lack of freedom.
2. A situation of opportunity: Despite the difficulties, returnees have emphasized the benefits of having migrated, particularly in the economic sphere. The opportunity to access a labor market with greater employment opportunities and higher wages, coupled with the purchasing power of the dollar, allowed them not only to meet their needs in the United States but also to improve their quality of life and provide support to their families in Mexico, fostering periods of prosperity. In this regard, they highlighted several advantages, including economic stability, availability of employment, and the perception of higher wages compared to their country of origin.

Migrants returning to their community of origin face a third situation, which is the inverse of the previous ones, as they must reintegrate into a local economic system with limited employment opportunities. Achieving progress in this original context requires greater effort, as the income earned through arduous workdays is often insufficient. Likewise, well-being and living conditions shift drastically, while job quality and requirements tend to decline. Although the sense of isolation dissipates upon return, income is significantly reduced. For these migrants, returning home signifies starting anew and confronting multiple obstacles.

During their stay in the United States, most returnees contemplated the possibility of returning voluntarily, although some were compelled to do so. The process of planning their return involves making the necessary preparations and arrangements to ensure continuity in their life projects in the place of origin. Thus, it entails actions deliberately planned in advance to achieve a specific purpose or objective, requiring the allocation of financial and organizational resources.

Migrants' decision to return was influenced by various factors, including agricultural cycles of planting and harvesting, the illness or death of a family member, the return of a relative or friend, family pressure or agreements made either in Mexico or the United States, lack of employment and legal documentation, as well as the fulfillment of their intended objectives. However, returning is not always a rationally planned decision; in some cases, it results from unforeseen circumstances, an undesired course of action, or an adverse situation beyond their control that compels them to return.

The most significant lessons learned during the migratory experience are closely linked to the American lifestyle. Returning migrants develop a stronger sense of order, assimilating a different culture, acquiring new knowledge, and gaining work-related skills and experiences. Many leave their community of origin for the first time and, through migration, discover a new way of life that helps them navigate their surroundings more effectively. Furthermore, some migrants depart at a young age in search of their first employment opportunity.

The migratory experience provides individuals with the opportunity to learn how to: work, manage money, appreciate opportunities and situations, perform tasks more effectively (with increased attention and quality), and even undergo a shift in attitude toward the responsibilities they have taken on and in assuming control of their own well-being. Furthermo-

re, over time, a noticeable reduction in machismo is observed, along with a greater willingness to respect social norms and traffic regulations.

Migrants planning to return to their community of origin face a constant dilemma, as they desire to be in two places simultaneously. On one hand, their attachment to their community and their connection with family drive them to want to return; however, their locality does not offer the necessary opportunities for progress. On the other hand, the American lifestyle provides greater economic advantages, but it comes at the cost of being unable to enjoy the companionship of their family or experience full freedom.

Upon returning, migrants recognize that they are reintegrating into a challenging environment and must face various obstacles. In the labor market, finding employment is difficult; in the family context, there may be indifference from relatives, leading to a sense of estrangement in their own home, which necessitates the rebuilding of the emotional bonds they had before leaving. From an economic perspective, wages are low and insufficient to cover household expenses. The wage disparity with the United States is one of the strongest incentives for reconsidering emigration.

In the social context, migrants face the challenge of reestablishing connections within their community, adapting to new generations of individuals who are unfamiliar to them, and assuming the responsibility of educating their children, particularly those with U.S. citizenship. Additional challenges include health-related issues, changes in diet and climate, as well as exposure to crime (such as theft, fraud during the return journey, and extortion in their place of origin).

Migrants who reported not having faced any challenges generally did so because they spent limited time abroad or had a stable source of income derived from circular migration, such as being residents or citizens of the United States. They often had personal savings and, in some case, a dual pension due to their dual nationality. Alternatively, these migrants reintegrated into the family business, which they may have maintained before leaving. Some returnees engage fully or partially in agricultural work, while others opt not to return to farming and instead transition into commerce. For returnees, facing these types of challenges involves adapting to changes in their circumstances while striving to achieve stability in all areas of life.

Towards the economic reintegration of migrants and its determinants

Economic reintegration occurs when migrants return to their place of origin and rebuild their livelihoods through various income-generating stra-

tegies. This process involves reentering the labor market by utilizing their knowledge, skills, experience, material and immaterial resources, investments, savings, remittances, financing, and entrepreneurial activities. Returnees seek economic sustenance either through self-employment or wage employment, aiming to meet their needs and covering household expenses.

During their stay in the United States, migrants participated in various economic activities, enabling them to acquire new job skills. According to data collected by the EMIRR, 31.45 per cent worked in restaurants; 20.16 per cent were employed in the agricultural sector, working as farmers, harvesters, and apple packers, as well as in animal care, poultry farming, and operating agricultural machinery or irrigation systems. Additionally, 16.93 per cent worked in the construction sector, and 15.32 per cent were employed in other service industries, including landscaping, babysitting, hospitality, tortilla production, and warehouse operations. Furthermore, 7.25 per cent worked in factories, processing plants, or industries such as cardboard manufacturing, cosmetics production, insulation, and assembly lines. Another 6.45 per cent were involved in manufacturing, particularly in carpentry, woodworking, and the textile industry. Lastly, 3.22 per cent were employed in domestic services or the transportation sector.

The skills acquired by migrants during their stay in the United States cannot always be directly applied to developing a productive activity or establishing a business in their place of origin. This limitation arises from differences in factors such as levels of demand, organizational structures, and production methods and techniques. However, the practical training they receive represents a valuable human resource, as it enables migrants to acquire and refine personal skills, such as proficiency in a trade or specialization, along with greater responsibility and a stronger work ethic (Arrollo & Berumen, 2002).

The transnational experience acquired in international labor markets, particularly in the United States, can be beneficial for migrants upon their return and reintegration into the economic sphere. This experience serves as a source of information and an additional asset for establishing family businesses. It also provides insight into the differences in quality of life between their destination and place of origin, allowing them to envision the possibility of improving local living conditions through entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it enhances their skills not only in their previous fields of work but also in other areas, enabling them to diversify their sources of income.

It would be ideal for migrants to receive training in their place of origin prior to departure, with the aim of promoting and applying the knowledge and technical skills acquired on both sides of the border, particularly in the fields of agriculture.

Among the migrants surveyed in Mariscal, 41.12 per cent reported having received training that proved useful for their work. Of this percentage, half received training at the company where they were employed, 19.60 per cent participated in a government program, 17.64 per cent independently paid for a course, and 3.92 per cent acquired knowledge at an educational institution.

Regarding the type of training received, 56.86 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had learned about the handling of materials, tools, equipment, or machinery, with a particular focus on the following areas: restaurant operations (cooking/food preparation); various trades (carpentry, electrical work, and masonry); agroindustry (operation of tractors, plant spraying equipment, forklifts, packaging, and poultry farming); hospitality (cleaning and maintenance); construction; and textile manufacturing.

Among the returnee migrants surveyed, 20.16 per cent expressed interest in receiving training in trades such as plumbing, electricity, or masonry. An additional 16.13 per cent indicated a desire to learn computing and english, while 12.1 per cent showed interest in enhancing their skills in agriculture and livestock farming. This latter group emphasized the importance of obtaining guidance to produce quality products in the field, manage technology, improve and select seeds, care for livestock through basic veterinary courses, and produce milk and cheese.

On the other hand, 11.3 per cent expressed an interest in acquiring skills related to the repair of automotive, agricultural, and industrial machinery or equipment. Meanwhile, 8.87 per cent indicated a desire to participate in an entrepreneurship course that would provide training in business planning, management, and administration. Similarly, 7.26 per cent preferred to enhance their skills in gastronomy or food preparation. A further 6.45 per cent expressed a general interest in learning about the handling of tools, equipment, or machinery. 4.03 per cent wished to develop skills in construction or architecture, while 3.22 per cent showed interest in training as a beautician or seamstress. Additionally, 1.61 per cent would like to learn about administrative and accounting aspects. In contrast, 3.22 per cent stated that they were not interested in receiving any training.

Upon returning from the United States, 47.58 per cent of the respondents sought employment through family or friends. Meanwhile, 39.51 per

cent opted for self-employment, primarily in the agricultural and livestock sectors, while others rejoined a family-owned or personal business. A smaller proportion of migrants joined the passenger transport sector or worked in various trades, such as carpentry or masonry. Furthermore, 6.45 per cent ceased working, while the remaining 1.61 per cent sought employment through the municipal government, where they were hired as police officers, security guards, tractor drivers, and custodians.

Among the surveyed migrants, 69.35 per cent considered starting a business upon their return; however, only 37.9 per cent were able to do so. The types of businesses launched by returning migrants include: grocery stores, clothing sales, hardware stores, or candy shops (40.42 per cent); food preparation, such as restaurants, small eateries, and fast food (19.15 per cent); the production and sale of agricultural products (8.51 per cent); and other ventures, such as water purification plants, butcher shops, spare parts sales, and animal feed, including forage (31.91 per cent).

Of the total number of migrants who established a business in the community, 60 per cent had prior experience in managing such projects. Regarding the knowledge they had when starting their business, 40.42 per cent possessed technical skills, while 42.55 per cent had administrative knowledge. Similarly, 29.78 per cent received some form of support or guidance, 44.68 per cent had access to equipment or machinery, 72.34 per cent had a premises or facility, and 97.87 per cent used their money and savings as part of their initiative to launch the business.

The capital required by returning migrants to finance their businesses is reflected in the resources available to them at the time of establishment, with the maximum investment required being approximately 300,000 pesos. The financing for these businesses was obtained through one or more complementary sources. Considering the total number of respondents, the main sources of funding were: 1) 93.61 per cent used their own capital and savings derived from remittances sent during their migration experience; 2) 31.91 per cent requested a loan from a credit institution (savings bank or pawnshop); 3) 23.40 per cent obtained financing through a partner or family member; 4) 12.76 per cent resorted to loans from acquaintances in the United States or sold goods or property; and 5) 6.38 per cent sought a bank loan, government credit, or other form of financing.

In the context of return and reintegration, savings represent one of the primary economic strategies employed by returnees. Approximately 80 per cent of migrants had savings upon their return from the United States. Of

these funds, around 40 per cent was invested in a business, while 60 per cent was allocated for household consumption.

Regarding their integration into economic activities, returnees primarily engage in commerce and the primary sector (agriculture and livestock), followed by services and transportation. In addition to seeking a source of income through their labor activities, many returning migrants utilize agriculture as a strategy for self-consumption and food supply.

As part of the economic reintegration process, the sending and utilization of remittances also constitute a significant factor to consider. Similar to other parts of the world, such as Morocco (García, 2007), remittances sent to Mariscala de Juárez are primarily allocated to housing, including construction, home improvement, or land acquisition (61.29 per cent). To a considerably lesser extent, remittances were used for family sustenance (20.96 per cent), covering household expenses such as food and healthcare. Additionally, 4.84 per cent of respondents reported having saved their remittances, while an equal percentage stated that they had not sent money, either due to unfavorable employment conditions or because returning was not part of their plans. The use of remittances for education, the purchase of livestock and agricultural land, or vehicle acquisition was minimal. This trend reflects migrants' tendency to prioritize immediate household needs (housing, food, and healthcare) over investments in factors that could enhance economic productivity.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in communities within Mexico's traditional migration region (Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato). Various authors have indicated that remittances are primarily allocated to family sustenance, household maintenance, meeting basic needs, and acquiring of goods and services. Additionally, they are used for the purchase, expansion, or renovation housing, as well as for debt repayment (Arroyo & Berumen, 2002; Canales, 2005; Orozco, 2007).

Evidence from states with a strong migration tradition suggests that few returning migrants invest in productive businesses. The proportion and volume of remittances allocated to directly productive activities are limited. Compared to other countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Ecuador, Mexico exhibits the lowest level of business investment derived from these financial flows (Arroyo & Berumen, 2002; Canales & Montiel, 2004; Canales, 2006).

The multiplier effects of remittances are substantially reduced when the majority of these resources are directed toward unproductive expenditures, such as parties, luxury expenditures, and meeting basic needs. As a result,

unproductive spending takes precedence over investment projects that these resources could potentially finance. Furthermore, the consumption of goods and services is not supported by the community's own production, leading to a dilution of the multiplier effects, which are channeled toward urban areas (Canales & Montiel, 2004).

The receipt of remittances not only supports the essential needs of migrants and their families but also serves as an incentive for labor mobility. In addition, these transfers foster transnational commitments, functioning as mechanisms for the reproduction and maintenance of social, cultural, and symbolic relationships. As economic flows, remittances provide the material support necessary for the construction of extended family networks. In conjunction with the monetary flow, familial values such as reciprocity, solidarity, and responsibility are also transmitted (Canales, 2005).

Economic reintegration: results of the logit econometric model

The results of the binomial logistic regression model, which identifies the main attributes of economic reintegration, are presented in Table 2. The variable used to measure economic reintegration is the establishment of a personal business. The findings indicate that only six of the nine variables included in the model were statistically significant: gender (sex), marital status, level of education, English proficiency, legal status or possession of migration documents, and the number of years since returning. Regarding the gender variable, its negative and significant coefficient suggests that women are more likely than men to start their own business upon returning, using entrepreneurship as a means of reintegrating into the local economy.

The literature on migration determinants indicates that women have greater opportunities and incentives to return to their place of origin, whether due to family considerations or social reintegration. This tendency is reflected in their higher likelihood of establishing a business, not only as a result of being a return migrant but also due to their gender (Massey, 2017).

On the other hand, the model indicates that the variables positively and significantly influence the likelihood of return migrants in Mariscal de Juárez starting a business include marital status, years of schooling, English proficiency, possession of the necessary migration documents to work in the United States, and the number of years since their return.

The interpretation regarding education suggests that higher levels of schooling increase the likelihood that a migrant returning from the United States will start their own business and, consequently, be able to reactivate

their economic activities in their place of origin. This result may be explained by the fact that migrants with higher levels of human capital possess better competitive conditions, which facilitate economic integration with greater advantages and, therefore, reduce the likelihood of being excluded from local income-generating activities.

Table 2: Determinants of economic reintegration of return migrants in Mariscala de Juárez, Oaxaca

Independent variables	Coefficient	Z-statistic
Age	0.0579	0.54
Age squared	-0.0008	-0.74
Sex (male=1)	-1.7326	-2.73***
Civil Status (married=1)	1.0543	1.91*
Years of schooling	0.1651	1.86*
Speaks English	1.1888	2.27**
Years as a migrant	0.0276	0.61
Legal status in the U.S.	1.2949	2.37**
Years since returning	0.0512	1.67 *
Training course	0.5472	1.17
Expectations met	0.2506	0.31
Constant	-4.2135	-1.57
Number of observations	124	
Log-likelihood	-251.19	
Chi-square	112.27	
Prob > chi-square	0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.1596	

***, **, *: Significant at 1 per cent, 5 per cent y 10 per cent, respectively.

Source: Author's elaboration based on EMIRR, 2018.

Undoubtedly, being married has a positive effect, as having a family encourages returning migrants to engage in activities that increase household income. Speaking english has an even greater impact on reintegration through entrepreneurship, as it fosters an entrepreneurial spirit characterized by initiative and continuous learning. For example, if the municipality had a tourism-oriented economy, this attribute would become especially important for catering to international visitors.

If the legal status in the United States grants returnees greater mobility between their place of origin and the United States, it consequently helps

further propel the establishment of their own businesses. This could be partly explained by the acquisition of technical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills (know-how) during their stay abroad, which fosters expectations about the potential to introduce new technologies or innovations into their ventures. Finally, the positive coefficient of the variable “years since return” implies that the longer returnees have been in their place of origin, the greater the likelihood they have reintegrated into local economic activities, due to the opportunity to establish their own businesses, driven perhaps by a desire for greater stability, motivated in part by their experiences in the neighboring northern country.

TOWARDS THE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND ITS DETERMINANTS

In the process of social reintegration, as part of human mobility and return, migrants may or may not have the capacity to reintegrate and adapt to their place of origin, assimilating and internalizing local ways of life. This process can be observed across various socialization spaces within the community. Some studies examine social and cultural reintegration to analyze the challenges and conditions faced by families (García & Burgueños, 2018); explore return and social reintegration as outcomes of the articulation and dynamics of global labor markets (Rivera, 2013); and investigate the social integration of minors within the educational sphere (Rentería, *et al.*, 2017).

In the context of social reintegration, our case study emphasizes a strong familial component to understand household composition, kinship relations, transnational networks, required services, and government programs benefiting returnees. Furthermore, this analysis is closely linked to the sociodemographic characteristics of migrants.

According to the survey results, 96 per cent of migrants who returned to their community of origin confirmed having at least one close family member who had migrated to the United States for work or residence. Regarding kinship ties, 68.54 per cent reported having siblings in the country, while 80.64 per cent indicated the presence of nephews, uncles, or cousins, and 20 per cent specified that their children remain in the United States. Additionally, 4.83 per cent stated that their spouse is still in the United States, and an equal percentage indicated that their parents have not returned.

In this context, 25 per cent of returned migrants have children who were born in the United States. Within the framework of circular mobility, this circumstance could facilitate the regularization of the parents' immigration

status and enable dual citizenship for their children. The presence of family members in the United States strengthens transnational networks and contributes to repeated migration.

In households of returned migrants, the average number of residents is 4.52. Among respondents, 42.74 per cent reported that only one person sustains the household, while 47.45 per cent indicated that two family members contribute financially. Regarding healthcare services, the majority (90 per cent) described their health status as good or fair. Additionally, 60 per cent of returnees received medical care while in the United States, primarily for work-related injuries, surgical procedures, or childbirth. After resettling in their community of origin, 83.06 per cent were enrolled in Seguro Popular, 9.67 per cent lacked affiliation with any healthcare service, 4.83 per cent were covered by ISSSTE, and 2.42 per cent were registered with IMSS. Awareness of government health programs targeted at migrants remains limited: only 1.61 per cent were familiar with the Ventanilla de Salud program, 13.7 per cent had heard of Vete sano, regresa sano, and just 2.41 per cent were aware of the Asistencia a Repatriados Enfermos program.

Regarding social programs, 54 per cent of returnees are either direct beneficiaries or have a family member receiving government support. Specifically, 31.45 per cent benefited from Prospera, while 30.64 per cent received the Pensión para Adultos Mayores. On average, families received 854 pesos in government assistance, with amounts ranging from 280 to 2,000 pesos per household. Among the 124 surveyed returnees, more than 90 per cent were familiar with programs such as Tienda Diconsa, Pensión para Adultos Mayores “65 y más”, Prospera, and Seguro Popular. However, it is concerning that fewer than 7 per cent of respondents were aware of or had heard about the Programa 3x1 para Migrantes and the Fondo de Apoyo para Migrantes (FAM).

SOCIAL REINTEGRATION: RESULTS OF THE LOGIT ECONOMETRIC MODEL

Regarding the results of the econometric model explaining social reintegration, Table 3 presents the estimates from the binomial logistic regression model. In this model, the dependent variable for social reintegration is defined by participation in a social program. The findings indicate that only three variables included in the model were statistically significant: the number of years spent as a migrant, years since returning to the community, and possession of an educational certificate.

Table 3: Determinants of Social Reintegration of Return Migrants in Mariscal de Juárez, Oaxaca

Independent Variables	Coefficiente	Estadístico z
Age	-0.0105	-0.51
Sex (male = 1)	-0.3122	-0.53
Civil Status (married =1)	-0.6607	-1.39
Years of schooling	-0.0631	-0.12
Years spent as a migrant	0.8420	2.19**
Years since returning to the community	0.0511	1.82*
Possession of a certificate	-0.7788	1.87*
Expectation of returning to the U.S.	-0.1369	-0.31
Savings	0.3235	0.62
U.S.-born children	0.0252	0.05
Constant	0.5935	0.54
Number of observations	124	
Log-likelihood	-157.41	
Chi-square	123.41	
Prob > chi-square	0.0000	
Pseudo R ²	0.1265	

***, **, *: Significant at 1 per cent, 5 per cent y 10 per cent, respectively.

Source: Author's elaboration based on EMIRR, 2018.

The variable years spent as a migrant exhibits a positive and significant sign, indicating that the shorter the duration of a migrant's stay abroad, the lower the likelihood of losing social ties with the community. Consequently, upon returning, they have a greater probability of participating in a government program.

On the other hand, the model shows that the variable years since returning to the community has a positive influence on the likelihood of benefiting from a government program. This is because, over time, migrants strengthen their social relationships and become more aware of available opportunities or government support programs. A possible interpretation of the educational certificate variable, given its negative coefficient, is that migrants without a certificate have a higher probability of successfully integrating into government programs. This may be attributed to their increased vulnerability, which makes them more likely to receive government assistance.

Although the variable related to expectations of returning to the United States was not significant, it displayed the expected sign, indicating that migrants who maintain the hope of returning to the United States are less likely to participate in social activities in their local community.

The measurement of social reintegration may vary depending on the definition applied; in our case, it is based on whether returnees benefit from any government program, which implies having a family, social, and informational networks. However, various government supports have become universal, meaning that local conditions, in this case, become less significant, as reflected in the results of the model. Being a beneficiary of a public program for social integration is an important indicator, as it implies the restoration of identity. In this regard, it is essential to keep official documents updated and in order, such as the voter ID (INE), birth certificate, and CURP, to ensure access to public programs and facilitate the reintegration of migrants into their community of origin.

CONCLUSIONS

This article contributes to the study of return migration from a local perspective, reflecting the diverse realities that migrants face in their economic and social reintegration. Population movements continue to be reshaped due to multiple changes in national and international migration patterns. The place of origin plays a crucial role in understanding the root causes of migration, as persistent issues such as poverty, unemployment, limited economic fluidity, insufficient access to adequate nutrition, school dropout rates among children and young people, loss of identity, and family disintegration remain prevalent. Moreover, for several years, agricultural cultivation has no longer guaranteed the minimum conditions for survival. Alongside preexisting social issues, rising levels of violence and insecurity have further exacerbated the situation. These public concerns form part of the everyday local context and take on greater significance given the trajectories, humanitarian challenges, and political dilemmas that governments must address to respond effectively to the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of human mobility.

Government narratives regarding the impact and potential of family remittances as a financing instrument for productive projects and a catalyst for regional development are often overestimated, particularly in the absence of public policies designed to achieve these objectives. The challenge of development lies in creating an enabling environment in which remittances can play a transformative role. A key issue that remains unresolved

is determining how public policies can facilitate the effective integration of remittances into the local economy. Once the functioning of the productive base is fully understood, policy interventions can contribute to mitigating economic deficiencies and structural weaknesses.

Programs designed for returnees, such as the 3x1 Program for Migrants and the FAM, lack a targeted focus on communities in Oaxaca and Mexico as a whole, highlighting a disconnect between migrant-led projects and comprehensive public policies. To address this gap, hypothetical government actions aimed at promoting productive investment (through remittances⁶) and facilitating economic and social reintegration should consider the following measure:

1. Promotion and support of entrepreneurial initiatives (micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises). This approach involves providing access to information and financial resources to support the entrepreneurial process and business consolidation. Additionally, it includes fostering entrepreneurial skills and establishing strategic partnerships to enhance productive activities.
2. Financial support tailored to individual profiles, proposed projects, and the trajectories of returnees.
3. Expansion of investment capacity. This strategy emphasizes the role of human capital in organizing financial, social, and knowledge-based capital by leveraging professional skills, institutional relationships, and private capital accumulated through migratory experiences.
4. Strengthening knowledge and enhancing skills acquired throughout the life trajectories of returnees. This can be achieved through training programs, workshops, arts, trades, and specialized instruction designed to increase productivity. Acknowledging prior work experience is essential, particularly in sectors where technology transfer occurs, such as gastronomy, agriculture, and livestock farming.
5. Fostering the creation of a local productive system. This system should integrate interconnected businesses and institutions linked by geographic proximity, with the goal of maximizing the impact of local production, improving the management of public goods and services, and integrating knowledge to promote community well-being. The inclusion of endogenous products, particularly those of regional origin and agro-industrial nature, should be encouraged.

⁶ In many cases, the potential of remittances for productive investment is restricted to consumption and the fulfillment of basic household and family needs. Consequently, productive investment could be sourced from alternative funding options, such as savings cooperatives and other financial lending institution.

6. Directing investments toward profitable projects that incorporate technology and innovation, and that receive support in marketing or through credit.
7. Promoting the creation and improvement of public physical and social infrastructure, with the aim of making the places of origin more attractive for productive projects and investment.
8. Redesigning family survival strategies toward more impactful productive projects, where investment does not flow to medium-sized cities but remains within the community, as part of endogenous production and the strengthening of the local market.

The primary objective of this research was to analyze the determining factors of the social and economic reintegration of returnee migrants in Mariscal de Juárez. To achieve this, fieldwork was conducted to gather quantitative information regarding the perceptions and experiences of the migrants, which facilitated the creation of databases and information matrices through the EMIRR. Based on the collected data, two econometric models were developed to explain the economic and social reintegration of returnee migrants in their municipality of origin. The results suggest that:

- Women are more likely to start their own businesses upon returning to the community as a means of economic reintegration.
- Speaking English (language proficiency), being married (civil status), legal status in the United States (necessary immigration documents for employment), and high levels of education (years of schooling) are factors that jointly determine the economic reintegration of migrants into the community through the establishment of a business.

The absence of a certificate, a shorter period spent abroad as a migrant, and the number of years since returning are determining factors in the social reintegration of returnees, as they increase the likelihood of being part of or benefiting from a government program.

Another relevant finding of this study is the specific profile of migrants in this municipality, characterized by the following features: the population is primarily male; however, the female gender is increasingly present in migratory flows. Seventy-five percent of returnee migrants have family responsibilities, either being married or living in cohabitation. The same percentage falls within the productive age range of 21 to 50 years, and in full use of their labor capacities. Eighty percent of returnees have received basic education, with less than nine years of schooling. Additionally, 80

per cent of migrants used their remittances to build their homes and support their families, thereby improving living conditions to some extent.

The reasons migrants' return to the community are closely tied to family; saving is the primary action migrants undertake with their return in mind. Once established in the community, their main priority is securing an income, i. e., ensuring employment. Forty percent of returnees have turned to self-employment. Sixty percent of the family members of the surveyed migrants receive some form of government support, such as the Prospera program and the Pension for Older Adults. This indicates that public attention is directed towards families with migrant members. However, migrants do not rely exclusively on these supports, and it is expected that this will generate virtuous cycles in the medium term.

Returnee migrants primarily find employment in the trade sector, the primary sector as farmers and ranchers, as well as in the services and transportation sectors, the construction industry, and a small proportion are employed in the government sector (municipal). Approximately ten per cent of the returnee population is not employed due to factors such as unemployment, being homemakers, or living off savings, pensions, or remittances. Throughout their migratory experience, returnees have enhanced their labor skills and modified their attitudes. They have acquired knowledge shaped by the American lifestyle, which has contributed to the transformation of their human capital. In fact, as part of the challenges faced by migrants when returning to their community, this study initially assumed that they would not find employment in the formal labor market, would lack self-employment opportunities, and would have limited options for additional income sources. However, the results obtained from the research revealed a different and less adverse reality.

Migrants are aware that upon returning, they must immediately focus on generating an income, as this is their primary need when attempting to reestablish themselves, given that the savings they have accumulated are finite. They face a reality characterized by a scarcity of employment opportunities, low wages, and, despite their hard work, the income entering their households may be much lower than what they earned in the United States. It is necessary to continue encouraging this slight increase in human capital to stimulate the development of labor competencies and creativity among returnees, as the jobs they occupy tend to be low-level positions. The migratory experience, particularly in terms of labor market integration abroad (in the United States), favors the migrants' integration into specific

sectors of the economy: commerce and services, agriculture and livestock, construction, and transportation.

Once migrants return to their community of origin, they begin a series of actions that allow them to reintegrate. They reactivate family and friendship ties to secure employment, explore their own forms of self-employment through investments in businesses (such as stores, food services, or the production and sale of agricultural products), and seek opportunities in local companies or the government sector. Notably, 6.45 per cent of returnees no longer needed to work. Considering the nature of the existing economic units in the community, it is highly likely that migrants who establish businesses will reintegrate into trade, accommodation services, food and beverage preparation, and manufacturing industries.

The results of this research should be interpreted with caution, as it is a case study and does not aim to generalize the phenomenon under analysis. However, it opens up a range of possibilities for future lines of research related to conceptual discussions on where return begins and ends, reintegration in its various dimensions, development, public policies, and the socio-productive environment (local economic context) in municipalities with a high level of migratory intensity and that have experienced large volumes of returnee migrants.

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Article received on October 24, 2023, and accepted on September 5, 2024