

Description of irregular migration in transit through the State of Mexico

Descripción de la migración irregular en tránsito por el Estado de México

Juan Gabino González-Becerril

*Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the Population
Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, Mexico*

Abstract

The purpose of this text is to expose and describe irregular migration through Mexico, focusing specifically on the State of Mexico. It is argued that there has been an increase in the presence of irregular migrants in the country, especially in the State of Mexico and its municipalities. The presence of Central Americans stands out mainly, followed by those who come from South America and the Caribbean Islands. A lower presence of migrants from Europe, Africa and Asia has also been observed. According to the data presented, it has been identified that around 170 countries originate irregular migration in Mexico, of which 30 have been detected in the State of Mexico.

Keywords: Irregular migration, constitutional reform, new faces, State from Mexico.

Resumen

El propósito de este texto es exponer y describir la migración irregular a través de México, centrándonos específicamente en el Estado de México. Se argumenta que ha habido un aumento en la presencia de migrantes irregulares en el país, especialmente en el Estado de México y sus municipios. Se destaca principalmente la presencia de centroamericanos, seguidos por aquellos que provienen de Suramérica y las Islas del Caribe. También se ha observado una menor presencia de migrantes procedentes de Europa, África y Asia. Según los datos presentados, se ha identificado que alrededor de 170 países tienen como origen la migración irregular en México, de los cuales 30 han sido detectados en el Estado de México.

Palabras clave: Migración irregular, reforma constitucional, nuevos rostros, Estado de México.

INTRODUCTION

The demographic flow of undocumented or irregular migration through Mexico has acquired characteristics of being massive and has been called caravans, exodus due to poverty, inequalities or multifactorial causes.

These exoduses are a cause for concern for academia, governments and civil society in general. Both its demographic size and its situation of irregularity from a legal point of view are worrying. In addition, the institutions in charge of collecting information are also concerned about generating statistics on this migration. For example, according to the Migration Policy Unit, in 2023, 686,732 undocumented foreigners were registered and channeled in Mexico.¹

In addition, the Mexican Senate indicates that we are being a host country for migrants due to economic, political, labor factors or forced displacement. INEGI provides data on the reasons for international emigration, as well as the place of birth and residence prior to the census survey. However, this time we will dispense with it. We will focus on aspects of irregular migration through Mexico and the State of Mexico.

Taking into consideration the above and considering the difficulty of measuring migration flow, it is stated that the presence of irregular migrants in the country has increased, especially in the State of Mexico and its municipalities. The presence of Central Americans stands out, followed by those who come from South America and the Caribbean Islands. To a lesser extent, but with increasing diversification, are those that come from Europe, Africa and Asia. According to the data presented, around 170 countries have been identified as the origin of irregular migration in Mexico, of which 30 have been detected in the State of Mexico.

The text is structured as follows: first, irregular migration is defined; secondly, the methodology and the source of information are presented; Next, the new profiles of international migration in the world, as well as irregular migration in Mexico, are analyzed. Subsequently, some figures on migrants in an irregular situation in the State of Mexico are presented. The geographical distribution is also addressed, highlighting the presence of irregular migrants in the municipality of Valle de Chalco, State of Mexico, in 2022. Finally, some general comments on the subject matter are included.

¹ CRM Log 2023, available in https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/bitacora_2023.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION: DEFINITION

Undocumented migration is also clearly influenced by the characteristics of the social and demographic systems of the place of origin and destination. However, at the same time, it has its origin in a series of complex factors that are found in the place of origin, transit and destination, which are subject to institutional controls and regulations (Hauser and Duncan, 1975b).

In the context of globalization, the State adapts and may even undergo transformations as a result of this phenomenon, which guarantees its role in the process of migratory regulation. For example, in the case of irregular migration, freedom of movement and flow does not apply, as is the case with foreign direct investments (Perales, 2013). This gives rise to different types of transnational migrations: those of transnational elites, transnational networks of public officials, and the disadvantaged and irregular global class. That is, the State discriminates, selects and adjusts its structures, institutions and regulatory actions in relation to them, in the context of globalization and deglobalization (Sassen, 2007).

In this context and in that of austerity, in the case of Mexico, the State classifies migrants by class and does not recognize or assign immigrant or refugee status to irregular migrants. Therefore, these people will be forced to use non-regular routes to be able to transit or access the country or another country that is destined. Due to their condition of being expelled, the current ideology constructs the identity of the migrant as a minority based on their ethnicity, origin, gender and irregularity.

Even in the initial definition itself, a discriminatory process can be observed. Irregular migration refers to people who move without following or complying with the legally established rules for moving from one country to another. These people on the move do not have legal documents to support their stay in a transit or destination country. There is no universally accepted definition to describe irregular migration. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines it as the movement of “people who move outside the rules of the countries of origin, transit or host”.

Due to their irregular, illegal, or undocumented status, these people are exposed to the (legal) vulnerability and risk (of being captured and deported) that migrants face during their journey, which is an inherent social trait of this population group (Bustamante, 2010; González, 2010).

Some argue that irregular migration can manifest itself in a variety of ways: either internal, external, or mixed. These displacements entail problems, in addition to legal risks, they present vulnerabilities and risks associated with human trafficking; the possibility of being exploited in the informal economy; exclusion from services or violation of their human rights with little possibility of receiving help. In addition, there is a lack of reliable statistics to diagnose or analyze this irregular situation (Alvarado, 2023).

Most Latin American countries ensure the right of all people to move freely within their territory (discursively). However, they impose restrictions on mobility. In our country, free movement is also guaranteed and it is recognized as the place of origin, transit, destination and return of irregular migrants. However, it is urgent to establish a legal and institutional framework that allows or facilitates the mobility of irregular migrants through international cooperation between countries. It also recognizes the responsibility to guarantee comprehensive protection of the rights of migrants in transit on a daily basis in the different countries of the world, including Mexico (Oceguera and Aguilar, 2020).

It must be based on what exists, such as Article 11, in its constitutional reform published in the Official Gazette of the Federation on August 15, 2016. In said article, a modification was made in the second paragraph, which was as follows:

The exercise of this right shall be subordinate to the powers of the judicial authority, in cases of criminal or civil liability, and to those of the administrative authority, with regard to the limitations imposed by the laws on emigration, immigration and general health of the Republic, or on pernicious foreigners residing in the country. Everyone has the right to seek and receive asylum. The recognition of refugee status and the granting of political asylum shall be carried out in accordance with international treaties. The law shall regulate its admissibility and exceptions. (cited in Oceguera and Aguilar, 2020: 167).²

However, the Mexican authority in charge of migration has prevented the passage, by persuading them not to continue with their journey, carrying out blockades, deterrence, detention and deportation with the support of the National Guard (at the request of Donald Trump, who was president of the United States of America) and local police authorities.

At the same time, transit permits are denied on the grounds of the Covid-19 pandemic, and from the United States, recently, with the application

² In addition, corroborated in <http://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Constitucion/articulos/11.pdf>

of the U.S. Title 42 (rapid expulsion of migrants), closing migrant stations, carrying out inspections on trucks and trains, requesting identification at bus terminals, among other coercive measures against migration in transit (Olivares and Sánchez, 2023).

However, the most recent is the controversial SB4 Law of Texas, which criminalizes migrants,³ due to which the U.S. Department of Justice has sued the State of Texas for this restrictive Law (Martínez, 2024). For his part, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador argues that it is unconstitutional and at the same time condemns the Law for its possible involvement in the separation of families and the violation of human rights (GOB, 2024).

These actions have also been used by the immigration authority of the State of Mexico during the pandemic, when requesting identification when buying a foreign bus ticket. This is supported by the approach that the Migration Policy is of National Security⁴ and the immigration law of our country. However, some experts consider that this law has some unconstitutionality that are suggested to be reviewed by experts and scholars of migration (Castilla, 2014).

In addition, the economic support of 660 dollars per month for six months to Venezuelans who are returned to their country (in addition to finding them employment) is questioned and similar support is sought for those of other nationalities (Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Ecuador).⁵ AMLO's critics have called him "Venezuela's lamp, Mexico's darkness" because of this issue of support for the deportation of Venezuelan migrants.⁶ Although these actions are due to election times in both Mexico and the United States, for example, the UN denounces the rise of anti-immigration speeches during election campaigns.⁷

However, opinions are heard that propose the decriminalization of irregular migration in Latin American countries and especially in Mexico.

³ See in S. B. No. 4, Available in <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/884/billtext/pdf/SB00004F.pdf>

⁴ Migration and Security, Priority Issues in the Relationship between Mexico and North America, available on <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2021/01/07/politica/013n1pol>

⁵ The Government of Mexico gives 660 dollars to returning Venezuelans, available in <https://www.razon.com.mx/mexico/gobierno-mexico-entrega-660-dolares-venezolanos-deportados-569898>

⁶ PAN senator criticizes AMLO for economic support to Venezuelans: "Lamp of Venezuela, darkness of Mexico", available in <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/senado-ra-del-pan-critica-a-amlo-por-apoyo-economico-a-venezolanos-candil-de-venezuela-oscuri-dad-de-mexico/>

⁷ The UN denounces the rise of anti-immigration speeches during electoral campaigns, available at <https://www.msn.com/es-mx/noticias/mundo/la-onu-denuncia-el-auge-de-los-dis-cursos-contr-la-inmigraci%C3%B3n-durante-campa%C3%B1as-electorales/ar-BB1km8Eh?o-cid=msedgntp&pc=HCTS&cvid=2bc5beca3757460681229e537cc0a7f7&ei=29>

This idea has been discussed since the beginning of the current century. This is due to the limitations of Mexico's current General Population Law from the perspective of human rights (Morales, n.d.).

Concomitantly, there are opinions that cast doubt on the performance of the Mexican State in terms of the current immigration treatment, model, and control.

The model of migration control and regulation applied by Mexico does not ensure its obligation to respect and guarantee the full exercise of the right to personal liberty of migrants or their human rights.⁸

In short, despite constitutional provisions, population laws, and migration laws, the immigration model continues to maintain detention as the rule rather than the exception. In practice, undocumented and irregular migration in transit continues to be considered a national security issue, which goes against the objectives of the current National Development Plan (Morales, 2012).

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The target group of this study is composed of individuals who travel through Mexico without complying with the legal regulations established to cross into the United States through our country. The Federal Government's Migration Policy Unit generates specific statistics on events involving people in an irregular migratory situation in Mexico, which supported our work and are available in its statistical bulletins.⁹

In addition, other secondary and complementary sources were used, which contributed to the process of describing the data on irregular migration that passes through our country and, therefore, the State of Mexico. The descriptive method used in this study consisted of selecting the object of study and evaluating it in the light of recent events using absolute and relative data, such as average annual growth rates, percentages, and graphic or cartographic resources taken from the website of the Migration Policy Unit. From this, hypotheses and initial research questions are established, from which arguments or statistical regularities about irregular migration are derived. The results are tested using descriptive research designs. The variables of irregular migration in a post-pandemic and migratory crisis

⁸ They point out deficiencies in the migration model, available in <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Senalan-deficiencias-de-modelo-migratorio-20240107-0066.html>

⁹ http://politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Direccion_de_Estadistica#est

context are measured, the measurements are analyzed, and general conclusions are established that are also subject to discussion.

The meeting point between socio-demography and the law is being sought, since it refers to people in transit (considered pernicious) but by not having any permit to stay, the transit becomes irregular and undocumented according to the laws and regulations of Mexico (Morales, 2012). This condition, as stated by Bustamente, cited in Velasco (2021), places the migrant in a situation of asymmetry of power and risk of vulnerabilities in terms of destination, transit and return.

For example, migration legislation, which is addressed to the administrative branch and is the regulation on emigration and immigration referred to in the Constitution, may limit the right of entry, exit, transit, trafficking and change of residence, as well as restrict the rights of harmful foreigners residing in Mexico. Consequently, anything that exceeds these limits is unconstitutional (Castilla, 2014). This indicates that the Constitution and the Migration Law have given rise to new areas of concern and studies on transnational migration, especially in what is recognized as irregular in its transit through Mexico to the United States.

The relevance of the administrative data sources of the Migration Policy Unit (UPM) lies in the process of registering foreigners or issuing permits (according to the law) to reside in the country or, failing that, to be repatriated. These administrative records are recognized as reliable sources of migration statistics, allowing to some extent to analyze the populations and movements of migrants through Mexico.¹⁰

NEW FACES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE WORLD¹¹

According to estimates, only about 10 to 15 percent of migrant populations are in an “irregular” situation at some point (Castles, 2010).

In addition, it has been reported that in 2009 there were 50 million undocumented migrants worldwide (representing 23.4 percent of global migration). As for the overall increase in international migration since then, it is likely that the number of irregular migrants increased to 58 million in 2017 (representing 21.3 percent) (IOM, 2018) whereas the total number of international migrants worldwide reached 281 million in 2020 and the proportion of irregular migration continues to rise.

¹⁰ IOM (2020). Migration Data Sources, available on <https://www.migrationdata-portal.org/es/themes/fuentes-de-datos-sobre-la-migracion>

¹¹ International Migration Highlights 2020, available on <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/aspectos-destacados-de-la-migraci-n-internacional-2020>

The numbers are accompanied by new faces and profiles, such as forced displacements across national and legal borders that continue to increase. It includes refugees from around the world who are staying in low- and middle-income countries. The majority of the world's international migrants reside in a small number of countries. International migration often occurs within regions. Women and girls account for 48 per cent of international migrants of this type. Most international migrants are of working age. Despite this, most countries have policies in place to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration which, however, their application is contrary to the legal spirit.

For example, some countries restrict migratory mobility or outsource their migration policy by imposing quotas on irregular immigration. Mass irregular migrations occur in various regions of the world, generating humanitarian crises that the affected nations do not know how to deal with, which puts local and national authorities in a bind. Fences or buoys are implemented in rivers, border closures, tangible and intangible walls and national guards that do not solve the problem.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN MEXICO

Irregular migration in Mexico has experienced a significant increase in recent years. In 2019, 182,940 irregular migrants were registered, while in 2022 this figure rose to 444,439 people. This represents an absolute increase of 261,499 irregular migrants in this period.

However, in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in irregular migration due to the mobility restrictions imposed. Despite this, from 2021 and 2022, after the pandemic, an increase in irregular migration has been observed, as well as in its average annual growth rate (Table 1). This increase is due to the resumption of mobility, the opening of borders and the growing exodus or caravans of migrants from different parts of the world, especially from Latin American countries.

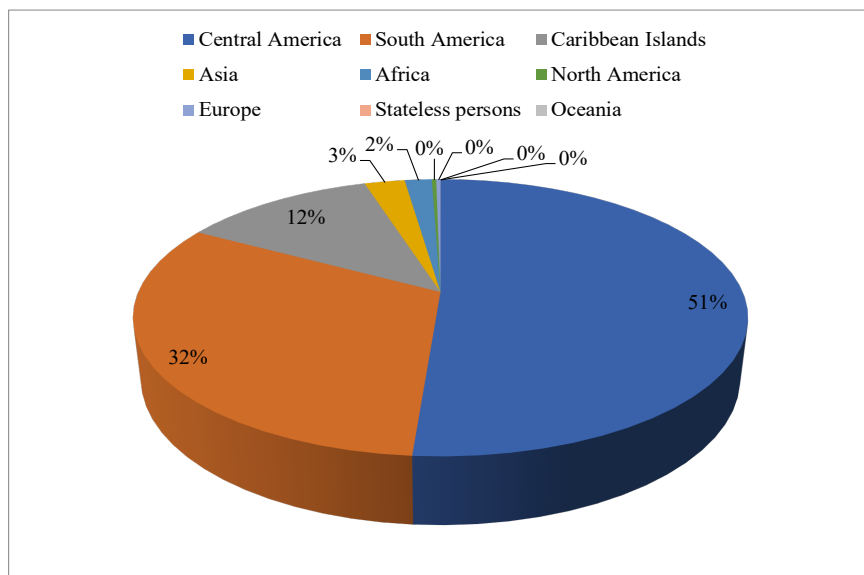
Table 1: Irregular migration in Mexico, 2019-2022

Year	Absolut	Growth rate
2019	182,940	
2020	82,379	-79.78
2021	309,692	132.42
2022	444,439	36.12

Fuente: https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11686/files/documents/2023-03/Perfil%20Migratorio-%20Boletin%20Anual%202022%20%283%29.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text

There are various origins of the irregular migration that transits the country in 2022. The greater presence of people from Central America (51.2 percent), South America (31.8 percent), the Caribbean Islands (12.2 percent), Asia (2.5 percent), Africa (1.7 percent), North America, Europe and Oceania (Figure 1) stands out.

Figure 1. Irregular migration in Mexico by country of origin 2022 (presented)



Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

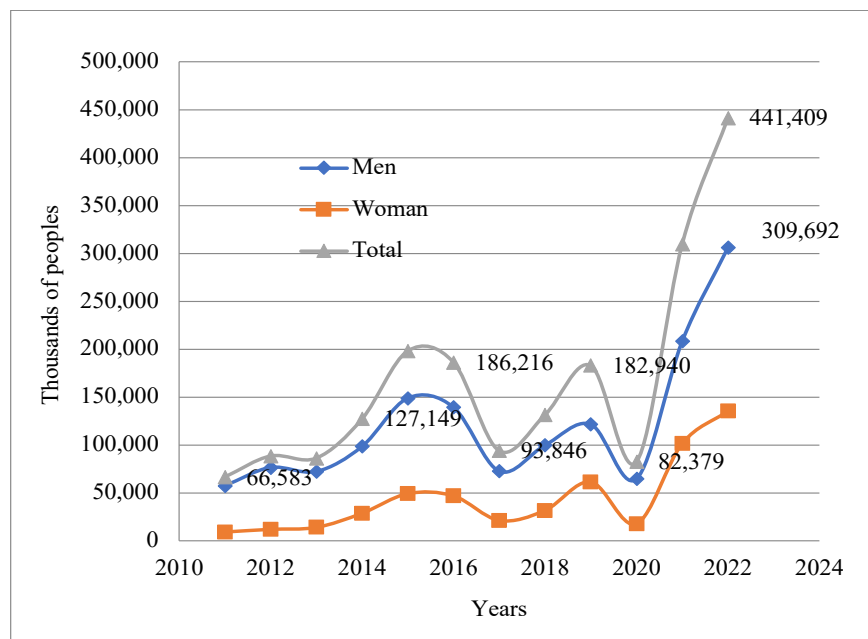
In addition, women also migrate irregularly, although most of them are men of working age. This inclusion of women gives a new face to migration in transit and is recognized as family-friendly, since they are also accompanied by children.

Its behavior between 2011 and 2022 has experienced ups and downs that were due to the rhetoric of President Donald Trump in 2017 and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Falls are more pronounced for women compared to men and the total (Figure 2). But it is also due to the policy of deterrence, retention and deportation applied in our country during the aforementioned years.

For exhibition purposes, the following graph has been included that shows the irregular migration of women from various regions of the world who have passed through Mexico between 2011 and 2022. It is estimated that the cumulative number of irregular migrants is almost two million

people from different parts of the world. Of these, 1,465,792 are men and 528,812 are women, which represents 26.5 percent of the accumulated total from 2011 to 2022.

Figure 2: Irregular migratory events in Mexico by country of origin 2011-2022



Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

Both men and women in transit come from more than 170 countries, and the graph indicates that women are fewer in both absolute and percentage terms in the last eleven years. Women from Central America (78 percent), South America (ten percent) and the Caribbean Islands (seven percent) are particularly noteworthy (Table 2).

This is a sample of the new international migratory face for the country and the state of Mexico, men and women who migrate for multiple factors. For example, those who come from Venezuela derive from an authoritarian state that has led to an economic crisis and expelled millions of Venezuelans, not to mention Nicaragua, whose government has expelled, persecuted and stripped nationalities of their fellow citizens, turning them into stateless people. As an authoritarian state and “lack” in democracy, the case of Cuba and Colombia is added. Whose governments recognize themselves as leftist or socialist and with which they have presented their

differences with neoliberal governments also with their dose of authoritarianism.

Tabla 2: Migraciones irregulares en México según sexo y región de origen 2011-2022
(Total = 1,994,494)

Country of nationality	Central America	South America	Caribbean Islands	Asia	Africa	North America	Europe	Total
Men 2011	54,013	783	726	724	246	772	156	57,420
Women 2011	8,173	364	193	106	41	232	47	9,156
Men 2012	71,828	879	2,449	259	294	747	85	76,541
Women 2012	10,333	304	1,016	44	29	204	32	11,962
Men 2013	68,023	1,033	1,101	821	499	719	126	72,322
Women 2013	12,734	453	423	73	46	195	51	13,975
Men 2014	92,469	1,306	1,771	1,000	732	1,013	162	98,453
Women 2014	27,245	475	559	46	53	264	49	28,691
Men 2015	134,945	1,205	6,765	2,089	1,869	1,920	129	148,922
Women 2015	44,673	501	3,117	135	209	540	34	49,209
Men 2016	111,836	1,386	16,305	4,470	3,240	1,931	168	139,336
Women 2016	39,593	584	5,190	362	670	417	63	46,879
Men 2017	61,659	979	1,625	4,824	1,618	1,772	116	72,593
Women 2017	18,940	347	463	346	560	533	52	21,241
Men 2018	87,503	995	662	7,206	1,932	1,375	86	99,759
Women 2018	29,638	344	328	100	859	376	29	31,674
Men 2019	102,245	1,431	6,991	5,565	4,313	887	101	121,533
Women 2019	53,057	863	4,077	313	2,752	308	34	61,404
Men 2020	60,366	1,078	1,771	355	380	665	40	64,655
Women 2020	15,929	427	872	24	210	229	27	17,718
Men 2021	171,546	15,004	16,849	1,646	1,635	795	744	208,219
Women 2021	78,203	12,054	9,783	140	431	379	471	101,461
Men 2022	150,971	107,125	32,023	8,697	5,210	774	1,160	305,960
Women 2022	58,520	52,386	20,180	1,675	1,462	356	832	135,411

Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

The Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran cases are countries that have experienced recurrent economic crises that derive from neoliberal models that reproduce great inequalities, coupled with demographic pressure, affected by natural disasters and insecurity.

Currently, the emblematic case is that of Ecuadorians, who are affected by insecurity derived from organized crime, which drives them to opt for international migration. This phenomenon is known as forced migration and is already a reality in many Latin American countries, therefore, statistics and migration policy must focus on this issue.

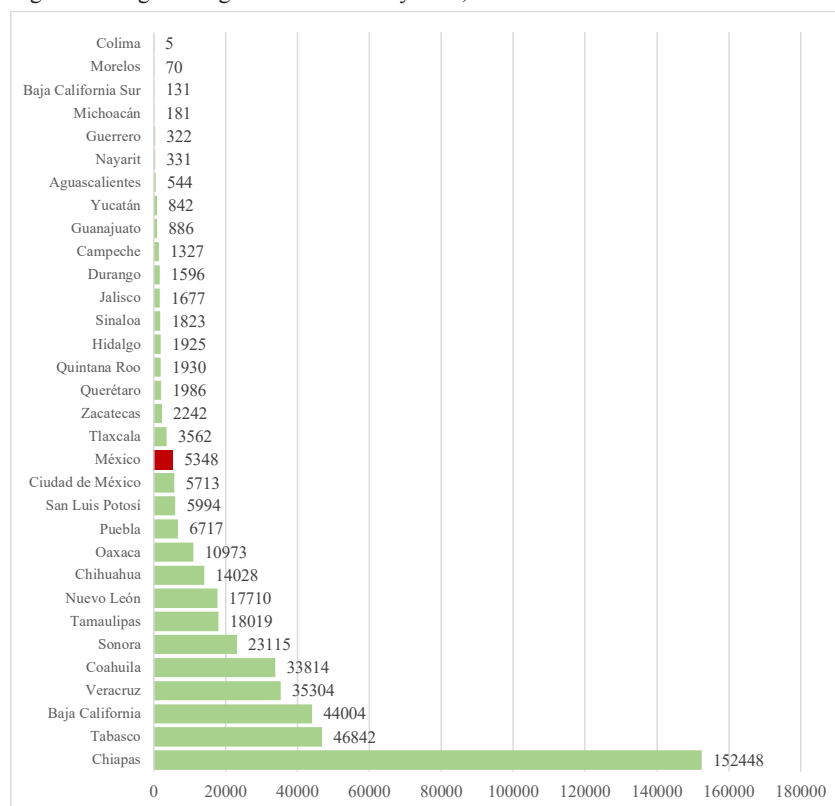
Various people are fleeing hunger, as is the case of Africans, where poverty and capitalist exploitation of their natural resources are determining factors. An example of this is the Haitians. It is interesting to note that around two percent of Haitians have entered the State of Mexico between 2011 and 2021, a percentage that derives from the more than 400 thousand irregular migrants who have crossed through the country

The Migration Policy Unit reports that 2,726 irregular migrants were registered in the State of Mexico for the year 2021, while in 2020 this figure reached 5,348 people of 30 different nationalities, including Haitians. But the INEGI, according to the 2020 Population and Housing Census of Mexico, reported a total of 77 Haitians in the State of Mexico, all of them registered in the municipality of Toluca.

By 2023, it is estimated that of the 110 thousand irregular migrants in transit through Mexico, the State of Mexico has a Haitian migration of three percent. This means that there are around three thousand Haitians in a situation of mobility. This migration can be observed in neighborhoods, streets, markets, businesses, bus stations and buses, participating in informal activities and cruises both in the state of Mexico and in its capital city. Their skin makes them distinguishable, but they can also be mistaken for people from Ethiopia or other African, Latin American, or Caribbean countries. On the contrary, migrants in flux from Central America, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador can mimic or be confused with the Mexican population, the State of Mexico or Toluca.

Undocumented migrants are scattered throughout the national territory. For the year 2022, the following states stand out: Chiapas, with a population of 152,448 people; Tabasco, with 46,842 people; Baja California, with 44,004 people; Veracruz, with 35,304 people; Coahuila, with 33,814 people; Sonora, with 23,115 people; Tamaulipas, with 18,019 people; Nuevo León, with 17,710 people; Chihuahua, with 14,028 people; Oaxaca, with 10,973 people; Town, with 6,717 people; San Luis Potosí, with 5,994 people; Mexico City, with 5,713 people; and the State of Mexico, with 5,348 foreigners in an irregular situation (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Irregular migrants in Mexico by state, 2022



Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

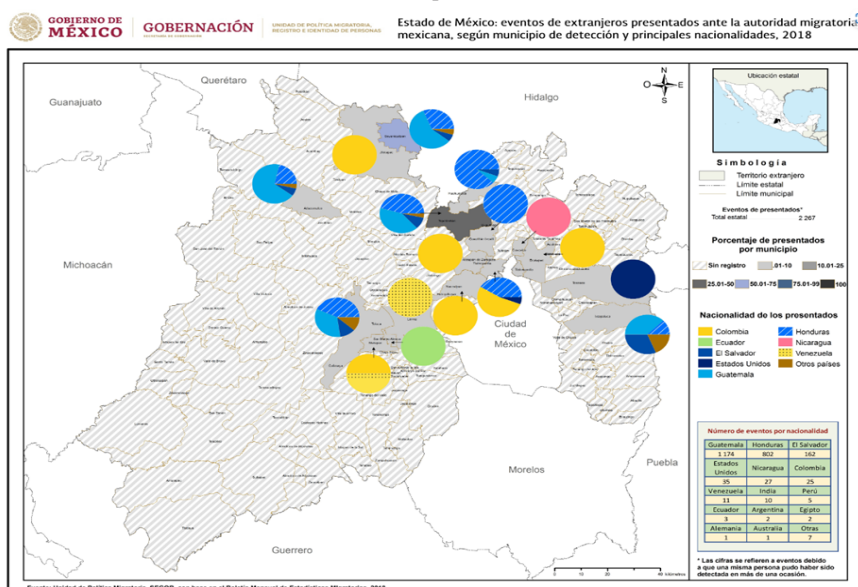
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN THE STATE OF MEXICO AND MUNICIPALITIES 2021-2022

Irregular migration in transit through the State of Mexico is evidenced more markedly every year through cartography (Map 1). By clarifying the vision of its passage through the Mexican territory, it is possible to dimension and organize in an orderly way the geographical space along its route, which in turn allows its changes over time to be observed (GOB, 2011). This scientific and real approach helps to understand the evolution of the territorial space of irregular migration, which is subject to unconstitutionality when presented to the immigration authority and therefore deported.

In maps 1, 2 and 3 it can be seen that their demographic weight in different municipalities of Mexico is increasingly relevant. In addition, there

is evidence of greater diversification in absolute and relative terms in terms of their origin. At the same time, where a greater number of colors are presented according to the origin of the migrant when they are presented to the immigration authority, and in this the municipal police plays a fundamental role. Likewise, the municipal police, the state police, and the National Guard are based on the institutional articulation scheme.¹² In the presentation action, elements of opacity are implied in the call for help, the use of force, detentions, and deportation, despite the fact that the police receive training in human rights, gender, and vulnerable populations.

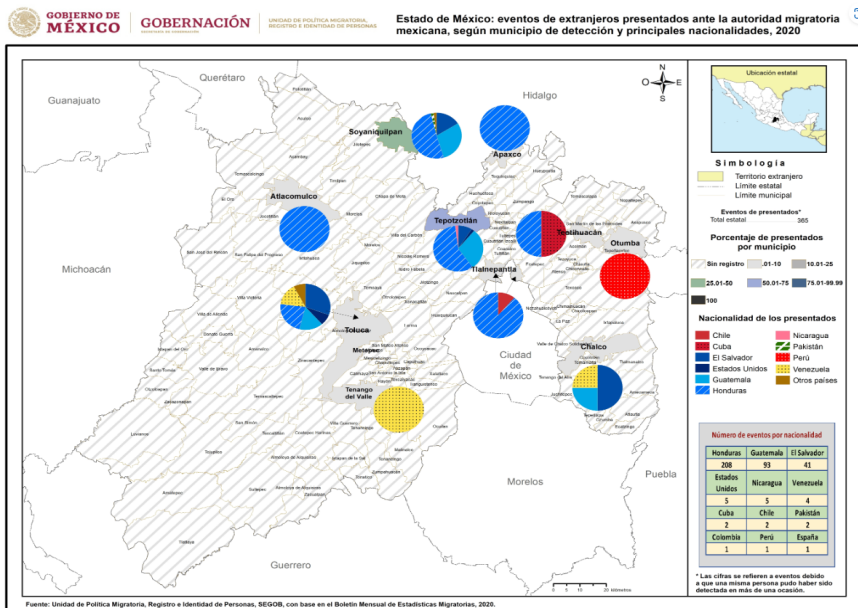
Map 1



Source: https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadistica/Atlas-Atlas2018/A_2018_20.jpg

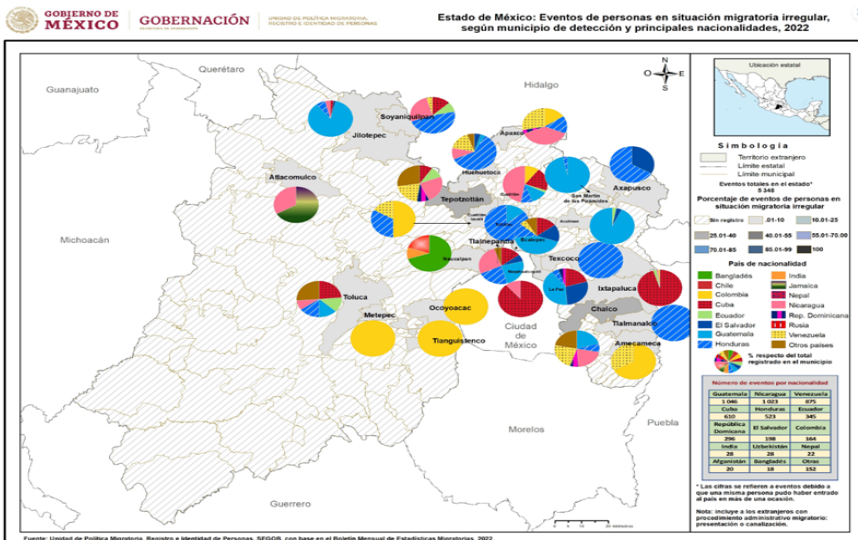
¹² See FASP-FOSTASEG Training 2019, available in https://www.secretariadocje-cutivo.gob.mx/fasp-fortaseg-2019/Capacitacion_Integrada.pdf

Map 2



Source: https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadistica/Atlas/Atlas2020/A_2020_22.jpg

Map 3

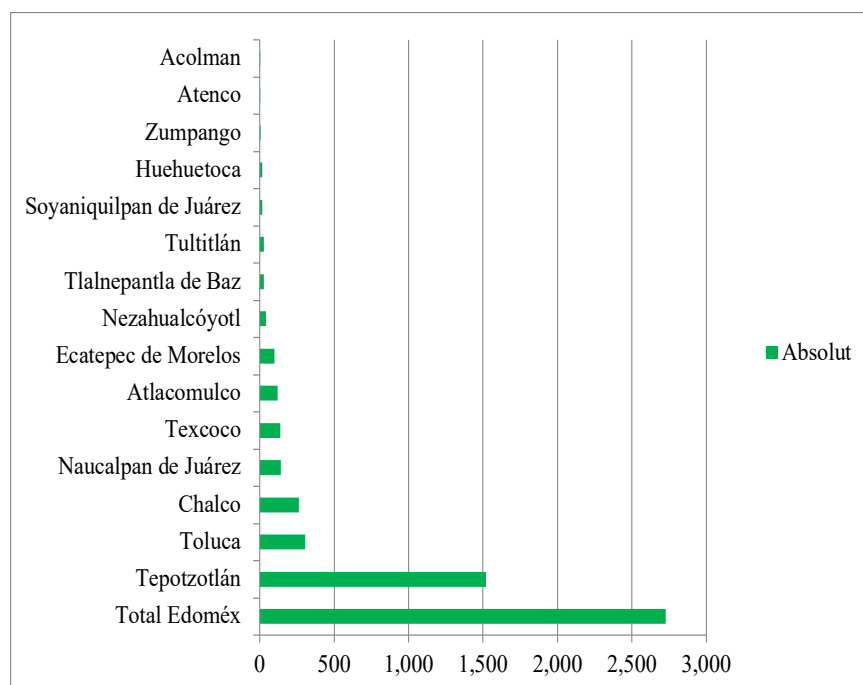


Source: https://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadistica/Atlas/Atlas2022/A_2022_22.jpg

We must not forget that the traffic police of the State of Mexico is one of the institutions that has generated the most distrust among the population.¹³

Previous information suggests that irregular migration in the State of Mexico has been distributed in several municipalities, such as Acolman, Ameca-meca, Apaxco, Atlacomulco, Axapusco, Chalco, Cuautitlán Izcalli, Cuautitlán, Ecatepec de Morelos, Huehuetoca, Ixtapaluca, Jilotepec, La Paz, Metepec, Naucalpan de Juárez, Nezahualcóyotl, Ocoyoacac, San Martín de las Pirámides, Soyaniquilpan de Juárez, Tepotzotlán, Texcoco, Tianguistenco, Tlalmanalco, Tlalnepantla de Baz, Toluca and Tultitlán during the year 2022. It should be noted that more and more municipalities in the state are witnessing this international migratory phenomenon, with Tepotzotlán, Chalco and Toluca occupying the first places in the number of cases (figures 4 and 5).

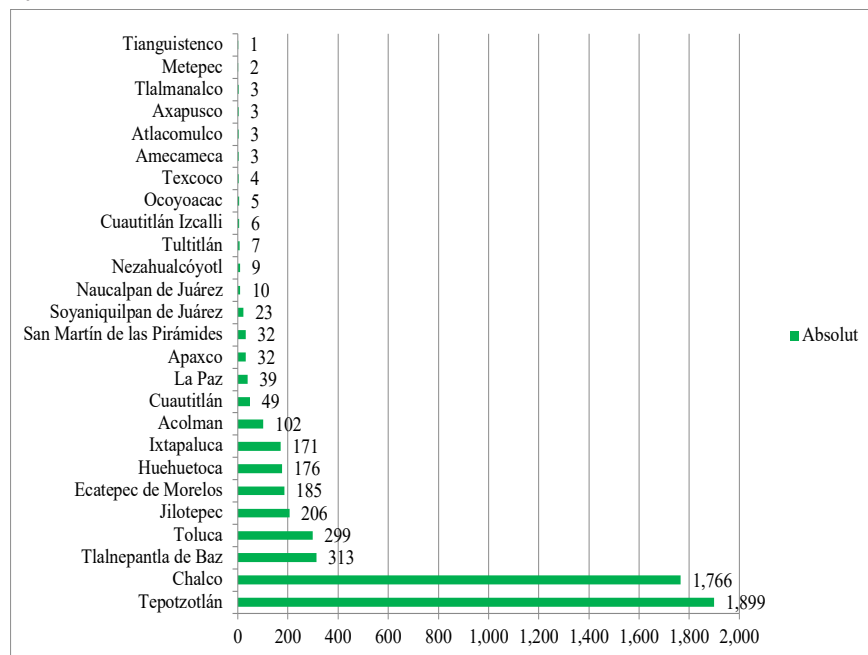
Figure 4: People in an irregular migratory situation according to municipality of the State of Mexico, 2021



Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

¹³ Traffic police concentrate the greatest distrust among Mexican households, available in <https://elceo.com/politica/policia-de-transito-concentra-la-mayor-desconfianza-entre-los-ho-gares-mexicanos/>

Figure 5: People in irregular migratory status by municipality of the State of Mexico, 2022



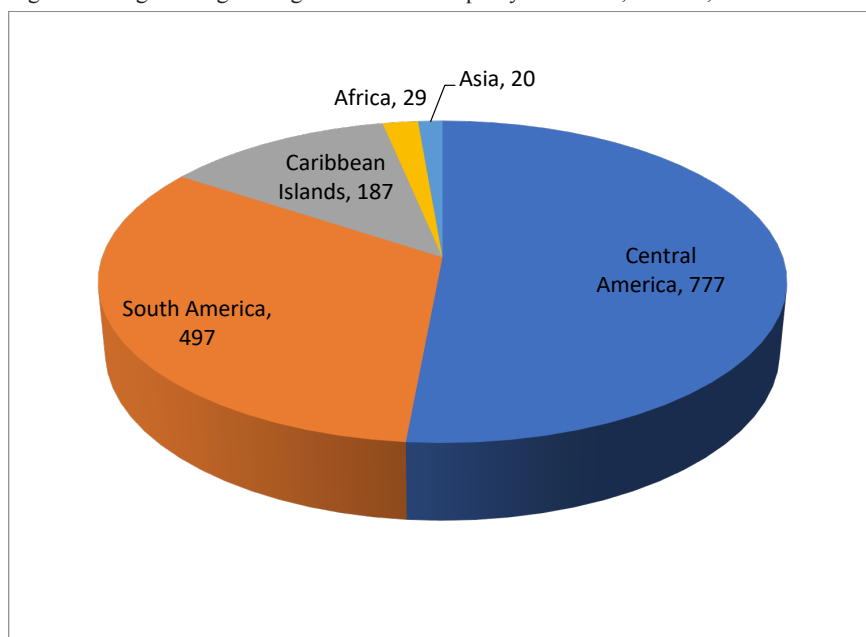
Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHALCO VALLEY, STATE OF MEXICO, 2022

During 2020, the media have constantly reported on the presence of irregular migrants in the State of Mexico. An example of this is the increase in Haitian migrants as well as from other countries in the municipality of Valle de Chalco, who face a real ordeal when crossing the territory of the state of Mexico. In addition, there has been a constant flow of migrants through this region of Mexico, and thousands of Haitians or other nationalities have arrived in the east of the state.

The municipality of Valle de Chalco, according to data provided by the Migration Policy Unit of our country, maintains that of the more than five thousand migrants of this category registered by said institution, detected in the entity, 1,510 people were presented to the Valle de Chalco immigration authority. The greater presence of those who come from Central America, South America, Caribbean Islands, Africa and Asia stands out (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Irregular migrant region in the municipality of Chalco, Mexico, 2022



Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

In particular, the largest numbers of irregular migration in their passage through Chalco, State of Mexico come from Venezuela with 367 people in this condition, Nicaragua with 340, Guatemala with 294, Dominican Republic with 102, Honduras with 87, Cuba with 82, Ecuador with 81, El Salvador with 53, Colombia with 41, India with ten and in the case of Haiti only four irregular migrants were registered (Table 3).

Most of these irregular migrants have suffered xenophobia, discrimination and exclusion in the countries through which they have passed, both by governments that consider themselves democratic and by the native inhabitants through whom they cross on foot.

They are part of a new face of migration on the move that faces crises at other borders in Latin America, testing democracies that outsource U.S. immigration policy as well as Mexico's. Currently, Mexico implements a policy of deterrence, detention, and deportation that serves as an example of externalization of U.S. immigration policy.

Table 3: Country of nationality of irregular migrants presented in Chalco, State of Mexico, 2022

Country of origin	Absolut
Venezuela	367
Nicaragua	340
Guatemala	294
Rep. Dominicana	102
Honduras	87
Cuba	82
Ecuador	81
El Salvador	53
Colombia	41
India	10
Eritrea	8
Mauritania	6
Bangladesh	5
Perú	4
China	4
Mali	4
Haití	3
Panamá	2
Argentina	2
Chile	2
Angola	2
Etiopía	2
Ghana	2
Guinea Bissau	2
Somalia	2
Costa Rica	1
Uzbekistán	1
Nigeria	1
Total	1,510

Source: Migration Policy Unit, 2022.

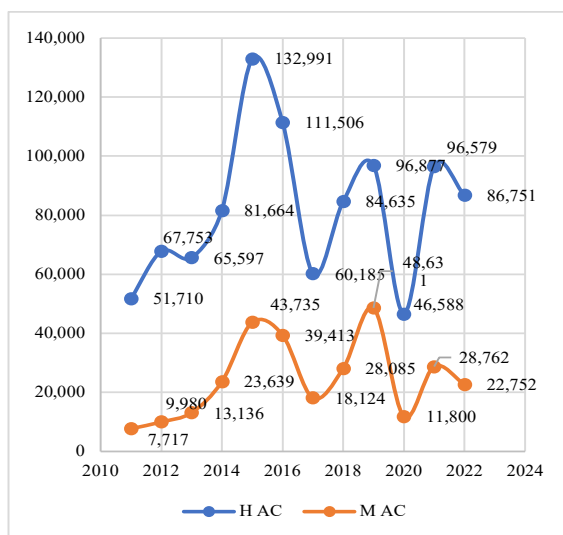
RETURN OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS FROM MEXICO

The repatriation of irregular migrants is based on violations of legal precepts, entails consequences of police bureaucratic documents that change and generate various situations over time depending on the country, state or municipality, even radically transforming their original meaning to become identification documents, categorization as migrants in transit, and they can even pave the way to legal, safe, illegal, or insecure status (Barbero, 2024).

The returns made by the Mexican authority are justified for breaking the law, which makes them irregular. The data presented here highlight three situations:

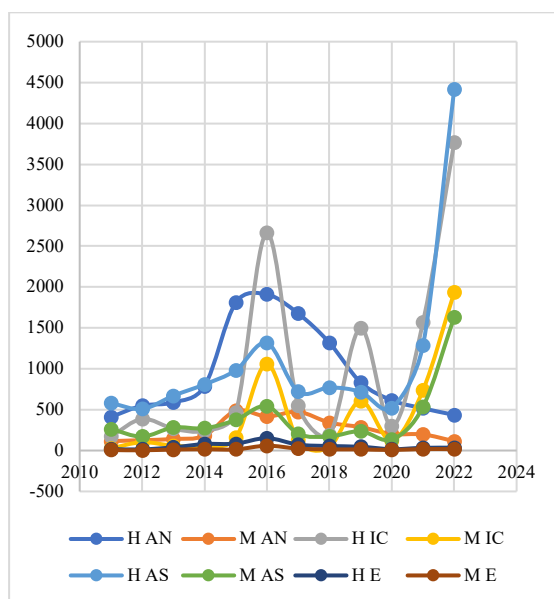
- The highest absolute number of returns of irregular migrants has been in Central America. With a peak in 2015 during the administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto, who implemented deterrence and deportation processes. It is noteworthy that since 2011 there have been more returns from men than from women. Subsequently, there was a decline that was reversed during the presidential term of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, pressured by the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump at the time. The drop in 2020 is partly explained by the Covid-19 pandemic, and then increased (Figure 7). In general, these ups and downs are due to the externalization of the restrictive U.S. policy towards our country, which has recently been directed towards other Latin American countries.
- The second group, due to its absolute importance, is made up of those who were returned to North America (AA), the Caribbean Islands (IC), South America (AS) and Europe (E). The majority of returnees were men and women from South America (AS) and men from the Caribbean Islands (IC) in 2022. However, in 2016 there was a point of greater return of male migrants from these places, who were joined by men from North America. This period coincides with the governments of Peña Nieto and López Obrador. On the other hand, the largest decrease in returns of this group of migrants in transit occurred in 2020 due to the pandemic (Figure 8).
- A third group refers to returnees, men and women, to countries in Asia (A), Oceania (O) and Africa (A). The returns of men and women from these groups in 2016 stand out, according to their regions of origin: Asia, Oceania and Africa. However, those from Asia are the most frequent, even during the pandemic (Figure 9).

Figure 7: Events of foreigners returned by the Mexican authority 2011-2022: Central America (AC) by sex



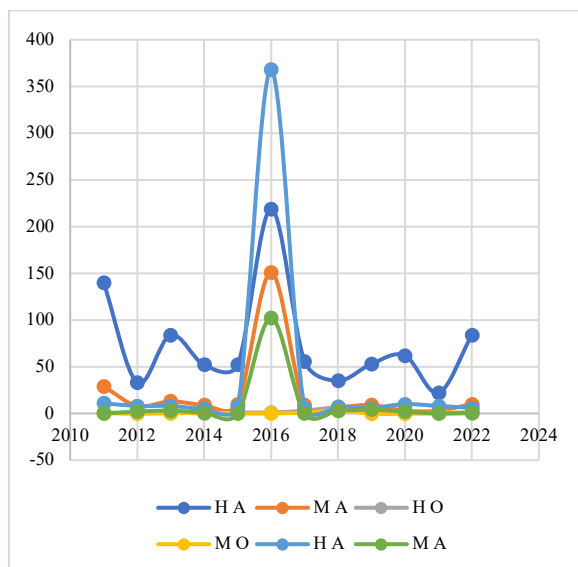
Source: Migration Policy Unit.

Figure 8: Foreigners' events returned by the Mexican authority 2011-2022: North America (AN), Caribbean Islands (IC), South America (AS) and Europe (E) by sex



Source: Migration Policy Unit.

Figure 9: Events of foreigners returned by the Mexican authority 2011-2022: from Asia (A), Oceania (O) and Africa (A) by sex



Source: Migration Policy Unit. Available in https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Sintesis_Grafica/?Sintesis=2022 and https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Sintesis_Grafica/?Sin-tesis=2023

FINAL COMMENTS

The thermometer of irregular migration is an indicator of the increase in transit migration through Mexico and in our region. The greater presence of irregular migration from Central America (78 percent between 2011 and 2022), South America (ten percent) and the Caribbean Islands (seven percent in that period) stands out, in addition to other nationalities that, together, according to the data reviewed here, come from 170 countries. In the State of Mexico, the origin of 30 countries was reported.

In general terms, the data indicate that 3.5 percent of irregular migration passes through the State of Mexico. In addition, it has been highlighted that female migration has played a crucial role in this new face of migration, with fluctuations according to the countries of origin and systemic crisis derived from the Covid-19 pandemic or restrictive policy. However, the national average exceeds 20 percent and the percentage of migration that the State of Mexico goes through is similar to this figure in 2022.

Despite its descriptive nature, we consider that it is a starting point to address the articulation in the interpretation between the demographic and

the regulation of migration in flow. Both the Mexican constitution and the population and migration law privilege human rights. However, in practice, the application of the law and its regulations are based on unconstitutionality, based on national sovereignty and the externalization of U.S. restrictive policy. This situation makes it necessary to recognize the need to review and create state and municipal laws with a focus on human rights that in their application is to the letter and not to the interpretation of the law.

This is because in the State of Mexico, only emigration that originates in its municipalities is considered in the State Development Plans. The issue of irregular migration in transit or flow through our state has not yet been addressed.

One of the most important challenges in obtaining a good diagnosis of irregular migration is for government institutions to implement instruments and methods for its identification. This, with the support of academic institutions, to generate information compatible with international criteria and thus be useful for the formulation of public policies. Policies that are inclusive for all irregular migrants seeking a permanent stay in the country or in the State of Mexico.

Based on the information presented, it can be argued that the State of Mexico has been and continues to be a starting point for irregular migrants to reach the United States. In addition, it works as a filter since many manage to stay or seek to settle in the country or in the entity. In some municipalities of the State of Mexico, their presence in neighborhoods is evident when renting homes for their stay in municipalities near the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City and Toluca. However, the presence of irregular migration in municipalities in the north and northeast of the state of Mexico is striking. The cases of Atlacomulco, Ixtlahuaca and Jilotepec stand out.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND HEMEROGRAPHY

Alvarado, Marcos, 2023, *Entendiendo la migración irregular: un fenómeno complejo y sus múltiples dimensiones*, disponible en <https://situam.org.mx/emigrar/que-es-la-migracion-irregular.html>

Barbero, Iker, 2024, *La orden de devolución para inmigrantes irregulares: una sanción con múltiples significados sociales*, disponible en <https://theconversation.com/la-orden-de-devolucion-para-inmigrantes-irregulares-una-sancion-con-multiples-significados-sociales-220491>

Bustamante, Jorge A., 2010, *Emigración indocumentada a los Estados Unidos*, disponible en <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv233mhm.4>

Castilla Juárez, Karlos A., 2014, *Ley de Migración mexicana: algunas de sus in-constitucionalidades*, disponible en https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-75992014000200006

Castles, Stephen, 2010, *Migración irregular: causas, tipos y dimensiones regionales*, disponible en <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/myd/v8n15/v8n15a2.pdf>

Castor Roca, Antonio Ricardo, s/f, *Expulsiones: migraciones y refugio desde las categorías de Saskia Sassen. Una visión crítica*, disponible en https://dspace.uib.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11201/153893/Castor_Roca_AntonioRicardo.pdf?sequence=1

El Pulso del Estado de México, 2023, *Miles de haitianos arriban al oriente del Edomex*, https://elpulsoedomex.com.mx/miles-de-haitianos-arriban-al-oriente-del-edomex/#google_vignette

GOB, 2011, *Ley de Migración*, disponible en https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/656786/LMigra_20_05_21.pdf

GOB, 2024, *Comunicado No. 108*, disponible en <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-reprueba-la-entrada-en-vigor-de-la-ley-antiinmigrante-sb4-en-texas?state=published#:~:text=El%20Gobierno%20de%20M%C3%A9xico%2C%20a%20trav%C3%A9s%20de%20la,contra%20los%20derechos%20humanos%20de%20la%20comunidad%20migrante.>

González Fagoaga, Jesús Eduardo, 2010, *La vulnerabilidad de los grupos migrantes en México*, disponible en https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1665-89062010000100010

Martínez, Alonso, 2024, *Ley SB4 de Texas: lo que hay que saber de la 'ley antimigrante'*, disponible en <https://elpais.com/america/actualidad/2024-03-21/ley-sb4-de-texas-lo-que-hay-que-saber-de-la-ley-antimigrante.html>

Morales Sánchez, Julieta, s/f, *Despenalización de la migración irregular en México: Análisis y perspectiva de la Reforma a la Ley de Población de 21 de julio de 2008*, disponible en <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/6/2993/10.pdf>

Morales Vega, Luisa Gabriela, 2012, *Categorías migratorias en México. Análisis a la Ley de Migración*, disponible en https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-46542012000100025#:~:text=A1%20amparo%20de%20este%20prop%C3%B3sito%20del%20Estado%20mexicano,se%20ha%20dado%20en%20llamar%20ilegal%20o%20indocumentado

Oceguera Avalos, Angélica y Aguilar Cisneros, Kenia Yasbeth, 2020, *El trabajador migrante en situación irregular: marco normativo y políticas públicas*, disponible en https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-21472020000100161

OIM, 2018, *Global migration indicators 2018*, disponible en https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/global_migration_indicators_2018.pdf

OIM, 2022, "Perfil migratorio de México", en *Boletín anual 2022*, disponible en <https://mexico.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11686/files/documents/2023-03/Per->

fil%20Migratorio-%20Boletin%20Anual%202022%20%283%29.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text

Olivares, Emir y Sánchez, Arturo, 2023, *Migración negará permisos de tránsito a migrantes*, disponible en <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2023/05/12/politica/migracion-negara-permisos-de-transito-a-migrantes/>

Perales Garza, Yadira, Claudia, 2013, *Ley de migración: “reforma a cuentagotas”*, disponible en <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/bmdc/v46n137/v46n137a10.pdf>

Philip M. Hauser y Dudley Duncan, Otis, 1975, *El estudio de la población* (Volumen 3), disponible en <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/7ca82113-9ed6-49b7-8bcf-1a483109e2c5/content>

Sassen, Saskia, 2007, *Una sociología de la globalización*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Kat, Resumen en https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0250-71612008000200008.

Velasco Ortiz, Laura, 2021, *Jorge A. Bustamante, su contribución a los estudios sobre migraciones y frontera*, disponible en <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/migra/v12/2594-0279-migra-12-rmiv1i12600.pdf>

AUTHOR’S SUMMARY CV

Juan Gabino González Becerril

Master’s Degree in Population Studies from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. He is a full-time professor-researcher at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the Population of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (CIEAP/UAEM) and is director of the journal *Papeles de Población* edited by the same institution.

E-mail: gonzalezg2012@hotmail.com

ORCID Record: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4274-4203>