

# MEMO

## Complex Migration Flows and Multiple Drivers in Comparative Perspective

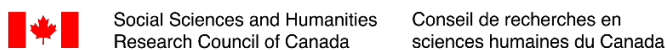


### Background country report on Honduras within the migration system of the Americas

*The MEMO research partnership is led by:*



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## The MEMO Research Project

MEMO is a **multidisciplinary project** to develop a socio-ecological system framework that integrates drivers (main contextual factors) and individual determinants of migration; its primary objectives are:

To map the links between internal, intra-regional and intercontinental migration along complex population dynamics and migration systems;

- To describe and interpret the interplay among migration drivers (environmental conditions, demographic and health factors, economic development dynamics, socio-political issues), accounting for cultural and emotional processes that can shape individual decisions to migrate;
- To provide evidence to inform policy and support an efficient and rights-based governance of international migration.

Differences and analogies of migration drivers and determinants are comparatively established across (and within) the following regional migration systems:

- **The Americas** – focusing on migration flows from the northern countries of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) to Mexico and further North to the USA and Canada.
- **West Africa** – focusing on Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Ivory Coast and their inter-related flows to each other, to neighbouring countries in West Africa and towards Europe and Canada.
- **South Asia** – focusing on Nepal and Bangladesh, internal and cross border flows within South Asia, as well as to Malaysia and Canada. The migration system and population dynamics are described and modelled to capture the plurality of (multi-directional) population flows.

MEMO will contribute innovative analytical tools to support a rights-based governance of migration and related drivers.

## Research partner organizations



# **Background country report on Honduras within the migration system of the Americas**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Honduras' profile in the global migration system has changed dramatically in the last thirty years. From being a country of destination until 1990, by 1995 Honduras had turned into a country of origin of ever-growing migrant flows directed, mainly to the United States. In recent years, however, out migration from Honduras has sought new destinations, indicating a change in the traditional patterns of international mobility from the country. Moreover, in the last decade, Honduras has become a hub for migrants in transit from the Caribbean and South America, as well as for migrants from Africa and Asia, aiming to reach the United States. These developments deserve to be carefully examined, as they might be indicative not only of changes in Honduras' migration dynamics, but of deeper transformations in the global migration system.

In this report, we look at migration dynamics in Honduras and their recent transformation. We focus on internal, intra-regional and intercontinental migration dynamics, and review the literature that explores decision-making for migration, before identifying the topics we believe should be part of a future research agenda. Our aim is to provide a general panorama of what is known about Honduras' role in the regional (Americas) and global migration systems – and the still open questions that the MEMO project ought to answer.

As a first step in this direction, it is necessary to provide a brief characterization of Honduras and its main socio-economic and demographic indicators. Honduras is located in the north of Central America, at latitude 15°11'60" N and longitude 86°14.514' W (Geodata, 2023). It is bordered by the Caribbean Sea or the Antilles to the north, Nicaragua to the southeast, the Gulf of Fonseca and the Pacific Ocean to the south, the Republic of El Salvador to the southwest, and Guatemala to the west.

## Map 1. Honduras and its borders



Source: CentroGeo's elaboration (Gabriela Quiroz Cázares) on DIVA-GIS and CentroGeo data

In 2021, the population living in Honduras was 10,278,345, of which 50.5% were men and 49.5% were women (World Bank, 2023). Honduras' population is predominantly young: 31% is 14 years old or younger, 65% is between 15 and 64 years old and only 4% of the total population is over 65 years of age. With 90 inhabitants per square kilometre, Honduras is one of the most densely populated countries in the Americas.

The population of Honduras is multi-ethnic. Mestizos are the majority group, but there are also six Indigenous peoples: Lenca, Miskito, Tolupan, Chortí, Pech, Tawahka and English-speaking Garífuna and Afro-descendants. While Spanish is the country's official language, both Indigenous and Afro-descendant languages are also spoken (FAO-Honduras, 2023). The territory of Honduras is divided into 18 departments and 298 municipalities (MAEC, 2023). By 2021, 41% of the total population was considered rural and 59% urban (MAEC, 2023).

Regarding the economy, in 2021 Honduras' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was USD 28,490 million, and the GDP per capita was USD 2,771.7, almost USD 10,000 less than the world average of USD 12,236 (World Bank, 2023). In turn, the average monthly income was USD 245.90 in rural zones and USD 313.61 in urban areas. With a Human Development Index of 0.621 in 2021, Honduras ranked 137 out of a total of 191 countries (UNDP, 2022).

**Table 1. Honduras: Selected economic and socio-demographic indicators, 2021**

Total population*	10,278,345 people
Male / Female*	50.5% / 49.5%
Age structure*	Under 15 years old: 31% 15-64 years old: 65% 65 years old and over: 4%
Population density*	90 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
Rural / urban**	41% / 59%
Working age population**	65%
Economically Active population**	41% of the working age population
Gross Domestic Product*	USD 28,490 million
Gross Domestic Product per capita*	USD 2,772.7
Average monthly income*	USD 245.90 (rural) / US\$ 313.61 (urban)
Human Development Index***	0.621

Source: Authors' elaboration on data from \*The World Bank (2023), \*\*MAEC (2023), \*\*\*UNDP (2022)

Globally, Honduras is one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change and natural disasters (Abeldaño, 2022; Eckstein et al., 2018). According to the World Food Program, 58% of Honduras' total territory – about 146 municipalities from thirteen departments – (Reichman, 2022; WFP, 2017) lies within the Dry Corridor (*Corredor Seco*), a geographical area that is 1,600 kilometres long and 100-400 kilometres wide, covering parts of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua (see Map 1). The Dry Corridor is characterized by long periods of drought, followed by intense rains (FAO, 2016). Furthermore, hurricanes and tropical storms strike the country recurrently, resulting in loss of lives, infrastructure and livelihoods, as well as in human displacement.

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch, one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes on record, ravaged Honduras and left a balance of over 1,500,000 victims, including 5,700 fatalities, 8,000 missing and 12,200 wounded persons in Honduras alone (PAHO, n.d.). In addition to its enormous human cost, Mitch also sowed unprecedented physical destruction. It is estimated that 10% of Hondurans lost their homes, 20% of the schools were destroyed, and 70% of the country's agricultural production was lost to the hurricane (Alaniz, 2017; Christian Aid, 2019; Quijada and Sierra, 2018). Twenty-two years later, in 2020, consecutive hurricanes Eta and Iota devastated Central America again, with Honduras taking, once more, the brunt of the destruction (IDB, 2021).

Honduras is also one of the countries in the American continent most affected by the violence of criminal gangs and transnational organized crime. Widespread insecurity has been traditionally associated with the weak institutional framework of the justice system, the growing incidence of corruption and, more generally, the absence of the rule of law (Alvarado, 2021; Ruiz, 2021; Wolf, 2020). The *maras* – youth street gangs originally formed in Los Angeles and reproduced in Central America after the wave of deportations that followed the 1996 adoption of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in the United States – extort, kidnap, rape, contract-kill and, more generally, terrorize the urban population, especially the young, often leading to the displacement of both individuals and families (ECAP, 2019).

The 2009 U.S.-backed *coup d'état* against democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya further compounded Honduras' already fragile governance and plunged the country into political and economic instability, and unprecedented violence (Dodd et al., 2019; Reichman, 2022). The succeeding governments of Porfirio Lobo (2010-2014) and Juan Orlando Hernández (2014-2018, 2018-2022) did little to bring back stability. Much to the contrary, both politicians have been denounced for their links to drug-trafficking groups and, in 2022, shortly after leaving office, former president Hernández was in fact extradited to the United States to face charges of drug trafficking and money laundering (BBC, 2022; Reuters, 2021).

Until the 1990s, rather than a country of origin, Honduras was a destination country, mainly for intraregional migration flows. However, the economic impact of the neoliberal economic policies adopted throughout the region in the 1990s, along with the economic and social stresses following the effects of Hurricane Mitch, transformed the prevailing migration dynamics and triggered hitherto unseen flows of out migration. Since the early 2010s, growing numbers of unaccompanied boys, girls and adolescents have been leaving their communities to join relatives or acquaintances in the United States. In addition to this change in the migrants' profile, there have been important transformations in the modus operandi of transnational migration from Honduras. In 2018, the first U.S-bound massive migrant caravans were organized in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and left from that city.

Since 2021, external factors, among which U.S. migration policy is paramount, have triggered new flows of transit migration, both from within the region and from other continents. The new incoming flows of migrants, especially from Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Haiti, have become

a feature of migration dynamics in Honduras and provide evidence of the changing nature of the country's role in the regional migration system.

While undoubtedly a part of the Mesoamerican migration system (Durand, 2016), Honduras is a latecomer to the northbound migration dynamics that characterizes it. Because of its internal social, economic and political features, as well as its geographic location on both the Caribbean and the land route from South America to Mexico and the United States, Honduras plays an emerging, constantly evolving and increasingly important role. Researching and understanding this role is essential to widen our understanding of the global migration system as a whole and the transformations it has undergone since the early 2000s.

## 2.0 Migration dynamics

Yolanda González Cerdeira et al. (2020) identified four major migration cycles in Honduras, all of them closely linked to the country's economic and development models. The first cycle took place from 1890s to the 1950s and was driven by the banana plantation economy prevalent in the context of the primary-export development model. During this first cycle, there were two main migration streams. On the one hand, internal migrants from all over the country, and especially from Olancho, flocked to the northern departments to work in the banana plantations (FONAMIH, 2007, p. 33). On the other hand, an array of foreign nationals arrived in Honduras attracted by the booming banana and mining industries. American, German, Italian, French, English and Spanish citizens arrived in Honduras, as did Arab, Jewish and Chinese immigrants who settled mainly on the Caribbean coast, in Tegucigalpa, and in the south of the country (Flores Pineda and Amaya Oviedo, 2020).

In addition to extracontinental immigrants, the banana and mining economy attracted workers from other countries in the region. Guatemalans and Afro-descendant people from Jamaica, Belize and Great Cayman settled in cities such as Puerto Cortés, Lima, Tela and La Ceiba (FONAMIH, 2007, p. 28). The most important migrant inflow, however, was composed of the Salvadoran citizens, who arrived in Honduras starting in the early 1920s to work, first, for the banana companies of the northern coast, and later settled in the central and eastern valleys, such as Comayagua and Olancho, in search of jobs and arable land. It is estimated that by 1960, around 300,000 Salvadorans lived in Honduras (FONAMIH, 2007, p. 26).

Although during the first cycle out migration was not a dominant trend, in the 1930s there was an international migration wave from Honduras, composed of Garífuna population with the destination of New Orleans, the port of entry for banana exports from Honduras and the seat of the most important U.S. banana producing companies. Ever since that first stream in the 1930s, New Orleans has been home to the oldest and most important Honduran diaspora in the United States (FONAMIH, 2007, p. 28; Ortega, 2016, p. 12).



The second migration cycle spanned roughly from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s and was marked by the shift from an agro-export economy to the import-substitution development model. This economic transformation brought about new internal migration flows, as peasants and rural labourers moved to Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and to a lesser extent, Choluteca, in search of jobs in the newly created industries.

The agrarian reform, enacted in 1969, triggered new migration flows. Internally, significant numbers of rural inhabitants from the south and the west moved to the north of the country in the hope of acquiring their own land (González Cerdeira et al., 2020). In turn, the large Salvadoran population living in Honduras was expelled by Oswaldo López Arellano's military government, on the grounds that the agrarian reform was to benefit solely Honduran citizens. This political act exacerbated the existing hostility between the two countries, and in July 1969, the Soccer War (*Guerra del Fútbol*) between Honduras and El Salvador broke out. According to Menjívar (2000), between 200,000 and 300,000 Salvadorans were repatriated from Honduras after the start of the war.

During the second migration cycle, both emigration and immigration became more prominent. For one thing, Honduran workers had been emigrating to the United States since the 1940s in response to the demand of labor created by WWII (Figueroa, 2017, p. 103). Additionally, the decline of the banana economy had brought about unemployment and uncertainty in the formerly buoyant towns of northern Honduras and entire families began to emigrate to the United States, especially to New York and – building upon the already existing migrant networks – New Orleans.

Meanwhile, the number of immigrants in Honduras also increased during this period. According to Sermeño Lima, between 1960 and 1990, the number of foreign citizens residing in Honduras rose by more than 400% (2018, p. 11). The largest rise took place in the 1980s as a result of the civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, which provoked large population displacements and waves of asylum seekers, many of whom found shelter in the no less than five refugee camps that existed in Honduras at the time (Reichman, 2022). Until the early 1990s, Honduras was, thus, a destination country for international migrants.

The trend changed during the third migration cycle (mid-1990s-2009), which is associated with the neoliberal economic model, the implementation of structural reforms that strongly limited the role of the state, and the extensive installation of maquilas in San Pedro Sula and its surroundings. The maquila industry consisted of largely duty-free and tariff-free factories for the labour-intensive production of goods for export and created a significant number of low-skill and precarious jobs. Although the maquila industry had begun operating in Honduras in the mid-1970s, it was really in the 1990s that it experienced a boom. By 2007, the maquila had become the main source of employment and foreign investment in the country (FONAMIH, 2007, p. 21 and 33).

The intensification of the maquila economy created new internal migration trends, as rural labourers from across the country were drawn to the Sula Valley, as well as to Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, and Choluteca, all of them cities where maquilas were booming. Furthermore, the maquila industry demanded, above all, female labour. According to data from the Honduras

Central Bank cited by Barahona (2005), in 1993, 76% of the total maquila workforce was composed of women, and seven out of ten women between the ages of 18 and 24 began their working life in the maquila industry. By necessity, this entailed massive female internal rural-urban migration. Later, however, and given the poor working conditions in the maquilas, female international migration, especially to the United States, began to increase, adding to the already existing flows of male migrants.

Following Hurricane Mitch in 1998, migration flows from Honduras to the U.S. rose significantly: 88% from 2000 to 2015, according to Figueroa (2017, p. 104). There were also important qualitative changes in the migrants' profile. Quijada and Sierra (2018) state that, before Mitch, 40% of the U.S.-bound Honduran population was rural; by 2006 the percentage of rural migrants had increased to 53%. The same data shows that migrants with only primary education increased by 9% and migrants coming from the lowest quintile rose from 6.7% to 8.9% (Quijada and Sierra, 2018, p. 2). Equally important, this U.S.-bound mobility further reinforced Hondurans' transnational migrant networks in the United States.

In response to the migrant streams from Honduras in the aftermath of Mitch, and acknowledging that it was impossible for those fleeing Hondurans to return safely, in 1999 the Clinton administration granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to approximately 75,000 Honduran citizens. Since then, the TPS has been extended consecutively until today, further strengthening the important Honduran diaspora in the U.S.

According to González Cerdeira et al. (2020), the fourth and current cycle of migration in Honduras began in 2009, with the *coup d'état* against President Manuel Zelaya, which was followed by the adoption of neoliberal economic policies and the intensification of extractive activities. This combination has led to environmental degradation and widespread violation of the human rights of indigenous peoples and environmental activists. While the evidence is not sufficiently conclusive to state that the coup itself triggered new out migration flows from Honduras, researchers have noted that the ensuing political upheaval, repression and corruption did so (see Reichman, 2022).

According to González Cerdeira et al., the current cycle has been “the most intense in terms of the number of people mobilized” (2020, p. 67). In addition to the rising numbers of migrants, female participation in migration flows from Honduras has continued to grow. Moreover, since the early 2010s, Honduran unaccompanied boys, girls, and adolescents began to migrate to the United States through Mexico. In 2014, thousands of them were detained at the southwestern U.S. border along with thousands of minors from Guatemala and El Salvador. This has come to be known as the “unaccompanied minors crisis”.

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During the current phase, other significant developments in international migration trends have taken place that closely involve Honduras. First, the migrant caravans – the massive northbound mobilization of, initially, Central American migrants and, later, migrants from all over the world – were first organized in San Pedro Sula, whence they departed for the first time in October 2018. This event inaugurated an era of massive mobilization of migrants, who sought protection from organized crime and abusive authorities, through the visibility afforded to them by traveling in large groups. In addition to being a new modality of transnational migration, the caravans showcased the consolidation of a trend in the migrants' profile (see Flores Pineda and Amaya Oviedo, 2020; Myrntinen, 2018), as significant numbers of unaccompanied boys, girls and adolescents, as well as entire family units, joined the caravans to reach the United States and request asylum there.

Policy responses to the caravans profoundly affected migrant flows in the region. With the Mexican government's acquiescence, in January 2019 the Trump administration implemented the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), a procedure whereby asylum-seekers from Central America who had entered the U.S. through its border with Mexico, were sent back to Mexico to wait for the evaluation of their case. Between January 2019 and August 2022, time during which the MPP were in place, over 70,000 Central American migrants were returned to Mexico (American Immigration Council, 2022). Furthermore, in order to curb migration in the countries of origin and transit, the Trump administration signed Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACA) with the Northern Central American governments. ACA agreements were in fact third safe country agreements. The U.S.-Honduras ACA was signed in September 2019 with the specific aim of limiting the northbound flow of Nicaraguan and Cuban migrants who had begun to arrive at the U.S. border in large numbers (Adams and Cancino, 2019; Harrington, 2020). Finally, in March 2022, amid the COVID-19 pandemic that affected mobility worldwide (see MacAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021), the Trump administration applied Title 42, a rarely invoked law that empowers U.S. federal authorities to prohibit migrants from entering the country if it is determined that doing so will contribute to the spread of infectious diseases. Title 42 involved immediate expulsion; however, it did not prevent migrants from attempting to re-enter several times. This is reflected in the number of encounters and expulsions by the U.S. Border Patrol. According to Gramlich (2022), 14% of the 1.8 million expulsions that took place under Title 42 between April 2020 and April 2022 were Honduran citizens.

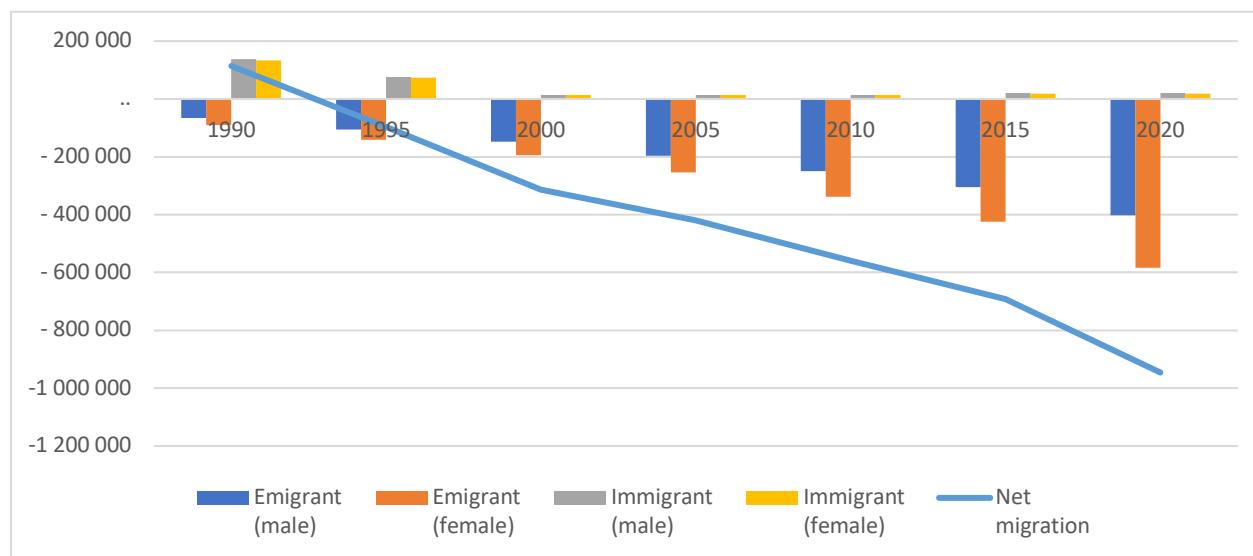
Although during his campaign for the presidency, Joe Biden promised to reverse many of the previous administration's migration policies, a mixture of agenda priorities and legal challenges resulted in the continuation of both the MPP and Title 42 well into the first half of his tenure. In May 2023, following the end of the sanitary emergency, Title 42 was lifted and unauthorized migration continued to be addressed under Title 8, the legal framework in operation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Title 8, migrants who claim they need international protection are entitled to, at least, an initial interview. Nonetheless, if they are not deemed eligible for asylum, they might be deported and banned for five years, with unlawful re-entry attempts carrying legal sanctions.

Important exceptions were made to the application of these norms that signal the political use of migration policy. For instance, the MPP did not apply to citizens from Venezuela, Nicaragua or Cuba and, until October 2022, migrants from these countries were not treated under Title 42 either, as they were deemed legitimate asylum-seekers, in contrast to Central American migrants whose governments stand in a less antagonistic relationship with the U.S. When Title 42 was finally expanded in early 2023 to expel Venezuelan, Cuban, Nicaraguan and Haitian migrants, special parole procedures were also implemented to provide legal migration pathways for these nationalities. These policy decisions were mirrored by increasing flows of citizens from these countries through Honduras.

## 2.1 Migrant stock

Until the 1990s, net migration in Honduras was positive, mainly because of the large numbers of migrants and refugees from other Central American countries that sought shelter there. This trend changed abruptly in the early 1990s, when the peace processes throughout the region prompted the return of several tens of thousands of Salvadoran and Nicaraguan refugees and self-exiles to their countries of origin, turning Honduras into a negative net migration country by 1995. Since 1995, emigration from Honduras has increased continuously. Between 1995 and 2000 it grew by more than 300% and it continued increasing in the following years. By 2020, 945,882 emigrants were recorded, almost ten times as many as those registered in 1995. As Figure 1 shows, throughout the 1990-2020 period, women emigrated from Honduras in greater numbers than men, accounting for 56% to 59% of the total out migration in this 30-year time span.

**Figure 1. Honduras net migration 1990-2020**



Source: Authors' elaboration on UNDESA data

The immigrant population in Honduras comes mainly from El Salvador and Nicaragua, followed by the US, Mexico and Guatemala. Today the number of Nicaraguans and Salvadorans is but a fraction of the numbers recorded until the mid-90s; both nationalities, however, continue to make up the largest groups of immigrants in Honduras, indicating a mainly regional migration dynamic.

**Table 2. Migration to Honduras: Five top countries of origin, 1990-2020**

Country of origin	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nicaragua	142 802	74 273	5 768	5 649	5 530	7 767	7 943
El Salvador	114 810	60 692	6 574	6 439	6 303	8 853	9 071
Guatemala	3 250	3 336	3 421	3 351	3 280	4 607	4 711
United States of America	2 692	3 877	5 061	4 946	4 851	6 799	6 954
Mexico	795	980	1 164	1 140	1 116	1 567	1 602

Source: Authors' elaboration on UNDESA data

For its part, the proportion of Hondurans living outside the country has increased since 1990. In that year, it was 3.09%; by 2020 it had tripled, and amounted to 9.73% of the total population. Throughout the 1990-2020 period, the main country of destination for migrants from Honduras was the United States. According to UNDESA (2020), in 2020, 7.64% of Honduras' total population lived in the U.S. This figure includes 57,000 beneficiaries of the Temporary Protected Status (Warren and Kerwin, 2017) and 14,300 active recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program created in 2012 during the Obama administration that protected from deportation several thousands of noncitizens, mostly from Mexico and Central America, who had arrived in the U.S. when they were children (USCIS, 2022).

While the United States is the undisputed top country of destination of Honduran migrant population, the second place on the list has been taken by different countries throughout the 1990-2020 period. Until 1995, El Salvador was the second most frequent country, followed by Nicaragua. Since 2000, both Nicaragua and El Salvador have hosted a relatively stable number of Honduran migrants, 13% to 14% of Honduras' total migrant population in each case. But in 2010, Spain became the second most frequent country of destination, indicating a major shift from the prevailing intraregional migration pattern to an increasingly important intercontinental migration. Even if the numbers are much smaller compared to the U.S., over the last three decades, the Honduran population in Spain grew at an impressive pace: by 310% between 2005 and 2010, and by a further 344% between 2010 and 2015. In 2020, with a total of almost 100,000 people, the number of Hondurans in Spain was 85 times higher than the number recorded in 1990, representing nearly 1% of Honduras total population. For its part, Mexico is now the third most frequent hosting country, surpassing, since 2015, both El Salvador and Nicaragua. This further confirms the change from mostly short-distance to international migration trajectories.

**Table 3. Honduran population living abroad. Top five hosting countries, 1990-2020**

Country of destination	1990		1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020	
Total Population	5 053 000	%	5 813 000	%	6 657 000	%	7 565 000	%	8 451 000	%	9 295 000	%	10 122 000	%
United States of America	108 923	2.16	198 509	3.41	290 034	4.36	383 822	5.07	491 834	5.82	607 457	6.54	773 045	7.64
Spain	1 169	0.02	1 515	0.03	2 515	0.04	7 820	0.10	26 902	0.32	41 333	0.44	99 418	0.98
Mexico	1990	0.04	3031	0.05	4 203	0.06	6 704	0.09	9 982	0.12	14 623	0.16	38 764	0.38
Nicaragua	10 105	0.20	9 473	0.16	10 017	0.15	10 745	0.14	11,534	0.14	12,439	0.13	13 110	0.13
El Salvador	15,774	0.31	12,650	0.22	9525	0.14	10 362	0.14	11 198	0.13	11 676	0.13	11 878	0.12
Other	18 418	0.36	21,397	0.37	25 809	0.39	29 429	0.39	36 053	0.43	42 327	0.46	48 862	0.48
Total emigrant population	156 379	3.09	246 575	4.24	342 103	5.14	448 882	5.93	587 503	6.95	729 855	7.85	985 077	9.73

Source: Authors' elaboration on UNDESA data

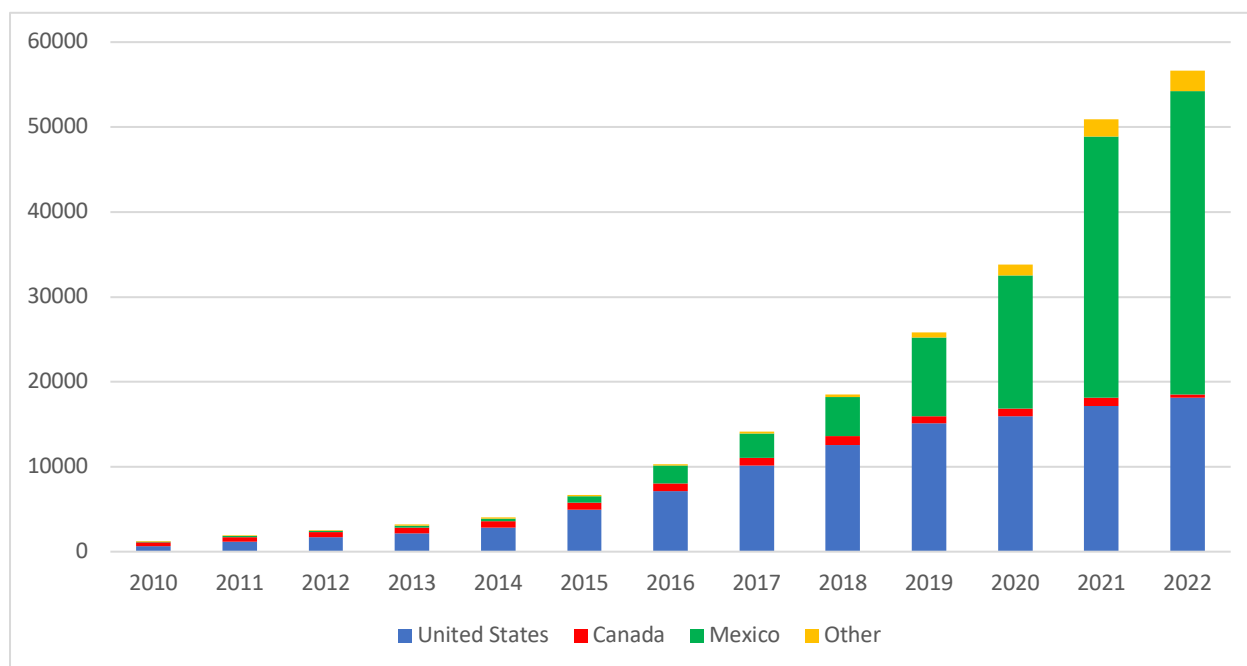
## 2.2 Asylum

In recent years, asylum applications from Honduran citizens have increased exponentially for two main reasons (see Figure 2). First, especially since the 2009 coup, the country's political, economic, and social conditions have deteriorated significantly, and the curtailing of social and political rights is driving the vulnerable population to look for international protection beyond Honduras' borders (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Second, legal migration pathways have become so limited, that requesting asylum on the grounds of criminal violence, the effects of climate change, and political persecution, has become a migration strategy, even if there is no guarantee that applicants will be granted international protection.

Until 2013, the main recipient countries of refugees from Honduras were the United States, Canada, and Mexico, in that order, and the number of Honduran refugees was under 3,000 globally, with the number of asylum applications being but a fraction of the number of actual refugees. In 2013, however, interesting trends began to emerge, signaling fundamental changes in Hondurans' migration patterns and strategies. First, since 2013, asylum applications to the U.S. began to increase sharply. That year there were twice as many asylum applications as there were refugees in the United States. By 2014 there were three times as many asylum applications, and their number continued rising. In 2020, the U.S. government received 101,617 asylum applications from Honduras, almost six times the number of Honduran refugees in that country (15,940).

Secondly, Mexico acquired greater importance as a country of asylum. Between 2014 and 2015 asylum applications from Honduran citizens increased 2.5 times, and between 2015 and 2016 they tripled. In 2016, Mexico became the country with the second largest number of Honduran refugees, leaving Canada in the third place. This trend continued in the following years. In 2021, with 30,787 Honduran refugees, Mexico became the top country of asylum, followed by the U.S. with 17,149. In 2022 the trend was repeated.

Finally, European countries, such as Italy and Spain, began to appear as new destinations for Honduran asylum seekers and they have now displaced Canada as one of the top three countries of asylum. In 2019, Spain received 9,085 asylum requests from Honduran citizens, the third highest number after the U.S. and Mexico. By 2020, with 974 refugees and 8,685 asylum applications, Spain had become the third top country of destination for Honduran refugees and asylum seekers.

**Figure 2. Refugees from Honduras by country of destination, 2010-2022**

Source: Authors' elaboration on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data

As for asylum seekers and refugees in Honduras, the numbers are negligible: less than 100 applications per year, with Cuba as country of origin in the first place between 2000 and 2006, and Nicaragua occupying the top post since 2018 to date. While it could be argued that the number of Nicaraguan refugees admitted since 2019 is a result of the Asylum and Cooperation Agreement (ACA) signed with the United States in that year, the fact that the number of Nicaraguan refugees did not drop dramatically after the Biden administration terminated the ACA in 2021 suggests that asylum-seeker flows from Nicaragua have had, from the outset, their own internal logic and are independent of the ACA.

### 3.0 Internal and cross-border migration

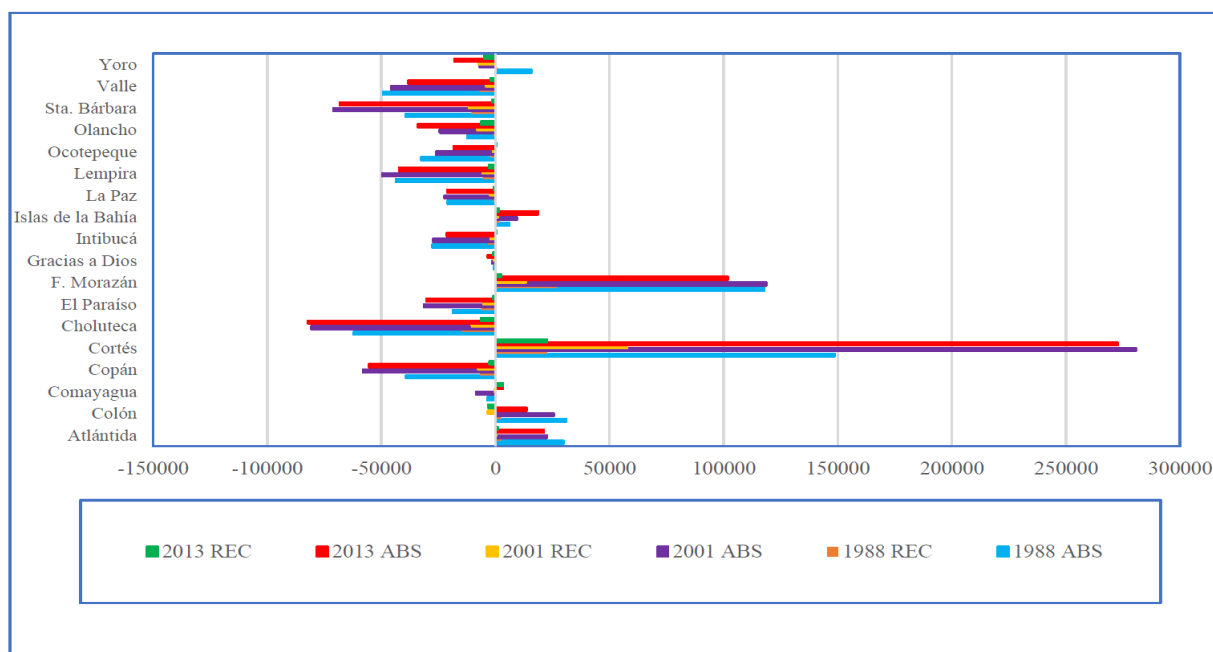
Internal migration dynamics in Honduras have continued to evolve alongside the external ones. The drive for urbanization, which began in the 1950s, and was further accelerated by the inception of the maquila industry in the 1970s, is now the dominant trend. According to Elsa Lily Caballero, from 1988 to 2007, 22.46% of the total population of Honduras migrated internally, mainly to major and mid-sized cities (cited in FONAMIH, 2007, p. 34). During that period, internal migration took three distinct forms: 1) migration from the south and the southwest to the country's main cities, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula; 2) permanent migration to the municipalities of Choloma and Cortés after the installation of the maquilas; and 3) the migration of temporary extra-regional agricultural labourers to the municipalities of Villanueva and Cortés (Caballero, cited in FONAMIH,



2007, p. 53-54). Between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s, municipalities such as Choloma and Villanueva in the department of Cortés witnessed dramatic population increases driven by the maquila attraction force. From 56,000 inhabitants in 1990, Villanueva’s population grew to 90,000 in 2007; similarly, Choloma’s population grew from 75,000 in 1993 to 150,000 in 2007 (FONAMIH 2007, p.48-49). The trend continues today (Flores Fonseca, 2019, p. 75).

In a recent study, Manuel A. Flores Fonseca (2020), found that migration within Honduras is mainly directed to urban settlements. According to Flores Fonseca, 75% to 78% of the internal migration flows involve at least one city, whereas only between 22% to 25% of this mobility is rural-rural. Moreover, Honduras’ two largest cities, Tegucigalpa (and its surrounding Central District) and San Pedro Sula, continue to attract most of the internal migrants, followed by the maquila municipalities of Choloma and Villanueva and intermediate cities such as La Ceiba, El Progreso, Siguatepeque, Comayagua, Danlí, Olanchito, Santa Rosa de Copán, Tocoa and San Manuel. In Flores Fonseca’s words, the cities of San Pedro Sula, in the department of Cortés, and Tegucigalpa/Central District, in the department of Francisco Morazán, “make up an attraction migration system” (“*un sistema migratorio de atracción*”) in themselves (2020, p. 18), where mobility between them produces other urban-urban-flows. Among these flows, Flores Fonseca highlights several: San Pedro Sula to Villanueva and San Manuel; La Ceiba and El Progreso to San Pedro Sula; and, finally, Choluteca, Danlí and Juticalpa to the Central District. Large and medium-sized cities appear to be the main places not only of destination of recent internal migration flows in Honduras, but also of origin of such flows. As Flores Fonseca observes, this has resulted in negative net migration figures in most of Honduras’ large and medium-sized cities.

**Figure 3. Honduras. Recent and absolute migration at departmental level, 1988-2013**



Source: Flores Fonseca, 2019, p. 68. Reproduction with the permission of *Revista Economía y Administración (E&A)*.

## 3.1 Climate-related migration

Daniel R. Reichman (2022) claims that “as recently as 2008, climate change simply did not play an important part in the discourse around the causes of Central American migration” (p. 91). That began to change in 2009, when the term “Dry Corridor” first appeared in mainstream media after severe droughts affected broad parts of northern Central America.

Today, experts refer to the Dry Corridor as a recognizable territory characterized by alternating droughts and profuse rainfall. Honduras’ departments of Choluteca, Valle, Intibucá, Ocotepeque, Lempira, La Paz, Copán, and El Paraíso, accounting for approximately 58% of the entire territory, lie within the Dry Corridor (Reichman, 2022) and are susceptible to its climatic conditions, which have become more acute in recent years.

In addition, Honduras is one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of natural disasters. In 2014, Wrathall et al. remarked that “named tropical storms ha[d] made landfall in northern Honduras in twelve of the [previous] fourteen years” (2014, p. 294). In fact, since 1998 Honduras has been struck by hurricanes Mitch (1998), Katrina (1999), Michelle (2001), Beta (2005), Gamma (2005), Stan (2005), Agatha (2010), Tropical Storm 12E (2011), Eta (2020) and Iota (2020). As mentioned in the introduction, the most devastating of these events was, without a doubt, Hurricane Mitch, which left over 5,000 fatalities and 285,000 homeless people, in addition to impacting 90% of the territory. The extent of the destruction was such, that, according to experts, Mitch caused a ten year-setback in Honduras’ development (ISDR, 2007).

Although less devastating than Mitch, the subsequent hurricanes and storms have also sowed widespread destruction and made living conditions harder throughout the years: permanent flooding and irreversible land erosion now affect many villages on the coast, rendering them uninhabitable (Wrathall et al., 2014, p. 294) and provoking population displacements. Yet, while there is no doubt climate events impact both internal and external mobility patterns in Honduras, the exact nature of the relationship is more difficult to ascertain.

In Reichman’s view, it is important to differentiate, as Michael Clemens (2017; 2021) suggests, between migration “long waves” and “short spikes.” Long waves are decades-long mobility patterns that “generally arise not from poverty but rather from growing wealth” (Clemens, 2021). In this type of migration, economic gains facilitate further mobility of family and friends, who are supported by “successful migrants”. By contrast, “short spike” migration is triggered by crises “such as crime waves, political upheaval or extreme weather events, which force people to flee both direct threats to their lives and indirect threats to their livelihoods” (Reichman, 2022, p. 91). As Reichman states, climate-induced migration can be placed in both categories.

Other authors have focused on the differentiated effects of slow-onset and sudden-impact disasters on migration patterns in Honduras and, more generally, in Northern Central America. While cautioning against overgeneralization, Riosmena (2023) points out that slow-onset events, like extended droughts, tend to be associated with internal migration, whereas sudden impact

disasters, such as hurricanes, tend to generate international mobility. In this vein, Escribano (2021) highlights the correlation between the impact of the 2020 hurricanes Eta and Iota and increased U.S.-bound migration. The fact the U.S. government extended the TPS for Honduran citizens on the grounds that it was impossible for them to return to their home country in the aftermath of the disasters is, in Escribano's (2021, p. 6) view, an admission, in the way of policy, of the link between climate events and international migration.

For its part, Bermeo and Leblang's (2021) research on the relationship between climate change, violence, and migration in Honduras arrives at a conclusion that might run against the notion that drought (a slow-onset event) causes internal, short-distance migration. Rather, their findings show a strong correlation between rainfall decrease in specific Honduran departments and apprehensions of family units from those departments at the southwest U.S border. This link appears to be further strengthened by violence, as higher homicide rates increase the association between rainfall deviation and family unit apprehensions.

Nevertheless, all authors agree on one point. The effects of environmental conditions/events are, first, differentiated and, second, they exacerbate already existing structural inequalities. For instance, Wrathall (2012) and Wrathall et al.'s (2014) study on the impact of environmental stress on the Garifuna villages of northern Honduras shows that, although hurricanes and tropical storms have strongly affected the livelihoods of the rural population in northern Honduras, leading to significant population displacements, they have not affected everyone in the same way. Moreover, migration was a strategy among those "with suitable alternatives," while those with "diminishing prospects" tended to stay behind (Wrathall et al., 2014, p. 297). Hence, not only was migration a product of inequality, but it also reinforced inequitable socio-economic structures.

In turn, drawing on Durham's work on the Soccer War (1979), Reichman (2022) highlights the impacts of the socio-economic changes brought about by expanding coffee agriculture in the Dry Corridor to explain climate-related migration from that region. He stresses that coffee agriculture, which dramatically expanded in the Dry Corridor between 2010 and 2020, produced changes in land-tenure regimes as well as relative prosperity, and therefore, long-wave migration to the United States. On the other hand, those people who have been excluded from the benefits of coffee agriculture are less well equipped to cope with the effects of environmental phenomena and are strongly affected by sudden-impact events, adapting to them through a variety of strategies, one of which is migration.

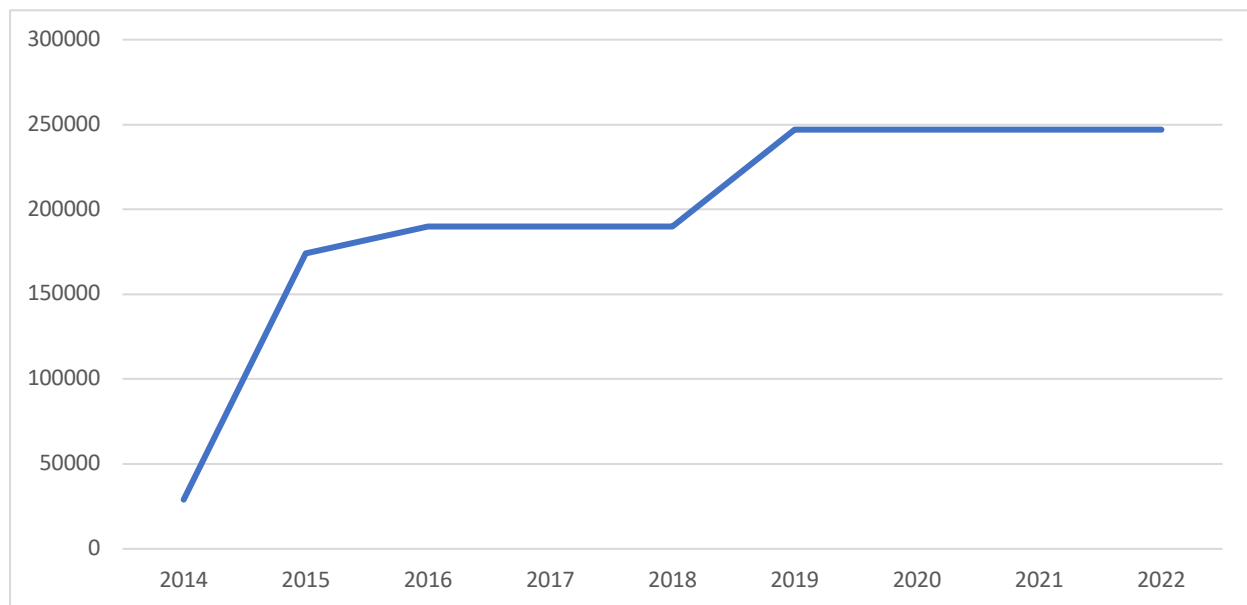
All things considered, it is clear that climate events aggravate the factors that explain and determine migratory movements in and from Honduras, and in so doing they accentuate the gaps in economic and social development within and between countries and regions (OIM, 1999). Poverty, lack of access to infrastructure and basic services, food insecurity, lack of access to land and to government support, as well as exposure to violence affect the resilience of communities and their ability to cope with climate events (Dodd et al., 2019; Escribano, 2021). Further

examination of how these factors interact with one another is a promising research avenue presented to the MEMO research project.

### 3.2 Forced internal displacement (FID) associated with conflict and violence

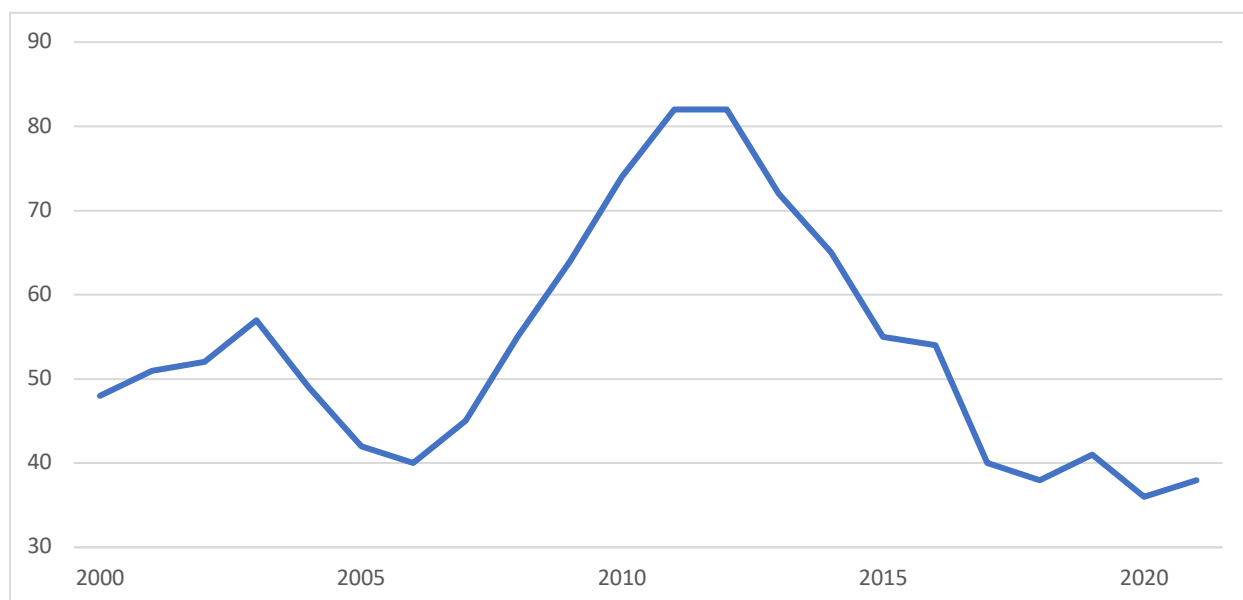
Honduras displays striking growth rates of forced internal displacement (FID) associated with conflict and violence. According to World Bank data (2023), between 2014 (year for which the first records are available) and 2021, the number of internally displaced persons associated with conflict and violence rose from 29,000 to 247,000, an increase of 851% in eight years. The most abrupt increase (600%) took place between 2014 and 2015 – corresponding to Juan Orlando Hernández’s first year in power; a second, comparatively milder, increase occurred between 2018 and 2019, the first year of Hernández’s second term in office (see Figure 4). These data suggest that political violence may have been a factor of internal displacement in those two periods.

**Figure 4. Honduras: New displacements associated with conflict and violence, 2014-2021**



Source: Authors' elaboration on The World Bank data

In addition to political violence targeting journalists, environmental activists, and members of the LGBTQ+ population (Human Rights Watch, 2022), criminal violence in Honduras is pervasive and, as will be discussed below, is strongly correlated with internal and external displacement (Cantor, 2014). In the period 2000-2021, the rate of homicides per 100,000 persons in Honduras oscillated between 82 in 2011, at its peak, and 40 in 2020, at its lowest point. The real magnitude of these figures becomes evident when taking into account that the global average homicide rates in 2011 and 2020 were 6.1 and 5.6 per 100,000 persons respectively.

**Figure 5. Honduras: Homicide rate per 100,000 persons, 2000-2021**

Source: Authors' elaboration on The World Bank data

Prior to 2013, the government of Honduras did not recognize forced internal displacement as a problem. Once it officially acknowledged it, the government began monitoring FID. The Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence (CIPPDV, for its acronym in Spanish) published its first report in 2015; it stressed that FID associated with violence was a “generalized phenomenon” (CIPPDV, 2015, p. 12) because it affected around 4% of households in the 20 municipalities selected for the study. The report estimated that there had been 174,000 internally displaced people between 2004 and 2014, and 41,000 households of which at least one member had been displaced by violence. Moreover, 7.5% of the surveyed households had been displaced two times and 2.2% three times.

Regarding the causes of displacement, in 67.9% of the households, the decision to migrate was solely influenced by the need to escape violence (CIPPDV, 2015, p. 14). More generally, reasons to migrate related to perceived insecurity in the community, threats towards and murder of a relative, followed by sexual violence, housing dispossession, kidnapping, and forced recruitment.

The subsequent report, published in 2019, showed an intensification of the problem. It recorded 58,550 households in which at least one member had been displaced by violence, a figure that represents an increase of 42% with respect to that of 2015. At 247,000, the total number of displaced persons was also 41% higher than in the previous period, whereas the number of households that had been displaced two times also increased by 0.5% to reach 8% (CIPPDV, 2019, p. 29).

A comparison of the two reports reveals an aggravation of FID in numeric terms, but also shows consistency in the general patterns. Indeed, both reports find that female-headed households with a greater presence of minors are more vulnerable to internal displacement than those headed by

men (CIPPVD, 2015, 13; CIPPVD, 2019, p. 31). Moreover, the two reports identify the departments of Cortés and Francisco Morazán as both the main sending and receiving departments, while the cities of San Pedro Sula and the Central District, La Ceiba, and Choloma are cited as the most affected by incoming and outgoing internally displaced persons (CIPPVD, 2015, p. 13; CIPPVD, 2019, p. 36). This coincidence between sending and receiving locations reveals – according to the reports – a strong intraurban and intradepartmental component of internal displacement in Honduras (CIPPVD, 2015, p. 13; CIPPVD, 2019, p. 36).

Internal displacement in rural areas is not uncommon and mostly affects indigenous or Afro-descendant communities that are illegally evicted from their land (Mollett, 2011; 2013; 2014; Morales Gamboa, 2020, p. 47). However, it is urban and, especially, *maras* violence that seems to account for most of the internal displacements in Honduras. In 2014, 28% of the surveyed households identified the *maras* as the persecuting agent; by 2018 this figure had risen to 48% (CIPPVD, 2015, p. 14; CIPPVD, 2019, p. 45). The reports underline that each time, a high percentage of surveyed households refrained from identifying their aggressors, most probably, out of fear of retaliation. As such, it can be hypothesized the *maras* represent a much higher rate as persecuting agents and cause of internal displacement.

### **Box 1. *Maras***

*Maras* are violent street gangs that marginalized youth originally formed in Los Angeles, California in the 1980s. Following the adoption of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in the United States in 1996 and the massive deportation of unauthorized Central American migrants that ensued, the uprooted youths reproduced in their new countries the gangs that had given them a sense of belonging back in the U.S. In this sense, *maras* violence derives from a double uprooting: first, from the country of origin in Central America, which most of the members had left as young children and barely knew, and second, from the United States, the country they came to consider as their home.

Due to this context of uprooting, *maras* fundamentally constitute peer communities, providing their members with cultural and social identity. Rather than economic gain, *maras* seek to establish strong hierarchical communities based on loyalty bonds and the complicity surrounding inenarrable acts of violence. Because of these characteristics, the *maras* are also deeply territorial groups and regularly resort to brutal violence to defend and enlarge their territories, which are mostly urban neighbourhoods. Increasingly, the *maras* have become associated with drug-trafficking groups, for whom they act as contract killers and security personnel. Being paid in kind, they have also started to make inroads into low-scale drug dealing. These processes further exacerbate urban, territorial violence (Flores Pineda and Amaya Oviedo, 2020, p. 6).

The *maras* extort money from residents and business-owners throughout the country. They resort to force and coercion to recruit children and adolescents into their cliques, and then force them to take part in criminal activities. Often, they perpetrate sexual violence too, in order to assert their

dominance. For all these reasons, the violence that the *maras* exert is thought to be the main driver of internal displacement in Honduras.

Although the *mara* phenomenon is generally equated with criminal violence, in Honduras it presents characteristics that differentiate it from other violent criminal actors, notably drug-trafficking groups and “regular” criminal gangs, that also ravage Honduran society (Inkpen et al., 2021; InSight Crime, 2021). Tiusabá Gómez and Rodríguez Pastrana (2017, p. 33) stress the difference between criminal organizations, whose primary purpose is to obtain economic benefits, such as Los Chirizos, Los Vallecillo, Los Ponce, and Los Cachiros, and *maras*, which must be conceived of as “transnational subcultural gangs”, such as Mara Salvatrucha 13 and Barrio 18, West Side, and Mara 61.

Even if the link may be more difficult to demonstrate, there is evidence that *mara* violence also triggers international displacement. As Alba Villalever et al. (2023) observe, violence has increasingly been cited as one of the principal causes of forced migration from Central America, with *maras* being identified as the main agents of persecution by 54.4% of Central American forced migrants in transit through Mexico.

Generalized (not *mara*-specific) violence in Honduras has also been associated with international migration. In his research on the relation between violence and migration, Michael Clemens (2017; 2021) found a strong correlation between homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants and apprehensions of unaccompanied Honduran children and adolescents at the U.S. southwest border between 2011 and 2016. Based on a quantitative study, Clemens (2017) concludes that six additional homicides over the whole period “caused a cumulative total of 3.7 additional unaccompanied child apprehensions in the United States” (p. 1). The author also found that, because of the diffusion of migration experience and the support of migrant networks, violence can create migration waves “that snowball over time, continuing to rise even when violence levels do not” (Clemens, 2017, p. 1).

A final word of caution is in order. As is the case with environmental factors, violence alone does not produce mobility. Rather, it is the interaction between violence and other factors, such as poverty, job insecurity, and weak rule of law, that generates vulnerability, hinders resilience, and prevents the adoption of protection strategies (IPPDV, 2019, p. 50). To echo Aylsa Winton’s words, violence as a cause of migration, must be understood “in the context of social exclusion and economic precariousness” (Winton, 2019).

## 4. Intra-regional migration dynamics

### 4.1 Short-distance cross-border migration

Prior to the early 2000s, and except for the U.S.-bound flows, migration from Honduras was mainly short-distance and aimed at the neighbouring countries, especially Nicaragua and El Salvador. Following the normalization of diplomatic relations after the Soccer War, thousands of Salvadoran workers flocked back to Honduras, revitalizing the local regional cross-border labour market.

Moreover, since the mid-2000s, the Central American Integration System (SICA) has promoted deeper economic integration between Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Similarly, the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) signed with the United States in 2004, and in force since 2006 has also played a role in the region's integration and mobility. The 2005 CA-4 agreement, an intergovernmental arrangement permitting the free circulation of citizens from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua among the four countries for recreational and non-commercial purposes (SELA, n.d.), further facilitated intraregional mobility. Under the CA-4 agreement, authorized cross-border circular migration increased.

Roque Ramírez (2006, p. 17) refers to a dynamic cross-border economy at El Amatillo, on the border with El Salvador, driven by both formal businesses – banks, currency exchange offices, restaurants, transport services, etc. – and informal activities – such as money exchanging stalls, eateries, and the famous *caponeras* (also known as tuk-tuks) that transport people across the border. Roque Ramírez also mentions a circular migrant labour flow of Nicaraguan seasonal agricultural workers who travel across Honduras to get to work on the southern Salvadoran fields. Most of these workers used their CA-4 document to transit through the region (Roque Ramírez, 2006, p. 19).

Although the CA-4 accord officially remains in force, intraregional mobility has been significantly affected since 2019 due to the interdiction measures adopted across the region in response to the first migrant caravans. The Guatemalan government, for one, implemented several measures to prevent the caravans from Honduras from entering its territory (Reina 2020), which were further justified by the need to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. In late 2020, the caravans organized in Honduras in the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota met the same fate when trying to cross into Guatemala through the Agua Caliente border post (Arroyo 2020). Ultimately, as Silva Cruz and Mendoza Carrión (2021) assert, the ease with which Central American citizens, especially Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Hondurans, used to be able to transit throughout the region has been significantly curtailed. The mobility restrictions are now such that “the so-called ‘easy passage’ at land borders has all but disappeared” (p. 113).



## 4.2 Long-distance authorized cross-border migration

Every year, a small number of Honduran citizens enters the U.S. with permission to study, invest and work. In 2017, of a total of 17,784 Hondurans who entered the United States, 6,967 did so with an immigrant visa according to data from the U.S. Department of State (IOM, 2021, p. 10).

In September 2019, the governments of Honduras and the United States signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Seasonal Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Workers, whereby Hondurans could qualify for more than 20,000 work visas. Nonetheless, as of 2021, the implementation of the agreement was still pending due to the protocols implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These work permits are the H-2A and the H-2B visas that grant temporary stay in the United States to seasonal workers. While the H-2A visas apply to workers in the agricultural sector, the H-2B visas are intended for workers in the service sectors. In 2019, Honduras received fewer than 1,200 H-2A and H-2B visas combined (OIM, 2021, p. 21) and in 2020 it was granted approximately 300 H-2A visas, and between 800 and 1,000 H-2B visas, a figure that in both cases represents less than 2% of the total H-2A and H-2B visas issued that year (Ramón 2021).

The recruitment of the workers for these seasonal work programs is supported by the Honduran government through its ministry of labour, which periodically organizes fairs to identify suitable candidates and put them in contact with possible employers in the U.S. According to Ramón, the ministry has a database of over 3,000 carefully selected candidates (Ramón, 2021, p. 7). Despite the information campaigns by the Honduran government, fraud and deception surrounding the recruitment process for H-2A and H-2B visa candidates are commonplace. Workers and peasants are often victims of scams whereby non-existent visas are sold to them (Baquedano, 2019). Employers and intermediaries also commit various types of abuse: document retention as a form of coercion, involuntary deductions, charging recruitment fees, and compelling the workers to take out insurance policies, as well as forcing them to stay on the job against their will are some of the conducts aggrieved workers consistently refer (Osorto, 2019).

For its part, Canada has both a Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and a program for Temporary Foreign Workers in Agriculture (see Cockram, L., et al., 2021, p. 24-26), of which Honduran workers partake, albeit in negligible numbers. While the total number of temporary foreign worker permit holders has ranged from 72,965 in 2015 to 135,760 in 2022, Honduran citizens received 360 permits in 2015 and 570 in 2022. Throughout the 2015-2022 period for which data are available, Honduran participation in the TFWP has never been higher than 0.52%. A similar picture emerges from the analysis of the Temporary Foreign Workers in Agriculture Program. Between 2016 and 2022 the total number of permits grew from 43,921 to 70,365. With 492 permits, Honduran beneficiaries accounted for 1.12% of the total in 2016, the highest participation in the period. After that, from 2017 to 2022 Honduran participation was lower, ranging from 0.79% in 2021 to 1.04% in 2022 (Government of Canada, 2023; Statistics Canada, 2023).

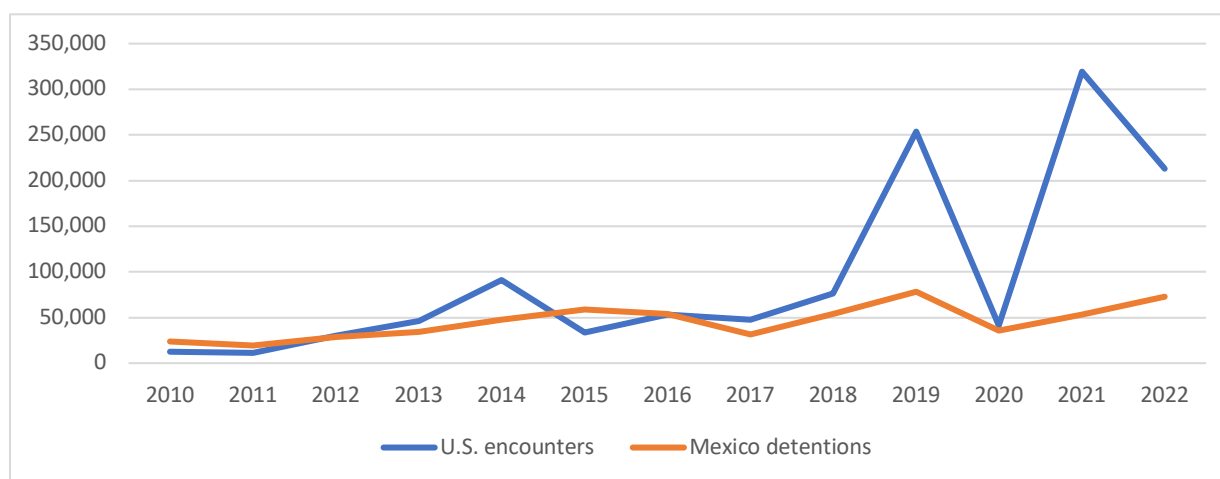
In 2019, in the wake of the migrant caravans, the Mexican government extended its program of Regional Border Visitor Cards (TVRF for its acronym in Spanish) to Salvadoran and Honduran citizens, in addition to Guatemalan and Belizean citizens who were the original beneficiaries. The card grants permission to stay in Mexico's southern border states for as long as seven days, but it does not authorize undertaking paid activities. In 2019, 2,639 TVRF were granted to Honduran citizens, compared to 162 in 2020, 638 in 2021, and 387 in 2022 (UPM, n.d.).

Lastly, in 2022, the governments of Honduras and Spain, the second most important destination of Honduran out migration after the U.S., signed an agreement to offer temporary work visas in the agricultural sector to Honduran citizens. It is estimated that 569 such permits, twice as many as in the previous year, will be available by the end of 2023 (TN23.tv, 2023).

### 4.3 Long-distance unauthorized cross-border migration

Economic needs, family reunification, violence or insecurity, education, domestic violence, and health are all cited as causes of international migration from Honduras (see OIM, 2021, p. 8). Given these flows are mostly unauthorized, it is difficult to estimate their magnitude. Nonetheless, the number of detentions/encounters of unauthorized migrants can be used as a proxy for the size and/or the intensity of these flows. Figure 6 shows the number of Honduran citizens detained by Mexican immigration authorities and the number of encounters of Honduran citizens at the U.S. southwest border (the border with Mexico) recorded by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). It is worth mentioning that, while the Mexican authorities record the number of persons detained, the U.S. authorities record the number of encounters with unauthorized migrants. This means that several entry attempts by a single individual might be recorded as separate encounters. For these reasons, Mexican figures are thought to reflect the size of the flows, while U.S. figures could be better understood as an indicator of their intensity.

**Figure 6. Honduran citizens detained in Mexico and U.S. southwest border encounters, 2010-2022**



Source: Authors' elaboration on CBP and UPM data

## MEMO

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Between 2010 and 2022, there was a continuous increase in the number of both unauthorized Honduran migrants detained in Mexico and encounters with unauthorized Honduran citizens at the U.S. southwest border. Albeit with the already stated caveat, these figures may be taken as an indicator of the growing magnitude and intensity of the unauthorized northbound long-distance migration flow from Honduras, especially since 2018.

Within this general trend, striking differences between the patterns for Mexico detentions and U.S. encounters are evident. In the period 2010-2016 Mexico recorded more detentions of Hondurans citizens than the U.S. However, since 2017, U.S. encounters have not only surpassed detentions in Mexico, but they have shown consecutive pronounced increases that suggest the development of new U.S.-bound migration trends from Honduras.

In 2010 and 2011, the number of detentions was relatively low, compared to the rest of the period: 36,019 and 30,610 in total between Mexico and U.S. in 2010 and 2011, respectively. Significant here is that in 2010, Mexico detained nearly twice as many Honduran unauthorized migrants as the U.S., and in 2011, 71% more. Since 2012, the number of detentions/encounters began to increase in both countries and reached a first peak in the U.S. in 2014, corresponding to the most critical point of the unaccompanied minors' humanitarian crisis, when 90,968 encounters with Honduran unauthorized migrants were recorded. In turn, in Mexico the peak was reached in 2015, with 58,814 detentions, over 25,000 more than in the U.S. that year. In 2016 Mexican authorities detained, once again, more Honduran citizens than the United States. By 2017, however, the trend reversed and, from then on, encounters with Honduran unauthorized migrants at the U.S. southwest border came to exceed the number of detentions in Mexico. Since 2018, U.S. southwest border encounters of Hondurans citizen have climbed sharply, setting a new trend that continues at the time of writing.

The year 2019 was a watershed in Honduran unauthorized northbound migration, as the migrant caravans organized in Honduras entailed the mobilization of tens of thousands of Honduran men, women, unaccompanied boys, and girls, as well as entire family units. In that year alone, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection recorded 253,795 encounters with Honduran unauthorized migrants. For its part, Mexico registered 78,232 detentions, a figure that is still unsurpassed.

The abrupt fall in the number of detentions/encounters in 2020 can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and the migration interdiction measures adopted to hinder caravans from entering Mexico and reaching the United States. Yet the number rose again in 2021 to a record 319,324 encounters in the U.S. Several factors may account for this sharp increase: on the one hand, the devastation from hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020, as well as the extension of the TPS that the U.S. government granted to Honduran citizens on the grounds of these disasters; and on the other hand, the expectation that the incoming Biden administration would eliminate the Trump administration's most extreme anti-immigrant measures, therefore making it easier to enter the United States. Nonetheless, the rise in the number of detentions/encounters may also reflect a stricter implementation of Title 42 (see above, p. 10) and ensuing re-entry attempts.

With regard to the migrants' profile, data on Honduran returnees from Mexico and the United States recorded by the Survey on Migration on Mexico's Southern Border (Emifsur) (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al. 2020, p. 29 and 37) show interesting differences. In 2017, 9% of the returnees from the U.S. were female; in 2019, the figure increased to 10.5%. By contrast, in 2017, 14.1% of Honduran returnees from Mexico were women. Two years later, the figure rose to 27.5%, nearly a 100% increase compared to the 2017 figure. These data confirm that female migration from Honduras is rising; but they also suggest that while leaving in larger numbers, Honduran women are not traveling to the same destinations as men, as within the American continent, they appear to be choosing to stay Mexico, a country closer to home.

Because of the mounting migration interdiction measures that both Mexico and the U.S. have adopted, unauthorized migrants are forced to transit along more dangerous routes and in turn become particularly vulnerable to the abuses of corrupt authorities and criminal actors. To increase the chances of a successful crossing and to protect themselves from organized crime, migrants from Central America often resort to migrant smugglers, also known as *polleros* or *coyotes* (for the difference between the two notions, see Casillas 2023).

Prior to the restrictions imposed to stop the first caravans, migrants from Honduras did not require the services of intermediaries until they reached the border with Mexico, since the CA-4 agreement granted them free transit through Guatemala. At the time of writing (July 2023), smugglers may be hired directly in Honduras to arrange the entire journey, in Guatemala or in Mexico. According to the 2019 Emifsur (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al. 2020, p. 40), Hondurans resort less often than Guatemalans and Salvadorans to *coyotes*. Between 2009 and 2012, an average of 10.5% of the Honduran migrants returned by U.S. authorities reported having engaged the services of a smuggler to cross the border. This percentage rose significantly in the following years in the aftermath of the unaccompanied minors' crisis: to 47.9% in 2015, 56.2% in 2016 and an all-time high of 65% in 2017. In 2018, the percentage fell to 34.7% and in 2019 it decreased again to 17.6%. It is no coincidence that this abrupt fall took place in the same year as the caravans, since one of the reasons that seems to explain why the caravans were organized in Honduras was the critical economic and security situations in the country, which made it necessary for the people to leave and impossible for them to afford the services of a smuggler, something that, by no means, guarantees a successful crossing (see Paris-Pombo, 2016, p. 153). Traveling in caravans was, therefore, an economic way to make the journey safely, substituting the relative security that smugglers could provide by that afforded by high visibility and massive mobilization.

Smuggler fees are high, and they have increased consistently in the past years as a result of the soaring risks and difficulties involved in the journey. According to Greenfield et al. (2019), in 2017 the smuggling fee from Honduras to the U.S. border (Mexican side) was around USD 6,400, while the trip from Honduras across the U.S. border cost approximately USD 10,600 and the fee for crossing the Mexico-U.S. border alone was USD 4,200. In 2021, a Mexican smuggler stated that

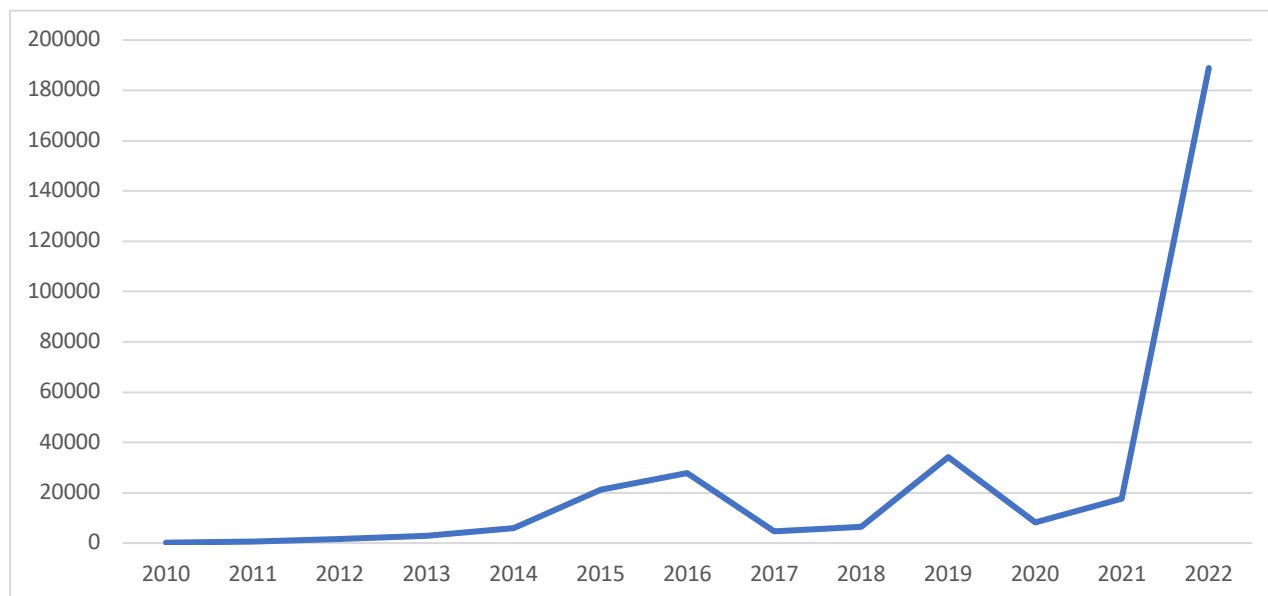
his fee to get a Honduran migrant to Los Angeles, California was USD 12,000 (Olivares Alonso, 2021; see also Quijada and Sierra, 2018, p. 6). The scale of these sums for Honduran citizens becomes apparent if one considers that the 2021 average monthly income in Honduras ranged between USD 245 and USD 313 (see above, p. 5).

## 5. Extra-regional and inter-continental migration dynamics

Historically, migration to Honduras originated within Central America. Yet changes in recent years point to the increasingly important role of Honduras both in the migration dynamics of the American continent and globally. Transit flows through Honduras can be approached by looking at irregular migration flows –as they are officially called by Honduras National Migration Institute. The figures since 2010 reveal consistently rising numbers of northbound Caribbean migrants, mainly from Cuba and Haiti, that enter Honduras. They also highlight Honduras' centrality in the routes of South American, Asian, and African migrants aiming to reach the United States.

According to data from Honduras National Migration Institute, the number of persons recorded as irregular migrants rose from 168 in 2010 to 188,858 in 2022. Within that twelve-year period, there were consecutive watershed years in 2015 with 21,122 recorded irregular migrants, 2016 with 27,863 migrants, and 2019 with 34,206 migrants.

**Figure 7. Honduras. Irregular migration flows, 2010-2022**



Source: Authors' elaboration on Instituto Nacional de Migración (Honduras) data

Throughout most of the 2010-2022 period, migrants from three countries were over-represented. First, Cuban citizens accounted for the bulk of the irregular flows: 90% in 2015, 61% in 2019 and 39% in 2022. Next, Haitians have also had a significant participation, especially since 2016: 47% in 2016, 63% in 2020 and 43% in 2021. And thirdly, Venezuelans accounted for 29% of the cases recorded in 2022. Each of these 'atypical' waves of transit migrants was triggered by political events that took place far away from Honduras. The Cuban flows, for instance, were prompted by the restoration of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba under the Obama administration in 2014, the end of the U.S. wet foot/dry foot policy towards Cuban refugees in 2018, Cuba's increased internal repression in 2021, and, perhaps more importantly, Nicaragua's decision to eliminate the visa requirement for Cuban nationals in the same year (Augustin and Robles, 2022; Lamrani, 2021; USDHS, 2017). In turn, the Haitian waves were sparked by the 2016 destitution of Dilma Roussef as president of Brazil, a country that had provided refuge for thousands of Haitians following the 2010 earthquake. Further Haitian streams were caused by the U.S. government's extension of the TPS for Haitian citizens in 2020 (García Lira, 2016; USDHS, 2021). Lastly, the Venezuelan 2022 exodus appears to be related to the information circulating among the Venezuelan population that Title 42 did not apply to them, in addition to the uncertainties and expectations that announcements by the Biden administration created in March and October 2022 regarding changes to migration policy affecting Venezuelan citizens (USDHS 2022; Ruiz Soto, 2022).

The number of African and Asian migrants in transit through Honduras has also increased in recent years, albeit less abruptly. Honduras' location in the Central American Isthmus and on the Caribbean makes it a strategic post along the route to the United States for extracontinental flows. As Yates and Bolter (2021) state, with Europe ever more difficult to reach due to increased enforcement, developed economies such as the United States and Canada have become more attractive destinations, in part because they already host significant African diaspora communities. Brazil serves as the starting point for this extra-regional migration considering the existence of diplomatic representation and direct flights from many African countries. Typically, migrants will make the journey from Brazil to Colombia, then the Darien Gap in Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico, before reaching the U.S.

For these reasons, transit flows through Honduras have also diversified enormously. In 2022, the National Migration Institute noted a record number of 122 countries of origin, among which African countries such as Angola, Cameroon, Ghana and Senegal stand out, as do Asian countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, and Nepal (OMIH, 2023, p. 6-8).

## 6. Decision-making for migration

Referring to his years-long research on Honduran migration, Reichman (2022) states that “individuals rarely point to a single explaining factor in their migration decisions. Family, personal aspirations, money, friendships, politics, religion and personality all came into play in shaping the decision to leave”. Hiskey et al. (2018) and Cárdenas Vélez et al. (2023) also espouse this view.

Without contesting the notion that the decision to migrate is the product of myriad considerations at a particular time, the abundant academic literature on decision-making for migration tends to highlight the role that specific factors play in Hondurans’ ultimate decision to leave. To begin with, there is agreement that economic factors take priority in Hondurans’ decisions to migrate. Unemployment, limited job opportunities, insufficient income, insufficient land, and food insecurity have all been found to weigh more heavily than any other element in individuals’ considerations regarding migration (Cárdenas Vélez, et al., 2023; Dodd et al., 2019; Kumar et al. 2021; OIM, 2021; Sladkova, 2007; Wrathall, 2012).

Authors have also focused on the complex relationship between international migration and the economic means needed to enable it. According to this argument, international migration requires some form of capital, which is why the households that do not possess this capital will take on debt to finance mobility (Reichman, 2022; Sladkova, 2007). In turn, the difficulties to pay back the debt will often trigger further migration, giving rise to a vicious cycle, whereby debt is “simultaneously a cause and a consequence of migration” (Reichman, 2022). For their part, Kumar et al. (2021), based on their study of settlements in the department of Copán, show that not only migration as such, but the intention to migrate itself can produce financial distress and even result in food insecurity for those who intend to migrate, as money for food is diverted to sustain migration plans.

Another strand of the literature focuses on the role of social capital as a driver of migration from Honduras. Quijada and Sierra’s (2018) nation-wide research shows that social capital is the determining factor for the decision to migrate among low-income households, whereas among other income groups, socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education and having access to basic services, appear to be more strongly correlated with the intention to migrate.

The role of environmental factors in mobility within and from Honduras has also received substantial attention. In this context, migration is considered one of the possible responses to environmental stress, as well as an adaptation strategy to climate change (McLeman and Hunter, 2010). Most authors emphasize, however, that climate hazards alone cannot explain migration outcomes. It is rather the interaction between environmental factors and structural inequalities that enhances climate vulnerability, affects the capacity of communities to adapt, and can ultimately lead to internal and international migration (Casillas, 2020; Escribano, 2021; Wrathall, 2012; Wrathall et al. 2014). Reichman (2022) advances more specific arguments; from his research on migration in the Dry Corridor, he concludes that temporary environmental shocks will

affect families differently, depending on how they are positioned within the already existing migration and remittance economy. Meanwhile, Bermeo and Leblang's (2021) study of migration from the Dry Corridor shows a correlation between prolonged droughts and a higher number of apprehensions of Honduran citizens at the U.S. border.

Regarding violence as a possible explanatory variable of migration from Honduras, there is ample academic research encompassing differing views. Centeno Sarmiento (2021) finds conclusive evidence of a positive relationship between homicide rates and migration. So does Clemens (2017), whose research points to a strong causal relationship between violence at the origin and unaccompanied minors' apprehensions' (UAM) rates at the United States border. However, Clemens qualifies his findings by factoring economic and migration networks into the analysis. This allows him to conclude that while violence can be a major determinant of international migration from poor regions, it alone cannot explain migration outcomes, insofar as it interacts with economic determinants of migration and prior migration flows (Clemens, 2017, p. 24). In Hiskey et al.'s (2018) view, rather than violence and homicide rates, it is crime victimization that better explains intentions to migrate in Honduras. This is a conclusion partly shared by Quijada and Sierra (2018), who conducted a multivariate study on migration drivers and observed that homicide rates did not appear to be statistically significant, while conceding that they had failed to capture the more relevant variable of victimization.

Finally, immobility has been the object of a few, yet very suggestive, investigations. Working with youths in rural communities of Yoro and Intibucá, Wyngaarden (2020) and Wyngaarden et al. (2023) looked into young men's and women's decision to stay in a context where the culture of migration prevails. They found that this decision is informed by, on the one hand, repel factors such as risk and uncertainty, knowledge of negative experiences and negative discourses associated with migration, and on the other hand, retain factors such as family obligations, appreciation for the land, and a "moral imperative to sustain rural livelihoods" (Wyngaarden, 2020, p. 96). Equally important, psychological factors like capacities to envision a viable rural livelihood and awareness of their internal capabilities were also key in the individuals' preference for immobility.

## 7. Discussion of findings of the reviewed literature and setting a research agenda

### 7.1 Main periods of immigration, emigration, and transit migration and demo-social characteristics of migrant populations related to each period

Immigration to Honduras occurred in two main periods. The first one spanned through the first half of the twentieth century and was driven by Honduras' insertion in the international economy through the banana and mining exports. In this period, significant numbers of Europeans, as well



as people from the Middle East arrived in Honduras to invest in the newly booming sectors. Most of these immigrants were middle-aged males, some of whom were later joined by their families. The expansion of banana agriculture also attracted numerous agricultural workers from the Caribbean and other Central American countries. Salient among these were the Salvadorans, who were predominantly young, male and from a rural background.

The civil wars in Central America, which took place at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, mark the second period of immigration, when thousands of refugees from the neighbouring countries crossed into Honduras in search of safety. Entire family units, most of them from rural areas, found shelter in Honduras until the early 1990s, when the peace processes made it possible for them to return to their home countries.

Emigration from Honduras exhibits, in turn, a very different pattern. Having been a country of immigration until 1990, Honduras became a country of negative net migration at least since 1995. Ever since then, emigration has increased continuously, displaying some pronounced peaks in 1998 after Hurricane Mitch, in 2014 during the unaccompanied minors' exodus, in 2019 with the migrant caravans, in 2020 following the storms Eta and Iota, and in 2022 when the end of the application of Title 42 was announced. Throughout this period, the migrants' profile has changed from predominantly male, young, and rural or from the impoverished areas surrounding Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, to include more and more female migrants, boys, girls, and family units.

Finally, substantial transit migration through Honduras is relatively recent and has surged during three main periods: 1) from 2014 to 2016, when U.S. policies towards Cuba and events in Brazil triggered massive flows of Cuban and Haitian northbound flows; 2) between 2018 and 2019, when Cuban transit migration increased in reaction to new policy decisions in the U.S. and the migrant caravans drew numerous extra-regional migrants; and 3) since 2021, once COVID-19 mobility restrictions were lifted. This development attracted large numbers of Cuban and Venezuelan citizens, as well as migrants from other continents, who then ventured north in hopes of finding more favorable conditions to enter the U.S. following Joe Biden's presidential election victory and his announced (albeit not implemented) reversal of the Trump administration's migration policies. Transit migrants are mainly young men; but women, children and family units have joined in ever growing numbers the northbound flows that cross Honduras on their way to the United States.

### **7.2 Dynamics between the main migration corridors**

Because of its location on both the Central American Isthmus and the Caribbean Sea, Honduras is a point of convergence of U.S.-bound migration flows from South America, Africa, and Asia. The decades-long experience with migration through Guatemala and Mexico, which is part of the Mesoamerican migration system (cf. Durand, 2016), is now extremely useful to migrants from South America traveling overland to Mexico and the United States. It is also convenient for extra-regional migrants from Africa and Asia who arrive, mostly by plane, to Brazil and then follow the

same overland route through Central America aiming to reach the Mexico-U.S. border. As such, the intra-regional migration corridor has been fully integrated with the extra-regional South American migration corridor as well as with the extracontinental (Asian and African) corridors.

### 7.3 Gaps in our knowledge and future research agenda

Honduran migration has been widely researched, with particular attention to violence, economic and environmental factors as drivers of migration (Bermeo and Leblang, 2021; Cárdenas-Vélez et al., 2023; Clemens, 2017; 2021; Dodd et al., 2019; Hiskey et al., 2018; Reichman, 2022). Thus, a solid basis exists upon which to build a future research agenda. In what follows, we identify some areas of research that could be further developed:

1. Migration patterns from Honduras: Throughout this report, it has become evident that migration patterns from Honduras have changed dramatically in the last thirty years. Clemens' (2017; 2021) observation that there are “long-wave” and “short spike” migration flows is extremely insightful and could serve as a starting point to investigate changes in migration patterns from different regions of Honduras, as well changes in the geographic reach of Honduran migration. Among these, a conspicuous case that begs further investigation is the emergence of Mexico and Spain as top countries of destination, signaling a shift to a predominantly long-distance extra-regional migration dynamic. In the same vein, asylum in Mexico as a legal migration path for Honduran citizens is a relatively new phenomenon that is worth exploring through the notions of long-wave and short-spike migration.
2. Changes in the demographic profile of Honduran migrants: While the feminization of Honduran migration has been duly observed (ECAP, 2019; Myrntinen, 2018; Parella Rubio, 2022) there is still much to be investigated about the causes of this phenomenon and its variations. For instance, why female migration to Mexico has increased much more than to the United States is a question that still needs to be answered. Moreover, the impact of long-distance female migration from Honduras on further migration flows, as well as on the migrant women's communities of origin is still unresearched.
3. Regarding minors, both unaccompanied and traveling with family groups, research ought to be undertaken to understand not only the motives that drive the adults' decision to involve their children in international mobility, but also the decision-making of the boys, girls and adolescents who autonomously choose to migrate.
4. The unintended impacts of politics and policy decisions on migration flows: Throughout this work it has become apparent that politics and policies that are not specifically directed at Honduras have had significant effects on migration flows from and through that country. U.S. policy toward Cuba, Brazil's domestic politics, Nicaragua's visa requirements for Cubans are all examples of policies that, without having Honduras as a target, have had a profound impact on transit migration flows through Honduras. Systematically analyzing

those events and their impacts in various timeframes may offer valuable insights into the articulation between politics and migration.

5. The relationship between economic factors and migration in Honduras: While authors agree that migration requires some capital to invest in the migration project (Reichman, 2022; Sladkova, 2007), it has also been observed that immobility is a choice that can only be made by those with sufficient means to stay (Wyngaarden et al., 2023). Problematizing this relationship appears to be a promising avenue to gain more nuanced understandings of the economic drivers of migration from Honduras. In a similar vein, the interplay between debt and migration emerges as an area that ought to be more thoroughly explored.

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## Appendix

### Honduras migration dynamics: Synoptic tables

Table A. Key events for internal and cross-border migration

Year/period	Country(ies) involved	Event/Politics	Description
1969	Honduras	Agrarian reform	Rural-rural migration Expulsion of Salvadoran immigrants
1970s	Honduras	Inception of maquila economy	Rural-urban migration Urban-urban migration
1970-1996	Guatemala and El Salvador	Armed conflicts	Drivers of migration to Honduras
1990-1998	Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua	Peace processes in Central America	Return of refugees and self-exiles in Honduras to their countries of origin
1998	Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras	Hurricane Mitch	Floods, internal displacement, and international migration
1990-present	Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras	Social violence, crime, drug trafficking	Increase in post-conflict, gang and drug trafficking violence
2005	Guatemala, Honduras	Tropical storm Stan	Floods, internal displacement, and international migration
2009	Honduras	Coup d'état	Increase in social conflict, precarious living conditions, generalized insecurity
2010	Guatemala, Honduras	Tropical storm Agatha	Floods, internal displacement, and international migration
2011	Guatemala, Honduras	Tropical storm 12E	Floods, internal displacement, and international migration
2014	Honduras	Juan Orlando Hernández is elected president	Emergence of political violence
2018	Honduras	Juan Orlando Hernández is elected for a second term	Rise in political violence
2020	Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador	Tropical storms Eta and Iota	Floods, internal displacement, and international migration
2020-2022	All	COVID-19 pandemic	Restricted mobility

**Table B. Key events for short distance cross-border migration**

Year/period	Country(ies) involved	Event/Politics	Description
1969	Honduras	Agrarian reform	Expulsion of Salvadoran workers
1969	Honduras, El Salvador	Soccer War	Honduras-El Salvador cross-border mobility interrupted
1970s	Honduras, El Salvador	Normalization of relations	Honduras-El Salvador cross-border mobility restored
1970-1996	Guatemala and El Salvador	Armed conflicts	Drivers of migration to Honduras
1990-1998	Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua	Peace processes in Central America	Refugees and self-exiles in Honduras return to their countries of origin
2004	Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, U.S.	DR-CAFTA	Regional economic integration
2005	Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua	CA-4	Free circulation for citizens of the region for non-commercial purposes
2019-	Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, U.S.	Migrant caravans and policy responses	Free intraregional mobility curtailed to stop the caravans; CA-4 disregarded
2020-	All	COVID-19 pandemic	Intraregional mobility further restrained

**Table C. Key events for long-distance authorized cross-border migration**

Year/period	Country(ies) involved	Event/Politics	Description
2019	Honduras, U.S.	Comprehensive Agreement on Seasonal Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Workers	Number of temporary work visas for Honduran citizens increased
2019	Honduras, Mexico	TVRF extended to Honduran citizens	Honduran citizens to benefit from Mexico's TVRF program
2023	Honduras, Spain	Migration agreement	Work visas for Honduran agricultural workers

**Table D. Key events for long-distance unauthorized cross-border migration**

Year/period	Country(ies) involved	Event/policy	Description
2014	Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador U.S.	Unaccompanied minors' humanitarian crisis	66,000 unaccompanied minors arrive to the U.S. southwest border
2014	Mexico	Plan Frontera Sur	Increased border controls after the unaccompanied minors' humanitarian crisis
2018-2019	Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador Extra-regional migrants	Migrant caravans	Massive migrant flows reached the U.S. border
2019-2020	U.S.	Migration interdiction measures: MPP and Title 42	Massive detentions at the border Humanitarian crisis on the Mexican side because of the returned migrants
2020	Global	COVID-19 pandemic	Mobility restrictions
2020	Guatemala and Honduras	Tropical storms Eta and Iota	New northbound flows U.S. extends TPS for Hondurans
2021	U.S.	Joe Biden's presidency begins	Expectations that migration controls would be relaxed trigger new large northbound flows from Central America

**Table E. Key events for extra-regional and intercontinental migration**

Year/period	Country(ies) involved	Event/policy	Description
2010	Haiti	Earthquake	Full-scale destruction triggers international migration, mainly to Brazil and Chile
2014	U.S. Cuba	The Obama administration restores diplomatic relations with Cuba	Cuban emigration to the U.S. Honduras as country of transit
2016	Brazil	Dilma Rousseff is removed as president	Haitian migrants leave for fear of anti-immigrant laws Honduras as country of transit
2018	U.S. Cuba	End of the wet foot/dry foot policy	New wave of Cuban migration Honduras as country of transit
2019-date	Haiti	Political and economic instability	Emigration from Haiti Honduras as country of transit

2020	U.S. Haiti	TPS for Haitians extended	Massive Haitian U.S.-bound flows through Honduras
2021	Cuba	Intensification of political repression	Emigration from Cuba Honduras as country of transit
2021	Nicaragua Cuba	Nicaraguan government eliminates visa requirements for Cuban citizens	Massive migration to Nicaragua ultimately directed to the U.S. Honduras as country of transit
2022	Venezuela	Worsening economic, political and security conditions Rumors that Title 42 did not apply to Venezuelans	Northbound migration from Venezuela Honduras as country of transit
2022	U.S.	Biden administration announces end to Title 42	Massive northbound migration from Venezuela Honduras as country of transit

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