

My family, my roots, my future

International Migration and Youth in the Western Highlands of Guatemala



My family, my roots, my future: International Migration and Youth in the Western Highlands of Guatemala

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Index

Acronyms	9
Prologue	11
Introduction	13
1. Presentation	15
1.1 Background	15
1.2 Objectives	16
2. Theoretical Framework	18
2.1 Approach to the Study of International Migration and Immobility	18
2.2 Approach to Recent International Migration in Guatemala	27
2.3 The Reality of Young People in Guatemala	30
3. Methodology	33
3.1 Timing and Phases	33
3.2 Methodological Strategy	34
3.3 Quantitative Strategy: A Survey of Young People ages 18–30	36
3.3.1. Qualitative Strategy: Focus Groups and Interviews	45
3.3 Characteristics of the Municipalities	50
3.4 Characteristics of Surveyed Youth	63
4. Principal Study Results	70
4.1 Reality of youth in the Selected Municipalities	70
4.1.1 Education	70
4.1.2 Socioeconomic Factors	77
4.1.3 Political Factors	87
4.1.4 Community and Cultural Factors	91
4.2 Migration in the Municipalities Studied	95
4.2.1 Migration Intention among young people	99
4.2.2 Intention to Remain	114
5. Initiatives for Young People in Guatemala’s Western Highlands	120
5.1 Current Local Initiatives in the Municipalities Studied	120

5.2 Possible Alternatives to Irregular Migration and to Strengthen Interest in Remaining	126
6. Main Findings of the Study	144
6.1 Drivers of International Migration	144
6.2 Intention to Migrate and Remain among Young People.....	147
6.3 Current Socioeconomic Initiatives in the selected municipalities	153
6.4 Recommendations for Working with Youth in Guatemala's Western Highlands.	155
References	158

Figures, graphs and tables index

Figure 1 Model of migration drivers	22
Figure 2 Aspiration / capability model of migration.....	24
Figure 3 Location of municipalities selected for the study	42
Figure 4 Quantitative strategy implementation path	45
Figure 5 Aspiration/ability model based on survey results	117
Graph 1 Distribution of sectors per municipality and geographical area	41
Graph 2 Distribution of the number of surveys per municipality and geographical area	41
Graph 3 Total population of 18 selected municipalities.....	51
Graph 4 Population 18 - 30 years old in selected municipalities.....	52
Graph 5 Percentage of population 8-30 years old in selected municipalities.....	52
Graph 6 Percentage of population by ethnic self-identification (indigenous and non-indigenous)	53
Graph 7 Percentage of population by area of residence (urban and rural)	54
Graph 8 Estimate of extreme, non-extreme, and total poverty percentages using the Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) method	55
Graph 9 Basic services and housing deficit (%)	56
Graph 10 State Density Index (SDI) 2010	57
Graph 11 Highest educational level attained by the population has not formal education he population ages four and older (%).....	58

Graph 12 International migration rates and households receiving remittances (%)	59
Graph 13 International migrants (2002–2018)	60
Graph 14 Population (ages 18 to 30) in 2018 from selected municipalities	61
Graph 15 Ethnic self-identification of young people in selected municipalities.	62
Graph 16 Number of surveys per municipality	63
Graph 17 Number of respondents by gender, per migration area	64
Graph 18 Percentage of survey respondents by geographical area, per migration area	64
Graph 19 Number of respondents per age (by year)	65
Graph 20 Ethnic self-identification per migration area	65
Graph 21 Number of respondents per native language, per migration area.	66
Graph 22 Percentage of respondents by marital status, per migration area	67
Graph 25 Intention to migrate to another country in the next 12 months per area of study	100
Graph 26 Migration intention of survey respondents per area of study and gender . .	101
Graph 27 Migratory intention per area of study and ethnic self-identification	101
Graph 28 Migration intention per area of study and level of education	102
Graph 29 Migration intention per area of study and whether the person was enrolled in school or university in 2022	102
Graph 30 Migration intention per area of study and whether the young person was looking for a job or was employed.	103
Graph 31 Migration intention per area of study and food insecurity	103
Graph 32 Migratory intention per area of study and family ownership of productive land.	104
Graph 33 Migration intention per area of study and household monthly income.	104
Graph 34 Migration intention per area of study and opinion of the country's current economic conditions compared to the previous year.	105
Graph 35 Migration intention per area of study and ownership of land, housing, and business	106
Graph 36 Migration intention per area of study and community participation.	106
Graph 37 Migratory intention per area of study and experiences of discrimination . .	107
Graph 38 Survey respondents' main reasons for considering leaving the country. . . .	107

Graph 39 According to migration intention, why do you think this municipality's young people migrate to the United States?	108
Graph 40 How will they pay for the trip?	108
Graph 41 Migration intention and household members living in the United States	109
Graph 42 Household members of respondents living in the United States	110
Graph 43 According to migration intent, do you have close friends or neighbors currently living in the United States?	111
Graph 44 According to migration intent, have you or anyone in your household received remittances from the United States during the last twelve months?	111
Graph 46 Would your family support your decision to migrate to the United States? .	112
Graph 47 Why do you think people in your community choose to migrate despite knowing the risks they might face along the way?	113
Graph 48 To what extent do you think climate change affects young people's decision to migrate in your community?	114
Graph 49 To what extent do you think the pandemic affected young people's decision to migrate in your community?	114
Graph 50 Why have you not considered leaving the country?	115
Graph 51 According to migratory intention, would your family support your decision to migrate to the United States?	116
Graph 52 <i>Migration intention according to respondents' characteristics</i>	148
Graph 53 <i>Migration intention and family reality</i>	149
Graph 54 <i>Statements with which respondents identify</i>	153
 Table 1 Main findings of CRS-USCCB 2020 study	 15
Table 2 Migration dimensions and drivers	21
Table 3 Immobility explanatory framework.	25
Table 4 Research phase (July 2021 - September 2022)	33
Table 5 Methodological strategy summary	34
Table 6 Sample calculation parameters	38
Table 7 Results and calculations	38
Table 8 Municipalities by migration rate (areas of study)	39

Table 9 Distribution of study units per department, municipality, and sector.....	40
Table 10 Scope of qualitative work, phase I and II.....	49
Table 11 Educational reality of surveyed youth.....	70
Table 12 Socioeconomic reality of surveyed youth.....	77
Table 13 Jobs for young people in Totonicapán.....	81
Table 14 Political reality of surveyed youth.....	87
Table 15 Community and cultural reality of surveyed youth.....	91
Table 16 Variables related to the intention to migrate and remain in the community based on the probabilistic econometric model.....	119
Table 17 Variables related to migration intention according to the probabilistic econometric model results.....	119
Table 18 Characteristics of successful and unsuccessful initiatives in the selected municipalities.....	142
Table 19 Main challenges young people (ages 18 to 30) face in selected municipalities.....	145
Table 20 Variables related to the intention to migrate and to remain.....	150
Table 21 Survey results according to immobility explanation.....	151

Acronyms

ACMI	Association of Coffee Growers of San Miguel Ixtahuacán
ADAT	Association of Coffee Growers of San Martín Cuchumatán
ADESJU	Association for the Sustainable Development of Youth
ADIJE	Integral Development Association of Young Entrepreneurs
AMMID	Maya Mam Association of Research and Development
ASODIETT	Association of Differentiated and Specialty Coffee Producers of Guatemala
CDRO	Western Rural Development Cooperation Association
COCODE	Community Development Councils
COMUDE	Municipal Development Councils
CONJUVE	National Council for Youth
CRS-USCCB	Catholic Relief Services-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
DEDGT	Department of Studies on Global and Territorial Dynamics
DESGUA	Sustainable Development Association for Guatemala
DIFAM	Association for Integral Family Development
DMM	Municipal Directorate of Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FUNDESA	Foundation for the Development of Guatemala
ICEFI	Central American Institute of Fiscal Studies
ICESH	Institute for Research in Socio-Humanistic Sciences
IDESAC	Institute for the Socioeconomic Development of Central America
IGER	Guatemalan Broadcast Education Institute
INE	National Statistics
INTECAP	National Technical Training Institute
MAGA	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food
MIDES	Ministry of Social Development
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINTRAB	Ministry of Labor
MSPAS	Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare
OMJ	Municipal Youth Services Office
PRODESSA	Santiago Development Project
PRONEA	National Alternative Education Program
SESAN	Secretariat of Food and Nutrition Security
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
URL	Rafael Landívar University
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VRIP	Vice-Presidency for Research and Projection at Rafael Landívar University

Prologue

Several studies have already contributed to understanding the causes of international migration in the case of Guatemala, whose reality shares characteristics with migration from Central America and Mexico to the United States. These studies have provided important findings related to determining that in the last two decades international migration is multi-causal. However, economic motivation continues to be fundamental in the search for employment and better income; but there are also other motivations such as family reunification, fleeing violence or as a consequence of greater vulnerability due to extreme climatic events and environmental degradation. It is also known that the migrant population is mainly youth and male, although the number of women, family groups, LGBTQI population and accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children has increased.

On the other hand, studies that have sought to delve deeper into the conditions that root or cause populations to decide to stay have been limited. The study conducted by Catholic Relief Services in 2020 “Between rootedness and the decision to migrate. A study on the main factors that influence the intention to stay in the country of origin or to migrate” was a pioneer in this line of studies. Findings prompted a second study to delve deeper into the factors involved in the decision of young people to migrate or remain in their country of origin. To do so, it was necessary to carry out a more extensive investigation, using research instruments that would allow the universe studied to be broadened. In this opportunity, the Institute of Socio-Humanistic Sciences of the Vice-Rectorate of Research and Projection of the Rafael Landívar University was responsible for making a methodological proposal that would delve theoretically into this reality and apply a mixed method to study young people in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

Study results lead us, first, to one of the micro scales of migration, related to the decisions of the people who migrate. Among the findings, the main factors implicated in the decision to migrate or to stay are the attachment to the family and the community, as well as the different roles that can be played there. Among these roles that young people can play are the aspirations regarding their insertion in social participation processes in comprehensive spheres related to their interests. However, this study also confirms that structural causes related to poverty, inequality and exclusion continue to be factors that promote international migration.

Despite the above, it is important to note that most youth who participated in the study showed their intention to stay and hence the importance of knowing some of the alternatives that are generating in the communities of origin of migrants. For example, entrepreneurship has had a renewed rise to cushion the economic and

employability challenges during the pandemic. However, other social activities such as housing construction, leadership training, among others, were also identified. There are examples that young people have many possibilities to carry out new productive and service activities in their communities, however, the study also reveals the great existing limits on public policies oriented to the territories and to the families, because finally the migration of internal or external youth also responds to a family survival strategy in these contexts of historical exclusion. Therefore, more comprehensive policies or initiatives that motivate youth in other areas of their aspirations and broaden their possibilities for participation in community development become important.

Beyond the knowledge of the aspects covered, this study has additional value given by the coordination effort between an international cooperation entity that works hand in hand with national partners in the territories where international migration takes place, and an academic entity such as the Rafael Landívar University. From the planning of the study to its publication, the exchange of perspectives, the collaboration achieved between researchers, surveyors, research subjects and relevant actors in the territories were valuable. Equally important will be the possible public action activities that can be carried out together, contributing to the need for strategic alliances to achieve a greater impact on changing the social conditions of the territories where irregular migration is generated in increasingly forced conditions.

Let this study serve to further deepen the reality of young people who dream and are willing to create a better future in their communities, but when they do not achieve it, they are forced to migrate or are also called to do so to fulfill their expectations of social mobility and human development. As well as for decision makers, to establish public policies, programs and projects of greater impact in these territories and sectoral policies in education, health, housing and comprehensive development of young people that reach especially those most excluded sectors such as rural youth, women and indigenous peoples.

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Introduction

In 2021, Catholic Relief Services approached the Vice-Presidency for Research and Projection at Rafael Landívar University to establish an alliance to conduct a study. The aim was to identify, among the socioeconomic initiatives directed at young men and women in the selected territories, which elements could serve as alternatives to irregular migration, reinforcing the interest in remaining in the territory. During 2021 and 2022, the Department of Studies on Global and Territorial Dynamics (Dedgt), attached to the Research Institute in Socio-Humanistic Sciences (Icesh) of VRIP, developed a research process using a mixed methodology to approach the reality of youth in 18 municipalities of the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

The report presented here is divided into six main sections. The first section presents the study, including the background, objectives, and research questions, as well as the theoretical and methodological approach that constitutes the study's framework. The second section addresses the context of recent international migration in the Western Highlands, as well as an approximation of the reality of youth in Guatemala. The third section presents the methodology used for the study and details the qualitative and quantitative strategy. This section includes a characterization of the 18 selected municipalities for the study, as well as a characterization of the young people who participated in the survey.

The fourth section presents the main results of the study regarding the reality of youth in four different areas (educational, socioeconomic, political, community, and cultural), as well as the migratory reality in the selected municipalities. The fifth section presents the initiatives for youth in the selected municipalities. Finally, the sixth section presents the main findings of the study around four major themes: (1) the driving factors of migration in this region of the country, (2) the intention to migrate and the intention to remain among young people, (3) the existing initiatives for youth in the selected municipalities, and (4) the main recommendations for working with youth in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

1. Presentation

1.1 Background

Between May and October 2020, Catholic Relief Services-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (CRS-USCCB) researched the drivers of migratory intentions of residents in rural communities in Guatemala where CRS-USCCB has a presence. The study, entitled *Between rootedness and the decision to migrate*, a study on the main factors influencing the intention to migrate or remain in a country of origin¹, aimed to identify main trends, factors, and migration profiles contributing to rootedness in these communities.

The CRS-USCCB 2020 study included quantitative and qualitative components. Quantitative research included conducting 785 surveys with a representative sample of 73 rural communities where CRS-USCCB and its partners have a presence in the departments of Chiquimula, Huehuetenango, Quiché, San Marcos, and Totonicapán. The qualitative component consisted of 84 semi-structured interviews with young residents with migration experiences from rural and urban areas and 12 semi-structured interviews with key informants from entities that work on migration issues. Table 1 summarizes the study's main findings and conclusions.

Table 1
Main findings of CRS-USCCB 2020 study

Migration profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The study identified three profiles of respondents and statistically characterized each: less migratory intention, undecided, and greater migratory intention. These migration profiles correspond to an analysis of the intent to migrate abroad; researchers recognized that the lines between the three categories are not clearly defined and largely nuanced.
Sociodemographic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a significant trend toward younger migrants and the feminization of the migratory flow of Central Americans to the United States. Additionally, people with higher educational levels have greater migratory intentions. Discrimination and various forms of violence, related to gender identity for example, are push factors regardless of place of residence.
Socioeconomic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variables related to work, aspirations, and life ambitions have more significant weight as motivators than strictly economic ones in subjects' migratory intention. Occupation was the only factor with a significant relationship to migratory intention. The varying propensity for migration among people with different occupations is much more significant than among households with different relative poverty rates. People who worked as day laborers in agriculture and construction and as housekeepers had a greater intention of leaving Guatemala, followed by students and the unemployed.

¹ The publication is available at <https://www.crs.org/media-center/news-release/guatemala-most-people-wouldnt-choose-migrate-new-study-says>

NOTE: All tables and figures where no source is specified were created based on this study's surveys and results

Population retention and rootedness factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal, stable employment and employment suitable for training are factors that favor rootedness, the latter being especially relevant for young people. • Access to formal education also favors rootedness, at least temporarily; if education access does not come with employment or income-generating opportunities, it could lead to more significant migration in the medium term. • Greater access to arable land, as well as the implementation and strengthening of collective strategies, not only to deal with the consequences of natural disasters and climate change but also to mitigate their effects, will be essential containment elements in the future. • Social participation can generate rootedness and encourage permanence in the community if it generates hope for improving future livelihoods and living conditions.
Migratory intention during COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pandemic only postponed migration plans. Although only 12% of the sample had intentions to migrate abroad, 27% had migratory intentions before the pandemic but had given up, at least temporarily.

Based on CRS-USCCB study (2020)

The CRS-USCCB study included retention factors that “encourage people to remain in their place of origin and include both rootedness factors and other causes that explain why people remain in their communities” (CRS-USCCB, 2020, p. iii). Rootedness is defined as:

“ A complex bond that joins people with specific spaces and places full of meaning in their multiple affective, identity, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions. The feeling of rootedness or socio-territorial attachment understands territory as the space given meaning by a social group that satisfies its vital needs, both material and symbolic (CRS-USCCB, 2020, p. iii). ”

Rootedness refers to the ties to symbolic and material relationships between subjects in a given space (CRS-USCCB, 2020). The study found that elements that generate rootedness in youth include **(1)** having formal and stable employment which can contribute to generating income; **(2)** access to formal education; **(3)** tenure and access to productive land and ways to improve it; and **(4)** social participation that generates hope to improve future living conditions.

1.2 Objectives

Based on the first study’s findings, CRS-USCCB saw the need to more thoroughly analyze the elements that foster rootedness to better understand their role in the migratory phenomenon in the Guatemalan Western Highlands. In 2021, CRS-USCCB approached the Vice-Presidency for Research and Projection (VRIP) of Rafael Landívar

University to collaborate on this research. The Department of Studies on Global and Territorial Dynamics (DEDGT), which is a part of the Research Institute in Socio-Humanistic Sciences (ICESH) of the VRIP, agreed to follow up on CRS-USCCB's study with new research.

The new research focused on the following study objective proposed by CRS-USCCB: To identify, among the socioeconomic initiatives that target young men and women in the selected geographic areas, which elements could function as alternatives to irregular migration and strengthen interest to remain in said areas.

The study also sought to answer the following research questions posed by CRS-USCCB:

- What initiatives did people identify as sources of formal employment and sustainable income which represent a significant extent of participation in the target areas? To what extent do these entrepreneurship, employment, or self-employment initiatives foster rootedness and counteract the intention to migrate among young people (men and women)? What are the characteristics of the most effective initiatives in generating sustainable livelihoods? What are the characteristics of the most effective initiatives to encourage young people to remain in their communities? Which of these initiatives are most in demand among young people?
- What economic and social structure elements are “bottlenecks” for the growth and expansion of alternatives so that the population remains in their communities of origin?
- What elements of the economic and social structure are characteristics of positive deviants, that is, territories or communities that demonstrate lower levels of migration and higher levels of population that seek to remain in the territory?
- What are the main obstacles young people face to undertake entrepreneurial endeavors (training, access to financing, technical assistance)?
- What socioeconomic initiatives (productive, educational) operating in the Western Guatemala could attract young people's attention and change, so they desist from their migratory intention? From young people's perspective, are there differences between income-generating initiatives based on agriculture and other income-generating initiatives? How does climate change impact the effectiveness of agriculture-based, income-generating initiatives as alternatives to irregular migration? Which elements of actions are most critical to fostering rootedness?

- What initiatives (driven by the government, civil society, churches, and the private sector) convince young people to remain in their community? How successful are they? What is the expected impact, population involved, duration, type of employment generated, and level of innovation?
- To what extent do community organization and participation encourage (or not) rootedness and diminish migratory intention among young people, women and men, indigenous and non-indigenous people? What are the most critical elements for community organization and participation that foster rootedness?

The Department of Studies on Global and Territorial Dynamics (DEDGT) of Rafael Landívar University proposed a study to delve into young people's reality in the selected geographic areas in order to understand factors that drive migration as well as those that motivate people to stay. Furthermore, the study would identify socioeconomic initiatives aimed at young people in the target areas that can function as alternatives to irregular migration and strengthen youth's interest in remaining in their communities. To achieve these goals, researchers designed and analyzed the study's results through the theoretical framework detailed below.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Approach to the Study of International Migration and Immobility

Throughout history, various theories have tried to explain why people migrate². One of the oldest and best-known explanations comes from neoclassic economics³ that explained migration was due to geographical differences, regional labor supply and demand, and wage disparities. Based on this macroeconomic theory, researchers developed a model focused on an individual decision, according to which human beings consider migrating as a result of an individual and rational decision based on the cost-benefit analysis they observe in regional wage disparities, as well as the supply and demand of labor. The new economics of migration enriched this theoretical

² To learn more about this topic, the authors recommended reading the following texts, which they used to prepare this summary of the theoretical approaches to the migration study: *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of Millennium* (Massey *et al.*, 1998); *Clandestinos: Migración México-Estados Unidos en los albores del siglo XXI* (Durand & Massey, 2003); and *La explicación teórica de las migraciones: luz y sombra* (Arango, 2003).

³ The leading exponents of this theory are John Fei, Gustav Ranis, Michael Todaro, Lydia Maruszko, and John R. Harris.

approach;⁴ it proposed that family decisions also motivate migration by seeking to diversify income sources. Migration thus allows families to make a relative profit in contrast with the community and minimize economic risks.

Subsequently, new approaches were emerging that tried to break from the previous analytical model that was focused on decision making at the micro level (the individual or the family). The theory of segmented labor markets⁵ arose from the proposal that migration is due to attraction factors in destination countries, including high demand for labor activities the native population does not want to engage in. The theory of world systems⁶ explained migration within the framework of capitalism expansion, which led to the perpetuation of inequality, and not simply the sum of individual or family decisions.

Other theoretical approaches have attempted to explain the factors that perpetuate migration. These approaches generated the **theory of social capital**,⁷ which contributes to understanding migratory networks, which in turn enable and facilitate new migrations by connecting migrant communities at their origin and destination. The **theory of cumulative causation**⁸ states that when migratory networks reach a level of maturity, they allow migration to begin to self-perpetuate, reducing migration costs and risks. This theory explains that migration changes cultural values and perceptions in the communities of origin, which increases the possibility of migrating. According to Durand, Massey, and Malone (2009), although migration can begin for different reasons, such as wage differences, market crises, or structural change, it is possible to find other factors that perpetuate international migration throughout the migratory process.

After reviewing theories addressing migration, experts in this field (Massey *et al.*, 1998) conclude that any theory that seeks to explain migration satisfactorily must consider the following elements:

1. Structural forces in countries of origin
2. Structural forces in destination countries
3. Social, economic, and cultural structures that arise between origin and destination
4. Migrants' motivations, goals, and aspirations

⁴ The leading exponent of this theory is Oded Stark.

⁵ The leading exponent of this theory is Michael Piore.

⁶ Paul Singer, Alejandro Portes, John Walton, Elizabeth Petras, Saskia Sassen, and Ewa Morawska agree with this line of thought.

⁷ Douglas Massey, Rafael Alarcón, Jorge Durand, and Humberto González are among its leading exponents.

⁸ Gunnar Myrdal was the first to identify the process of cumulative causation, which Douglas Massey took up later and applied to the study of migration.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

In recent decades, several social scientists have approached the **study of immobility** to understand those who do not migrate. According to Kerilyn Schewel (2019), migration studies need a mobility bias, which emphasizes the understanding of factors driving migration over the compensatory forces that restrict or resist them. Schewel says the structural forces that restrict or resist migration in and between communities of origin and

destination should be added to the four elements above suggested by Massey *et al.* (1998), as well as the aspirations of the actors that respond to these forces.

Joaquin Arango (2003) is also critical of theories that focus on explaining why people migrate and are unable to explain why so few people ultimately do. “Theories about migration would have to deal not only with mobility but also with immobility, not only with centrifugal forces but also with centripetal forces. The venerable pair of ‘attract’ and ‘expel’ forces should be complemented, at least, by the vectors ‘retain’ and ‘reject’” (p. 23).

Why do people migrate? A look at the factors driving migration

Mathias Czaika and Constantin Reinprecht (2020) argue that migration drivers are structural elements that have the potential to facilitate, allow, limit, or trigger migration processes. They prefer to talk about drivers because they feel that when scholars consider migration determinants, they ignore the roles human agency and context play in migration processes. These authors conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on drivers of migration, particularly empirical studies. They identified a total of 24 migration drivers classified into nine dimensions: **(1)** demographic, **(2)** economic, **(3)** environmental, **(4)** human development, **(5)** individual, **(6)** political-institutional, **(7)** security, **(8)** sociocultural, and **(9)** supranational.



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight

Table 2
Migration dimensions and drivers

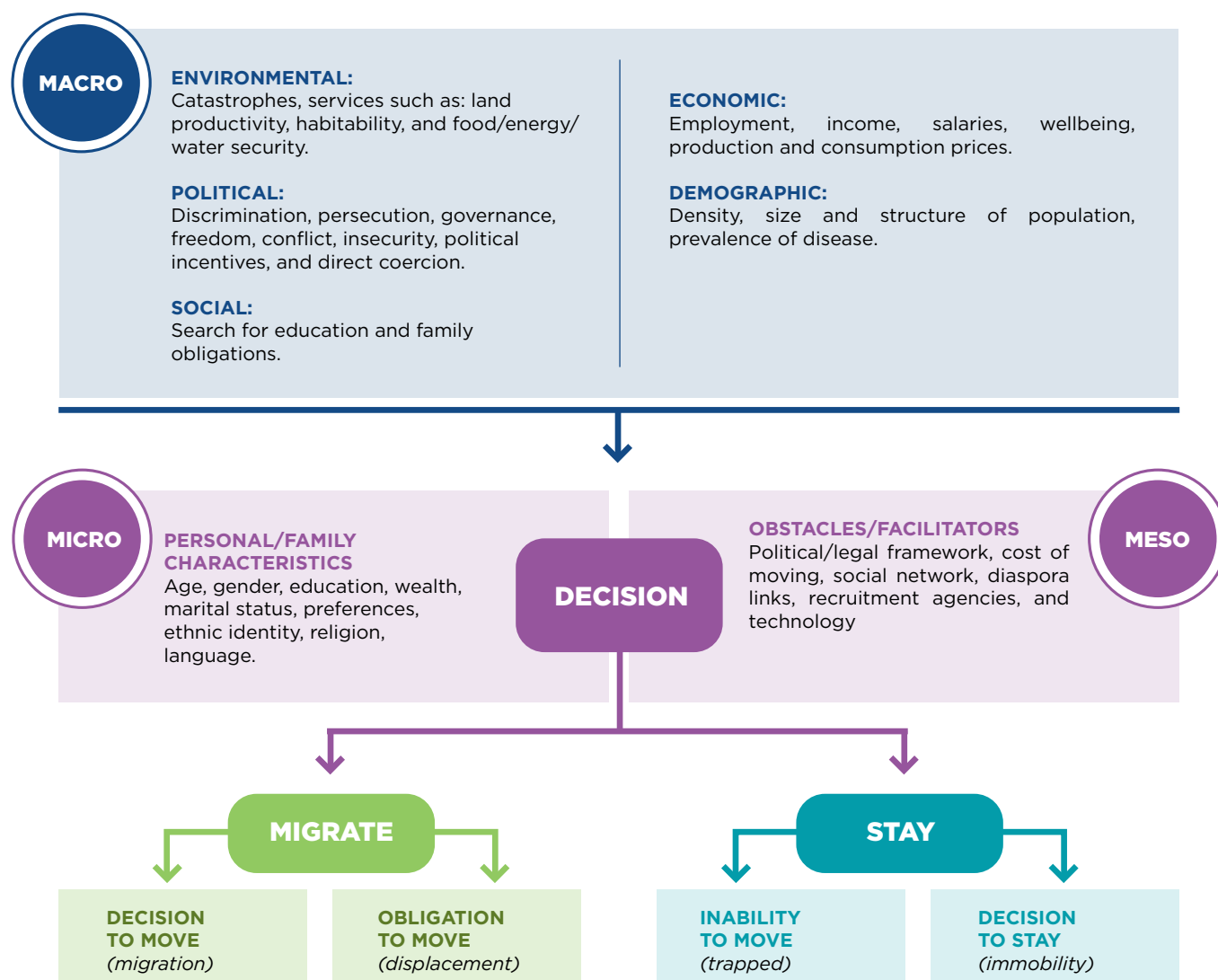
DIMENSION	FACTORS
Demographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population dynamics • Family size and structure
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and working conditions • Labor and employment market • Urban/rural development and living standards • Poverty and inequality
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environmental conditions • Natural disasters and environmental shocks
Human development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational services and training opportunities • Services and health status
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal resources and migration experience • Migration aspirations and attitudes
Political-institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and service infrastructure • Migration governance and infrastructure • Migration policy and other public policies • Civil and political rights
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict, war, violence • Political situation, repression, regime change
Sociocultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and migration networks • Cultural norms and social ties • Gender relations
Supranational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalization and (post) colonialism • Transnational ties • International relations and geopolitical transformations

Based on Czaika and Reinprecht (2020).

The United Kingdom Government Office for Science (2011), which uses Richard Black *et al.*'s (2011) model of migration drivers, has suggested that five broad categories of factors influence the decision to migrate: **(1)** demographic, **(2)** economic, **(3)** social, **(4)** political, and **(5)** environmental. Drivers are a series of factors at the macro level whose spatial and temporal variability can create conditions for migration. According to this model, existence of these drivers does not necessarily imply that migration occurs since the decision to migrate or not will also depend on personal and family characteristics at the micro level and other aspects that hinder or facilitate migration at the meso level.

Researchers have used this framework to understand the impact climate change could have on migration since it will influence the five categories of factors that affect migration levels and patterns. From this perspective, climate change will influence migration outcomes through existing drivers.

Figure 1
Model of migration drivers



Adapted from Foresight: migration and global climate change. Final project report: Executive summary (p. 9). United Kingdom Government Office for Science, 2011

Jørgen Carling and Cathrine Talleraas (2016) argue that the migration-drivers concept broadly covers the different mechanisms that eventually produce migration, including the so-called “deep causes” or “root causes” that refer specifically to social and political conditions, for example, poverty or violent conflicts.

Why are there people who do not migrate? A look at the factors that favor immobility

Most studies emphasize understanding why people migrate and the factors driving migration; however, attention has been paid to why people do not migrate even though most of the world’s people are not migrants. In 2021, the United Nations estimated there to be approximately 281 million international migrants worldwide, equivalent to only 3.6% of the world’s population (IOM, 2021).

According to the model proposed by the United Kingdom Government Office for Science (2011), driving factors do not necessarily produce migration because other factors also influence the decision to migrate, including personal and family characteristics, as well as elements that either hinder or facilitate migration. Czaika and Reinprecht (2020) propose that the answer to why some people do not migrate is in the absence of one or more factors driving migration; however, it can also include some factors driving immobility.

Jørgen Carling (2002) proposed the so-called aspiration/ability model to understand the relationship between the aspiration to migrate and the ability to do so. Carling coined the term “involuntary immobility” to refer to people who have the aspiration to migrate but do not have the ability to do so. The model also allowed him to propose three categories: **(1)** mobility, those who aspire to migrate and have the ability to do so; **(2)** involuntary immobility, those who aspire to migrate but do not have the ability to do so; and **(3)** voluntary immobility, those who have the ability but not the aspiration to migrate. Carling’s model is based on two levels of analysis—aspiration and ability—but it does not exclude other factors at the micro and macro levels.

Later, another migration scholar, Hein De Haas (2003), who follows Carling’s model, proposed replacing the term “ability” with “capability” based on the capacity approach used by Amartya Sen.⁹ For Schewel (2019), the theoretical approach of aspiration and capacity in migration is very useful to understand mobility and immobility.

⁹ Amartya Sen, an Indian economist, contributed to the economic theory of development and welfare. He introduced the term *capability* in a lecture given at Stanford University in 1979 entitled “Equality of What?”, later developing the concept in texts such as *Commodities and Capabilities* (1985); *Capability and Well-being* (1993), among others. This concept refers to people’s ability to function freely, leading a life based on what is valuable.

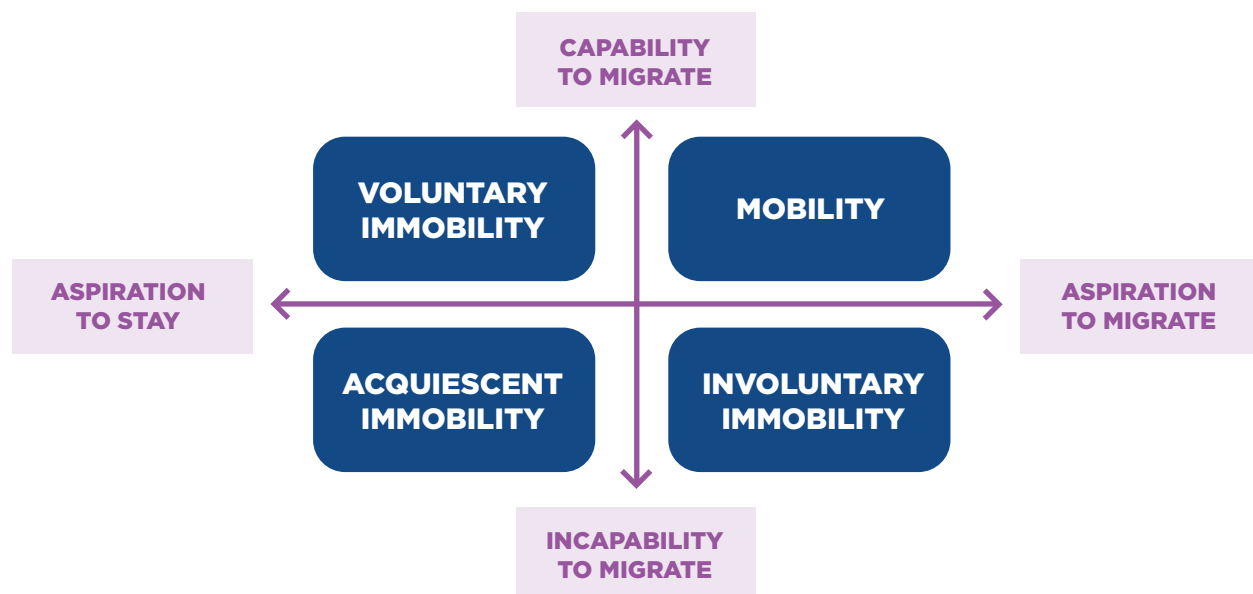
Schewel (2015) presents an adaptation of the aspiration/capability model in migration based on the contributions of Carling (2002) and De Hass (2003). This model relates the aspiration to migrate and to remain with the ability or inability to migrate. Four categories arise as a result of this combination: **(1)** mobility (has the aspiration to migrate and the ability to do so); **(2)** involuntary immobility (has the aspiration to migrate and the inability to do so); **(3)** acquiescent immobility (has the aspiration to remain and the inability to migrate); and **(4)** voluntary immobility (has the aspiration to remain and the ability to migrate). Schewel's (2019) principal contribution is to include a fourth category, acquiescent immobility, to highlight those who do not want to migrate, cannot do so, and accept the restrictions. According to the author, this category challenges the neoclassical perspective and the push and retention factors that assume that the aspiration to migrate should be greater among those with more to earn (economically) and that people from lower-income countries would migrate to higher-income countries.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Figure 2

Aspiration / capability model of migration



Based on Schewel (2015, 2019).

For Schewel (2019), the explanatory framework of aspiration and the ability to migrate suggests two explanations for why people remain and do not migrate. On the one hand, immobility results from structural limitations on the ability to move; on the other hand, immobility results from an aspiration to remain voluntarily or acquiescently. Limitations can be political or legal, for example, migration controls; economic, for example, the lack of financial resources to move; social, due to the lack of human or social capital; or physical, border walls and other barriers. In the aspiration to remain, three categories explain immobility preference: factors that retain (attractive conditions at home that reinforce the preference to remain), factors that repel (conditions elsewhere that decrease the aspiration to migrate), and internal restrictions (elements of individual psychology that influence decision making).

Table 3
Immobility explanatory framework

Immobility	
As a result of structural limitations on the ability to move	As a result of the aspiration to remain voluntarily or acquiescently
<p>Type of limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and legal (e.g., migration controls). • Economic limitations (e.g., lack of financial resources). • Social limitations (e.g., absence of human or social capital such as migratory networks abroad, knowledge of migratory routes or guides). • Physical limitations (e.g., border walls). 	<p>Categories of aspiration to remain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining factors (attractive conditions at origin, attachment to territory and family). • Repelling factors (conditions elsewhere that diminish the intention to migrate such as job opportunities at the destination, financial costs, dangers on the route, xenophobia, and racism). • Internal restrictions (elements of individual psychology, such as risk aversion, a threshold of indifference, lack of motivation).

Based on Schewel (2015, 2019).

For Schewel (2015), dominant migration theories at the macro and micro levels have their roots in the theory of rational choice, which focuses on economic cost/benefit analysis at the individual level. However, the author reviewed literature that

identifies factors beyond economic ones that help to understand the preference to remain. Retention factors include attachment to the homeland and its commitment to development, attachment to the family and the community, and spiritual and religious values. Factors that repel include the stress of leaving home, dangers along the journey, xenophobia and racism, and moral depravity. Finally, internal restrictions include lack of motivation to achieve, little capacity for aspiration, risk aversion, and of indifference.

Researchers understand attachment or rootedness as an element within retention factors that could be associated with immobility. Margarita Quezada (2007) argues that rootedness is like “putting down roots” that create bonds that maintain some “tie” with a place. One or more of the following ties can build this rootedness: family, economic, professional, cultural, territorial, historical, and political. According to this author, there are two ways to create a sense of belonging and identity within a specific territory: (a) from childhood in the family and (b) from integrating other external experiences into the space. From these ideas, researchers say that the importance of rootedness lies in creating meaning and belonging to a given space.

Diana Mata-Codesal (2016) suggests that the question should not be why people migrate or stay, as both questions lead to mutually exclusive approaches.

“*Immobility cannot exist independently of mobility. We decontextualize human mobility if we do not consider the associated processes of staying in place in our analyses. We achieve only partial visions if, together with migrants, we do not incorporate, face to face, the people who remain to look at the relation between the two processes. (Mata-Codesal, 2016, p. 18).*”

According to Stockdale and Haartsen (2018), in the past, studies considered people who chose not to migrate as a remnant of migration; in some cases, they were considered people who failed in the intention to migrate or as those “left behind.” In all these cases, people who do not migrate seem vulnerable or disadvantaged. Therefore, the perspective of immobility represents a break from this idea as it considers people who do not migrate as active participants who receive recognition due to their capacity to act and make conscious and deliberate decisions. For example, in many cases, migration of some family members allows others to remain.

For Hammar and Tamas (1997), immobility substantially contributes to understanding international migration. There are multiple spatial strategies and international migration is only one of them; people use other strategies to remain in their community of origin or to try other forms of migration (internal, cross-border, circular, and others). These other special strategies help explain why there is not a greater number of international migrants in the world. For Mata-Codesal (2016), migration and immobility are family strategies through which families seek to ensure their livelihood.

The broad theoretical framework used for this study helped researchers approach the factors involved in the decision to migrate or remain. From these perspectives, one can delve deeper into elements that could function as alternatives to irregular migration or strengthen the interest in remaining in a given territory.

2.2 Approach to Recent International Migration in Guatemala

International migration to the United States from Guatemala is part of what Jorge Durand (2016) has called the Mesoamerican migration subsystem. In this subsystem, the role of the United States stands out as the main destination country for citizens from Mexico and the three countries of northern Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. According to Durand, the trigger for Central American international migration lies in the civil wars that waged in these countries during the Cold War. Characteristics that define the migratory flow within this subsystem include unidirectionality, high irregularity, extensive and mature social networks in the US, low-skilled labor migration, and a predominantly male migrant profile, although this is gradually evolving towards family migration.

Alejandro Canales (2019) mentions that among the main structural causes of migration from the three countries of northern Central America are high poverty rates and insufficient growth and economic development, and high levels of violence. In both cases, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have significantly higher trends than the Latin American average.

“Poverty, social inequality, low levels of development and economic growth, a productive matrix of low level productivity specialized in primary goods for exportation, maquila, and services, combined with violence and public insecurity, political instability, and organized crime networks generate meager expectations of a better future for children and offspring in the places of origin. (Canales [2019] p. 111)”

Specifically for international migration from the three countries of northern Central America to the United States, Durand (2016) indicates that, although regional wage inequality is one of the classic economic arguments used to explain this type of migration, this factor is not enough. He believes the start of migration required triggering factors such as civil wars and the environmental crisis caused by hurricanes that made international migration possible. Furthermore, social networks between origin and destination have consolidated and perpetuated migration in the region.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

The three countries of northern Central America have gained notoriety in the last decade due to the migratory crises that have become visible in the US because of Central American migrant flows. In 2014, President Barack Obama highlighted a “humanitarian crisis” caused by the arrival of unaccompanied minors and family units at the southern border. Immigration shelters and courts were unable to attend to the influx of migrants. In 2018, during President Donald Trump’s administration, the issue made headlines again when the press denounced implementation of family separation at the border. Finally, in October 2018, the first caravan of Central American migrants departed from Honduras, seeking to reach the US in a visible and massive way. Since then, many more caravans have been organized, even during the pandemic.

These developments have characterized the most recent migratory dynamics in northern Central American:

- a. Diversification of the migrant profile. Despite continuing to be primarily male and adult, there is a transition towards family migration with increasing numbers of women, unaccompanied minors, and family units.
- b. Increasingly mixed flows. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between those who are motivated by economic factors and those who are forcibly displaced and in need of international protection.
- c. New migration modalities. Although the migration flow continues to move primarily undercover and makes use of coyote [migrant smuggler] networks, there are also large, visible exoduses that challenge more restrictive policies aimed at stopping irregular migration in the region (Gramajo, 2020).

Furthermore, for some years, anthropologist Jorge Durand (2016) has proposed that in the case of Central America, uprooting operates as a push mechanism for the population. Durand argues that several phenomena facilitate this uprooting, including (a) family disintegration, (b) daily violence, (c) a massive, destabilizing presence of gangs, drug trafficking, and organized crime, and (d) widespread impunity and obsolete government apparatus that lack institutional foundations. This context causes migrants who, in classical terminology, could be considered economic migrants, to leave the region in search of better opportunities; however, it also causes departure of the uprooted, who, according to Durand (2016), “opt for migration because they no longer have anything to lose, nothing that binds them to the land, community, neighborhood, or the country” (p. 51).

In the specific case of Guatemalan migration, recent studies by Rafael Landívar University (Gramajo & Rocha, 2017; Gramajo, 2019; and Roldán *et al.*, 2020) state that despite the persistence of traditional patterns of internal and cross-border migration, international migration is currently the predominant trend among the Guatemalan population. The causes for migration are increasingly varied. However, economic motivations (income improvement and job search) and family reunification in the US dominate. In the Western Guatemalan Highlands, migration has matured over time and experience; the social capital accumulated between communities of origin and destination facilitates the migration of family groups and even community groups. The Guatemalan migratory flow is mainly composed of adult men. In recent years, however, authorities have observed an increasing flow of family units and unaccompanied minors. Evidence of this shift include detention data from the US southern border and deportation events recorded in Guatemala.

Migration intention among Guatemalans

Since 2004 the Americas Barometer Survey of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) has asked, “Do you intend to move to live or work in another country in the next three years?” answers in the affirmative have fluctuated in Guatemala between 14.4% (2012) and 36% (2021). In the most recent survey conducted in 2021, 64% of respondents who intended to migrate indicated that the most important reason they had to think about migrating was the lack of economic opportunities. This is relevant data as it shows that two out of three Guatemalans who are interested in migrating seek to do so to find job opportunities abroad. In addition, according to this study, the greatest migratory intention was among young men who self-identify as indigenous (Osorio, 2021).

The results of this survey have been consistent in recent years and show the weight of economic motivations in Guatemalans' migratory intentions. In the 2017 survey, 27.2% of respondents said they intended to migrate. This intention was significantly higher among the population under 35, who had family economic difficulties, and who were unemployed (Azpuru, 2018). In the 2019 survey, 25.3% of those surveyed indicated an intention to migrate, which was higher among men between 18 and 25 years old who live in rural areas and are unemployed (Osorio & Wolsky, 2019).

2.3 The Reality of Young People in Guatemala

The term “youth” is understood differently, depending on different variables; however, the age criterion usually prevails. Since 1985, within the framework of the International Year of Youth, the United Nations has defined young people as those between 15 and 24 years of age.¹⁰ The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defined a child as a person under the age of 18, while the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth (2005) recognized young people to be between 15 and 24 years old.

In Guatemala, the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents Act (Guatemalan Congressional Decree 27-2003) established that a child is any person from birth to 13, while an adolescent is any person between the ages of 13 to 18. The National Youth Policy (2012–2020) defines young people as between 13 and 29 years of age; among youth there are adolescents (age 13 to 17) and young people (age 18 to 29). This policy is being updated and validated (CONJUVE & UNFPA, 2020).

Social sciences have gone beyond categorization from stages or age ranges; for example, sociology, demography, and psychology have explored what they call the life course approach. From this theoretical perspective, researchers seek to understand how social dynamics shape individual and generational life. One of its leading exponents, Glen Elder, proposed concepts such as trajectory, transition, and turning point to understand vital events in human beings beyond the age criterion.¹¹ This approach addresses this issue as the transition to adulthood and understands it as a process in life in which a series of social institutions take part (including family, school, church, and government). These transitions give shape and meaning to life trajectories.

Additionally, they are not permanent and can present at different times without



■ Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

¹⁰ See *Global Challenges: Youth*: <https://www.un.org/es/global-issues/youth>

¹¹ See, e.g., Elder, G. (Ed) (1985). *Life Course Dynamics. Trajectories and Transitions*, 1968-1980. New York. Cornell University Press.

predetermination; social and cultural contexts also influence them (Blanco, 2011; Oliveira & Mora Salas, 2008). For the Mexican case study, Oliveira and Mora Salas (2008) identified relevant elements of this transition to adulthood: the exit from school and entry into the labor market, the beginning of sexual life, sexuality and family formation, and leaving the parental home. In addition, they conclude that gender inequalities and social background greatly shape life trajectories from a very early age (Oliveira & Mora Salas, 2008).

In terms of Guatemalan youth's reality, the most recent census, in 2018, showed that a third (35.6%) of the population is between 13 and 30 years old with the majority being over 18 (61.9%) (CONJUVE & UNFPA, 2020). The most recent demographic studies agree that Guatemala currently has a demographic bonus due to a favorable relationship between the productive and dependent age populations, mainly young people and adults. However, researchers also indicate that a country can waste this historic opportunity if it does not create favorable conditions to absorb the demands, especially the labor demands of young people (Canales, 2019; CONJUVE & UNFPA, 2020; ICEFI, Plan International and Paz Joven, 2022).



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

At the socioeconomic level, youth also face countless challenges, including high poverty rates. Results of the 2014 National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI) show that six out of ten young people ages 13 to 19 live in poverty. In addition, poverty rates increase in rural areas: 74.9% of youth between ages 13 and 19 and eight out of ten young people among the indigenous population live in poverty (Plan International & Paz Joven, 2022).

Finally, regarding international migration and youth, the 2018 census indicated that the Guatemalan migrant population is essentially young; seven out of ten Guatemalans who migrated internationally between 2002 and 2018 did so before the age of 30 (INE, 2018). Furthermore, data show that the departure rate of young people from the country has accelerated. Between 2002 and 2006, young people ages 13 to 30 represented six out of ten migrants, while in 2017–2018, youth represented seven out of ten migrants (CONJUVE and UNFPA, 2022).

CONJUVE and UNFPA's 2022 analytical study concluded that Guatemalan youth is diverse and should play a key role in achieving the country's desired sustainable development. However, "the scenario in which most young people currently live,

especially women, indigenous peoples, and rural residents, is marked by a lack of rights and opportunities for their development” (p. 106).



■ Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

3. Methodology

3.1 Timing and Phases

Researchers conducted the study between July 2021 and September 2022 and proposed a two-phase approach: the first phase from July to September 2021 and the second from March to September 2022. In the first phase, researchers created a socioeconomic profile of the selected geographical areas based on existing official figures. They developed exploratory fieldwork to map and outline alternatives or local socioeconomic initiatives for youth in two departments in the Western Highlands, San Marcos and Quetzaltenango.

The second phase involved collecting data from the target population, young people between 18 and 30 years of age, using a specialized survey as well as semi-structured interviews and focus groups in four departments of the Western Highlands: San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, and Totonicapán. In this last phase, researchers also analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data collected and prepared the final research report.

Due to the ethical guidelines of this research, only youth between the ages of 18 and 30 were included as survey participants ensuring all were of legal age by Guatemalan law and were able to give their informed consent before answering the questionnaire or participating in interviews or focus groups.

Table 4
Research phase (July 2021 - September 2022)

OBJECTIVE	Phase I (July–September 2021) Socioeconomic profile, mapping, and outline of socioeconomic alternatives in selected geographic areas	Phase II (March–September 2022) Analysis of rootedness factors that dissuade migratory intention for youth from the selected areas
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literature review on migration and rootedness factors.• Socioeconomic profile of the selected geographic areas based on secondary sources.• Fieldwork to map and outline local socioeconomic alternatives.• Systematization of collected information and proposal for the study's second phase.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and validation of research instruments.• Fieldwork to collect data with the target population regarding the migratory reality, push/retention factors, and local initiatives proposed as alternatives to irregular migration.• Quantitative and qualitative analysis of collected data.• Preparation of final research report.

3.2 Methodological Strategy

Researchers used a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches and carried out the study's first phase between July and September 2021. They outlined the socioeconomic characteristics of the selected geographical areas based on secondary sources and mapped and outlined some existing socioeconomic alternatives based on interviews and focus groups.

The second phase included a quantitative strategy to collect information through a specialized survey, in-depth interviews, focus groups with young people, and semi-structured individual interviews with key actors. Researchers attempted to understand the migratory reality, push and retention factors involved in the decision to migrate, and local initiatives for youth.

Table 5
Methodological strategy summary

PHASE	Phase I (July–September 2021) Socioeconomic profile, mapping, and outline of socioeconomic alternatives in selected geographic areas	Phase II (March–September 2022) Analysis of rootedness factors that dissuade migratory intention for youth from the selected areas.
	Fieldwork: August–September 2021	Fieldwork: July–September 2022
STRATEGIES	Literature review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized literature on migration and youth. Public policies focused on youth and/or selected geographic areas. Quantitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characterization of selected departments based secondary sources (INE, IGM databases). Qualitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with key actors. Focus groups 	Literature review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized surveys on migration and youth. Specialized literature on migration and youth. Quantitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of young people ages 18 to 30. Characterization of municipalities based on secondary sources. Qualitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with key actors. Interviews with youth. Focus groups

SELECTED GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	<p>Two departments and ten municipalities</p> <p>Quetzaltenango (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepción Chiquirichapa • San Martín Sacatepéquez • Palestina de los Altos • San Juan Ostuncalco • Cajolá <p>San Marcos (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sipacapa • San Miguel Ixtahuacán • Concepción Tutuapa • Tejutla • Comitancillo 	<p>Four departments and twelve municipalities</p> <p>Quetzaltenango (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepción Chiquirichapa • Cajolá <p>San Marcos (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sipacapa • Tejutla <p>Totonicapán (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa María Chiquimula • Santa Lucía La Reforma <p>Huehuetenango (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unión Cantinil • Todos Santos Cuchumatán • San Juan Atitán • Santiago Chimaltenango • Chiantla • San Sebastián Huehuetenango
PARTICIPANTS	<p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 106 people: 53 women and 53 men <p>Method of participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 individual interviews • 17 focus groups 	<p>Survey participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 755 valid surveys <p>Focus group and interview participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 participants: 42 women and 33 men <p>Participation method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 interviews • 5 focus groups
SELECTION CRITERIA	<p>Criteria for selecting municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rates of international migration • Located in San Marcos and Quetzaltenango (geographical, historical, and ethnic similarities) • Contact with URL and CRS <p>Criteria for selecting participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth ages 18 to 30 from selected municipalities • Youth participating in collective initiatives/youth groups (selection included CRS-USCCB-supported initiatives) • Key actors (public officials or from local initiatives) 	<p>Criteria for selecting municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities with high and low migration rates • Contact with URL and CRS <p>Criteria for selecting youth for the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 18 and 30 years old from selected municipalities • Random probabilistic sampling <p>Criteria for selecting participants for focus groups and interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth ages 18 to 30 from selected municipalities • Youth participating in collective initiatives/youth groups (selection included CRS-USCCB-supported initiatives) • Key actors (public officials or local initiatives)
SCOPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers conducted fieldwork in 18 municipalities in four departments in Guatemala's Western Highlands (San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, and Quetzaltenango); 755 young people ages 18 to 30 participated in the survey and 181 participated in interviews and focus groups. 	

Researchers conducted the study following research ethics guidelines and strict biosafety protocols due to COVID-19. Research requires a series of ethical commitments involving respect for human dignity, the right to privacy and confidentiality, respect for autonomy, and minimizing damage and risk, while keeping a study's potential benefits as a main objective. URL's Research Ethics Committee of the Vice-Presidency for Research and Projection approved the study's research protocol.

3.3 Quantitative Strategy: A Survey of Young People ages 18–30

The quantitative strategy consisted of developing a specialized survey of youth.¹² The DEDGT defined the survey's objective and designed the survey sample and instrument. DEDGT was in constant communication with the CRS-USCCB team throughout the process. The National Statistics Institute (INE) reviewed and approved the sample design.

Researchers collected quantitative data in 12 municipalities in the Western Guatemalan highlands considering the following criteria when choosing the municipalities:

- Municipal migration rate as a percentage of households; ratio between households with at least one migrant and the total number of households per municipality according to data from the most recent INE population census (2018).
- Average deportation rates per 10,000 inhabitants from the Guatemalan Migration Institute's (IGM).
- Municipalities where CRS-USCCB has a presence through its community development projects and URL contacts.

Sample design

The survey's sampling scheme was probabilistic, two-stage, and stratified.¹³ The selection units were the occupied households of the primary sampling units (PSUs). Researchers made the selection with equal probability for each of the households.

¹² Researchers found that there had been at least three recent surveys in Guatemala related to their study. In the case of youth, the most relevant was the *First national youth survey in Guatemala* (ENJU 2011) from the National Statistics Institute, the National Youth Council, and the Executive Secretariat of the Civic Service. In the case of migration, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Survey on International Migration of Guatemalans and Remittances in 2016. In addition, since 2004 the *Barometer Survey of the Americas* of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) has included a question related to migratory intention, which they analyze in relation to other variables.

¹³ Probabilistic: Method of selection by which each unit of the population (person, household) has a known probability, other than zero, of being included in the sample. Two-stages: The first stage refers to (randomly) choosing geographical areas of the sample framework according to INE, and in the second stage, within these geographical areas (randomly) selecting homes. Stratified: a technique of organizing the sample framework into internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous subgroups to ensure an adequate "distribution" of the sample selection in the important population subgroups (United Nations, 2009).

Researchers calculated the average number of people included in the survey using the following formula:

$$\bar{n} = \bar{n}_{II} * r * b$$

Where:

- \bar{n} is the average number of people to survey
- \bar{n}_{II} is the average number of households researchers seek to survey in each primary selection unit
- r is the proportion of young people ages 18 to 30 corresponding to the total population
- b is the average number of people per household

The following formula calculates the design effect:

$$Deff \approx 1 + (\bar{n} - 1)\rho$$

Where:

- $Deff$ is the design effect
- ρ is the intraclass correlation of the variable under study

The sample size calculation is given by:

$$n \geq \frac{P(1-P)Deff}{\frac{RME^2 P^2}{z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2} + \frac{P(1-P)Deff}{N}}$$

Where:

- P is the probability of success
- $(1 - P) = Q$ is the probability of failure
- RME is the relative margin of error

Researchers adjusted the sample size due to the expected non-response rate (NRR)¹⁴:

$$n_{tnr} = \frac{n}{(1 - nrr)}$$

Where:

- n_{tnr} is the sample size adjusted by the nrr
- n is the sample size
- nrr is the non-response rate

¹⁴ In our case, the survey obtained a 20% non-response rate after performing the pilot test of the instrument in the urban area of Chiantla, Huehuetenango.

The sample size in households is calculated by:
$$n_{II} = \frac{n}{r * b}$$

Where:

- n_{II} is the sample size in households

Researchers calculated the number of primary sampling units by:

$$n_I = \frac{n}{\bar{n}} = \frac{n_{II}}{\bar{n}_{II}}$$

Where:

- n_I are the primary sampling units

Table 6
Sample calculation parameters

CONFIDENCE LEVEL	90%	\tilde{n}_{II}	15
MARGIN OF ERROR	0.07	ρ	0.1
RELATIVE MARGIN OF ERROR	0.14	P	0.5
b^*	4.6	$Q = (1-P)$	0.5
r^*	0.24	NRR	20%

Note: *INE calculations ** Result after conducting a pilot test of the instrument in Chiantla.

Table 7
Results and calculations

STRATA	\tilde{N}	Deff	N	n (ajust)	PSU (adjusted)	nII Red
HIGH MIGRATION	17	2.700	369	462	28	420
LOW MIGRATION	17	2.700	373	467	29	435

The study included municipalities with high migration rates (above 20% of households) and municipalities with low migration rates (less than or equal to 10%). According to the hypothesis, there may be differences in young people's reality and their intention to remain in their community or migrate between those living in municipalities with high migration rates and those with low migration rates.

Table 8
Municipalities by migration rate (areas of study)

DEPARTMENT	MUNICIPALITY	MIGRATION RATE (%)	CODED MIGRATION RATE
Quetzaltenango	Cajolá	40.40 %	High
Huehuetenango	Unión Cantinil	39.20 %	High
Huehuetenango	Todos Santos Cuchumatán	35.50 %	High
Quetzaltenango	Concepción Chiquirichapa	35.40 %	High
Huehuetenango	San Juan Atitán	23.60 %	High
San Marcos	Tejutla	9.60 %	Low
Huehuetenango	Santiago Chimaltenango	9.30 %	Low
Huehuetenango	Chiantla	8.90 %	Low
Huehuetenango	San Sebastián Huehuetenango	8.00 %	Low
San Marcos	Sipacapa	8.00 %	Low
Totonicapán	Santa María Chiquimula	2.00 %	Low
Totonicapán	Santa Lucía La Reforma	1.40 %	Low

Note: Researchers calculated migration rates as the ratio of households with at least one migrant per households without migration from 2002 to 2018 using data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018).

Researchers created the following sample distribution to represent each study area designed for 855 participants, 420 from municipalities with high migration rates and 435 for the area with low migration rates. Researchers used 57 sectors called Primary Sampling Units (PSU); the distribution appears in Figure 9. URL sent the study's sample design to INE, who reviewed it and supported the unit selection.

Table 9
Distribution of study units per department, municipality, and sector

NO.	DEPARTAMENT	MUNICIPALITY	SECTORS	PLANNED QUESTIONNAIRES	CODED MIGRATION RATE
1	Quetzaltenango	Cajolá	4	60	High
2	Huehuetenango	Unión Cantinil	4	60	High
3	Huehuetenango	Todos Santos Cuchumatán	9	135	High
4	Quetzaltenango	Concepción Chiquirichapa	5	75	High
5	Huehuetenango	San Juan Atitán	6	90	High
1	San Marcos	Tejutla	5	75	Low
2	Huehuetenango	Santiago Chimaltenango	2	30	Low
3	Huehuetenango	Chiantla	8	120	Low
4	Huehuetenango	San Sebastián Huehuetenango	3	45	Low
5	San Marcos	Sipacapa	3	45	Low
6	Totonicapán	Santa María Chiquimula	6	90	Low
7	Totonicapán	Santa Lucía La Reforma	2	30	Low
TOTAL			57	855	

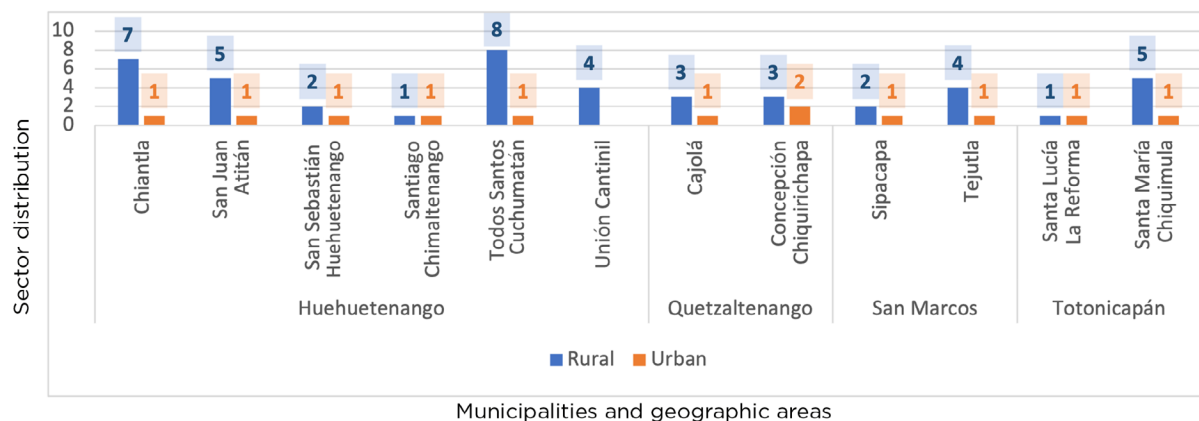
Note: Researchers selected 27 sectors for each study area. Data from INE.

Within each of the 57 PSUs, researchers selected 15 households and surveyed one young person between 18 and 30 years of age in each household. Researchers randomly selected households before the survey team went into the field. Members of the survey team used maps purchased from INE that identified the households the URL team had selected.

Unión Cantinil was the only municipality with only rural sectors and no urban sectors, while all the other municipalities had sectors in both areas. In the department of Huehuetenango, researchers selected 32 sectors, 28% in Todos Santos Cuchumatán, 25% in Chiantla, and the remaining 53% in the other four selected municipalities. In the department of Quetzaltenango, researchers selected nine sectors, 44% in Cajolá and 56% in Concepción Chiquirichapa. In the department of San Marcos, eight sectors were selected, 37% in Sipacapa and 63% in Tejutla, and eight sectors in the department of Totonicapán, 25% in Santa Lucía La Reforma and the remaining 75% in Santa María Chiquimula (see Figures 3 and 4).

Graph 1

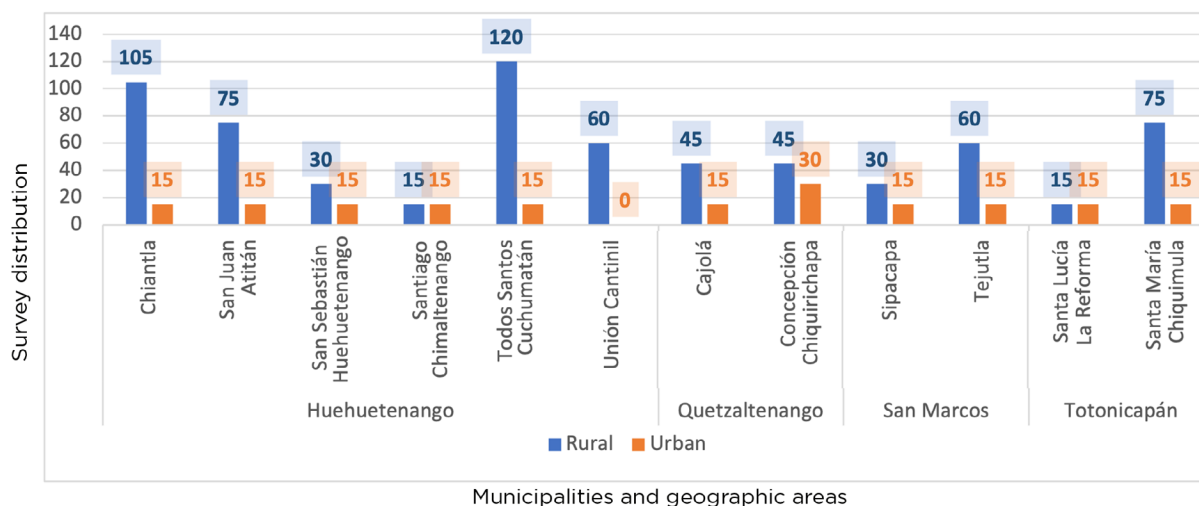
Distribution of sectors per municipality and geographical area



Data from INE.

Graph 2

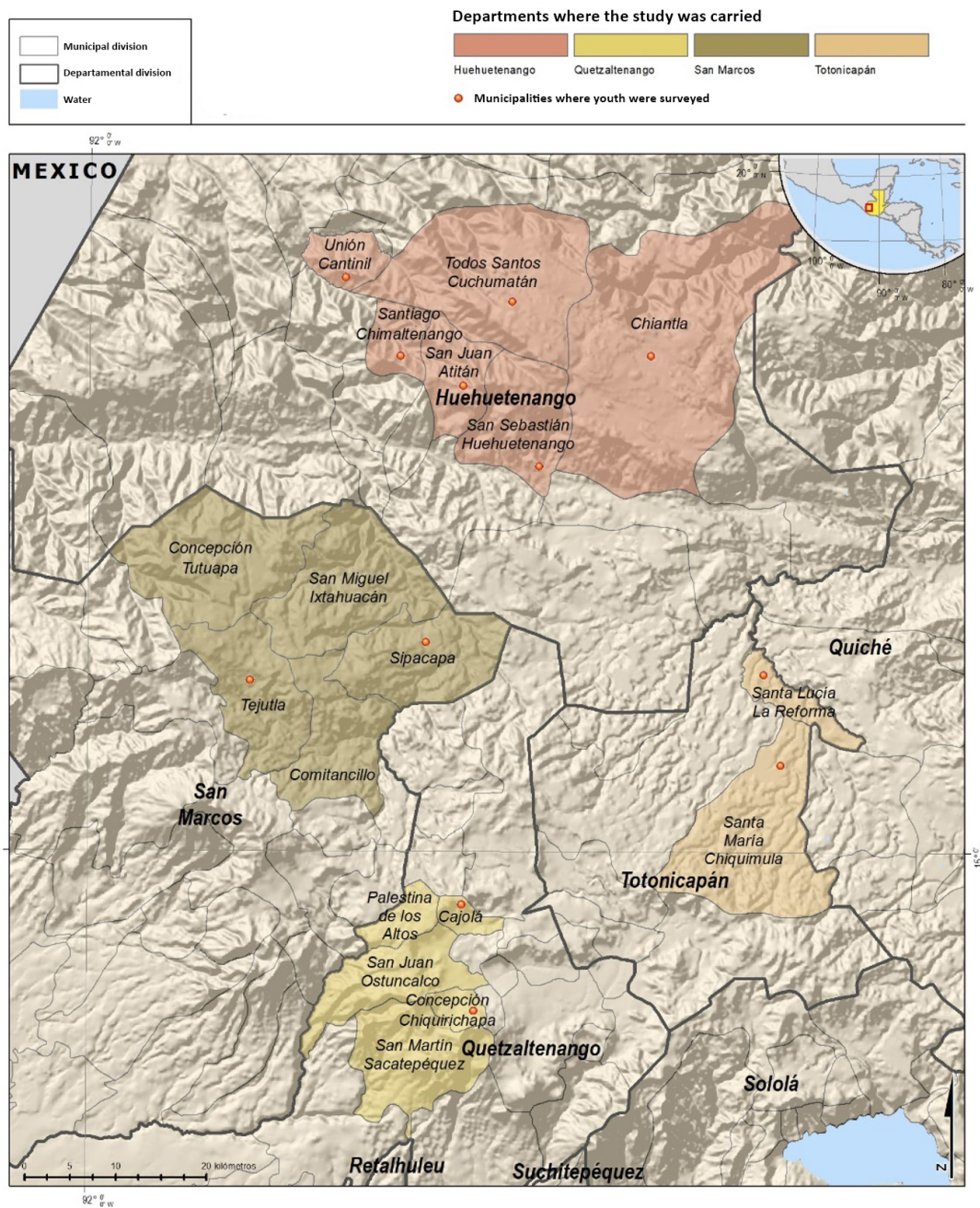
Distribution of the number of surveys per municipality and geographical area



Data from INE.

Figure 3

Location of municipalities selected for the study



Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en mapas topográficos del Instituto Geográfico Nacional a escala 1:50,000 y 250,000, Programa de emergencia por desastres naturales (PEDN-MAGA), 2002.

Universidad Rafael Landívar -URL-
Vicerrectoría de Investigación y Proyección

Instituto de Investigación en Ciencias Socio Humanísticas (Icesh)
Departamento de Estudios sobre Dinámicas Globales y Territoriales

Unidad de Datos e Información Estratégica (UIE)

Fecha de elaboración: febrero de 2023



Data and Strategic Information Unit (UIE) of the Vice-Presidency for Research and Projection of Rafael Landívar University.

Instrument design

The research instrument explored different areas in the lives of young people to identify all elements that could be push and retention factors in determining their intent to migrate.

Researchers observed the following areas:

- **Sociodemographic** (*age, gender, ethnic self-identification, gender self-identification, marital status, number of children, and religion*)
- **Education** (*years of schooling, type of educational institution attended, and reasons for school dropout*)
- **Economic issues** (*employment status, occupation, family income, individual income, and access to productive land*)
- **Politics** (*political participation, perception of politics at the municipal and national level*)
- **Community and cultural issues** (*participation in community groups, discrimination, safety, and environmental vulnerability*)
- **Migration** (*intent to migrate, motivations, migratory reality in the family and community, and migratory networks*)

Validation, training the surveyors, piloting the research instrument

Researchers carried this process out between April 18 and May 11, 2022. The DEDGT and CRS-UCSS teams designed the instrument, and six experts validated it, evaluating its clarity, relevance, and adequacy and sufficiency and consistency of the items in the same section. In addition, researchers asked the experts about their overall assessment of the questionnaire, the number of items, and the validity of the questionnaire's overall contents.

The DEDGT also developed a training process for community surveyors from the Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Juventud (ADESJU) in which researchers shared study objectives, methodology, the field data collection, strategy, and ethical and biosafety guidelines. Finally, the ADESJU team conducted a pilot test of the instrument in the municipality of Chiantla.

Application of the instrument

Researchers conducted the survey using the online tool *CommCare*, a software platform that allows users to design custom applications for Android devices. They developed a digital questionnaire that allowed for data collection in the field and simplified digitization in real time to feed the study database.

Researchers collected information between July 28 and September 30, 2022, visiting 1,294 homes. The database had a total of 855 questionnaires: 88.30% (755) were valid (completed) and 11.70% were lost (incomplete or undelivered). Researchers expected the non-response rate to be 20% and obtained 11.70% non-response rate. The selection of households was completely random based on prior selection using maps.

Database analysis

The DEDGT research team analyzed the survey results (R, SPSS, and Excel) using specialized programs for database management and specific tools for the descriptive and inferential analysis of research results. Researchers used all the sample records identified as valid questionnaires for a total of 755 records. They also performed a descriptive analysis of the sample according to general characteristics of the person and the household, education, economic, political, community, and cultural aspects, as well as specific questions related to migratory intention.

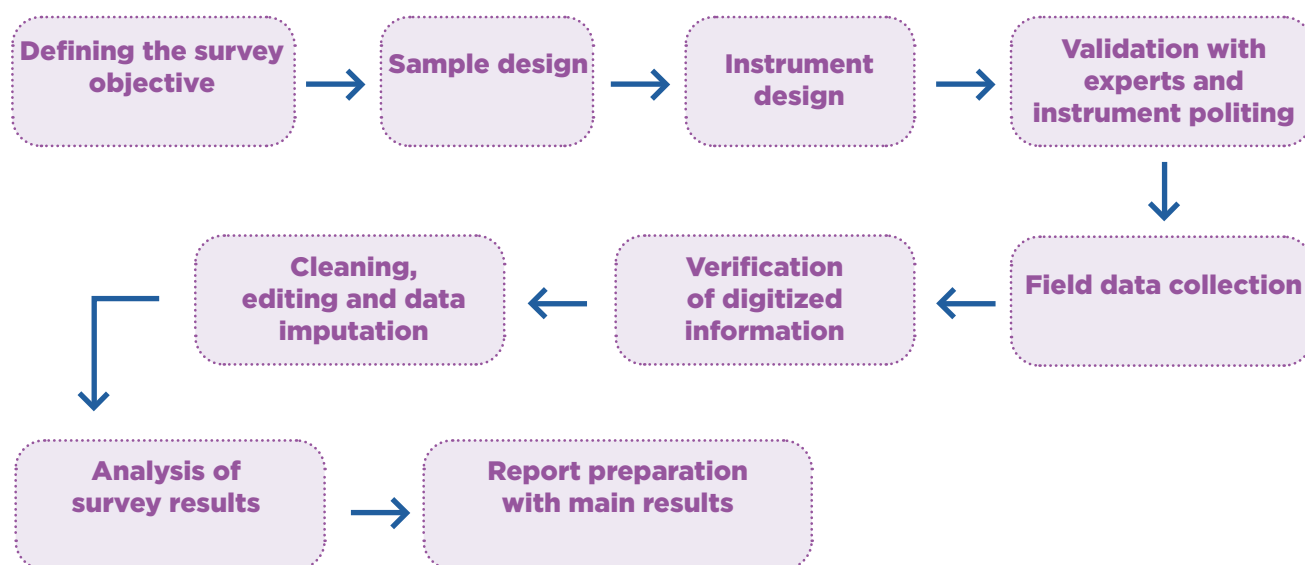


■ Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

They also developed a probabilistic linear econometric model to identify variables that influence youth's intention to migrate. The coefficients indicated the likelihood of the young people's intention to migrate, which was the dependent variable. Researchers reclassified them into dichotomous forms, one being equal to "Yes" and zero to "No." In the same way, researchers classified the responses of the explanatory variables. Initially, researchers calculated a model with most variables that, based on the theory or logical assumption, they

considered to influence the intention to migrate in the coming months. Most explanatory variables in this model were irrelevant, so researchers calculated a second model with significant ones. Again, researchers identified variables without statistical significance and assessed a third model, the accepted one. The results of this model appear below.

Figure 4
Quantitative strategy implementation path



3.3.1. Qualitative Strategy: Focus Groups and Interviews

The qualitative strategy in the first phase included fieldwork in ten municipalities in the departments of Quetzaltenango and San Marcos: San Juan Ostuncalco, Cajolá, San Martín Sacatepéquez, Concepción Chiquirichapa, Palestina de los Altos, Tejutla, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Sipacapa, Concepción Tutuapa, and Comitancillo. In the second phase, researchers visited five municipalities in the departments of Huehuetenango and Totonicapán: Todos Santos Cuchumatán, San Juan Atitán, Chiantla, Santa María Chiquimula, and Santa Lucía La Reforma. Researchers also visited two of the ten municipalities that participated in the first research phase twice: Tejutla, in San Marcos, and Cajolá, in Quetzaltenango.

Instrument design, validation, and piloting

As part of the qualitative approach, researchers designed three research instruments:

- a.** In-depth interview guide for youth who are either program beneficiaries or have ongoing entrepreneurial projects
- b.** Interview guide for local key actors
- c.** Guide for focus groups with youth

These instruments aimed to deepen understanding of the following:

- **Municipality's reality** (e.g., main opportunities and problems)
- **Youth's reality in given municipality** (e.g., educational, recreational, cultural, and political opportunities)
- **Local initiatives to support youth** (e.g., youth-oriented organizations, programs, policies, success stories, barriers to youth inclusion)
- **Reality of socioeconomic alternatives for young people** (e.g., sources of employment, access to land, entrepreneurship possibilities, access to microcredit programs, access to seed capital or technical training, environmental context, vulnerability, productivity, climate change, and natural resources)
- **Migration intent** (e.g., migration history in the municipality, profiles of people who migrate, conditions in which migration occurs, and motivations to migrate)
- **Future perspectives** (personal dreams and dreams for the community)

For the second phase, researchers considered the need to develop a pilot test with each instrument to evaluate whether the questions in these guides met the clarity, relevance, and adequacy criteria when used with research subjects. The pilot test was performed between May 2 and 6, 2022, during a visit to Chiantla, Huehuetenango while, community surveyors from ADESJU were trained.

Applying the instruments

Researchers applied each instrument with participant's prior informed consent and permission to use voice recordings during the interviews.

- a. In-depth interviews with young entrepreneurs or beneficiaries of local initiatives.** The survey teams held in-depth interviews with young people between 18 and 30 years of age in the selected municipalities who participate in identified local initiatives. Interviews were used to reconstruct case studies that would allow researchers to identify local socioeconomic alternatives from a young person's perspective.



■ Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

- b. Individual interviews with key actors.** Researchers interviewed key actors in each municipality identifying municipal officials, heads of local initiatives, and

community leaders who could offer their perspectives on the conditions young people face and the reality of migration in their geographic area.

The selection process followed the dynamics used in the first phase. Researchers approached municipal offices to contact directors of youth and women's services' offices yielding good results with individuals who work with youth programs and coordinate with other institutions, youth groups, and other community leaders. CRS and URL also provided contacts from their work in the selected municipalities.

- c. **Focus groups with youth** ages of 18 and 30, who participated or did not in local initiatives. Each focus group consisted of five to eight young people, which allowed for social distancing required due to COVID-19. The number of young people asked to participate depended on the physical space available. It was also decided that focus groups would be limited to eight participants during the research instrument validation process.

Fieldwork scope

During the first phase, researchers interviewed 106 people: 53 women, and 53 men, through 17 focus groups and 36 interviews. In the first phase, Catholic organizations in the department of Quetzaltenango facilitated contact with key actors. In Quetzaltenango, there was more contact with young people from rural communities, giving researchers another perspective on the issue.

Youth ages 18 to 30 participated in the focus groups and interviews while key actors were from different age groups but all of legal age. Key actors included municipal officials who work with young people, women, or health and food security programs; non-governmental organizations or associations involved in organizational or productive projects; religious leaders, such as priests, members of Catholic youth groups; and collective (cooperative) or individual productive initiatives. This diversity of participants provided different visions and, consequently, a more complex picture of the local reality. It was essential to get to know and be present in the local areas and to talk with young people to understand and put together their perspectives on the reality of each community.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Efforts during the second phase focused on identifying local initiatives that represent alternatives to irregular migration, beginning with first phase findings. The study involved 75 people, 42 women and 33 men. Researchers conducted 26 interviews with individuals or pairs and five interviews with people with some small enterprise or important economic initiative. They also conducted five focus groups with 39 young people. Key actors interviewed were community and pastoral leaders, leaders of programs or initiatives that work with youth, and public officials responsible for Municipal Youth Services Offices (OMJ) and CONJUVE. At least four of the seventeen focus groups were made up of young people who are not part of CRS projects, and in two cases do not belong to any organization.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Table 10.
Scope of qualitative work, phase I and II

	Phase I (2021)	Phase II (2022)	Total
Departments	(2) Quetzaltenango San Marcos	(4) Quetzaltenango San Marcos Totonicapán Huehuetenango	(4) departamentos
Municipalities	(10) San Juan Ostuncalco Cajolá San Martín Sacatepéquez Concepción Chiquirichapa Palestina de los Altos Tejutla San Miguel Ixtahuacán Sipacapa Concepción Tutuapa Comitancillo	(7) Todos Santos Cuchumatán San Juan Atitán Chiantla Santa María Chiquimula Santa Lucía la Reforma Tejutla Cajolá	(15) municipios (Cajolá y Tejutla fueron visitados en ambas fases)
Focus group participants and interviewees by gender	(106) 53 women 53 men	(75) 42 women 33 men	(181) 95 women 86 men
In-depth interviews	36	26	62
Focus groups	17	5	22

Data analysis

Researchers recorded interviews with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed them. During the first phase, researchers did the qualitative analysis using the program Atlas.ti, and Dedoose software in the second phase. They also performed selective coding of the information based on the research instruments' structure and established analysis categories. The coding process generated maps to analyze interviews, focus group transcripts, and make comparisons and triangulations among different municipalities' realities and from the various respondents. Researchers then analyzed the information and began systematization to develop the research report.

Finally, they created a “word cloud” based on the topics youth mentioned most frequently to better visualize key issues highlighted in the interviews and focus groups with the young people.

To prepare the final report, researchers developed a mixed analysis strategy based on main findings from a review of specialized literature on migration and youth and results of the qualitative and quantitative strategies. They attempted to tie together the results of the various methodological strategies to create a precise, rich analysis of the reality studied and to answer the research questions.

3.3 Characteristics of the Municipalities

Researchers carried out the study in 18 municipalities located in four departments in the region known as the Western Highlands, a densely populated area where, the majority of the population is indigenous Mayan, and small-scale agricultural production is widespread. Internal, cross-border, and international migration have historically been survival strategies for families in this region, allowing for social reproduction and protecting lives during the height of the internal armed conflict (Avancso, 2001; Camus, 2008).

General characteristics of the population

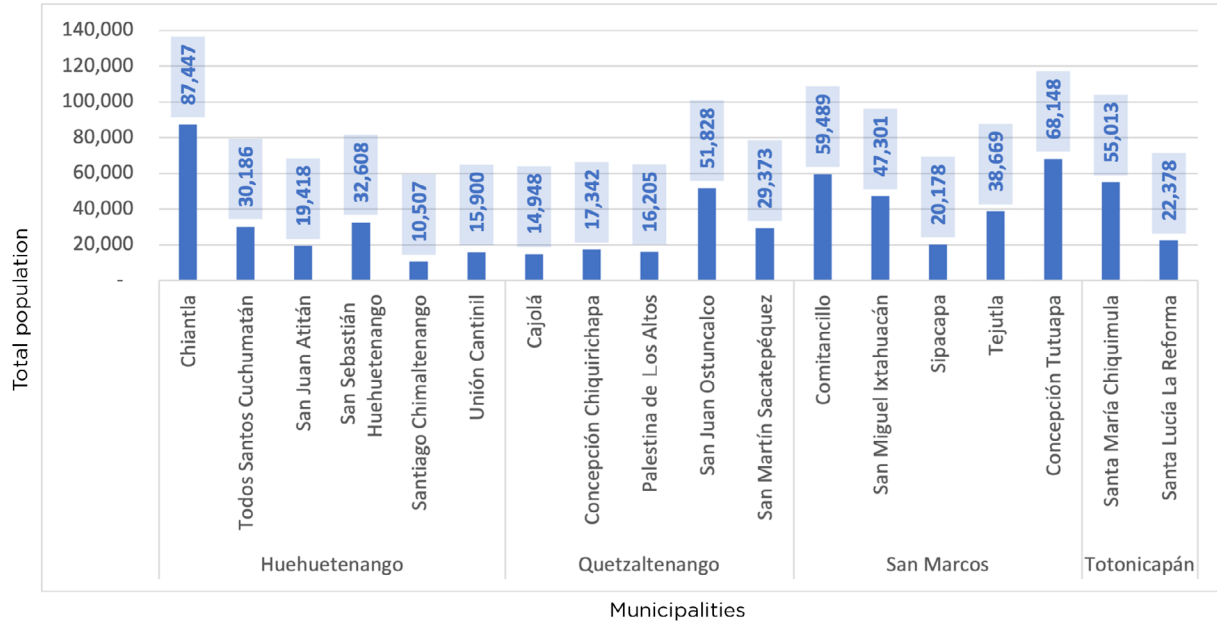
According to the 2018 population census, the selected municipalities have a total population of 636,938. Chiantla, Concepción Tutuapa, and Comitancillo are the largest municipalities and Santiago Chimaltenango, Cajolá, and Unión Cantinil are the smallest. Women make up more than 51% of the population in all of the municipalities, with 58% of women in Cajolá alone.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Graph 3

Total population of 18 selected municipalities



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

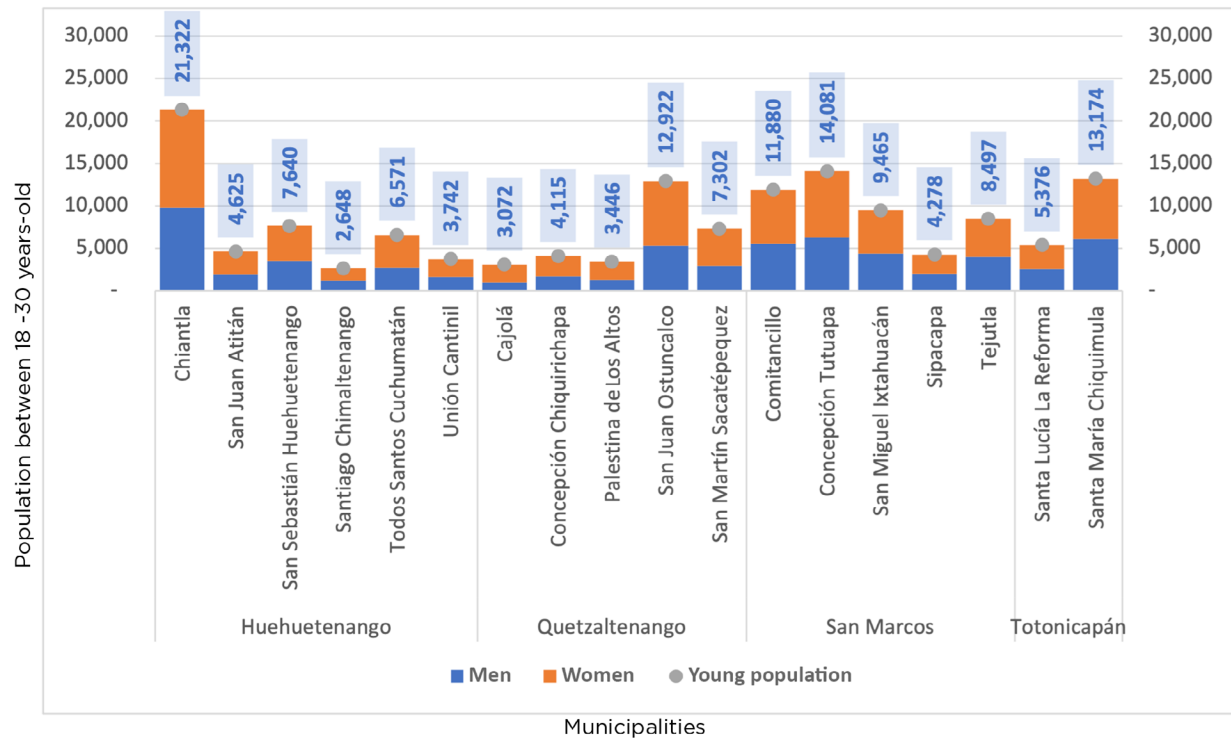
According to the 2018 Population and Housing Census, there are 144,156 young people between the ages of 18 and 30 in the 18 municipalities representing 20% and 25% of the total population. The municipalities of Santiago Chimaltenango, San Juan Ostuncalco, and San Martín Sacatepéquez have the highest percentage (25%) of young people compared to their total population. In San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Comitancillo, 20% of the population is between 18 and 30 years old (INE, 2018).



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Graph 4

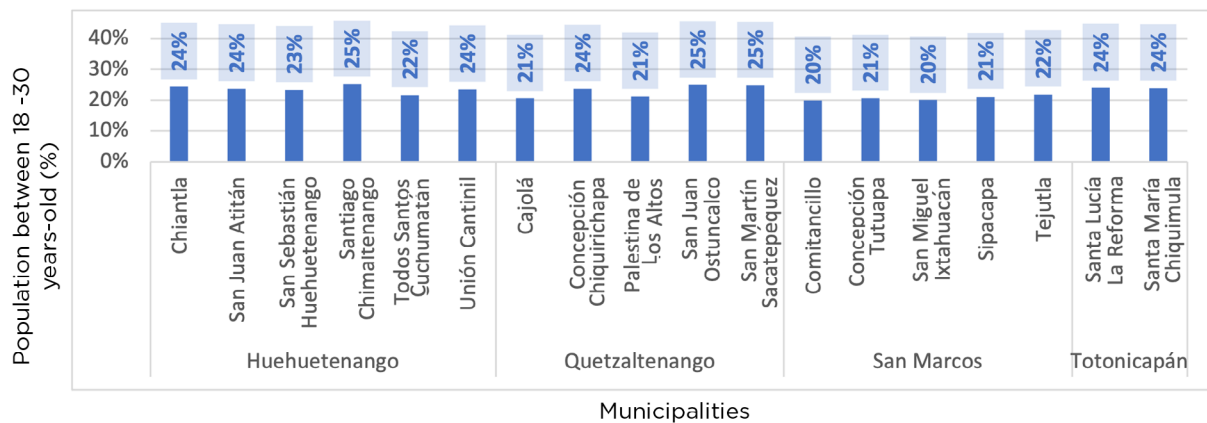
Population 18 - 30 years old in selected municipalities



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

Graph 5

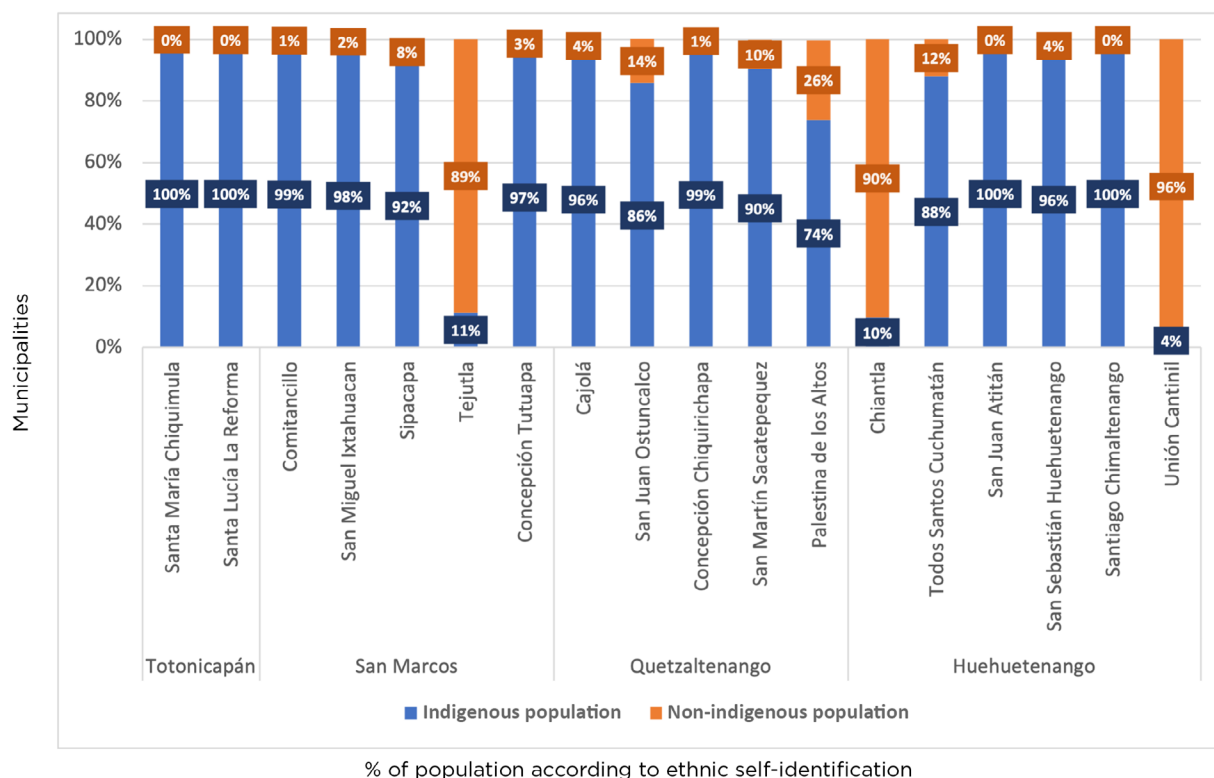
Percentage of population 8-30 years old in selected municipalities



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

According to the 2018 census, most people living in the selected municipalities self-identified as indigenous, except in the municipalities of Unión Cantinil and Chiantla in Huehuetenango and Tejutla in San Marcos. The most important linguistic community is the Mam population, followed by the K'iché population (see Figure 10).

Graph 6
Percentage of population by ethnic self-identification (indigenous and non-indigenous)

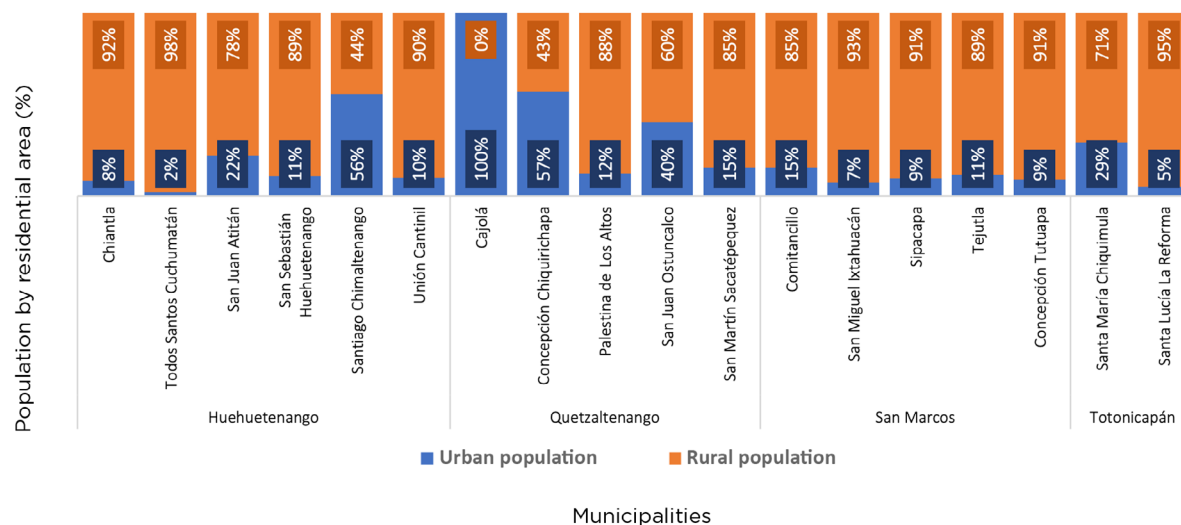


Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

Most of the population in the selected municipalities lives in rural areas. The municipalities with the largest population in rural areas are Todos Santos Cuchumatán (98.1%), Santa Lucía La Reforma (94.4%), San Miguel Ixtahuacán (92.9%), Chiantla (91.8%), Concepción Tutuapa (91.2%), Sipacapa (91.2%), and Unión Cantinil (90.5%). The municipality of Cajolá is entirely urban, and in Santiago Chimaltenango and Concepción Chiquirichapa more than 50% of the population is urban (see Graph 11).

Graph 7

Percentage of population by area of residence (urban and rural)



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

Socioeconomic and human development conditions



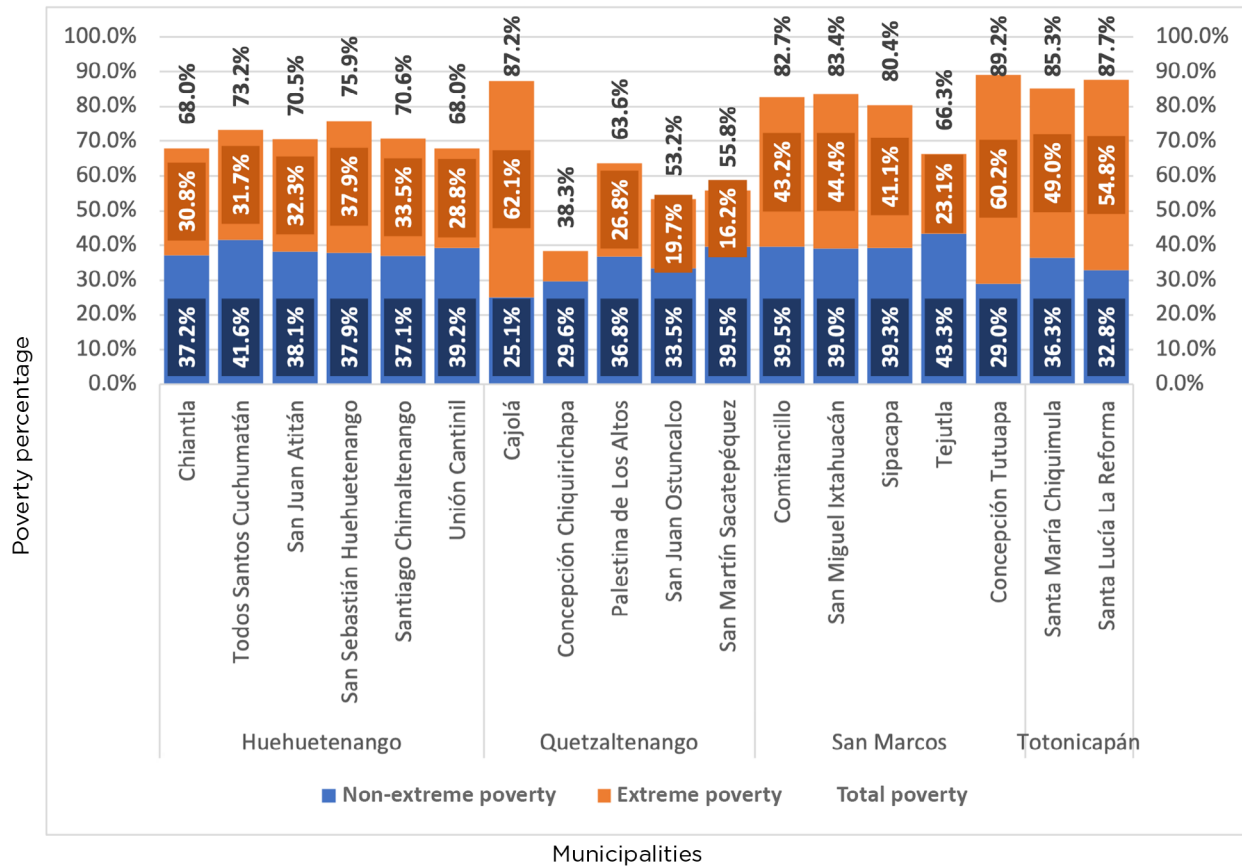
Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Poverty rates in the selected municipalities were determined based on information from the most recent census and using the Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) method.¹⁵ Half of the population lives in poverty in most of the selected municipalities. In some municipalities, more than 50% of the population lives in extreme poverty including Cajolá with 62.1%, Concepción Tutuapa with 60.2%, and Santa Lucía La Reforma with 54.8%. Tejutla and Todos Santos Cuchumatán have levels of non-extreme poverty above 40%. The municipality with the lowest poverty rate is Concepción Chiquirichapa, where only a little more than a third of the population lives in poverty (38.3%).

¹⁵ See Samuel Zapil's (2022) article entitled "Mapas de pobreza de Guatemala 2018, el método de Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas," available online at https://biblior.url.edu.gt/wp-content/uploads/publiclg/URL/ICESH/Estudios_Sociales/2710-317X-n86.pdf The interactive poverty map is available at <https://sie.url.edu.gt/mapa-de-pobreza/>

Graph 8

Estimate of extreme, non-extreme, and total poverty percentages using the Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) method

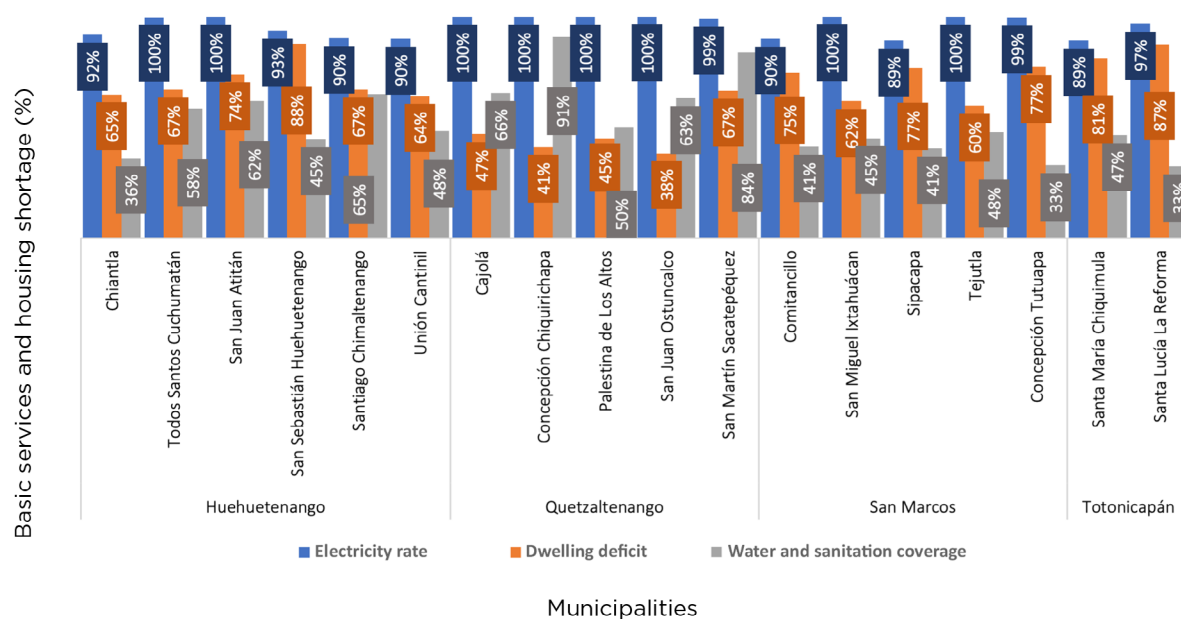


Based on Zapol (2022)

In all the municipalities, at least nine out of ten houses have electricity and a housing deficit above 50% in 14 of the 18 municipalities, which is even more evident in San Sebastián Huehuetenango (88%), Santa Lucía La Reforma (87%), and Santa María Chiquimula (81%). In terms of water and sanitation services, Santa Lucía La Reforma (33%), Concepción Tutuapa (33%), and Chiantla (36%) are the municipalities with the lowest percentage of households with these services. Concepción Chiquirichapa (91%) has the highest degree of coverage.

Graph 9

Basic services and housing deficit (%)



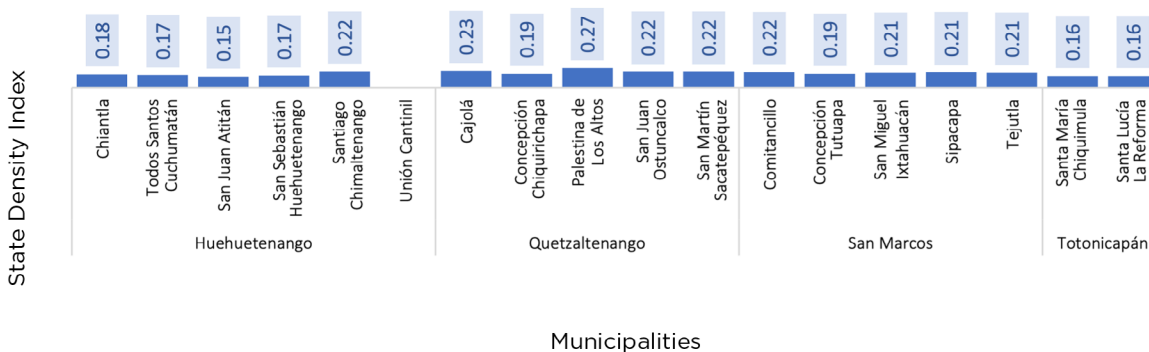
Data from Fundesa (2020).

According to the recent census (INE, 2018), the most important economic activities in the selected municipalities are agriculture, commerce, manufacturing, construction, domestic services, and healthcare. In Unión Cantinil three-quarters of the population works in agriculture. The municipalities with the lowest proportion of the population in agricultural, livestock, and fishing activities are Santa María Chiquimula, where commercial activities are more important, and Tejutla, where one out of ten people work in domestic services

According to Graph 10, the government was relatively absent from most municipalities by 2010. The highest State Density Index (SDI)¹⁶ is in Palestina de los Altos with 0.27, and the lowest SDI is in San Juan Atitán with 0.15. Most municipalities exhibit the same behavior characterized by government absence.

¹⁶ An indicator that allows us to quantitatively measure the presence of the State in a geographical region. If the presence is absolute, the index takes a value of one; otherwise, it takes a value of zero.

Graph 10
State Density Index (SDI) 2010



Note: In 2010 no information about the municipality of Unión Cantinil was available as authorities created it in 2005. Data from the National Human Development Report (NHR) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP Guatemala, 2010)

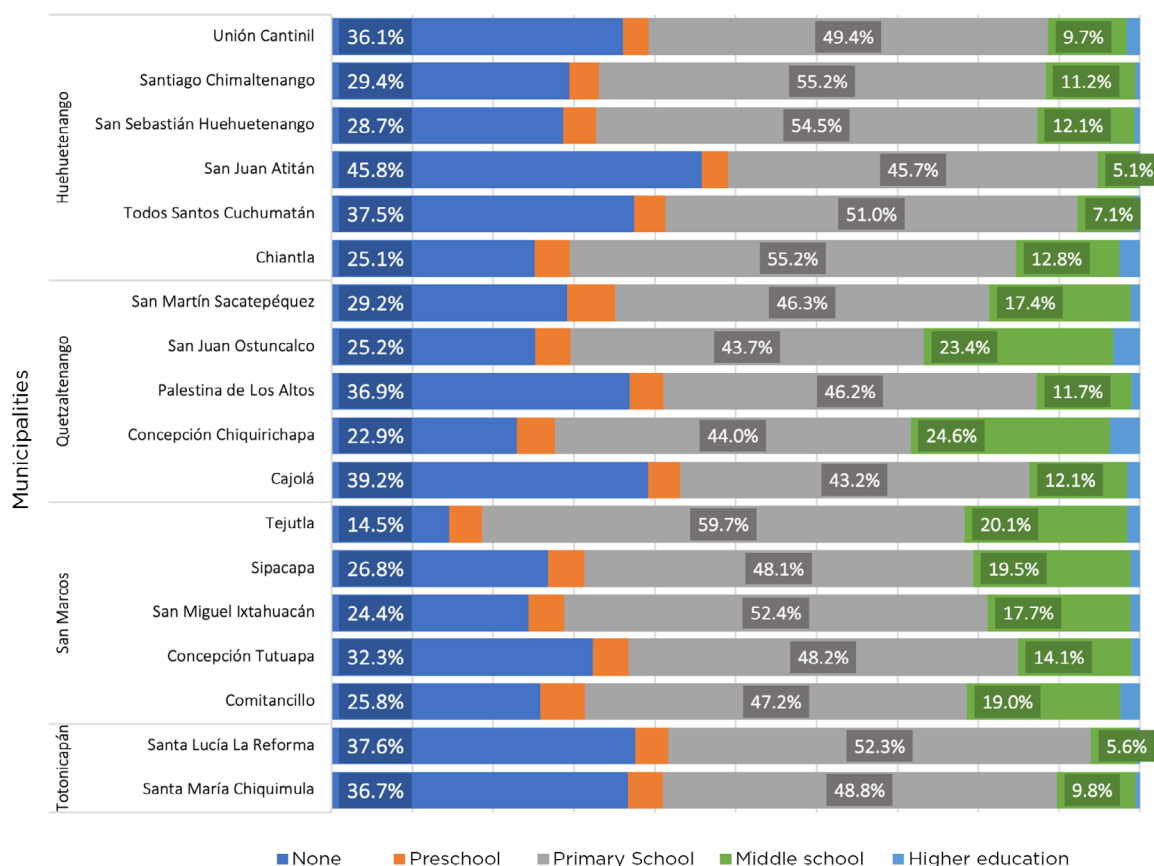
Finally, the most recent report from the United Nations Development Program in Guatemala (UNDP, 2022) presents estimates of the Human Development Index at the municipal level. The index is a statistical synthesis of indicators from three human development dimensions: education, health, and standard of living measured by average income. In the 18 selected municipalities, 12 have medium levels of human development, and 6 have low levels.

Education

All selected municipalities have high levels of population with no formal education. In San Juan Atitán, 45.8% of the population ages four and older have no formal education, and in Tejutla is 14.5% of the population has not formal education. Tejutla has the highest proportion of people who have completed primary school, while Cajolá has the lowest (43.2%). The municipalities where at least one out of five people have a primary school education are Concepción Chiquirichapa, with 24.6%; San Juan Ostuncalco, with 23.4%; and Tejutla, with 20.1%. In most of the municipalities, very few people have access to higher education (bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees). Concepción Chiquirichapa is the municipality with the highest percentage of the population with a university education at 3.6%.

Graph 11

Highest educational level attained by the population has not formal education he population ages four and older (%)



Population 4 years and older according to highest level of education (%)

Note: Values for preschool and higher education do not appear in the graph. Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE,2018).

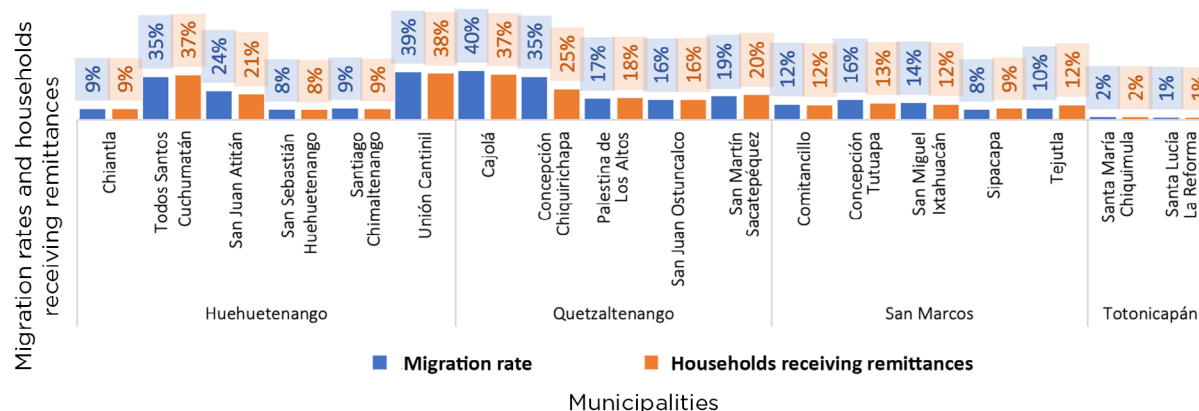
International migration

The 2018 census included the following question: “As of 2002, did anyone who belonged to this household go to live in another country and has not yet returned?” If the answer to this question was affirmative, the total number of people, as well as their gender, age when migrating, and the year they migrated, would have been registered. According to the census, 6% of the total households surveyed reported international migration and 301,069 people having migrated internationally between 2002 and 2018. International migration rates¹⁷ range from 1% to 40% of households in the selected municipalities.

¹⁷ Researchers calculated migration rates as the ratio between households with at least one migrant and those without migration from 2002 to 2018.

Graph 12

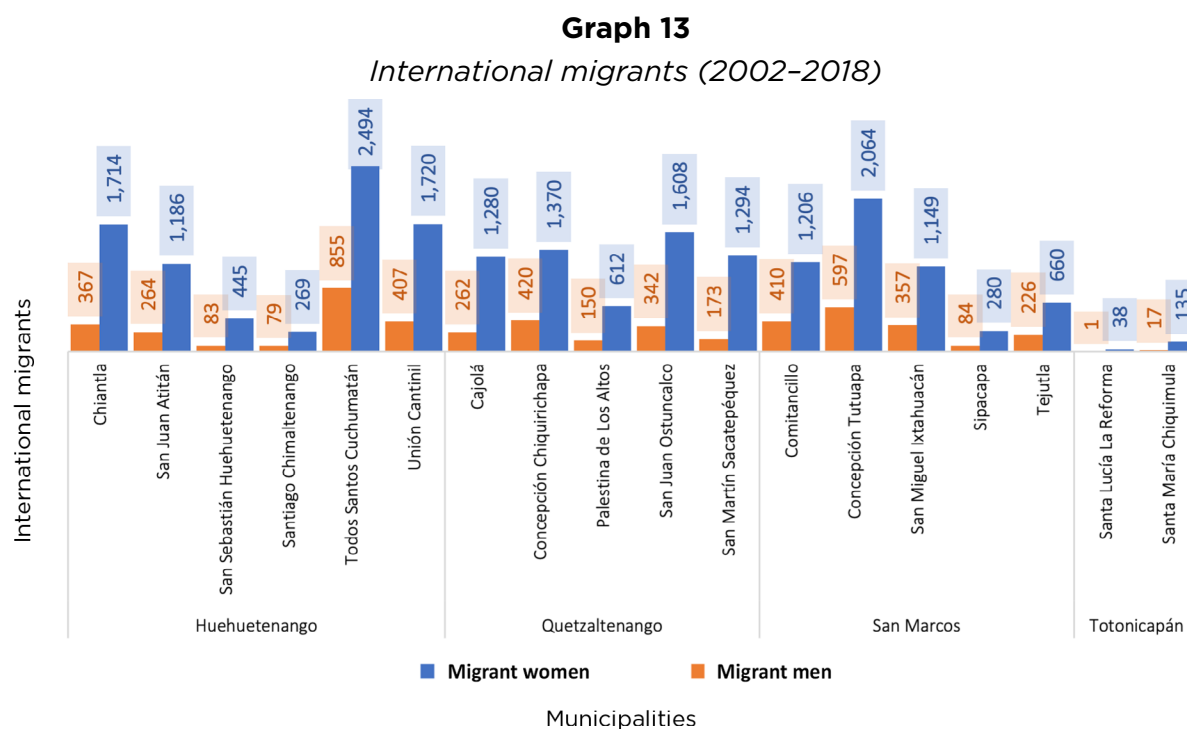
International migration rates and households receiving remittances (%)



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

Four out of ten households in Cajolá had a family member migrate between 2002 and 2018 who has not yet returned, while in Santa Lucía La Reforma, only 1% of households reported migration. The ratio of the migration rate and the percentage of households that receive remittances is noteworthy in the following cases: in Concepción Chiquirichapa, one-third of households have a member who migrated and has not returned, but only one out of four households receive remittances. In Todos Santos Cuchumatán, where 35% of households have at least one person who migrated, only 37% of households receive remittances. Researchers have several explanations for this phenomenon: (1) migrants may send remittances to several households, (2) the person migrated before 2002, and (3) migrants do not send remittances.

According to Figure 17, the municipality of Todos Santos Cuchumatán has the highest number of people who migrated internationally between 2002 and 2018, with 3,349 total people (74% men and 26% women). Santa Lucía La Reforma has the lowest migrant population with 39 people (97% men and 3% women). In all the municipalities, the migrants were mostly men between 2002 and 2018, and the migrants' average age was between 23 and 27 years old. In Cajolá, Sipacapa, and Santa María Chiquimula, migrants were, on average, 27 at the time of migration, and in Santa Lucía La Reforma, Palestina de los Altos, and Comitancillo they were 23.



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census (INE, 2018)

Reality of youth surveyed from selected municipalities

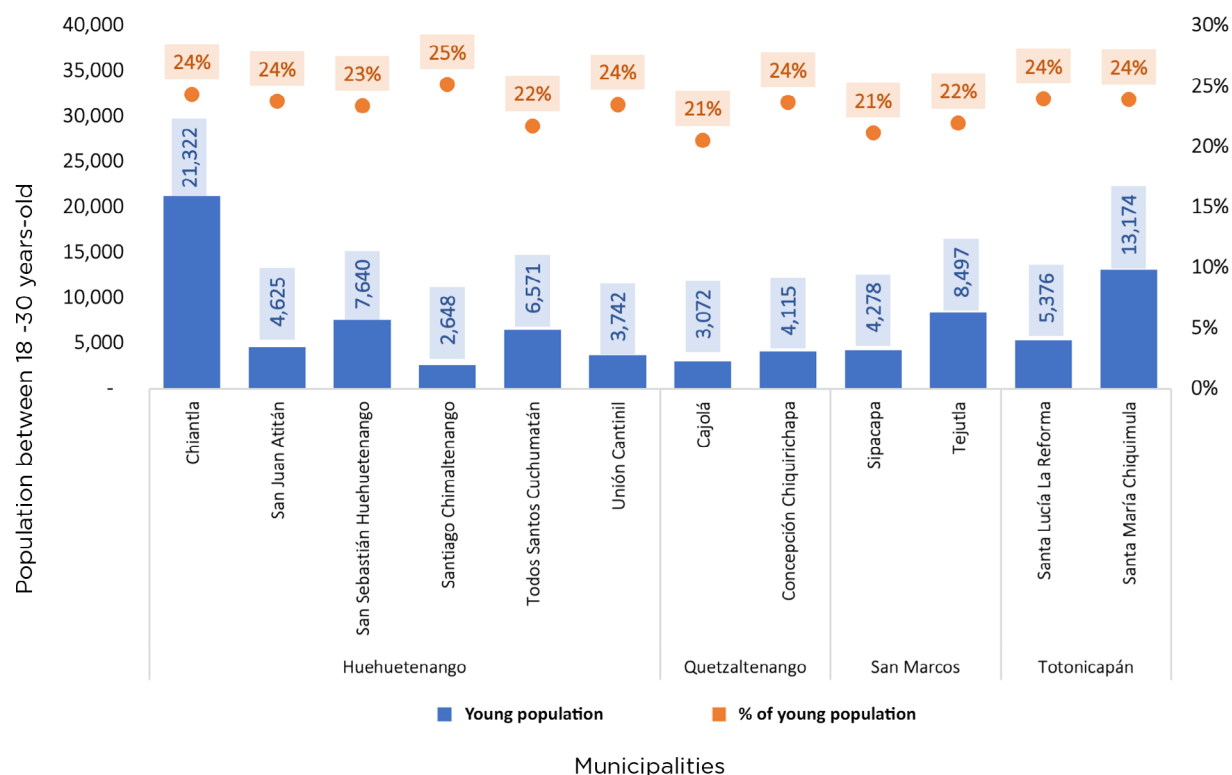
The following data shows information collected through a specialized survey on migration with youth ages 18 to 30 from the selected municipalities where young people make up about a quarter of the total population. Chiantla has the highest number of young people, and Santiago Chimaltenango has the lowest. Young people from the municipalities selected for the study live mainly in rural areas. In Cajolá, no youth live in rural areas as the municipality is entirely urban. In Santiago Chimaltenango, more than half of young people live in the urban center, and in Todos Santos Cuchumatán, most young people live in rural areas.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Graph 14

Population (ages 18 to 30) in 2018 from selected municipalities



Based on estimates and INE population projections

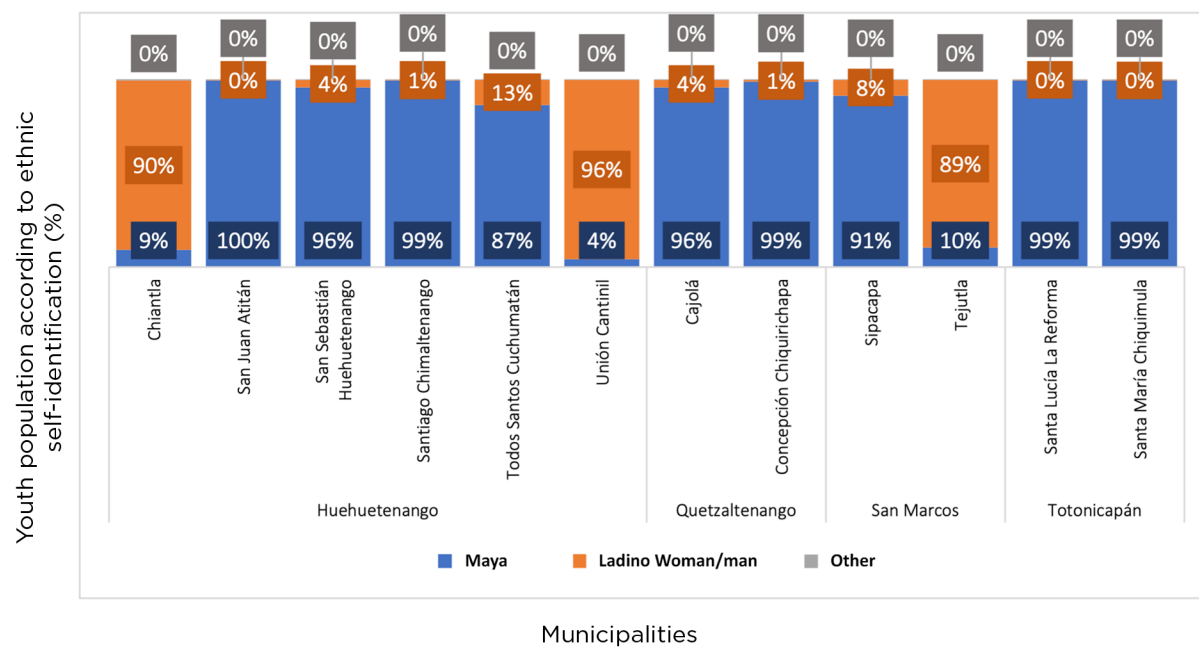


Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

In the 12 municipalities, young women account for more than 50% of youth with Cajolá representing 68% young women and only 32% young men; two out of three of young people ages 18 to 30 are women. Most youth in the municipalities selected for the survey self-identify as Mayan, except in Unión Cantinil, Chiantla, and Tejutla, where most of the population self-identifies as Ladino.

Graph 15

Ethnic self-identification of young people in selected municipalities



Data from the 12th Population Census and 6th Housing Census, INE 2018



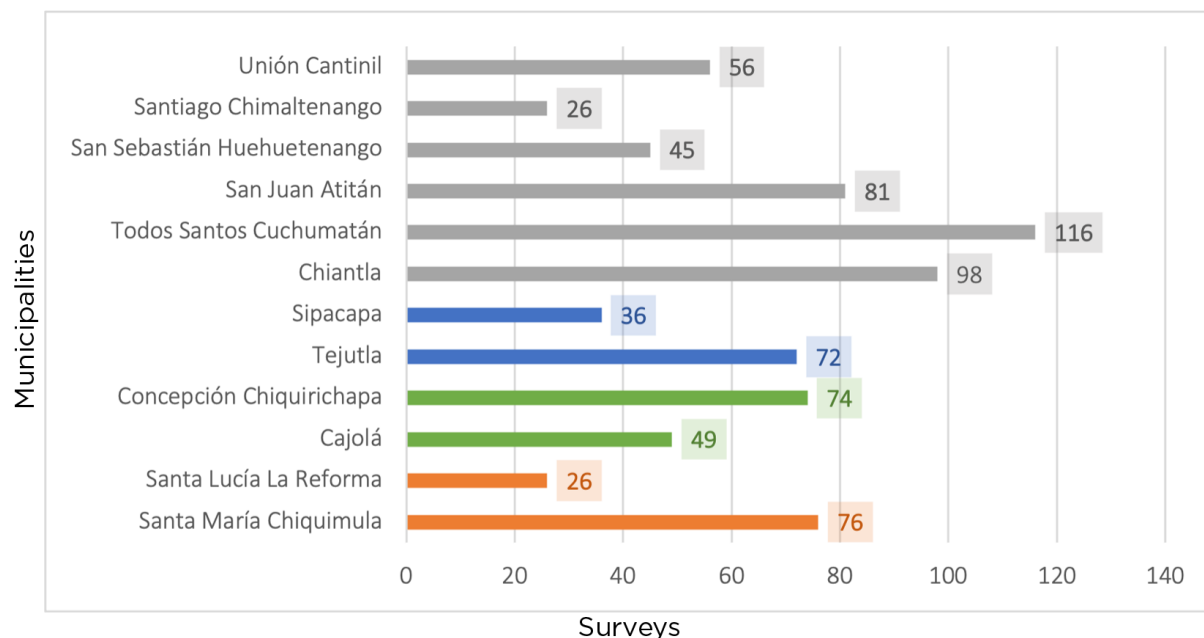
Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight, for exclusive use of CRS.

3.4 Characteristics of Surveyed Youth

There were 755 valid questionnaires in the four departments selected for the study: 422 in Huehuetenango, 123 in Quetzaltenango, 108 in San Marcos, and 102 in Totonicapán.

Graph 16

Number of surveys per municipality

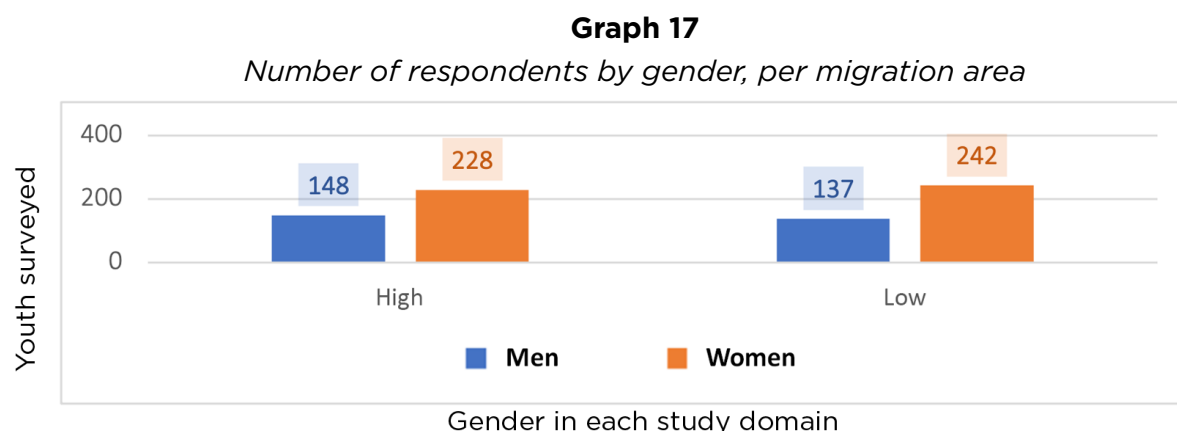


Characteristics of youth respondents

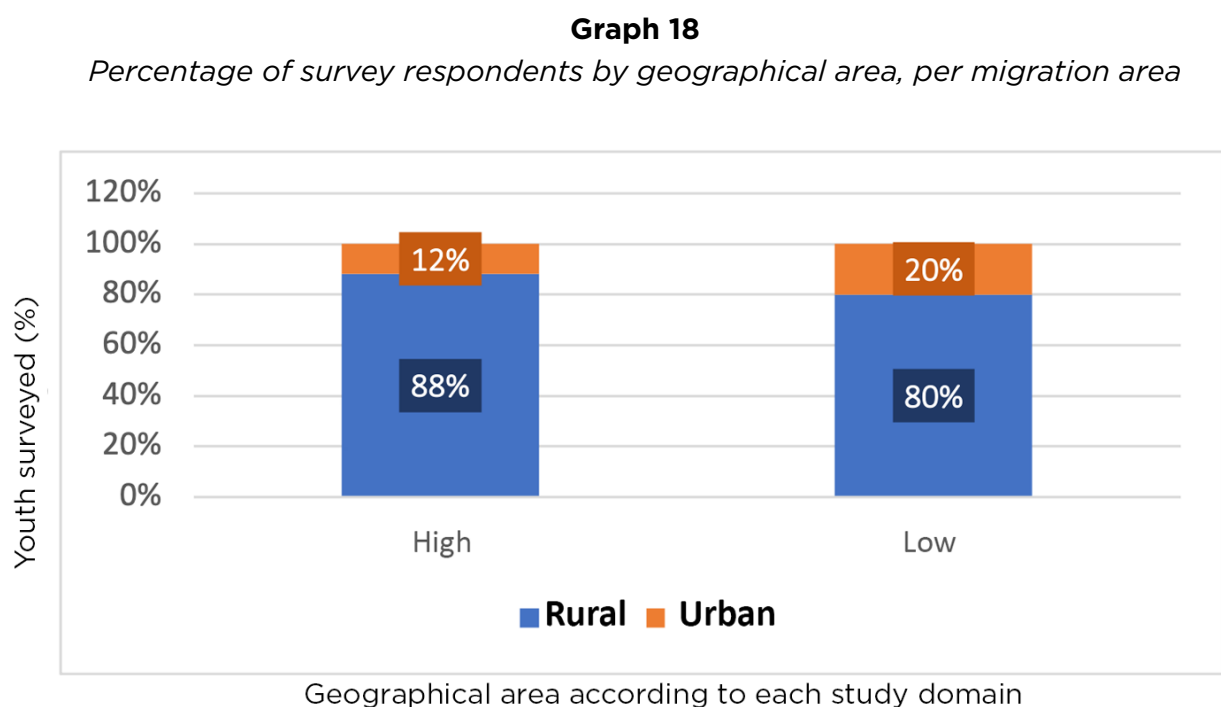
A total of 470 women and 285 men were interviewed. It is important to mention that the method for selecting participants was completely random, surveying the young people who were in the selected households at the time of the visits. In both migration domains (municipalities with high migration rates and municipalities with low migration rates), the proportion of women and men found in the households at the time of the survey was similar.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS



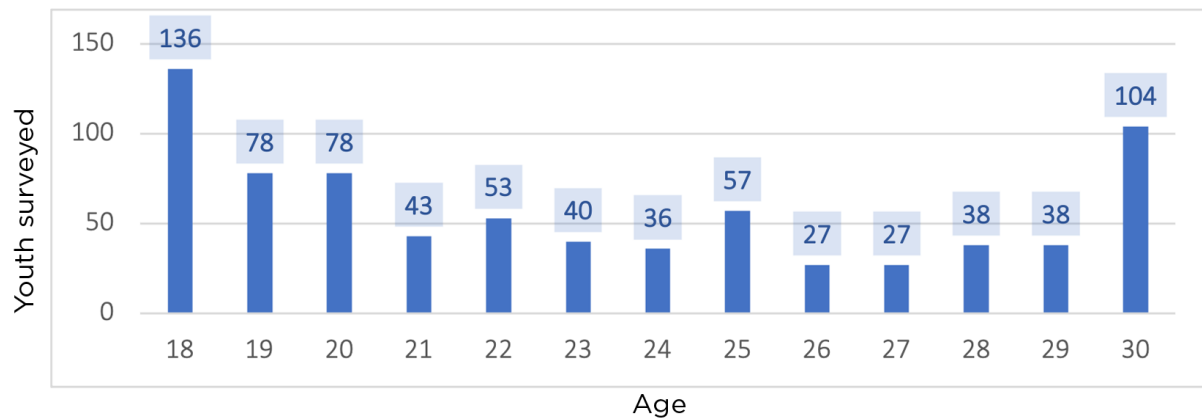
Among the survey respondents, 632 live in rural areas and 123 in urban areas. The low migration area had 8% more urban respondents than the high migration area. Most homes where young respondents live are in villages (53%), followed by hamlets (29%), municipal capitals (18%), parajes [tiny villages] (5%), cantons (2%), and neighborhoods (0.66%).



Researchers surveyed youth between 18 and 30 years old with distribution indicating that 18-year-olds and 30-year-olds had the most respondents.

Graph 19

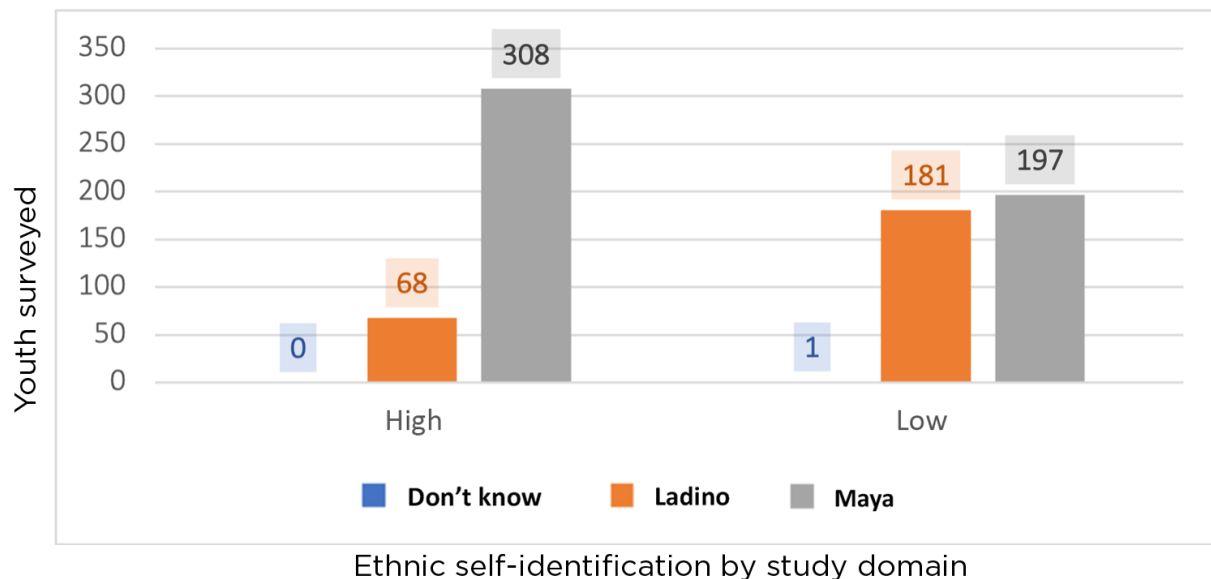
Number of respondents per age



According to the ethnic self-identification survey, most people self-identified as Maya (67%, 505 of 755), followed by self-identified Ladinos (33%, 249 of 755); one person did not self-identify with any ethnic group. In municipalities with high migration rates, most respondents (82%) self-identified as Maya, while in low migration areas, the proportion of Ladino and Maya was almost the same.

Graph 20

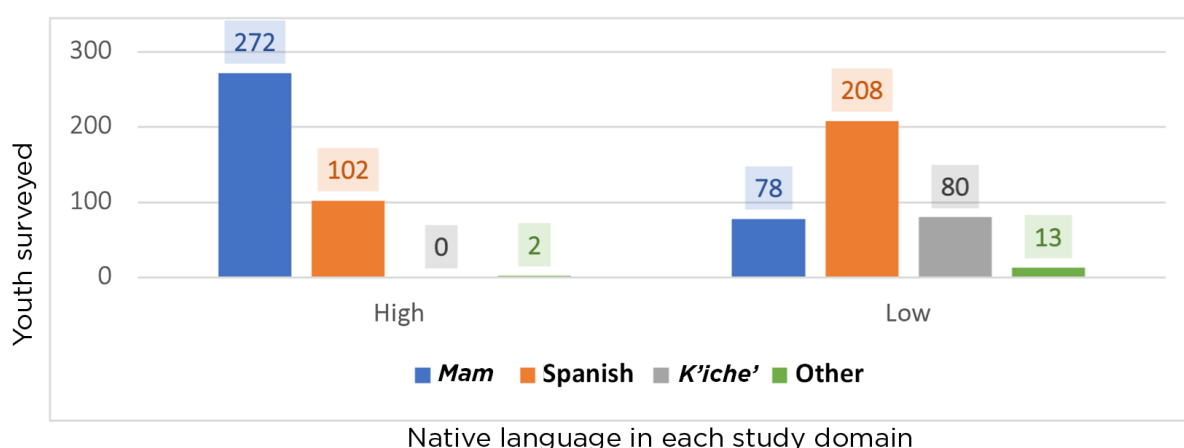
Ethnic self-identification per migration area



A total of 46% (350 of 755) of respondents reported Mam as their native language, 41% (310) Spanish, 11% K'iche', and 2% another language. In municipalities with higher migration rates, most youth indicated that Mam was their native language. In comparison, in municipalities with lower migration rates, most young people indicated that Spanish was their native language. Most of those surveyed indicated that Spanish was their native language, and that they can read and write in that language (88%). Of those whose native language is Mam, 52% reported also being able to read and write in Mam; in the case of K'iche', only 40% reported being able to read and write. As for the other languages, 33% said they can read and write in those languages.

Graph 21

Number of respondents per native language, per migration area



The most common religious affiliation among respondents was Catholic (54%), followed by non-Catholic Christians (35%); 8% indicated that they do not practice any religion, and the remainder practice other religions (Jehovah's Witness, Maya spirituality, Sabbatarian, Catholic-Orthodox, or Charismatic groups).

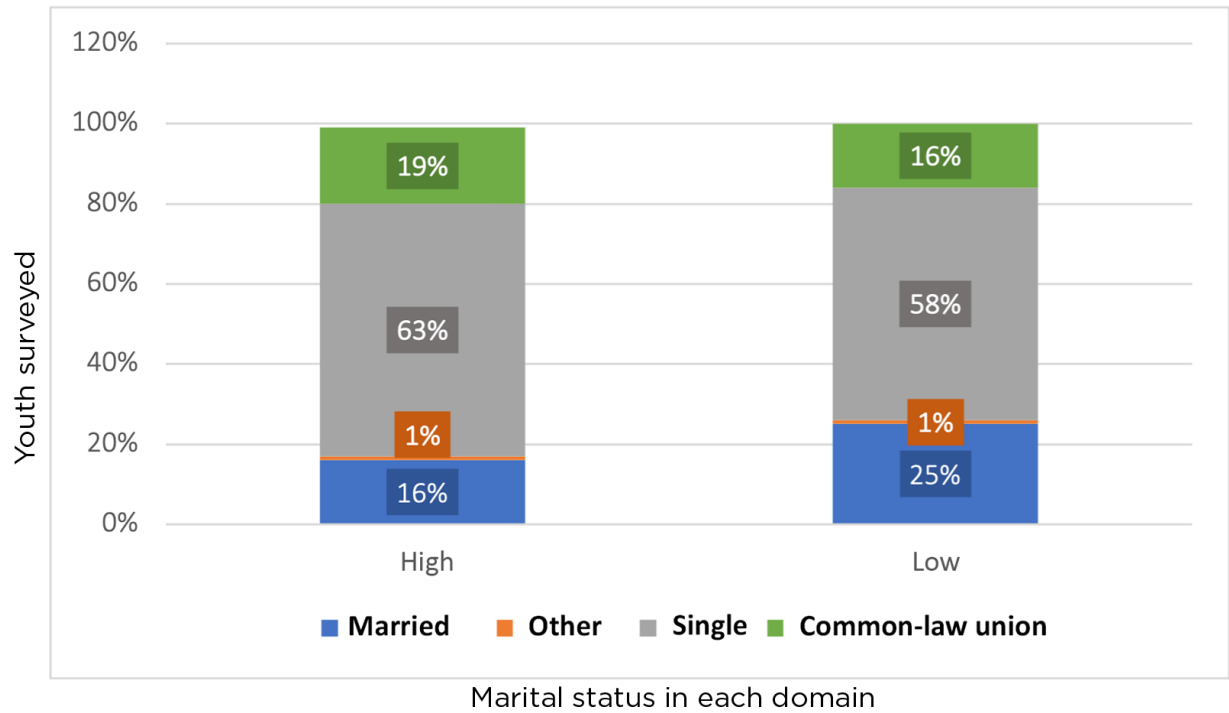
Household composition of respondents

Most respondents reported being single (60%), followed by married (21%), or living with a partner (19%). Municipalities with a high migration rate had a higher percentage of single people (63%) than those with low migration rates (58%). In contrast, researchers observed a lower proportion of married people in high migration areas (16%) than in low migration areas (25%). By gender, 71% of men and 54% of women reported being single, 15% of men and 24% of women married, 14% of men and 20% of women living with a partner, and 1% of women separated from a common-law union. The average age reported for having been married or begun cohabitating with a partner was around 19, and 41% of respondents reported having at least one child. Most people with children

reported having between one and three children (273), and the remainder four or more (37). The average age at which couples reported having their first child was 20.

Graph 22

Percentage of respondents by marital status, per migration area

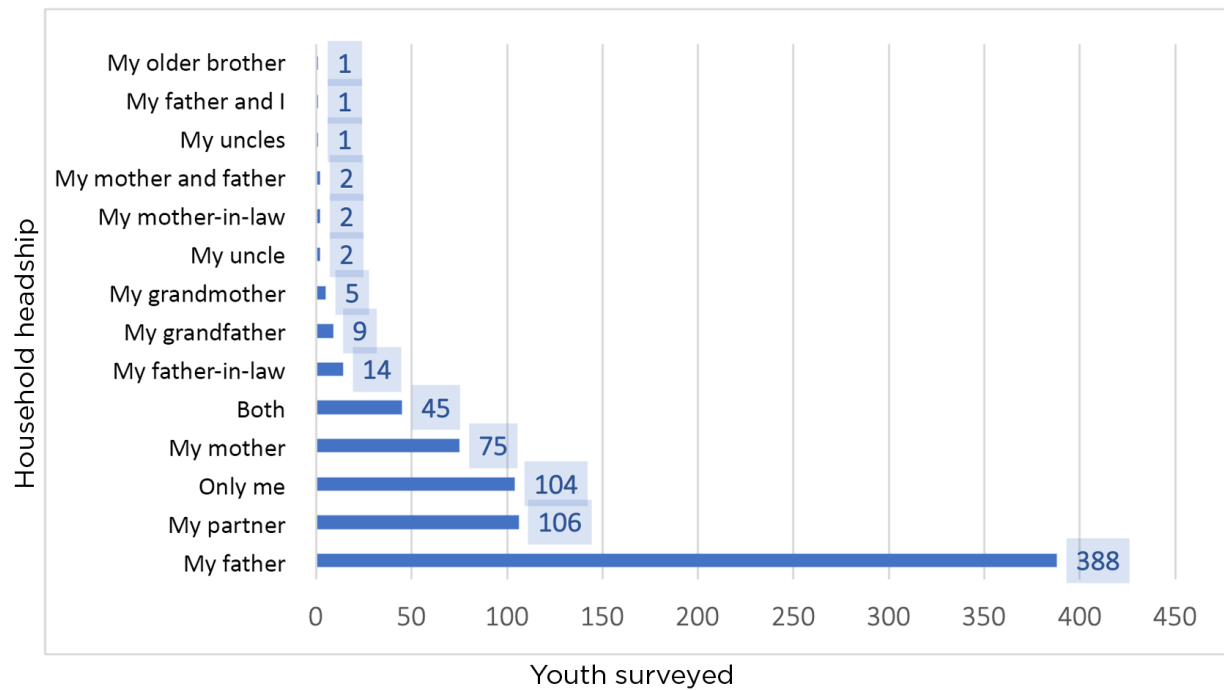


The majority of survey respondents (51%) identified their father as head of the household, followed by their partner (14%), or themselves (14%). Only 10% identified their mother as head of the household, and 6% indicated that the household head was a combination of both partners. In some cases, other members assumed the head of household role. Of the young people who self-identified as head of household, 24% were men, and 8% were women.



Graph 23

Head of household identified by respondents



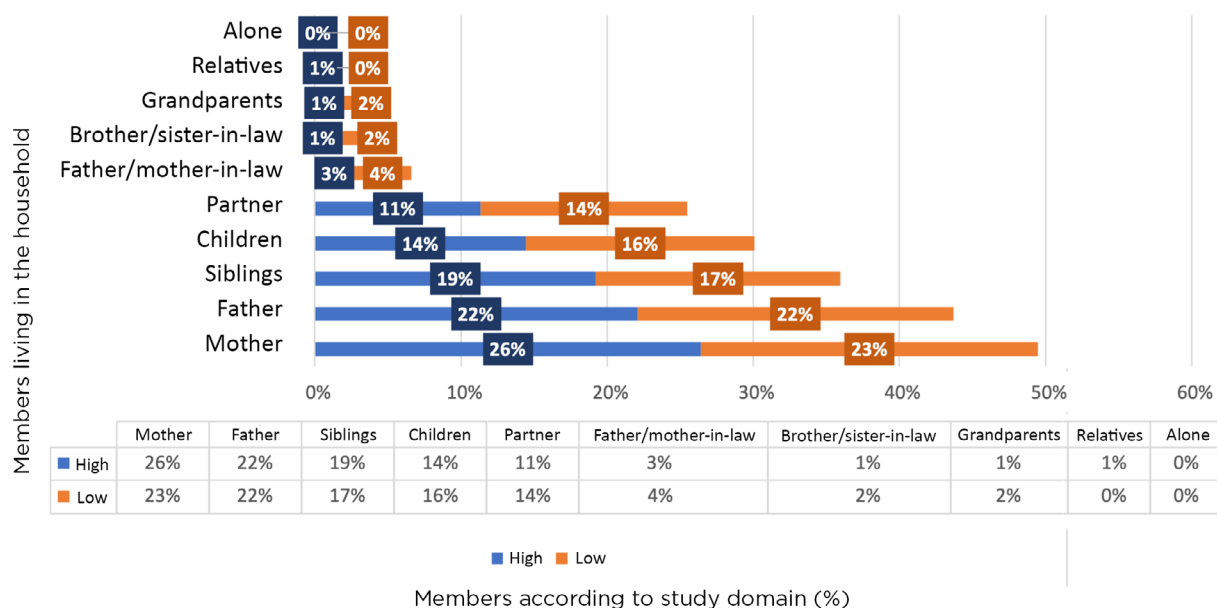
The average number of people who share food with respondents was 5.5. Most respondents indicated they lived with three to eight people sharing housing mainly with their mothers (60.7%), fathers (53.5%), siblings (44.1%), children (36.8%), and partners (31.1%). In the high migration area, a higher percentage of respondents reported living with their mothers (33%) and their siblings (24%). In contrast, in the low migration area, researchers observed a higher percentage of people living with their partners (17%).



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight para CRS

Graph 24

Family members who live with survey respondent per migration area



Characteristics of young people's housing

The homes in which 93% of the young people interviewed live are owned and fully paid for. A smaller percentage live in leased or borrowed housing (3%), rented housing (3%), or in homes that are in the process of being paid for (1%). Most of the walls of the houses are made of concrete blocks (56%) or adobe (36%). The roofs are metal (57%), concrete (30%), or tile (13%). The floors are cement (36%), dirt (28%), or ceramic brick (28%).

Survey results showed that 87.7% of homes have a connection to an electricity distribution network, 83.6% to an electricity meter, 82.1% to a water distribution network, 45.4% to a drainage distribution network, 14.8% to a water meter, and 10.1% to a telephone network. Most homes have between one and six rooms: two rooms (26%), three rooms (24%), and four rooms (17%). In most homes, between two (35%) and three rooms (27%) are used as bedrooms, while none of the rooms are used for work or business in 85% of households.

4. Principal Study Results

4.1 Reality of youth in the Selected Municipalities

The quantitative and qualitative research instruments explored different aspects of young people's lives in order to understand the factors that drive migration and those that encourage them to stay home. Below is a summary of the reality young people face in the selected municipalities based on the methodological strategies. A table details the survey's principal findings for each subject area followed by results from the focus groups and interviews with young people and key actors.

4.1.1 Education

Table 11
Educational reality of surveyed youth¹⁸

AREA	REALITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literacy: 85% can read and write• Educational level: Almost half of respondents (48%) have only a primary school education (27% finished and 21% completed some grades but did not completely finish); 10% did not have access to any level of education, and only 2% reached the higher or university level (complete and incomplete).• Gender gaps in education: A higher proportion of women (11%) than men (9%) have no formal education; 54% of women have some primary school education (24% incomplete and 30% complete), while 46% of men have completed all or some primary school (16% incomplete and 20% complete). Men have reached higher levels of education; for example, 9% have incomplete high school, and 15% have completed high school, while women showed 3% and 10%, respectively; 2% of women have started university studies, and 1% have completed university studies, while 1% of men have started and 0% have completed.• Parents' education: Most of the respondents' parents did not have any formal education (48%); this percentage is even higher among mothers (63%).

¹⁸ The difference was statistically significant at 95% by gender for the following education levels: incomplete and complete primary school, complete and incomplete middle school. A significant difference at 95% by gender for the following reasons for dropping out of school: need to work and parents do not want them to go to school.

AREA	REALITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment at the time of the survey: Survey results showed that 8% of respondents were enrolled in formal education for the 2022 school year, 53% male and 47% female; 50% were in private schools and 50% in public schools; 41% had hybrid classes, 33% in-person, and 26% online. • School desertion: Most of the youth respondents dropped out of school between 10 and 20 years of age or never went to school. The average dropout age was 13, which corresponds to the end of primary school. The main reasons for not enrolling in the 2022 school year were lack of money (53%) and the need to work (20%). Not taking into account young people who have no formal education, men drop out of school, on average, one year later than women; men drop out of school at 15, women at 14. . • Gender gap among school dropouts: The main reasons men gave for dropping out of school were lack of money (49%), need to work (34%), did not like school (5%), parents did not want them to continue (3%), no schools available (2%), among others. In the case of women: 55% reported lack of money, 12% need to work, 7% parents did not want them to continue, 6% did not like or did not want to go to school, 4% no schools available, 3% live too far away from school, 3% because they married or joined a partner, 3% because of household chores, among others. Although lack of money is the main reason for dropping out in both cases, women gave more reasons, such as household chores, marrying or joining a partner, living too far away, or because their parents did not want them to continue. • Beneficiaries of educational programs: Only one respondent indicated they received support to continue their education..

Researchers identified the following education challenges based on interviews and focus groups conducted in the selected municipalities:

- a. **Limited availability.** Interviewees and focus group participants in the selected municipalities mentioned the existing public schools being mainly primary and middle schools [7th–9th grades] as one of the main challenges. They

must attend private institutions for high school that, as a rule, are in urban centers. As a result, adolescents and young people must travel or walk to



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

get to educational centers.¹⁹ In addition, families must have resources to cover these expenses. For this reason, many adolescents drop out when they finish primary or middle school. Dropping out of school early could be a factor that influences young people in the selected municipalities to consider international migration as an option in the face of the impossibility of continuing their education. Others may resort to common-law unions or pregnancies at a young age.

“ In our communities young people do not have the opportunity to learn a profession in our communities and they can only go to middle school. Young people with limited economic resources cannot continue their education, and they do nothing to change that situation; they also marry early and continue to multiply, which multiplies poverty too. ”

-OMJ, San Juan Ostuncalco, personal communication, August 27, 2021. ²⁰

b. Limited access to the labor market for those with an education. Participants also reported young people who do complete their studies yet are still unable to find a job as another challenge. In some cases, this is due to a lack of job opportunities in the communities, while in others, it is due to a lack of work experience. In some cases, young people do find work in their communities; however, these jobs do not pay enough for them to cover their basic needs or fulfill their dream of attending university.

¹⁹ Roads in Guatemala are in very poor condition, which largely explains the high degree of isolation and lack of access to public services in many western highland communities.

²⁰ Transcripts for all textual citations from interviews with key actors or young participants in focus groups and in-depth interviews respect the respondents' oral language. Each interview received a code to protect the identity of the study participant.

“ Good morning, everyone. You asked young people what is most affecting them. I think it is the lack of economic resources and jobs because most of them lose patience because they graduate from some degree program and look for a job. However, we know that here in Guatemala, sometimes there are no job opportunities. So, the lack of jobs makes young people sometimes go elsewhere. ”

-Youth group, pastoral social, Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 27, 2022.

“ Unfortunately, young people start their studies and realize that many professionals do not have stable jobs, so they become discouraged. Then they think about migrating because they believe that is the solution for looking for new work sources and better living conditions. Another proliferating situation is crime, which does not allow development. ”

-Community authorities, Quipambé, personal communication, August 16, 2021.

c. Loss of interest in education. People from the selected municipalities also mentioned that young people lose interest in their education. This may result from their perception that formal education will not affect the possibility of social mobility. For others, migrating is a more attractive alternative. Participants reported that parents have expressed they do not want their children to continue to go to school because they have realized that “graduating from high school or as teachers is no longer useful.” Fewer and fewer young people have hope that they will have a stable future if they get an education.

“ Another thing I see today is that young people have lost interest in going to school because this would be a good alternative if they would think, “I graduate from such a profession, and I am going to get a job.” But unfortunately, it is not that way, so they have also lost interest in working. ”

-Community group, Quipambé, personal communication, August 16, 2021.

d. Impact of COVID-19. Participants mentioned that several young people left school during the pandemic for different reasons, among them the absence of tools to access online education; lack of economic resources or skills to manage online education; perception that they were not learning in the same way online as in person; the need to work to support their household; inability of some parents to support their children's educational development from home; and finally, some young people took advantage of the uncertain situation to migrate. During focus groups and interviews, young people described the difficulties of continuing their education from home and the impact of the lack of relationships with their classmates and teachers.

“ Many young people have dropped out of school due to this disease. I think most of them received online classes and did not learn anything because in in-person classes, one learns practical things and one learns more. Many have abandoned their studies just because of this disease, so the situation we are experiencing is quite difficult. ”

-Youth group, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 10, 2021.

“ The impact of the pandemic-migration has caused a drop in the number of students from 400 to 350. We are recovering, but anyway, an outflow of students remains. Before the pandemic, we lost 3% of students a year; with the pandemic, it was already hard. I do not even remember what the percentage was, maybe 13%. Now that we are still discussing the pandemic, I think we will lose more than 3% under other conditions. However, I hope not to reach 10%. ”

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Chiantla, personal communication, July 22, 2022.

“ I have observed that many young people no longer want to return to school because they have seen that working is an opportunity to have economic resources, not only to contribute to the family economy but also because they see that working gives them more benefits than going to school. ”

-CDRO Association, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, August 3, 2022.

e. Gender gaps. During visits to the selected municipalities, researchers observed that although there have been changes and women are increasingly allowed the same educational opportunities as men, there are still certain gender gaps and difficulties that mainly affect women. Participants perceived that women drop out of school early because their families expect them to join a partner or marry at a young age. There is a perception that having a career is not an option for women because they will not follow through with it due to marriage and responsibilities in the home. Other women find it difficult to continue their education because they assume chores such as caring for younger siblings or doing housework; the survey made this situation evident. Other reasons women gave for dropping out of school were household chores, marrying or joining a partner, school being too far away, or because their parents did not want them to continue.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“ I finished sixth grade in 2008, and since then, my dad has been in the United States; he was gone all the time. He would not let me continue school, so I did not go to school for about six years until I thought about what I would do with my life because agriculture, as my fellow group member said, is very difficult. I have worked with my parents, and one gets very tired. I even told my dad ‘I want to go to school’ but he used to say no. Because when you are a woman, they think you don’t have the right to go to school, that you can’t.”
-Youth group, Talmax, Concepción Chiquirichapa, personal communication, August 31, 2021.

In several focus groups and interviews, participants expressed that agricultural work is “difficult” due to the physical effort and time it demands. They also recognized that the benefits from it are not perceived as quickly as in other commercial or service jobs. Among young participants, there was less and less interest in agricultural occupations.

“ The lack of education is due to the economy because several people here in Santa María cannot go to school, especially in rural areas. Parents have no financial resources. We also believe there is a problem with machismo because young women are rarely allowed to go to school. This problem is more common in rural areas than urban areas, where almost everyone or most of us can go to school.”

-Youth group, Pastoral Social Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 27, 2022 .²¹

“ It is true. Here, we always have gender inequality. People criticize women more than men and give men more opportunities than women because, for families, the woman is born to marry, reproduce, or have a family, but she has no rights or cannot dream. Many women have been successful. Not just men can be successful. But many have not had the opportunity because of machismo. They do not believe that women can dream or do many things, but if they set their minds to it, women can do many things.”

-Youth group, Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

²¹ Participants in this focus group were primarily young women who live in the urban area of Santa María Chiquimula who had access to school.

4.1.2 Socioeconomic Factors

Table 12
Socioeconomic reality of surveyed youth²²

AREA	REALITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Socioeconomic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main activity at the time of the survey: 44% employed, 28% household chores (unpaid), 16% not employed, 5% went to school, 1% went to school and worked, 6% other activities or did not respond. • Gender gap in main activities: 72% of men worked at the time of the survey, while only 27% of women were working; 13% of men and 19% of women did not work at the time of the interview, 6% of men and 4% of women were students, 5% of men and 2% of women were actively looking for a job, 2% of men and 1% of women were in school and worked, 1% of women did not work and were not looking for a job, and 3% of women cared for others in the household; 45% of women were engaged in household chores while only 1% of men were. • Job type: Among respondents who said they work or go to school and work (45% of total respondents), the main activities were agriculture (36%), trade (13%), construction or masonry (7%), and housekeeping (5%); 27% were self-employed without formality, 25% had an employer, and 14% were self-employed with formality. Disaggregated by gender: 51% of men and 16% of women worked in agriculture, 53% of women and 19% of men were merchants, 25% of men and 3% of women worked in construction/masonry, and 14% of women were domestic workers. • Type of contract: Among those who work or go to school and work (45%), only 4% had a formal contract, and only 3% had social security benefits (access to IGSS); 1% of men and 2% of women had a formal contract, and 1% of men and women had access to IGSS.

²² According to the hypothesis test to determine if the difference between the genders was significant, researchers found a significant difference in main activities between men and women who were employed, who were actively looking for work, and those engaged in household chores. Differences by gender for economic activity: Researchers found a significant difference for the following activities: agriculture, construction, trade, and domestic services. Regarding income, the difference is significant for both genders in the ranges below Q3,000.

AREA	REALITY OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Socioeconomic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons why they can't get a job: Among respondents who were unemployed or were looking for a job at the time of the survey (144 out of 755), the principal reasons given were not enough formal education or training (32%), lack of experience (23%), unable to find a job they like (12%), because of where they live (8%). • Average monthly income: For respondents who were employed, monthly income was Q1,308.80, ranging from Q0.00 to Q10,000.00. In the high migration area, average income was slightly higher (Q1,339.40) than in the low migration area (Q1,276.80). • Gender gap in average monthly income: On average, young people reported a monthly income of Q1,308.80. However, monthly income was significantly higher among men who reported an average monthly income of Q1,169, while women reported an average monthly income of Q449; 54% of men and 83% of women had incomes less than Q1,000, a quarter of men and a tenth of women between Q1,000 to Q2,000; 14% of men and 3% of women between Q2,000 to Q3,000, and 5% of men and 2% of women had incomes between Q3,000 to Q3,999. Only five women had incomes higher than Q4,000 compared to nine men. The highest earner was a woman with an income of Q9,000 to Q10,000. • Monthly household income: Q1,748.70, ranging from Q0.00 to Q15,000.00. In the high migration area, the average monthly household income was Q2,063.80 and Q1,436.00 in the low migration area. • Perceptions of household income: 57% considered their monthly income to be fair, 37% insufficient and with economic difficulties, and only 6% considered their income to be enough to live and save. In the low migration area, a higher number of households reported that their monthly income was insufficient compared to the higher migration area. • Dependents: 40% of respondents said that other people depend on them for economic support.

AREA	REALITY OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Socioeconomic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most important source of household income: Parental occupation (46%), their own occupation (26%), the couple's occupation (22%). • Perception of their household's current economic situation compared to 12 months ago: 56% considered it to be the same, 28% considered it better, and 14% considered it worse. • Perception of the country's current economic situation compared to 12 months ago: 57% considered it to be worse, 36% considered it the same, 7% considered it better. • Property belonging to young survey respondents: 33.8% reported being homeowners, 28.5% landowners, 10.2% owning a vehicle, 9.9% own a business; 32% of men and 26% of women owned land, 37% of men and 31% of women owned a home, 13% of men and 8% of women owned a business. • Food insecurity: 12% (91 out of 755) of respondents said they had run out of food in recent months due to lack of money and other resources. The number was higher in municipalities with low migration rates (59 out of 755) than those with high migration rates (32 out of 755). • Access to productive land: 70% of respondents reported having access to productive land where they can grow crops for their own consumption. • Healthcare: 77% reported going to local health centers when someone is sick. • Beneficiaries of financial support programs: 0.93%, equivalent to 7 respondents

Participants reported that the socioeconomic reality in the selected municipalities is usually the main obstacle for young people to get ahead. Participants in focus groups and interviews mentioned the following difficulties:

- a. Lack of formal employment opportunities.** The lack of formal jobs in selected municipalities often appeared as the main difficulty young people face in accessing a stable income. Other difficulties were also associated with this problem, such as the need to have work experience or to have completed a particular educational level to get a job.

“ For some jobs, employers ask for two years of experience, but it is complicated for most people to have that experience. Perhaps they could first open the doors to those without experience so that they can obtain it. Getting experience is very difficult if they do not give us the opportunity; otherwise, we will not be able to have a job. ”

-OMJ, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 18, 2022.

“ In San Juan Atitán, it is tough to find job opportunities because the only institutions here are a cooperative in a place called Calvario, the Banrural bank agency, the Renap office, public schools, and health centers that belong to the government. People working in those places are from here, so it is difficult to find other opportunities, such as restaurants or something else. ”

-Teacher, San Juan Atitán, personal communication, July 21, 2022.

- b. Job opportunities that generate poor income.** In some municipalities, survey respondents reported that young people perform activities that are inadequately remunerated, meaning their income is below minimum wage and insufficient to cover the basic food basket.²³ For example, in San Marcos and Totonicapán, survey respondents reported that companies from other regions of the country (Salcajá, Quetzaltenango, or San Francisco El Alto, Totonicapán) offer them weaving jobs. The pay, however, is insufficient for the amount of time they invest; for example, they earn Q150 for a wraparound skirt can take three or four days to make.

²³ The minimum wage in Guatemala in 2022 was Q3,122.55 for the agricultural sector and Q3,209.24 for non-agricultural sectors (Government Agreement No.278-2021). In July 2022 the basic food basket cost Q3,369.69 (National Statistics Institute, July 2022).

In San Marcos, young people who have completed high school and taken technical cooking courses explained that the salary per day for men is Q75, or about Q1,500 for 20 days of work. For women, wages are usually lower, between Q40 and Q50 a day. Wages for agriculture jobs are similar or often below that amount. Participants from the four departments involved in the study recounted similar situations,



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

evidence that salaries do not meet minimum wage requirements and are not enough to pay for the basic food basket. For most of these occupations, employees negotiate a per-day wage with the employer, which means they do not receive labor benefits and other benefits formal employment offers.

“We work in agriculture and almost have to be content with our earnings because these days, neither the employer nor the worker makes a profit. It depends on the employers and the workers. Sometimes employees receive payments for Q60, Q75, depending on how they work.”

-Youth group, Agua Blanca, San Juan Ostuncalco, personal communication, August 26, 2021.

Table 13

Jobs for young people in Totonicapán

Although weaving in Santa María Chiquimula, was once an important activity for generating employment and income, this has changed. It is a lot of work for very little money. A key actor reiterated, “these are precarious opportunities.” He explained that weavers earn Q5 for each apron and they make about six aprons per day and will earn Q600 in a month (about US\$4 a day). “These wages are barely enough.”

“I have seen that in Santa María Chiquimula, most young people offer their labor, but they still end up with a minimal payment; employers exploit them since they earn almost nothing.”

-Pastoral Social, Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 26, 2022.

According to interviews in Santa Lucía La Reforma, other job opportunities for young people are found in the neighborhood stores around the country. Youth can earn about Q1,500 per month in these jobs and can earn twice as much if they have at least ten years of experience. Merchants are looking for young people who have completed at least sixth grade. Many women migrate internally to get jobs preparing tortillas in *tortillerías*, where they not only receive low wages but often suffer labor and sexual exploitation.

In general, young people start working at an early age often beginning to help support their families at age 13. Many people migrate internally because wages or jobs do not meet the basic needs to support their families. In recent years, young people from the selected municipalities have shown greater interest in migrating internationally.

"The immediate job opportunity young people might have is to be shopkeepers. In Santa Lucía, many families have stores where they sell goods for daily needs. These young people dream of going to work in a store, but not in their municipality, rather, in the eastern part of the country, or on the coast. The most immediate opportunities are often outside of their communities."

-CDRO Association, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, August 3, 2022.

"Recently, a co-worker told us that she asked the girls what their dream was, and they said they dream of 'working in a place where women make tortillas.'" However, we talked about how far the girl's thinking can go. I believe no dream is bad, but what they want cannot be good for their age. What do you need to work there? Know how to make tortillas. When do girls learn to make tortillas? From the age of 7 to 8, that means they are ready to leave when they are 12. It is a widespread situation."

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.

c. Job opportunities that are unsustainable over time. While operational, mining activities at the Marlin Mine in San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa generated jobs, especially in San Miguel Ixtahuacán.²⁴ However, when it closed people lost jobs, pushing some to migrate because they could no longer sustain the standard of living they enjoyed with their previous salaries.

²⁴ During the years the mine was operational there was social conflict between the people in favor of mining and those who opposed it, which damaged social cohesion. Furthermore, several studies revealed that the mining contracts left the Guatemalan State with little tax revenue or royalties. To learn more, consult the study by the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES) [Association for Research and Social Studies] entitled Cost-benefit study of the Marlin Mine in San Marcos, Guatemala (2010).

In some interviews, participants indicated that workers earned between Q18,000 and Q20,000 per month, however, when the mine closed, people were forced to leave their homes and land because they could not adapt.

“There is not job creation, such as the opportunity to apply for a job as we did in San Miguel when a company called Marlin Mine, a subsidiary of Goldcorp based in Canada, employed more than 2,000 people, 75% of them from San Miguel and the other 25% from other places were left with negative consequences when the mine stopped producing.”

-OMJ, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 9, 2021.

The negative effects of the mine impacted the municipal authorities and the community since we lost more than 2,000 jobs. The municipality, which received an average of Q50 million per year no longer receives it. When the mine was producing, this municipality operated with Q17 million, which is not even what we are receiving now. Now we work with Q4 million.

-OMJ, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 9, 2021.

- d. Gender gaps.** Fieldwork showed that women are the ones who face the most significant difficulties in accessing jobs and decent wages. Researchers saw a wage difference between men and women in the selected municipalities, as the survey also clearly evidenced (see Table 12). Men recorded an average monthly income of Q1,169 and Q449 was reported for women. Some households continue to believe that women should take care of the family and housekeeping. “One should stay in the kitchen or work in agriculture,” said a young woman from Aguacatán.

“Well, rights do exist, especially for men. However, it is not the same for young women, even among women, especially if they have no education. Young women without an education can get jobs as housekeepers with low wages because employers are unwilling to pay much, so they do not respect their rights. However, there is a little difference when young women have an academic degree because although they always receive lower pay, the difference is minimal.”

-Young entrepreneur, Chiantla, personal communication, May 4, 2022.

- e. Lack of attractive job opportunities for young people.** Participants often mentioned a lack of attractive job opportunities for young people. For example, they feel obligated to work in construction, which in recent years has demanded more labor due to increased building of homes from remittances. However, youth do not always have attractive employment possibilities. Tourism, cooking, and the banking sector are among the activities that young people find attractive. Participants said they saw increasingly less interest among young people to work in agriculture which is not seen as an attractive labor alternative for young people.

“ *Very few young people are interested in working in the fields, except in communities that are very far away, because they have no other opportunity to work but on their land. As you can see there are maize fields, but older people plant them. Even people who have businesses elsewhere know that at a certain time of year, they come and plant their maize or they leave someone to take care of it. But young people do not have that initiative and do not say, we are going to plant.* ”

-Youth group, Santa María Chiquimula Pastoral Social, personal communication, July 27, 2022.

- f. Deterioration of living conditions during COVID-19.** The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the population's economic conditions. In most of the selected municipalities, researchers observed that although people were earning enough to cover their minimum needs before the pandemic, the situation changed, and families began to experience greater economic difficulties during the pandemic. According to interviews and focus groups, deterioration of living conditions due to the pandemic has encouraged migration to the United States as an alternative to meet basic food, health, and education needs. People from the selected areas considered poverty to be a push factor. In addition, having large families with no means for survival pushes families to leave their territories. Adolescents and young people facing poverty within their families, decide to start their own families to ensure their own survival and that of their family of origin.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“Young people may not go to school because of a lack of economic resources or opportunities. They migrate to the United States because there is no work here. In addition, young women who are single mothers or married at 13 or 14 have children, and the man abandons them. There is no work here, so they migrate to the United States.”

-DMM, Cajolá, personal communication, August 24, 2021.

g. Housing conditions in selected municipalities. Participants suggested that housing problems (not having their own home or precarious housing conditions) move many families and women to consider the possibility of undertaking the journey north. People pawn their land, go into debt, and risk their lives for decent housing.

“The families we assist live in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty. We realize young people migrate because the living conditions in their communities are very vulnerable one of their dreams is to go to another country and get the means to build a house. Young people who migrate are mainly older children, but since they do not have the funds to pay for the migration journey, they pawn their land; then, what happens when they do not achieve their goal? They lose everything.”

-IDESAC, Cajolá, personal communication, August 24, 2021.

h. Land issues (access, tenure, and productivity). Remittances have made land more expensive and thus harder to acquire. For example, in San Juan Ostuncalco, a *cuerda* of land costs between Q400,000 and Q800,000. On the south coast, land is in demand and property prices have increased. Meanwhile, in municipalities such as Palestina de Los Altos, entire families migrate to the south coast during planting and harvesting seasons, and a good percentage of the population “borrows land on the coast”.

Other problems associated with land and agriculture have to do with labor scarcity to work the land. Participants from the selected municipalities indicated that migration of young men to the United States has reduced the labor force. They recognized that daily wages in Guatemala are too low, and that migration is a more profitable alternative for agricultural workers.

Access to land for women is more difficult, and in many cases when women do decide to work the land, it is because their fathers or husbands have left, and they must assume responsibility for it even though it is not in their names. Not owning the titles to the land is an obstacle for women and young people as they are not eligible for credit. Banks and financial agencies require collateral for loans, one of which is personal property titles.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

Finally, there is less interest in working the land. Older adults are usually the ones who plant and they do so individually. Doing it as a group is complicated “because people have a mindset of individuality,” said one key actor.

“If you are young and you want to survive in the countryside, it’s very difficult because there is no training, agrochemicals are expensive, seeds are hybrid, fragile, and do not self-reproduce.”

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Chiantla, personal communication, July 22, 2022.

“I know we cannot expect to receive everything as a gift. However, there is no other organization like ADIJE, where we can request a loan with low interest and that can be invested in whatever young people want and then repay it.”

-ADIJE loan recipient, personal communication, August 9, 2022.

4.1.3 Political Factors

Table 14
Political reality of surveyed youth²⁵

AREA	REALITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Political factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with the current national government: 72% were dissatisfied, 17% very dissatisfied, only 10% satisfied, and 0.52% very satisfied. • Satisfaction with the current municipal government: 70% were dissatisfied, 17% satisfied, 13% very dissatisfied, and 0.26% very satisfied. • Community participation: 31% of young people reported participating politically in some group in their community, 6.9% in a neighborhood committee, 4.9% in a political party or civic committee, 4.6% hold a community office, and 3% participate in a committee that promotes improvements. • Community participation by gender: 26% of women and 38% of men participate in the abovementioned groups. • Interest in political participation: 76% of respondents believe that young people are not interested in participating in politics, while 24% believe that young people are interested. When researchers asked participants about the reasons, those who believe young people are not interested in politics indicated lack of interest (69%), adults do not allow them to participate (11%), or there are no opportunities for political participation in the community (7%). When researchers asked about the reasons why young people do participate in politics, respondents mentioned a desire to serve the community (42%), because it is a right (38%), or to obtain a personal benefit (10%). • Interest in national affairs: 33% said they follow the news some days of the week, 21% some days of the month, 20% every day, 16% never, and 9% some days of the year.

²⁵ The difference in political participation between the genders is statistically significant.

AREA	REALITY OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Political factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main problems affecting young people at the municipal level: difficulty getting a job (44%), economic problems (29%), excessive alcohol consumption (12%), lack of access to education (7%), other reasons (8%). • Perception of the future compared to their parents: 56% believe they will be better off than their parents, 41% believe they will live the same as their parents, only 3% believe they will be worse off than their parents. • Beneficiaries of municipal support programs: 0.26% (equivalent to 2 respondents) indicated they were beneficiaries.

Young people in the four selected departments face obstacles to political participation, including the following:

- a. **Feel excluded from political participation processes.** Young people reported feeling that adults exclude them from political participation processes and that the adult population assumes these roles. In some cases, young people indicated that adult customs and traditions hinder the possibility of participating. In addition, researchers found that creating authentic intergenerational dialogue is difficult. Youth stereotypes are prevalent among adults, and there is a lack of trust towards young people.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

“We do not participate because the community does not give these projects to young people, but to adults since they have left youth aside. There has been no room for young people to get involved.”

-Youth group, Aldea Las Minas, personal communication, August 18, 2021.

“Adults, the “bosses”, as I said, make decisions. So, it is difficult to get involved. When I asked some leaders why young people do not join in, they said that these are customs and rules they have had for years, and they have always worked in this way. In some communities, a person must go through four phases to reach the title of principal or boss, so you must start from the bottom. This is how a young man makes his place.”

-CDRO Association, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, August 3, 2022.

“It is complicated because, for example, the COCODE members must be experienced elders. They do not accept young people. Youth have opportunities to participate only when there is a new mayor and a group starts working.”

-Women’s leader, San Juan Atitán, personal communication, July 21, 2022.

- b. Lack of institutional spaces that promote youth participation.** It is evident that public institutions and political agendas do not prioritize young people’s problems. Few political organizations, including municipalities, have allocated programs and budgets to meet their needs. For example, in Huehuetenango, only 30% of municipalities have offices for youth and child services, and most were only recently established. These offices have limited budgets so they must coordinate with other actors and have little experience working with young people.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

“Municipalities provide a municipal youth services office, of course, always respecting municipal autonomy; this office works according to the mayor’s decision because it needs some administrative arrangements and an allowance in the annual budget. It is necessary to have a person in charge of this office and a municipal public youth policy.”

-CONJUVE representative, Huehuetenango, personal communication, July 25, 2022.

“In Chiantla, authorities approved a youth policy at the municipal level, and they allocated resources for that purpose. It may become politicized at some point and resources are sometimes not prioritized. For example, in the last two years, we signed a scholarship agreement with the municipality, we invested in some things, and students were able to graduate. The municipal office did not pay a penny, even with a signed agreement.”

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Chiantla, personal communication, July 22, 2022.

“Last year we supported some young people, not everybody, because we have limited funds. We supported them with laying hens because we had a small budget for that purpose. We have Q40,000 for that project. Now we have some activities. For example, this year, we want to celebrate International Youth Day on August 12 because we have a small budget for that too, so more or less, we have about Q60,000 (US\$7635).”

-OMJ and DMM, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 18, 2022.

- c. Gender gap.** It is more difficult for women to participate politically because of the time it takes away from childcare and household chores. They also face violence from many men in the family (partners, parents, in-laws, sons), which limits their participation. Community discrimination and low self-esteem (caused by patriarchal violence) may also limit or obstruct their participation.

“Another difficulty we have faced as a group is the time factor because, as I have mentioned many times, women at a certain age must take care of the home. We are being revolutionary by saying that this work is not just for women. There is very little or almost no women participation in the processes because of the machismo culture; women cannot leave their homes without their children; they must take care of the household chores, and they must always look after the needs of the family, unlike men, who have more freedom to leave home and participate in a group.”

- Youth group A, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 13, 2021.

4.1.4 Community and Cultural Factors

Table 15

Community and cultural reality of surveyed youth

AREA	REALITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Community and cultural factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in community groups: 42.3% of respondents reported participating in a religious or church group, 27.9% in a sports team, 12.6% in a group related to cultural traditions or community festivals, 6.9% in an artistic group, 3.6% in a volunteer activity, and 2% in a group of students or school parent groups. • Recreational activities: 66.6% indicated that young people have opportunities to have fun safely, 49.8% reported practicing a sport, 19.6% starting a business, 15% practicing an artistic activity, 13.9% learning a trade or skill, 9.3% ad access to books, and 7% had access to films in cinemas. • Access to digital tools: 92.2% of respondents had used mobile phones in the last month, 64.1% had used social media, 57% reported having some Internet service, 17.7% computers, and 14.7% using online games. People from the high migration area used these tools more than those in the low migration area. • Violence in the community: 4% of respondents indicated having been victims of crime in their communities in the last 12 months, and 12% having heard of a murder in their community in the last 12 months.

AREA	REALITY OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Community and cultural factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence against young people: Most of the respondents believe that young people are more likely to experience violence on the streets (75%) than in their homes (6%) or on social media (6%); 4% believe that young people do not suffer violence in their communities. • Discrimination: Only 9% of respondents reported feeling discriminated against in their community. The main reasons being socioeconomic status, where they live, or the ethnic group they belong to. The places where they most often have felt discrimination are in the street, followed by schools. • Central conflict at the municipal level: Political in nature (39%), due to lack of services (8%), religious in nature (7%), due to the presence of criminal groups (3%). • Natural disasters: 53% considered it unlikely or not at all likely that there will be a natural disaster in the next five years in their community, and the rest considered that possibility likely or very likely; 11% of respondents reported that they or someone in their immediate family has been directly affected by a natural disaster in the last five years. • Crop loss due to climate variations: 26% indicated that they or someone in their immediate family had lost crops due to climate variations.

Researchers identified the following challenges for youth at the community and cultural levels in interviews and focus groups:

- a. Ethnic discrimination.** Young people from several municipalities spoke of difficulties expressing their ethnic identity. They said that while ethnic identity can be a source of pride, at times, that identity can be a source of shame due to the racism prevalent in Guatemala.²⁶



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

²⁶ The qualitative components established greater trust and closeness with the respondents, facilitating delving into sensitive issues such as discrimination. That is why, although in the survey, only 9% of young people reported feeling discrimination in their community, during the interviews and focus groups, young people were able to expand on how they live with different forms of discrimination in their communities.

“Here in San Miguel, for example, people have low self-esteem, which most influences migration because we feel inferior to other cultures due to our clothing, language, houses, or because we have to live with animals and be in harmony. Social media and television influence people because they see, for example, how people live in the cities. People also discriminate against us because we wear the traditional dress of San Miguel. After all, it is unacceptable to others; there is discrimination against, even among us. Some say: I do not go to another place because I need money, sometimes that is the situation; but other times, they say: I go to another place because there I do not have to take care of animals or because houses have two or three stories, there are formal roads, or there are beautiful parks.”

-Youth group Pastoral Social, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 10, 2021.

“Some people are ashamed of our culture, language, and clothing. Some people from other municipalities criticize us for wearing traditional clothing, or for our skin color, language, or food; because we are very different from Ladinos, we eat beans and tortillas. Likewise, people criticize us for our clothing, the traditional clothing from Santa Lucía, our traditional dress is our school uniform. But at the same time, we are proud to speak two languages, Spanish and K'iche.”

-Youth group, Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.

- b. Machismo culture.** Violence against women and pregnancies at a young age are considered part of the prevalent machismo culture in all four selected departments. This violence has many sides, including psychological, sexual, economic, physical, and even with inheriting property. It is also expressed in different ways. At a personal level, it could include rape, pregnancy in girls and adolescents, abandonment of a father's obligations to his children, preventing women from participating in family planning and deciding how many children to have, and whether or not they receive an inheritance. At the political level, women are prevented from participating in political activities, they are silenced at meetings, or are not taken into account.

“ More than a year ago, I planned to travel because I could not support my son and needed a home. Then I decided, I'm going to the States, I'm taking my son, I'm going to take risks, because the little I earn as a single mother is not enough. The child is already growing and will start school, and I cannot pay the expenses, so I better take him and leave. As I have already mentioned, the problem is that when fathers stay, they usually abandon their children. Women do not think about the consequences and make bad decisions, but afterwards, problems start, and they do not know what to do. Furthermore, nowadays, men only cheat on women, creating problems, and the children are not to blame. ”

-IDESAC beneficiaries, Cajolá, personal communication, August 10, 2022.

The study's qualitative component showed women to identify machismo, violence, low wages, and being single mothers as the main problems. Participants from Santa María Chiquimula and Cajolá referred the most to problems related to violence against women.

- c. Impact of climate change and other environmental issues.** There is a growing concern for the environment and climate change variations in the selected municipalities. Such changes include varied rainfall patterns, loss of land fertility, and more pests related to drought. Furthermore, tree felling has increased, and the mismanagement of solid waste has worsened.

In Todos Santos Cuchumatán and Santa Lucía La Reforma, respondents expressed concern about the loss of crops due to rain, hail, pests, or lack of water. This contributes to the population's financial debt and encourages migration as people look for ways to meet their economic commitments.

Chiantla has a Land Use Plan (POT) that officials do not enforce. Many houses are located on slopes, which puts them at high risk. Industrial activities and mining throughout other parts of Huehuetenango cause environmental damage and water access issues. Participants mentioned changes in planting methods, land use, and climate, and discussed poor family diets, associated with monoculture planting that does not allow for crop diversification, all of which affect food security.

d. Criminal violence. Participants from most of the selected municipalities did not identify criminal violence as a principal problem. Participants from Cajolá and San Juan Ostuncalco identified violence as a local problem, and also reported the presence of gangs. Interviewees claimed that young people who have returned from the United States created these gangs and/or that some of their activities are financed with remittances. In Cajolá, participants believe these groups have increased due to the lack of police institutions and social control in the territory.

“The breakup of the social fabric due to the war created great distrust among the population, especially in government institutions. All of us who work for the government have to gain trust step by step because we see that this is a slow process. Distrust in institutions has also created a little bit of conflict among the population; as proof of this, in 1998, I am not very clear about the date, there was a conflict among inhabitants, and they expelled the police. To date, there is no National Civil Police in our area; just a few months ago, the Public Prosecutor, and the “Court of Peace”, returned, but during all this time, the community organized itself to maintain security and community organization.”

-Inter-institutional coordination, Cajolá, personal communication, August 25, 2021.

4.2 Migration in the Municipalities Studied

Interviews and focus groups indicated that international migrants' motivations vary and are related to the lack of opportunities that would allow them to improve their living conditions. The driver is multicausal, but the primary motivation is related to material conditions and an inability to improve the standard of living.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Another change researchers perceived is that women are migrating more than before, despite gender-related posed risks. According to some participants, machismo violence in the selected areas is pushing this trend. They see it not only in expressions of violence but also in the poor living conditions families face, which require all members to generate income to survive. Many women migrants are single mothers or young mothers with children they cannot support.

During the fieldwork, researchers recorded several stories of women who tried to reach the United States and were victims of sexual assault during the journey. Young people also reported having to face kidnappings and other abuses committed by organized criminal groups in Mexico. The psychological and physical consequences of such events, are often profound, and the governmental support required to address them is scarce or irrelevant. In many of these cases, young men tend to hide to avoid being singled out by the community or to protect ‘young ladies’ from embarrassment.

“I have a nephew who also left under those conditions. He had a little money and he left. Coyotes charged US\$2,000 for the trip. We felt it was too much, although they considered it not, so they unexpectedly charged Q22,000 (US\$2,800) more because my nephew was in a dangerous place. Then we had to run from one day to the next, looking for that money, we got it, and we made the deposit that same afternoon, so he was released. They say that when those criminal groups grab migrants, they kidnap them, and we must pay a ransom to release them.”

-Community group, Quipambé, personal communication, August 16, 2021.

Deciding to migrate is a challenge for those who do it, primarily because prices to travel with coyotes range between Q90,000 and Q130,000, which migrants’ relatives pay. Payment does not guarantee a safe journey to the destination, as participants in Comitancillo know. At the beginning of 2021, several young people from the community died in the massacre in Camargo, Tamaulipas.²⁷



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

²⁷ The massacre occurred on January 22, 2021, in Camargo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, a few kilometers from the United States border. Criminals killed nineteen Central American migrants: 16 were Guatemalans, most from Comitancillo, San Marcos. Mexican police forces were involved in the incident.

“We are very poor. Comitancillo is a municipality at a high-priority level due to the malnutrition rates among children. For the same reason, young people ages 15, even 13, are already forced to migrate to another country to seek a slight improvement in their quality of life and that of their families. We realized the young man from Las Flores migrated because his mother lives alone with her children. He said he had to travel to help his mother, who needed an operation. All media knows this; the local people there know this. The young woman from Tuilelen also migrated to help her brother and her little sister who had a cleft lip because the parents did not have the economic resources to find her treatment her, so just like us, poverty is what forces us to migrate.”

-DMM, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 12, 2021

The incident in Tamaulipas has not deterred migration, as poverty continues to push many people to leave. Such was the case of a young man's family from the community of Las Flores, one of the victims of the massacre. They had arranged for the departure of their second daughter before finding out about the death of their firstborn. The daughter left on her journey to the US on the same day that the young man's remains were returned home. “She could not stay; she had to leave,” said a young woman from Comitancillo.²⁸

“The truth is that, although that is something that happened, the necessity drives us; it is like if one is hungry and they say that food is not good, but since one is hungry, one has to go and get it, just like that. They tell us that people die in the desert, mistreat us, and leave us lost there, but what can we do.”

-DMM, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 12, 2021.

Despite the importance remittances have had in boosting the economy in the selected municipalities or financing education for many young people, participants warned that attention should be given to other ways remittances have made an impact. These include dismantling community groups, lack of interest among young people to work in the field since remittances supply the income that working the land could generate, increasing land prices, and increased competition between families for material goods.

²⁸ See the Plaza Publica article “Migration does not stop in Comitancillo despite the murder of 16 persons in the tragedy of Tamaulipas” by Kimberly López (2023) <https://plazapublica.com.gt/content/la-migracion-no-se-deeten-en-comitancillo-pesar-de-16-assinados-en-la-tragedia-de>

“We can say that 80% of families have a relative in the United States, which has also had a significant impact on the life in San Juan. I don't know if you got to know the old San Juan; it had adobe houses, but now we see buildings of three, four, and five stories, commercial squares, and it has become very commercial. People practiced respect and solidarity. However, when we analyzed it, we found contradictions such as there being less malnutrition in the rural area because many people in the urban area, are merchants and consume a lot of junk food.”

-Community women's leader of San Juan Ostuncalco, personal communication, August 28, 2021.

In some municipalities in San Marcos and Quetzaltenango, participants referred to a culture or custom of migration. Adolescents migrate from an early age (between 12 and 15 years old). Family pressure, community tradition, and a type of “domino effect” influence the decision to migrate. In some places in Huehuetenango, migration has become a rite of passage for older children to prove their “manhood,” which the other brothers and more recently sisters, repeat. Young people migrate because they want to build their own houses, buy vehicles, have land to build, or have their own business. Others do it because it is a tradition to migrate or because their parents force them to go. “It is the only option to get ahead,” said one key actor.

Internal or cross-border migration to Mexico is a survival strategy in the municipalities involved in the study. In several municipalities in San Marcos and Huehuetenango, participants discussed migrating to farms in Chiapas for agricultural work or to tourist destinations and hotels of the Riviera Maya to get jobs in the service industry. In several municipalities, including those in Totonicapán, participants mentioned internal migration to the capital city for jobs in commercial activities (convenience stores and tortilla shops) and services (housekeeping) or to the south coast for seasonal agricultural jobs. Internal and cross-border migration involves risks just like international migration.

“They not only go to the United States but also migrate to the capital, and many work at jobs related to narcotrafficking. In the capital, they live in cheap hotels downtown, which seem to be places for prostitution and drugs. I met a boy who had lived here and went to live there in a hotel. Many people from here live in those cheap hotels.”

-DIFAM, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 9, 2021.

The case of Totonicapán is unique. Although there are not high levels of international migration, participants mentioned high levels of internal migration. People from Santa Lucía La Reforma move to urban centers and to Guatemala City to work in stores and *tortillerías* [places that prepare and sell tortillas], a situation that, according to many respondents, facilitates human trafficking and labor exploitation, especially for women, children, and adolescents. In Santa María Chiquimula, participants indicated a gradual change in this reality and an increasing interest in international migration. Participants reported that coyotes approached young people in this municipality during the pandemic to recruit them to travel with them.

4.2.1 Migration Intention among young people

Survey results indicate that 29% of respondents (222 out of 755) have intentions to migrate to another country in the next 12 months. Most of the respondents with intentions to migrate to another country plan to go to the United States (213), while five consider traveling to Canada, two to Mexico, one to Spain, and one to El Salvador. Statistically, there was no significant difference between the proportion of respondents with migratory intentions in municipalities with high and low rates of international migration.²⁹

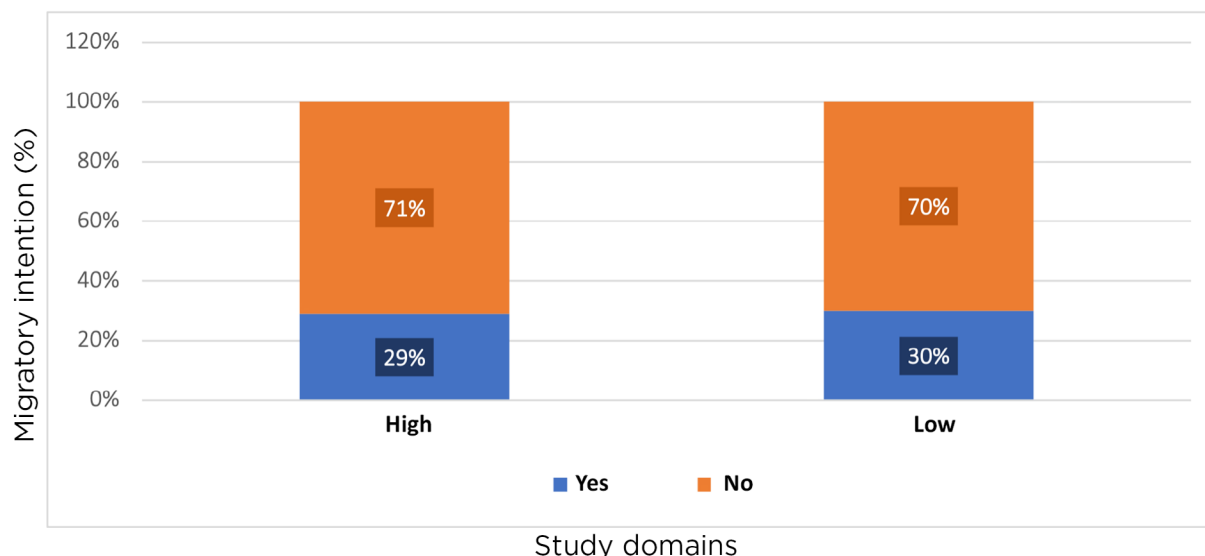


Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

²⁹ Proof of the difference between the proportions: According to tests results, we have 95% confidence that in both areas, the difference between the proportions of young people with migratory intention and those without intention to migrate is equal to zero.

Graph 25

Intention to migrate to another country in the next 12 months per area of study



The percentage of young people with migratory intention is similar to other surveys, like the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), which between 2012 and 2021 registered a migratory intention fluctuation between 14.4% (2012) and 36% (2021) (Rodriguez, 2021).

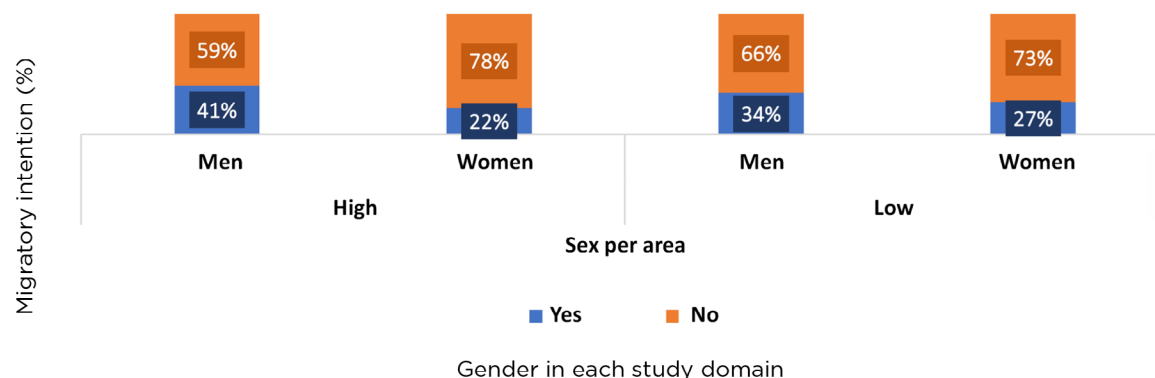
International migration versus internal migration. Based on the study findings, the intention to migrate internally was even lower than the intention to migrate internationally. Only 12% (90 out of 755) of respondents indicated that they have considered moving to another place within Guatemala; the main reasons being a lack of jobs and educational opportunities and a desire to improve their income.

Survey results show that young men have more migratory intention than women. In addition, researchers expected a correlation in the study areas; for example, a higher proportion of young men intend to migrate in municipalities with high migration rates. In municipalities with high migration rates, two out of five men have migratory intentions, while in municipalities with low migration rates, it drops to one out of three men.³⁰

³⁰ Proof of difference between the proportions: According to the test results, we have 95% confidence that in both areas, the difference between the proportions of young people with migratory intention equals zero. In both cases, young men and women want to migrate in the same proportion regardless of the study area.

Graph 26

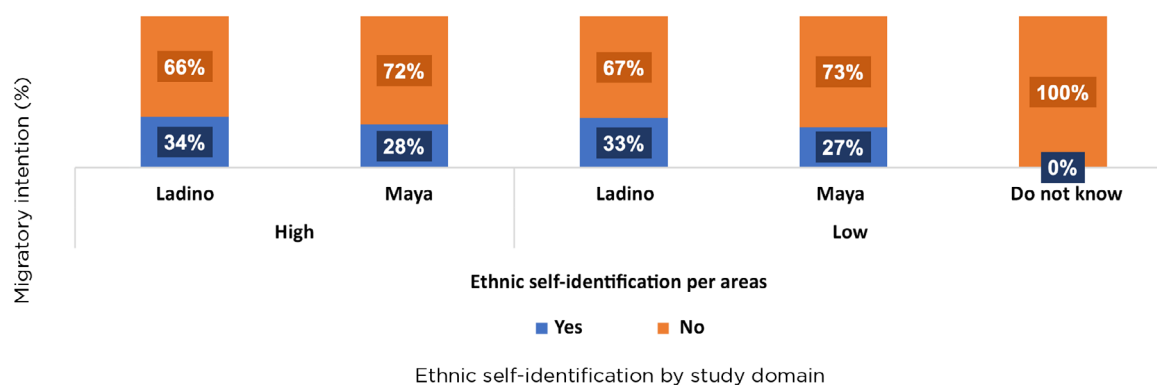
Migration intention of survey respondents per area of study and gender



The results also show no difference in migratory intention based on ethnic self-identification. Migratory intention is constant among the population that self-identify as indigenous and those who self-identify as Ladino in the selected municipalities.³¹

Graph 27

Migratory intention per area of study and ethnic self-identification



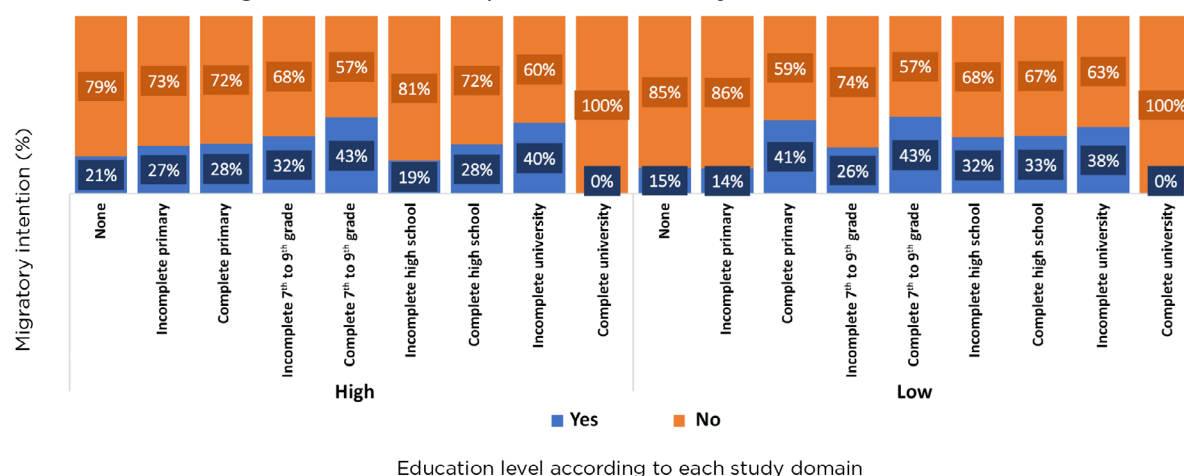
In municipalities with high migration rates, researchers recorded the highest migratory intention among respondents who had completed middle school and those with incomplete university studies.

³¹ Proof of difference between the proportions: According to the test results, we have 95% confidence that for the two areas, the difference between the proportions of young respondents with migratory intention according to their ethnic self-identification is equal to zero. Young Maya and young Ladinos have the same proportion of migration intention regardless of the area.

In municipalities with low migration rates, researchers registered the highest migratory intention among participants who had completed primary and middle school.³² None of the youth who had completed university studies (18 out of 755) indicated they had intentions to migrate. It will be important to examine the potential that increasing access to higher education in this region of the country could have as a retention factor when creating conditions that are attractive for young people.

Graph 28

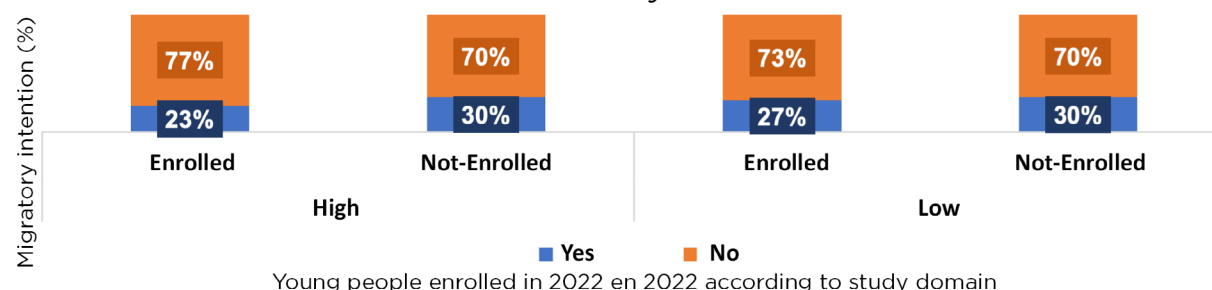
Migration intention per area of study and level of education



Young people enrolled in school or university at the time of the survey had less migratory intention than those who were not enrolled. The two areas of study shared this characteristic.

Graph 29

Migration intention per area of study and whether the person was enrolled in school or university in 2022

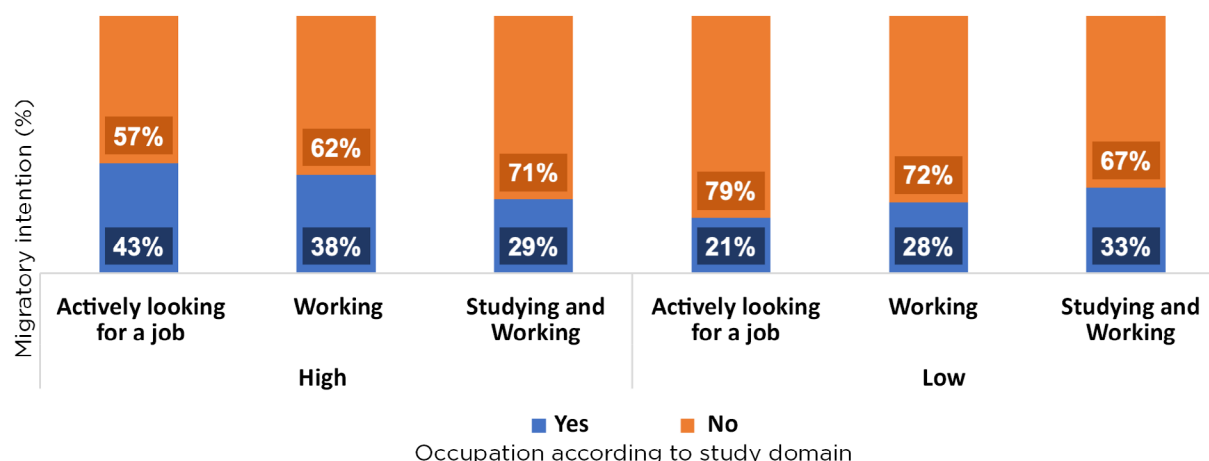


³² Proof of difference between the proportions: According to the test results, with 90% confidence, young people who intend to migrate and have incomplete or complete primary school education generate a significant difference according to the study area. That is, young people with incomplete primary school education have a greater intention to migrate in municipalities with high migration rates, and young people who have completed primary school have a greater proportion with the intention to migrate in the area with low migration rates. For the other educational levels, the test indicates no difference between the various proportions of the two areas of the study.

Young people actively looking for a job during the survey had a greater intention to migrate in the area with high migration rates than those who worked and those who went to school and worked. In the area of low migration rates, there is a converse relationship; those who indicated a greater intention to migrate are young people who went to school and were working at the time.³³

Graph 30

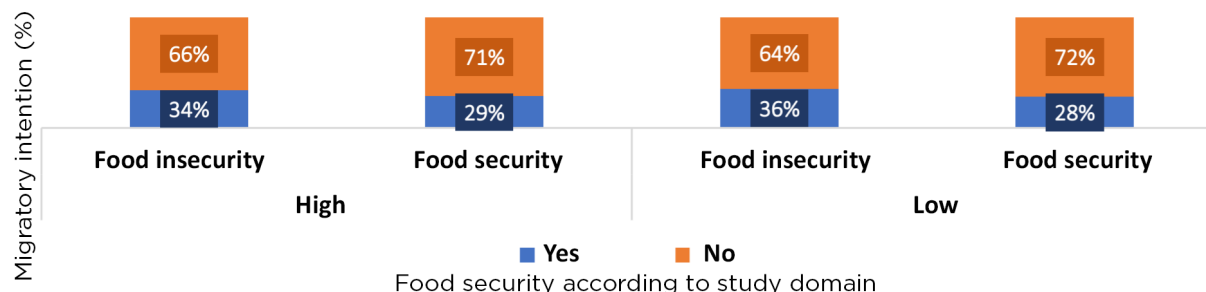
Migration intention per area of study and whether the young person was looking for a job or was employed



Young people who reported having economic difficulties in the last 12 months that led to food shortages in their household have a greater intention to migrate in the two study areas. While in both areas, about one-third of respondents who have experienced food shortages in the past 12 months intend to migrate.

Graph 31

Migration intention per area of study and food insecurity

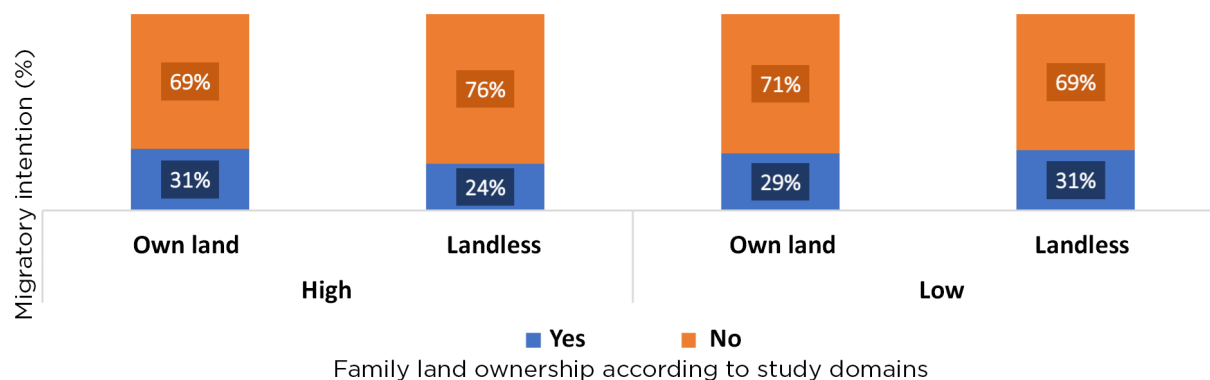


³³ Proof of difference between the proportions: According to the test results, with 95% confidence, there is no significant difference between the proportions of the two areas of the study.

Young people with household members who have productive land and generate crops for their own consumption presented a greater migratory intention in the high migration rate areas and a lower intention to migrate in the area with low migration rates. Young people living in households that do not own land for cultivation or to produce crops for their own consumption have a greater intention to migrate in the low migration rate area.

Graph 32

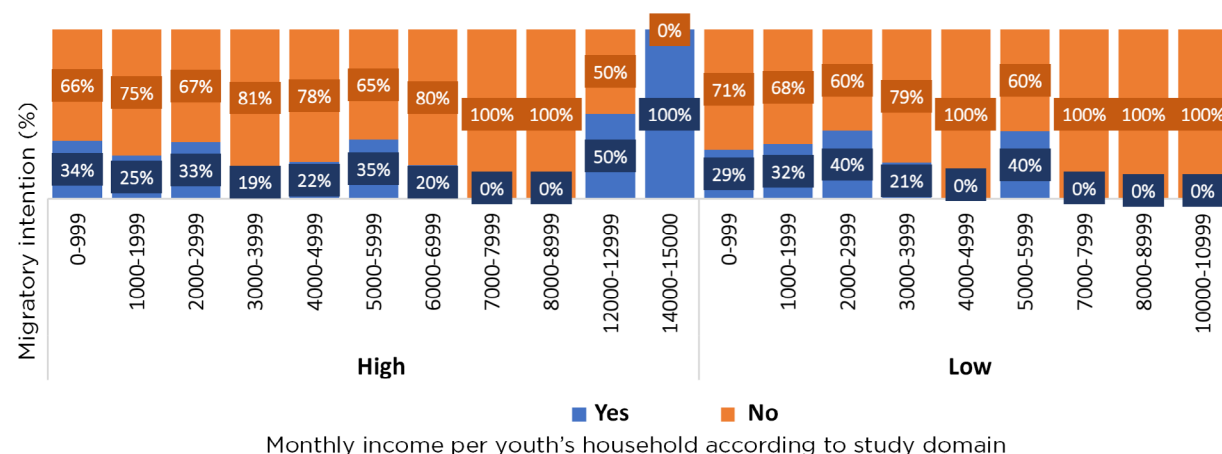
Migratory intention per area of study and family ownership of productive land



In the area with high migration rates, the intention of young people to migrate according to their income level does not present a clear trend. At low-income levels, the proportion of young people who intend to migrate is four out of ten, and at higher-income levels, young people have a greater intention to migrate. In areas with low migration rates, the intention to migrate appears to be related to income level. At higher incomes the intention to migrate falls migration is not considered an option even with incomes above Q4,000. This may be an effect of the cost of living, and municipalities with low migration rates have higher incomes for young people.

Graph 33

Migration intention per area of study and household monthly income

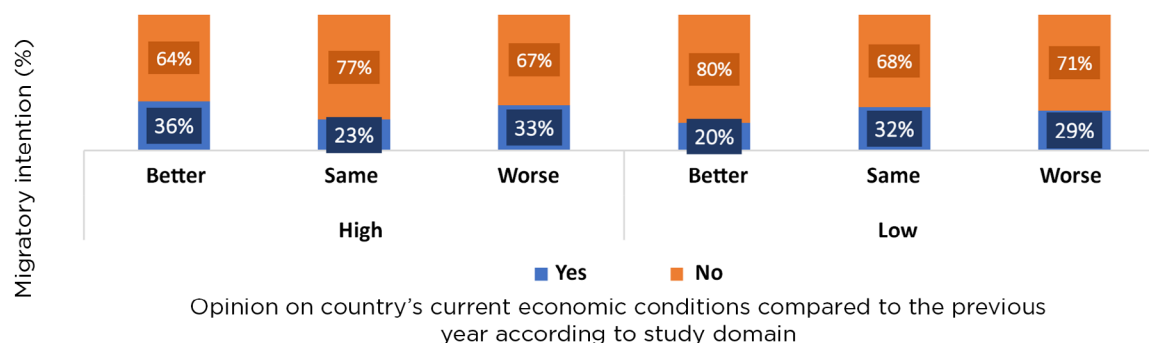


In the area with high migration rates, young people whose families have an income above Q12,000 have the greatest migration intention. In the area with low migration rates, young people with the highest income level do not intend to migrate; young people living in low-income families have a greater migratory intention than those with higher incomes.

In the area of high migration rates, the proportion of young people who considered economic conditions to be better than a year ago have higher intentions to migrate. Young people who reported economic conditions being the same as the previous year have less migratory intention. In the area with low migration rates, young people who considered economic conditions to be the same as the previous year have the highest migratory intention, and those who reported economic conditions as being better have a lower intention to migrate.

Graph 34

Migration intention per area of study and opinion of the country's current economic conditions compared to the previous year

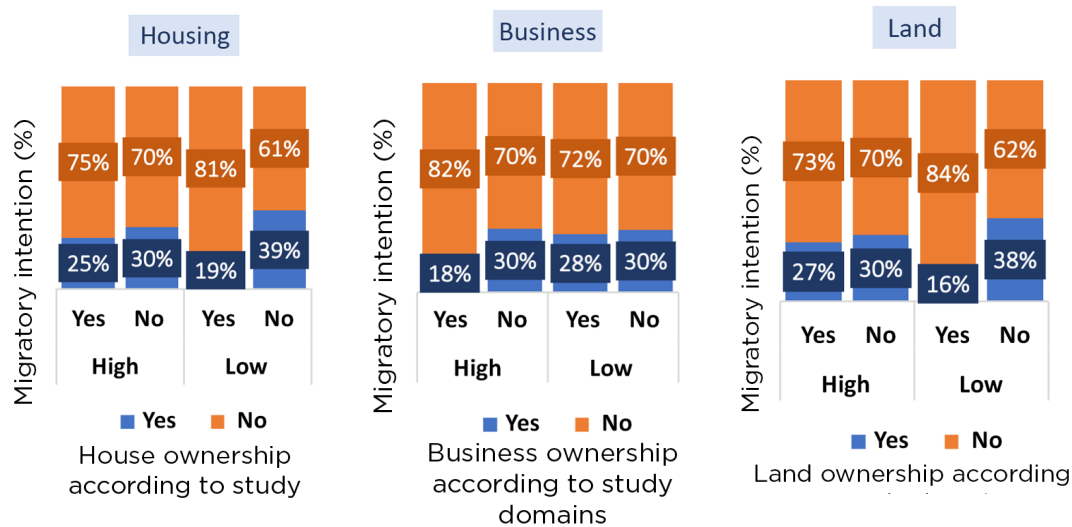


Young people who own land have less migratory intention than those who do not. The case is most evident in areas with low migration rates, where 16% of young people that own land intend to migrate, while for landless youth, the proportion increases to 38% or more than double. Young people who do not own any type of housing have a greater migratory intention than those who own some property; this same relationship occurs with those who do not own a business. In areas with high migration rates, young people who own businesses have the least migratory intention.³⁴ An interesting variable as young people usually mention being able to acquire one of these properties as a motivating factor for migration.

³⁴ Proof of difference between the proportions: According to the test results, with 95% confidence, there are no significant differences between the proportions of the two areas of the study for young people who own a home or a business. However, with 90% confidence, researchers found that the difference in the proportion of young people who own land is significant for the areas of the study; 27% of young people who own land intend to migrate in municipalities with high migration rates, on the other hand, this proportion falls to 16% of young people from municipalities with low migration rates.

Graph 35

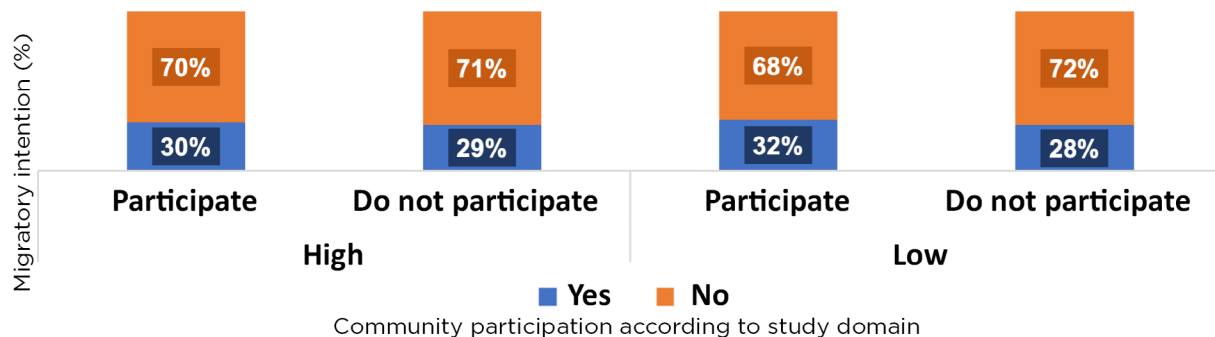
Migration intention per area of study and ownership of land, housing, and business



Regarding community participation, researchers found that in the area with high migration rates, three out of ten young people (30%) who participate in any group in their community intend to migrate. They found similar results for the area with low migration rates (32%).

Graph 36

Migration intention per area of study and community participation

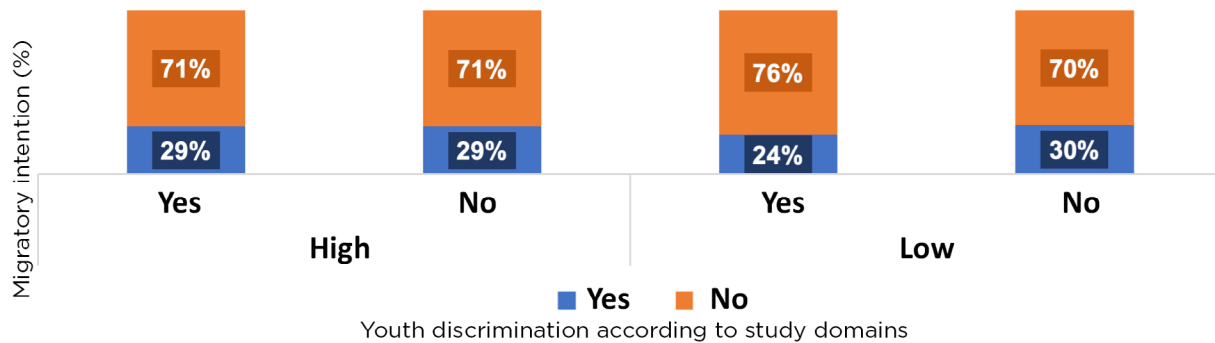


Note: Community participation means that the young person participates in a political party, a committee that promotes development, a neighborhood committee, or holds a position in a community office.

Suffering discrimination does not affect the intention to migrate in the area with high migration rates. In areas with low migration rates, young people who have not experienced discrimination in their community have a greater intention to migrate.

Graph 37

Migratory intention per area of study and experiences of discrimination

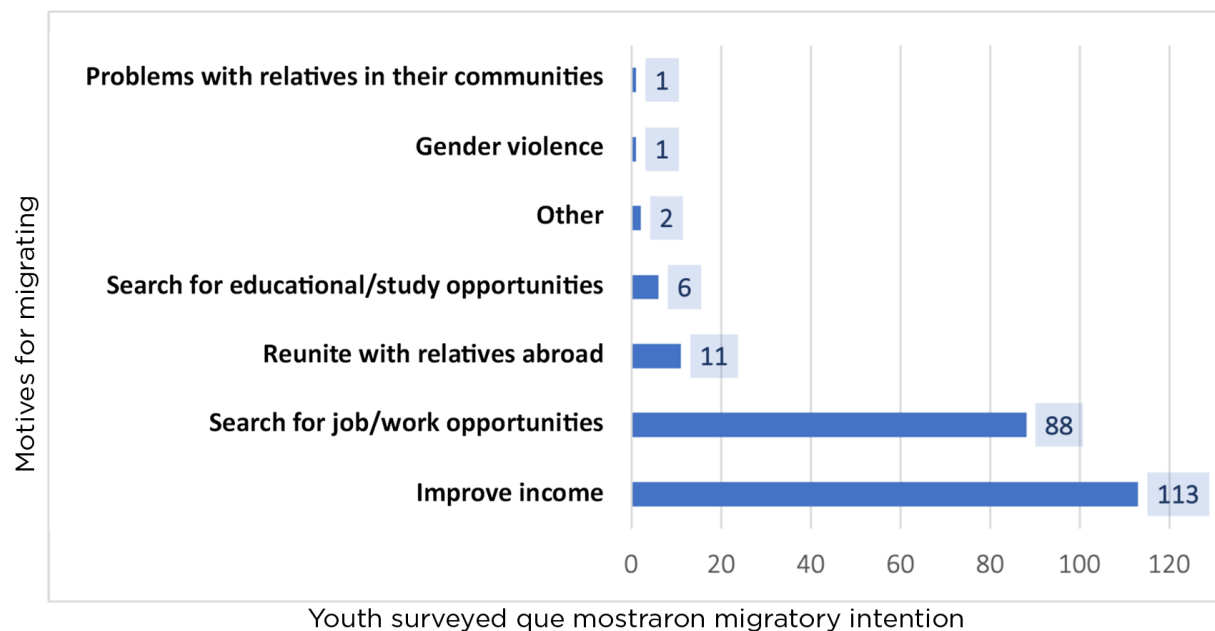


Motivations to migrate

Survey respondents with intentions to migrate said their primary motivations are essentially economic: to improve income (51%) and to look for job opportunities or work (40%). When researchers disaggregated motivations by gender, they found that 53% of men and 49% of women want to improve their income, 40% of men and 39% of women are looking for job opportunities, 3% of men and women are seeking educational opportunities, and 3% of men and 7% of women want to reunite with relatives abroad.

Graph 38

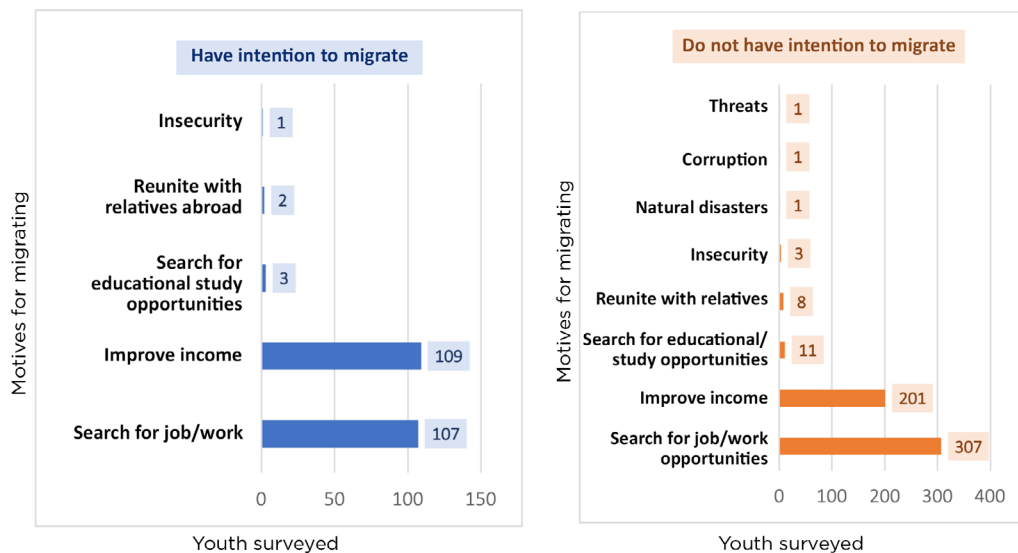
Survey respondents' main reasons for considering leaving the country



Respondents with and without intentions to migrate both gave economic reasons when asked why they believe young people in the municipality migrate to the United States.

Graph 39

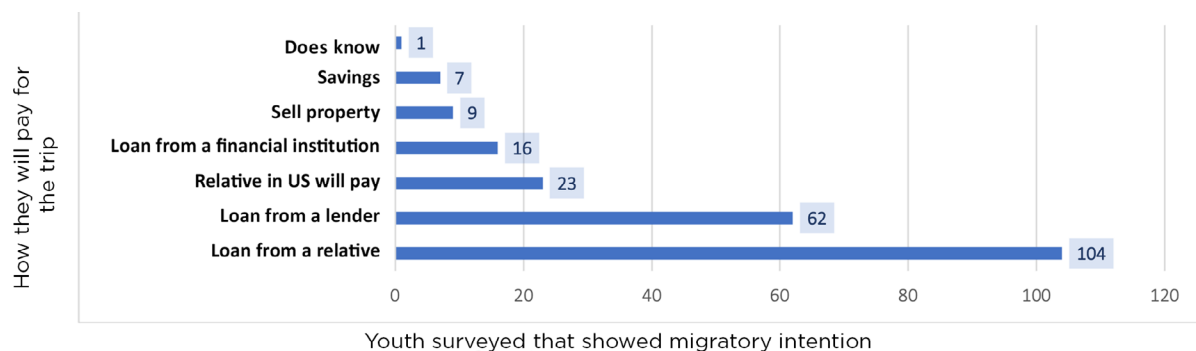
According to migration intention, why do you think this municipality's young people migrate to the United States?



Respondents who indicated intention to migrate said they would pay for the trip by borrowing money from family members (47%) or another lender (28%). It is noteworthy that 10% said a family member in the United States would pay for the trip while the remainder mentioned other sources of funding, including loans from a financial institution, sale of property, or savings.

Graph 40

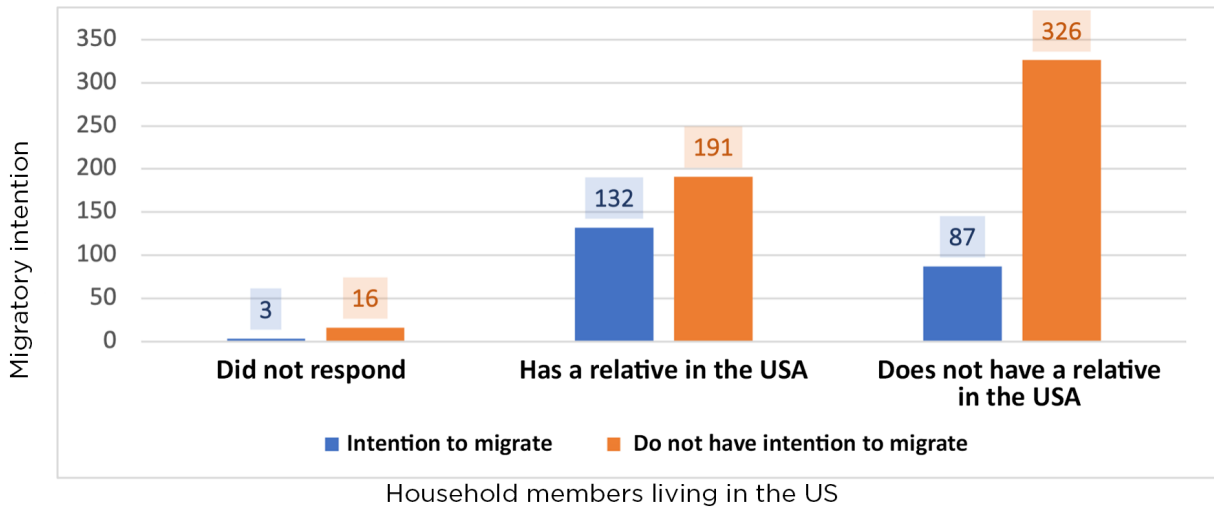
How will they pay for the trip?



Survey results showed that 43% of respondents (323 of 755) indicated that a member of their household currently lives in the United States with 45% of men and 41% of women reporting having household members living in the United States. Respondents with family members in the US were more likely to have intentions to migrate than those who did not.

Graph 41

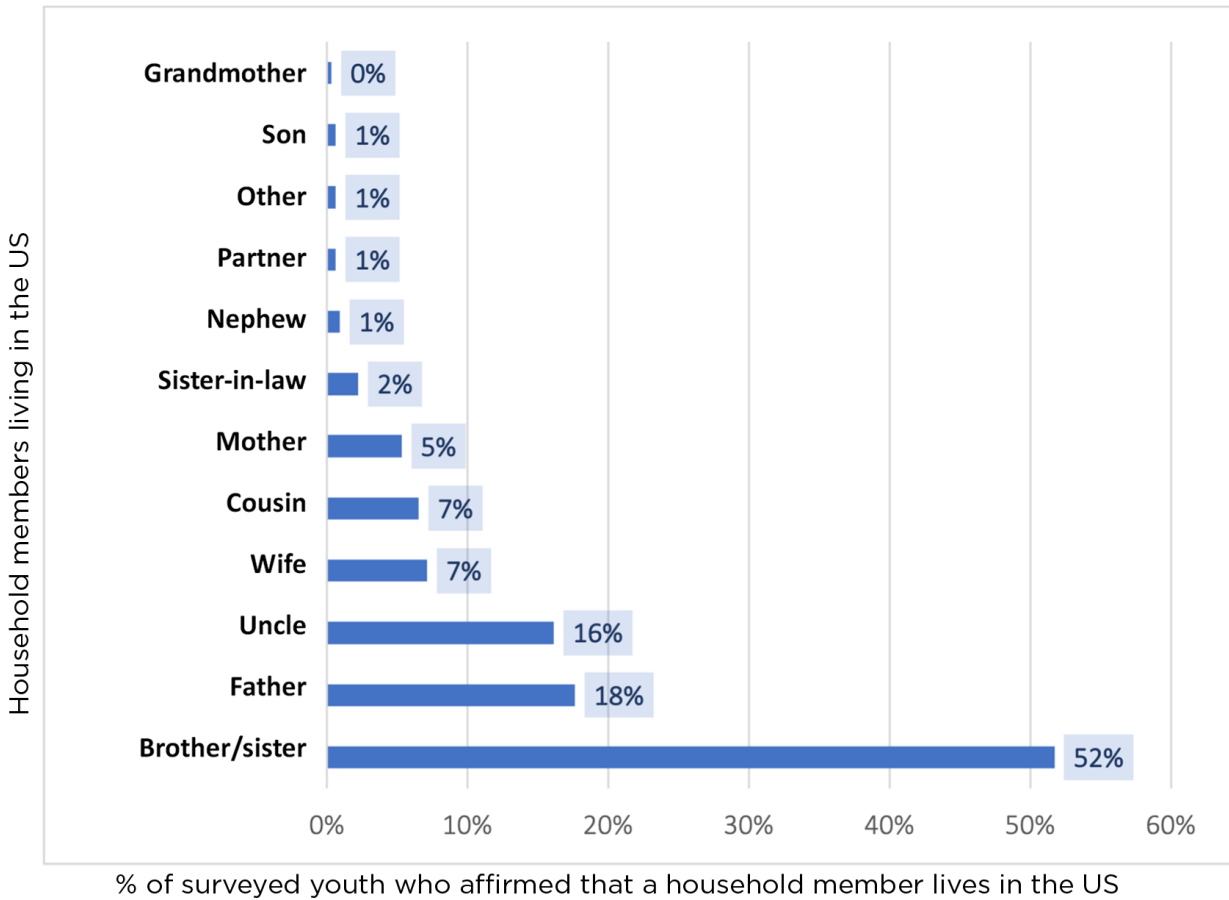
Migration intention and household members living in the United States



Most respondents who have a household member abroad primarily have a brother or sister living in the United States (52%), 18% their father 16% an uncle or aunt, 7% their husband/wife, 7% a cousin, 5% their mother, 2% a brother-in-law/sister-in-law, 0.9% a niece or nephew, 0.6% a partner, 0.6% a son or daughter, 0.3% a grandfather or grandmother, and 0.5% another relative.

Graph 42

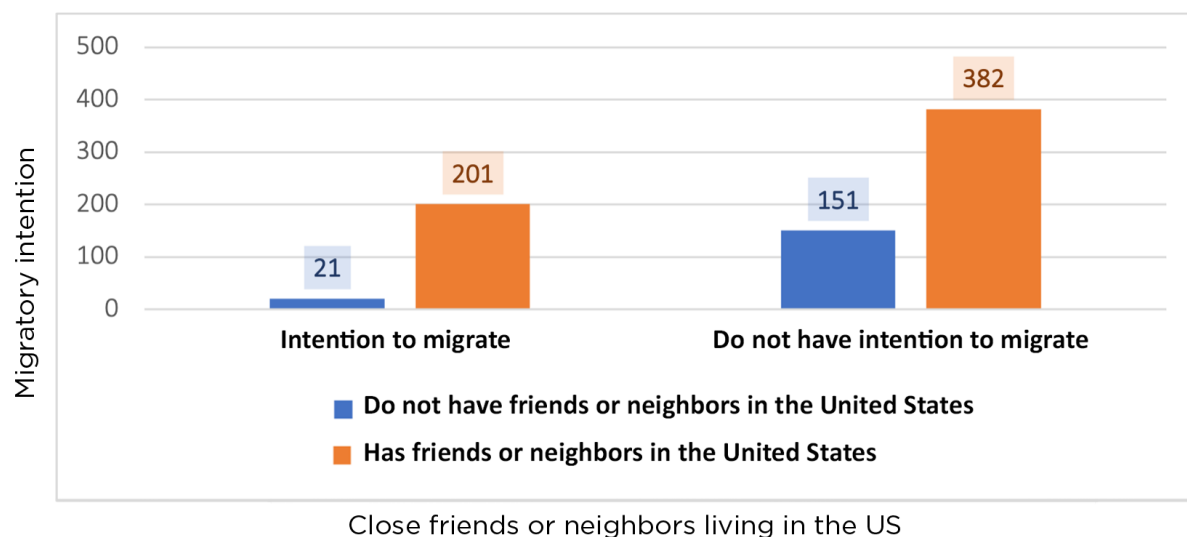
Household members of respondents living in the United States



According to the survey, 77% (583 of 755) of respondents indicated they have close friends or neighbors currently living in the United States. Respondents intending to migrate are more likely to have close friends or neighbors living in the United States.

Graph 43

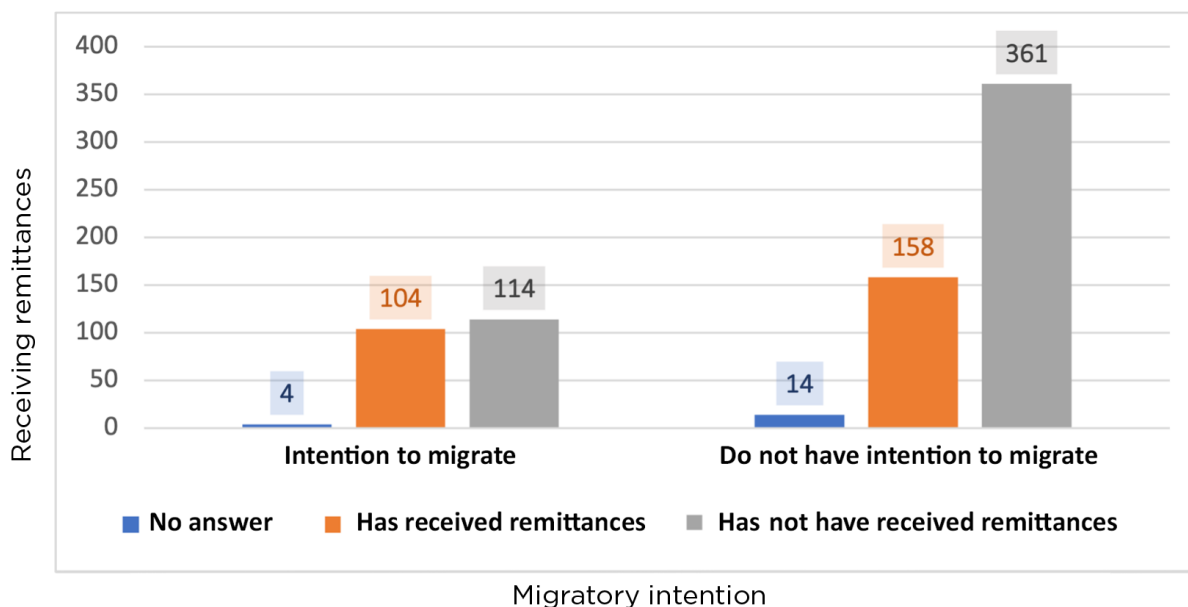
According to migration intent, do you have close friends or neighbors currently living in the United States?



Survey results indicate that 35% (262 of 755) of respondents have received remittances from the United States in the last twelve months. This percentage is higher among respondents who did not intend to migrate than those who did.

Graph 44

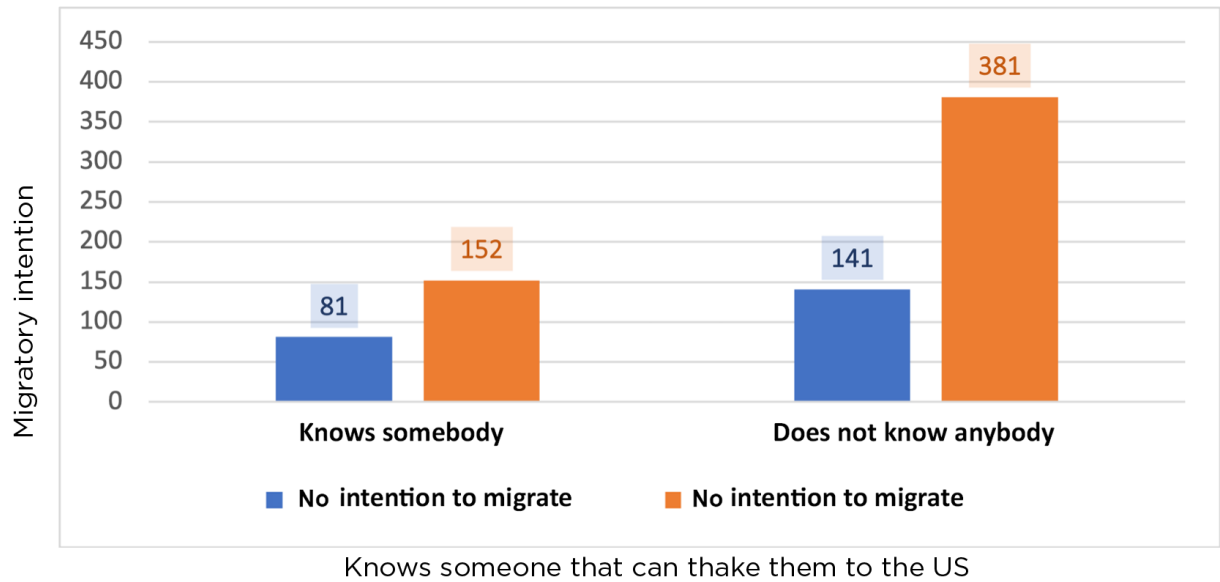
According to migration intent, have you or anyone in your household received remittances from the United States during the last twelve months?



Survey results show that 31% (233 of 755) of respondents indicate they know of a guide or coyote who can take them to the United States if they decide to migrate. Again, the proportion is higher among those who did not have intentions to migrate than those who did.

Graph 45

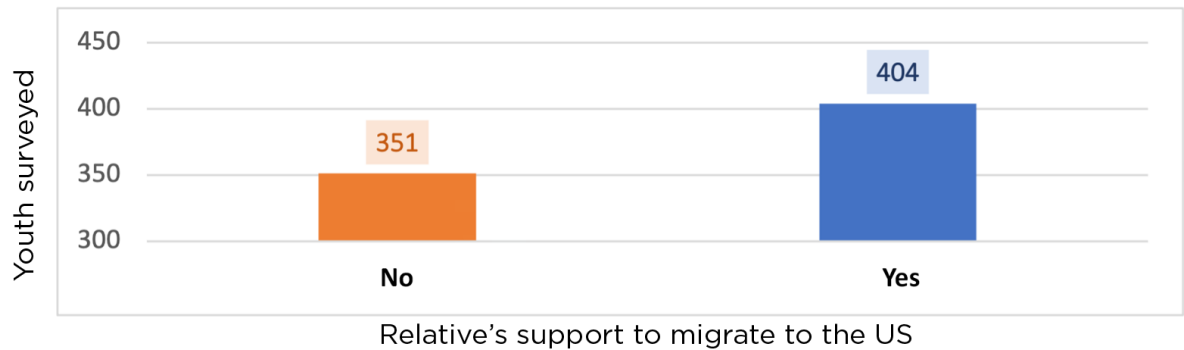
According to migration intent, do you know anyone (guide or coyote) who could take you to the United States?



Finally, nearly half of the young people surveyed indicated that their families would support them if they migrated to the United States (54%, 404 of 755), while just less than half of respondents (46%, 351 of 755) indicated that their families would not support this decision.

Graph 46

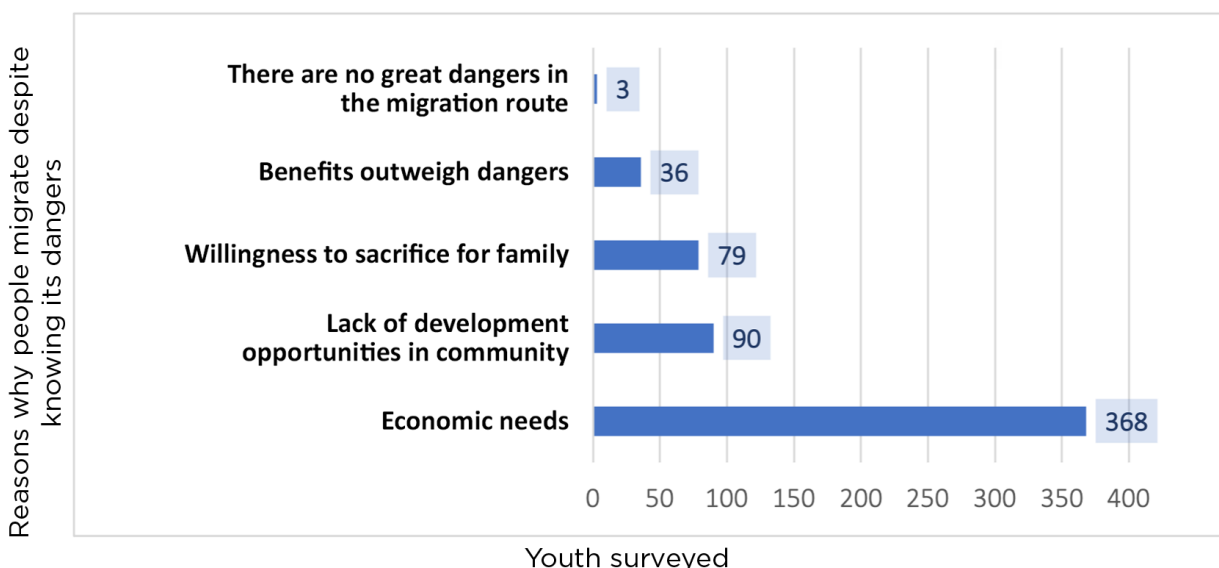
Would your family support your decision to migrate to the United States?



Results show that 76% of respondents (576 out of 755) said they knew the risks they might face on the migratory route. They reported that most people migrate, despite knowing the risks, due to economic needs (64%), lack of development opportunities in their community (15%), willingness to sacrifice for the family's well-being (13%), and for other reasons (7%).

Graph 47

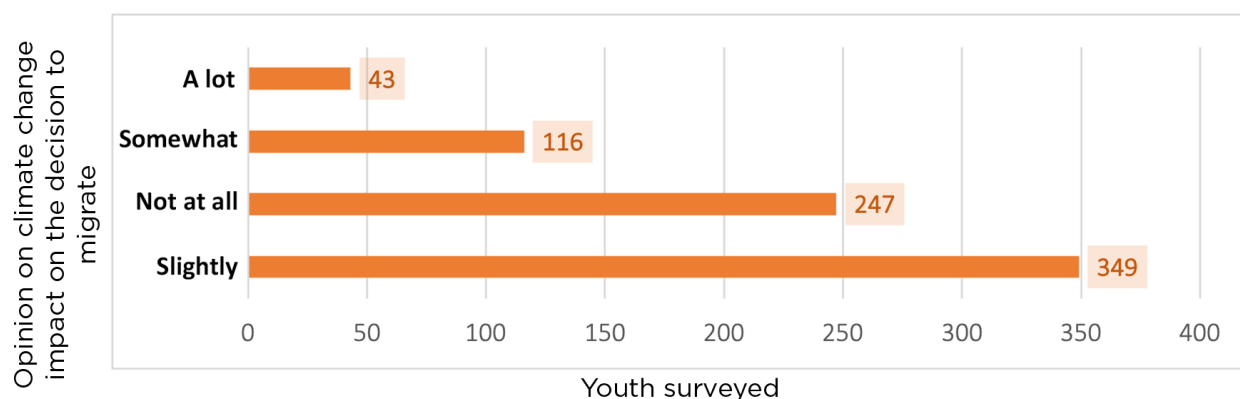
Why do you think people in your community choose to migrate despite knowing the risks they might face along the way?



When consulting respondents about other possible variables related to the intention to migrate, such as the impact of climate change or COVID-19, most youth replied that climate change has little (46%, 349 out of 755) or no impact (33%, 247 out of 755) on young people's decision to migrate from their communities; they also believe the COVID-19 pandemic had little (33%, 248 of 755) or no effect (29%, 217 of 755) on the decision. These trends are similar regardless of the respondent's migratory intention (see Figures 52 and 53).

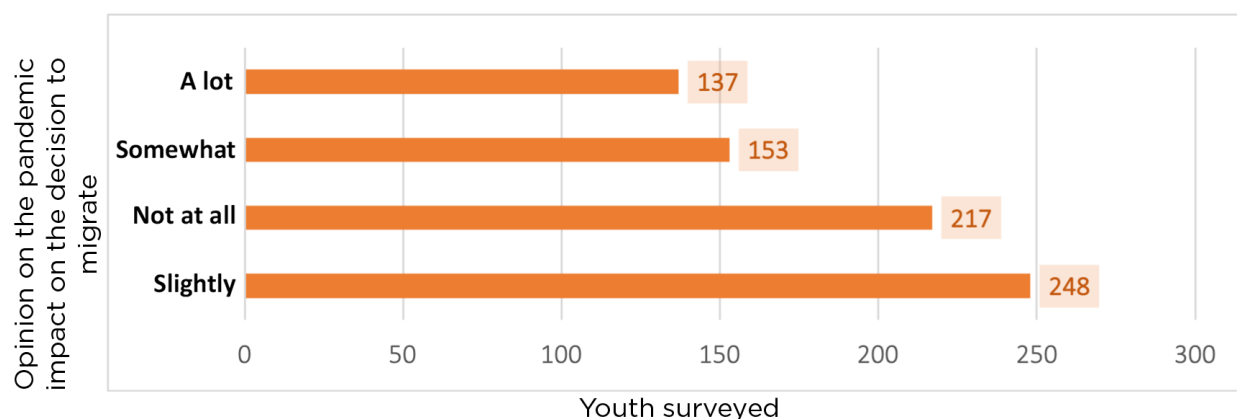
Graph 48

To what extent do you think climate change affects young people's decision to migrate in your community?



Graph 49

To what extent do you think the pandemic affected young people's decision to migrate in your community?



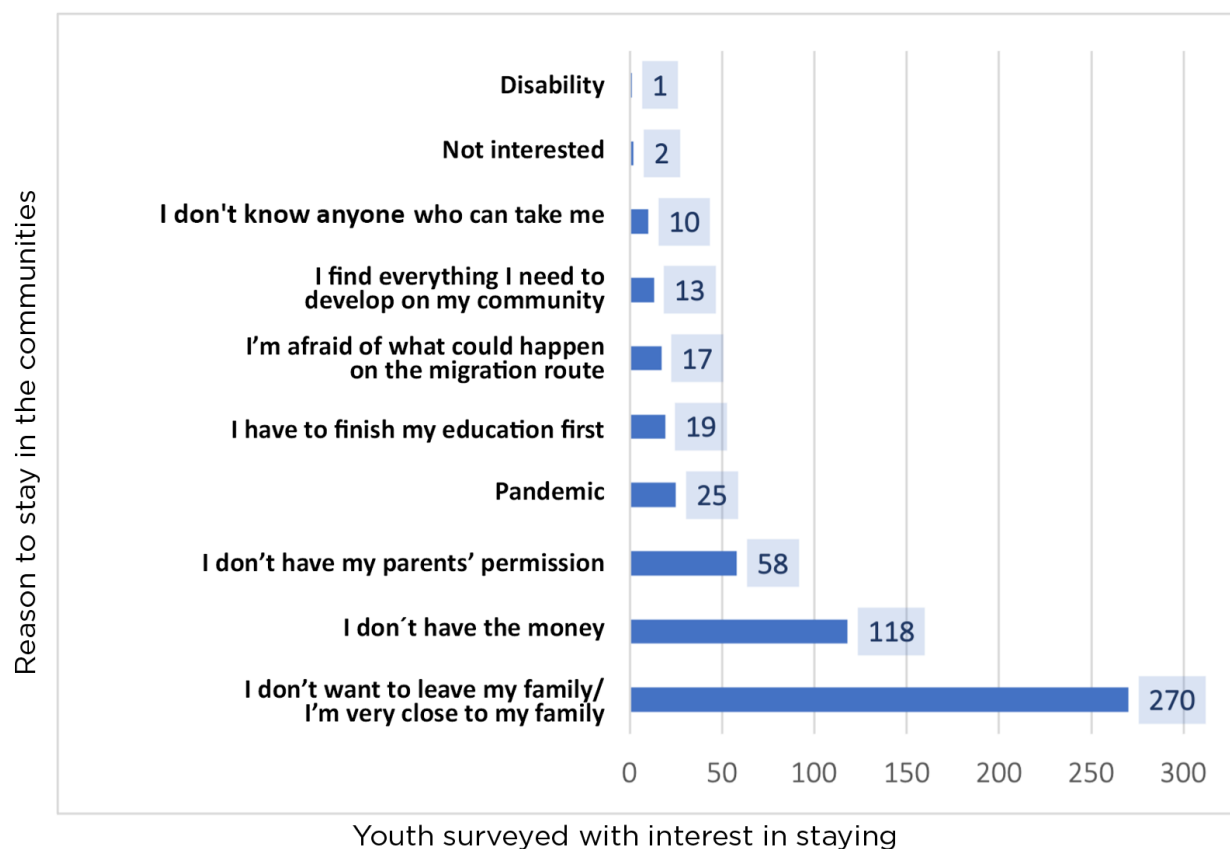
Among young people surveyed, only four had returned to Guatemala after migrating to the United States. One woman had been deported after a raid at her workplace, while three men voluntarily returned after attaining their goal. It is also important to mention that two of the four, a woman and a man, intend to migrate again.

4.2.2 Intention to Remain

It is important to note that most respondents (71%, 533 out of 755 young people) expressed no intention to migrate abroad in the next 12 months; furthermore, many also expressed no intention to migrate internally (88%, 655 out of 755). At the time of the survey, most respondents preferred immobility over migration.

Graph 50

Why have you not considered leaving the country?



When consulting those who expressed no intention to migrate abroad about the primary motivation to remain, 51% (270 of 533) indicated they did not want to leave their relatives, 22% (118 of 533) they do not have the money, 11% (58 of 533) they do not have their parents' permission, 5% (19 of 533) it was due to the pandemic, 3% (17 of 533) they were afraid of the risks along the migratory route, 2.4% (13 of 533) considered they can find everything they need to develop in their community, 1.8% (10 of 533) do not know anyone who could take them, 2 respondents said they were not interested, and 1 has a disability.

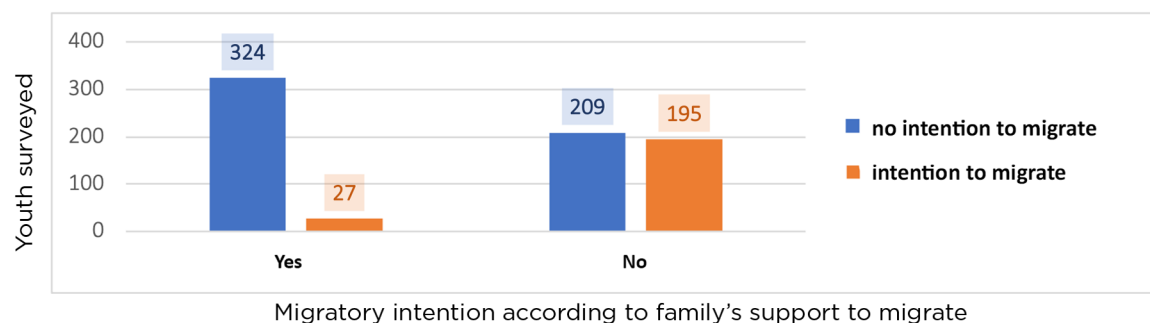
When researchers disaggregated the data by gender, they observed the same pattern: not wanting to leave their relatives is the main reason for 45% of men and 54% of women, followed by not having the money for 24% of men and 21% of women, not having parental permission was the reason for 11% of both genders, due to the pandemic for 6% of men and 4% of women, among other reasons.

These responses emphasize **the importance of family in the decision to migrate**. In 62% of cases, researchers related immobility to situations in the family environment: not wanting to leave family members (51%) or not having parental permission (11%). That when researchers asked young people, who said they knew the risks on the migration route (575 of 755), why they believed young people chose to migrate despite knowing the danger, 13% said it was because they were willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of their families.

Furthermore, when young people were asked if their families would support their decision to migrate to the United States, 54% said their families would. However, 46% indicated their families would not. Analyzing this data in greater detail, reveals that those with migratory intention said their families would support their decision to migrate. However, among those with no migratory intention, the majority stated that their families would not support a decision to migrate to the United States.

Graph 51

According to migratory intention, would your family support your decision to migrate to the United States?

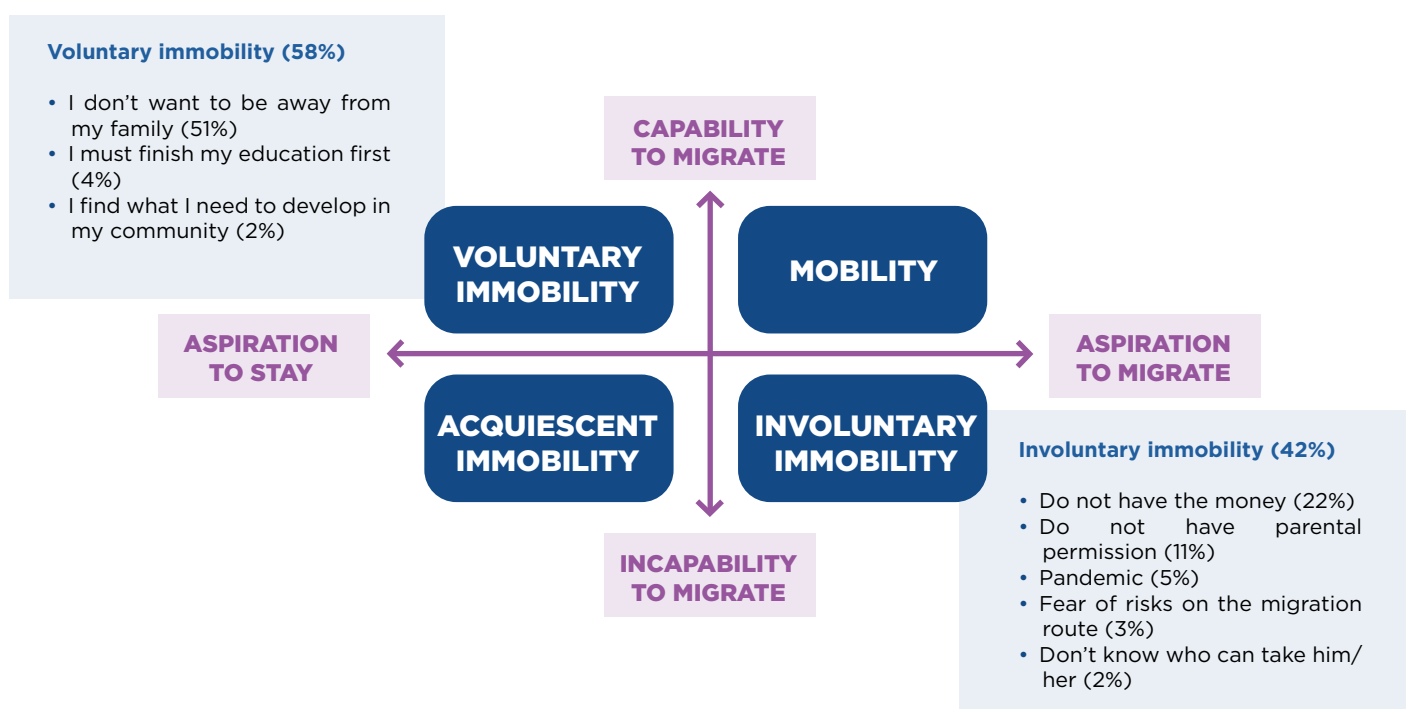


Another relevant factor related to family is that there was a higher percentage of siblings living in the United States (34.1%) among respondents with no migratory intention than among those who did express migratory intention (17.6%). This data may correspond to what some migration scholars consider the dual role of having family members in the United States. It can encourage migration, among those seeking family reunification abroad, or it can function as a retention factor, making it unnecessary for another household member to migrate because there is already someone abroad. The migrant person makes family reproduction possible in the country of origin (Mata-Codesal, 2016). Diana Mata-Codesal (2016) explains, “The immobility of certain people who remain at home—who take care of productive and reproductive tasks—facilitates and allows others within the same family to migrate” (p. 125). For Stockdale and Haartsen (2018), in many cases, the migration of some family members allows others to remain. According to the explanatory model of immobility in relation to aspiration/ability, survey

results reveal that a large percentage of young people who did not have intentions to migrate are in a situation of forced or involuntary immobility (42%). Their reasons for staying are related to an inability to migrate, for example, not having the money to do so or not having parental permission. About 58% of young people who did not have intentions to migrate are in a situation of voluntary immobility because their motivations to remain are related to their desire to not leave their family (51%), finish their education (4%), or because they believe they can develop in their communities (2%).

Figure 5

Aspiration/ability model based on survey results



Researchers obtained similar results from the qualitative component of focus groups and interviews. Participants who expressed the desire to stay gave the following reasons: having formed their own family, not having economic support, and the fear of migrating.

To identify variables that influence respondents' intention to migrate, researchers estimated a probabilistic linear econometric model using the ordinary least squares method. The coefficients indicate the likelihood of the young person's intention to migrate, which was the dependent variable. Researchers reclassified this variable into dichotomous form, one is equal to "Yes," and zero is equal to "No." They also classified the replies of the explanatory variables in the same way.

Initially, researchers created a model with variables that, based on the theory or logical assumption, were most likely to influence the intention to migrate in the coming months. Most of the explanatory variables from this model turned out to be meaningless, so a second model was created with variables that were significant. Again, researchers identified variables without statistical significance, so a third model was designed, which became the accepted one.

Of the total variables in the survey responses, only eight are statistically significant in explaining respondents' intention to migrate. The degree of this significance indicates that 27% of the variables explain the intention to migrate. In 78% of cases, equivalent to 591 of 755, the model correctly predicts the yes or no answer to the question about the possibility of migrating in the coming months. Researchers evaluated the percentages of explanation and prediction as acceptable, considering the dichotomous nature of the model. The percentage passed the residuals normality test and the non-existence of collinearity between the explanatory variables. Consequently, researchers considered it a satisfactory and acceptable model.

Variables such as land ownership, participation in a group involved in cultural traditions or the church, and believing the community offers opportunities negatively influence the intention to migrate; that is, they reduce it. Specifically, the probability of intention to migrate decreases by 37% when the respondent owns land. Participation in groups also has an important percentage of probability, 48% and 35%, respectively. Still, believing that there are opportunities in the community is the variable with the greatest retention impact. A respondent who believes this is 56% less likely to intend to migrate.

On the contrary, variables that favor migration were identified such as thinking about living outside the country, having a family member or acquaintance living in the United States, and having family support to migrate. The latter is the most important, as it increases the probability by more than 100%, followed by the variable regarding thinking about living abroad with a probability of 73%. The probability of having relatives or acquaintances in the United States ranged from 29% to 33%.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Table 16.

Variables related to the intention to migrate and remain in the community based on the probabilistic econometric model

VARIABLES RELATED TO INTENTION TO MIGRATE	VARIABLES RELATED TO INTENTION TO REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family supports decision to migrate Family member or acquaintance lives in the United States Thinking about living abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believing there are opportunities in the community of origin Participation in groups in the community (traditions, cultural, religious) Land ownership

In summary, the results of the probabilistic econometric model indicate that attachment variables, such as land tenure or participation in community groups, reduce the probability of having the intention to migrate among young respondents, while variables related to the family's support of the decision to migrate increase this probability.

Table 17.

Variables related to migration intention according to the probabilistic econometric model results

	COEFFICIENT	DEV. TYPICAL	Z	P-VALUE	
Constant	-1.27676	0.177823	-7,180	<0.0001	***
s3p7_land ownership	-0.376826	0.136103	-2.769	0.0056	***
s5p1_groups_traditions_culture	-0.479512	0.19283	-2.487	0.0129	**
s5p1_religious_or_church_groups	-0.349772	0.119631	-2.924	0.0035	***
s5p11_communities_opportunities	-0.560749	0.114202	-4.910	<0.0001	***
s6p2_living_outside	0.72795	0.158894	4.581	<0.0001	***
s6p5_member_home_living_USA	0.286622	0.119404	2.4	0.0164	**
s6p6_acquaintances_living_USA	0.322027	0.167165	1.926	0.0541	*
s6p11_family_suport_migration	1.26989	0.130078	9.762	<0.0001	***
R-Corrected square	0.266				

Number of correctly predicted cases = 591 (78.3%)

Note: The table shows the variables that negatively and positively influence the intention to migrate.

5. Initiatives for Young People in Guatemala's Western Highlands

5.1 Current Local Initiatives in the Municipalities Studied

Education

Scholarships are available so young people can continue their studies. For example, in Todos Santos Cuchumatán, the ASODIETT cooperative has scholarship programs for its members so their children can finish middle school. Researchers identified other organizations in the selected municipalities that support young people who wish to continue their education: MIDES, MINEDUC, PRODESSA, INTECAP, CRS, Caritas, CDRO, Fe y Alegría, IGER, and some universities.

Technical training programs allow young people to learn a skill and have employment alternatives in the short term. One key actor indicated that this training is attractive to young people because “it is better to learn by doing.” Technical training focuses on mechanical trades, pastry making, hairdressing, beauty specialists, weaving, embroidery, and other areas. In Santa María Chiquimula and Santa Lucía La Reforma, schools such as Fe y Alegría have opted for flexible education programs, recognizing that young people need both formal education and vocational skills that will give them more socioeconomic alternatives.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“The technical-occupational training program is the most successful and popular among young people as long as it focuses on what they like; otherwise, they don't want to enroll, although we explain there are general knowledge courses in specific technical training areas. We have to be very careful when choosing a course proposal.”

-OMJ, Chiantla, personal communication, May 3, 2022.

“We have addressed some topics of interest for youth. We also invited them to make some handicrafts. Young people from Siquibal said they wanted to learn baking, cooking, and other things.”

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.

Finally, it is important to note that in several of the selected municipalities indicated that they received remittances from family members in the United States, which helped them to continue their education.

Socioeconomic initiatives

Across the selected municipalities, researchers found limited support for young people to access economic development opportunities in their communities. The absence of formal jobs is notable. Socioeconomic projects for young people in these municipalities are limited to helping them start entrepreneurship enterprises, such as training and seed capital for projects, including egg production and raising laying hens, family gardens, vegetable and mushroom production, textiles, bakeries, hair salons, crafts, custom jewelry, food sales, and social housing construction. These opportunities are more common in San Marcos and Quetzaltenango than in Huehuetenango and Totonicapán. Usually, non-governmental organizations create partnerships with municipal mayors to support these initiatives.

A few agricultural initiatives led by cooperatives or associations have had positive results for their members. One of them is ASODIETT, a cooperative in Todos Santos Cuchumatán that supports coffee producers by improving production and marketing.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

“Everyone works, but in the case of fertilization, we have to invest in chemicals to get the products. In the case of coffee, when we negotiate a product, the buyer does not pay the price... because we have to meet their conditions and we do not earn much. There is almost no profit when we count everything we spend on planting maize.”

-ASODIETT youth group, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 19, 2022.

Another case is ADAT, an association of agricultural producers in the village of San Martín in Todos Santos Cuchumatán with experience in greenhouses, flowers, and vegetables. This group provides certificates for producing and exporting snow peas and fava beans; they also work with women.

“We are an association that cares for the well-being of farmers and works on women’s and young people’s issues. Specifically with young people, we are organizing a group with 30 youth, and we have managed a range of ages from 15 to 30. Some have received training in different areas and have even formed their board of directors. Oscar is one of the board members. We have made efforts with other organizations to support them. We worked on some entrepreneurial ventures with young people and coordinated with ADESJU, supported by CRS. Unfortunately, ADESJU is no longer with us, but we are still working with the group of young people, as well as other groups because our main idea is to make a corporation like ADAT, where some young people have already been trained in baking, others in coffee preparation, such as tasters, and others in food service.”

-ADAT, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 19, 2022.

In San Miguel Ixtahuacán, ACMI produces high-altitude coffee and supports its members by improving their cultivation techniques and vegetable production, in several villages in the municipality. In recent years they have provided technical training for coffee tasters, an occupational alternative for some women. ADIJE in Tejutla provides financing for productive projects as the banking system is not an option for many young producers due to high interest rates and crop risks.

Political initiatives

In some municipalities, there is a greater **presence of non-governmental organizations** that have promoted more youth participation and advocacy with local authorities to ensure more support for youth. For example, Chiantla appears to be one of the municipalities with a visible political organization that favors young people through civil organizations and the Municipal Youth Services Office which created a youth policy. Comitancillo and San Juan Ostuncalco are other municipalities that show youth participation. The religious youth organization in San Miguel Ixtahuacán also has an important political profile.

“Chiantla is a municipality characterized by the participation of organizations like ours that has created a public municipal youth policy which is one of the few existing at the national level; it has been in place for 7 years since its approval in 2016 and is valid through 2030. This policy identifies youth’s needs and aspirations through nine central themes. Another municipality strength, is the youth services office, an employment office, and a municipal employment service desk. Also although it has varied, public sector economic support for youth has not stopped, even if it is minimal. I think the difference is very marked compared to other municipalities that do not have support. In such cases, the public sector does not pay attention to young people.”
-ADESJU coordinator, Chiantla, personal communication, May 3, 2022.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“As an office of the commission and specifically of youth, we partner with many organizations with a presence in the municipality. And thank God Chiantla is one of the municipalities with more institutional presence from the private sector, government, and civil society. For example, we coordinate with Puentes to organize and train young people. If they want to focus on the employment area, as I say, there is an opportunity for them to receive training. Likewise, the office has an annex to the municipal employment service desk, which focuses on employment and entrepreneurs. In the job search area, if there are vacancies, we can promote them and coordinate with companies or entrepreneurship to create them.”

-OMJ, Chiantla, personal communication, May 3, 2022.

Community and cultural initiatives

There is an increasing number **of community and cultural projects related to international migration in the selected municipalities**. For example, in the Mam and Huista areas, Pop Noj Association works with family members to assist with the family reunification process when migrants return. They also provide humanitarian assistance to families in precarious conditions. In Santa María Chiquimula and Comitancillo, the Jesuit Network with Migrants of Guatemala provides psychosocial support to relatives of migrants and children and adolescents in human mobility contexts. In Quetzaltenango, particularly in Cajolá, returnees created Grupo Cajolá³⁵ and DESGUA³⁶, two important initiatives to generate opportunities in their communities of origin³⁷.

A few organizations, especially Pop Noj Association, Grupo Cajolá, Maya Jamax, and AMMID People's Council, are **working to create culturally relevant community programs**.

³⁵ Started by a returnee who lived in the United States for more than ten years. His project aimed to create new opportunities for young people. Grupo Cajolá works with indigenous Mam women who weave and raise chickens; preschool, primary, and middle school children; and young people with weaving projects or who are enrolled in diploma courses.

³⁶ An association of young returnees whose goal is to generate options for young people who do not have jobs. The association is involved in selling products made in the community (handicrafts, agricultural products); reflections on Mam Maya identity; defending the land; and food sovereignty.

³⁷ An association of young returnees. Its goal is to generate options for young people who do not have jobs. The association is involved in selling products made in the community (handicrafts, agricultural products); reflections on Mam Maya identity; defending the land; and food sovereignty.

“ This initiative was born in Caserío El Palomar. It is an artistic gathering place for children and young people to strengthen their skills through self-learning. It is connected to other groups, for example, the Jamax Maya People's Council, which supports young people's political education throughout the country to build a new government, and another powerful movement in the country called Ruk 'u'x. Jamax works mainly with children because it believes that principles and values, knowledge of their people must be learned in childhood. It is an artistic gathering place because musicians, dancers, poets, and other types of artists participate. ”

-Jamax, San Martín Sacatepéquez, personal communication, August 31, 2021.

AMMID is dedicated to protecting Maya identity and community agroecology practices and also has a youth component. Based on participants' discussions, researchers concluded that doing something for the community, contributing to its development, and increased focus on ethnic and gender identity may also discourage migratory intention.

“ I have decided to stay here because I would love to speak out for others. After all, who will initiate a process to help and be others' refuge if we leave? We want to get ahead here, to set an example to other young people, children, and those who come after us, that we can survive and get ahead; however, we have to join together because if everyone acts separately, then it is a little difficult to move forward. We would like to have a force to move forward. ”

-Youth group A, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 13, 2021.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“There is work to do to recover Maya medicine, talk about sexuality, promote good nutrition, and care for Mother Earth. In Concepción, this means working with the communities of the upper part, which have water recharge areas. What do we want with this? That the community who lives in the upper area realizes the impact their activities have on the community who lives in the lower area. We organized some reforestation days and would like them to maintain water springs in the upper part, perhaps with a fence. We are working on this approach at the community level. We are starting the diagnoses now.”
-AMMID, Concepción Tutuapa, personal communication, August 14, 2021.

5.2 Possible Alternatives to Irregular Migration and to Strengthen Interest in Remaining

Researchers mapped existing initiatives and analyzed their corresponding potential to offer alternatives to irregular migration and to strengthen the interest of young people to remain in their communities.

Formal education and technical training

The need for educational opportunities and technical training is one of the issues participants mentioned most often across all four departments. For many young people, having a technical or university degree is on their horizon, but often it remains an unrealized dream because they cannot afford it. Scholarship programs or educational loans could be an alternative for young people in these municipalities. Educational institutions, though, must create connections between this and employment or entrepreneurship opportunities.

Young people also expressed interest in learning technical trades in mechanics, electricity, carpentry, hairdressing, or crafts. These trades are attractive because of their potential to generate immediate income.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

“ *My brother is the person who has helped me the most. We are four brothers and live with my mother because we do not have a father. My oldest brother made a deal with my uncle; he was going to provide education for him, my brother was going to provide the education for me. I have to give it to my sister, and my sister has to give it to my little brother. We are helping each other to get ahead.* **”**

-Chef, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 10, 2021.

Researchers observed much support for formal education scholarships. The selected municipalities have coordinated education programs with organizations such as Fundap, INTECAP, Incap, Fundasistemas, Funcafé, and others. FAO coordinates formal education programs with the Ministry of Education and its departmental directorates.

In Huehuetenango and Totonicapán there are technical training initiatives and scholarship programs. The Fe y Alegría school in Chiantla supports young people not only with formal education but with technical training that allows them to become self-employed.

“ *We offer a diploma in automotive mechanics at the high school level, in conjunction with INTECAP, and another in computers with a specialization in maintenance. This is our weekday activity. We also have the flexible center on Saturday, which receives adults, and even some of our students' parents attend or have attended classes on the weekend.* **”**

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Chiantla, personal communication, July 22, 2022.

In Santa María Chiquimula, the Fe y Alegría educational center works with IGER, MINEDUC, PRODESSA, and others, to improve middle school education in literacy and mathematics.

“ Schools have only preschool and primary levels, but we have two centers working with IGER at the middle school level, and right now, with the help of the Ministry of Education, we are also starting a flexible program called PRONEA. Young people and adults, who want to continue their education, are enrolling, mainly from seventh to ninth grade.”

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.

Fe y Alegría's Centro del Saber is leading another important project in Santa Lucía La Reforma working to create an embroidery cooperative with women between 20 and 30 years old who are mostly single mothers. Other issues they will address sexual and reproductive health, vocational guidance, and information on university programs in the country.

Encouraging recreational activities

In the interviews and focus groups, youth participants expressed their interest in community spaces that allow them to develop recreational activities such as art (painting, music, graffiti, theater) and technology. The survey also showed that young people have limited access to libraries and books or film screenings. During the fieldwork, some participants mentioned recreational activities for youth



Foto por Luis Cocón/CRS

in San Juan Ostuncalco and Concepción Chiquirichapa. Young people and COCODES in Concepción Chiquirichapa have organized a science fair and a youth partner collective.

“ We know FUNDAP, where our young people already participate. We coordinate with them to help our participants learn or improve their knowledge. Some are currently enrolled in a program for nursing, a type of scholarship, which ends at the end of this year. We have had a successful organization.”

-Young women's leader, Tuipox, personal communication, September 1, 2021.

San Juan Ostuncalco is a municipality committed to culture with a space that promotes music classes, reading, poetry, and other arts.

“ *We believe it is important to have a small fund and the mayor's support for activities that attract young people. We're considering organising music workshops so they can learn to play guitar or another musical instrument. We're also thinking of teaching a painting class because young people are enthusiastic about graffiti. We talk among ourselves as coworkers, imagine if we bring a bohemian graffiti artist to teach a short workshop, so boys and girls learn to paint graffiti with cool things instead of topics related to gangs. They would be delighted.* **”**

-Inter-institutional Coordination, Cajolá, personal communication, August 25, 2021.

Access to formal employment

Young people long for formal jobs that allow them to earn income and fulfill their dreams, where they can use their talents, skills, and abilities.

“ *To stay in the country, young people need money. For this reason, they are also looking for a job opportunity but with better wages, not Q500, Q600, or Q1,000.* **”**

-Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Chiantla, personal communication, July 22, 2022.

“ *At that stage of my life, I thought of leaving, but fortunately, I managed to get a much better job, and that idea never crossed my mind again. With that job, I could continue my studies and never think again about going abroad.* **”**

-Teacher, Tejutla, personal communication, August 17, 2021.

Researchers identified the following initiatives in the selected municipalities. San Miguel Ixtahuacán has formed an alliance with the TELUS call center that operates in Quetzaltenango.

“CONJUVE San Marcos, TELUS Quetzaltenango, and Plus Academy signed an agreement to generate 100 jobs, which TELUS will provide. Our commitment as a municipality is to look for young men and women here and in four different places. Plus Academy will send teachers so they can learn English and offers professional training in four months. Not all groups will pass, but 70% to 75% of each group will. In four months, they should be fluent in English and be able to apply for a job at TELUS Quetzaltenango. Some young people who have returned from the United States who speak and write English no longer need to pass these classes, we just send their data to TELUS at once for an interview because they need many employees. Two young people from San Miguel are working there now.”

-OMJ, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, personal communication, August 9, 2021.

Some municipalities already have municipal employment service desk to assist returnees. These initiatives involve municipalities, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and non-governmental organizations such as FAO and IOM. During fieldwork, researchers verified the presence of these windows in San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, and Huehuetenango. The Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) has a program called First Job Scholarship, which supports young graduates by placing them in companies that will train them.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“MIDES and companies that have an apprenticeship program organized this initiative. The idea is to promote it and the companies that teach a trade. MIDES and the company would share the salary payment half-and-half. We have had about 30 scholarships, but thank God, this year, it was possible to make arrangements in Guatemala so municipalities could participate. As a result, we have almost 68 scholarships. We used to work with young people ages 18 to 24, but this time we have included ages 18 to 29, due to their needs and the lack of employment. There was a lot of interest in this scholarship, so I asked for the authorities’ support. Through this scholarship, we have placed health promoters in El Palmar, people at the office, and in maintenance.”
-MIDES coordinator, Quetzaltenango, personal communication, September 1, 2021.

In Totonicapán and Huehuetenango there appears to be few initiatives for young people as many municipal youth services offices are starting to work with this population. The municipalities coordinate with the Ministries of Labor, Education, Social Development, Environment, and the Social Welfare Secretariat. Other partnerships exist with non-governmental entities, such as Refugio de la Niñez, and the private sector, including URL, INTECAP, and TELUS.

Small-scale production and entrepreneurship

In the selected municipalities there are small-scale productive projects related to agriculture and livestock (raising laying hens, growing fruit and vegetables, and making honey, among others). Some projects focus on sustainable farming and food security, while others promote the Maya worldview.

These activities can generate economic resources for participating families. However, these projects also face limitations due to a lack of planning and coordination on behalf of the organizers behind them. For example, saturation of some local markets drives product price down and many producers become discouraged.

Most small-scale productive projects are family or individual based, not collective community projects. Many of these projects are designed for women or adults, although some young people are also involved, especially those in agriculture and livestock. Generally, their goal is to meet basic needs, such as food security and health, although some are already producing for local markets.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

Small-scale manufacturing projects, such as making soap, disinfectants, and other cleaning products, are also aimed at women. The Municipal Office for Women's Services (DMM) promotes these projects and has the support of mainly non-governmental organizations. For the most part, municipal authorities' contributions are limited to organizing community groups and logistics. In very few cases, they provide seed capital.

In Quetzaltenango, the Cajolá Group, which was founded by a returned migrant, currently employs women weavers for one of its projects. They sell their traditional textiles throughout the country and in the United States. For some women in this group, "it is more important to participate than to earn money." In addition to generating income, this group provides a space for women to leave the house, meet, and work together.

There is little coordination between government institutions. However, the Ministry of Social Development's work in Quetzaltenango to alleviate child food insecurity, which has forced it to coordinate with local organizations, Permanent Care Centers (CAP), and international cooperation agencies, such as FAO. To this end, they have begun training programs related to business ventures that allow mothers to generate income to feed their families or work in profitable activities. The DMM in San Martín Chiquirichapa reports that at least 40% of women participating in these programs manage to get ahead. Of course, the scope of these initiatives is quite limited compared to the needs of the municipalities.

In Tutuapa and Tejutla, some of the farming projects have formed partnerships between young producers and parents' organizations to supply food to local schools. These partnerships have been a success as they provide young people with fast, steady sources of income for every year they supply food. During the pandemic, the Fe y Alegría Educational Center in Chiantla launched a school cooperative project to supply retailers with farming and livestock products produced on their facilities. Researchers identified other projects related to weaving, and baking bread and pastries. Others are part of a production chain, such as ACMI's coffee tasting program in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, which has attracted young people, especially women.

Tierra Nueva in Huehuetenango, indicated that not everyone who receives training starts their own business. Depending on their work experience, three out of ten young people with training migrate, and of those who stay, only two become entrepreneurs. Their enterprises provide opportunities to generate income even when they are not sustainable. These ventures are more successful if training and seed capital accompany them.

“The agricultural project has helped me a lot, as I said. They did not abandon us at the end of the process but gave us the capital to undertake our projects. In my opinion, that is the only project that has helped many young people we were 90 young people who benefited. At the end of the whole process, we received support to start a venture to earn some income for our families, even if it was not much.”

-Group A, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 13, 2021.

“The association created a dressmaking group because many young people expressed interest in handicrafts, adding value to the fabrics and everything the group produces. Another group focused on hairdressing, styling, and everything that is attractive to young people.”

-AMMID, Comitancillo, personal communication, August 12, 2021.

FAO is increasing its efforts for young returnees in two San Marcos municipalities, Tutuapa, which was part of this study, and Tacaná. Their focus is on strengthening youth networks and institutions at the local and municipal levels. Most of the enterprises are agricultural and work in coordination with local actors. Another area for potential entrepreneurship is the arts.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“We have identified many young people who want another type of business, for example, in music and art, while others want to start a business. We have seen a change; for example, young men do not necessarily want to carry on their grandfather's or father's occupation. They are leaving aside agriculture and are interested in other activities. Result number two shows this change, which refers to improving access and management of digital platforms and ICTS (technology, information, and communication). We have had greater young people participate in these courses and training workshops because they want to learn about social media marketing and social media in general. We had a good response.”

-FAO program officer, San Marcos, personal communication, August 17, 2021.

FAO has also focused its efforts on improving the infrastructure for sports arenas, art schools, industrial arts, and music. Municipalities in San Marcos and Quetzaltenango have begun work along these lines through their women's and youth services offices. They coordinate with the private sector or non-governmental organizations to provide training and, in some cases, seed capital to encourage entrepreneurship. They offer courses in dressmaking, sewing, embroidery, weaving, and carpentry. The municipality and MIDES offer grants for artisans, providing training and seed capital. They have also supported entrepreneurships in the following fields: making uniforms, pastries, commercial food preparation, baking, computing, and beauty services. Although young people looking for opportunities are taking advantage of these initiatives, some participants suggested a greater variety of courses to avoid the current market saturation and because they have other interests.

Health programs are being implemented in Cajolá and San Juan Ostuncalco due to high malnutrition rate. The Permanent Care Center for example, coordinates the *Bono de Salud* program. Other organizations fighting malnutrition include SESAN, MIDES, CAP, and MAGA. World Vision works with young people, children, and adolescents from Palestina and Chiquirichapa. Their comprehensive programs provide training and seed capital along with support for bettering oneself, improving resilience, generating income, and addressing gender issues, all with an eye to keeping young people in their communities.

“ We do not just identify the potential of young people we also lead them to see their skills through a six-month course called *Successful Entrepreneurship*. What does the young person do there? We provide them with moral and psychosocial support and skills so they can start a small business. The project identifies their skills and the gaps or barriers to having the appropriate conditions, whether they can be employed, self-employed, or start a business. And we have had excellent experiences; we have a bit of everything from mechanics to costume jewelry in several areas. The project aimed at young people, which we are implementing now, has been extended for two more years. ”

-Program coordinator, World Vision, Quetzaltenango, personal communication, September 3, 2021.

The municipality of Palestina de los Altos coordinates with various entities to promote youth entrepreneurship. Researchers found that there is support for multiple projects, from sewing and embroidery to dairy production, cultivation of ornamental plants, food sales, and other activities that interest young people.

Like other projects, the key to entrepreneurship is that the ventures comprehensively cover multiples needs. For example, IDESAC, in Cajolá, works on housing issues and plans to adress food insecurity. In Huehuetenango and Totonicapán, youth entrepreneurship is backed by civil society organizations, some of which coordinate with government bodies and receive support from international cooperation agencies such as USAID and CRS, two important actors in both departments. These programs provide training in trades and seed capital so that participants can continue with their business, training, or studies. ADESJU, Tierra Nuestra, Asociación Pop No'j, CDRO, World Vision, Child Hood, ChildFund, Neumann, and Centro Fe y Alegría have begun adding social components to their entrepreneurship initiatives.

Entrepreneurship can be difficult because it depends on leadership and available to grow. Young people in the focus groups emphasized the importance of follow up and support.

“INTECAP has a presence in Quetzaltenango and Totonicapán, where they teach trades such as cooking, pastry making, and starting a business, which in my opinion, is the way to create jobs. Young people need education to find work.”

-Peace Court, Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 26, 2022.

In addition to training, seed capital or access to financing is a key factor.

“Young people said, it’s a waste of time if they just give us training and nothing else. We go to Toto, Xela, or Guate but have nothing. Institutions are more interested in agricultural projects and not what we want.”

-OMJ, Saint Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, August 2, 2022.

“If young people have external support, I think they can do much more. The problem is that they don’t have money. They can identify an opportunity or need to fulfill, but it is impossible to go forward if they do not have the resources.”

-ADESJU Coordinator, Chiantla, personal communication, May 3, 2022.

“Obviously, they cannot start a business because they have no income and do not manage funds. Getting loans is difficult for them.”

-OMJ, Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 26, 2022.

Participants said one of the problems with entrepreneurship initiatives is the lack of support and monitoring after training, which is why many enterprises do not succeed.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU para CRS

Social housing projects

Young people have identified wanting to build or improve their homes as one of the principal reasons for migrating to the United States, meaning social housing projects could have a significant impact on a community. Yet, during the fieldwork, researchers identified only one project that addresses housing needs in the municipalities of the Western Highlands—IDESAC in Cajolá, Quetzaltenango, which builds social housing for women.

“IDESAC is also building two-bedroom homes, although they intend to build four-bedroom ones. We must strengthen the role of maintaining food security in households. Having a house is fine, but we must also work on food security to reduce malnutrition in our children.”

-IDESAC, Cajolá, personal communication, August 10, 2022.

Community leadership training

In general, young participants in the study said they felt excluded from decision-making processes in their municipalities and recognize the importance of training to exercise leadership in their communities. CDRO has a model for training community leaders from childhood to 22 years of age. Through four phases, the program teaches children, adolescents, and young adults to take care of and protect themselves, grow up healthy, and participate in their communities. ADAT in Todos Santos Cuchumatán, educates and trains people so they in turn can promote initiatives related to agriculture, tourism, and the service industry.

“We are an association that cares for the well-being of farmers and works on women’s and young people’s issues. Specifically with young people, we are organizing a group with 30 youth, and we have managed a range of ages from 15 to 30. Some have received training in different areas and have even formed their board of directors. Oscar is one of the board members. We have made efforts with other organizations to support them.”

-ADAT, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 19, 2022)

In San Martín Sacatepéquez, the Municipal Youth Services Office works with Legal and Social Services (SERJUS) on improving citizen participation. The Municipal Youth Services Office in conjunction with the Ministry of Education offers computer courses for the southern region. One of their projects is to create a municipal technology training center for young people.

Spaces for intergenerational dialogue and psychosocial support

Several key actors interviewed mentioned difficulties in working with youth. At the same time, young men and women reported feeling excluded and discriminated against because adults do not trust them. Researchers perceived little intergenerational communication at the community level. Both young people and adults recognized the need for support during this stage in life, when they are defining their life ambitions.

Young participants talked about needing guidance and support to identify their talents and direction, which they summarized as follows: “We need to find our vocation” and “we cannot start without knowledge, which adults have.” Adults mentioned the need for psycho-emotional support as many young people are alone since their parents are in the United States, and the remittances they receive are spent on technology and clothing.

“ I would think that at first, young people must have psychological help before providing them another type of support where they can get involved in projects; they need encouragement to get involved in the processes. I have been working with groups of young people for a long time, and in my experience, the first is to motivate them and then work on projects. It has worked and has been excellent. Teamwork is very complicated for them because everyone has their pride and wants to do things separately; they are individualistic. We have that culture; we are not used to teamwork, which is difficult. ”

-Teacher, Tejutla, personal communication, August 17, 2021).

FAO has a program that offers psycho-emotional support to young deportees to help address the trauma caused by the migration cycle. Participants in the study recounted stories of young women who left and, on the way, suffered sexual violence. When they returned several found themselves with unwanted pregnancies, while others had

to deal with the trauma of the assault, but there was no support for either of these situations. “People prefer to be silent because they are ashamed to say that young girls were raped during the journey.” These women often face these experiences alone.

In some places, such as Quetzaltenango, preventing violence against women is critical as it is one of the most recurrent themes and was identified as a push factor for single mothers and women. One key actor shared that in order to start a small business it is necessary to have psycho-emotional support, recognize ones’ skills, and have material resources.



Photo by Juan Carlos García/ADESJU for CRS

In terms of international migration, there are programs in the four departments that work with families of migrants who have returned or been deported and coordinate with government agencies to care for their psychosocial needs. In San Marcos and Quetzaltenango, the Puentes project and FAO; in Huehuetenango, Pop No’j Association, children and adolescent humanitarian networks, migrant assistance service desks, and international organizations such as UNHCR.

“The psychosocial care we give in the migration program consists of home visits with families’ scheduled approximately every two months. During these visits, we identify families’ most urgent needs to provide care and to have either physical or psychological health and education. Economic initiatives and some other guidance they need are also important to support families.”
-Pop No’j Association, personal communication, July 20, 2022.

In Santa María Chiquimula and Comitancillo, the Jesuit Network with Migrants of Guatemala supports youth and provides psychosocial support to families in the context of human mobility. The network in the parish of Santa María Chiquimula plans to work with initiatives that teach people how to best use remittances.

“We are part of the Jesuit Network with Migrants, so we have a methodology and a work strategy to support the families of migrants in the whole psychosocial process, all those ruptures that exist in the family, and all the problems caused by migration for those who stay. Specifically, we hold workshops with children, young people, and adults, mainly women who have stayed.”
 -Youth group, Pastoral Social Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 27, 2022.

Listening to young people and their dreams

Finally, young participants reported that very often no one asks them what their dreams or aspirations are. For the most part, projects and initiatives are designed without knowing much about youth's reality or their dreams. Below are some examples of the dreams and projects youth shared about during the study. They reflect the diversity of youth's interests and the variety of opportunities for working with them in this region of the country. The voices of these young people make clear the need to diversify programs offered to them and to talk with them about their dreams when implementing actions.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

“Since childhood, I have liked drawing, painting, and doing illustrations. Then, with time, I improved, and Miss Mónica offered me an opportunity. Thank God I won, and everything is going well for now, and I have become a draftsman who draws people's portraits. I have looked for institutions where I can study to improve more on the techniques and types of drawings or paintings and everything else. For now, I want to create my studio, and in the meantime, engrave the drawings I make.”
 -Entrepreneurial artist, Santiago Chimaltenango, personal communication, August 1, 2022.

“ We want to get to know incredible places and be great professionals in what we want to study and do. We want to make our family and people proud and show them the truth because sometimes they say that women are incapable of doing something. We want to show them that women can do many things we set our minds to, reach high places, achieve many things, and, above all, make ourselves happy; be happy with our decisions. **”**

-Youth group, Fe y Alegría Educational Center, Santa Lucía La Reforma, personal communication, July 29, 2022.

“ My dream in the short term is to keep working, perhaps no longer where I am, but to look for something else to be a little busier, maybe less hard, and earning a little more. I am single, but I already have plans to get married, so maybe we can do something together with my wife in the future. Maybe I would work outside, and my wife would work from home with some small business. At the same time, I have the dream of supporting many people. Now that I work outside, I have realized that many people do not have opportunities. There is a person in our community whose husband was ill, and she came here to Chiantla to make tortillas for a small wage, and that is the kind of people I could support. If they earn a little, we will earn a little too. I would like to be something like a small investor. **”**

-Youth entrepreneur, Chiantla, personal communication, May 4, 2022.

“ My biggest dream right now that I'm just starting out is to have my own house. God willing, I will fulfill it. I want to help women who suffer sexism, discrimination, and physical and psychological abuse. I would like to help, be a lawyer, and support them whenever is needed. **”**

-Youth group, Pastoral Social Santa María Chiquimula, personal communication, July 27, 2022.

“Our dream as young people is to have a partner and children, and like all mothers, we will separate from the parental family. We also dream of having some land, a car, or building a house. That is our dream, to move forward.”
 -ASODIETT youth group, Todos Santos, personal communication, July 19, 2022.

The following table compares some of the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful initiatives in the selected municipalities.³⁸

Table 18.
Characteristics of successful and unsuccessful initiatives in the selected municipalities

FEATURES	SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	UNSUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES
Who offers them	Generally, successful initiatives are implemented by non-governmental actors as they have more resources that are more sustainable.	Government initiatives, or those without partners, generally fail as they have fewer resources and their duration may be limited to one administration or dependent on partisan politics.
Who benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed specifically for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives aimed at adults, heads of household, or women. Usually initiatives with individual beneficiaries.
Occupational fields	Technical education and training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to specific employment or entrepreneurial opportunities in communities of origin. 	Technical education and training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with no connection to trades that people can develop in the communities of origin. Large initial investment required to start a business related to the training received.

³⁸ See the annexes to learn more about some of the outstanding work we saw in the municipalities involved in the study, as well as the actors who work with young people.

FEATURES	SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	UNSUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES
Occupational fields	Productive projects and entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In agriculture they are comprehensive and include topics such as sustainability, food security, and indigenous worldview (e.g., family gardens). Non-agricultural areas of interest to youth, for example, technology, tourism, industry, and services. 	Production projects and entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In agriculture they reinforce gender roles assigned to men and women. Local markets become saturated because of similar productive projects are similar (e.g., too many handicrafts and laying hens) and because of lack of coordination. Lack of financing options to start or grow the project (seed capital, loans).
	Political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities where youth services offices or youth policies are in place. These encourage youth organizations (e.g., Chiantla). 	Political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people feel excluded from participation in decision-making at the local level.
	Community and cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychosocial support or facilitate exchange and sharing between different groups (women, relatives of migrants). Recovery or revitalization of ethnic identity. Recreational spaces for young people related to their interests (arts, sports, technology). 	Community and cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predominance of adult interests in community and cultural spaces; initiatives for young people designed with adult interests in mind.
	Other areas relevant to youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social housing projects. Initiatives related to sexual and reproductive health. Initiatives that address vocational choices and future expectations. 	

FEATURES	SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	UNSUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to get a first job (internships, employment placement). • Companies or organizations that have operations in the Western Highlands generate formal jobs that pay minimum wage (call centers, banks, NGOs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies that operate for a few years in the territory and then leave (e.g., the metal mining industry). • Jobs in the government sector as (they often depend on partisan politics). • Informal jobs that generate insufficient income (agriculture, construction).

6. Main Findings of the Study

6.1 Drivers of International Migration

Following the theoretical framework on the driving factors of international migration, the reality in the selected municipalities clearly shows that **there are structural elements with the potential to facilitate and trigger international migration processes among youth that live in this region of the country.** The study showed that socioeconomic conditions in the selected municipalities impact the reality young people face in different areas: educational, socioeconomic, political, community, and cultural.

- **Reality of poverty and low human development.** According to estimates based on the Unmet Basic Needs method, more than half of the population in 17 of the 18 selected municipalities lives in poverty. The only exception is Concepción Chiquirichapa, where a little more than a third (38.3%) of the population lives in poverty. In seven municipalities (Cajolá, Comitancillo, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Sipacapa, Concepción Tutuapa, Santa María Chiquimula, and Santa Lucía La Reforma), more than 80% of the population lives in conditions of general poverty (Zapil, 2022). Furthermore, the estimates of the Human Development Index at the municipal level show that 12 of the 18 municipalities have a medium



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

level of human development, while 6 of the 18 municipalities have low levels of human development (UNDP Guatemala, 2022).

- **Challenges youth faces in different areas.** Young people between the ages of 18 and 30 represent about a quarter of the total population in the selected municipalities. This situation directly impacts young people's capacity to fully develop in their communities of origin through access to fundamental rights such as education, employment, and social and political participation.

Table 19.

Main challenges young people (ages 18 to 30) face in selected municipalities

AREA	MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE SURVEY	MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED THROUGH ON FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropping out of school, usually for economic reasons such as lack of money and need to work. • Average school dropout age is 13; most have only some primary-school education or have finished primary school. • Limited access to higher education (2% have reached the university level—graduated or incomplete). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to educational centers. • Limited access to the labor market for those with an education. • Loss of interest in continuing education. • Impact of COVID-19 on education. • Gender gaps in education access.
Socioeconomic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal employment (only 4% of those working have a formal contract, and only 3% have social security). • Average monthly income is below minimum wage and does not cover the basic food basket (individual Q1,308.80, family Q1,748.70). • Average monthly income was significantly higher for men (Q1,169) than women (Q449). • Respondents indicated that they had run out of food in recent months due to a lack of money and other resources 12% total (15% of women 8% of men). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of formal employment opportunities. • Job opportunities generate insufficient income. • Job opportunities are not sustainable over time. • Gender gaps in employment access. • Lack of attractive job opportunities for young people. • Deterioration of living conditions within the COVID-19 context and housing conditions. • Land-related issues (access, tenure, productivity).

AREA	MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BASED ON SURVEY	MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BASED ON FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of dissatisfaction with national (72%) and municipal (70%) governments. • Low levels of political participation among young people (only 31% of young people claimed to participate politically). • The main problems respondents said affect youth in the municipalities are difficulty getting a job (44%), economic problems (29%), excessive alcohol consumption (12%), lack of access to education (7%), and other reasons (8%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people feel excluded from participation in political processes. • Lack of institutional spaces that promote youth participation. • Gender gap in political participation.
Community and cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents participate in community groups mainly related to religion, churches (42.3%), or sports (27.9%). • Frequent use of information technologies (mobile 92.2%, internet 64.1%). • Violence; 4% of respondents have been victims of crime in their community in the last 12 months, and 12% have heard of a murder in their community in the last 12 months. • Discrimination; only 9% reported feeling discriminated against in their community due to socioeconomic or ethnic factors. • Low perception of disaster risks; 53% believe a natural disaster is unlikely or not at all likely to occur in the next five years in their community. • Climate conditions, 26% indicate that they or someone in their immediate family has lost crops due to climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic discrimination. • Machismo culture. • Violence. • Impact of climate change and other environmental issues.

6.2 Intention to Migrate and Remain among Young People

- **Most young people surveyed prefer to stay and do not intend to migrate in the next 12 months.** Seven out of ten respondents indicated interest in staying in their communities in the next twelve months, while three out of ten showed interest in migrating to another country in the next twelve months. There was no statistically significant difference between the proportion of respondents with migratory intention per areas of study (municipalities with high and low migration rates).³⁹ The survey's results are similar to those from other surveys, for example, the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) survey which determined that migratory intention has fluctuated between 14.4% (2012) and 36% (2021).
- **Profile of young people intending to migrate.** Twenty-nine percent (29%) of young participants indicated an intention to migrate to another country in the next twelve months—most said they plan to go to the United States (96%). Survey results indicate that migratory intention was higher among men who self-identified as Ladino, have completed middle school, and are not currently attending an educational institution. Migration intention was also higher among young respondents who work but do not have a formal employment contract and those with occupations involving livestock, construction/masonry, and agriculture.

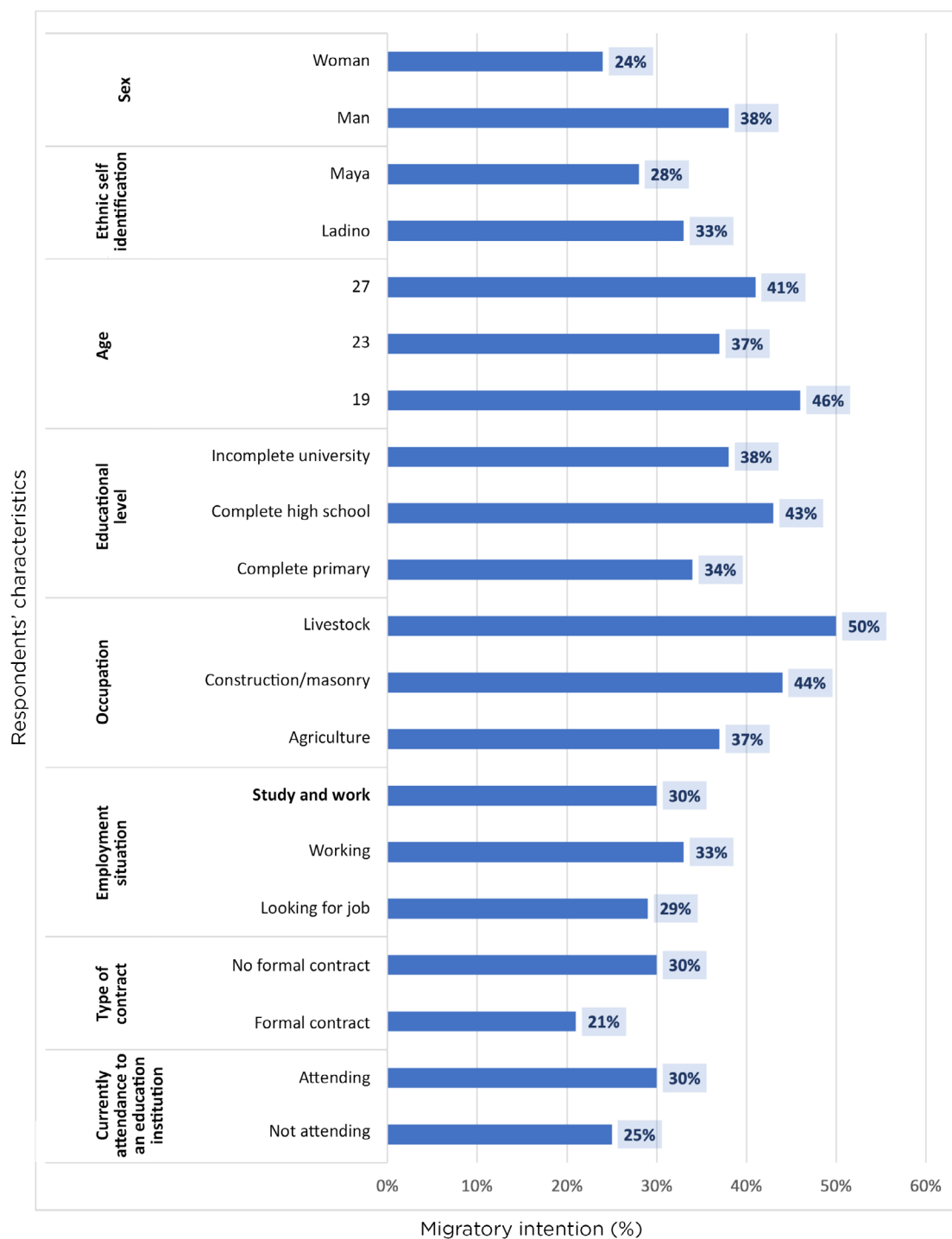


■ Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

³⁹ Researchers selected municipalities that, based on 2018 census data, showed high and low rates of international migration to analyze whether there was a difference between the reality of young people and the intention to migrate or remain in the territory. The survey results showed no statistically significant difference in the aspects analyzed between the two study areas. Furthermore, based on the qualitative component, we were also able to verify that young people's reality, challenges, and dreams are the same for all the municipalities involved in the study. Therefore, it is likely that high/low migration rates will be useful when analyzing other elements such as the history, current stage of migration, and role of migration networks in these municipalities; however, they were not relevant to the objectives of this study.

Graph 52

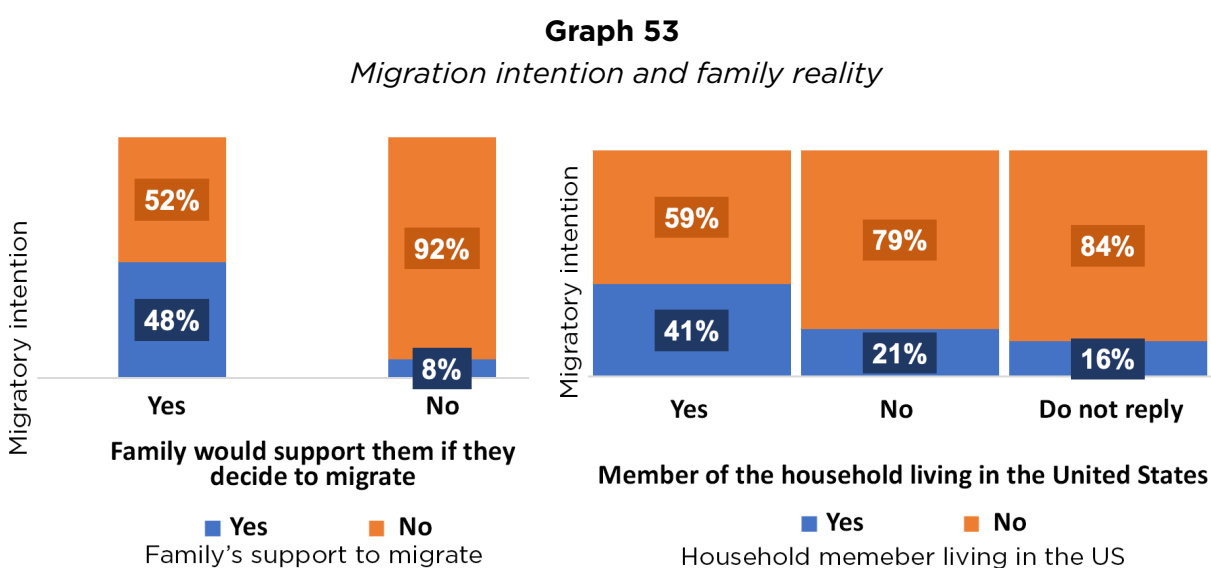
Migration intention according to respondents' characteristics⁴⁰



Note: Only three characteristics related to greater migration intention were included for age, educational level, and occupation.

⁴⁰ Proof of difference between the proportions: According to hypothesis tests, there is a statistically significant difference with 95% confidence in gender, age, and educational level. Researchers did not find substantial differences between ethnic self-identification, school attendance, type of hiring, and main economic activity.

- Importance of family in deciding whether to migrate or remain.** The main reasons young people gave for their intention to stay in the next twelve months (71%) include: I do not want to leave my family/I am very close to my family (51%), not having the money to do so (22%), and not having parental permission (11%). In most cases (62%), motivations to migrate are related to family situations, such as not wanting to leave their family or not having parental permission to migrate. This data confirms the importance of family attachment in the decision to migrate as one of the main retention factors for youth respondents. The survey also indicated that young people whose families supported their decision to migrate or those with a household member living in the United States expressed greater migratory intention.



- Economic motivations behind the intention to migrate.** The main motivations of young people surveyed who said they have intentions to migrate (29%) were essentially economic: improving income (51%) and looking for job opportunities (40%). Interviews and focus groups also showed that the intention to migrate is closely related to structural problems of a socioeconomic nature that do not allow or limit young people's possibilities to generate income and to pay for basic needs. Participants identified the following main challenges to youth achieving adequate socioeconomic development in the selected municipalities: Lack of formal employment opportunities, jobs that generate poor income and are not sustainable over time, and limited access to higher education.

- **Economic factors are not everything; the intention to migrate also relates to other variables.** Although the youth empathized economic reasons when asked directly about their motivation to migrate, the econometric model identified other variables associated with greater or lesser migratory intention. Results of applying this model confirmed the importance of other factors in the intention to remain, such as community participation in religious groups and cultural traditions, land ownership, and believing that the community offers opportunities. These results also confirmed that having a family member or acquaintance in the United States, having family support to migrate, and thinking of living outside the country are variables related to greater migratory intention.

Table 20.

Variables related to the intention to migrate and to remain

VARIABLES RELATED TO THE INTENTION TO MIGRATE	VARIABLES RELATED TO THE INTENTION TO REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having family support to migrate. • Having a family member or acquaintance living in the United States. • Thinking about living outside the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing there are opportunities in the community of origin. • Participation in community groups (traditions, cultural, religious). • Land ownership.

- **Motivations for remaining: Forced and voluntary immobility.** When analyzing young people's intention to remain based on the explanatory model of immobility, the study showed that in some cases, young people's decisions relate to structural limitations on the ability to move (forced immobility). In other cases, however, it is associated with the aspiration to remain voluntarily or acquiescently. The results of this study show that among around 42% of young people who do not want to migrate and plan to remain in their territory are in a situation of structural limitation in their ability to move, while around 58% aspire to remain voluntarily. It is important to recognize that those who are in a situation of involuntary immobility are potential migrants, since if at any time they manage to solve the structural limitations to their ability to move, they are likely to move.

Table 21.
Survey results according to immobility explanation

Immobility	
As a result of structural limitations on the ability to move	As a result of the aspiration to remain voluntarily or acquiescently
<p>Type of limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political and legal limitations (e.g, migration controls). Economic limitations (e.g., lack of financial resources). Social limitations (e.g., lack of human or social capital). Physical limitations (e.g., border walls). 	<p>Categories in aspiration to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining factors (attractive conditions at place of origin, attachment to the geographical territory and the family). Repelling factors (conditions elsewhere that decrease intention to migrate). Internal restrictions (elements of individual psychology).
<p>Survey results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22% Do not migrate because they do not have the money to do so 11% Do not migrate because they do not have parental authorization 5% Do not migrate due to the pandemic 3% Do not migrate for fear of risks along migration route 2% Do not migrate because they do not know who can take them <p>About 42%</p>	<p>Survey results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51% do not want to leave their families 4% Must complete their studies first 2% Believe that in their community they find everything they need to develop and therefore do not want to migrate <p>About 58%</p>

Based on Schewel (2019) and survey results.

- **Preference for international migration, however, internal and cross-border migration are still survival strategies.** Although survey results showed greater intention for international migration (29%) compared to internal migration (12%), internal and cross-border migration continue to be survival strategies to ensure subsistence for Guatemalans from the western highlands.

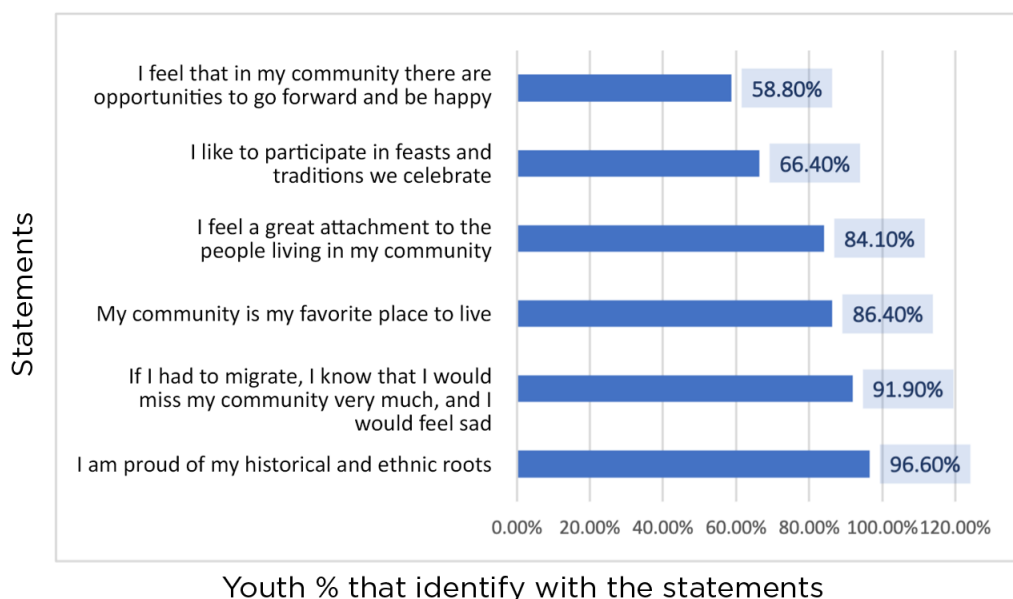
- **Internal and cross-border migration as a survival strategy.** Fieldwork in the municipalities of Totonicapán, which have low rates of international migration, showed that a lack of economic resources often prevents choosing international migration in these municipalities, so families resort to internal or cross-border migration. Therefore, low rates of international migration are not necessarily a result of the aspiration to remain but a result of structural limitations to the ability to move.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic is no longer a restriction to migration.** Most survey respondents believe that the COVID-19 has little (33%) or no (29%) effect on the decision of young people in their community to migrate. Among young people who expressed no intention to migrate abroad in the next twelve months (71%), only 5% said it was due to the pandemic. At this time, the pandemic no longer constitutes a limitation to migration as it did at the beginning when several people chose to suspend or postpone their journeys.
- **Attachment to the community as a retention factor.** The survey showed that young people feel a strong attachment to their community of origin: 97% of young people expressed pride in their historical and ethnic roots, 92% indicated that they would miss their community very much if they had to migrate, and 86% indicated that their community was their favorite place to live. However, young people also recognize they do not always find opportunities in their communities to get ahead and be happy (41%). Interviews and focus groups made it possible to dive deeper and understand that for attachment to community and family to function as retention factors, there must also be attractive conditions for youth in their communities of origin.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

Graph 54

Statements with which respondents identify



6.3 Current Socioeconomic Initiatives in the selected municipalities

- **Young people feel excluded from most current initiatives.** Most of the initiatives that currently exist in the municipalities are aimed at adults, and many have prioritized mothers. Young people feel left out of many of these initiatives because they often do not fit the projects' intended beneficiary profile. Being young constitutes an identity that implies discrimination, exclusion, and in general, little attention from the government at the national and local levels. The scope of many of these initiatives is limited, which the survey confirmed. Among survey respondents, only one indicated being the beneficiary of an educational program, seven were beneficiaries of a financial support program, and two indicated they benefited from a municipal support program.
- **Diversify options to make them attractive to young people.** Government and non-government organizations in the selected municipalities have a series of local initiatives aimed at the family economy or satisfying the population's basic needs. Several projects involve family farming or agricultural and livestock projects that strengthen gender roles and do not question the role of women or men in the reproduction of power relations that generally translate into more work for women. In addition, young people are generally not interested in these types of initiatives. Those surveyed proposed the need to diversify current options to meet their interests, for example, in technology, tourism, industry, or the service sector.

- **Transition from initiatives of an individual nature to initiatives that create links to the community.** Most of the current initiatives seek to impact individuals by promoting entrepreneurship. Family, community, or territorial initiatives are limited. Some of these initiatives seek to provide technical skills and seed capital to people so they can generate enterprise and income. These projects have also faced certain limitations due to a lack of planning and coordination by the actors that drive them, which has saturated some local markets and created competition at the local level. While some local initiatives do not necessarily generate substantial income for participants, they do create connections to the community based on identity. Researchers observed that this is more important for some women and could be relevant to working with young people in places where international migration originates.
- **Limited initiatives that address other areas of life.** Beyond socioeconomic initiatives, there is a lack of programs that address other areas of young people's lives. During the fieldwork, participants mentioned the need for psychosocial support for young people to enhance leadership, identity, political participation, and a sense of community. Young people are looking for a sense of belonging where they can feel useful to the community and serve others. They also mentioned the need for recreational spaces that allow them to use their talents and interests through sports, art, technology, and play.
- **Limited possibilities for political participation and the potential for community participation.** The young people involved in the study reported that these spaces continue to be adult centered and influenced by machismo. Communities often exclude young people from decision-making processes that impact life in the community. Young people also referred to a lack of spaces for intergenerational dialogue where they can share their needs and interests that would lead to finding alternatives and solutions from their point of view. Survey results showed that only 31% of young people participate politically in groups in their community (civic committees, political parties, neighborhood committees, committees to enhance development, and positions at community offices, among others). However, when researchers asked about other community spaces, participation was higher. For example, 42% of respondents participate in a religious or church group, and 28% participate in a sports team. These figures reveal the importance of promoting youth participation in other spaces.

6.4 Recommendations for Working with Youth in Guatemala's Western Highlands

Alternatives for young people

- **Need for comprehensive investment in communities of origin.** The study shows that the selected municipalities' reality presents structural elements that have the potential to facilitate and trigger international migration processes. Therefore, the central factor that could act as a disincentive to migratory intention must be comprehensive investment in communities of origin that facilitates access to essential and quality services for the population to overcome high levels of poverty and low levels of human development.
- **Other factors that could favor alternatives and/or attractive conditions for young people.** Related to this central element are other factors that could serve as disincentives to migratory intention among young people or strengthen their desire to remain in their communities. However, if organizations invest in them but fail to address the core factor, it will be difficult to achieve any significant impact. These factors are **(a)** generating formal jobs, **(b)** promoting productive projects and entrepreneurship, **(c)** social housing projects, **(d)** community leadership training, **(e)** formal education and technical training, **(f)** non-formal education (technical training, education for employment, entrepreneurship), **(g)** spaces for recreational activities (sports, arts, technology), and **(h)** spaces for intergenerational dialogue and psychosocial support.
- **Work with families in communities of origin.** The study confirmed the vital role families play in the decision to migrate. In addition, in the selected municipalities, is currently the most important retention factor for young people to remain voluntarily in their communities of origin and not migrate internationally. However, for this attachment to function as a retention factor, there must also be attractive conditions for youth in their communities of origin. Therefore, researchers suggest developing programs or initiatives designed to impact families.



Foto por Luis Cocón/CRS

- **Promote spaces for community and political participation of young people.** The study confirmed the importance of community participation in the lives of young people and identified it as a variable related to the intention to remain in the community. For example, according to the survey, religious or church groups, sports groups, and groups linked to cultural traditions or community festivals are spaces of interest for young people. Therefore, researchers recommend promoting community and political spaces for youth to participate based on their needs, interests, and preferences.
- **Attention to the specific needs of youth.** The transition to adulthood poses challenges and needs that require a specific and differentiated approach. Young people who participated in the study raised the need for more information and support for this transition, including sexual and reproductive health, vocational guidance, first-job searches, and entry into the labor market.

Local socioeconomic initiatives

- **Comprehensive initiatives.** The socioeconomic initiatives offered in the selected areas must be comprehensive. When designing initiatives, logical processes, local actors, and sustainability should be considered. Socioeconomic initiatives should include technical training and basic knowledge in administration, management, and marketing, as well as the possibility of providing seed capital or access to credit. Some local markets are saturated with certain products (for example, textiles, laying hens, and various agricultural products). Socioeconomic projects should consider strategic analyses of local, regional, and national markets and incorporate a production chain strategy.



Photo by Luis Cocón/CRS

- **Initiatives at family, community, and territorial levels.** Researchers suggest moving from programs designed to benefit individuals to promoting strategies that will have an impact on the family, community, and territory. Protecting life and the Maya worldview, access to new information technologies, and other issues of interest to young people should be part of socioeconomic initiatives. Projects that involve more contributing partners are likely to be more sustainable.
- **Initiatives that address young peoples' interests.** It is important to approach young people in regions where migration originates to understand what they want, their dreams, and their life ambitions. Dialogue should be started with young people to address intergenerational differences and the machismo culture. Projects aimed at young people should be based on their needs and expand the possibility of community participation. Young people in this study identified technology, tourism, industry, and the service sector as areas of interest.
- **Initiatives with cultural relevance.** There are only a few initiatives in the communities to strengthen ethnic identity and foster community or territorial attachment. Few projects develop young people's cultural and recreational interests as, they do not represent opportunities to generate income. They should, however, be a part of any initiative in migrant people's communities of origin.

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