

Between Tradition and Modernity: An Analysis of the Migration Dynamics of Veracruz

Entre la tradición y la actualidad: un análisis de la dinámica migratoria de Veracruz

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ABSTRACT

In the population history of Veracruz, a state in southeastern Mexico and a maritime entry port to the country, the arrival of people to the region has been prevalent. However, in the 21st Century, Veracruz *was incorporated* into the international migration flows to the United States. In this context, the objective of this study is to analyze recent emigration flows from Veracruz to the northern border of Mexico and the United States, as well as the dynamic of return migration and the immigration of foreigners. Taking a demographic and quantitative perspective, this research focuses on the 2010-2020 decade emphasizing a regional and municipal analysis. The results show that international emigration and immigration are phenomena limited to specific regions and municipalities, and that, only three out of ten regions converge the departure and return of Veracruz residents and the arrival of foreigners to the state, particularly from Central America and Venezuela.

Keywords: 1. emigration, 2. immigration, 3. return, 4. Veracruz, 5. Mexico.

RESUMEN

En la historia poblacional de Veracruz, entidad del sureste de México y puerto marítimo de entrada al país, ha sido predominante la llegada de personas a la entidad. Sin embargo, en el siglo XXI, Veracruz *se incorporó* a las migraciones internacionales hacia Estados Unidos. En este contexto, el objetivo de este artículo es analizar los flujos recientes de veracruzanos que emigran hacia la frontera norte de México y hacia Estados Unidos, así como la migración de retorno y la inmigración de extranjeros. Desde una perspectiva demográfica y cuantitativa, este artículo se centra en la década 2010 a 2020 enfatizando un análisis territorial regional y municipal. Los resultados muestran que la emigración e inmigración internacional son fenómenos acotados a regiones y municipios específicos, y que solo en tres de diez regiones convergen la salida y el retorno de veracruzanos, y la llegada de extranjeros al estado, particularmente de centroamericanos y venezolanos.

Palabras clave: 1. emigración, 2. inmigración, 3. retorno, 4. Veracruz, 5. México.

Received: September 2, 2021

Accepted: March 31, 2022

Original version (Spanish) published online: August 30, 2023

Translation (English) published online: November 13, 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Veracruz is the fourth most populated state in Mexico, with 8 062 579 inhabitants (6.4% of the total national population), only behind the State of Mexico, Mexico City, and Jalisco (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2020). Due to its geographical location, Veracruz is a seaport entry point for foreigners into the country; to the east, the Gulf of Mexico—symbol of the immigration history of the state—to the west Puebla, Hidalgo, and San Luis Potosí; to the south Oaxaca, Chiapas and Tabasco—these last two entities border with Guatemala, an entry point for Latin American migration flows—; finally, to the north, Tamaulipas—a state bordering with the United States—. The georeferencing of Veracruz makes of it an important national and international state for migration flows from, to and through its territory.

The migration history of Veracruz began in the 19th and 20th centuries with the arrival by sea of Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, English, Germans, French, Americans, Cubans, Africans, Arabs, Chinese, Lebanese, Jews, etcetera (TVMÁS, 2019), most of them arriving as temporary residents. That stage established the framework for the settlement of the first international immigrants in the state, and shaped the current and diverse communities of foreigners in Veracruz.

From 1950 to 1980, the boom in the port, oil and tourism industries turned the state into a point of attraction for labor from neighboring states (Anguiano, 2005). Internal migration flows in the 20th century turned Veracruz into one of the main receiving states of populations from within the country, ranking second in 1900 and 1940 with 75 683 and 135 584 domestic immigrants, respectively (Sobrinó, 2010). The constant arrival of these populations prevailed until the last two decades of the 20th century, when Veracruz reported negative net migration rates (NMR) of significant magnitude (Salas, 2004).

Subsequently, the Veracruz population joined the new national migratory destinations where labor was in demand, such as the northern border states. According to Vallentin (2009), the maquiladora industry in Mexico's northern border boomed in the last decade of the 20th century and the early 21st century, as a consequence of a productive reterritorialization process derived from different agreements, programs, and laws that fostered the development of the area. As such, the presence of recruiting agencies in Veracruz has been observed since 2001, agencies that facilitate the transportation, lodging, and labor recruitment in the industry (Pérez, 2001).

Thus, the population of Veracruz joined the international migration flows to the United States at the onset of the 21st century. Although Mexican emigration to the United States has a long history, as reported by Durand (2016), in 2000 Veracruz reported a low migration intensity index (MII) (Consejo Nacional de Población [CONAPO], 2002). However, some municipalities in the state presented an MII as high as those belonging to the traditional migration regions of the country: Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas (CONAPO, 2001; Pérez, 2012).³ Ten

³ In the years 2000 and 2010, two Veracruz municipalities of very high migratory intensity were identified (Landeró y Coss and Yanga in 2000; Tenampa and Texhuacán in 2010). However, during this period, the number of municipalities with high migratory intensity increased from 3 to 21—to the municipalities of

years later, Veracruz increased its MII to mid-level, with 1.7% of households reporting emigrants, 2.5% receiving remittances, and 1.9% with return migrants (CONAPO, 2012).

The beginning of Veracruzian emigration to the United States can be explained by the economic restructuring that the state experienced in the last decades of the 20th century. On the one hand, the main economic activities were eroded due to the disappearance of companies such as Tabamex, the Mexican Coffee Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Café), the National Commission of Fruit Growing (Comisión Nacional de Fruticultura), the National Insurance Company for Agriculture and Livestock (Comisión Nacional de la Agricultura y Ganadería), Banrural, and several sugar mills; and on the other hand, a policy of *modernization* of the Mexican countryside was promoted which resulted in a decrease in its main productive sectors, changing the status of Veracruz from agricultural exporter to expeller of workers (Pérez, 2001).

The phenomenon of return migration came as a logical result of the rise in the emigration flow from Veracruz to the neighboring country to the north, adding to the migratory and demographic dynamics of the state. The return of Mexican migrants from the United States increased substantially with the economic crisis in that country in 2007, and the implementation of strict anti-immigrant policies that resulted in an increase in deportations (Canales & Meza, 2018) of both recently arrived workers and of Mexicans with extended stays in the United States (Meza et al., 2017). It is in this context that Veracruz gained a modest but important position as a place of return for both those who were born in the state and fellow Mexicans born in other states (Canales & Meza, 2018).

Additionally, in the 21st century, Veracruz emerged as a transit entity for Latin American migrants bound for the United States. In the so-called Mesoamerican Regional Migration System (Castillo, 2010; Durand, 2016), Mexico is a transit territory for migrants coming mainly from Central America, although recently also from Caribbean and South American countries (such as Haiti and Venezuela) and even from other continents (such as Africa) (Bermúdez Lobera et al., 2020). The journey of migrants in transit through Mexico begins in the southern states of the country (Chiapas and Tabasco) until they reach the northern border (primarily at Tamaulipas and Baja California). In this sense, the state has become a transit point for migrants, whose route has been called the “Gulf migration route” (Martínez et al., 2015, p. 144). The systemic precarious living conditions in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, as well as the recent increase in violence in these territories, have caused the continuous outflow of their population (Nájera Aguirre & Rodríguez Tapia, 2020; Programa Estado de la Nación, 2016), and even phases of exodus in recent years (2008 and 2009) with the so-called migrant caravans (Contreras et al., 2021).

Carrillo Puerto, Cuitláhuac, and Yecuatla, identified in 2000, were added Altotonga, Astacinga, Atzalan, Tlaltetela, Comapa, Chiconquiaco, Hidalgotitlán, Juchique de Ferrer, La Perla, Playa Vicente, Tenochtitlán, Texcatepec, Tlacotepec de Mejía, Tlachichilco, Tlaquilpa, Totutla, Zentla, and Santiago Sochiapan— (CONAPO, 2002, 2012).

These continuous population flows have been joined by others of a cyclical nature, such as Venezuelans fleeing the convulsive political and economic situation in their country (Franco, 2020), and that of the Haitian population as a result of the economic deterioration caused by the 2015 hurricane (Coulange & Castillo, 2020). To these flows were added migrations in search of international protection, as is the ongoing case of the Honduran and Venezuelan experiences (Torre et al., 2021). During the 21st century, these mobility dynamics have been framed by migration control and surveillance in both Mexican and U.S. territory, and by the COVID-19 health crisis that began in 2020 (Hernández-López & Ramos, 2022), which is why points of transit, such as Veracruz, have now become states of migrant settlement, both temporary and permanent (Jasso, 2021).

In this scenario, from a sociodemographic and territorial approach, the objective of this article is to analyze the domestic and international emigrations of Veracruzians and the arrival of foreigners to the state of Veracruz, and to identify the homogeneity or heterogeneity of these flows within this state. The first section introduces the conceptual-analytical framework of reference and the methodological approach of our study. Subsequently, the four types of migration of interest during the second decade of the 21st century (2010 to 2020) are addressed: those who leave (emigration from Veracruz to the northern border of the country and to the United States), and those who arrive (return of Veracruzians and foreign immigrants). To close, some final reflections are presented focusing on the challenges for the state of Veracruz in terms of the current international migration dynamics.

CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL REFERENCES FOR THE STUDY OF POPULATION MOBILITY IN A GIVEN TERRITORY

From a sociodemographic approach, the study of population mobility encompasses various types of movements: (i) daily mobilities for work, educational reasons, etcetera, in which an administrative boundary is crossed but the place of habitual residence is maintained; (ii) internal migrations that involve a change of residence, either to neighboring entities, metropolitan areas, to those with dynamics of development and economic growth, or for reasons of forced displacement derived from insecurity; and (iii) international migrations represented by the change of place of residence from one country to another (Nájera Aguirre, 2020a). Within the latter type are mobilizations of people through one or more intermediate countries between origin and destination (identified as transit migrations) and mobilizations of people fleeing in search of international protection (known as asylum-seeking) (Nájera Aguirre, 2020a).

In the history of populations, migration has been central to the reproduction of societies (Canales, 2019). For migrants, such mobilities are part of strategies to obtain economic (and even non-economic) resources through labor opportunities in other territories. Likewise, migrants are also motivated by educational reasons or family reunification and, at other times, migration emerges to safeguard security and life in the face of violence, as a response to the loss of resources due to natural events, or due to the arrival of megaprojects. Thus, the causes of migration can be many and simultaneous (Van Hear et al., 2009), which is why some authors propose an approach

to the matter that considers the interconnection between the various structural causes: the conditions of economic crisis or violence (macro level), the different flows of migrants and refugees (meso level), and the different personal motivations (micro level) (Lorenzen et al., 2018).

Population migration is a concept that is highly related to the territorial dimension. Such mobility occurs and is observable through the various nuances that a territory can represent, i.e., as a place of origin, crossing or transit, waiting, arrival or settlement. Likewise, the place of origin of migrants can be a territory of return, while the immigration process in a waiting country or region can become a place of extended or permanent stay (Musset, 2015). This is why the territorial distribution of the various migration flows must account for three fundamental elements at the time of their analysis: space, time, and identity (Tarrus, 2000).

Thus, it has been shown that a territory is more than a geographic space, since it is also constituted by two types of relationships:

those established between human beings, and those that exist between them and the rest of the biophysical components of the planet. Therefore, territories are not fixed nor do they pre-exist human beings, they are structured and modified according to the forms adopted by the articulation of the indicated relationships (Morales & Jiménez, 2018, p. 10).

From this perspective, a territory is a social construction that manifests itself at multiple levels of scale (municipality, region, and state within a country), and therefore cannot be understood as an isolated or disconnected space.

In this regard, according to Nájera Aguirre (2020a, 2020b), the study of the population of a specific territory must take into account two orders of elements: the economic-labor, social, political and even ideological context in the territory where the population is observed; and the various populations that are present there, that is, the people who inhabit it and those who, despite not residing in it, are part of daily life there (national and international migrants, and those who transit or are intermittently present are known as the floating population). The *present populations* (residents and floating) and the *absent populations* (emigrants with active ties) are two groups that are part of the daily life of the observed territory through social, economic, cultural and political relations (Nájera Aguirre, 2020a). Addressing the study from a perspective that accounts for all the populations present in a given location makes it possible to adopt an inclusive approach to populations, one able to recognize the different social interactions in the territory (Nájera Aguirre, 2020a).

This work arises from this multi-population consideration with the purpose of presenting a sociodemographic dynamic more in line with the population reality of the territory under study: in this case, Veracruz. The quantitative analysis carried out in this research corresponds to the most recent decade of the 21st century (2010-2020), highlighting the position of Veracruz at the national

level, also taking into account its intra-regional division.⁴ The migrant populations analyzed are the following:

Populations leaving Veracruz. Based on the Survey on Migration at the Northern Border of Mexico (EMIF Norte, for its acronym in Spanish) for the years 2010 to 2017⁵ (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte [El Colef] et al., 2021c), we analyze the total mobilization of people aged 15 years and older—Mexicans and those born in Veracruz—who arrive at Mexico's northern border bound for those states (internal emigration) or the United States (international emigration).

Populations arriving in Veracruz. Based on Mexico's 2010 and 2020 population and housing censuses (INEGI, 2010, 2020), migrants born and residing in Veracruz who five years ago lived in the United States (international return)⁶ and migrants born in a country other than Mexico who resided in Veracruz (international immigration) are analyzed. Likewise, those international immigrants who five years ago resided in a country other than Mexico were identified as new international immigrants.

In relation to the mobility of people, the demographic approach adopted in this article attempts to evidence that all forms of displacement (departures and arrivals) link populations and territories, regardless of whether they are temporary or permanent. In this sense, it is assumed possible to identify Veracruz regions and municipalities with a greater or lesser presence of one or several types of national or international migration, and that, additionally, the persistence of these migratory phenomena in Veracruz will be an indication of the needs and social impact in the state.

Those who Leave: Veracruz Citizens to the North of the Country and to the United States, a Recent but Constant Path

The mobilizations of Veracruzians bound for the northern border and the United States have been important for several reasons: the diversity of their geographic origin, the destinations chosen, the motivations for emigration, and the variations in the phenomena during the second decade of the 21st century. As can be seen in Table 1, the flow of Veracruzian migrants arriving in Mexico's

⁴ According to the Secretariat of Regional Development of Veracruz (Secretaría de Desarrollo Regional de Veracruz), the state is divided into 10 economic regions: Huasteca Alta, Huasteca Baja, Totonaca, Nautla, Capital, Las Montañas, Sotavento, Papaloapan, Los Tuxtlas, and Olmeca, all in all grouping the 212 municipalities of the state (Agreement 621 of 2019).

⁵ The estimates are based on the flow of migrants from the South, and correspond to the mobilizations recorded in 13 municipalities in the five Mexican states bordering the United States, spaces where most migrants arrive in (El Colef et al., 2021b). Data from 2018 to 2020 were not available at the time of writing this article.

⁶ According to Ramos et al. (2017), one of the main methodological limitations of return migration is that it is not possible to know whether there were intermediate mobilizations in the census reference five-year period, or whether the return was voluntary or forced.

northern border,⁷ either to stay there or with the intention of crossing to the United States, declined sharply from 2010 to 2017, as did the national trend. Systematically, most of the mobilizations of Veracruzians have the northern border of the country as their destination (86.2% average in the period) and only 13.7% on average report the United States as their final destination. Notably, the most drastic decrease in the flow from Veracruz is observed in international migration, where the number of mobilizations in 2017 represented only 8.4% of those in 2010 (1 280 out of 15 303 mobilizations), compared to the flow aiming at the northern border, where the amount in 2017 represented 22% of that in 2010 (13 753 out of 62 492 mobilizations) (El Colef et al., 2021a).

The decline in Mexican migration to the United States at the national level shows that this was not a phenomenon exclusive to Veracruzians. In 2010, the NMR between Mexico and the United States was close to zero; this scenario was related to the economic crisis that began in 2007 in the U.S. (Galindo, 2015). Likewise, from 2009 to 2014 a NMR of 140 000 immigrants was estimated, evidencing a lower volume of Mexicans entering the United States when compared to those leaving said country, this time due to greater migratory control at the border between both countries (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015).

On the other hand, the decrease in mobility to northern Mexico would be related to the depletion of the comparative advantages offered by the maquiladora industries, and their inability to provide sufficient welfare to the families of migrants, mainly due to the precarious conditions of these jobs (Peña, 2018). An example of this can be found in that despite the fact that Ciudad Juárez had the largest number of available positions in the maquiladora industry in 2015, there were 22 000 unfilled vacancies that same year, which encouraged local agencies to resume hiring schemes in other states of the country, Veracruz included (Peña, 2018).

However, at the national level, the participation of Veracruz in emigration to the northern border has remained stable throughout the last decade, positioning itself among the first four places in relation to the rest of the states (with the exception of years 2013 and 2017) (El Colef et al., 2021a). This reflects the importance of Veracruzian mobility to the north of the country, as since 1980 the preponderant presence of this state has been recorded as the place of origin of recent migrants in Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo and Ciudad Juárez; and since 2000 in Nogales and Piedras Negras (Vázquez Delgado, 2015).

On the contrary, despite the fact that Veracruz showed little prominence at the national level in mobilizations to the United States, the state has displayed significant fluctuations in the last decade. While in 2012 and 2014, Veracruz ranked 9th at the national level, in 2015 and 2016 it took the 17th and 20th positions, respectively, a pattern of decline caused by both the strengthening of security at the U.S. border and stronger domestic economic trends in Mexico (Mazza, 2017).

⁷ The border municipalities of Tijuana and Mexicali in Baja California; San Luis Río Colorado, Altar, Nogales, Cananea, and Agua Prieta in Sonora; Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua; Ciudad Acuña and Piedras Negras in Coahuila; and Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, and Matamoros in Tamaulipas.

Table 1. Mobilizations of Mexican and Veracruz-born Migrants who Arrived in the Northern Border of Mexico, by Destination (2010-2017)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Migratory mobilizations of Mexicans to the north of the country	1 172 176	841 499	711 622	824 874	683 554	525 770	430 692	249 119
With the northern border as destination	679 300	523 316	435 476	544 646	518 196	429 487	354 820	213 769
Veracruz-born (%)	9.2	9.6	9.8	6.4	6.9	8.2	8.8	4.3
Veracruz's position at the national level	2	3	2	7	4	3	1	10
With the United States as destination	492 877	317 105	276 146	280 228	164 621	96 135	75 872	35 350
Veracruz-born (%)	2.9	3.5	4.2	2.9	3.8	2.5	1.8	3.6
Veracruz's position at the national level	13	11	9	13	9	17	20	11
Migratory mobilizations of Veracruzians to the north of the country	77 795	62 098	55 495	43 876	46 349	38 743	31 443	15 033
Percentage at the national level	6.6	7.4	7.8	5.3	6.8	7.4	7.3	6.0
With the northern border as destination	62 492	51 824	43 214	35 541	39 665	36 458	30 082	13 753
Percentage of total flow of Veracruzians	80.3	83.5	77.9	81.0	85.6	94.6	95.7	91.5
With the United States as destination	15 303	10 274	12 281	8 335	6 684	2 075	1 362	1 280
Percentage of total flow of Veracruzians	19.7	16.5	22.1	19.0	14.4	5.4	4.3	8.5

Source: EMIF Norte, Flows from the South, tabulations (El Colef et al., 2021a).

According to Massey et al. (1993), social networks increase the willingness to leave the place of origin and to venture into the migratory experience, since the costs of mobilization and labor uncertainty are reduced, among other aspects. Next, we analyze the proportion of Veracruz migrants' movements recorded by EMIF Norte to the northern border of the country, as well as the percentage of internal migrants born in Veracruz established in the same municipalities, in order to investigate the possible existence of social networks that favor migration.

As shown in Table 2, there is a close relationship between the percentage of Veracruz-born migrants residing in the municipalities surveyed by EMIF Norte and the mobilization figures of Veracruz citizens to these places. A clear example is Matamoros, the municipality with the highest proportion of Veracruzian mobilizations to the northern border in all the years analyzed (ranging between 57.7% and 72.1%) and, at the same time, it is the municipality where 3 out of every 10 internal migrants are born in Veracruz (32.7%) (El Colef et al., 2021a; INEGI, 2010, 2015). The geographic proximity between Veracruz and Tamaulipas is the main factor influencing the presence of Veracruzians in that entity, coupled with the fact that Matamoros from 1995 to 2015 increased its centrality as a municipality that attracts internal migration (Lomelí Carrillo & Ybáñez Zepeda, 2017). On the opposite side of the spectrum is Mexicali, a municipality that records the

lowest proportion of Veracruzian migrants arriving in the northern border, and has the lowest percentage of immigrants born in the state (less than 3%) (El Colef et al., 2021a; INEGI, 2010, 2015).

Table 2. Percentage of Veracruzian Migrant Mobilizations to the Northern Border of Mexico, by Municipality of Arrival, and Proportion of Veracruzian Migrants Residing in the Municipalities where EMIF Norte is Conducted (2010-2017)

Municipality	Percentage of mobilizations of Veracruz-born migrants who arrived in the northern border of Mexico, by municipality of arrival								Internal migrants born in Veracruz	
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2010	2015
Matamoros	59.1	57.7	64.6	68.9	70	72.1	71.9	67.9	32.7	32.7
Nuevo Laredo	4.4	10	5.4	5	2.2	2.7	1.9	0.7	20.8	21.8
Piedras Negras	2.1	3.1	3.6	1.5	1.4	0.1	0	1.3	11.9	13.1
Cd. Juárez	1.4	1.2	2.8	2.6	6.6	12.8	6.1	8.6	14.4	14.4
Nogales	15.2	10.3	12.1	12.3	6	3.9	3.8	3.5	4	3.1
Mexicali	0.7	1	0.2	0.5	5.6	0.3	0.1	0	2.7	2.7
Tijuana	17.1	16.6	11.3	9.3	8.3	8.2	16.3	17.9	6	5.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100		

Note: The values in these columns refer to the percentage of internal migrants born in Veracruz in the municipalities where EMIF Norte is conducted, so their sum is not 100%.

Source: EMIF Norte, Flows from the South, tabulations (El Colef et al., 2021a); 2010 Population and Housing Census, tabulations (INEGI, 2010); 2015 Intercensal Survey, microdata (INEGI, 2015).

Despite the existence of important migration networks in the municipalities of Nuevo Laredo, Piedras Negras, and Ciudad Juárez, according to the presence of Veracruzian migrants (21.8%, 13.1%, and 14.4%, respectively), the flow of mobilizations to these municipalities is significantly lower (less than 9%), which is consistent with the general decrease in the flow from the south to these arrival points since 2010 (Vázquez Delgado, 2015). However, the importance of these arrival municipalities in specific years is worth noting, such as the case of Nuevo Laredo, which was relevant only in 2011 (10% of mobilizations), and that of Ciudad Juárez in 2015 (12.8% of mobilizations), which may respond to the importance of these two places as traditional recipients of Veracruzians for several decades (Vázquez Delgado, 2015). Tijuana, on the other hand, despite having a lower proportion of Veracruzian migrants (around 6%), is recurrently the second border municipality with the second highest number of arrivals of Veracruzians in the north of the country (13% on average in the period); this tie can be explained due to Tijuana being a traditional crossing municipality to the United States (El Colef et al., 2021a; INEGI, 2010, 2015).

When it comes to the migration origin-destination relationship, Veracruz has experienced the flow of migrants to the northern border of the country and to the United States in a differential manner within its territory. Tables 3 and 4 show the participation of the 10 economic regions of the state based on the destination, as reported by migrants who arrived in the north of the country.

The Totonaca, Huasteca Baja, and Sotavento regions are the ones that concentrated the highest percentages of the flow to the northern border, with averages of 20.5%, 19.6%, and 15.9%, respectively (El Colef et al., 2021a). On this pattern, Pérez (2018) reported that since year 2000 the northern region of Veracruz has become the main area of origin of mobilizations to the northern border, this due to the crisis in the oil sector that affected Poza Rica and, with it, the labor force originating from neighboring indigenous municipalities.

Table 3. Percentage of Veracruzian Migrant Mobilizations with the Northern Border of Mexico as Destination, by Region of Origin in Veracruz (2010-2017)

Region	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Capital	14	7.4	8.1	4.9	3.4	2.3	3.2	4.2
Olmeca	6.7	7.3	3.7	5.1	5.4	5.2	4.7	7.2
Papaloapan	6.9	9.3	5.8	12.3	3.2	2.8	8.9	8.
Las Montañas	14.9	12.9	7.2	16.9	5.2	4	10.1	11.2
Huasteca Alta	12.3	11.2	13	9.6	2.8	8.4	4.2	19.4
Sotavento	5.1	8.4	12.8	14.6	21.4	22.9	26.2	15.8
Huasteca Baja	16.7	18.9	26.3	12	29.2	26.9	14.8	12.4
Totonaca	17.3	19.9	20.8	18.3	29.2	23.1	22	13.7
Nautla	4.5	1.7	0.8	2.4	0.1	2.3	2	6.5
Los Tuxtlas	1.6	3	1.5	3.9	0	1.8	1.2	1.4

Source: EMIF Norte, Flows from the South, tabulations (El Colef et al., 2021a).

When the evolution over time of each of the regions is studied, it can be observed that some of them significantly increased their participation in the analyzed period. Examples of the latter are the regions of Sotavento and Huasteca Baja, which increased their contribution in the flow of Veracruzians to the northern border (from 5.1% in 2010 to 26.8% in 2016 in the case of the first region, and from 16.6% to 29.9% in the second) (El Colef et al., 2021a). The increase in the participation of the Huasteca Baja region can be explained by its constant contribution to this flow since 2000 (Pérez, 2018), which could be conducive to the establishment of social and family networks and, with this, to the increase of mobilizations towards the northern border (Del Rey Poveda, 2007). Likewise, Del Ángel and Rebolledo (2009) had previously documented the flow from the Sotavento region to the north of the country, caused by the crisis in the agricultural sector in this area during the 2000s, and by the precarious labor conditions offered by the industrial and service sector in the area. There are still municipalities in this region where nearly half of the population is engaged in primary activities, while most of the inhabitants work in the service sector (Secretariat of the Government of Veracruz [SEGOB Veracruz, after the acronym in Spanish for Secretaría de Gobierno de Veracruz], 2020), a scenario that favors the migration patterns previously found.

Despite the diversity of motivations for migration, people heading to the northern border have moved predominantly for work reasons, although this reason has lost strength over time. From

2010 to 2017, the percentage of migrants who reported being in the north of the country to work or look for work fell from 84.4% to 55.7%, giving way to other reasons such as visiting family or friends (which increased from 12.7% to 21.5%), for tourism (from 0.8% to 6.5%), and for change of residence (from 0.7% to 4.7%) (El Colef et al., 2021a). This indicates that, for people leaving Veracruz, despite the persistent labor opportunities offered by Mexico's northern border, the social networks that have developed over several decades lead to family and residential mobilizations.

The flow of migrants intending to cross into the United States fluctuates more markedly according to the region of origin of the population, as shown in Table 4. In general, the regions of Las Montañas, Sotavento, and Capital record the highest average participation in the flow to the U.S. with 22.1%, 14.3%, and 14.2%, respectively (El Colef et al., 2021a). These results are consistent with research that has investigated the causes of migration in these regions, describing that this flow has been caused by the abandonment of the countryside (Del Ángel & Rebolledo, 2009) and by the worldwide coffee crisis that decreased the price of coffee and affected its producers in the center of the state (Griffith et al., 2017; Mestries, 2003).

Table 4. Percentage of Veracruzian Migrant Mobilizations to the United States, by Region of Origin in Veracruz (2010-2017)

Region	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Capital	18.3	13.9	18.6	14.6	1.9	11.4	6.8	28.4
Olmeca	12.1	13.7	12.6	14.9	7	2.3	7.2	1
Papaloapan	7.5	6.6	4.1	16.8	2.5	0.8	1.3	0
Las Montañas	31	23.9	20	28.9	17	11.8	31.2	13.2
Huasteca Alta	1.8	7.8	2.8	0.4	0.5	20.9	0	14.1
Sotavento	11.6	12.4	21.8	3.1	24.2	15.3	24.3	2.4
Huasteca Baja	6.8	5.6	8	4.7	2	13.3	0	0.5
Totonaca	6.3	8.3	7.6	11.5	5.5	16	1	27.9
Nautla	1.9	2.2	2.7	3.6	0.8	5.1	6.1	12.4
Los Tuxtlas	2.7	5.5	1.9	1.3	38.4	1.1	22.1	0

Source: EMIF Norte, Flows from the South, tabulations (El Colef et al., 2021a).

However, the relevance of these regions varies depending on the year analyzed. For example, emigration from the Capital region started in 2010 with a share of 18.2%, then decreased to its minimum of 1.9% in 2014, and then reached its maximum in 2017 with 20.4%. In the case of the Sotavento region, its share started at 11.6% (2010), then increased to its maximum in 2016 (24.2%), and decreased drastically one year later, to 2.4%. The Las Montañas region is the origin of emigrants that had the highest stability in the period studied, ranging from 11.8% to 31.2% (El Colef et al., 2021a). The explanation for the differentiated participation of these regions could be found in the decline in the international price of coffee and sugarcane that was experienced between 2011 and 2017 (although with significant fluctuations in that period) (International Coffee Organization, 2021; Sector Agroindustrial de la Caña, n.d.), being that coffee is a crop of relevance

for the Las Montañas and Capital regions, while the three regions concentrate an important participation in the state agricultural production of sugarcane (SEGOB Veracruz, 2020).

Instability in the migration flow to the United States is also a characteristic of the regions that have little presence. The most representative case is the Los Tuxtlas region, which recorded a minimal participation from 2010 to 2013, to later occupy first place in 2014 (38.4%), and second place in 2016 (22.0%) (El Colef et al., 2021a). The variations in this region could be related to the tourist flows each year, since ecotourism activity in the Los Tuxtlas region has become an alternative to the decision to migrate to the United States, although the communities that have benefited the most from this activity are also the ones most economically affected in the off-season (Piñar et al., 2011).

The motivations for emigration to the United States are, as in the case of those heading to the northern border, essentially work-related. However, said cause has also decreased over time: from 2010 to 2017 those who reported leaving to look for work went from 68.1% to 23.6%; while those who indicated leaving to go to work decreased from 21.9% to 10.0% (El Colef et al., 2021a). The decrease in work-related reasons has been substituted by recreational activities such as leisure reasons, which increased from 0.05% to 38.9% (El Colef et al., 2021a). This illustrates that, although the flow to the United States is minor among Veracruzians, most of them continue to cross the border in search for new job opportunities, although interest in new life experiences has indeed increased.

Those who Arrive: Homecoming and New Foreign Neighbors

Return migration has emerged in the state derived from the important role of Veracruz in emigration to the United States, as have transnational links between those who stay and those who leave. According to Ramos et al. (2017), in Veracruz the number of return migrants increased from 23rd place between 1985 and 1990 to the 6th position between 2010 and 2015 at the national level. Additionally, with two of the most important seaports in Mexico (Coatzacoalcos and Veracruz), and being a migratory route for foreigners bound for the United States, the entity has been a recipient of foreigners coming mainly from Europe, Asia and the Caribbean (Medina, 2018; Salazar, 2011). Both migratory phenomena are addressed in this section, accounting for the regionalization and participation of Veracruzian municipalities.

Regarding return migration, based on the 2010 and 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2010, 2020), two important results stand out: the first is that the total figure of Veracruz returnees decreased from 2010 to 2020, from 42 445 to 10 235 people, respectively. This pattern is concordant with what was reported at the national level, as the number of returnees decreased from 824 006 to 442 281 from 2010 to 2015 (Ramos et al., 2017) reaching 178 072 in 2020 (INEGI, 2020). The second is that it shows that the three regions that recorded the highest average participation in the flow of emigrants to the United States (Las Montañas, Capital, and Sotavento) (El Colef et al., 2021a), were the same ones leading in terms of the arrival of return migrants in 2010 with 23.9%, 16.2%, and 11.3%, respectively (Table 5) (INEGI, 2010, 2020). A decade later, the regions of Las Montañas and Capital stayed first and second place, but Sotavento was displaced

by Nautla. The latter region has presented important migration trends that could explain its growing participation in 2020, since of the 11 municipalities that comprise it, 6 presented medium and high MII in 2010 (SEGOB Veracruz, 2020).

Table 5. Percentage of Veracruzian Migrants Returning to the State, by Region of Arrival in Veracruz (2010 and 2020)

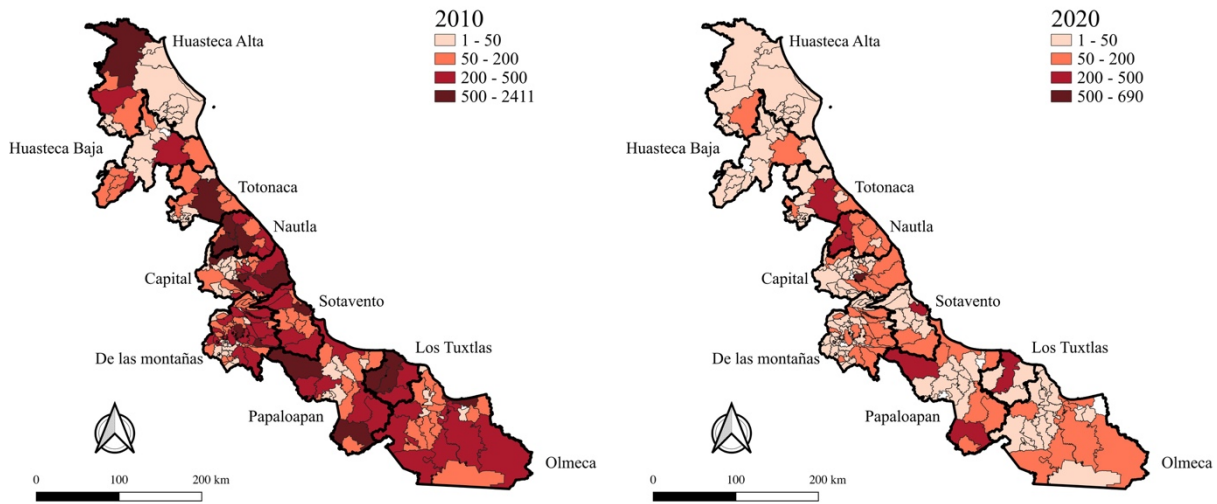
Region in Veracruz	2010	2020
Capital	16.2	16.9
Olmeca	10.1	10.6
Papaloapan	13.6	12.0
Las Montañas	23.9	21.9
Huasteca Alta	2.9	2.4
Sotavento	11.3	8.9
Huasteca Baja	3.7	4.8
Totonaca	4.8	6.2
Nautla	8.4	11.4
Los Tuxtlas	4.7	4.4

Source: Population and Housing Census, microdata (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

When addressing the phenomenon of return migration, it is important to keep in mind that emigrants to the United States do not necessarily return to their municipality or region of origin, as some returnees return to municipal capitals, state capitals, or urban localities (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012). This background is relevant to explain the results of Maps 1a and 1b, which show that the return of Veracruz migrants at the municipal level is not exactly a reflection of the geography of international emigration to the United States, and that, rather, a heterogeneous pattern is observed in both years of analysis.

In 2010, in 9 of the 10 regions of Veracruz there was at least one municipality with more than 500 return migrants, which happen to be places belonging to one of the nine metropolitan areas of the state (Córdoba in Las Montañas, Veracruz in Sotavento, Xalapa in Capital, Pánuco in Huasteca Alta, Papantla in the Totonaca zone, and Coatzacoalcos in the Olmeca area) (CONAPO et al., 2018), or with medium and high MII (Atzalan in Nautla, Actopan, and Altotonga in Capital, Cuitláhuac in Las Montañas, and Tierra Blanca and Playa Vicente in Papaloapan) (CONAPO, 2012). From the above criteria, Martínez de la Torre and Misantla in Nautla, and San Andrés and Santiago Tuxtla in the territory of Los Tuxtlas are excluded, although the demographic and economic relevance of these municipalities in each of their regions has been documented (SEGOB Veracruz, 2020).

Maps 1a and 1b. Veracruzian Return Migrants, by Municipality and Region in Veracruz (2010 and 2020)



Source: Population and Housing Census, microdata (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

This heterogeneity continued in 2020, although the concentration by municipality changed with respect to that of 10 years ago. Only the capital of the state (Xalapa) recorded more than 500 return migrants, while Papantla, Martínez de la Torre, Atzalan, Veracruz, Playa Vicente, Tierra Blanca, and San Andrés Tuxtla concentrated between 200 and 500 return migrants (INEGI, 2020). Several authors have evidenced the economic and demographic relevance of Xalapa as a point of attraction for internal migrants in the state, due to the concentration of educational and governmental services in this municipality, which has presented medium and high indicators of migratory attraction so far in the 20th century (Lima & Vázquez, 2018; Libreros et al., 2020).

The above shows that, despite the fact that the Sotavento, Las Montañas, and Capital regions recorded the highest average participation in the flow to the United States, geographic heterogeneity is observed in terms of return in both 2010 and 2020. The findings for the Veracruz case match the dispersed geographic distribution at the municipal level found by Terán (2019). Additionally, it can be said that returned Veracruz migrants settled in places of regional relevance or important economic activity within the regions, being more evident in 2020, where the main return destination was the state capital.

The second group of those arriving in Veracruz is composed of international immigrants who settle in the territory. Although thousands of people from different parts of the world have settled in the state throughout the history of Veracruz, in the second decade of the 21st century the profile of international immigration reflected the combination of new and historical migration flows. As can be seen in Table 6, although the presence of foreigners has remained virtually unchanged between 2010 and 2020, the share of each region of the world has varied between the two years.

The majority of international immigrants are U.S.-born individuals, representing 71.7% and 65.6% in 2010 and 2020, respectively (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

Table 6. International Immigrants in Veracruz,
 by Place of Origin (2010 and 2020)

Country or region	2010		2020	
	Number of people	%	Number of people	%
United States	16 722	71.8	15 250	65.6
Europe	2 607	11.2	1 373	5.9
South America	1 931	8.3	2 198	9.4
Central America	1 134	4.8	2 647	11.4
The Caribbean	692	2.9	1 145	4.9
Canada	81	0.3	211	0.9
Asia	79	0.3	379	1.6
Africa	13	0.1	20	0.1
Total	23 259	100	23 223	100

Note: People who stated a continent as origin without specifying the country were omitted, due to the impossibility of including them in the disaggregated analysis.

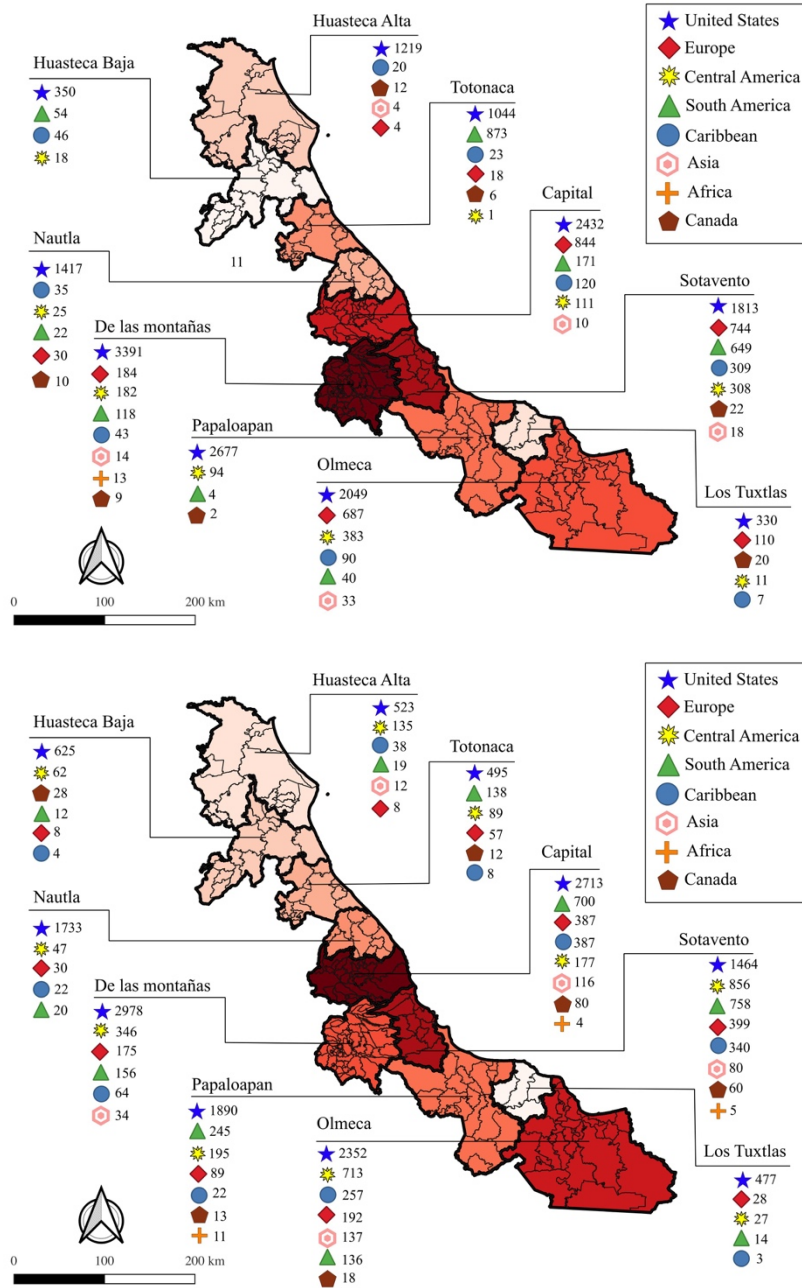
Source: Population and Housing Census, microdata (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

Overall, people from Central America, South America, Canada, the Caribbean, and Asia increased their presence in Veracruz, although the last three represent the lowest percentage (less than 10%). Central American immigrants are the group with the highest growth in the state (from 4.8% in 2010 to 11.4% in 2020), while immigrants of European origin, which include 20 countries (among which Spain, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and France stand out), also decreased considerably in the years studied (from 11.2% to 5.9%) (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

The geographic distribution of international immigrants in Veracruz shows that there are regions with greater diversity of foreigners than others, and a clear majority settlement in the center and south of the state (Maps 2a and 2b). In 2010, the Las Montañas region was the territory with the greatest plurality of foreigners: it recorded the largest community of people from the United States in the Veracruz (3 391), as well as the only presence of people from Africa (13). On the other hand, the Capital and Sotavento regions had the largest population from Europe, in addition to the largest settlement of people from the Caribbean in both regions (INEGI, 2010).

Although the Olmeca region also concentrated a considerable number of Europeans, people of Central American origin stood out the most (383), with the municipalities of Coatzacoalcos and Cosoleacaque having the highest concentration of them (which is related to the immobilization of the migrations in transit through the state, and the increase in refugee applications in that region). Finally, the highest proportion of foreigners of South American origin was found in the Totonaca region (873) (INEGI, 2010).

Maps 2a and 2b. International Immigrants in Veracruz, by Region or Country of Origin and Region of Residence (2010 and 2020)



Source: Population and Housing Census, microdata (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

In 2020, settlement in the territory of Veracruz underwent considerable changes, as evidenced in Map 2b. The first of these is the increase in Central Americans in the state, positioning them as the second most prevalent immigrant group in 6 of the 10 regions (only behind people from the United States). Thus, from 2010 to 2020, not only did the proportion of Central American

immigrants increase in absolute terms, but also their territorial distribution throughout the state diversified (INEGI, 2020).

Two other important changes in the pattern of international immigrants in 2020 were the diversification of African immigrants in other parts of the entity, and the noticeable increase of people from Asia. With respect to the former and as mentioned earlier, in 2010 people of African origin were only recorded in the Las Montañas region, but 10 years later this area was abandoned and they emerged in other regions such as Capital, Papaloapan, and Sotavento, this matching with Coulange and Castillo (2020), who categorized the flow of Africans among the most recent in the state. Likewise, Asian immigrants increased their presence in general, and in five regions in particular, Capital, Olmecca, and Sotavento standing out (INEGI, 2020).

Due to relevance of migration in the years prior to 2020, Table 7 shows that although the largest arrival of people originating from the United States continues standing out, it decreased significantly. Likewise, the arrival of Spaniards, French, Cubans, and Germans to the state of Veracruz keeps constant, showing significant differences between 2010 and 2020 (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

Table 7. Newly Arrived International Immigrants in Veracruz, by Place of Origin of the Largest Migrant Groups (2010 and 2020)

Position	2010		2020	
	Country of birth and residence in 2005	Number of people	Country of birth and residence in 2015	Number of people
1	United States	4 477	United States	1 366
2	Venezuela	632	Honduras	549
3	Argentina	320	Venezuela	266
4	Cuba	127	France	169
5	Spain	98	El Salvador	124
6	Germany	53	China	81
7	Guatemala	38	Haiti	78
8	Canada	33	Belgium	72
9	Japan	21	Guatemala	70
10	Brazil	18	Spain	60
	Others	50	Others	187
	Total	5 867	Total	3 022

Source: Population and Housing Census, microdata (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, an important flow of foreigners into the country in the decade under analysis are people from Venezuela, as a result of the political and economic crisis that caused an exodus of Venezuelans to various Latin American countries, including Mexico (Franco, 2020). In Veracruz, 632 Venezuelans arrived in 2010 and 266 in 2020, a possible reflection of the increase in refugee applications in the country and in the state. Similarly, immigrants from northern Central America increased their share of the immigrant stock in 2020,

a sign of the dynamics of population mobilizations in the Central America-Mexico-United States migration system (INEGI, 2010, 2020).

CLOSING REMARKS

The outward and inward flows of population from and to the territory of Veracruz during the second decade of the 21st century evidence the current migration dynamics of and challenges for this state. The flow of Veracruz emigrants to the northern border of Mexico—which began at the end of the last century—showed a considerable decrease in the period from 2010 to 2017. It is likely that this decrease is related to the loss of allure of the maquiladora industries in northern Mexico, as well as to the great growth of violence in border cities such as Ciudad Juárez, but also to economic contractions and greater migration controls in the neighboring country to the north. This was observed with greater emphasis in relation to those mobilizations that arrived in northern Mexico and were bound for the United States.

Nonetheless, despite the noticeable decrease in the flow of emigration from Veracruz during the period studied, the state's participation in the national flow to the northern border remained constant, which undoubtedly reflects the permanence of this form of mobilization as an economic-labor strategy of Veracruzian families, yet it also evidences this as a new profile of family reunification and change of residence. Analyzing census data allowed us to observe the pre-existence of social networks between the Veracruzian population residing in the border cities of northern Mexico and the newly arrived populations, as recorded in Matamoros, in all years, and in Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras in specific years. Likewise, it is likely that the mobilization of Veracruzians in localities such as Tijuana is related to their tradition of being a crossing point to the neighboring country to the north, as otherwise these places lack any migratory link to Veracruz.

In the case of the migration flow of Veracruzians to the United States, the irregularity of mobilizations during the decade observed stands out. The Veracruz regions of Las Montañas, Sotavento, and Capital stood out as those with the greatest and most systematic emigration flow to the United States; however, great divergences and ephemeral behaviors were observed in the period analyzed for other regions.

As the historicity of these migratory phenomena progresses, the existence of social networks, mainly familial and of friendship, that support, enable, and probably promote the reproduction of this life strategy for Veracruz citizens can be assumed with greater certainty. According to the Secretariat of the Government of Veracruz (SEGOB Veracruz, 2021), emigration to the United States has resulted in the establishment of several migrant associations in that country in a relatively short period, such as the *Federación Veracruzana USA* (Veracruzian Federation USA) in California, La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz in Texas, the Asociación de Aguadulceños (Association of Aguadulceños) in North Carolina, and Veracruzanos Solidarios (Communitarian Veracruzians) in Utah, among others, which makes it evident that the links between Veracruzian populations are socially solid across nations.

As for the people who arrived in Veracruz from abroad, it was shown that Veracruzians who returned to the state after emigrating to the United States do not necessarily converge with the regions of origin of such migrations reported in EMIF Norte, that is to say, there are no mirror dynamics between the annual departures and returns reported by the censuses. Rather, the return pattern in Veracruz was diverse and heterogeneous in both 2010 and 2020, concentrated in the most important municipalities of the different regions or those of significant migrant tradition. In 2020, Xalapa reported the largest number of Veracruz returnees, reaffirming the tendency of migrants of moving to more economically dynamic locations.

Veracruz's migration tradition as a host to foreigners in Mexico is nurtured by the diversity of the entity's current international immigrants. At the national level, due to strong Mexican emigration links to the United States, U.S.-born immigrants were the largest migrant group in both 2010 and 2020—it is likely that a large share of these are of Mexican ancestry (father or mother)—. Despite a substantial increase in extracontinental migrants from Asia and Africa, and an important increase in South American immigration (from Venezuela), the arrival of Central American population stands out the most. The most evident change is that foreigners are no longer concentrated only in the center and south of the state, but in all regions of Veracruz.

It is important to mention that the highest increase of recent foreigners in Veracruz (between 2015 and 2020), both in amount and territorial distribution, was led by Central Americans, mainly from the Northern Triangle and, among them, by those from Honduras. The presence of Hondurans in Veracruz is a reflection of the preponderance of that population in the Gulf migration route, which leads migrants in transit to the United States (Castillo García & Nájera Aguirre, 2016), as well as the increase in migratory movements in search of international protection initiated in 2018. Future works should analyze the territory of Veracruz as a place of transit of migrants in their way to the United States, not only from Central America, but also people from other countries.

Finally, it should be noted that Veracruzian migrants leaving the state, those who return, and recently settled international immigrants are population groups that require state and local attention to ensure that their needs are met and their human rights are respected.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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