



FINAL REPORT
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**IMPACT OF REGULAR TEMPORARY
MIGRATION TO CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES**
**ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS AND MIGRATION INTENTIONS
OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA,**
and analysis of barriers and opportunities to scale
up the regular migration strategy.

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Regular Temporary Migration of Guatemalans to Canada and the United States: Analysis of the Impact on Living Conditions, Migration Intentions, Barriers, and Opportunities.

Project:

Impact of regular temporary migration to Canada and the United States on the living conditions and migration intentions of families and communities in Guatemala, and analysis of barriers and opportunities to scale up the regular migration strategy. Addressing the root causes of irregular migration in Guatemala.

Authors:

Landini, Fernando
Brodbeck, Arnold
Vera, María
Torres Parejo, Úrsula
González Enríquez, Isabel
García, Miguel Ángel

Publication of Action Against Hunger,
Central America Office
Address: 6a. Avenida "A" 13-63, zona 9 tercer nivel, oficina 301
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Teléfono: (+502) 23671234
Website: <http://www.accioncontraelhambre.org>

Design:

Nuñez y Mansilla

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ACRONYMS

AAH	Action Against Hunger
CECI	Centro de Estudios y Cooperación Internacional (Acronym in Spanish that stands for: Center for International Studies and Cooperation)
COCODE	Consejo Comunitario de Desarrollo (Acronym in Spanish that stands for: Community Development Council)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
INTECAP	Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad (Acronym in Spanish that stands for: Technical Institute for Training and Productivity)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MINTRAB	Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social (Acronym in Spanish that stands for: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare)
NCBA-CLUSA	National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presentation and theme

Migration flows and processes constitute complex realities that cannot be interpreted in a uniformed way, since they involve different experiences and processes. Most of the research on Central American migration to Canada and the United States has studied irregular migration. Alternatively, this work focuses on the study of temporary regular migration and addresses both, the dynamics of regular temporary migration and its impact on the communities of origin, as well as the processes linked to the demand for workers and the administrative and institutional steps that allow the hiring of foreign workers through temporary visa programs.

Methodology

To achieve these objectives, four differentiated strategies were implemented. In Guatemala, sixty interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and members of selected communities. Additionally, 1,367 community surveys were taken. The study focused on the departments of Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, and San Marcos. The specific communities were selected from a random sample in order to compare communities with high and low percentage of regular migrants. Surveys of regular migrant's families were added as well to this sample. Additionally, twenty-five interviews with key stakeholders and employers were conducted in Canada and the United States, along with a survey of 166 employers.

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Results



Reasons for migration

Most people who migrate do so for economic reasons, i.e., looking for better living conditions and better jobs. Before the possibility of a temporary work visa, they prefer regular migration, since it is safer, it does not require them to remain abroad indefinitely, and it helps in maintaining family ties. In contrast, it is acknowledged that irregular migration can grant access to better paid jobs and longer working hours.



Types of temporary work visas

The Canadian and United States temporary work visas have different formats and are subject to multiple regulations and administrative procedures. In Canada, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) prevails; while in the United States, temporary work visas are classified as H-2A (agricultural workers) and H-2B (non-agricultural workers). Both programs require that the employers offer the position to citizens first. Then, they are allowed to apply for authorization to hire foreign workers. Due to the complexity of these processes, employers usually hire professionals or companies that oversee bureaucratic procedures and/or recruit workers.



Recruiting companies

Many Canadian visas in Guatemala are managed with the support of recruitment companies located in the country, which contributes to a more orderly and transparent process. In the case of the United States, a more fragmented system is observed, with a strong presence of small recruiters who work in specific communities for a single employer, most of them are informal. In recent years, the Guatemalan Government recruiter (Labor Migration Program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare) has increased its presence, now occupying a key role in United States visas processes. Unfortunately, Guatemalan workers, and even public employees, have scarce knowledge on how visas work. This has increased the probabilities of fraud committed by people who pose as recruiters or representatives of foreign employers.



Impact of temporary work visas on migratory intention

The availability of temporary work visas affects peoples' migration intentions. Initially, during the interviews, some people explained that they delay the decision of irregular migration while hoping to obtain a visa; but when they are not able to get a visa, they continue with their course of action. The comparison between communities with a high and a low percentage of regular migrants shows that visas do not increase or decrease migration intention, but they do have a substantial impact on the way in which this migration occurs: when visas are available, most of the migration occurs through regular channels. Simultaneously, as people return, the number of people staying abroad decreases at a given time.



Impact of temporary work visas on well-being

Data shows slight difference between communities with high and low percentage of visas. However, they do show major differences between the families of regular migrants and the rest. Families of regular migrants have a better general economic situation: lower levels of poverty and food insecurity, access to diverse food, among many other indicators. At the same time, there are also contrasts in favor of families of irregular migrants compared to non-migrant families, although not so sharp. The evidence indicates that the existing differences between families of regular and irregular migrants are product of the way they have migrated, and not from differences that existed before migrating.



Remittances' transfers

Regular migrants send remittances more frequently and in larger monthly amounts than irregular migrants. Nevertheless, they make investments in similar goods, such as purchasing agricultural tools and equipment. Finally, the use of remittances for investments increases over the years in families of regular migrants in a marked way. This unequivocally shows that regular migration has a greater potential to improve life quality of households and to conduct investments that generate income and development in the communities of origin, particularly those linked to agriculture.



What do employers look for in foreign workers?

They look for individuals with physical strength, who are reliable and can have a good relationship with others. Employers also value workers who have experience related to the activity they will be conducting, although they are usually trained. Employers prefer men over women, due to the prioritization of physical strength and the higher costs of housing both. Additionally, employers usually foster relations with the countries and territories in which their workers were hired first, since they usually expand their workforce based on recommendations from those who are more reliable and productive. This strategy often leads to bribery and fees of Q 2,000 to Q 3,000 by workers who recommend friends and neighbors.



Employers' experiences with Guatemala

The experiences are varied. They tend to highlight the quality of Guatemalan workers compared to other nationalities. However, they also point out that the procedures tend to require more time (due to delays in passports and visas), even though deadlines seem to have accelerated recently. American employers also highlight additional costs for hiring Guatemalans, both regarding airfares and bonuses demanded by recruiters, since they do not usually have consolidated ties with formalized local agencies. Regarding the Labor Mobility Program, although it has a growing presence, employers have indicated that it does not always meet the deadlines and qualities required for the selected workers.



Recommendations

Based on the identified problems, a set of recommendations are presented and analyzed in detail in the following text:

- ① The registration process for recruiters in Guatemala needs to be consolidated. Furthermore, descriptive information must be published to enable contact with employers.
- ② Support external certification of the quality of registered recruiters.
- ③ Promote the creation of a national coordination table or panel made up of recruiters registered in Guatemala and key stakeholders.
- ④ Support in positioning the Labor Migration Program as a promoter and driver of strengthening the recruiting system in the country.
- ⑤ Train registered recruiters for them to know the procedures of the visa programs.
- ⑥ Develop, in a collaborative way, strategies to substitute the worker-to-worker hiring model and the problem of visa abandonment.
- ⑦ Develop and/or validate psychometric tools to select workers.
- ⑧ Educate first-time visa holders to anticipate the working and living conditions in Canada and the United States.
- ⑨ Promote actions that reduce recruitment costs in Guatemala.
- ⑩ Support efforts to reduce passport and visa processing times.
- ⑪ Contribute to the development of connections among United States employers, recruiters, and Guatemalan workers.
- ⑫ Foster changes in the structure of visa programs.
- ⑬ Develop educational outreach material to educate interested workers about the visa programs available.
- ⑭ Create a website with information regarding temporary work visas.
- ⑮ Train personnel from selected municipalities to provide guidance and disseminate information on temporary work visas.
- ⑯ Develop complaint mechanisms in order to preserve the anonymity of workers who have been victims of fraud, improper charges, and mistreatment by employers.
- ⑰ Develop financial alternatives for workers who have been selected for visas, to avoid situations where they borrow under unfavorable conditions to cover the initial expenses.
- ⑱ Develop financial education actions to enable remittance investments.
- ⑲ Provide personalized agricultural and business advisory services to facilitate a more effective use of remittances.
- ⑳ Develop training or entrepreneurship incubation programs.



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Study limitations

Although the sample size of the surveys in Guatemala is robust, the results are not necessarily representative of the country, since communities and departments were selected randomly. At the same time, surveys were not conducted in municipal seats either. Results should be taken cautiously, even though they are undoubtedly convincing. The second limitation refers to the small number of interviews and surveys in Canada, which could imply that the results from these sources reflect the reality of the United States to a greater degree.



Themes of future research

The study highlights the importance of (1) comparing the satisfaction of the employers with recruiting process advised by other workers suggestions versus advised by specialized agencies, (2) studying the factors that contribute to job abandonment or non-return once abroad and (3) examining the impact of temporary regular migration on family relationships. Additionally, it is advised to further study (4) mistreatments in the workplace, (5) the operations of intermediaries and informal recruiters, and (6) the underlying reasons for the low recruitment of women with visas. Finally, in order to better understand the impact of the availability of visas on irregular migration, it would be key (7) to carry out an intervention that offers visas and follow up on the case over the years, by preferably contrasting with a territory in which no intervention has been carried out.



Value of study

This research highlights that a better understanding of the link between regular migration and development could be of great value when promoting community development projects. Moreover, often some of the resources required to achieve socioeconomic transformation can be provided by the community's members, rather than coming entirely from conventional development projects.

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INTRODUCTION

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Transforming migration and remittances into engines of employment, life projects and local development processes in the territories of origin has been and continues to be a key action line for multiple organizations and institutions. It is hoped that this will improve the living conditions of the communities from which the migrants come, as well as reduce irregular migration flows abroad. However, the idea underlying many of these initiatives is that the low development level (both economic and institutional) is one of the root causes of international migration. Notwithstanding, this linear interpretation has been disputed by numerous analysts who have shown that migration tends to increase when development level increases, especially in the most impoverished countries or regions (De Haas et al., 2020; Flahaux and de Haas, 2016). This argument becomes clearer when it is observed that development processes can also be linked, especially in the short and medium term, to an increase in inequality and a decrease in the well-being of individuals and specific social groups, a situation that drives them to emigrate (Clemens, 2017; DeHaas, 2020).

From this perspective, it is necessary to recognize that migratory flows cannot be understood as a homogeneous or unique fact, but that these are umbrella terms under which enormously differing experiences, journeys, projects, and results are included. Within this line of thinking, there are several studies that have addressed the transformations regarding living conditions in the territories of origin of migrants, thanks to migration. However, these studies do not distinguish among different migratory experiences and tend to focus on irregular migration, which is predominant when migration from Central American to the United States is considered. There are very few studies that have attempted to compare the impacts that cause regular and irregular migration. It is recognized that both types of migration tend to entail differences in terms of the cost and risks associated with the journey, the working conditions at the destination, and the transformation of family relationships and migratory dynamics, etc. (Binford, 2019; Brodbeck et al., 2018; Brooks, 2018; Gesualdi-Fecteau, et al., 2017; Heidbrink, 2019; Johnson and Woodhouse, 2018; Passel and Cohn 2016).

Within a context where neither international development cooperation nor the strengthening of border controls have significantly modified living conditions or emigration rates in the countries and communities of origin of migrants (De Haas et al., 2020; MPI, 2019), it is essential to explore alternatives and policies for regulating migration at international level. One of the most discussed solutions is the establishment of legal channels for international migration, within which temporary migration programs are located (Ramón, 2021).

Thus, this research starts from recognizing that there are three general types of experiences related to migration in Guatemalan rural contexts: regular migration, irregular migration, and no migration. Based on this, this study seeks to understand the differential impacts of these three types of migratory experiences on well-being, socioeconomic opportunities, and migratory intention in families and communities of origin. Additionally, recognizing the key role that remittances play in this process, it also aims to study their use, exploring the possible existence of differential uses depending on the type of migration. On the other hand, given the interest of this work for the processes of regular migration of Guatemalans to Canada and the United States, it also aims to understand what the processes are related to obtaining visas, who are the stakeholders involved, and what is the perspective of employers who demand foreign labor through temporary migration programs.

In turn, a complex study is described here, which seeks to understand in greater detail both the dynamics of regular temporary migration and its impact at the origin communities, in comparison with irregular migration; as well as the processes linked to the demand for workers and the administrative and institutional steps that allow hiring foreign workers through temporary visa programs. In recognizing the importance of generating knowledge for action, particularly for the designing of policies and institutional actions, there is also attention given to the identification of obstacles and bottlenecks that limit the participation of Guatemalan workers in temporary employment programs in Canada and the United States.

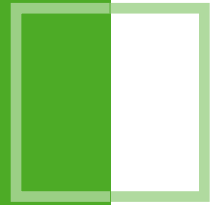


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OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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Based on the arguments from above, the following statements are defined as general research objectives:

- a Evaluate the capacity of temporary regular migration programs between Guatemala with Canada and the United States to favor the establishment of temporary migrants, their families, and their neighbors in their areas of origin and promote improvements in their well-being and socioeconomics opportunities in Guatemala.
- b Identify and understand the bottlenecks that hinder the demand for regular temporary migrant workers in Canada and the United States, and the participation of Guatemalan workers in temporary employment programs.

Likewise, the following were established as research questions:

- 1 To what extent does temporary regular migration, in contrast to irregular migration, encourage or discourage the migratory intentions of households and communities that remain (roots).
- 2 What is the mechanism to obtain a temporary visa and how important is social capital to access the temporary employment programs of Canada and the United States?
- 3 What are the costs involved in migrating and what are the impacts of the three different migratory experiences (non-migrant, irregular migrant, and regular temporary migrant) on the income and living conditions of migrants and their families in the communities of origin?
- 4 Are there significant differences in the use of remittances in households with different migratory experiences? What are the most interesting uses mentioned in the interviews as means to reduce poverty?
- 5 What are the bottlenecks that hinder the participation of Guatemalan workers in temporary employment programs, from the perspective of employers, temporary migrants, non-migrants interested in temporary migration and the authorities of Guatemala, Canada, and USA? Are there relevant differences between the cases of Canada and the United States?



BACKGROUND REVISION

BACKGROUND

REVISION



The migration flows of Guatemalans to northern countries, especially to the United States, have increased in recent years (IOM, 2022; MPI, 2019). The consequent restrictions on mobility imposed globally due to the Covid-19 pandemic, did not have a decreasing effect, judging by the significant increase in deportations of Guatemalans registered from Mexico and the United States in 2021, in comparison to the previous year (Guatemalan Institute of Migration, 2022).

Analysis of the effects that this migratory flow has on migrant-sending communities are numerous, often yielding inconsistent and even contradictory results depending on the specific local context under evaluation. The methodologies used for these examinations, since the influencing dimensions and variables are multiple, are complex and interdependent. Below is a background review of this study's key themes as well as the use and impact of remittances, the impact of temporary regular migration, migration and gender (understood as a cross-cutting theme) and employers of migrant workers.

3.1. Remittances: use and impact

The arrival of remittances is the most visible effect and the most studied of the Guatemalan migratory flows, mainly to the United States. Remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached a record of US\$529 billion in 2018, three times more than official development assistance. In Guatemala, remittances received in 2021 exceeded US\$15 billion, representing 17.8% of GDP, an amount higher than the total budget of the Guatemalan State for that same year (Banco de Guatemala, 2021). In 2021, remittances received by Guatemala increased by 35% in relation to the previous year, exceeding 15 billion dollars despite the economic crisis and mobility restrictions caused by the Covid-19 health emergency, or in part because of it; since, the solidarity of migrants abroad with their families and relatives in the territories of origin tends to increase in times of crisis (Banco de Guatemala, 2021).

Remittances are an important mechanism to prevent negative consequences of poverty, particularly for families in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability (Cohen, 2011). In fact, the incidence of poverty among households that receive remittances is significantly lower than among all Guatemalan households (IOM, 2017). However, there is further discussion regarding the potential of these remittances to influence the socioeconomic development in the medium and long term, not only of the receiving households, but also of the communities of origin as a whole and of the country itself.



Different studies have shown that households that receive remittances invest to a greater extent in housing and education (that is, physical and human capital), which could have positive consequences for the development of the territories of origin (Adams and Cuecuecha, 2010; Housen et al., 2013).



However, if we compare the evolution of the use of remittances in Guatemala between 2010 and 2016, the percentage of remittances destined to satisfy basic household needs has decreased (food, clothing, transportation, etc.). Furthermore, the comparison also shows a decrease of investment in health and education (IOM, 2017). On the other hand, the percentage of remittances destined for construction and purchase and improvement of households has increased from 20.4% to 49.8%, and the productive use, oriented towards starting up or improving a business decreased significantly (from 8% to 7.2%).

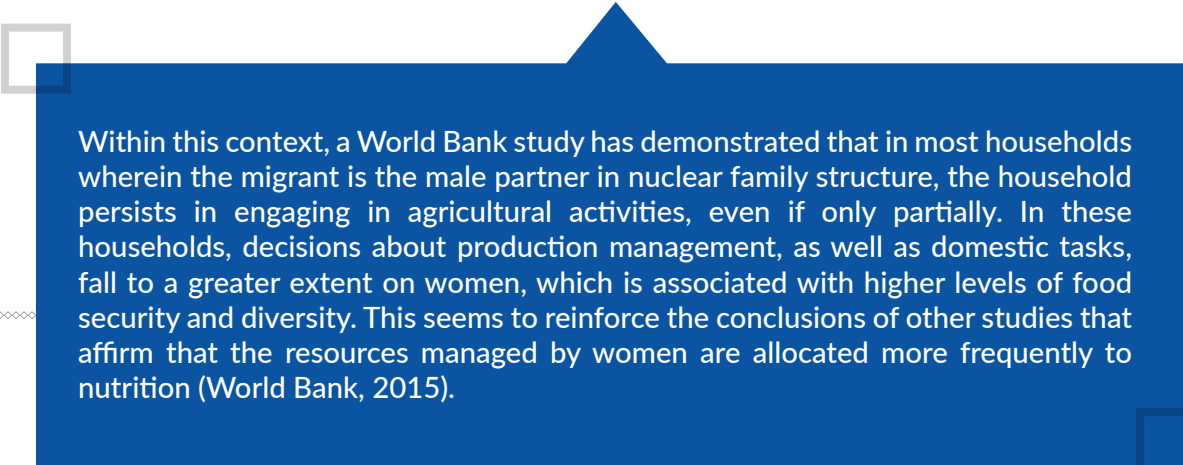
Several authors seem to agree that remittances in Guatemala would be alleviating the severity of poverty. However, they would not be reversing the global poverty index or the inequality relations in the country, due to the high general poverty indexes of families, the deficient and/or abusive coverage of financial services and, mainly, the absence of public policies that promote, facilitate and guide local development in the territories (Barre, 2011; Bornschein, 2016).

After all this, the analysis of the use of remittances is not enough to infer, for example, that greater spending on basic consumer products such as food expenses will necessarily result in an immediate improvement in the nutritional and health conditions of the members of households. On one hand, in the international arena, according to data from the Gallup World Poll based on a study in which 68,463 people were interviewed in more than 60 countries, there would be a clear association between the receipt of remittances and food security. Thus, severe food insecurity would be related to not receiving remittances regardless of the geographical context (Ebadi et al., 2018; FAO, 2019). This trend is also confirmed by some studies for the Guatemalan case (CRS, 2020) and for the case of the Dry Corridor of the Central American Northern Triangle (Ruiz Soto et al., 2021).

However, in some local scenarios and specific migratory situations, this relationship does not seem to be so evident. A study carried out by the World Food Program shows how, in fact, food insecurity (moderate to severe) would have increased in households in which the recent migration of one of its members occurred in the regions of the Dry Corridor of the Central American North Triangle (Inter-American Development Bank, 2017). This same study also indicates that in parallel to the increase in food products purchased in the market by households that receive remittances, there has also been a significant decrease in food self-sufficiency by the same households. In this way, the vulnerability of households with respect to fluctuations in prices of the basic food basket could be increasing, especially among the most impoverished households that dedicate a greater percentage of their income to food supply, as well as dependence on remittances for the minimum supply of households.

In this sense, another study focused on Guatemala, reveals that the irregular migration to the United States of one of the parents would lead to a significant decrease in the height and weight considered healthy among children under three years. This decrease even seems to occur in the cases in which families receive remittances. Thus, the indication here is the parents of younger children would not achieve economic success quickly enough to offset the negative effects in terms of health and nutrition caused by their absence, especially during pregnancy and the first two years of life (Davis and Brazil, 2016). In both research (Davis and Brazil, 2016; Inter-American Development Bank, 2017) the time elapsed between the start of the migratory journey of the migrant member or members of the domestic unit and the arrival of the first remittances would be decisive. Thus, it is observed that the migratory experience itself, as well as its times and forms would be determining the development of the youngest members of the families.

On the other hand, the analysis of the effects of migration on nutrition, diet and food security indices of households should incorporate the gender component in decision-making processes, both in the domestic sphere and in the productive sphere, as different studies show (World Bank, 2015; Deere and Alvarado, 2016; Taylor et al., 2006; Teye et al., 2017). Even though the migratory flow of Guatemalans to the United States in recent times shows a gradual increase in women's participation, the high percentage of female heads of household that remain in the migrant-sending regions also allows us to speak of a feminization process of rural Guatemala. Indeed, 69% of individual remittance recipients are women (IOM, 2017).



Within this context, a World Bank study has demonstrated that in most households wherein the migrant is the male partner in nuclear family structure, the household persists in engaging in agricultural activities, even if only partially. In these households, decisions about production management, as well as domestic tasks, fall to a greater extent on women, which is associated with higher levels of food security and diversity. This seems to reinforce the conclusions of other studies that affirm that the resources managed by women are allocated more frequently to nutrition (World Bank, 2015).

The effect of remittances on nutrition is also related to other dimensions of migration, such as the transformation of attitudes, knowledge and preferences, the effect of the absence of the migrant in relation to childcare, self-production of food and the gender and generational conceptions related to the control of family income and the intra-family distribution of food, among others. Some research seems to find, for example, a relationship between the receipt of remittances and the consumption of less healthy foods (non-traditional), as well as the worsening of the diet in rural areas (Thow et al., 2016). The importance of analyzing the transformations of ideas, values, preferences, attitudes, and knowledge when evaluating the effects of migration in the territories of origin is also evident in relation to health and education management. A qualitative study carried out in a rural area of northern Guatemala indicated that returned migrants, their families and, to a lesser extent, the community, attached greater importance to education as a tool for personal and community development, as a consequence of the migratory experience (Barret et al., 2014).

3.2. Impact of migration in the territories of origin



Structural problems and limitations are determining factors when assessing impact that migration may have in the territories of origin. For example, decisions about investment in education among remittance-receiving households are influenced by employability perceptions in the local labor market (Chaaban and Mansour, 2012). However, the potential that social remittances must promote development processes, understood not as a one-way transfer of values, attitudes and knowledge from migrants abroad to their communities of origin, but as a mutual circulation and transformation, could be more diverse and profound than many studies suggest (Barret et al., 2014). Despite this suggestion, the transformation of sociocultural values and practices can become conflictive or contradictory, and even be perceived in certain cases as negative by the community of origin (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2010; Ortiz and Rivera, 2010). Different studies show the range of social transformation possibilities that social remittances can engender.

In addition to the greater commitment to health and education, especially for children, Guatemalan transnational families and returned migrants often reconfigure their pre-migration gender roles. Specifically, they show a greater concern for gender equity and a progressive women empowerment, both for those who migrated and for those who remained in their places of origin while in charge of managing family income (Taylor et al., 2006).

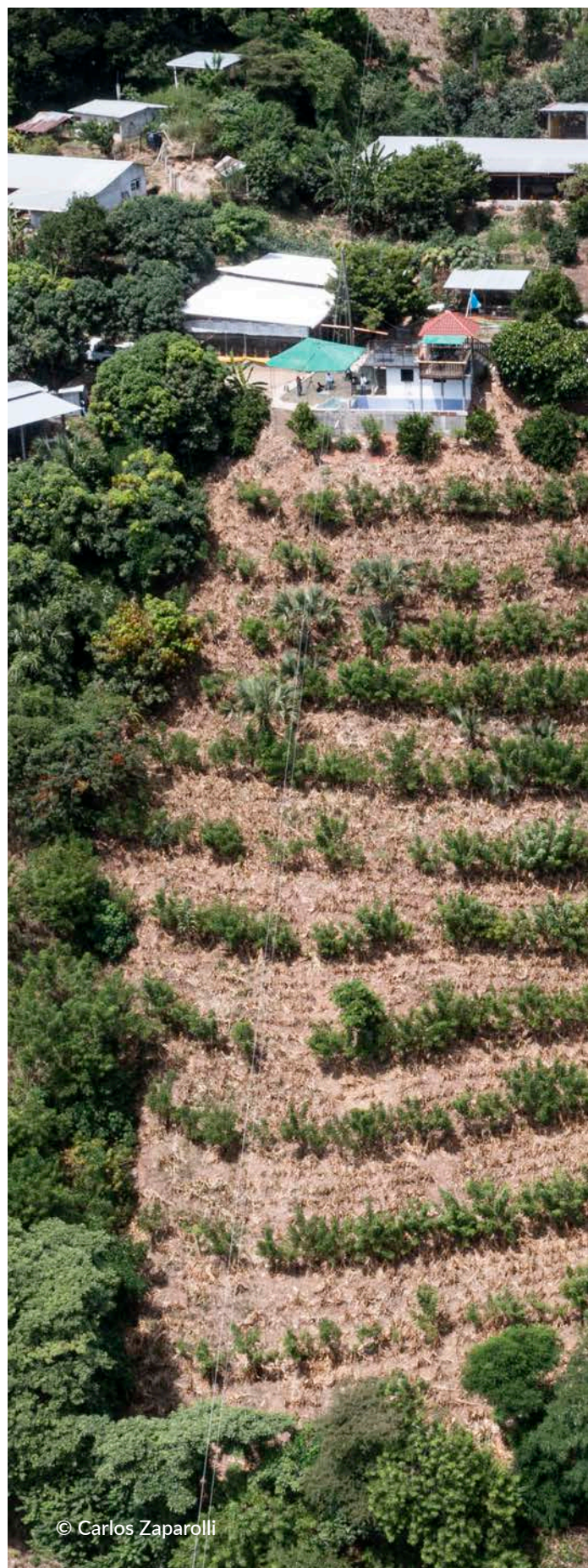
As previously argued, Guatemalan families headed by women are more common among households with a member abroad. In fact, from the total number of heads of household who receive remittances in Guatemala, 41.4% are women, while women only represent 22.7% of heads of household at national level (IOM, 2017).

Despite these numbers, numerous studies of the impact on the reconfiguration of gender roles motivated by international migration have underlined the greater autonomy and independence acquired by women (Deere and Alvarado, 2016). As a result, it cannot be assumed that migration necessarily leads to a women empowerment process. This is so because such process will be strongly influenced by the social and normative context of the community under examination, as well as by the agency capacity, experiences and values of the individual and collective subjects involved (Teye et al., 2017). At the same time, in order to materialize this female empowerment process, resulting in a greater effective exercise of rights and a decrease in the rates of violence against women in the country, adequate public policies and the Governments' commitment are also required. (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky, 2011).

Migration can also promote a greater critical awareness of the exercise of citizenship and increase the capacity for social and political participation not only of migrants but also of households and communities of origin (Barret et al., 2014; Orjuela et al., 2011). In this sense, the Guatemalan case is not an exception, considering that within the international context, there is evidence of the transnational social networks influencing in the emergence of different social movements, including protests and petitions for reform and greater transparency in migrant-sending regions and nations (Lacroix et al., 2016).

It is also important to incorporate the environmental dimension in the analysis of the effects of migration in the territories of origin, something especially relevant in the case of Guatemala due to the recurrence of extreme weather events in recent times, serious agricultural losses, increased insecurity food and, therefore, growing migratory flows (Inter-American Development Bank, 2017).

Investment in livestock by remittance-receiving households seems to be a growing trend in Central America, along with the purchase of arable land, at least among higher-income households that have already covered their basic consumption needs (Davis and Lopez-Carr, 2014).



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In Guatemala, some studies have also shown this increase in livestock and agricultural activities with the consequent reduction of the wooded forest area (Angelsen et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2006). For their part, other works have highlighted the increase in land dedicated to non-traditional crops in the western mountainous regions with the consequent overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, causing contamination of important bodies of water (Moran-Taylor and Taylor, 2010). The transformations' study in the productive use of land and natural resources management as a consequence of migration is inseparable, as it has been seen from the study of cultural changes and the analysis of their socioeconomic effects. In particular, it has been observed that migration can contribute both to a more equitable distribution of land in sending territories (Aguilar-Støen, 2012), as well as exacerbate social inequities prior to the migration experience (Cohen, 2011; Mata-Codesal, 2017).

Finally, the influence that migration has on the migratory intention of the inhabitants of the communities that expel migrants could be incorporated into the analysis. On one hand, studies often suggest that migratory culture would be fueled in the territories of origin by the arrival of remittances. Thus, the migration of people from a locality would favor the migration of new members due to the social success obtained; for example, when constructing or remodeling their house, it would be an incentive to migrate abroad (Domínguez et al., 2018; Freddi et al. al., 2020). On the other hand, the transnational social networks of households with relatives and friends abroad have been considered a determining element in the maintenance of international migratory flows for years, especially in contexts where migration occurs irregularly. Specifically, this is due to their role as facilitators of subsequent migrations of members of the community of origin, both by having relatives at destination and information on routes or keys to be settled.

3.3. Specific impact of regular temporary migration

The analysis of migration impacts associated with temporary employment programs in the migrants' territories of origin also yield multiple and diverse results. For instance, variables such as the time spent participating in employment programs seem to be determinant when evaluating the transformation in the living conditions of participants. The economic resources mobilized by the nearly 13,000 Guatemalans who participated in temporary agricultural employment programs in Canada and the United States exceeded US\$100 million in 2019. The field research carried out by Brodbeck et al. (2018) in communities of the department of Huehuetenango with temporary workers displaced to the United States to carry out forestry work, with an average of 7 months (under the H-2B visa), an average monthly remittance of USD\$ 982 could be verified. This income (USD\$ 6,874 per year) was mainly invested in increasing the daily consumption of the family, household improvement, purchase of agricultural land, start-up of small businesses and education of children. According to the review carried out by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (Budworth et al., 2017) regarding the impact of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) of Canada on the conditions and livelihoods of temporary workers at origin, it was found that living conditions improve gradually with the years of participation in this regular temporary migration program. This is because the continuity in these programs would allow moving from basic consumption pattern to productive investment in land, equipment, and businesses.

Repeated participation in these programs over the years could also be crucial in terms of food security. As the study of remittances in general, the analysis of the effects of remittances sent by temporary migrants also yields conflicting results that are difficult to analyze. Remittances could improve food security only temporarily, without truly affecting the food security of migrants and their families (Weiler et al., 2017), mainly for those migrants who have fewer years of participation in these programs. Migrants from more impoverished regions would seem to need more years of participation in the program to be able to begin to allocate a greater part of the remittances to productive investments. In this sense, participation in these programs would transform situations of extreme poverty and precariousness into forms of more moderate precariousness, although there is a lack of evidence to ensure that these programs make it possible to transform the productive matrix in the territories of origin to generate new job opportunities in the communities. However, in some contexts it has been possible to relate participation in these programs with income increases derived from agricultural activities, and to a lesser extent, from other productive activities in the territories of origin thanks to the investments made (Carvajal and Johnson, 2016). More evidence seems to exist when linking participation in temporary visa programs with an increase in the schooling of children and youth of migrant families (Budworth et al., 2017).

Undoubtedly, regular temporary migration avoids the risks involved in migrating irregularly, which requires greater investment and indebtedness by assuming an uncertain path subject to multiple abuses, trespassing migration regulations at destination and the impossibility of seeing family that remains in Guatemala for a long time. On many occasions, this situation ends up causing rupture or restructuring the family unit and the loss or deterioration of any of the affective ties prior to migration. On average, irregular migrants remain in the US for 13.6 years before returning to their country of origin (Passel and Cohn, 2016).

From the point of view of the transformation of attitudes and values in the migrants' communities of origin, there are also very varied results because of temporary migration, despite the potential of social remittances to transform the issuing communities. On one hand, despite the research indicating that Mexican migrants employed in temporary agricultural employment programs in Canada acquired new skills, technologies and knowledge related to agricultural production; the new knowledge and technologies acquired were not entirely applicable in the rural context of origin (Budworth et al., 2017). Similar results were obtained in a qualitative study carried out in Guatemala in 2019. In this case, farmers who had participated in temporary employment programs in Canada and the United States stated that they were unable to apply agricultural knowledge acquired in their communities of origin, since the techniques used in Guatemala were fundamentally manual and did not have the necessary machinery, irrigation systems, inputs, and products (ACH, 2019).



In a qualitative study conducted by Hughes (2014) in households where male members participated in temporary employment programs in Canada, it was found that both, during the stay abroad and the subsequent stage of return, the traditional gender roles remained unchanged. Although there were occasional changing signs of thinking about gender patterns and patriarchal dominance, traditional gender relations were generally unchanged. At the same time, while the male partner was in Canada, the responsibilities of women who remained managing the household increased. On the other hand, men continued to exercise full control over how the remittances must be used. Additionally, the community exerted greater pressure or surveillance on the partners of male migrants (Hughes 2014; Robillard et al., 2018). The transformation of gender roles and a greater women empowerment would seem to be more marked when it is women who participate in temporary work programs abroad. However, women generally represent a small percentage among the participants in temporary employment programs (ACH, 2019).

Finally, in relation to the effects of regular temporary migration on migration flows, there are different considerations to consider. On one hand, the increase of development level in low-income territories, such as Guatemala, could lead to a greater desire and possibility of leaving the country. However, recent studies seem to point to the potential of regular temporary migration channels to curb irregular migration flows, as long as the regular channels for hiring migrants in sectors such as agriculture, which are highly dependent on foreign labor in certain countries, are combined with strong policies to control irregular migration (Clemens and Gough, 2018). Controls, not only at the border, but also incentives for hiring through regular channels would be fundamental in this sense; since, as shown by a qualitative study carried out with employees of ranches in the US who occasionally become smugglers of Mexican migrants upon the request of their employers, given the availability of undocumented immigrants and the absence of government control on the farms, the employers' preference was to hire irregular migrants. According to this study, agricultural employers would hire Mexican workers who had entered the US with temporary H-2A visas, when they did not have enough undocumented laborers, or to justify the use of irregular labor under a legality appearance (Izcara-Palacios, 2014).

3.4. Hiring of temporary foreign workers in Canada and USA

Temporary foreign workers have been increasing steadily in Canada and the United States over the past 20 years. In 2018 there were almost 55,000 jobs held by temporary foreign workers in the Canadian agricultural industry, representing 20% of the total for the sector. The main origins of these workers were Mexico (51%), Guatemala (20%) and Jamaica (18%).¹ In the case of Guatemala, there were close to 10,000 people.

Regarding the United States, temporary H-2A visas have increased fivefold in the last 14 years.² Through the H-2A and H-2B guest worker programs, employers can hire foreign workers for temporary jobs. The number of temporary farmworkers employed with H-2A visas was 442,822 people in 2019. The majority were Mexicans, 419,052; while Guatemalans reached 2,681 agricultural workers.³

1 Statistics Canada: COVID-19 Disruptions and Agriculture: Temporary Foreign Workers. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00002-eng.htm>.

2 Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture: H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/#h2a>

3 U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker Admissions (I-94 Only) by Region and Country of Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2019. <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019/table32>

These temporary programs in the territories of origin are not new, but rather, they were raised as more humane versions of the programs that were conducted at the beginning of the 20th century. These programs were promoted by the recommendation made by the World Commission on International Migration in 2005, under the assumption that this type of contracting would meet the economic needs of both, the countries of origin and those of destination (García and Décosse, 2014).

Canadian and United States agricultural and forestry employer organizations and lobbies have identified the difficulties of recruiting temporary foreign workers as one of the greatest risks of their activity (Charlton and Castillo, 2021). The Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council estimated losses of C\$2.9 billion in 2020, because of fewer temporary worker arrivals due to COVID-19 restrictions.⁴

Both supporters and detractors of this type of program can be found in academic and institutional literature. Supporters argue that these programs generate mutually beneficial impacts, for the receiving countries, territories of origin, and for the migrants themselves (triple win). Furthermore, the receiving countries would satisfy their need for labor in certain productive sectors, such as agriculture, without having to address the possible costs, both economic and political, related to the permanent migration of foreign populations. The migrants' countries of origin would benefit from the arrival of remittances and skills and knowledge transfer brought by the migrants, which would reduce the pernicious consequences related to talent drain. Finally, migrants could access employment opportunities that are absent in their communities of origin through legal channels, avoiding the risks and costs of irregular migration and having a legal framework of protection and more favorable working conditions than those irregular migrants employed in the same productive sectors.



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⁴ Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council: <https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/>

Supporters of these forms of international hiring, conclude together with the World Commission on International Migration, that well-designed temporary work programs for migrants in countries like the United States represent an advantageous scenario for all parties involved (Ruhs, 2006). Meanwhile, critics argue that in implementing these programs, it systematically results in situations of social and labor vulnerability for migrants (Castles, 2006; Tazreiter, 2019; García and Décosse, 2014). Costs and/or penalties associated with changing employers, leaving the program, or denouncing and vindicating labor rights would allow employers to impose abusive working conditions on migrants and subject them to excessive forms of control inside and outside the workplace (Zou, 2018).

For its part, the US Congressional Research Service⁵ pointed out in 2020 that employers consider the procedures, required to certify that there are no United States workers available to carry out the jobs they seek to fill with H-2A and H-2B visas, expensive, slow, and ineffective. It should be noted that the control of the wages paid to workers under these temporary employment programs is also regulated to avoid harm to local workers. However, during the workers' stay, a substantial number of problems and abuses have been identified, which tarnish the image of these programs in the host societies (Binford, 2019; Brooks, 2018; Moorefield, 2019; Wallis, 2019; Weiler, 2020; Zou, 2018). These researches focused on both, the Canadian case (usually used as an example of respect and control of workers' rights at destination) and the United States case, by addressing various problems: excessive control of migrants in the workplace; obstacles to their right of association and punishment for those workers who demand respect for their rights; sexism and discrimination against women in hiring processes and gender violence; non-payment and amount of wages; and safety deficiencies in the workplace, among others.

Within this context, the importance of this present study is demonstrated by the previously outlined academic literature. In other words, the academic literature on different forms of mistreatment and abuse of migrant workers in destination countries is much broader than that devoted to studying the impact of temporary labor migration in the territories of origin.



⁵ Congressional Research Service: H-2A and H-2B Temporary Worker Visas: Policy and Related Issues. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/R44849.pdf>



METHODOLOGY

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METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, research was organized into four separate, yet coherent, methods. The process utilized a triangulation of methodologies (qualitative and quantitative) approach. Following Noble and Heale (2019), methodological triangulation involves the use of a variety of research methods to contribute to the explanation of complex human behaviors. In this case, the system under examination was migratory processes. The assumption underlying this proposal is that, by viewing a phenomenon using different lenses or perspectives (including qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as a diversity of information sources), it will make possible to arrive at more complex and integrated descriptions. Thus, unlike qualitative research proposals exclusively oriented towards understanding, and quantitative ones, specifically oriented towards quantification. This study seeks to articulate both perspectives. In terms of the scientific paradigm. The proposed methodology is based on a pragmatic approach, which assumes that the research tools must be selected based on the research objectives and not on the a priori preferences of the research team, and that the knowledge generated has true value when it allows acting on reality to transform it.

The four research methods were:

- 1 Survey to members of selected Guatemalan communities.
- 2 Interviews to key stakeholders knowledgeable about the temporary visa programs in Guatemala and with members of selected Guatemalan communities.
- 3 Interviews to key stakeholders and employers located in Canada and the United States with knowledge or interest in temporary work visa programs.
- 4 Survey to employers and potential employers of migrant workers in the framework of temporary work visa programs located in Canada and the United States.

Each of these four components is discussed in detail below.

4.1. Survey to members of selected Guatemalan communities

This survey is essential to obtain broad information on regular and irregular migration, including destination countries, remittances and the differential impact of regular migration compared to irregular migration. The departments of Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango and San Marcos were selected to implement the questionnaire. The first was selected for its high number of regular temporary migrants, and the rest due to their high rates of irregular migration. As explained below, two communities from the municipality of San Andrés Semetabaj (department of Sololá) were also incorporated during the study implementation.

Initial sampling strategy and community matching

A cluster sampling strategy was used, seeking to compare the impact of regular and irregular migration at community level, two strata were identified:

- **Stratum 1:** communities where there is a high percentage of households, in which at least one member has ever migrated with a temporary visa to Canada or the United States.
- **Stratum 2:** Communities with characteristics like those included in stratum 1 but with a low percentage of participants in temporary regular migration programs to Canada or the United States.

Initially, 24 communities were selected, corresponding to 12 pairings made up of a stratum 1 community and a stratum 2 community. Given the difficulty in effectively accessing the communities, 11 pairs were finally reached. Note that the concept of high and low percentage of temporary work visas is a relative concept and makes sense through a comparison between communities, and that a community with a low percentage of visas in the municipalities with the highest percentage in the country could be a community with high percentage in another region or department.

For selecting communities corresponding to stratum 1, information was obtained from the municipalities and communities of origin of regular migrants from different sources, including records from one of the main recruiters in the country, US employers interviewed in the research framework and personal knowledge of team members based on previous studies. However, since the information available was almost exclusively at municipal level and not at community level, the most mentioned municipalities or those with the largest numbers of registered migrants were previously visited. In this way, in dialogue with municipal authorities and, in some cases, leaders of local organizations, communities were identified as good candidates to be incorporated into stratum 1. Subsequently, other communities were searched in the surroundings that were similar in terms of population, language (since Mayan languages are spoken in many communities), productive profile and distance to the main highways. It was also considered preferable that they be located within the same municipality.

It's worth noting that this matchmaking was not always easy, as a combined set of conditions needed to be met. At the same time, it was necessary to have support from both, the municipalities and the corresponding community authorities, something that is not always easy, since this project did not provide specific benefits for the participating communities (as happens when diagnostic or studies are carried out as baseline to implement projects in the territory). As indicated above, the study yielded data from 22 paired communities (data were also collected from one additional community of stratum 1, but whose complement unexpectedly withdrew support in the last days of fieldwork). It should be noted that in order to build this sample of paired communities, it was necessary to incorporate two communities from the municipality of San Andrés Semetabaj (department of Sololá) to contrast with stratum 1 communities belonging to Patzicía and Tecpán (Chimaltenango).⁶

⁶ The specific communities where the surveys were conducted are not reported in compliance with the requirements of the Ethics Committee that evaluated and approved this study. In particular, it is understood that not including this information constitutes an additional measure to protect the communities that voluntarily participated in the study (since, for example, employers or institutions could make decisions that harm specific communities based on knowing certain results).

Random Survey Sample Size in Paired Communities

To calculate the sample size necessary to compare two proportions, the formula indicated by Pita Fernández (1996) was used:

$$n = \frac{[z_{\alpha}\sqrt{2p(1-p)} + z_{\beta}\sqrt{p_1(1-p_1) + p_2(1-p_2)}]^2}{(p_1 - p_2)^2}$$

In this formula:

- ▶ n is the number of households in each stratum.
- ▶ Z_{β} is the value of the standard normal distribution corresponding to a given statistical power ($1-\beta$) (approximately 1.645 for a power of 95%).
- ▶ $Z_{\alpha/2}$ is the value of the standard normal distribution corresponding to a certain level of significance (α) (approximately 1.96 for a significance of 5% or 95% of confidence).
- ▶ $p=(p^1+p^2)/2$, where p^1 is the proportion in the first sample and p^2 the proportion in the second one.

After applying the formula and adding the resulting sample from the two strata, it was necessary to multiply the result due to the design effect caused by using cluster sampling, and then increase it by the non-response rate. In this sense, the following parameters were established:

- **Expected proportion of the first sample.** As different indicators will be compared, a proportion or prevalence of 50% is considered, the most unfavorable value that causes a larger sample size, but it ensures that the sample is valid to estimate all indicators.
- **Expected difference between proportions.** 15% is the expected difference between the proportions. Small differences between the proportions are also unfavorable, since they generate a larger sample size. Specifically, 15% is considered as a value, as it is the minimum value for the difference found in the intention to migrate abroad between the regular and irregular migration groups, which oscillated around 19% in a study previously carried out in a municipality of Huehuetenango (ACH, 2022).
- **Confidence level.** The standard confidence level is 95%.
- **Power.** A power level of 95% is taken, considered a fairly optimal level, related to a beta type error equal to 5%.
- **Design effect.** A design effect equal to 1.5 is assumed as it is a complex design with random selection of clusters.
- **No Response Required (NRR).** A 5% of non-response required rate is established for possible inconsistent or erroneous answers.

Table 1. Calculation of the random sample size in selected communities.

Power (%)	Sample size				
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sum	Design effect (n*1.5)	Plus non-response rate (n/(1-NRR))
95	280	280	560	840	884

Thus, a minimum sample size of 884 households was obtained from this calculation to be distributed between the two strata. However, the sample was expanded to 1,110 households in order to increase the statistical power. **To define the number of surveys per community, a base of 25 households plus a weighting according to the population of each one of them was established.** For this purpose, the 2002 Population and Housing Census was considered, since the 2018 Census did not have publicly available disaggregated population information at community level at the time of the study, and the National Institute of Statistics of Guatemala did not respond to the information request made.

The following table reports the distribution of the sample per community. Note that in one of the communities the questionnaire could not be applied nor was it possible to select an alternative community for the reasons indicated above. In some cases, it was not possible to complete the target values in specific communities due to logistical reasons. Thus, the total number of paired surveys was 1,042 (521 in each stratum). Additionally, it is worth noting that unpaired surveys are not excluded from all analyses, only from those that require a comparison between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants.

Table 2. Distribution of surveys obtained per community, stratum, and mismatches between matched communities.

Stratum 1		Stratum 2		Mismatch (Stratum 1 - Stratum 2)
Village or community	Quantity	Village or community	Quantity	
1.A	30	1.B	31	1
2.A	56	2.B	58	2
3.A	60	3.B	60	0
4.A	47	4.B	47	0
5.A	62	5.B	56	6
6.A	46	6.B	45	1
7.A	43	7.B	42	1
8.A	43	8.B	42	1
9.A	47	9.B	47	0
10.A	61	10.B	61	0
11.A	39	11.B	35	4
12.A	52	Mismatched	0	52
Total	586		524	68



Complementary sampling strategy of regular temporary migrants

Additionally, the study will also need to compare households with different migratory experiences: regular, irregular, and non-migrant. However, knowing a priori the number of families with members who travel or who traveled to Canada or the United States with temporary work visas could be small, it was recognized the need to expand the sample of households with regular migrant departures from a snowball sampling from clusters (Hernández-Ávila and Escobar, 2019). **The snowball sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling technique used in social sciences to reach hard-to-reach groups and is characterized by recruiting subjects from contacts or references, usually (although not always) those that possess the sought characteristic.**

The main objective of this strategy was to describe the families in which at least one member ever migrated to Canada or the United States with a temporary work visa. Given the type of evidence, it should be noted that the results obtained are not statistically generalizable to other families or outside the communities and municipalities where they were obtained.

To calculate the sample size necessary for the estimation of proportions, the following formula suggested by Pita Fernández (1996) was used:

$$n = z_{\alpha/2}^2 \cdot \frac{p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

In this formula:

- ▶ n is the sample size necessary.
- ▶ $Z_{\alpha/2}$ is the value of the standard normal distribution corresponding to a certain level of significance (α) (approximately 1.96 for a significance of 5% or confidence of 95%).
- ▶ p is the proportion expected.
- ▶ d is precision.

After applying the formula and obtaining the result, it was necessary to multiply it by the design effect due to using cluster sampling, and then increase it by the non-response required rate. In this sense, the following parameters are established:

- **Expected proportion.** Since different indicators will be compared, a proportion or prevalence of 50% is taken, the most unfavorable value that causes a larger sample size but ensures that the sample is valid to estimate all indicators.
- **Confidence level.** The standard confidence level is 95%.
- **Accuracy.** A value of 6.5% is set for accuracy.
- **Design effect.** A design effect equal to 1.5 is assumed as it is a complex design.
- **No Response Required (NRR).** A 3% non-response required rate is established for possible inconsistent or erroneous responses.

Table 3. Snowball sample size calculation in selected communities.

Accuracy (%)	Sample size		
	Sample	Design effect (n*1.5)	Plus non-response rate. (n/(1-NRR))
6,5	227	341	351

Based on this, 351 households where at least one member travels or traveled with a temporary work visa to Canada or the United States were established as the objective of the snowball sampling. However, as responses were also obtained from households with regular migrants as part of the random sampling, this minimum sample size was taken in a flexible manner, considering within this number both the surveys obtained by snowball and those from families of regular migrants randomly obtained.

As explained later in the procedure, the snowball surveys were carried out both in communities where questionnaires were randomly applied, and in communities selected for this purpose due to their high percentage of regular migrants. **In total, the strategy made it possible to reach 448 households from regular migrants.** Going back to the sample calculation, the sample required for an accuracy of 6% required 267 cases. Adding the design effect and the non-response required rate, a value of 422 is obtained. Thus, it is concluded that accuracy of the sample improved with respect to the forecasts, being below 6%.

The number of snowball interviews obtained in each department is presented below.

Table 4. Distribution per department of surveys carried out by snowball sampling technique.

Department	Surveys
Chimaltenango	192
Huehuetenango	32
San Marcos	33
Total	257

Instrument

The information required to meet the objectives was obtained through a survey. It is available as Annex A and is made up of 9 blocks.

- **Block 0:**
Corresponds to data prior to starting the survey such as date, place, and name of the person surveying, as well as informed consent.
- **Block 1:**
Includes general information about the family, such as people who live in the household, who lived but have migrated, language spoken at household and sociodemographic information on all members and migrant members.
- **Block 2:**
Refers to information about the household, improvements made and characteristics of services and available appliances.
- **Block 3:**
Includes general socioeconomic information.
- **Block 4:**
Deals with the migratory history of each of the persons mentioned as household members or household members who have migrated.
- **Block 5:**
Deals with analyzing the remittances that the family receives, including amounts and use given to them.
- **Block 6:**
Analyzes the migratory intention of the person who answers the survey, as well as evaluating different ways of migrating.
- **Block 7:**
Includes two scales related to food security, the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (ELCSA) (FAO, 2012) and the Food Consumption Score (FCS) (Wiesmann et al., 2009).
- **Block 8:**
Corresponds to observable characteristics of the household that are recorded after the conversation.

Additionally, the questionnaire collects the necessary indicators in a cross-section way to calculate the Simple Poverty Scorecard (Poverty Qualification Index) (Schreiner, 2016).

Procedure

To carry out the surveys, a team of seven interviewers and a supervising field manager were trained. The training lasted two days and included a pilot test in a community not foreseen in the sampling. Surveys were carried out between October 24th and December 5th, 2022. The team was transported in two vehicles with their corresponding drivers. The field manager coordinated the visits in advance after requesting authorization from the corresponding municipal and community authorities. However, last-minute changes of opinion by community authorities who revoked previous guarantees and blocked access roads required constant adjustments. The field team always worked under the supervision of the research team leader.

After arriving at the agreed time, a brief presentation was made in most of the communities in front of the community authorities, then surveys were carried out. Interviewers were usually accompanied by one or more members of the Auxiliary Mayor's Office or the COCODE. In some communities it was agreed to cover the wages of those who accompanied them. To collect the random surveys, the interviewers distributed the community by zones. To avoid concentrating responses in specific sectors of the communities, based on the number of random surveys needed and the number of households in a community, a skip number was established. For example, if a community had 200 houses and 50 surveys were necessary, 4 was established as the skip number ($200 / 50 = 4$). This meant that one family should be interviewed and skip 3, and so on. If the entire area was covered, the procedure was repeated starting with the household next to the starting point. In these cases, the people from the community who accompanied the team had the role of guiding the interviewers and building trust, but they did not indicate who would be surveyed.

In the case of snowball surveys, there were two options. First, in communities started in randomly way, and snowball collection was carried out when the random sample objective was reached. Secondly, in communities where only snowball surveys were carried out. However, in both cases the procedure was the same, the families that met the criteria that one or more of their members had had a temporary work visa in Canada or the United States were surveyed. These people were identified both from indications from the companions of the community, as well as recommendations from the interviewees.

The questionnaires were administered only to one family member who was of legal age (18 or older) in case of voluntary acceptance of the content of the informed consent. The survey was carried out through a conversation. The most frequently used language was Spanish, although a percentage was carried out in the Mayan languages known by team members (Kaqchikel, K'iche and Mam). The responses were recorded on a tablet using Kobo and then uploaded to the internet, so they could be reviewed by those responsible for supervision.



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Data analysis

The survey data were analyzed using the SPSS version 25 statistical analysis program. The general results are presented as frequency tables. Additionally, there are different statistical analyses to test hypotheses, mainly the comparison between groups.

The survey data were analyzed using the SPSS version 25 statistical analysis program. The general results are presented as frequency tables. Additionally, there are different statistical analyses to test hypotheses, mainly the comparison between groups.

Additionally, to facilitate the interpretation of results, it is necessary to clarify two key issues. In the first place, based on the data, it was decided to classify all households according to the migratory profile of their members. If none of the households had migrants, the family was considered 'non-migrant'; if one or more had migrated irregularly and none had done it in a regular way, it was categorized as 'irregular'. If at least one had migrated regularly and none irregularly, it was categorized as 'regular'. In the case of households with regular and irregular migrants, it was categorized as mixed.

The second clarification refers to the databases for the analysis. Although a primary database was used for the analysis that considered each survey as a case (equivalent to a household), a second database was also used, which took as cases every one of the people referred to, when the migratory history of both the members of the household and those who migrated is reported. This database that also includes the person who answered the survey, has 7,014 cases, in contrast to the surveys that are 1,373 in total (summing paired, random unpaired and snowball).

4.2. Interviews to key stakeholders and members of selected Guatemalan communities

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and members of selected Guatemalan communities. The sampling was intentional, which implies that it did not seek to be representative of a given population universe. Thus, the results derived from the interviews cannot be considered generalizable in a traditional sense to the entire country or to territories other than those where the study was conducted.

The key stakeholders were selected for holding a key institutional position linked to the research objectives, which allowed them to share relevant information on the themes studied.

Nine interviews were conducted with key stakeholders directly linked to Guatemala: one academic, four recruiters, two government officers (Labor Mobility Program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and Directorate of Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the Canada and United States embassies in Guatemala.

The interviews with local and community stakeholders were mainly carried out in the departments of Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, and San Marcos, in line with the departments selected to run the survey. However, specific interviews were also conducted in the departments of Sololá (Municipality of San Andrés Semetabaj) and Sacatepéquez (Municipality of Santiago Sacatepéquez).

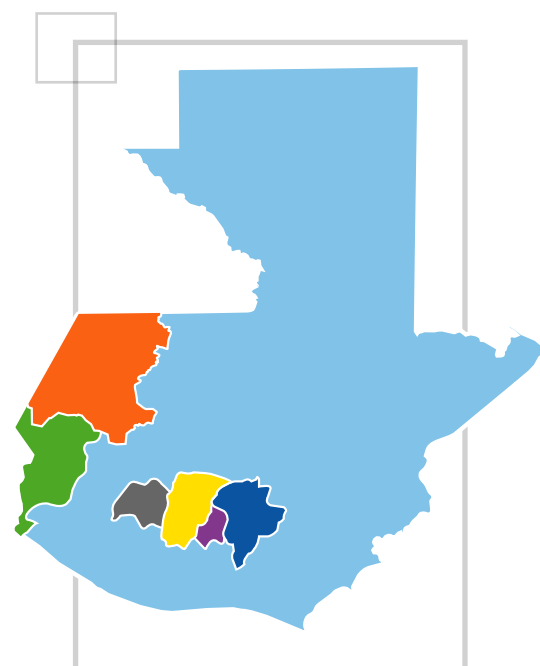
The first was added based on the need to expand the sample required for the survey in communities (as previously explained); while the second one took advantage of the survey pilot test in a community in the municipality. The specific municipalities and communities were selected in parallel with those planned for conducting the surveys, always considering the availability of concrete local support to reach the communities. In any case, it should be noted that, as the communities planned for the surveys were adjusted during the process, there are some differences in the communities visited in the framework of the interviews and surveys. **In total, 11 interviews were conducted with different types of municipal officers**, 11 with community authorities (Auxiliary Mayor's Offices and COCODEs), 6 with authorities or members of local organizations, and 24 with community members. In total there were 51 interviews (since one of them involved both municipal officials and community authorities) and 79 people interviewed. The survey formats are incorporated as Annex B (interviews with key stakeholders) and Annex C (interviews with community members). The tables with the distribution of the interviews carried out and the municipalities visited to carry out the interviews appear below.

Table 5. Distribution of interviews per type of stakeholder and gender.

Type of stakeholder	Quantity of interviews	Quantity of persons	Men	Women
Key stakeholders	9	14	5	9
Municipal officers	11	14	8	6
Community authorities	11	29	26	3
Local organizations	6	9	4	5
Members of communities	24	27	19	8
Totals	60	93	62	31

Table 6. Municipalities where face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Department	Municipality
Chimaltenango ●	Patzicía
	Patzún
	Parramos
	Tecpán
Guatemala ●	Guatemala
Huehuetenango ●	Aguacatán
	La Democracia
	La Libertad
	San Rafael Pézsal
Sacatepéquez ●	Santiago Sacatepéquez
Sololá ●	San Andrés Semetabaj
San Marcos ●	Esquipulas Palo Gordo
	Tacaná



Researchers took notes during the interviews. Although some of them were recorded initially, it was gradually realized that this could limit the answers of the people interviewed, so only some key interviews were recorded in case it was necessary to resort to audio. Notes were also transcribed in a word processor and then subjected to thematic analysis. Due to the characteristics of the proposed research, the themes of analysis arose both from the framework of the research objectives and inductively from the repeated reading of the material. In this process, the software Atlas.ti was used for qualitative analysis.

4.3. Interviews to key stakeholders and employers located in Canada and the United States.

In order to learn about the procedures associated with obtaining temporary work visas and the bottlenecks that hinder the demand for regular temporary migrant workers in Canada and the United States, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and employers located in Canada and USA. 8 key stakeholders (1 from Canada and 7 from the United States) and 17 employers (4 from Canada and 13 from the United States) were totally interviewed. The interviews were 20 men and 5 women. **Key stakeholders included recruiting authorities, public officers, and members of professional associations.** Although an attempt was initially made to balance the samples per country. During the implementation of the study, it became evident that it was easier to access interviewees from the United States.

In all cases, the interviews were conducted remotely (by phone or videoconference). At the same time, the majority were recorded, with prior informed consents. Notes were taken during the interviews. The duration was between 15 and 40 minutes. The interview protocol for key stakeholders was flexible, in order to adjust to the specificities of each interlocutor. It included questions about how temporary visa programs for foreign workers function, the challenges employers encounter in the process, the workers' countries of origin, and the reasons why employers prefer to hire men or women.

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Analysis of interviews

For the analysis, the interview notes were transcribed using a word processor, in order to carry out a thematic analysis. As in the case of the interviews with key stakeholders and members of Guatemalan communities, the analysis themes from which the material was organized arose both from research objectives and inductively from the repeated reading of the material. In this process, the material was organized with the support of Microsoft Excel.

4.4. 4.4. Survey of employers and potential employers of migrant workers within the temporary work visa programs framework of Canada and the United States

In order to quantify the information obtained in the interviews with key stakeholders and employers in Canada and the United States, a simple survey was designed based on the information obtained in the first interviews. In the design process, we also had the support of the Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI - Canada) and the National Cooperative Business Association - CLUSA International (NCBA-CLUSA), which is a federation of cooperatives located in the United States.

The survey sought to obtain information from employers who hire migrants under temporary work visa programs in Canada and the United States, as well as employers who might be interested in doing so. Although both survey formats have minor differences, they generally inquire about the respondent's industry sector, employer sociodemographic profile, contract worker profile, and employee-related preferences (including skills and gender). In the case of employers with experience with temporary work visa programs, it also inquiries about recruitment process, visa application, and specific experience in hiring Guatemalans. The complete questionnaire is available in Annex E.



The questionnaire was designed on the Kobo online platform (<https://www.kobotoolbox.org/>) with response options in English and French.

To send the survey, support was requested from different recruiters, key stakeholders and producer organizations that operate in Canada, the United States and Guatemala. In the particular case of the United States, the questionnaire was sent to the cooperatives that make up NCBA-CLUSA, to a list of 14,462 emails from producers and agricultural companies that hired workers using H2A and H2B visas between January 2021 and June 2022 (available on the website of the United States Department of Labor), and personal and institutional contacts of Dr. Arnold Brodbeck, a researcher on the team who is linked to different stakeholders and institutions interested in this theme, in that country. In total, 166 responses were obtained, 10 from Canada and 156 from the United States. The vast majority (94.6%) corresponded to employers that had already hired workers through temporary visa programs, while the rest were interested in doing so, but they had never done it. Regarding the types of visas used in the United States, 60.2% with H-2A visas and 42.6% with H-2B (including some cases of both types) stand out. In terms of gender, responses with men predominate (61.4%).

Like the survey of households of Guatemalan communities, the data from the employer survey were analyzed by using the statistical analysis program SPSS version 25. However, due to the descriptive emphasis of this research component, in this case frequency analyses were only performed, without using further statistics test of hypotheses.



4.5. Ethical guidelines

This research, as well as the corresponding interview, survey and informed consent protocols were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universidad San Pablo de Guatemala. Additionally, the interview protocols for Canadian and United States employers and for Guatemalan stakeholders were approved by the Auburn University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). Considering the specificities of the research implemented, the most important aspects considered by the team during the study were the following: **informed consent, competent care for the well-being of subjects, and confidentiality.**

Informed consent

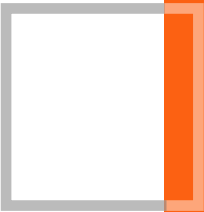
During the research, informed consents were used before agreeing on taking interviews or conducting surveys. Following point 1.7.4. of the Code of Ethics of the College of Psychologists of Guatemala (2011)⁷, the informed consent included information on the purpose of the activity (interview or survey) and the study (the research as a whole), mutual responsibilities, protection of the confidentiality and limitations, likely benefits and risks, and option to refuse or withdraw at any time without prejudice. At the same time, information about the expected duration of the interview was included and a contact telephone number or email to make complaints or queries was offered.

In the case of interviews and surveys with members of selected Guatemalan communities, the informed consent was verbal, and a copy of the consent signed was provided by the person responsible for conducting the interview or survey. Verbal consent was selected, since a written one did not increase the protection of participants, but it might attempt against the cultural practices of the communities (signing a document with a formal structure can be experienced more as violence than as a tool oriented to rights protection). Additionally, in the case of interviews with key stakeholders (in Guatemala, the United States and Canada) and employers (Canada and the United States), consent was also verbal since a horizontal power relationship was recognized in the link. When requested or interested, participants were interested, the consent form was shared (by email or by hand). Finally, in the case of the surveys to employers in Canada and the United States, the informed consent was incorporated as a question within the survey.

Risk of subjective discomfort as result of interviews

While analyzing the nature of the study, the data collection strategies used and the characteristics of the participants, the team considered that there were no significant risks related to participation in the study in any of the cases.

⁷ It was decided to frame the proposal within the Code of Ethics of the College of Psychologists of Guatemala, since psychology has a solid tradition in developing ethical guidelines for research work that is appropriate for social research since it deals with local parameters adjusted to the Guatemalan reality.



However, it was also realized that in the case of interviews and surveys with members of the selected communities, feelings of sadness and discomfort could be awakened when remembering difficult, even traumatic experiences related to migration. While it is arguable that the emergence of these feelings can be considered emotionally negative, it is important to recognize the responsibility of researchers to protect and support people in such circumstances, by having been the cause of recollecting such experiences.

Faced with this, the team that carried out the interviews and surveys in Guatemala previously identified reference services to offer psychological or telephone support in the different areas, as well as formal channels for placing complaints if appropriate. Additionally, the informed consent protocol for interviews and surveys of community members warned about this risk and informed about the availability of contacts to access professional support if necessary. Fortunately, this support was not considered necessary by any of the interviewers or surveyors, nor requested by the people surveyed and interviewees.

Protection of confidentiality

Only in the case of interviews with qualified informants and some employers, the full names and roles of the people interviewed were recorded for a correct interpretation of the information. For the remaining interviews and surveys, full names and locations were not recorded in order to avoid identification of individual interviewees. In no case was the primary information obtained (interviews and databases) shared or will be shared outside the team researchers, nor will research results be presented or shared by identifying the participating people. However, in cases in which the qualified informants explicitly authorized it, their names or references were included in the reports when they were important for the contextualization of the statements.

In relation to the people who accompanied the team at the time of the surveys, they were informed of the data confidentiality they could hear from their neighbors in the survey's framework, and it was highlighted the importance of not sharing it. At the same time, they were given a confidentiality agreement, signed by the members of the team (it was decided not to request the signature of the companions, since it was estimated that this did not imply increasing the protection of the people surveyed).

Finally, all audio recordings will be deleted no later than one year after the study has ended. It should be noted that the reports, publications, and results presentations derived from this study will not indicate the names of the participants, unless expressly authorized by the people involved. At the same time, the name of the communities visited will be protected in all reports or publications aimed at dissemination, including the main body of this report.

4.6. Analysis of difficulties in obtaining certain samples

It is important to explain and analyze the difficulties encountered in obtaining different samples during this study, since it is assumed that these are challenges linked to a large extent to the sensitivity and fears that the content of the project arouses. Surveys in Guatemalan communities and surveys with employers in Canada and the United States are addressed independently.

In order to coordinate the surveys in selected Guatemalan communities, endorsement was first requested from the corresponding municipalities, and then from the COCODEs or Auxiliary Mayor's Offices. The first difficulty was the lack of interest by these stakeholders (associated with the lack of individual or community benefits), since in line with the informed consent, it was always made explicit that the research team brought neither visas nor community development projects, or other types of benefits. To deal with this situation, and when it was convenient, it was offered to pay equivalent wages to the members of the communities that provided support during the community tours, for the lost working-hours.

However, the team did run into unforeseen difficulties. On one hand, reluctance to receive researchers was observed in several communities, based on previous experiences of temporary work visa frauds in different areas, for fear that the team would carry out some type of maneuver or deception, something that was not simply resolved by being transparent and explaining the meaning of the work to be done. And on the other hand, there were also concerns about the possibility that the presence of the team in the communities would lead to the loss of visas as consequence of the information obtained. It should be noted that this was not unreasonable, since residents were aware that the payments that are usually requested as a condition to obtain visas are illegal and can lead them to be rejected (both individual visas and those of the entire community). In several specific cases, and after building trust, interviewees reported that the community knew that they had to hide and deny the existence of these payments, in order to avoid risking their visas and those of their community. Thus, the lack of interest in participating in the surveys, the lack of knowledge and mistrust regarding the surveyors' team and the fear of losing the visas currently available, led the authorities to deny the access to the communities on numerous occasions, by revoking the day of the surveys, or establish new requirements for access, such as holding a prior general meeting or even paying a contribution to the community.

The other difficulty arose with surveys of employers. Specifically, only 1 of the 11 contacted companies/ organizations that oversee recruiting foreign labor decided to forward the survey to their employers (in most cases, the team never received a response to emails or phone calls, or the answer was that they did not wish to be involved). Regarding the organizations linked to producers, only NCBA-CLUSA, a partner entity for implementing the project, and a Canadian NGO with contact with three agricultural cooperatives actively responded to the support request, in addition to institutional contacts of Dr. Brodbeck, one of the researchers responsible for the study, to whom the questionnaire was sent. Fortunately, the team had a list of almost 15,000 employers who applied for H-2A and H2B visas, which allowed them to reach a sufficient number of surveys.



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It is recognized that the difficulty in obtaining responses to the questionnaire results, at least in part, from the lack of benefits perceived by recruiters and by the interviewees themselves, even though the team tried to highlight the interest in accessing the study results and its usefulness to address problems related to the recruitment process that might be of interest. However, the sensitivity of the survey theme itself, associated with discussions highlighting the vulnerability of foreign workers and the existence of abuses by employers (Castles, 2006; Tazreiter, 2019; García and Décosse, 2014; Zou, 2018) could have influenced the low rate of response. In this regard, a key favorable player in issuing temporary visas stated that groups that defend workers' rights tend to unnecessarily make "a lot of noise." Within this context, it is not surprising that employers become defensive and reluctant to provide information and share their opinions freely, fearing that the answers could be used against them.

Beyond the fact that it is always possible to generate better or worse strategies to face problems and challenges, such as those mentioned, it has been decided to make them explicit in this section, since they constitute learning experiences and can even be considered as results of this study. In this line, it must be recognized that these challenges should not be thought as alien to the research, but as constitutive elements of the theme addressed.



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RESULTS

RESULTS

5.1. Why do the members of the selected Guatemalan communities migrate?

Based on the analysis of the interviews, a clear predominance, almost absolute, of economic factors is observed to explain migration, be it one's own, family members or neighbors of the communities themselves. Regarding the push factors, there are cases in which it is explained that migration occurs to face situations of need, even for "food security", as an interviewee said. However, the general perception is that it is possible to survive in Guatemala when having a job, in the sense of meeting basic food needs and having a place to live, but not to progress or get ahead, which could be conceptualized as entering a process of upward social mobility. Thus, in this way, the interviewees argue that the income they can obtain is low and that there are no formal jobs with decent wages.

In short, there is a fairly general consensus that it is impossible to progress or climb socially (for example, by improving home, buying agricultural land or educating children) through own efforts if people remain in the country.

In parallel, specific cases were also observed in which it was argued that migration was also driven by the loss of livelihoods, as there were many brothers with whom to share the land or debts that could lead to losing assets. At the same time, it was also mentioned, although very sporadically, that the deep reasons for migration lie in the lack of government support, bad public policies, and corruption, which prevent the country from inserting itself on sustainable development.

Meanwhile, attractor factors were also mentioned in the interviews, that is, those that promote migration by attracting from the destination. In this case, an absolute predominance of economic motivations is also observed. In particular, the expectation of obtaining much higher income abroad is described, which will become the means to have a better future, both for the person who migrates and their family. Additionally, it was also identified as an attractive factor to see the economic progress of the families of those who migrated, which is expressed in construction, home improvement or purchase of land for agriculture.

Finally, a single detracting factor was also mentioned that is associated with the risks incurred during the journey between Guatemala and the United States. However, this comment was heard very sporadically. Although it is common for the interviewees to refer to the risks of the trip, it is unusual for them to do so to explain their reluctance to migrate.

At this point, it is also important to analyze the quantitative data obtained. From the surveys carried out randomly, 537 people who migrated out of the country at least once were identified. In 536 of these cases, information on the reasons for migration was obtained from a multiple-choice question (with no limit on the number of responses).

Table 7. Reasons for migration of people who have migrated (random surveys).

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Search for better living conditions	482	89.7%
Job search	190	36%
Bad family situation	125	23.6%
Better access to basic services (education, health...)	122	22.8%
Job offers at destination	22	4.4%
Family reunification	5	0.8%
Persecution	1	0.2%
Violence / insecurity in Guatemala	1	0.2%
Natural disasters / deterioration of livelihoods	0	0%
Total	-	100%

The quantitative results are fully consistent with the qualitative evidence. In general, there is a combination of push factors at origin (Guatemala) and attracting factors at destination (Canada and the United States). In this way, there is a consensus that upward social mobility is not possible through work in the country; and that migration (whether regular or irregular) is the only option for progress within one's own control. Within this context, seeing the impact of remittances from migrants in their own communities seems to function as a permanent reminder of what is possible... but not there, but elsewhere.

Additionally, the reference to classic migration factors such as family reunification, persecution, insecurity, or violence was scarce or null. At the same time, very few references to factors of an institutional nature or linked to public management were observed in the interviews, such as corruption or bad governments. In this way, an interpretation of the situation is configured that invites an individual solution of the problems faced (expressed in migration) in contrast to what could be collective processes of social organization that are oriented to modify the current social situation.

The results obtained are consistent with previous studies. The explanatory factors most frequently used to explain migration in the Central American Northern Triangle countries in general, and particularly Guatemala, are poverty and socioeconomic conditions (Abuelafia et al., 2019; IOM, 2019). This is reasonable in a context characterized by high levels of poverty (Sánchez, 2016). As an example, a survey carried out by the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINEX) can be mentioned, in which the lack of employment was identified as the main reason for migration, followed by the search for better salaries (FLACSO, 2020).

The MINEX survey data revealed that 91.1% of Guatemalan migrants set out on the road due to economic reasons. Finally, a study carried out by Save the Children (2019) on the factors that motivate migration in Guatemala also observed that the receipt of remittances has a strong symbolic effect, especially on youth, which leads thinking that the 'American dream' constitutes the only way of personal fulfillment.

At the same time, these results contradict studies that argue that violence and crime also contribute to increase migration of Guatemalans to the United States (Cutrona et al., in press; Lopez, 2019). Possibly, these differences can be explained by the rural nature of the populations where the surveys were carried out, characterized by lower levels of violence.

5.2. Differences between temporary regular migration and irregular migration: perception of the participants

Irregular migration is a common phenomenon in Guatemala, with an estimated 1.3 million of Guatemalans currently living in the United States, which represents a 44% increase since 2013 (Selee et al., 2022).

This section discusses the perceptions of workers and families about the differences, benefits and challenges of regular migration and irregular migration.

Irregular migration is expensive. Both immigration options, with visa and undocumented, have associated costs. Migration with visa to Canada can cost between Q5,000 and Q50,000, and visa to the United States between free and Q50,000, always depending on the expenses considered. The variations are the result of a combination of visa processing fees, costs of travel within the country, purchase of clothing and other travel essentials, and illegal charges to obtain visas. The Canadian visa requires workers to cover application costs and any related travel expenses within the country. In the case of the United States visa, employers must reimburse workers for all related expenses, making these visas free for workers. However, there appears to be frequent fees associated with facilitating the application process in both cases, which may include fees to obtain a visa assignment. These fees range from questionable to illegal charges, but they still occur frequently. The different payments and costs are analyzed in detail later, but it is noted that the illegal charges are usually requested by the migrants themselves, who require money from neighbors or even relatives to recommend them to their employers for future visas, or by informal intermediaries who have direct contact with certain employers, but not through the formal recruiters that work in the country.

In contrast, according to the interviews carried out in Guatemala, irregular migration by means of coyotes⁸ has costs ranging from Q80,000 to Q160,000, depending on the sources and the year in which the service was paid. Illegal migration networks are highly sophisticated businesses that provide participants with numerous options that raise or lower the cost.

⁸ In general, those who help migrants to cross the border of a country irregularly or illegally by paying a fee are called 'coyotes' in Central America and Mexico.

Migrants can pay for a more comfortable and relatively safe trip, which includes private vehicles and airfare to the United States border or select cheaper options. Recognizing the possibilities of failed border crossings, some coyotes include up to three border crossing attempts in the prices. Some interviewees also highlighted that, if it is not finally possible to cross, coyotes do not demand payment of outstanding amounts.

Regardless of the selected option, interviewees highlighted difficulties in raising the necessary capital. Many borrow money from their family and mortgage houses or agricultural land to raise the funds needed for irregular migration. Sometimes, the land is mortgaged with informal intermediaries, even with coyotes, which implies significant financial risks. An interviewee from the department of Sololá who was deported from the United States a few years ago, highlighted that coyotes can charge up to 10% monthly interest. It should be noted that migration with a visa, especially when paying illegal charges, requires similar strategies to obtain the necessary capital. However, in most cases, the interviewees consider the legal route to be economically more affordable and with much less risk, both in a financial sense and for reasons of personal security, as discussed below.

Security is a major problem when it comes to irregular migration. Undocumented migration requires hiring coyotes and participating in a business with close ties to criminal groups associated with people and drug trafficking. Participants in the study shared fears related to kidnapping and risks associated with traveling through Mexico and crossing the US border. They understand that they are placing their lives, or the lives of their loved ones, in the hands of people motivated only by money, who operate illegally and without any supervision. As result, many had first-hand experiences with people who were kidnapped or simply disappeared along the way. One interviewee commented that she had a neighbor who tried to cross through Mexico to the United States last year, but no one heard from him, so she believed that he probably died in the desert. At the same time, a woman recounted that several months have spent without hearing from a young woman from her community who migrated. The last news they had received was a call to her family informing that she was kidnapped.



In addition to the risk associated with irregular migration, many described the physical difficulties and suffering of the journey. For example, traveling through Mexico in the back of trucks with dozens of other travelers, with little to no food and water.

An interviewee commented that coyotes do not like to give food or water because then people would have to use the bathroom. In this way, they have them crammed into the back of a truck with almost no air, so people have to go to the bathroom wherever they are. Other interviewees highlighted the long walk through the desert, hiding from the border patrol, with little water and food. The general perception is that migrating without documentation is an uncomfortable and high-risk undertaking with uncertain results.

The uncertainty of the journey extends even beyond the border crossing. While extensive family and community networks help migrants settle, there is still a high degree of uncertainty. Both migrants and their families do not know what jobs they will get or what their living conditions will be. In some cases, coyotes or some sponsor in the United States who lends the money for the trip offer them employment upon arrival, but with heavy deductions to recover the loan. In these cases, certain forms of servitude can even be observed.

In contrast, numerous interviewees highlight that visas offer security to people. When they travel, they know where they are going to work, what they are going to do, and even how much they will be paid for their work. The wife of a worker who traveled to Canada with a visa commented that, unlike what happens when migrating without papers, her husband gets on a plane, and she knows when he arrives, where he will be and even what work he will do. At the same time, families also know when their loved ones will return, which is one of the greatest benefits of visa programs, as will be explained later.

Irregular migration could be permanent. As result of the high capital investment and difficulties in making the journey, most irregular migrants stay at their destination for a long period of time. They rarely stay less than 5 years, while most families referred to stays of 10 years or more. According to Passel and Cohn (2016), irregular migrants remain in the United States for 13.6 years before returning to their countries of origin. The interviewees report that a migrant stays until he/she achieves a set of economic objectives that he/she proposes. These may include buying land, building a house, setting up a business, and educating children, among others. However, these goals take time, and many interviewees highlighted the negative impacts this has on families.



Extended absences can often lead to situations in which parents who have traveled to the United States irregularly stop sending money. Thus, there are cases in which contact with families is gradually lost as deeper roots are established in the places of destination. For family members who remain in Guatemala, this is a recognized concern and risk associated with irregular migration. Indeed, wives understand that there is a risk that their partners will not return and establish a new life. The impacts on children are also a big concern. Several community leaders pointed out that there are challenges with children suffering from depression and often dropping out of school. In many cases, parents are away so long that their children don't really know them as parents. The wife of an irregular migrant commented that her son called uncle to his father, because he possibly did not understand who he really was. The academic literature has also identified and described the complex processes of reorganization and even rupture that transnational families face as a consequence of prolonged migration, including studies of Salvadoran migrants to the United States (Molina, 2018) and Latin American migrants to Europe. (Sorensen, 2008; Parella, 2007).

In contrast, **temporary visa programs offer a way for families to stay in touch. Both parties know when the person who migrated will return.** Although the stay is long, even two years in the case of Canadian visas, there is always a defined date for the return. This situation seems to contribute to family unity and to ensure a regular flow of remittances. The lives of the members of the family do not take place in two countries at the same time, only in one, Guatemala. Within this context, there is a clear perception that trips to Canada and the United States are to earn as much money as possible, which leads to living spending as little as possible.

Based on the evidence from the interviews conducted, earnings associated with irregular migration appear to be higher than those earned by temporary work visa holders. Many irregular migrants find jobs in industries such as construction or hospitality, where earnings are substantially higher than in agriculture. At the same time, irregular migrants have the freedom to seek the highest paying jobs and can take more than one job or change jobs if the income, hours available, or employer are not satisfactory.

On the other hand, workers who hold visas typically work in low-income farm jobs and don't have the opportunity to seek higher wages or other positions. The contracts established by the employers consider the prevailing wages dictated by the Government and workers are committed to a single employer. In any case, it is also necessary to highlight that those who travel with a visa leave Guatemala with the certainty of having a job and knowing the salary they will earn per hour. As per a worker explained,



“leaving with a visa allows to leave one day and spend the same night working and earning money... by the end of the week you will be sending remittances home.”

While irregular migrants may earn more, visa workers generally send similar or even larger amounts of money and can start sending it sooner. This is because they can start working immediately, they took out smaller loans, and their cost of living abroad is generally lower. Interviews suggest that undocumented migrants must work for two to three years before regularly sending remittances to families. This extended waiting period is necessary to cover living expenses and pay off the debt owed to the coyotes or moneylenders. In parallel, although obtaining the visa also implies costs, the interviewees highlighted that these can almost be paid with two or three months of work.

Additionally, most regular migrants have free or employer-subsidized housing and are only responsible for living-related expenses. For example, one Canadian employer noted that workers were provided with a house with electricity, water, internet, TV, furniture, and laundry for just \$30 per week. In the case of United States H-2A visas, housing is even fully covered by employers.

For their part, **irregular migrants obtain an advantage in income, mainly due to their prolonged stay in the United States. As noted, they stay for years, while workers with visas have contractual periods ranging from 3 months to 2 years.** Shorter visa periods, especially when combined with high visa costs, result in lower earnings and greater worker discontent. This seems to contribute to migrants abandoning visas and staying irregularly.

However, some workers who obtained visas are tempted by higher-paying undocumented jobs. With the costs and risks of irregular migration gone, after the end of contracts (or even before it happens), non-returning becomes a tempting proposition for some, especially workers with shorter visa contracts. As result, employers who brought in workers on visas run the risk that industries with higher-paying jobs will attract their workers. As a United States employer explained, sometimes people stand outside supermarkets and offer \$25 an hour and as many hours as people want to work, which can be really tempting for many.

The information from the interviews is complemented and reinforced by the analysis of the surveys. Below are two tables that investigate the impact of regular and irregular migration on the well-being of the family, on their income and on family relationships.

Table 8. Assessment of the impact of migration in different areas, differentiating families of regular and irregular migrants

Impact assessment levels	Well-being		Family Income		Family Relationships	
	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular
Very positive	4.8%	1%	11.4%	3.4%	3.5%	0.5%
Positive	68.8%	53.4%	64.4%	56.8%	31.9%	16.4%
Neither negative nor positive	10.9%	14.1%	20.7%	28.6%	20.2%	25.6%
Negative	13.1%	25.7%	3.5%	6.8%	32.2%	40.6%
Very negative	2.4%	5.8%	0%	4.4%	12.2%	16.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 9. Statistical comparison of the perceived impact of migration, differentiating families of regular and irregular migrants

Areas of impact	Regular migrants' mean rank ⁹	Irregular migrants' mean rank	Are the differences significant?
Well-being	314	259	U = 29,918, p < .001 ^{**10}
Family income	314	251	U = 30,444, p < .001 ^{**}
Family relationships	312	255	U = 31,287, p < .001 ^{**}

NOTE: higher mean range indicates perception that the impact was positive to a greater degree

The quantitative results are consistent with the qualitative evidence. In general, regular and irregular migration generate benefits both for level of well-being and family income, which is understood when considering that migration arises as a strategy to improve living conditions. However, in both cases, a favorable differential is observed in the case of regular migration. In a certain sense, this is unexpected, since it contrasts with the perception of many interviewees that irregular migration allows them to obtain higher income per month (because they are better paid jobs and without limits on hours) and long-term jobs (for a longer stay abroad). In any case, it is consistent with different arguments presented previously that indicate that, if the costs of irregular migration and maintenance are considered, regular migration allows both sending remittances more quickly and allocating a higher percentage of income to remittances.

In parallel, the impact indicated on family relationships is also in line with those heard in the interviews. In the case of regular migrants, a neutral effect is observed on average, even though 44.4% emphasize that in their case it was negative. In the case of irregular migrants, this percentage increases to 57.5%, which is explained by the prolonged stay outside the country and the loss of family relationships. However, what is most striking here, is the percentage of negative impact on the families of temporary workers with visas is really high. Possibly, this difficulty was not highlighted in the interviews because it is not as acute as in the case of irregular migration. However, having identified the problem, it is advisable to analyze it further in the future.

The following tables analyze opinions on payment fairness and migrant treatment at work.

9 To compare quantitative variables between two groups, such as age, the average is very useful. For example, it could be thought that regular migrants are older (or younger) on average than irregular migrants. This could easily be seen by calculating the average age of each group. However, this is not correct for ordinal variables (for example, the levels of migration impact on well-being, income, and family relationships), since an average cannot be calculated in these cases. On the other hand, the average range can be calculated, which is a number that indicates whether a group (for example, regular or irregular migrants) is higher or lower than another or others in an ordering (expressed in an ordinal variable). For example, in this case it can be seen that regular migration had a more positive impact on welfare than irregular migration, since the mean range of regular migrants (which is 314) is greater than the mean range of irregular migrants (which is 259). In other words, regular migrants responded more frequently with positive impact levels than irregular migrants.

10 In this work the symbols * and ** indicate that a test is statistically significant. Following standard conventions, an asterisk (*) indicates that p < .05 and two asterisks (**) that p < .01.

Table 10. Perception of payment fairness received according to type of migrant.

Payment received	Regular Migrants		Irregular Migrants		Are the differences significant?
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Very unfair	4	1%	4	1.8%	U = 38,720, p = .002** Mean rank Regular: 327 Irregular: 286
Somewhat unfair	36	8.9%	26	11.8%	
Neither fair nor unfair	52	12.9%	38	17.3%	
Somewhat fair	252	62.4%	136	61.8%	
Very fair	60	14.9%	16	7.3%	
Total	404	100%	202	100%	

NOTE: higher average range indicates fairer pay perception

Table 11. Perception of the treatment received according to type of migrant.

Way of being treated	Regular Migrants		Irregular Migrants		Are the differences significant?
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Very poor	9	1.4%	1	0.4%	U = 42,523, p = .013* Mean rank Regular: 332 Irregular: 303
Poor	19	4.5%	22	9.9%	
Neither good nor poor	59	14%	35	15.7%	
Good	312	74.3%	161	72.2%	
Very good	24	5.7%	4	1.8%	
Total	420	100%	223	100%	

NOTE: higher average range indicates better treatment perception.

In general, the results show that the fairness perception of the payment received and the way in which the migrant is or was treated at work are slightly better for regular migrants. Beyond this difference, data shows that overall pay is considered reasonably fair. On the other hand, although the perception of having been treated badly or very badly is lower in the case of regular migrants, a worrying 5.9% is still observed.

5.3. Operation of temporary work visas

It is important to make explicit and analyze the difficulties encountered in obtaining different samples during this study, since it is assumed that these are challenges linked, to a large extent, to the sensitivity and fears aroused by the content of the project. The surveys in Guatemalan communities and the surveys for employers in Canada and the U.S. are addressed separately.

In order to coordinate the surveys in selected Guatemalan communities, endorsement was requested first from the corresponding municipalities and then from the COCODEs or Auxiliary Mayors' Offices. The first difficulty here was the lack of interest on the part of these actors (associated with the lack of individual or community benefits), since in line with the informed consent it was always made explicit that the team did not bring visas, community development projects or any other type of appropriable benefits. To address this situation, and when it was convenient, we offered to pay equivalent wages for lost work time to community members who provided support during the community tours.

5.3.1. Types of visas and their characteristics

American visas

The United States has two guest worker visa programs, the H-2A agricultural program and the H-2B non-agricultural program. Current United States foreign worker programs have their roots in the 'Bracero' programs that grew out of a bilateral agreement between the United States and Mexico to provide low-wage workers (Bauer, 2007; McDaniel and Casanova, 2003; Sarathy and Casanova, 2008). The 'Braceros' program was first established in 1917, and then again, during World War II (Sarathy and Casanova, 2008). Although the program was initially small, it grew to 450,000 visas by the year 1960 (Massey et al., 2002). When the program ended in 1964, approximately 4.5 million jobs had been filled by Mexican citizens (Bauer, 2007).

After dismantling the 'Braceros' program, foreign labor could still be hired under section H-2 of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1943 (Bauer, 2007). The H-2 program provided temporary visas mostly for workers from Caribbean countries, but it was reformed in 1986 with the Immigration Reform and Control Act in response to situations of labor exploitation (Bauer, 2007; Sarathy and Cassanova, 2008).

The resulting H-2 Guest Worker program has two separate visas, the H-2A program that allows farmers to hire temporary foreign agricultural workers, and the H-2B program for non-agricultural jobs. The reformed H-2 programs served as an alternative source of labor to hiring undocumented workers, which were one of the dominant sources of labor in agriculture (Bauer, 2007). Employers apply for visas and recruit workers to assign approved visas.

Both visa programs have a similar application process that begins with employers applying for a labor certification from the Department of Labor (Figure 1). This certification demonstrates that: (1) the jobs are temporary or seasonal, (2) there is not enough local labor, and (3) the employment will not adversely affect the wages or working conditions of similarly employed local workers. In both application processes, employers must advertise positions and hire local applicants, if they apply. Foreign workers under the H-2 program may only work for their hiring employer and for the contract term.

Figure 1. Summary of the application process for H-2A and H-2B visas



Source:
Modified from McKinzie and Bampasidou (2020) <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/lblack/articles/page1593638904306>

Applications for both visas take up to 120 days, sometimes longer for H-2B visas, and involve approval by three Government agencies. The process requires:

- ① Obtaining a state job order for recruitment of U.S. citizens
- ② Applying for a temporary labor certification from the Department of Labor (following the above requirements)
- ③ Obtain approval of a Non-Migrant Worker petition from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service
- ④ Processing of visas for selected workers at the corresponding consulate. The H-2B visa has an additional step that is to secure a prevailing wage determination, before beginning this process.



H-2A Program

The H-2A Program (H-2A Agricultural Guest Worker Program) is **designed for United States farmers seeking to address the shortage of workers with foreign labor**. Positions must be seasonal or temporary, and they do not generally exceed one year. However, extensions of up to three years are allowed. The H-2A program has grown from 75,000 workers in 2010 to 317,000 certified visas in 2022, and represents 10 percent of farm employment (Castillo et al., 2022). Only 1% of these visas (2,164) are originated in Guatemala.

Employers are responsible for providing the following benefits to H-2A workers:

- **Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR).** Corresponds to the payment of the minimum wage that must be paid to agricultural workers, as established by the Department of Labor. Wages vary by State and range from \$12 to nearly \$18 per hour. Employers can also pay using production incentives, but they must be equal to the AEWR.
- **Written Disclosure:** Workers must have a written contract describing the job at the time of being hired.
- **Three-quarter guarantee:** Employers must guarantee 75% of workdays in the contract period.
- **Housing:** Employers must provide housing at no cost and pay for three meals per day or provide housing with full kitchens.
- **Transportation to the Job Site:** All trips to the job site are provided at no cost.
- **Inbound and Outbound Travel:** Employers will reimburse workers for all visa-related expenses within one week of arrival and all reasonable travel and subsistence expenses, once 50% of the contract has been fulfilled. Return travel and subsistence expenses will be provided or reimbursed at the end of the contract.

b**H-2B Program**

The H-2B Non-Agriculture Guest Worker Program is for temporary non-agricultural jobs, including hospitality (i.e., hotels, ski resorts, amusement parks, etc.), seafood processing, landscaping, restaurants, construction and forestry (Seminara, 2010). The H-2B program has a stricter and more limited definition of temporary work, even if the underlying job is not. **Temporary jobs are defined as seasonal jobs, related to times of peak demand or ones that are intermittent and that the local population is unwilling or unable to fill** (Seminara, 2010). H-2B visas are generally approved for 10 months or less; however, they can be extended for up to three years. The challenge for a longer visa is to justify that it is temporary work or related to times of high demand for work.

The program is limited to 66,000 visas per year with periodic expansions by the Congress that double or triple the number of available visas. This results in an uncertain and highly competitive process between employers to obtain the available visas. 95,192 visas were issued in 2021, and the limit was temporarily increased by an additional 64,000 visas in 2022 due to employer demand. Guatemalan workers accounted for approximately 3% of these visas in 2020 (Bier, 2021).

Over the past decade, employers have been required to provide an increasing number of benefits to workers, in line with the H-2A program. Employers must provide the following benefits:

- **Prevailing Wage:** Employers guarantee 35 hours per week paying the occupational prevailing wage set by the National Prevailing Wage Center. Prevailing wages vary by State and occupation. Employers can also pay by using production incentives, but they must equal or exceed the prevailing wage.
- **Written Disclosure:** Workers must have a written contract describing the job at the time of being hired.
- **Three-quarter guarantee:** Employers must guarantee 75% of workdays in the contract period.
- **Transportation to the Job Site:** All trips to the job site are provided at no cost.
- **Inbound and Outbound Travel:** Employers will reimburse workers for all visa-related expenses within one week of arrival and all reasonable travel and subsistence expenses, once 50% of the contract has been fulfilled. Return travel and subsistence expenses will be provided or reimbursed at the end of the contract.
- **Housing:** A significant difference from the H-2A program is that most H-2B employers do not need to cover housing expenses. The exception is positions when workers move to a new workplace each week. In those cases, employers are responsible for housing costs.

Canadian visas

Canada has two main visa programs, the long-term Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) which is made up of three separate programs. SAWP, like its United States homologous, began as a bilateral agreement, originally with Jamaica in 1966, later expanded to other Caribbean countries and Mexico. SAWP allows employers to hire workers for a maximum of 8 months to work in agriculture. This program depends on the Governments of each country to recruit, select, and process workers. To participate in SAWP, employers must be part of an approved agricultural commodity sector.

In the early 2000s, Canada implemented the TFWP with three separate streams of farm work as a pilot project. These separate programs include the Agricultural Labor Stream, the Stream for Low-wage Positions, and the Stream for High-wage Positions. These programs were designed to provide a more flexible source of labor that included employers outside of the agricultural industry and allowed hiring workers from any country. Unlike SAWP, each employer is responsible for hiring their own workers.

The TFWP also allows for longer visa periods of up to two years, which are popular with employers with year-round labor needs, such as greenhouses and livestock farms. Additionally, these programs do not require working with a government recruiter in the countries of origin, as required by SAWP. In 2021, the TFWP recruited 82,150 workers, of whom more than 13,000 were from Guatemala (Statistical Research Department, 2022).

Applications for any of the TFWPs begin with a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) from the Government. This document, requested by the employers, provides proof that they were unsuccessful in recruiting Canadians. Like the equivalent United States program, positions must first be advertised locally. However, for some of the TFWP visas, this requirement may be waived on an exceptional basis. Once employers receive a positive LMIA report, they send a signed contract to the selected temporary foreign worker (or the appropriate recruiter) to apply for the work permit. If the employer is in Quebec, it also needs approval from the provincial Government. There are subtle differences between the different TFWP programs. The following describes each of them.

a Ag-Stream

To qualify for the Ag-Stream visa, employers must first produce crops within specific productive sectors defined by the Canadian Government. Second, the worker's activity must be primarily agricultural, such as operating farm machinery, planting, or maintaining or caring for crops and livestock. Employers can apply for visas that last up to two years. The Ag-stream program has no caps governing the percentages of temporary foreign workers versus Canadian workers. This program also has a faster and more streamlined application process.

Employers must provide the following benefits to employees:

- **Transportation:** Employers pay in advance the cost of transportation to and from the location where the workplace is located.
- **Workplace Transportation:** If workers are housed off-site, employers cover all transportation costs to the workplace.
- **Housing:** Employers must provide housing and may deduct a maximum of \$30 per week.
- **Health Insurance:** Employers must pay for private health insurance when it is not available through the provincial government.
- **Wages:** Employers will pay the same wages as similarly employed Canadians (often the provincial minimum wage). Workers are also eligible to work overtime.
- **Working conditions:** Workers have the same rights as Canadian workers, including pay, workplace insurance, retirement, and benefits.

Unlike United States programs, Canadian employers do not cover any expenses related to the visa application.

b

Stream for Low-wage Positions and Stream for High-wage Positions

These visas are designed for occupations outside of those permitted by the Ag-stream and seek to face short-term labor shortage issues. In both programs, the employer pays the prevailing wage, as defined by the Canadian Job Bank, or the same wage that other Canadian employees earn in the area for the same activity.

The main distinction between the two programs is based on whether the wage is equal to or higher (High-Wage) or lower (Low-Wage) than the provincial median hourly wage. Other minor distinctions pertaining to the High-Wage program: there is no cap on the number of foreign workers, a transition plan to reduce reliance on foreign workers is required, and there is no requirement to covering costs such as transportation to Canada or housing. Also, High-Wage visas can be for periods of up to three years, while Low-Wage visas are for two years or less. **Most of the Guatemalan workers hired correspond to the Ag-stream and Low-Wage programs.**

The Low-Wage Stream program, unlike the Ag-Stream program, has a 20% cap on the ratio of foreign workers to locals at a specific location. This is to ensure that Canadians are considered for these jobs. However, there are numerous occupations that are exempt or capped at 30%. For Low-Wage Stream, employers must provide the same benefits described by the Ag-stream program.

5.3.2. Administrative procedures in Guatemala and destination countries

The administrative procedures for managing visas are complex. Thus, **the most frequent employer practice is that they hire professionals or companies that are in charge of one or more parts of this proceeding.** In particular, in the United States it is frequently mentioned to hire lawyers or firms that are

in charge of carrying out the procedures required by the government to authorize visas. At the same time, in Canada and the United States there are companies that are in charge of offering the complete service, including both the application for visas to the government and the identification, hiring and administrative support of workers in their own countries.

Some of these companies located in Canada and the United States subcontract companies in Guatemala to take care of local management (including workers' selection, when necessary). In some cases, the employers themselves carry out the procedures in their countries and directly contract companies or intermediaries located in the place of origin of their workers (for example, Guatemala), which may be more or less formalized and offer a wider range of services (these companies are often referred to as 'recruiters' even though the services they can offer are much broader than simply recruiting workers).

Finally, local facilitators were also identified in some cases, which sometimes overlap and are confused with informal intermediaries. Local facilitators **work at community or municipal levels by helping selected workers, so that they can complete their visa procedures**, for which they charge their services directly to the workers and not to the employers as in the remaining cases. These services may include transportation to Guatemala City, hotel reservations, management of medical appointments or making appointments at embassies, among others.

The employer survey responses show the most frequent practices:

Table 12. Modality used to carry out the visa authorization procedures.

	Canada		United States	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
We hire an external company	6	60%	125	85.6%
We do it ourselves	4	40%	21	14.4%
Total	10	100%	135	100%

Table 13. Modality used for the identification and hiring of employees.

	Canada		United States	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Ourselves, through employee contacts	5	50%	87	59.2%
Recruiter company in the country of workers	4	40%	38	25.9%
Recruiter in our country	4	40%	36	24.5%
Government agency of the workers' country	2	20%	6	4.1%
Other	1	10%	2	1.4%
Total	10	--	147	--

NOTE: this question allowed several answers.

In general, these results show that employers most frequently hire external companies to carry out visa procedures, particularly in the United States (Table 12). However, when selecting specific workers abroad, a percentage of between 50 and 60% select them directly with the support of contacts from their current employees. Even so, it is also common for companies to hire companies to identify and/or hire workers in their countries, particularly in Canada. In contrast, it is observed that few have resorted to government recruitment agencies.

In operational terms, the first step in obtaining the different types of visas, is that Canadian and United States employers apply to the corresponding authorities, and then recruit workers to fill those positions. As indicated, workers can be directly selected by employers or through different types of companies or intermediaries. Most of the workers come from rural communities and have little experience with the bureaucratic processes required by the application. In addition, they must travel to Guatemala City, which can take some hours. For this reason, local intermediaries, recruiters, or facilitators usually play a very important role in offering administrative support to visa procedures.

The first step for any visa is to apply for the Guatemalan passport. This process can take a month or less. However, reports of delays of up to 8 months were frequent in the interviews. There is evidence that the Guatemalan officials responsible for issuing passports have worked to expedite the application process in the case of workers who participate in work visa programs (fundamentally based on an agreement between the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare [MINTRAB] and the Guatemalan Institute of Migration). However, learning this streamlined process often requires working with a recruiter who has ties to government stakeholders. Once the passports are obtained, each country has its own application process.



Canada: TFWP

Workers who participate in the Canadian program generally do so by contacting formal recruiters located in Guatemala, most of which have offices in Guatemala City or its surroundings. With the help of these companies, workers complete the application form once they have received their contract from the employer.

With the support of the recruiters, workers are responsible for the following procedures:

- **Biometrics:** requires an appointment with the Canadian embassy to take fingerprints and photographs.
- **Health Exam:** A comprehensive health exam is required to ensure workers are in good health.
- **Criminal record check.**
- **Interview with the consulate:** interviews with the Canadian consulate are often required.

Once applications are submitted, there is a waiting period of approximately two weeks. However, delays of up to two months usually occur. Once the visa is approved, the passport is sent to the Canadian embassy in Guatemala, which mails it to the Canadian embassy in Mexico for visa stamping (this is the only Canadian embassy in the region equipped to stamp passports). This process takes an additional one to two weeks. The costs associated with the visa application are assumed by each worker.

b EE.UU.: H-2A y H-2B

The U.S. Guest Worker application process begins with the Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker by the prospective employer. Once the request is approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, the employer can hire a formal recruiter in the workers' home countries to handle the paperwork and schedule interviews with the embassy.

However, it is common for United States employers that hire workers in Guatemala to use intermediaries that are less formalized than their Canadian counterparts, which generally means that they offer a smaller range of services and do not necessarily follow the same quality standards. There even seem to be some cases in which employers contact workers directly. Considering the predominance of informal intermediaries in this case, workers will have much less support to carry out local procedures.

In particular, the visa application consists of an online form, which once approved by the Embassy requires a scheduled interview with the United States Consulate in Guatemala. Each applicant needs the following documents:

- **Photograph**
- **Confirmation of non-immigrant visa application**
- **Payment receipt**
- **Non-immigrant worker petition receipt number**

Embassy interviews with H-2 workers are common. However, after the pandemic this requirement has been made more flexible and is only specified if it is considered necessary. Once workers receive a positive response, their visas are stamped in their passports. The process takes three to five days. Processing time has dramatically decreased since the pandemic, as demand for migrant workers has increased and the Biden administration has prioritized recruiting workers from the Central American Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). Before the pandemic, processing times of three weeks or more were common.

Expenses related to visa application are reimbursed by employers, including travel, accommodation and subsistence costs incurred during the application process. This often includes bus tickets, hotels and meals while the worker is traveling or staying in Guatemala City.

5.3.3. Description of the worker recruitment process (at origin and destination): the role of recommendations

Selection of workers through recommendations: the worker-to-worker system.

Most employers in both Canada and the United States often contract local visa processing agencies, recruiting firms or intermediaries to facilitate the recruitment of foreign workers. However, **this study shows that most of the workers are not selected by these companies but through worker-to-worker recommendations.** Employers ask their current workers to recommend family and friends who are willing to participate in the visa program. In the case of new employers, the procedure is usually the same, taking advantage of recommendations from workers from neighboring farms. Local recruiters and intermediaries are only asked to recruit new workers if employers do not have enough referrals or are dissatisfied with their workforce and are looking to expand into other countries or regions.

The worker-to-worker model **allows employers to both monitor productivity and reward their most trusted workers.** Workers who exhibit a strong commitment to work and are highly productive generate higher value, so employers try to select similar workers. By allowing these workers to recruit, they hope to select similar people. In some cases, employers allow supervisors or team leaders to select their own crews and, in turn, pay productivity bonuses to the crew. This hiring strategy motivates supervisors to select the most productive workers.

As visas are scarce in home countries, allowing workers to refer family or friends is also thought of as a way to reward employees. This tactic does not only recognize the effort of good employees, but also encourages workers to be productive. The opportunity to bring family and share the benefits these visas provide is a powerful motivator.

In addition, there is inter-family or community pressure to ensure that recommended workers complete contracts and provide quality work. Referring workers who abscond or are not productive could affect their status within the company and even their future employment. Employers use this hiring model as a way to ensure a reliable and quality workforce. Allowing outside recruiters to select workers disrupts this social dynamic that unites employees and employers.



Profiles of Guatemalan recruiters working with Canada and the United States

Currently, there are three large recruiting companies in Guatemala that focused on Canada and oversee helping workers with their application process, selecting and recruiting new workers when employers request it. In the case of United States visa programs, there is a much more decentralized model that relies on a large number of small recruiters, often linked to individual employers.

Among the recruiters that work predominantly with the United States, the **Fundación Juan Francisco García Comparini**, can be mentioned, which has been providing recruiting services for six or seven years at no cost, selecting agricultural workers associated with the three companies and the cooperative that finances it as part of its social responsibility actions. At the same time, a non-profit recruitment company with a significant presence in Mexico, called **Cierto Global**, has recently settled in Guatemala. Finally, the Guatemalan Government has formalized an internal recruitment service in recent years, as an effort to create opportunities for Guatemalan citizens in the global north (MINTRAB Labor Migration Program), which currently has a growing presence, mainly regarding with United States visas.

As of the date of this report, the recruiters authorized by the Guatemalan Government were the following (presented in the order as they appear in the MINTRAB website):

- 1 Comuguate
- 2 Servicios Amigo Laboral Guatemala (Salgusa)
- 3 Labour Recruiting Services Guatemala
- 4 Teexgua
- 5 KGO Internacional
- 6 Asesorías San Gabriel
- 7 Grupo Siembra
- 8 Operadora Laboral
- 9 Servicios Matías - Sepulveda
- 10 Asesoría Integral Migratoria
- 11 BC Consulting
- 12 Asesorías CA
- 13 Cierto Guatemala
- 14 Desarrolladora Agro-Industrial (Dainsa)
- 15 Fundación Juan Francisco García Comparini
- 16 Serttegua
- 17 Moci Guatemala
- 18 Cima
- 19 Fundación Margarita Valiente
- 20 Global Innovation Work

Recruitment companies or agencies based in Canada

The recruitment model for Canadian visas in Guatemala is much more structured and was born from a pilot project implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a farm labor recruitment organization located in Quebec (Fondation des Entreprises en Recrutement de Main-d'œuvre agricole Étrangère - FERME), with the aim of building a migration framework for Guatemalans interested in participating in Canada's TFWP program. FERME **provided employment opportunities with Guatemalan farmers in Canada and IOM created a recruitment network by identifying workers with the required skills.** This program that started in 2003 with 215 participants, grew to employ almost 700 in 2005 (IOM, 2006).

The IOM-identified Guatemalan communities with strong agricultural traditions (with emphasis on vegetable production) were a good match for the skills that Canadian employers were looking for. As part of the pilot project, some Canadian employers traveled to Guatemala and interviewed workers. IOM's role also included helping workers to process the required documentation, such as medical exams, criminal records, and passports. This work was done against a payment intended to cover the required application costs and transport workers to the different offices for appointments.

When the IOM pilot project finished, several of the employees responsible for recruiting and processing the paperwork started private recruitment companies. In this way, two of the leading Canadian visa recruitment companies were born around 2008. Today, one of these companies provides 90% of the farm labor to Canadian employers and the other has diversified into more qualified non-agricultural labor. These recruiting companies have continued to grow with more than 15,000 workers participating in Canadian programs by 2022.

Currently, these companies provide the same services, helping Canadian employers to connect with Guatemalan workers and Guatemalan workers to process the required documentation. In turn, employers typically submit the names of the workers they wish to receive or request the hiring of new workers with specific skills. Skills can include expertise in certain crops, but more often they are associated with physical characteristics such as strength, the ability to work in harsh weather conditions, or the height required to easily reach certain crops.

A key role of recruiting companies is **to ensure that workers are eligible to travel to Canada and comply with the full contract.** For this reason, recruiting companies have established criteria that all workers, regardless of whether they are referred, must meet to be eligible. These include never having traveled to Canada or the United States illegally, a clean criminal record, and being in good health. There are other criteria that have eventually been mentioned, such as being under 35 or 40 years of age and having strong family ties (being married or in a stable relationship and having children).

As part of the recruitment process, first-time traveling workers occasionally take strength, agricultural experience, and basic education tests. Strength tests are common in narratives and involve lifting a 100-pound sack with ease. Farm experience and education tests are criteria set by some employers seeking workers with specific skills in a certain crop or nursery environment. Exams can be written or, more often, through video conference interviews with recruiters or employers. It's important to note that most employers don't require formal education but may test basic reading and math skills or experience in specific crops.

From the workers' perspective, these long-established recruitment companies provided a reliable organization to be registered for Canadian jobs. At the same time, they carry out a more transparent and secure process than the one seen in the United States visas.

United States-oriented recruitment companies or agencies

The process of recruiting labor in Guatemala to work in the United States is less structured and transparent than what is observed in the Canadian case. The United States system, which initially began with the H-2B visa program, is largely based on **the worker-to-worker recruitment model and the establishment of intermediaries or recruiters in the communities of origin of the workforce.** In most cases, these recruiters (not necessarily formalized) have established relationships with individual United States employers and facilitate the identification of workers, and sometimes the associated administrative paperwork for visa management. Many of these individuals are employees, former employees, or contractors of employers, who because of a longstanding relationship with them have taken on a recruiting or application management role.

This recruiting model results in a fragmented and decentralized system in which each employer has its own recruiter who only operates in the communities where the worker-to-worker recruiting model originated. Over time, recruitment spreads to neighboring communities based on increasing labor demands. Employment requirements, prerequisites, and procedures change with each recruiter and employer. This system is based on relationships and seems to discourage the formalization of intermediaries.

From an employee perspective, this recruiting model is highly dependent on geographic location and who you know. It is generally confusing to know the process of each recruiter, the job requirements, and the duration of the process. As a result, fraudulent recruitment appears to be more prevalent among United States visa programs. Due to the large number of recruiters, it is easier for people to claim that they represent a certain employer.



Emerging recruiting options

In the last two years, efforts have been made in Guatemala to address the increase in irregular migration by opening access to legal migration pathways through temporary work programs. These efforts, subsidized by the United States government, include the opening of a branch of Cierto Global in Guatemala, a United States based private non-profit entity, and the recruitment service offered by the Guatemalan government through the Labor Migration Program.

Cierto Global has established a pilot project in Guatemala to increase the recruitment of workers for H-2A visas, with the support of the United States government and the Buffet Foundation. Cierto's objective is **to establish ethical and transparent recruitment from Guatemala, as an effort to create legal pathways for people to migrate to the United States.** This organization that works with non-profit community entities, is trying to create an alternative recruiting model outside of the traditional worker-to-worker recruiting model. Their efforts have been moderately successful, and their slow growth is due in large part to United States employers have established and reliable work ties in other countries or regions.

Similarly, the Guatemalan government established a worker recruitment program to help funnel labor to both Canada and the United States. The Labor Migration Program provides a free recruitment service to Canadian and United States employers. Like Cierto, they have had limited success reaching employers who already have established ties, so both organizations seem to be setting their sights on new employers looking for labor.

According to some employers, the government recruiting program has had trouble providing the required manpower in a timely manner. This has created uncertainty among employers, who desperately need not only labor, but also workers to arrive on time. There seems to be a learning curve that has slowed their efforts, but it is clear that their services have progressively improved. In 2022, approximately one third of visas to the United States were handled by this program.

Parallel to the Guatemalan government's efforts to create a solid public recruiter, there is a strong desire to attack the problem of fraudulent recruiters. **This has led to the creation of an official registry of recruiters according to government agreement number 50-2022 of the President of Guatemala.** Unfortunately, this is meeting some resistance, that is not always explicit among established recruiters, who fear it will undermine their legitimate businesses. Recruiters have noted that part of the registry requires sharing clients' names and addresses. While this is reasonable, many fear that this information could be used by the government contracting program to offer them free services.

5.4. Costs and payments involved in regular and irregular migration

Migration costs are different depending on whether it is irregular or regular migration, and in the latter case there are differences between the Canadian and United States programs.

Expenses for regular migration

There are different costs that the worker pays to participate in the temporary work visa programs. Some of these costs are covered by the worker, while others are reimbursed upon arrival at their destination. These include passport, administrative cost of the visa application, travel expenses while obtaining the documentation, payments for support in completing paperwork and applications, costs of luggage and clothing necessary to travel, and even illegal visa access fees.

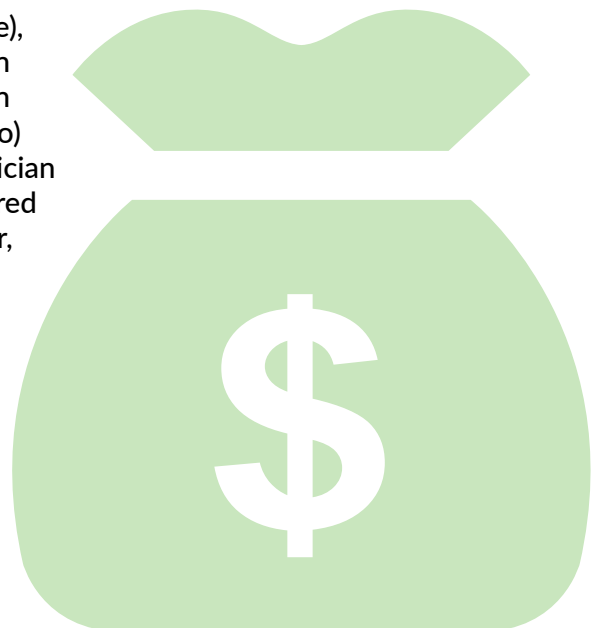
Interviewees reported costs from Q3,000 to more than Q60,000, depending on the situations and items included. This wide range is mainly due to the payment of illegal access fees and hiring intermediaries to assist in visa applications. The next section describes the different fees paid by workers.

a Visa administrative costs

Application fees for the United States H-2A or H-2B visa are covered by employers and reimbursed within days of arrival. Visa applicants pay a visa application fee of \$190. There may be other small costs related to photographs and copies of documents; however, the general administrative costs are approximately Q1,500.

For the Canadian TFWP (Ag-Stream and Low-wage), workers are responsible for all visa-related application costs. These costs include the work permit application (C\$155), biometric registration (fingerprints and photo) (C\$85) and a full medical examination by a certified physician (approximately Q780). The total administrative cost required for these procedures is approximately Q2,165 per worker, although there may be variability due to the cost of medical examinations).

In both cases it is necessary to add 50 dollars for the passport, in case the workers have never requested it, or it is not valid (approximately Q400).



b Travel costs in Guatemala and destination

International travel costs to Canada are paid in advance by employers. In the case of the United States, although this is the most frequent scheme, it is not mandatory. In cases in which the ticket is paid for by the worker, employers must reimburse it when they arrive at their destination. Travel expenses within Guatemala to apply for visas are responsibility of the workers in the case of the TFWP program and reimbursed in the case of United States visas upon arrival at the workplace.

These expenses consist of transportation to Guatemala City, where the embassies are located, and the corresponding lodging and food expenses. Since workers are recruited in rural areas that are located from two to more than eight hours from the capital, it is necessary to take public transportation or hire private vehicles. Once in the capital, accommodation and food expenses are required for at least one night, and probably several days in case of delays. A recruiter estimated these expenses at Q1,000 each trip. If applicants need more than one trip, the costs increase.

c Essential travel expenses

Many first-time visa applicants have expenses related to purchasing clothing and luggage for the trip. The weather can be drastically different depending on the duty station and certain clothing may be required for the type of work to be performed. Some workers buy warm clothes, boots, and other items. While some Canadian employers provide winter clothing, some workers cover these expenses. Also, many have never traveled and need to buy suitcases. These expenses are likely to be small; however, considering the low salaries in the communities from which they are recruited, many cover these expenses with loans.

d Informal support services to complete procedures and applications

There are intermediaries that provide visa application services in many of the communities where workers are hired. These people, who usually held a previous visa, help workers who must navigate the complex visa application process. This occurs more frequently in communities, when recruitment takes place without the intermediation of a formal and established recruiting company, that is, when informal recruitment methods are used, often associated with United States visas.

These visa advisory entrepreneurs offer many of the services that large recruiters typically cover for workers, including assistance in completing the visa application, coordination of travel logistics to Guatemala City (vehicle, lodging, meals, etc.) and application to request Guatemalan passports. Since many workers are originally from rural regions and may never have traveled to Guatemala City, these services are useful for those without other support.

Although formal recruiters provide most of these services, there are cases in which workers are expected to process their own passports or travel to the capital to meet recruiters. In these cases, these intermediaries are available for inexperienced workers who need assistance. The costs of these services are highly variable and difficult to differentiate from illegal visa access fees or intra-country travel costs reported by interviewees. Some applicants reported costs ranging from Q300 to over Q1,000.

e

Illegal charges

Illegal visa access fees seem to be a sad and widespread reality. Gesualdi-Fecteau et al. (2017) argue that the arbitrariness with which workers selection occurs in Guatemala, gives rise to **illegal charges between U\$D 1,500 and U\$D 10,000 by intermediaries** (which corresponds to charges between Q11,700 and Q78,000 to the current exchange rate).¹¹

While employers work hard to prevent workers from paying these fees, they are an unintended consequence of the worker-to-worker hiring model. In particular, these payments seem more frequent and higher when the recruitment processes are managed by informal intermediaries. Visa access fees, generally described as referral or enrollment fees, range from Q2,000 to Q60,000, according to interviews.

As visas are limited and with unclear functioning for most parties, some workers tasked by employers with recommending others take the opportunity to charge access fees. These fees are highly variable and are even charged within family groups. These fees were seen on all visas, but the United States visas appear to have higher fees. The informal and internal recruiting method that has many small recruiters tied to single employers, has a limited supervision since employers are often too distant to have little control over the process, or simply they have no interest in getting involved.

The fees paid to obtain United States visas range from Q2,000 to Q60,000. This type of payment was also reported within families, although with smaller amounts, which seem to increase as networks expand outside family groups. Although most of the reported values were less than Q30,000, one case of Q60,000 was observed.

Larger and more formal recruiting firms, commonly for Canadian visas but beginning to emerge for the United States visas as well, seem to reduce the frequency of these charges. While they are unlikely to have the ability to prevent these payments entirely, they do seem to help control them. For example, well-known recruiters often stress the importance of not charging these fees and warn that charging them could close the door on new visas in the community. At the same time, they have also been heard advising employers to limit the number of recommendations they accept from each worker. As one recruiter noted, “when we notice that a worker refers 10 or more people, we can bet he’s getting paid, and we warn employers.”

These companies also encourage workers to disclose cases of illegal visa access payments. As a result, the fees in formal contracting appear to be somewhat less frequent and smaller. It seems that employers only find out about these problems when workers are unhappy and report payments. However, these situations can result that workers and possibly other family members being excluded from future visas, mainly in the case of informal recruiters. As a result, cases in which these payments are openly reported are rare, since the person who is asking for payment and the person giving it, know that talking about this can close opportunities for both. Even for the largest and most formal recruiters, **disclosure can mean stopping entire communities from recruiting.** The fees charged in the Canadian visa program ranged from Q2,000 to Q25,000, although values higher than Q15,000 are uncommon.

¹¹ An approximate exchange rate of U\$D 1.00 = Q. 7.80 is taken as reference.

The following table summarizes the costs for both types of visas.

Chart 1. Costs and payments corresponding to regular visa programs.

Description	TFWP	H-2A/B	Comments
Administrative expenses	Q2,565	Q2,270	There may be some variability for the medical examinations required by TFWP visas. Some of these payments are reimbursed by employers in the case of United States visas.
Travel within the country	Q500 to Q2,000		The exact costs to travel within Guatemala are variable depending on the location. An estimated range is presented.
Clothes and suitcases	Indefinite		While workers commented on these costs, the exact amounts are unknown.
Support services to complete procedures	Indefinite		Some workers use administrative and logistical support services. However, the exact costs are unknown and difficult to differentiate from illegal payments.
Illegal charges for visa access	Q2,000 to Q25,000	2,000 to Q30,000	These payments appear to be higher on United States visas, when made. The ranges reported by interviewees are variable and depend on the situation.

Irregular migration expenses

Irregular migration through coyotes has costs ranging from Q80,000 to Q160,000, depending on the sources (between U\$D 10,000 and 20,000 approximately). The range of costs is associated with different characteristics of the trip. There are more convenient options that include airfare to Mexican border cities and transportation to specific locations in the United States once the border is crossed.

At the lower end of the spectrum is a much tougher road trip through Mexico and across to the other side of the United States border. Some coyotes offer three tries to cross the border. Although the coyotes’ role described in the interviews is consistent with the academic literature, it is noteworthy that the amounts paid are higher than those reported by other authors, ranging from US\$2,000 to US\$12,000 (Heidbrink, 2019; Sittig and González, 2016).

Quantitative evidence

The survey asked how much those who migrated had to pay. However, the results are not presented here as it is understood that this is unreliable information. Indeed, despite the transparency of the values related to irregular migration, in the case of migration with a visa, elements that question the value of the data were identified. In particular, the question did not differentiate between legitimate payments related to procedures (such as passport, visa stamp, and medical certificate), expenses for buying clothes or trips to the capital, informal support services to complete procedures, and illegitimate payments to neighbors or informal recruiters to obtain visas.

In this way, the interviewees were **afraid of reporting irregular payments made for fear of losing visas**. Thus, some interviewees from families with regular migrants may have answered by thinking exclusively about the irregular payments made (from a targeting bias on what they supposed should be kept hidden) and answered that they did not pay anything. Instead, others may have responded by considering only legitimate payments (including or not travel expenses), while others may have added up all the costs they had to make. Undoubtedly, getting this information through a survey is difficult. In future work, it would be convenient to differentiate by type of expense assumed for a better understanding.

Meanwhile, the interviewees were also asked if they were aware of the existence of temporary work visas to travel to Canada and/or the United States, and if they had to pay to obtain them. The following tables report the results. The first presents the data from the random surveys, considering only the people who said they knew of the existence of these visas before the survey. The second table is differentiated by type of family (using the complete sample) and type of community (using the paired sample).

Table 14. Opinion regarding whether there are payments to be made to get temporary work visas

	Frequency	Percentage
No need to pay	71	8.7%
Need to pay, but I don't know how much	333	40.7%
I know how much I have to pay	82	10%
I don't know if I have to pay	272	33.3%
No answer	60	7.3%
Total	818	100%

Table 15. Opinion regarding whether there are payments to be made to get temporary work visas according to type of community and family

	Type of family			Type of community	
	Regular	Irregular	No migrant	High % of visas	Low % of visas
No need to pay	20%	3.4%	7.1%	11.5%	5.6%
Need to pay, but I don't know how much	36.3%	33.1%	42.2%	39.8%	41.5%
I know how much I have to pay	25.2%	7.4%	6.3%	13.2%	5.6%
I don't know if I have to pay	11.9%	48%	36.5%	28.3%	39.6%
No answer	6.7%	8.1%	7.9%	7.3%	7.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Results show that **most of them consider they have to pay to get a temporary work visa for Canada or the United States (50.7%), while 33.3% indicate that they do not know, and 7% did not answer the question. In contrast, only 8.7% indicated that they did not have to pay.** In any case, it is important to take these results with extreme care, as it is not clear whether to assume that the statement 'must be paid' refers only to legitimate payments, or whether it includes an acknowledgment of the illegal payments existence.

Comparing the results according to the family migratory status and type of community, statistically significant differences were observed (according to family type: $\chi^2 (8) = 97.51, p < .001^{**}$; according to community type: $\chi^2 (4) = 26.55, p < .001^{**}$). Considering the differences according to migratory status, it is clear that families of irregular migrants and non-migrants are more unaware if payments should be paid or not. In contrast, it is much more common for families of regular migrants to report that they do not have to pay to obtain a visa, possibly when responding thinking about illegal payments. Meanwhile, a high percentage that indicates to know how much to pay is observed. At the same time, differences were also observed between communities with the highest and lowest percentage of visas, along the same lines as indicated above, but less markedly.

A total of 75 interviewees corresponding to the random sample answered that to obtain a temporary work visa, it was necessary to pay and indicated that they knew the amount. The values indicated were from Q800 to Q60,000. The most frequent values were between Q5,000 and Q15,000. Although in this case we are talking about payments necessary to obtain the visa, that could lead to respond by focusing on illegal payments, it is clear that these values could refer to both illegal charges (for example, because they are recommended) and legitimate payments, linked to the costs that workers must assume. In any case, they can work as a reference.

Although the investigation of means may be biased by the existence of uncompensated extreme values, the analysis shows that the mean of payment values indicated in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants was Q9,352; and in those with a low percentage Q13,158. For their part, the average payment indicated by the interviewees from families of regular migrants was Q7,007, by irregular Q11,182, and by non-migrants Q14,143. However, to find out if these differences are significant by considering the smaller sample size and that there are uncompensated extreme cases, it is preferred to use non-parametric statistics. The analysis shows that both, in the comparison between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants ($U = 639.5$, $p = .026^{**}$) and between families with different migratory experiences ($KW: \chi^2 (2) = 6.49$, $p = .04^*$) the differences are statistically significant. Particularly, the comparison between pairs in the second case reveals that the differences occur specifically between the values reported by regular migrants and non-migrants, but not between the rest of the pairs.

Overall, these results indicate that there are costs clearly associated with migration, both regular and irregular. However, it is clear that costs are much lower in the case of regular migration, related with what was previously identified in the literature (Ruiz Soto et al., 2021).

On the other hand, it is also observed that the structure of costs and real expenses related to obtaining temporary work visas in Canada and the United States is masked. First, the different types of visas do not have the same fee schedules, some of which are then reimbursed by employers (as is the case of H-2A and H-2B visas is), which could confuse workers. At the same time, there are variable payments, such as transportation, lodging, and clothing. Added to these are even less transparent costs, such as legal (but veiled) payments to those who offer advice for visa management and illegal payments for referrals or to be recruited, which are not only veiled, but there is a clear intention to hide and deny them.

Within this context, it is convenient that the different stakeholders have clear knowledge of the procedures involved in visa management, actions can be taken to deal with the problem of illegal payments, and clear information to be provided on the cost structure.

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5.5. Deceptions, frauds and knowledge about the operation of temporary work visas

The existence of deception and fraud related to obtaining temporary work visas is a central and transversal concern of the different stakeholders interviewed. This includes from residents of communities and COCODE authorities, through municipal officials, recruiting companies and local organizations, to national government authorities and representatives of foreign governments. It is important to highlight that these visa frauds and deceptions not only affect the individual people who are cheated but also create problems for the broader operation of the visa delivery system, reducing its potential positive impacts. In particular, there is a mistrust increase regarding these issues in the communities, an increase in general transaction costs and a decrease in the value of temporary work visas as an alternative to irregular migration from the point of view of those who consider the possibility of migrating.

Multiple accounts of deception and fraud were heard in the interviews, although all followed a similar structure: a request for a variable payment to have the possibility of accessing a temporary work visa in Canada or the United States. In a municipality of Chimaltenango, an interviewee reported the case of a fraud asking for payments to obtain visas that involved approximately 1,000 people. In another municipality, a resident of a community commented that he paid USD\$1,000 to travel to the United States with his son with a work visa few years ago, but it was a lie. In a municipality of San Marcos, an interviewee explained that one day some people came offering to register on a list to issue visas. They did not guarantee getting them, but to register you had to pay between Q250 and Q500. In other municipalities where fraudsters guaranteed to deliver visas, payments of between Q5,000 and Q25,000 were reported. A neighbor from a community in the department of Chimaltenango commented that there were people who sold their animals to make these payments. Finally, a striking case is an irregular migrant who was deported from the United States, who before traveling irregularly was scammed three times, he paid Q8,000, Q3,500 and Q10,000 respectively.

As an additional element, it is highlighted that those who approach to municipalities and communities to make these offers, usually do it on behalf of recognized entities, such as recruiting companies, the IOM or embassies, or from supposed direct contacts with employers. In any case, these statements cannot be irrefutably corroborated by those who always listen to them. In this regard, the case of a local government entity responsible for the migration area in a municipality was reported, in which people -supposedly representing the IOM- were registering interested parties to issue temporary work visas for Canada. Unfortunately, the interviewee indicated that he did not know if the information was true and even worse, he did not know how or where to look for information to make sure. Fortunately, due to personal contacts from the research team, it was able to confirm that this was a fraud. However, the lack of knowledge on how to search for information was worrying, since it could not be explained to the person involved due to lack of educational background, but rather by the existence of a very non-transparent system where there is nowhere to access reliable information¹².

12 Note that OIM does not have a contact telephone number where it is possible to answer questions about what the institution is doing at field, and even today information on recruitment efforts carried out in the past appears on the institution's website. (<https://www.iom.int/es/news/el-programa-de-migracion-temporal-canada-dirigido-por-la-oim-ha-ayudado-12000-personas>) which gives credibility to the deception.

When talking about deception and fraud related to obtaining temporary work visas, **it is important to differentiate them from improper payments requested by recruiting companies, intermediaries or recommendations to employers who are seeking to hire more staff.** Although both situations are similar, because they are illegal and they take advantage of the need and vulnerability of those who seek a visa, they are different. In the cases of deception and fraud, what is claimed is a lie and there is no possibility of obtaining a visa. On the other hand, payments to intermediaries, recruiters or to obtain recommendations, there is abuse, but there is a real possibility of accessing the intended visa. Likewise, there are nuanced cases in which the person who request a payment, understands that he/she will be able to obtain a visa for the person who delivers to him/her the money, but not with the same certainty with which he/she communicate it, or that he/she does believe that will be able to obtain the visa. Ultimately, when he/she cannot obtain the visa for the person, then he/she refuses to return the money received. Either way, it is clear that all these situations end up contributing to strengthening mistrust.

Another point of interest for this study is that several interviewees highlighted that the existence of frauds and deception associated with the distrust that derives from them, leads people to give up looking for a temporary visa and instead choose to migrate irregularly. It is worth dwelling on this point, as it has key implications for this research.

Specifically, it is observed that although the interviewees highlight migrating by means of a visa as a preferable option (as became evident when comparing the two migratory alternatives), this becomes an uneasy alternative, as it is constantly tinged with the possibility of being defrauded or cheated. Thus, the loss of confidence in those who present themselves as intermediaries to obtain a visa (whether they are legitimate intermediaries or not), means that the visa alternative is always associated with the possibility of deception, thus losing value as an alternative.

To better understand the dynamics of fraud and mistrust related to obtaining temporary work visas, it is essential to analyze the knowledge degree that people have about how these visas work. In this sense, the qualitative evidence suggests that knowledge about them is very low. Some residents of communities who were interviewed indicated that they do not have information on how to carry out the procedures to request a temporary visa. Others highlighted that those who obtained the visa do not share information on how to obtain it. In particular, a community authority explained that he suffered a fraud related to visas due to his situation of need and the ignorance of how they work. It should be noted that this poor knowledge not only reaches members of the communities, but also authorities of local civil associations or even municipal officials. For example, the contact of an organization assumed that people do not have access to temporary work visas because they do not know who to contact to request them; while a high-ranking municipal official pointed out that authorities from a neighboring municipality charged to process visas and entered funds to local government bank accounts, even though this is counterintuitive.

Obviously, it is clear that there is a diversity of positions and situations. Certainly, having a relative with a visa or even having traveled regularly is not the same as never having migrated. However, there is an inaccurate understanding of how temporary work visas work in Canada and the United States, leading to them being conceptually described as an unclear reality. Meanwhile, there also seems to be an expectation, largely illusory, that it would be possible to access temporary work visas if people had access to information on how to apply for them. From this perspective, the solution to the problem would be simple (disclose the information), but this would not happen because there are people with interests or privileges that do not facilitate it (such as other migrants who go year after year or intermediaries who charge for the service). In any case, as explained above, obtaining these visas does not fundamentally depend on access to information but rather on the contacts or social networks to which one has access. Finally, there also seems to be a quite frequent perception that **access to temporary work visas depends to a large extent on luck or, in any case, that it is beyond the control of personal action. This is certainly in contrast to irregular migration, which in many ways appears to be much more transparent, despite being illegal.**

Surveys offer complementary information on the knowledge degree on how to migrate regularly, irregularly and on temporary work visas. The following table presents the people’s knowledge level on how to migrate regularly and irregularly, differentiating according to communities with a high and low percentage of regular migration.

Table 16. Knowledge about regular and irregular migration in different types of communities

Level of knowledge	About regular migration		About irregular migration	
	High % regular	Low % regular	High % regular	Low % regular
A lot	5.1%	3.3%	6.7%	8.2%
Quite	6.8%	5%	3.9%	8.6%
Something	15.8%	7.9%	10.1%	9.8%
Bit	33.6%	36.8%	37.5%	37.3%
Nothing	39.1%	47.1%	41.8%	36.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Using the Mann-Whitney U Test, it was observed there is greater knowledge about this migratory strategy in that communities with a high percentage of regular migrants ($p < .001^{**}$); and conversely, in communities with a lower percentage of regular migrants there is more knowledge about irregular migration ($p = .014^{**}$).

Additionally, using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, it was analyzed whether the interviewees knew more about how to migrate regularly or irregularly. The test evidenced 400 cases in which knowledge about regular migration was greater than knowledge about irregular migration, 308 cases in which more is known about how to migrate irregularly than regularly, and 662 cases in which both were known about equally. In summary, the statistical test shows greater knowledge about regular migration than about irregular migration in the interviewees ($p = .003^{**}$).

Meanwhile, it was also studied whether the knowledge degree on how to migrate regularly and irregularly differed according to the migratory status of the family (regular, irregular or non-migrant). The results are presented in the following tables.

Table 17. Knowledge level on regular immigration according to family migration status

Knowledge about regular migration	Family immigration status		
	Regular	Irregular	Non-migrant
A lot	9.2%	7%	2.5%
Quite	15.4%	9.5%	3%
Something	26.2%	9.5%	9.6%
Bit	40%	26.4%	34.4%
Nothing	9.2%	47.8%	50.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 18. Knowledge level on irregular migration according to family migration status

Knowledge about regular migration	Family immigration status		
	Regular	Irregular	Non-migrant
A lot	6.2%	16.4%	5.3%
Quite	6.2%	11.9%	3.7%
Something	13.8%	11.4%	7.6%
Bit	33.8%	37.3%	37.6%
Nothing	40.0%	22.9%	45.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Next, it was evaluated whether there were differences in the knowledge degree about how to migrate regularly and irregularly according to family migratory status by using the **Kruskal-Wallis** Test. The results show that there are statistically significant differences in both cases (regular migration: $\chi^2 (2) = 56.9, p < .001^{**}$; irregular migration: $\chi^2 (2) = 103, p < .001^{**}$). In particular, the peer-to-peer analysis shows that families that only have regular migrants have a significantly higher knowledge degree about how to migrate regularly than the other migratory conditions, and families that only have irregular migrants have greater knowledge about how to migrate irregularly than the rest of the families.

The survey also inquired whether the interviewees knew about the temporary work visas existence before answering the questionnaire, and whether they were known at community level. The results are presented in the following tables, differentiating between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migration.

Table 19. Personal knowledge of temporary work visas existence in different types of communities

Did you know about these visas?	Communities with a high % of regular migration		Communities with low % of regular migration	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	413	77.3%	354	67.6%
No	120	22.5%	164	31.3%
No answer	1	0.2%	6	1.1%
Total	534	100%	524	100%

Table 20. Community knowledge about working temporary visas existence in different type of communities.

Does your community know about these visas?	Communities with high % of regular migration		Communities with low % of regular migration	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	352	66.5%	253	49%
No	159	30.1%	231	44.8%
No answer	18	3.4%	32	6.2%
Total	529	100%	516	100%

At the same time, the X2 Test was also used to analyze whether the differences observed in both cases between communities with a high and a low percentage of regular migrants were statistically significant (cases in which there was no answer to the question were excluded). The results show that in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants, both the interviewees ($\chi^2(1) = 11.14, p < .001^{**}$) and the general members of the communities ($\chi^2(1) = 28.78, p < .001^{**}$) are more knowledgeable about temporary work visas in Canada and the United States.

What implications can be drawn from these results?

First, it is observed that knowledge about how to migrate is relatively low. In fact, only 11.9% indicated that they knew some or a lot about how to migrate with a visa in communities with a high percentage of regular migration, and 10.6% know how to do it irregularly. At the same time, in communities with a low percentage of temporary work visas, only 10.6% said they knew some or a lot about regular migration and 16.8% how to do it without papers. In contrast, those who say they know little, or nothing range from 70% to 80% in both types of communities.

Although the low percentages regarding knowledge of how to migrate with a temporary work visa are consistent with the qualitative evidence, a mismatch is observed regarding how to migrate irregularly, the Xilcoxon Test indicated greater knowledge about regular migration than about irregular migration. This mismatch invites us to take this specific result with caution. Indeed, it is possible that in a survey those who responded to the questionnaire would prefer not to report knowledge about an illegal activity in the country of destination, unlike migration with a visa that would not be problematic from a legal perspective. Thus, the qualitative information can probably be considered more accurate.

On the other hand, results also show that knowledge about how to migrate from regular to irregular is distributed differentially. The results obtained are reasonable: in communities with a high percentage of regular migration and in families with regular migrants, there is more knowledge about how to migrate with a visa. Therefore, in communities with a lower percentage of resulting migration and families that have irregular migrants, there is more knowledge about irregular migration.

However, beyond the knowledge level about how to migrate regularly, they also inquired about the knowledge of the temporary work visas existence. As expected, these are better known in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants. However, there are significant ignorance percentages about the existence of these visas. Even 22.5% of the interviewees from communities with a high percentage of regular migrants reported not knowing of their existence (a figure that rises to 31.3% in those with a low percentage). Even those who participated in the study indicated to know even less about them in their communities.



5.6. Gender and ethnicity and its relationship in regular and irregular migration

Although it was not explicitly stated as an objective of the study, by adopting a perspective that is sensitive to gender and cultural differences, it is appropriate to ask whether the possibilities of accessing temporary work visas are conditioned by the gender of the people and their indigenous or non-indigenous condition. The available data is analyzed below arising from this question. To analyze the indigenous character of the people, **two variables are used: if Spanish is spoken at home and if a Mayan language is spoken** (note that conceptually these are two different variables, since in some families it is often speak both languages).

Interviews conducted in Guatemala show that most of the people who migrate are men, whether with a temporary work visa or irregularly. Along the same lines, it is also argued that the percentage of women who migrate irregularly is higher than those who do so regularly, up to the point that several interviewees reported not knowing women who had traveled with a visa.

This information is fully consistent with the evidence from the surveys. First, it is clear that **men migrate more than women**. Considering all the household members in the random sample and those who migrated and are part of such households, a clear male predominance is observed. Meanwhile, 17.6% of men in these households live or lived abroad, only 1.7% of women did ($\chi^2(4) = 420, p < .001^{**}$). Additionally, both the random sample and the snowball sample are taken (which allowed the number of migrant households with visas to be expanded), it is observed that while women represent 10.2% of irregular migrants, only 4.9% of them ever migrated with a visa, a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2(1) = 7.88, p = .005^{**}$). This makes it possible to affirm that **the percentage of women who emigrate temporarily with a visa is lower than those who do so irregularly**. These results are in line with previous works that argue that the majority of those who migrate from Guatemala to the United States are men (ECLAC, 2021), and there is a strong gender gap in the temporary employment programs of Canada and the United States (Brooks, 2018; Weiler, 2020).

Two explanations for the male predominance were identified in the interviews: the working demand nature in the countries of destination and traditional gender roles in the communities of origin. Regarding the first question, several interviewees argued that few women travel with a visa because employers prefer men. This seems to have three dimensions. First, that most of these jobs would require physical strength (for example, lifting heavy weights). Second, that these are traditionally male jobs (particularly agriculture). And third, that women tend to have less experience in such works (for the above reasons). A recruiter argued that male predominance “is a tradition.”

Additionally, staff from two recruiters highlighted that regulations in destination countries require housing men and women in different facilities, which usually implies higher costs. Thus, faced with the dilemma of hiring only men or only women, they prefer men. Finally, the wife of a worker who went to Canada with a visa also commented that there are employers who do not want women because they “make trouble” and can cause conflicts between men. As an example, she cited the case of a community resident who returned with a worker he met abroad and abandoned his wife.



On the other hand, it is also argued that fewer women with visas migrate due to the traditional division of roles based on gender in the communities of origin. In particular, it is highlighted that men, usually understood as 'household heads', have a cultural duty to be providers for their family, which leads them to be the first to seek alternatives to increase household income. In parallel, it is also pointed out that there are expectations that women remain at home and that it is frowned upon for them to leave their family or their parents, as previously described in literature (Gil and Torralbo, 2012; Sánchez, 2018). In any case, many interviewees highlighted that the most important bottleneck is the lack of demand for female workers by employers, and that if visas were available, many women would want to travel. For this reason, some interviewees highlighted that there are employers who prefer to hire women for harvest work, especially when it comes to delicate fruits such as blueberries or strawberries, since they are traditionally considered to have greater manual skill, an argument also identified in the work carried out by Gesualdi-Fecteau (2014) in Canada.

In order to explain that women migrate less irregularly than men, similar arguments were also heard. In particular, several interviewees pointed out that there are more jobs for men than for women in the United States, although without clearly clarifying the reason in a generic way. At the same time, there are specific fears associated with women for irregular migration, such as risks of unwanted pregnancies, rape and sex trafficking. Finally, explanations associated with the traditional division of gender-based roles in families were also presented, which lead men to think of themselves as providers and women as responsible for the family and household.

Additionally, some interviewees also suggested that, although irregular migration continues to be predominantly male, the percentage of women tends to increase. This trend, which has already been identified in academic literature (Sánchez, 2018), undoubtedly has multiple causes. Within the framework of this work, it is worth asking whether the lower availability of temporary work visas could have some influencing degree on this dynamic, by partially channeling the migratory will of men, but not of women.

The previous reflections can be compared with the employers' responses to the survey, summarized in the following table.

Table 21. Strengths and weaknesses of hiring women according to employers

	Canada		United States	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Hiring women requires additional investment in housing.	6	60%	58	38.7%
Women have less physical strength.	6	60%	46	30.7%
Women have skills that men don't.	5	50%	33	22%
Hiring women can lead to lower productivity due to pregnancy and/or maternity.	1	10%	18	12%
Women don't have the skills we need.	1	10%	17	11.3%
Women have a more positive attitude.	1	10%	15	10%
Hiring women brings risks of violence against women.	0	0%	16	10.7%
Women are less problematic.	0	0%	10	6.7%
There are no specific strengths or problems associated with hiring women	0	0%	48	32%
Total	10	--	150	--

According to the survey, the two most mentioned problems or drawbacks of hiring women are consistent with the interviews. Two central concerns are observed, **the need for additional investment in housing and the fact that women have less physical strength**. However, despite the high percentages, they are not overwhelming percentages, so it is not clear if these problems can really explain by themselves why only 4.9% of those traveling with visas are women, when 50% of those surveyed in Canada and 22% in the United States considered that women have skills that men do not have, and 32% argued that hiring women does not imply any particular problem or challenge in the United States.

Finally, the rest of elements valued by the survey that refer to potential problems and strengths of hiring women do not seem to have a great incidence. Thus, it could be hypothesized that, although there may be significant challenges in hiring women from the point of view of employers, there are also strengths; so, it is likely that a relevant part of the large male predominance in temporary work visas is due to tradition or lack of reflection on gender stereotypes instead of intrinsic reasons. Either way, this is a topic of interest that needs to be explored further, also considering the possibility that employers have not allowed themselves to be fully honest with their concerns for not being politically incorrect.

Regarding the incidence of indigenous or non-indigenous character of workers to access to temporary work visas, numerous interviewees highlighted that it is something that does not interest to employers or over which they have any preference. In fact, some pointed out that Canadian visas are more frequently granted to indigenous people, since the highest percentage comes from rural areas of the department of Chimaltenango, a territory with a strong Kaqchikel predominance. One small recruiter even pointed out that all the workers sent to the United States are indigenous. In parallel, others argued that indigenous people may even be preferred, as they are recognized as more knowledgeable and experienced farmers. In contrast, the only potentially negative argument for hiring members of Mayan villages is possible poor Spanish skills. However, several recruiters highlighted that it is a common practice to send workers in groups, in this way, if someone does not have a good Spanish, they can communicate in their native tongue with other members.

These qualitative arguments are consistent with the evidence from the survey. Although the survey did not ask for self-identification as indigenous or as a member of a population of origin, the languages spoken at home were inquired, allowing more than one option to be selected. The results show that the percentage of those who migrate with visa and come from households where Spanish is not spoken is higher than those who migrate irregularly and do not speak Spanish at household either (18.8% versus 15.1%, respectively, even when the differences are not statistically significant: $\chi^2(1) = 1.80, p = .179$). In parallel, the percentage of those who speak a Mayan language at home and migrate regularly is also higher than those who speak a Mayan language at home and migrate irregularly (52.9% versus 48.3%, respectively, even though in this case the differences are not statistically significant either: $\chi^2(1) = 1.62, p = .204$). In any case, the data indicates that there are zero reasons to assume any type of discrimination in access to temporary work visas for indigenous people.

Finally, in an interview with a recruiter, they reported to be working to develop an indigenous recruitment protocol in order to harmonize indigenous uses and customs with the employers' demands. Two issues stood out during this process. First, employers' preference to receive migrants every year, may collide with the community view that it is unfair if the same neighbors are those who always benefit from traveling. The second point refers to the duty to collaborate with the community in the care of common goods, such as roads or the community authority role; for example, in the COCODE or the Auxiliary Mayor's Offices. Regarding this last matter, it was observed, in the interviews in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants, that those who travel with visas pay remaining neighbors to replace their community responsibilities on certain occasions.



5.7. Workforce demand and employers' preferences

Interviews with employers from Canada and the United States identified three key elements required for the employees: strong commitment to work (work ethic), having a positive and trustworthy attitude, and being able to get along with others. At the same time, the evidence indicates that specific skills are often secondary, and while some employers need workers to have general experience in the area they will be working in, most provide job training. Finally, there are also geographic preferences based largely on established hiring networks.

Strong commitment to work (work ethic)

Employers recognize that rural agricultural territories allow the development of workers who are not only capable of performing physical work but are also accustomed and willing to occupy these jobs. One American employer explained that they were basically looking for people who grew up with a machete and a hoe. Many of the workers recruited for these positions have done farm work since they were children. Most have less than sixth grade of education and have experience only in subsistence farming and working as farm laborers.

Employers point out the need for people to be physically strong, have strength for long days at field, and be able to deal with inclement weather. An employer who works with a greenhouse commented that boxes with tomatoes are heavy, and workers have to be able to lift and move them all day. At the same time, the owner of a nursery explained that workers have to be moving plants from one place to another, there is no shade, and it can be very hot. For these reasons, recruitment is done in rural areas with strong agricultural traditions, looking for people who identify with physical labor in agriculture. Employers recognize that this translates into a capable, willing, and highly productive workforce. A Canadian employer summed it up by explaining that he was looking for people who started working at the age of seven on his father's farm.

Positive and reliable attitude

While most of the employers don't require specific skills, as many prefer to provide job training, they do look for people who have a positive attitude, are open to learning and are trustworthy. As one employer said, "I'm looking for someone who is willing to learn, who can be trained, who gets up in the morning and works hard all day and does it again the next day and does it for six months straight."

Additionally, employers look for workers who have the necessary personal certainty to migrate to a new country and adjust to a new language, culture, and sometimes work. As one Canadian employer explained, "I'm really looking for people with the right attitude and confidence. They are coming to a new place where they don't speak the language. I need people who have the confidence to handle that and have the right attitude." Employers also look for reliable people who, once they've learned the job, can do it with minimal supervision. This requires that workers not only be willing to do their job but have the desire and willingness to work hard and be productive.

Many employers pointed out that documented migrant labor is not cheap labor. Employers invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in visas and travel expenses, and it is important that they select the right people. “At the end of the day, these workers cost me more than \$20 an hour, once housing is counted [minimum wage is \$14 an hour in the region],” one employer stated. It should be noted that the expected attitudes and the expectation of trustworthiness extend beyond the workplace and into personal life, since many workers live on farms or in employer-subsidized housing.

Ability to get along with others

Employers look for workers who can not only get the job done and have a positive, dependable attitude, but also get along with others. As workers travel to Canada and the United States on multi-month contracts and are expected to work and live together, their ability to get along with others is critical. Housing ranges from apartments with two to four workers to larger collective dormitory.

Although employers strive to place workers in a family or community in the same homes, it is not uncommon for them to share housing with people they do not know. This has made employers sensitive to cultural conflicts between workers from different countries, ethnic origins or regions. As a result, many only recruit from a certain region or country. “Some employers provide food, and you can’t have Mexicans and Guatemalans because they eat different foods, so they would be unhappy, and you want to have happy workers, so it’s important to choose a country,” explained a United States labor inspector.

Employers also evaluate workers on an individual basis. They identify workers who cause problems, including starting fights, consuming high levels of alcohol, or leading other workers to complain about them. “There are house rules, and they are expected to abide by them, which are cleanliness, getting along with others and following the rules. And some people can’t do that,” said one employer. Many employers conduct their own interviews and ask questions to try to understand which workers will make successful candidates. It is important to remember that many employers rely on the recommendations of employees they trust the most, since they know not only about the job but also about the living conditions in which they will have to work and function. As one recruiter explained: “I look for people who can get along with others. They are going to live with other people. They need to have a personality that allows them to get along... honestly, I can teach them the job, but personality and attitude can’t.”

Required experience and knowledge

Most employers prefer to train their own workers. As noted above, they look for people with extensive experience in the agricultural field, as well as key indicators of physical strength, persistence, and a willingness to do hard manual labor. Specific tasks vary greatly by employer and can range from pruning plants in nurseries to harvesting agricultural products or managing livestock. Some of these jobs require specialized training, while the most important thing in others is the training or physical capacity to be able to carry them out. As a nursery manager commented: “our requirements are that they have had at least some previous experience on a farm, anything related to plants or agriculture, just so that they can feel comfortable with the type of environment in which they be working”.



As result, most employees look for experienced labor through workers who return year after year. “Right now, it seems like we have a steady group coming every year, and something that must be said about that people who already know how to do half of our jobs, they are becoming our regular employees,” one employee commented. Having an experienced workforce increases productivity and requires employers to spend less time training workers on everything from specific job tasks to housing rules. The returning workers gave the occupants a sense of stability and most are forced to have a percentage of their total workforce repeat each year.

Many employers foster a positive work environment to encourage workers to return. This was highlighted by one employer who noted: “our biggest challenge is figuring out what else would make them happy. The idea is that people want to go back to work every year.” There are employers who provide items like free SIM cards, paid TV services and free vehicles. And at the same time, they allow longtime employees to refer family members.

However, there are employers who find that long-timers become complacent and productivity drops. They emphasize that there is a process in which workers acquire a better understanding of labor laws and stop participating in production incentive programs. For example, programs designed to increase productivity by paying a bonus for harvesting so many pounds of produce per day. Additionally, some employers noted that workers begin to abuse alcohol, resulting in loss of productivity or domestic disturbances. In these cases, employers find it necessary to periodically update a percentage of their workforce with motivated new migrants who are willing to play by the rules. In this sense, one employer pointed out that a balance needs to be struck: “we have to make these guys come back year after year, because what we do is very specialized [...]. We want them back, so we don’t have to retrain them. You cannot retrain a group of people year after year after year.” For most employers, this process occurs as a result of periodic employee evaluation. Employees are tested on everything from job performance to their personal time in employer-subsidized housing.

Employers' preferences based on interviews

The surveys also asked what characteristics they most looked for to hire workers.

Table 22. Characteristics sought by employers to hire workers

	Canada		United States	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Confidence that they will remain until the end of the contract	8	80%	65	41.9%
Personal reliability	6	60%	107	69%
Skills related to the specific job	5	50%	101	65.2%
Physical strength/endurance	5	50%	65	41.9%
Willingness to follow instructions	4	40%	95	61.3%
Previous work experience with us	4	40%	91	58.7%
Fluent in English or French	3	30%	53	34.2%
Other	1	10%	1	0.6%
Total	10	--	155	--

The survey results are consistent with the interviews. The results highlight the importance given to personal reliability, mentioned even more frequently than skills related to the specific job. At the same time, the high percentage of employers concerned about the permanence of employees during the entire contract period is striking, particularly in Canada, which indicates that this is an issue that requires further study. Finally, it is observed that the command of the local language (either French or English) is also of moderate importance for employers. In general, except for the confidence that workers will stay until the end of the contract, there are no marked differences between the responses from Canada and the United States.

Geographic preferences

Most agricultural employers hire workers from regions with a long farming history. When selecting specific countries, employers rely on the recommendations of recruiting companies, neighboring farms, and the workers themselves. This leads to employers having strong ties to specific countries and regions. If they are happy with their workers, most have no interest in recruiting from new areas. For example, in a study carried out by AAH (2019), it was observed that more than 50% of the Guatemalans hired with a Canadian temporary visa lived in the department of Chimaltenango.

New employers use recruiting companies or recommendations from neighboring farms to select their workforce. Once workers are established, most will rely on top performers for referrals to new workers. This often leads to employers only having experience with workers from a small geographic region. In some cases, employers feel dissatisfied with the productivity of the workers they hire and consult with businessmen in the same industry about experiences with people from different countries. In this way, some employers hear from workers from countries like Guatemala and seek to establish new hiring networks.

For employers to hire workers from new countries, it is necessary that other employers in the sector or industrial area already have experience with workers from other regions (to offer recommendations), or that there are recruiters with experience and/or willingness to hire from new territories or countries. It is important to note that many recruitment agencies seem to have strong ties to specific countries and regions. This can limit access unless employers are working with new recruiters.

From the questionnaire to employers, it can be seen that the two most important factors for hiring workers from specific countries are the quality of the workers (understood as a general synthesis of the desired characteristics) and the networks established with workers from such countries, factors respectively mentioned by 84.7% and 68.7% of those surveyed within the three most important reasons.

Chart 2. Key worker characteristics preferred by employers.

Preference	Description
Strong commitment to work	Employers look for labor with a strong commitment to work, linked to life experiences as a family farmer or day laborer. This often means hiring in rural regions with a farming tradition. Here, physical strength and persistence are central features.
Positive attitude	Employers look for workers with a positive attitude toward physical work and interested in learning new skills.
Reliability	Since many workers are expected to perform tasks independently, employers are looking for people who can be trusted to remain productive without constant supervision.
Ability to get along with others	Many workers stay in shared housing offered by employers. The ability of workers to have positive interactions with others, inside and off the job is key, as well as maintaining a clean home and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption.
Field work experience	Most employers prefer to train their workers. However, they also look for people with extensive experience in agriculture, as an indicator of physical strength, persistence, and willingness to do hard manual labor.
Confidence that they will remain until the end of the contract	A significant percentage of employers, particularly Canadians, consider this a central aspect, probably because they have had bad experiences in the past.

5.8. Challenges faced by employers: quantitative evidence

The following table presents the challenges faced by employers, identified in the survey.

Table 23. Challenges faced by employers.

	Canada		United States	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Complex visa application process	7	70%	97	62.6%
Uncertainty about if workers will be available, or when	6	60%	83	53.5%
Costs associated with the visa application process	4	40%	88	56.8%
Costs associated with the recruitment process	4	40%	58	37.4%
Travel costs from the workers' country	4	40%	47	30.3%
Ensure workers' permanence during the contract term	4	40%	26	16.8%
Difficulties for workers to perform their task competently	4	40%	23	14.8%
Housing provision	2	20%	50	32.3%
Conflicts between workers of different nationalities	2	20%	11	7.1%
Few visas available	1	10%	63	40.6%
High wages	1	10%	58	37.4%
Availability of workers at the right time of year	1	10%	46	29.7%
Workers' recruitment/search	1	10%	15	9.7%
Compliance with the workers' labor rights	1	10%	14	9%
Others	0	0%	9	5.8%
Total	10	--	155	--

What does this table show?

First, the complexity of the visa application process appears as a challenge in both countries, which is consistent with all the procedures described above that employers must carry out. At the same time, this is associated with the second most selected challenge, referring to the uncertainty that does not allow certainty regarding the workers' arrival which does not allow employers to plan appropriately.

Then there are three challenges related to costs: visa applications, recruitment and international travel of workers. In particular, the United States is concerned about the costs associated with applying for visas. Along the same lines, there is a significant concern among United States employers about the level of wages they must pay, a concern that does not appear with the same force in the case of Canadian employers.

On the other hand, an interesting difference observed between the responses of employers from both countries is the few visas available in the United States, which is clearly derived from the annual limits established by the US government for H-2B visas. Finally, it should be noted that the recruiting process of workers and compliance with labor rights have not been mentioned in either of the two countries as a notable challenge.

5.9. Perception and experiences related to hiring Guatemalan workers

There are four main emerging themes related to hiring Guatemalan workers. The first refers to the fact that most employers highly value the commitment to work, attitude and productivity of Guatemalan workers. The second includes the challenges of the internal recruitment process in Guatemala, which is characterized by being insufficiently structured or formalized, particularly when the destination is the United States. This lack of structuring means that the companies in charge of processing visas or managing contact with recruiters in the countries of origin of the migrants do not recommend Guatemala (due to the greater uncertainty) and because there is little control over the payment of illegal fees related to visas. The third issue refers to the fact that Guatemala has higher costs. This is due to slower processing at the Canadian and United States embassies and the need to pay for airfare, compared to countries like Mexico (especially problematic for United States employers). Finally, the fourth theme deals with delays in hiring Guatemalan workers.

A committed workforce

Almost without exception, employers who hired Guatemalans described a workforce that is positive-minded and highly productive. As one employer pointed out, they come ready to work. Since most of the recruited Guatemalans come from rural regions with agricultural traditions, it is not surprising that they can adapt to the physical demands of field work. Many have worked in agriculture since they were children. Employers recognize and actively recruit workers with these characteristics, as they constitute a highly productive workforce.

Since employers are responsible for managing labor both in the workplace and in the employer-owned or subsidized housing they offer, they are sensitive to the personal conduct of workers. Some interviewed employers initially recruited Mexican workers, but switched to Guatemalans due to the perception that they were easier to work with. Employers noted that Guatemalans have fewer alcohol-related problems and create fewer domestic disturbances or lost productivity.

Some employers decided to switch to Guatemala due to the increasing absence rates of Mexican workers. An employer who uses H-2B visas noted that “Mexicans have more and more contacts with friends and family [in the United States], and then we saw the escaping rate start to increase.” Most United States employers pay for visa and travel expenses, so when workers leave their jobs, employers lose that

investment. An employer noted, “Our cost per person coming is between \$500 and \$600 per employee, so if I lose 100 people, that costs me \$50,000, so I have a vested interest in finding the best workers, those who are committed to the process and the work”.

It is important to note that **some employers say they are beginning to see increases in Guatemalan dropout rates and are considering shifting their recruitment to countries like Honduras.** Undocumented migration to the United States has increased dramatically over the past decade, and many of the illegal networks that facilitate the journey of Mexican migrants are also available to Guatemalans.

In general, one employer described Guatemalans as willing to work and getting into less trouble. Guatemalan workers seem to receive directions well and to be receptive to employers’ demands. In interviews with workers, they commented on their eagerness to prove their worth to ensure continued participation in the visa program. Employers seem to recognize these attributes and are increasingly receptive to hiring Guatemalan labor, even with the different challenges that hinder hiring in the country.

Less structured recruitment process in the case of United States visas

The interviews carried out show that **the process of recruiting Guatemalans to work in Canada is much more organized and structured than the one destined for the United States.** In the case of Canadian visas, there is a group of consolidated recruitment companies in Guatemala that act as intermediaries between employers and workers. In the case of United States visas, a much more decentralized scenario was observed, characterized by more direct relationships between employers and workers. In general, Canadian companies dedicated to recruiting foreign workers have fluid links with local recruiters who have databases of workers that allow them to satisfy the employers’ demands. These recruiters have established orderly procedures for selecting and processing workers, leading employers to describe this process as seamless and transparent. This reduces the uncertainty and challenges, much more common in the United States visas.

For United States employers, recruitment often depends on **direct relationships between employers and their Guatemalan employees to a large extent, who over time become community or local outreach recruiters.** This recruitment process seems to work well for established employers but is difficult for new ones who might be interested in Guatemala. In fact, the difficulty in finding reliable and established recruiters is a barrier for United States employers without established relationships. Many United States visa processing companies, trusted by most employers, are hesitant to work in Guatemala for the same reason, especially since they already have established relationships with recruiters and labor in Mexico.

Different labor intermediaries and United States visa processing companies seem hesitant to venture into Guatemala, particularly because they lack networks in the country, or their networks have not been sufficiently tested. The result of this is that many of them steer employers away from Guatemala, either by charging bonus, expressing concerns, or not offering services. These actions lead most employers to choose other countries.

As one United States temporary visa specialist noted: “[Employers] rely on these agents to do all the paperwork...The main thing is to convince these agents and attorneys when they get new clients, to guide them to the Northern Triangle [El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala]”. He further indicated that “when [the intermediary company] registers a new client, a new hotel, it says [should say] “Honduras is your option, go to Honduras’, and they say ‘it’s fine’ and they trust it [the intermediary company]”.

Worker-to-worker recruitment schemes have some unintended consequences that are causing great challenges, both for employers and workers. In effect, this scheme has allowed some workers to start charging for visa referrals, despite employers warning them not to. This appears to be very common on both United States and Canadian visas, even though it is not possible to quantify the frequency.

Employers struggle with this problem and implement different strategies to reduce its occurrence. These strategies include having employees sign documents saying they did not pay any fees to obtain the visa and firing those who have charged others, coupled with refunding money to those who made the payments. One employer explained: “I am concerned about the guys who ask their friends to come to work. If I hear someone saying ‘hey, pay me \$500 and I’ll get you a job at X’, they’re immediately sent home.” The topic is regularly discussed with employees at every step of their application process, along with the impacts these payments may have on employers’ ability to continue hiring workers.

Higher costs to hire Guatemalans

Several United States employers repeatedly commented that it is more expensive to hire staff in Guatemala than in Mexico. Concerns about the cost of hiring typically come from employers working in industries tied to commodity prices, which have tighter profit margins. These are typically agricultural employers working with crops such as tomatoes, strawberries, or nurseries that are sensitive to rising labor costs. Employers in other industries, such as landscaping or hospitality, where labor costs can be passed on to clients, were less concerned about hiring costs. For their part, Canadian employers expressed even less concern, as most of the costs are related to airfare, which cannot be avoided.

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There are numerous problems that make hiring Guatemalan workers more expensive. First, the United States shares a border with Mexico, making travel less expensive than the required airfare from Guatemala. Second, many recruiters charge additional fees to work in Guatemala, where they have less developed recruiting networks. Finally, visa processing times are longer, and since United States employers must reimburse expenses related to visa processing, this creates additional costs.

Employers who hire in Mexico rely on ground transportation to transport workers from their homes to their workplace. One nursery owner commented:

“they [workers] travel by bus and we have to cover travel expenses. It’s going to be less expensive than trying to get someone from Guatemala, it could be \$150 per person, plus food and lodging”. Employers who hire in Guatemala buy airline tickets ranging from \$500 to over \$800 per ticket. For some employers, the added cost is difficult to manage, as a United States temporary visa specialist noted: **“Some employers are a little more price sensitive. They just don’t have the ability to set prices. They’re competing with imported food from Mexico and other places, so they just can’t...they don’t have the margins.”**

Higher visa processing fees to recruit in Guatemala are another challenge. Many companies that process visas for employers are not comfortable with Guatemala and do not recruit or charge higher fees to work there. Although the additional fees mentioned ranged from \$100 to \$300 per worker, employers commented that their biggest concern was not the fees, but the doubts they shared about working with Guatemala. The problem appears to be related to uncertainty and longer processing times, so employers take the easiest and least expensive option, without preference.

Since United States employers reimburse workers for visa-related expenses, a longer process can translate into higher costs. Employers cover travel, accommodation and meal expenses when workers submit visa applications and await the Embassy interviews. It’s unclear how much employers reimburse, since visa processing times are variable, and the Embassy of the United States doesn’t always require interviews. However, employers who hire in both Mexico and Guatemala indicate that the costs of working with Guatemala are undoubtedly higher.

Canadian employers rarely pointed out the additional costs of hiring staff in Guatemala. Since Canada does not share a border with Mexico, traveling by airfare is the only option. In contrast, one Canadian employer did point to slower visa processing times and delays in receiving workers. However, as they do not reimburse visa processing fees, this has no cost implications.

In general, both United States and Canadian employers are less concerned about travel and recruitment costs than uncertainty and delays in receiving workers. As one visa processing company commented, “Five years ago, employers complained a bit [about costs]. They were always looking for the cheapest route that could mean a worker was on a bus for eighteen hours instead of getting a plane. But the last two years, employers need those workers, they want those workers, and they realize the expense of getting them there... [then, they prefer] what would be less traumatic for the worker and get them there safely.”

Delays in hiring workers

As discussed above, visa processing times in Guatemala are longer for Canadian and United States visas compared to Mexico. There are two main reasons for these delays. First, the delays in obtaining the Guatemalan passport, and second, slower visa processing times by the respective embassies. It is important to note that the delays in both processes have drastically improved over the last year. However, these delays still resonate with employers who have had negative experiences or who are being advised by visa processing companies in their countries.

Delay in the Guatemalan passports' delivery has contributed to delays in visa processing. During the pandemic, passports were not available and in the past two years, passports can take up to a year to be processed. First-time visa applicants or those with expired passports had difficulty in obtaining visas. **In the last year, the Guatemalan Government has made efforts to expedite passports for visa applicants.** In some cases, mobile passport processing facilities have traveled to rural areas with large numbers of temporary work visas. In Vancouver, Canada, the Guatemalan Consulate is renewing passports for TFWP workers.

Today, there is the possibility of expedited processing of passports in a month according to several recruiters and employers. However, it is not clear how to access this option, as not all recruiters seemed to be aware of or have access to it. This is likely the result of a communication problem, but it contributes to delays for employers hiring workers. In any case, an interviewee indicated that the procedures for issuing passports have been greatly accelerated, so this procedure was no longer so necessary.

A second delay concerns slower visa processing times by the Canadian and United States embassies. Employers noted that the United States embassy takes longer to process applications and schedule interviews than their Mexican counterparts. The visa takes 2-4 weeks to process in Guatemala, which is 2-3 times longer than in Mexico. Over the past year, there are indications that this timeframe has been reduced to 3-5 days; however, there is still a perception that the process is taking longer in Guatemala.

In the case of Canada, delays at the embassy are result of workers' passports having to be mailed to the Canadian embassy in Mexico for visa stamping. Canadian visas are approved regionally, and Mexico was selected to process visas for most of Central America. The result is one to two weeks of delay in sending and receiving passports. In both, the United States and Canadian cases, a lengthy process results in employers experiencing delays in receiving workers. In addition, employers wait to buy plane tickets until workers have their visas in hand, creating additional costs. While some employers try to anticipate and plan for these delays, others lose workdays in their businesses. As one nursery producer pointed out: "I need them working here, not waiting for their visas there."

During the past year, efforts have been made to overcome many of the challenges in hiring Guatemalan workers. Guatemalan workers are recognized by most employers as a highly productive and desirable workforce. However, visa processing companies and recruitment networks in Guatemala are still developing, and narratives of previous negative experiences need to be overcome. A United States temporary visa specialist stated it best when he said that **"we don't want to push all of our members down this path...the worst that could happen is that everyone is upset that processing takes forever, then there is a bad face and the reputation spreads, and then nobody is going [to look for workers in Guatemala]. These [hiring] numbers are increasing, and I hope we get to a point in which we can go full steam ahead and word of mouth starts to spread, and everyone starts to jump on board."**

Quantitative evidence

Surveys to employers also analyzed the reasons for hiring (or not) Guatemalans. From the interviewees, 23 had done so (9 from Canada and 14 from the United States), while the rest had not. The following table analyzes the reasons why the rest of the interviewees had not hired Guatemalans.

Table 24. Reasons why Guatemalans were not hired

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
I have no contacts in Guatemala	80	60.6%
I have never considered Guatemala	47	35.6%
My recruiter does not work with Guatemala	35	26.5%
Travel costs are higher	29	22%
My recruiter advised me not to hire Guatemalans	3	2.3%
Other producers advised me not to hire Guatemalans	3	2.3%
Total	132	--

The quantitative results show that the main reason for not hiring Guatemalans **is the lack of connection with Guatemala. The two main causes for this were lack of direct contacts with Guatemalans by the employers, and the tendency of working with recruiters that have no ties to the country.** Additionally, there was sentiment of some never having thought about the possibility of hiring workers from Guatemala. This leads to a recommendation that a recruiter or a visa processing company could eventually give if they had fluid contacts and ties with local workers or recruiters. Thus, it can be observed that at this moment, the main restriction for hiring Guatemalans has to do with the lack of contacts and employers' relations with Guatemala (direct or through recruiters). From this derives the importance of promoting Guatemala among foreign employers and recruiters and generating actions to develop links between local recruiters and foreign recruiters or companies. At the same time, this is positive, the results show that there are very few cases in which recruiters or other producers advised against hiring workers from Guatemala.

On the other hand, it should also be noted that **22% of interviewees indicated that they had not hired Guatemalans because the travel costs were higher**, a percentage that could increase if employers seriously consider working with Guatemala, since currently they might not know that travel costs are indeed higher. Thus, the relevance of this percentage must be taken with care, since it will surely be higher among those who really consider the possibility and obtain cost information.

Regarding the interviewees who indicated that they had hired Guatemalans, they were asked if they planned to continue doing so. In total, 19 indicated yes, 2 no, while the rest did not answer the question. Those who answered “yes” argued that Guatemalans were hard-working (95%), had the necessary skills (53%), were more trustworthy than other nationalities (47%), and that they had contacts in Guatemala (47%) as employers. In contrast, one of the cases that reported that it would not hire Guatemalans stated that its employees had not completed their contract, and the other one that had decided not to have workers of mixed nationalities. **These results suggest that Guatemalans are valuable workers for employers when they meet them, and that the abandonment of contracts is something that should be paid close attention,** since it can negatively impact even Guatemala’s prestige level as a source of reliable workers.

Chart 3. Synthesis of challenges faced when recruiting Guatemalan workers

Challenge	Description
Lack of contacts and experience with Guatemalan workers	Employers with established worker networks in other countries have no reason to expand into new regions, especially since they rely on the worker-to-worker selection system based on recommendations.
Decentralized and fragmented recruitment process (USA)	Recruitment for United States visa programs is fragmented with many small recruiters working with individual employers. New employers and many United States visa processing companies lack reliable contacts in Guatemala to hire labor. Within this context, the MINTRAB Labor Mobility Program occupies an increasingly important role.
Higher recruitment costs	United States visa programs is fragmented with many small recruiters working with individual visa processing companies have limited recruiting experience and networks in Guatemala. This translates into greater uncertainty, which discourages recruitment through higher fees.
Higher mobility costs in Guatemala and travel to the United States.	The costs of transporting workers to the United States, usually by air, are two to three times higher than ground transportation used for Mexican workers. Added to this are higher internal transfer costs in Guatemala for paperwork, which must be covered by United States employers.
Delays in hiring workers	Passport processing and visa processing times are longer compared to Mexico, as result of delays at Embassies. However, the issuance of passports and United States visas appear to have sped up.

5.10. Employers’ expectation on labor recruiters and intermediaries

Most employers in Canada and the United States appear to have little or no contact with recruiters in the countries of origin of their workers. Instead, they usually hire companies specialized in recruiting workers and managing visa processes. Employers usually provide these companies with information on the number of workers needed, period of employment, required skills and, if they have them, a list of workers they wish to hire (whether they are migrants who have already worked with them or that have been recommended by those who already did it). In turn, these companies often hire recruiters in each country to identify and hire workers in their countries of origin.

However, this process can also occur in other ways. For example, through the direct hiring of a recruiter in the country of origin of the migrants, or even the direct process management with the support of recruiters or intermediaries (not necessarily formal) located at community level. In the case of United States visas in Guatemala, the direct link with workers or with informal local intermediaries seems to be much more frequent compared to other countries such as Mexico, in which the arrival of United States employers to the workers is much more institutionalized.

In general, recruiters are expected to hire a workforce that is willing to work, that is productive, and fully compliant. Since some employers require workers with specific skills or experience, they are expected to have extensive knowledge of the country, its people, and the employment histories of different regions. In addition, to have the ability to develop relationships with communities to provide labor with the required skills and commitment to the work they must do (work ethic). This makes it easier to hire new workers when employers do not provide names. Recruiters must maintain a database of workers, with different skills, who can be hired as needed. A few of the main employer complaints about the Guatemalan Government recruitment agency (MINTRAB Labor Mobility Program) are its limited worker database and lack of capacity to quickly respond to employer requests.

Recruiters are also expected to operate ethically by not charging visa access fees or recruiting workers by giving inaccurate information about the type of work and working conditions that await them. The collection of illegal fees is a major problem in many of the visa programs. Employers consider that they could have different degrees of legal responsibility in case workers pay illegal fees to obtain visas, so they seek to reduce risks by hiring good recruiting companies. At the same time, employers expect recruiters to not only act ethically and responsibly themselves but also to help reduce or avoid worker-to-worker referral payments.

Additionally, employers point out that **it is essential that the companies or stakeholders that recruit workers clearly and transparently report job expectations and contracts terms.** Many employers have specific expectations regarding output, productivity, physical demands and expected working hours, as well as set living conditions and wages. In this context, it is understood that recruiters must not only ensure that workers understand contractual expectations, but also have the physical ability to do the job. In this way, recruiters must not only look for workers in regions where the appropriate qualities exist, but also have selection processes that make it possible to identify workers with the skills, knowledge and strength that each employer requires. Undoubtedly, employers hope to avoid workers who are unproductive or fail to complete their contracts due to incorrect expectations.

Detection of workers who have a high probability of not fulfilling their contracts, or not returning to their countries of origin when the contract ends, is also a task assigned to recruiters. Although, these recruiters, despite guaranteeing a clear understanding of contracts, usually implement different strategies to prevent those who obtain the visas from abandoning their jobs. Considering the economic cost of irregular migration for the migrant himself, visas are undoubtedly a tempting option. As result, many recruiters often consider factors that can help reduce job abandonment or non-return rates. These include selecting workers who don't have legal problems, who have never attempted to migrate illegally, and who have dependents at home. Some recruiters even avoid workers with tattoos or are single.

Additionally, employers expect recruiters to understand the bureaucratic processes required by each visa, as well as a demonstrated ability to navigate potential inconveniences. This often means building relationships with both the Guatemalan government and embassy officials to overcome or anticipate challenges in the application process. Recruiters should also avoid selecting workers who are likely to be turned away from visa applications because of criminal records or deportation.

From the employer survey, it was observed that 87% of those who used recruiters consider it key to select reliable workers with the right skills and 71% to ensure a transparent recruitment process. These results are fully consistent with the qualitative evidence. However, it is striking that only 16% consider it key to offer their services at low cost, which shows that those who choose to hire recruiters prioritize service quality over cost. Thinking about the role of MINTRAB's Labor Migration Program, it is clear that offering the service free of charge is an advantage, but quality is undoubtedly the most important attribute.

5.11. Sending and use of remittances

Remittances constitute a key source of resources, not only for the families that receive them, but for the country as a whole. As previously indicated, **remittances received in Guatemala exceeded \$15 billion dollars for 2021** (Banco de Guatemala, 2021). At the same time, they help vulnerable families improve their socioeconomic situation (Cohen, 2011; IOM, 2017).

This section focuses on comparing the reception and use of remittances between regular and irregular migrants. Taking the sample of random surveys, it is observed that 87.4% of the people who migrate send or bring remittances, while 8.8% do not. At the same time, in 3.8% of the cases, the interviewees did not know or did not want to answer. In general, the most frequent scheme is periodic delivery, corresponding to 96.5% of cases. Instead, bringing them back, using a mixed scheme or other alternatives represents only 3.5%. Based on this, it was analyzed with the complete sample of surveys whether regular or irregular migrants were more likely to send or bring remittances.

Table 25. Sending remittances according to type of migration

Do you send remittances?	Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	Total
Yes	434 (96.4%)	237 (87.5%)	450 (100%)
No	16 (3.6%)	34 (12.5%)	271 (100%)
Total	450	271	721

Results show that sending or bringing remittances is more frequent in the case of regular migrants than irregular migrants ($\chi^2 (1) = 21.18, p < .001^{**}$). In fact, the probability that irregular migrants do not send remittances is 253% higher (that is, 2.53 times higher) than regular migrants.

From the point of view of households, 30.5% of households randomly surveyed reported having received remittances currently or in the last 5 years. Comparing regular and irregular migrant households, 88.8% of regular migrants report having received remittances in the last 5 years, versus 70.5% of the latter ($\chi^2 (1) = 30.921, p < .001^{**}$). This means that regular migrant households are 26% more likely to receive or have received remittances in the last 5 years.

This information is consistent with the qualitative evidence. In the interviews conducted in Guatemala, it was reported that irregular migrants sometimes “forget” their families and stop sending remittances, in the two cases. First, when people who migrate are young people without children or without family commitments, it is not surprising that over time they stop sending remittances. Second, when the ties between the person who migrated and the person who stayed in Guatemala with their children suffer. On the other hand, it should also be recognized that irregular migrants initially need to establish themselves and find work, so the initial remittance transfer is more likely to be delayed or small. In this line, authors such as Davis and Brazil (2016) highlight from a study carried out in Guatemala that irregular migrants often fail to achieve economic success fast enough to avoid the negative effects of their absence on the health and nutrition of their children up to 2 years old.

However, the fact that a family receives or has received remittances in the last 5 years does not mean that they have received every one of them. Those who claimed to have received them did so, on average of 3.04 of the last 5 years. Disaggregating between the types of migration, it is observed that regular migrant households have received remittances for an average of 2.87 years against 3.18 for irregular migrant households, without these differences becoming statistically significant ($t(468) = -1.862, p = .063$).

The following table presents the periodicity with which remittances are received both in the random sample and when comparing between families with different migratory conditions.

Table 26. Frequency of receiving remittances in random households and comparing regular and irregular migrant households

Frequency of remittances	Complete random sample		Regular migrants' households		Irregular migrants' households	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	6	1.8%	4	1.2%	5	3.4%
Fortnightly	89	26.5%	173	52.3%	21	14.2%
Monthly	185	55.1%	141	42.6%	95	64.2%
Quarterly	38	11.3%	10	3%	23	15.5%
Once a year	18	5.4%	3	0.9%	4	2.7%
Total	336	100%	331	100%	148	100%

The differences observed between regular and irregular migrant households are statistically significant ($U = 14,818, p < .001^{**}$). The mean range of regular migrant households is 269, while irregular migrant households is 174. **Since higher values indicate more frequent remittances, it is concluded that regular migrant households receive remittances more frequently.** Qualitative evidence does not deny or confirm this information. The interviews indicate that the most frequent periodicity for sending remittances is fortnightly or monthly, but the frequency is not always the same with irregular migrants and may change depending on the situation. In any case, **it is more frequent that biweekly remittances are mentioned in interviews with regular migrants or their families, in line with the quantitative data.**

The average monthly amount of remittances received was reported in ranges rather than an open-ended question. The results are presented below.

Tabla 27. Monthly amount of remittances received in random households that reported receiving remittances, comparing regular and irregular migration households.

Monthly average amount of remittance received	Complete random sample		Regular migrants' households		Irregular migrants' households	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than Q250	3	1.1%	2	0.7%	0	0%
Between Q250 and Q1,000	34	12%	11	3.7%	14	11.8%
Between Q1,000 and Q2,000	52	18.3%	13	4.4%	32	26.9%
Between Q2,000 and Q4,000	51	18	52	17.7%	26	21.8%
Between Q4,000 and Q7,000	81	28.5%	126	42.9%	22	18.5%
Between Q7,000 and Q10,000	50	17.6%	72	24.5%	18	15.1%
More than Q10,000	13	4.6%	18	6.1%	7	5.9%
Total	284	100%	294	100%	119	100%

The existence of statistically significant differences in the monthly average of remittances received by households with different migratory conditions was evaluated. The average range was 227 for regular migrant households and 157 for irregular migrant households. Since a higher average range indicates a higher amount, it is concluded that regular migrant households tend to receive higher monthly remittances on average ($U = 11,498$, $p < .001^{**}$). This is also clear when observing that the average amounts of Q2,000 or more are systematically more frequent in the case of families of regular migrants. For their part, the interviewees do not seem to have an opinion on whether regular or irregular migrants send more money.

Additionally, a calculation of the monthly amount of remittances was approximately carried out as a guide. For this purpose, it was considered that the value 'less than Q250' was 250, and that more than Q10,000' was 10,000. Regarding the rest of the values, an average was taken for each range (for example, if the range was between Q2,000 and Q4,000, Q3,000 was taken as the value). Thus, an average of Q4,414 was obtained for the random sample, Q5,673 for households with regular migrants and Q4,023 for those with irregular migrants. It is also observed that the monthly average amount of the families of regular migrants is higher. For its part, the information from the interviews also recovers the diversity of amounts reported in the table. In the case of regular migrants, the most frequently reported monthly amounts are between Q6,000 and Q15,000, somewhat higher than the amount estimated in the previous calculation. In any case, it is clear that these values must be taken only indicatively and with extreme caution.

The use given to the income from remittances was investigated in the interviews. Answers are varied, but in general it is observed that remittances are used primarily to cover immediate family needs such as food, clothing and health, to which is added the education of children. Household improvement appears as one of the most frequent uses given to remittances. Regarding expenses or investments aimed at production or income generation, some mention that remittances can be used to purchase agricultural inputs for production, such as fertilizers. However, the purchase of agricultural land is the most frequent productive investment. In parallel, investments are also appearing to start small businesses such as stores, hardware stores or shoe stores. In a specific case, the purchase of a machine to make prints was also mentioned. In general, these uses of remittances have been mentioned in previous literature (Adams and Cuecuecha, 2010; Brodbeck et al. 2018; Housen et al., 2013; IOM, 2017).

On the other hand, it is worth noting the case of regular migrants who are engaged in agricultural activity, they are also integrated into dynamic markets and are part of cooperatives or are associated with consolidated companies. In such cases, it is observed that migrants often use remittances to capitalize and modernize their own production; for example, installing irrigation systems. In these cases, there seems to be a context that favors the productive use of remittances, since migrants do not have to generate a new business upon returning, but rather can enhance what they already do, knowing that they have a guaranteed market together with the support of the organizations to which they are a part.

Additionally, it should also be noted that the interviewees tend to point out that the uses given to remittances tend to change over time. In particular, they are usually used to cover immediate subsistence needs and to pay debts related to the migration process, while it is more frequent that they are later used to improve homes and, eventually, make investments.

As part of the survey, the way remittances are used was also analyzed. The following tables differentiate between daily expenses and investments and compare families of regular and irregular migrants.

Table 28. Expenses covered for the most part by remittances in random households and differentiating regular and irregular migrants' households in the complete sample (cases in which remittances were received in the last 5 years).

Expense type	General random sample	Regular migrant families	Irregular migrant families	Are there differences between regular and irregular?
Food purchase	91.1%	96.4%	90.5%	$\chi^2(1) = 6.871, p = .009^{**}$
Health expenses	65.3%	70.9%	56.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 9.166, p = .002^{**}$
Education expenses	30%	41.1%	25%	$\chi^2(1) = 11.562, p = .001^{**}$
Payment of services (water, electricity...)	39.8%	52.3%	43.9%	$\chi^2(1) = 2.846, p = .092$
Fee for rental or home purchase	5.9%	7.5%	4.7%	$\chi^2(1) = 1.273, p = .259$
Emigrant debt payment	32.9%	33%	39.9%	$\chi^2(1) = 2.098, p = .147$
Agricultural inputs: seeds, fertilizers, others	8.3%	19.8%	8.1%	$\chi^2(1) = 10.344, p = .001^{**}$
Average	39%	45.9%	38.4%	

Table 29. Investments covered with remittances in random households and differentiating regular and irregular migrants' households in the complete sample (cases in which remittances were received in the last 5 years).

Investment type	Relevance of remittances to be invested	General random sample	Regular migrant families	Irregular migrant families	Are there differences between regular and irregular?
Land for agriculture	Primary	27.1%	32.4%	24.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 7.908, p = .019^*$
	Secondary	9%	15.5%	9%	
Farm tools or equipment	Primary	3.1%	9.8%	0.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 22.12, p < .001^{**}$
	Secondary	8%	17.8%	6.3%	
Animals or livestock	Primary	2.4%	3.8%	0.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 5.42, p = .02^*$
	Secondary	3.1%	4.5%	1.5%	
Facilities for trade or business	Primary	1.1%	2.2%	1.6%	$\chi^2(1) = 1.24, p = .26$
	Secondary	2.5%	3.6%	1.6%	
Trade or business establishment	Primary	1.7%	3.5%	0.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 5.75, p = .017^*$
	Secondary	4.2%	6.4%	2.3%	
Home improvements	Primary	12.9%	49.5%	32.6%	$\chi^2(1) = 28.40, p < .001^{**}$
	Secondary	37.8%	20.3%	10.1%	

NOTE: To calculate the statistical differences between families of regular and irregular migrants, the variable was dichotomized between those who used remittances and those who did not to finance the investment.

These tables offer a lot of valuable information. In the first place, it is observed that **remittances received by regular migrant households are used more frequently both to cover current expenses and to make investments compared to those of irregular migrants.** This is observed both in the current average use of remittances (45.9% versus 38.4%, respectively) and the percentages in the table corresponding to investments. In practice, this seems to indicate that remittances are much more significant in regular migrant households than in irregular migrant households, which is fully consistent with the higher frequency and higher average amount identified in the case of regular migrant households. On the downside, this could also indicate a greater reliance on remittances. However, subsequent analyzes related to well-being indicators do not seem to support this counter hypothesis.

On the other hand, the results also show that there are **no statistically significant differences between both types of households regarding the use of remittances to pay the debt contracted to emigrate,** which suggests that it also constitutes a relevant expense for households of regular migrants. This seems to contradict the results of a study carried out in the countries of the Central American Northern Triangle, which found that regular migrants tended to commit the assets and savings of their family and friends to a lesser extent to migrate, since they could use their own savings to a greater extent to finance the trip (Ruiz Soto et al. 2021).

Regarding investments, it is observed that regular migrants' households use remittances to make productive investments more frequently than irregular migrants' households. This is very interesting, as it shows the potential of regular migration to drive the development of future income-generating activities (this argument holds even when home improvements are excluded from the analysis). Additionally, the analysis of the complete table also allows us to observe that the two most frequent investment items are home improvement and the purchase of agricultural land. However, in the case of regular migrants' households, the purchase of agriculture tools or equipment becomes relevant, something rarely mentioned by irregular migrants' households. Perhaps this is related to the fact that regular migrants are hired for agricultural work much more frequently than irregular migrants, or that they worked in agriculture before migrating. In any case, it shows specific opportunities to support regular migrants at the time of return.

Additionally, the following table analyzes whether the probability of using the money for different investments increases, if the number of years (within the last five) in which families received remittances.

Table 30. Correlation between the frequency of different investments and the years in which remittances were received in the last 5 by accordingly differentiating to family migratory status

Investment type	Families that received remittances	Families of regular migrants	Families of irregular migrants
Land for agriculture	r(495) = 0.19 , p < .001**	r(292) = 0.21 , p < .001**	r(130) = 0.21 , p = .014*
Agriculture tools or equipment	r(476) = 0.16 , p < .001**	r(281) = 0.21 , p < .001**	r(124) = 0.10 , p = .25.
Animals or livestock	r(478) = 0.051 , p = .26	r(281) = 0.048 , p = .42	r(127) = 0.050 , p = .57
Facilities for trade or business	r(465) = 0.036 , p = .43	r(272) = 0.065 , p = .28.	r(123) = -0.053 , p = .56
Trade or business establishment	r(473) = 0.11 , p = .018*	r(277) = 0.11 , p = .009**	r(126) = 0.056 , p = .53
Home improvements	r(497) = 0.21 , p < .001**	r(299) = 0.21 , p < .001**	r(125) = 0.36 , p < .001**

NOTE: The variables referring to investment types considered three levels, including no spending on the respective item (0), use of remittances without being the main source (1) and remittances as the main source (2).

The results referring to all the families that received remittances in the last five years show that four of the six investment items analyzed become more frequent as the years receiving remittances increase: purchase of land for agriculture, agricultural tools and equipment, establishment of a trade or business and home improvements. This confirms the fact that the use of remittances changes over time. Although, it is important to point out that in the specific case of irregular migrants, the increase in the frequency of investments over the years is only observed in the case of purchasing agricultural land and home improvements. This suggests that in the case of regular migration there is a more marked increase in the use of remittances for investment over the years compared to families of regular migrants.

In general, no relevant differences are observed between qualitative and quantitative findings. However, it is clear that the quantitative evidence allows us to analyze in greater detail the differences in the use of remittances between regular and irregular migrants' households. Thus, the percentage of current expenses covered with remittances is higher in regular migrants' households and investments are clearly more frequent.

Additionally, the interviews made it possible to address issues that were not considered in the surveys. In the first place, it is interesting to present the difference that many interviewees make between good and bad use of remittances. In general, this differentiation assumes that there are uses of remittances that do not contribute to the long-term well-being of the family, the reason why they are considered inappropriate; while other uses do, which is why they are considered more desirable. Between these two uses, a third category can be located that refers to daily expenses related to food or subsistence, which are considered necessary, even when they do not generate a persistent impact on well-being. Thus, it is argued that there are people and families who know how to use remittances that allows them to really benefit, while others do not know how to do it and waste them on ephemeral consumption. Along these lines, numerous interviewees argued that community members often lack the skills, experience and necessary knowledge to make good use of and invest the income.

In particular, among the expenses considered as negative, excessive alcohol consumption is mentioned to which is added the purchase of expensive cell phones, non-essential clothing, motorcycle or even a car or van. In this case, they are considered unnecessary or superfluous expenses because they are not essential for life, they depreciate quickly and do not generate income. One interviewee even indicated that the improvement and construction of homes beyond the true family needs is a way of throwing money away. In contrast, the most valued uses of remittances are the purchase of agricultural land, start-up of a business or entrepreneurship, and construction of houses. Based on this differentiation, several interviewees highlighted the need to generate financial education or orientation actions for a better investment of remittances, in order to favor a lasting use of the income derived from migration.

Another aspect also addressed in the interviews was who makes the decisions regarding the use of remittances. In this case, no differences were identified between regular and irregular migrants either. In general, numerous interviewees argue that the couple is who decides how to use the money, based on an agreement. An interviewee from Chimaltenango specifically commented that the money was kept in the bank month after month, and with his wife, they decided together what to do when he returned. However, it is understood that this organization is only possible in the case of regular migrants. In other cases, it was argued that whoever sends the money actually decides how to use it. Thus, it was commented that sometimes, husbands send money and ask their wives to share photos of the things they bought to be sure of the use given to the remittances.

Additionally, several people interviewed pointed out that those who receive the money usually have limited freedom to make decisions, even hidden from the person who sends it, as has been mentioned in different studies (World Bank, 2015; Molina, 2005). Based on this, several interviews highlighted the importance of women making good use of money, avoiding using it for superfluous consumption. At the same time, it was also commented that making good use of money means not living only on remittances but working in the fields and producing food to reduce expenses. In any case, communication between the couple was mentioned as an important facilitator for shared decision making.

Below is a summary of the differences between regular and irregular migrant households regarding the use of remittances.

Chart 4. Synthesis of findings regarding the sending and use of remittances comparing regular and irregular migrant households

A higher percentage of regular migrants send remittances to their families compared to irregular migrants (the probability of not sending remittances is 253% higher in the case of irregular migrants)

Households of regular migrants are 26% more likely to have received remittances in the last 5 years than those of irregular migrants.

Households of regular migrants receive remittances more frequently than those of irregular migrants

The average monthly amount of remittances received by the household is higher in the case of regular migrants' households

The remittances received by regular migrants' households are used more frequently to make current expenses, lead to a greater amount of investment and are more decisive in their financing

Investments to purchase agriculture tools or equipment are much more frequent in regular migrants' households.

In general, the use of remittances for investment increases with the number of years in which remittances were received. This is more marked in the families of regular migrants.

The preceding table demonstrates that regular migration has a much higher potential to improve households' quality of life than irregular migration. In particular, it is observed that remittances arrive earlier, are more frequent, and in higher amounts. Additionally, they lead to more investments that suggest a greater capacity to have a long-term impact on families and communities.

5.12. Use of knowledge acquired abroad

Interviews conducted in Guatemala show that migrants usually acquire new knowledge and skills from the jobs they perform. Among them can be mentioned knowledge about work in the field, irrigation, use of pumps, work with power tools, management of new crops and veterinary applications and insemination, among others. In this line, the Department of Labor Mobility of MINTRAB reported that is working to be able to certify skills acquired abroad with the support of the Technical Institute for Training and Productivity (INTECAP).

Some interviewees commented that they were able to take advantage of the knowledge acquired; for example, by installing tape irrigation, improving livestock management or incorporating new agricultural products that they learned to grow abroad. A paradigmatic case of this, it is a farmer who learned to use veterinary products in Canada, and now he is consulted by his neighbors in case of need.

However, numerous interviewees highlighted that the use of this knowledge was scarce or even impossible, since the productive practices were very different, particularly because they had a high degree of mechanization or because they corresponded to a different climate. A regular migrant from Chimaltenango specifically recounted that he had learned to use power tools, but that they did not exist in Guatemala. Even so, he managed to implement some ideas related to irrigation. Another interviewee noted that the machines used in Canada are different from those used in Guatemala. Another one summed up the difficulty in using knowledge acquired abroad by stating: “it is not the same there, as it is here”. These results are consistent with the findings of Budworth et al. (2017), who observed that Mexican workers who migrated to Canada through temporary employment programs had difficulty in applying the knowledge acquired in their rural contexts of origin. At the same time, they are also in line with the results of a previous work by ACH (2019), in which farmers who traveled to Canada and the United States with visas explained that they could not use the knowledge acquired abroad because they did not have the machinery, facilities and inputs used there.

Within this context, the experience of Fundación Juan Francisco García Comparini (certified recruiter based in Santiago Sacatepéquez) may be of interest. The Foundation is an expression of the social responsibility area of four Guatemalan companies in the agro-export sector. Currently, it selects farmers linked to these companies to participate in temporary agricultural work visa programs in the United States in response to labor requirements from foreign partners. Notably, traveling farmers are already integrated into dynamic trade chains before they travel. At the same time, according to reports from the Foundation, workers tend to be highly valued by United States employers, since they have good knowledge in relevant areas.

In particular, what is interesting to note here, it’s that many of the returning farmers seem to make good use of the knowledge acquired. Some even return with an interesting willingness to expand their productive activity, compared to previous more conformist attitudes. When analyzing this case, it is possible to identify some factors that may be key to making good use of the knowledge acquired abroad. First, a relative coincidence is observed between the productive activity carried out in Guatemala and that carried out abroad (agricultural activity linked to a certain productive sector). Second, it is necessary to recognize that these are producers already integrated into organized or even dynamic commercial chains, so that upon their return they do not have to generate a new productive alternative, but simply invest in the production line with which they have been working. Finally, the linkage in Guatemala with the companies that buy their production can also function as a support framework when making investments. Thus, although it is probable that these characteristics are not present in most of the cases of regular migrants, it would be advisable for them to be considered when generating actions aimed at promoting the use of such knowledge.

In the survey carried out in Guatemala, information was collected on the areas of work experience abroad, the use of knowledge acquired and the reasons why it had not been possible to put the new knowledge to use. The following table shows the distribution by areas and the type of work carried out abroad by the members of the families surveyed (note that this information corresponds to both the interviewees and the people referred by them in the questionnaires).



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Table 31. Type of work done abroad, comparing regular and irregular migrants

Type of work	Have you ever traveled with a visa?		Total
	No	Yes	
Agriculture activities	54 (17.4%)	370 (79.9%)	424
Construction	110 (35.4%)	16 (3.5%)	126
Care for elderly or children	0 (0%)	1 (0.2%)	1
Hospitality, restaurants	64 (20.6%)	6 (1.3%)	70
Cleaning	16 (5.1%)	2 (0.4%)	18
Forest works	5 (1.6%)	26 (5.6%)	31
Other	62 (19.9%)	42 (9.1%)	104
Total	311 (100%)	463 (100%)	774

After reading the table, it can be seen that there are statistically significant differences in the distribution of the type of work performed, depending on whether the person ever traveled with a temporary work visa or not ($\chi^2 (6) = 368, p < .001^{**}$). In general, it is observed that the vast majority of temporary regular migrants carry out agricultural activities. In the case of irregular migrants, there is a predominance of work related to construction, followed by the hospitality and restaurant industry, and then by agricultural activities. These data are interesting, since they show the areas in which migrants develop knowledge and skills as result of their work experience. The following table analyzes the use given to the knowledge acquired abroad.

Table 32. Use of knowledge acquired abroad when comparing regular and irregular migrants.

Did you acquire knowledge abroad and use it?	Have you ever traveled with a visa?		Total
	No	Yes	
No, no knowledge was acquired	7 (8.4%)	11 (4.4%)	18
Yes, but it was not used	63 (75.9%)	145 (57.8%)	208
Yes, to start or improve agricultural activities	9 (10.8%)	90 (35.9%)	99
Yes, to start or improve business activities	4 (4.8%)	5 (2%)	9
Total	83	251	334

In first place, it is observed that 95.6% of the cases of those who traveled some time with a temporary work visa and 91.6% of those who did so without a visa acquired knowledge as result of the work activities carried out. These percentages are very high and to some extent unexpected. It is true that they should be taken

who have not used the knowledge generated, which is higher in irregular migrants. Possibly, this percentage difference can be explained, since carrying out agricultural improvements or undertakings is the most frequent use given to the knowledge acquired, and regular migrants carry out agricultural work much more frequently than irregular migrants. In any case, this information also reinforces the importance of being able to generate support actions aimed at using the knowledge acquired, recognizing that agriculture will be the priority area. In contrast, very few appear to be using the knowledge gained to start or improve business activities. Additionally, **the statistical analysis confirms that there are statistically significant differences in the uses given to the knowledge acquired while working abroad, depending on whether they are migrants who have ever traveled with a temporary work visa or not (Likelihood Ratio = 22.67, $p < .001^{**}$).**

The following table explores the reasons for not using knowledge acquired abroad.

Table 33. Reasons for not using the knowledge acquired abroad, comparing regular and irregular migrants.

Why did you not use the acquired knowledge?	Have you ever traveled with a visa?		Total
	No	Yes	
Lack of money for investment	9 (14.5%)	31 (21.4%)	40
Lack of guidance or knowledge to get a business or production up and running	1 (1.6%)	6 (4.1%)	7
Knowledge was not useful for us	49 (79%)	75 (51.7%)	124
Other	3 (4.8%)	33 (22.8%)	36
Total	62	141	207

The results show that the reasons to explain the non-use of knowledge acquired abroad are distributed differently between both groups ($\chi^2 (3) = 15.3, p = .002^{**}$). The main reason is that the knowledge was not useful, which is fully consistent with the interview's narrative, in which it was highlighted that the mechanization of production and crops are not compatible with the Guatemalan reality. However, there is a relevant percentage of cases where the reason was lack of money for investment. Possibly, in situations like this, it would be possible to act by generating opportunities to access resources, credits or grants. It is important to note that access to formal credit is currently particularly low in rural Guatemala, according to a recent study carried out in the North and Northwest of Guatemala by FAO (2020).

On the other hand, it is observed that the percentage of cases where the problem was lack of technical assistance are few, although this should be taken with caution, since the existence of guidance or specialized technical support could contribute both to increasing the effectiveness of the use of the knowledge acquired as expanding the possibilities of its use. Finally, in the case of those who ever migrated with a temporary work visa, it is observed that 22.8% of the cases could not practice their knowledge for other reasons. It would be convenient to explore in greater depth what these reasons may be in the future, beyond the standard answers to the questionnaire.

5.13. 5.13. The problem of permanence of temporary workers when the visa ends

Once their visa period ends, the permanence of migrant workers in Canada or the United States is a matter of concern for different stakeholders, including from governments up to employers, recruiters, and even members of grassroots organizations and community leaders. Note that the United States Migration Policy Institute (MPI) argued that creating mechanisms is crucial to avoid the permanence of workers once the visas expired (Ramón, 2021). At the same time, it also seems to be a rather opaque topic, both because of the little information that is available and because of the concern or discomfort that talking about it generates in certain interlocutors. As if it were something that must remain hidden because of the possible consequences of bringing it to light. For example, the leader of one of the communities with the highest percentage of visas in Guatemala indicated that he only knows two people who have not returned to his community in the last 18 years. It is true that he may not have been interested in asking about it. However, it is most likely that he tried to minimize the matter.

Under the umbrella of migrants' permanence after the end of a visa period, two different situations can be identified in general. On one hand, workers who do not show up for work in the destination country or who leave their post after starting. And on the other hand, those who end their contract, but do not return. Although both situations share the decision of no return, they also have differential elements that justify avoiding the consideration of them as the same phenomenon. In fact, they are likely to have different causes and consequences. For example, if we consider that the main concern of employers is having the labor of migrants, the fact that they decide not to return after finishing their contracts will not be as worrying as if migrants do not show up for work. And by-product, this is likely to impact the recruiter's credibility of providing committed and reliable workers.

In descriptive terms, the percentage of regular migrants who remain after their visa expired is difficult to obtain, and it is not even clear that anyone really has reliable information. Large recruiters are probably the most likely to have this information. A recruiter reported that in other countries a 2% retention rate should be considered a low percentage. Even a medium-sized recruiter operating in Guatemala indicated that in its case, the percentage was less than 1%, based on a very solid selection of people considered reliable, together with signing a contract that imposed economic consequences in case of not returning. Unlike, based on potentially exaggerated but valid data for an estimate, a public official indicated that he thought there was a 7% non-return. Thus, possibly the overall value is between 2 and 7%, although it is clear that more research is needed on the subject. As additional data point, a recruiter who reported a low percentage of migrants who remain, indicated that it had experienced an unexplained increase in cases after the worst part of the pandemic passed.

In general, to understand the dynamics of the phenomenon, it is important to recognize that, although most of the regular migration from Guatemala is destined for Canada, when these migrants decide to stay, they almost always choose to go to the United States, since they understand that they will find better jobs there, with higher salaries and more support networks. One interviewee highlighted that entering the United States through the Northern border is not problematic. Another pointed out that the cost is Q10,000. However, another interviewee, who had made the journey himself, indicated that during the visa period the border can be crossed without inconvenience because it is legal to do so.

Within this context, analyzing the reasons why people choose to remain in the visa destination or return to Guatemala is essential. In general, the reasons for permanence seem to be organized around two fields: equation between incentives and family needs, and the reaction to the job characteristics and the treatment received. However, as we will be seen later, both fields are usually linked.

The causes of permanence in destination countries associated with the equation between incentives and family needs are various.

1 **First of all, it has already been established that wages that workers in non-agricultural jobs can obtain are considerably higher, even 50% or more.** At the same time, in some places it is easier for workers to receive offers to do other better-paid jobs (the case of an employer who reported that it is common for certain people to offer work with better salaries in the vicinity of supermarkets that has already been mentioned). Thus, the difference in the salary paid per hour and between the number of hours offered by the employer who managed the visa, and the new potential employer will work as an incentive to leave the job.

2 **At the same time, the existence of debts or economic needs in the family that cannot be covered with current job income will drive the decision not to return** (although not necessarily to leave the job). A particular scenario, identified on several occasions, refers to short visa periods (two to four months), when the amount paid to receive the recommendation was high. Thus, workers become aware that they will not be able to obtain a significant profit if they return when instructed, which leads them to stay. Consequently, while the illegal payments to obtain the visa are higher and the visa period shorter, the probability of permanence will increase.

In parallel, the same situation applies when the family has previous debts that must be paid, or if a problem arises that will require a significant investment of money, such as a child's serious illness. The Auxiliary Mayor of a community in the department of Chimaltenango explained this by pointing out that the costs of obtaining visas are high, and that there are people who decide to stay because they did not earn enough. More clearly, a neighbor from a community in Huehuetenango explained that some people he knew stayed because their 3 or 4-month visa was not enough to pay the debts they had. As an additional factor, one interviewee also indicated that when deciding to stay, the way in which the money sent as a remittance has been used may have an impact. If the money was used mostly for superfluous consumption and there is no prospect of making any significant improvement, there is a greater possibility of not returning.

3 **Another key element refers to the confidence degree that the worker has that he will be summoned in subsequent years.** This is key, since it is not the same to return believing that one will return next year than thinking that he will not. Analyzing in economic terms, if one expects to return in the coming years, the difference between the expected profits and the ones that can be obtained by remaining without papers are not that great. However, when it is assumed that the possibility of returning in the future is low, the difference in favor of staying irregularly is much higher. This situation is observed when workers have a bad relationship with employers or with group leaders who participate in decision-making, when production goals established in contracts or by bosses are not met, or when migrants perceive that employers have economic problems that can imply the bankruptcy of the business.

In this sense, an interviewee who traveled to Canada for several seasons explained that he never stayed because his employer liked how he worked, and for this reason he always brought him back. Additionally, a particular case related to the low expectation of returning in subsequent years is when those who recruited the workers did not select people with the necessary skills or abilities to carry out the work. Thus, the workers themselves become aware that they do not have what it takes to carry out the work, so they easily assume that they will not be summoned again.

Among the reasons related to the work characteristics and treatment received, two fundamental ones can be mentioned.

4

Sometimes, the work done is considered excessively hard or difficult. This can usually occur when workers' selection was not adequate or when the characteristics of the work to be carried out were not communicated with sufficient clarity. In this case, there is a possibility that employees end up abandoning their work, not because of a cost-benefit evaluation, but mainly because they consider that the hard work is beyond their possibilities. For example, one interviewee highlighted that some workers resign because the working conditions are very demanding, and they fear for their health. Along the same lines, it is interesting to mention that some employers organize the work based on group leaders, who are usually paid a bonus for productivity. Within this framework, it is not implausible that they can sometimes put too much pressure on their subordinates to obtain this extra, thus contributing to the experience that the work demand goes beyond personal possibilities.

5

On the other hand, as mentioned in this work and as indicated by the literature, there are cases of mistreatment by employers (Binford, 2019; Weiler, 2020). At the same time, without going to this extreme, it is possible that the relationship of migrants with employers or with their direct supervisors is bad. Undoubtedly, these situations constitute an incentive to leave work and seek alternatives outside of the relationship with the employer or company that managed their visa. In this sense, a well-informed source indicated that although the Embassies that grant visas do not carry out an individual analysis of who returns and who does not, when it is detected that a high percentage of workers leave a particular employer, it is easily hypothesized that it may be due to situations of mistreatment or abuse.

Finally, two additional causes that contribute to the fact that workers who travel with a visa do not return can also be mentioned.

6

The importance of recruiting companies or local labor intermediaries acting seriously and complying with current regulations, which includes not making improper charges to workers, has been previously mentioned. However, the case of false recruiters who charge high amounts to the supposedly selected workers to access the visas has been heard, under the assumption that they will not later show up to work in the destination country. In these cases, the payment to access the visas replaces the traditional payment made to the coyotes.

7

Finally, cases in which workers do not return to Guatemala at the end of their contract have also been mentioned, because they have family or legal problems in Guatemala (for example, situations of family abuse), which make them less likely to return.

The following table summarizes the identified causes that contribute to regular migrants not returning to Guatemala at the end of their visas.

Chart 5. Analysis of the permanence causes of workers with visas in the countries of destination

Relationship between incentives and family needs	
Cause: Lower wages than in other industries. Generally limited working hours.	Key aspects: Availability of alternative jobs in the area that offer better income and visibility of these jobs. The number of hours offered can be key.
Cause: Payment of high costs to access visas or high family needs due to debts or other family situations, combined with short-term visas	Key aspects: Degree of generalization and amount of illegal payments to access visas. Possibility of real control over these practices. Visa duration. Use given to remittances: superfluous consumption versus perceptible improvements.
Cause: Belief that obtaining the visa again in subsequent years is not viable.	Key aspects: Relationship established between the worker and his supervisor or employer. Fulfillment or not of productivity goals. The existence of unrealistic or excessively high goals. Workers' selection without the necessary skills.
Characteristics of work and treatment received	
Cause: The work performed is considered excessively difficult or hard, even as a risk to health or life.	Key aspects: Selection of unsuitable workers for the job. Lack of clarity when reporting on work conditions. Excessive pressure from employers or group leaders.
Cause: Mistreatment towards workers or bad relationship with employers or supervisors.	Key aspects: Frequency of ill treatment towards workers. Excessive expectations or pressure to increase productivity.
Other causes	
Cause: Fake recruiters or job brokers.	Key aspects: Government control over local recruiters and labor brokers. Scarcity, non-existence or difficulty of access to certified or recognized intermediaries. Degree of fragmentation of recruiters.
Cause: Legal or family problems of regular migrants.	Key aspects: Degree of evaluation of the legal situation of migrants before issuing visas.

Faced with these problems, interviewees who work in recruiters mentioned the implementation of different strategies to prevent or reduce the risk of job abandonment or the permanence of workers at the destination once their contracts have ended. It is clear that this is and should be a central concern for recruiters, since it is related to their ability to offer reliable workers to employers, which means their prestige (that may lose) as companies.

Among the strategies mentioned, the following stand out. The first refers to the selection of reliable people. Within this context, there are cases in which community residents or local leaders are consulted to see if they confirm that they are trustworthy people. On other occasions, the role that local organizations can play by selecting workers within their members has been pointed out. This assumes that the organization will select reliable and skilled workers to maintain the possibility of sending new workers in the future, and that traveling workers will have a commitment to the organization that will deter them from breaching their contract. In the specific case of the Fundación Juan Francisco García Comparini, as a certified recruiter, it only selects workers linked to the four agro-industrial companies (one of them a cooperative) that finance its social promotion activities.

The importance of selecting people with profiles less likely to stay abroad was also mentioned, particularly people who are married or in a permanent union with children. The underlying assumption here is that existing ties in Guatemala will reduce the risk of a non-return. For their part, several recruiters emphasized the importance of sensitizing and educating workers before traveling, by inviting them to reflect on their life plan and the benefits of returning. Additionally, a recruiter reported that they urge employers not to accept workers recommended by migrants themselves, so that they will not assume any responsibility for their abilities or reliability in such cases. Another recruiter indicated that they suggest employers to have a limit on the referrals they receive from each worker, in order to reduce the risk of illegal payments. Finally, the Fundación Juan Francisco García Comparini reported that before starting the trip, they sign a contract with the workers that are being sent (who work with the agricultural companies that finance it), that will imply the loss of an equivalent of US\$10,000 of benefits if they do not return.

Finally, it is interesting to mention the reasons given by the workers who traveled and decided to return, even when they received recommendations to remain without legal papers. The explanations are generally linked to three reasons. First, there is **the desire to return to see family and children**, something that contrasts directly with the reality of irregular migration. Second, **the expectation of traveling again and recognizing it is necessary to return to do it**. Finally, several interviewees also reported that they **returned because staying is illegal, and they want to be honest people**. This last point is interesting, as it incorporates an ethical dimension to the decision to return to origin.

5.14. Impact of the availability of temporary work visas on migration intention: qualitative and quantitative evidence

The capacity of temporary visa programs to favor the establishment of roots of those who remain in the communities of origin and to encourage legal migration alternatives was evaluated in this research. This section focuses on the community level and starts with the following questions: Is the migratory intention different in communities with a high and a low percentage of regular migrants? Are regular and irregular migration valued in the same way in both types of communities? Finally, is the form that the migratory intention acquires different if there is a high percentage of regular migrants in the community? To answer these questions, the results of the interviews carried out in Guatemala and the survey carried out in order to compare between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants are taken up.

The analysis of the interviews shows that the availability of temporary visas to work in Canada and the United States affects in a complex and non-linear way both the migratory intention of the people who remain, and the way in which the will to migrate is materialized. The first conclusion is that the availability of temporary work visas seems to reduce the willingness to migrate irregularly.



Certainly, **the analysis previously carried out shows the reasons why the members of the visited communities prefer regular migration over irregular migration.** In this way, it would seem that the availability of visas initially reduced irregular migration in view of the expectation of a more valued migratory alternative. In this sense, the Auxiliary Mayor of a community in the department of Chimaltenango commented that there was a marked drop in migration without documentation when recruiters came into the community offering travel with visas. For its part, a municipal authority from the department of San Marcos stated that the availability of visas “drastically slows down” irregular migration.

However, in order to fully understand this initial reduction in irregular migration based on the availability of visas, it is necessary to clarify the mediating role of mistrust and fraud expectation. In effect, this initial decrease in irregular migration occurs as long as people in the community believe that the opportunity to access a visa is real and not a deceit. In case they fear the latter, they will not consider the alternative of waiting for a visa. A recruiter pointed out that the first year that we arrive in a community, there is usually a lot of mistrust, but the interest increases exponentially the second year, since they have been able to see that some of their neighbors actually traveled and returned.

In a second moment, it is observed that a percentage of those who intended to migrate found the possibility of doing so through a visa. However, as the available visas do not cover all the demand, some people who had decided to postpone migration without documentation decide to emigrate irregularly. In this sense, several interviewees pointed out that people end up frustrated with so much waiting and choose to leave without papers. Thus, it could be argued that the availability of temporary work visas does not have an impact on the long-term migratory intention, but it does channel it in a manner that respects the regulations.

After having presented the general lines of the analyzed phenomenon, it is convenient to incorporate additional elements to generate a more complex interpretation. On one hand, an interviewee from a recruiter highlighted that visas allow people not to lose ties with their community. As per their opinion, by seeing the benefits of work abroad, family ties and identification with their community are strengthened. An official from a Mayor’s office with a very strong presence of visas even highlighted that migration leads to an increase in the availability of employment in the communities, mainly in the construction area, which ends up decreasing the need to migrate due to the lack of employment. Thus, there are two arguments that would suggest that the availability of visas could reduce the migratory intention.

However, there are also two arguments that suggest that the availability of visas could increase migration intention. First of all, some interviewees highlighted that there are people who are not willing to leave irregularly, due to all the suffering and risks that this implies. Nevertheless, they would be willing to do so with a visa. In this case, the availability of visas would contribute to the willingness to migrate regularly. At the same time, there is a second argument that points out that when many people from a community begin to travel at a certain time, in this case regularly, the economic benefits they obtain become visible to residents. Thus, the desire to achieve what others achieve would strengthen the migratory intention, both regular and irregular.

Finally, some interviewees also pointed out that people over 35 years of age are usually not selected to travel with a visa. In this way, it would be possible to think that the impact on migratory intention could be different according to age. And although it was not mentioned, it is also likely to have a differential impact according to gender, since the low percentage of visas obtained by women possibly limits the perception that migrating regularly is an alternative for them.

Now, what does the quantitative evidence say about these issues? In the first place, the results show that there are no statistically significant differences in migratory intention when comparing communities with a high and low percentage of visas, both when the variable is taken ordinal ($U = 136,060$, $p = .713$) and when it is worked in a dichotomous way ($\chi^2(1) = 2.097$, $p = .148$). Specifically, these data suggest that the availability of visas does not modify the migratory intention of the people who remain, even though there is a trend (not statistically significant) that migratory intention is higher in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants.

Table 34. Migration intention in communities with high and low percentage of regular migrants.

Migration intention	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
No, I totally rule out the possibility of emigrating from Guatemala in the future	80	15.4%	95	18.3%	175
No, I prefer to stay in my community	162	31.2%	127	24.5%	289
No, I think I will not emigrate in the future	13	2.5%	8	1.5%	21
I am indecisive with the idea of emigrating. I don't know what I will do in the future.	7	1.3%	10	1.9%	17
Yes, I think I will emigrate at some point in the future.	242	46.6%	272	52.5%	514
Yes, I plan to emigrate within a year.	11	2.1%	5	1.0%	16
Yes, I have already made preparations to emigrate within a year	4	0.8%	1	0.2%	5
Total	519	100%	518	100%	1037

Table 35. Dichotomous migratory intention in communities with high and low percentage of regular migrants.

Migratory intention	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
No, I do not intend to migrate	255	49.8%	230	45.3%	485
Yes, I plan to migrate	257	50.2%	278	54.7%	535
Total	512	100%	508	100%	1020

NOTE: To construct the dichotomous variable, the three alternatives that indicate the presence of intention to migrate and the three that indicate absence were grouped together, excluding the intermediate or indefinite option.

Due to the possibility that the availability of visas had a differential impact on the migratory intention of different groups, it was analyzed whether certain segments of the population presented different migratory intentions depending on whether they were in communities with high or low availability of visas. In this way, it was evaluated whether the availability of visas had an impact on the migratory intention of men and women, of people older than and under 35 years of age, and households where a Mayan language was spoken or not, or Spanish was spoken or not. The only group where differences were observed was in those who did not speak Spanish at home ($U = 3,810, p = .044^*$)

Table 36. Migratory intention of those who do not speak Spanish at home, by comparing communities with high and low percentages of regular migrants

Migratory intention	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
No, I totally rule out the possibility of emigrating from Guatemala in the future.	24	27.0%	16	21.9%	40
No, I prefer to stay in my community.	30	33.7%	16	21.9%	46
No, I think I will not emigrate in the future.	4	4.5%	2	2.7%	6
I am indecisive with the idea of emigrating. I don't know what I will do in the future,	0	0%	0	0%	0
Yes, I think I will emigrate at some point in the future.	31	34.8%	38	52.1%	69
Yes, I plan to emigrate within a year.	0	0%	1	1.4%	1
Yes, I have already made preparations to emigrate within a year.	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	89	100%	73	100%	162

The analysis carried out showed that the average range of migratory intention in the communities with a high percentage of visas is 75.2, and those with a low percentage is 89.2. Since higher values indicate greater migratory intention, it can be observed that the availability of visas would seem to reduce the migratory intention of those who do not speak Spanish at home. Although the reasons for this are not clear, it is undoubtedly a matter that requires further reflection and analysis. On the other hand, in order to facilitate the results reading, the following table is presented by re-categorizing the migratory intention as a dichotomous variable. The results are also statistically significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 5.65, p = .017^*$).

Table 37. Migratory intention of those who do not speak Spanish at home, by comparing communities with high and low percentages of regular migrants (dichotomized variable).

Migratory intention	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
No, I do not intend to migrate	58	62.2%	34	46.6%	92
Yes, I plan to migrate	31	34.8%	39	53.4%	70
Total	89	100%	73	100%	

NOTE: To construct the dichotomous variable, the three alternatives that indicate the presence of intention to migrate and the three that indicate the absence were grouped together, excluding the intermediate option.

After concluding that the availability of visas does not have a general effect on the migratory intention, we next analyze whether it has any impact on the way in which such migration is channeled. For this purpose, it is analyzed how people from communities with high and low percentage of visas migrated and migrate, and how families with different migratory status are distributed. For the analysis, those who have migrated and returned, as well as those who migrated as part of the households surveyed are included.

Table 38. Distribution of migrants with and without a visa in communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants

Has the person ever migrated with a visa?	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Yes	144	64.9%	15	6.7%	159
No	78	35.1%	210	93.3%	288
Total	222	100%	225	100%	447

Tabla 39. Families with different migratory status in communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants

Migratory condition	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Regular	115	23%	14	2.8%	129
Irregular	54	10,8%	145	29.5%	199
No migrant	330	66,1%	333	67.7%	663
Total	499	100%	492	100%	

NOTE: 10 families categorized as mixed were excluded.

The results obtained show that the percentage of migrants who ever traveled with a visa is much higher in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants ($\chi^2(1) = 165, p < .001^{**}$), as expected. Looking at these tables, it might be thought that they do not offer additional information or a significant contribution to interpreting the phenomenon. However, it is key to consider that these results arise from strictly matched samples. Based on this, it becomes aware that the number of migrants is very similar in both groups (222 in the case of communities with a high percentage of visas, and 225 in the case of communities with a low percentage). This suggests that the migratory intention is similar. At the same time, by observing the previous table, it is also recognized that the percentage of families that have at least one migrant is very similar (33.8% in those with a high percentage and 32.3% in those with a low percentage).

This is interesting, because it reconfirms that the availability of visas does not affect the overall migratory intention in the communities. However, looking in detail, where the availability of visas does seem to have a radical impact is in the way in which this migratory intention is channeled. Indeed, 64.9% of migration has been channeled regularly in communities with a high percentage of visas, and only 6.7% has done so in those with a low percentage. Similarly, while 23% of households can be characterized as regular migrants in communities with a high percentage of visas, this is only possible in 2.8% of households in communities with a low percentage of visas. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that, although the availability of temporary visas does not affect the migratory intention, it does have a decisive and substantial impact on the specific way in which this migration occurs (that means regular or irregular).

However, people who had migrated at least once were considered as equivalent in the previous analysis, without considering the specific time spent abroad, since irregular migration can be very long. At the same time, families were also compared based on their immigration status, without considering the specific number of current and past migrants. To include this dimension in the analysis, the number of people who had migrated as members of the household and were abroad at the time of the survey was compared. The results show that the mean per family of people abroad, in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants is 0.276, and 0.38 for those with a low percentage. These differences are statistically significant ($t(1040) = -2.44, p = .015^*$). Note that the number of people abroad from communities with a low percentage of regular migrants is 37.7% higher.

In parallel, the average number of workers currently abroad from regular and irregular migrants' households was also compared. On average, each regular migrants' household has 0.62 members living abroad, while this figure rises to 0.99 in the case of irregular migrants' households, these differences are statistically significant ($t(590) = -5.50, p < .001^{**}$).

Although these results should be interpreted with caution as the number of regular migrants abroad is likely to vary by time of year, the findings would seem to indicate that regular migrants' households have fewer members abroad on average compared to families of irregular migrants. Possibly, this derives from the fact that migrants without documentation tend to stay abroad much longer than those who migrate with temporary visas, even adding the periods of time corresponding to all their trips. Assuming this conclusion, it could be stated that, given that the migratory intention does not change based on the availability of visas in a community, but the way in which migration occurs does change, and that each family of temporary migrants has on average fewer members abroad, then the availability of visas does reduce the total number of migrants in destination countries.

Additionally, the questionnaire also inquired about the interviewees' opinions about migration and the relationship between temporary work visas and migratory intention. The following tables address these issues.

Table 40. Assessment of regular and irregular migration in communities with a high and low percentage of temporary work visas

Migration assessment	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage	
	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular
Good	94.4%	13%	92.9%	16.2%
Neither good, nor poor	4.1%	32.2%	6%	38.7%
Poor	0.6%	54.8%	1.2%	42.2%
Total	519	100%	518	100%

The results show that migration with a visa is unequivocally valued positively, with no statistically significant differences between the community types ($U = 137,761, p = .089$). For its part, irregular migration tends to be perceived negatively, although without such a homogeneous opinion is observed. In this case, the statistical analysis shows that the differences between both types of communities are statistically significant ($U = 120,854, p = .003^{**}$), and that those interviewees who come from communities with a high percentage of regular migrants value a little more negatively migration without documentation (mean rank of communities with a high percentage 543, mean rank of communities with a low percentage 493, higher scores indicate a higher degree of rejection).

According to expectations, interviewees value regular migration positively, while those from communities with a high percentage of regular migrants have a slightly more negative view of migration without documentation compared to those from communities with a low percentage of visas. However, what is striking is the high percentage of negative evaluations in both groups regarding irregular migration, perhaps derived from the tendency of those who responded to give politically correct answers or to avoid expressing approval or even tepidity with an illegal practice.

The following table collects opinions on the relationship between temporary work visas and migratory intention.

Table 41. Opinions on the relationship between temporary visas and irregular migration in communities with a high and low percentage of irregular migrants.

Degree of agreement with the following statements		Communities with a high percentage	Communities with a low percentage	Are there statistical differences?
Visas are a better way to migrate than migration without documentation	Totally disagree	0.6%	0.4%	U = 132,191, p = .211
	Somewhat disagree	0.2%	0%	
	Neither agree, nor disagree	3.5%	4%	
	Somewhat agree	2.1%	4%	
	Totally agree	93.7%	91.5%	
I think that there are people in the community who do not want to migrate without documentation, but who would surely want to migrate if they got a visa	Totally disagree	0.6%	0.4%	U = 129,599, p = .124
	Somewhat disagree	0.4%	0%	
	Neither agree, nor disagree	5.6%	7.2%	
	Somewhat agree	3.1%	5.2%	
	Totally agree	90.4%	87.2%	
When people know that there are visas, their desire to migrate without documentation decreases because they realize that there are more convenient options	Totally disagree	0.8%	0.6%	U = 130,321, p = .167
	Somewhat disagree	0.6%	0.2%	
	Neither agree, nor disagree	6%	8.3%	
	Somewhat agree	3.9%	5%	
	Totally agree	88.8%	85.9%	

The preceding table confirms three key results of the qualitative inquiry. In first place, it shows that regular temporary migration is considered preferable to irregular migration in a very marked way. At the same time, it also supports the argument that the availability of visas could increase the regular migratory intention. This pertains to cases of people who are not willing to assume the suffering and risks associated with migration without documentation but would be interested in the event that there was a safe option that would allow them to return with their family. Finally, the results also support the idea that the availability of visas can reduce irregular migratory intention.

Finally, the following table shows the way in which the people interested in migrating would think to migrate, after being inquired about their level of migratory intention. The statistical analysis does not show the existence of differences between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants ($\chi^2 (3) = 2.136, p = .545$).

Table 42. Migration modality of those who want to migrate when comparing communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants.

Migration modality	Communities with a high percentage		Communities with a low percentage		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
I would emigrate without documentation	5	1.9%	5	1.8%	10
I do not know yet	3	1.2%	6	2.2%	9
I would only emigrate legally, with a visa	241	93.8%	252	91%	493
Whether with or without documentation, I will migrate	8	3.1%	14	5.1%	22
Total	257	100%	277	100%	534

The results obtained are unexpected, since a very large majority of interviewees state that they would only emigrate regularly, even in communities where access to visas is very low or even non-existent. In parallel, it does not seem reasonable that only a very small percentage, between 5% and 6.9%, is willing to migrate irregularly, considering the high percentages of irregular migration observed, even in communities with a significant number of visas. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the responses do not refer to the migration modes that the interviewees would use or could use, but to what they would like to do. This is very interesting since it reinforces the most important results obtained in this section: the migratory intention in the communities is high, but if people had the opportunity to choose, they would undoubtedly prefer to do it with a visa instead of irregularly. In turn, avoiding risks and being able to return with their families, without having to stay abroad for so long, are perceived benefits of regular migration.

5.15. 5.15. Differences between communities with high and low availability of temporary work visas

Along with other objectives, the research proposed to analyze whether the temporary regular migration programs between Guatemala and Canada and the United States contribute to increasing the well-being not only of migrants and their families but also of their neighbors and communities. In general, numerous interviewees highlighted that temporary work visas have been a great benefit for their communities. Specifically, the temporary visas have increased sending of remittances, improved households of migrant families, and led to greater availability of work for those who stay behind (since remittances boost the community economy). However, in such arguments it is very difficult to differentiate between impacts linked to migration itself and those linked to temporary regular migration.

Thus, work was done based on the surveys and a set of variables was identified that could indicate different forms of well-being, to compare communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants. The following table shows the variables analyzed and the values of the statistic test used. Then, detailed information of cases with statistical significance is presented.

Table 43. Analysis of differences between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants

Variables analyzed	Are there differences between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants?
Household poverty level (Simple Poverty Scorecard)	t(1040) = 0.7654, p = .44
Education level of the interviewee	U = 134,123, p = .73
Making housing improvements or extensions in the last 12 months	$\chi^2(1) = 3.996$, p = .028*
At least one member of the household had a job that generated income for the family in the last 12 months	$\chi^2(1) = 5.335$, p = .013*
Perception of the family economic situation	U = 133,538, p = .565
Changes in the family economic situation in the last 12 months	U = 130,965, p = .285
Participation of a family member in groups, organizations or associations	$\chi^2(1) = 0.59$, p = .442
Degree of trust in the people of the community	U = 123,219, p = .006**
Household that receives or received remittances in the last 5 years	$\chi^2(1) = 0.000$, p = .984
Monthly amount of remittances received	U = 7,570, p = .019*
Valuation of life itself	U = 126,610, p = .025*
Food Consumption Score (FCS)	t(1039) = 1.451, p = .147
FIES scale (ordered according to item severity)	U = 137,302, p = .34

Table 44. Housing improvements and expansions in communities with high and low percentages of temporary work visas

Did you make any repairs or modifications?	Type of community	
	High percentage	Low percentage
Yes	82 (15.8%)	60 (11.5%)
No	438 (84.2%)	461 (88.5%)
Total	520	521

Data shows that households in communities with a high percentage of temporary migrants are more likely to have improved or expanded their home in the past year. Specifically, it is observed that households in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants are 50% more likely to have made housing improvements in the last 12 months compared to households in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants.

Table 45. Households in which at least one member generated income in the last 30 days, in communities with high and low percentages of temporary work visas

Did any member generate income?	Type of community	
	High percentage	Low percentage
Yes	394 (75.6%)	423 (81.5%)
No	127 (24.4%)	96 (18.5%)
Total	520	521

The results show that it is more likely that at least one member of the household has generated income in the last 30 days in communities with a low percentage of temporary work visas. Specifically, it is observed that households in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants are 7.8% more likely that at least one member has generated income for the family in the last 30 days, compared to households in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants.

Table 46. Differences in the degree of trust in people, in communities with high and low percentages of temporary work visas

Degree of trust in the people of the community	Type of community	
	High percentage	Low percentage
Total mistrust	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)
Mistrust	20 (3.9%)	18 (3.5%)
Neither trust, nor mistrust	96 (18.5%)	73 (14%)
Trust	300 (57.8%)	295 (56.6%)
Total trust	102 (19.7%)	135 (25.9%)
Total	519 (100%)	521 (100%)

Being 1 'total mistrust' and 5 'total trust', the mean rank of communities with a high percentage of regular migrants is 497, while communities with a low percentage is 543, which indicates that there is greater community trust in communities with lower percentages of regular migrants, compared to those with higher percentages.

Table 47. Amount of remittances received per month, in communities with a high and low percentage of temporary work visas

Amount of remittances received	Type of communities	
	High percentage	Low percentage
Less than 250Q	0 (0%)	3 (2.2%)
Between 250 and 1,000Q	13 (9.7%)	20 (14.8%)
Between 1,000Q and 2,000Q	19 (14.2%)	31 (23%)
Between 2,000Q and 4000Q	24 (17.9%)	25 (18.5)
Between 4,000Q and 7,000Q	50 (37.3%)	27 (20%)
Between 7,000Q and 10,000Q	21 (15.7%)	23 (17%)
More than 10,000Q	7 (5.2%)	6 (4.4%)
Total	134 (100%)	135 (100%)

With 1 serving as the lowest monthly remittance amount and 7 serving as the highest, the results indicate that the mean rank of the communities with a high percentage of regular migrants is 146, and those with a low percentage is 124, which indicates that the amount monthly received by remittances tends to be higher in those communities with high percentage.

Table 48. Valuation of life itself, in communities with high and low percentages of temporary work visas.

Valuation of life itself	Type of communities	
	High percentage	Low percentage
Very bad	0 (0%)	1 (0.2%)
Bad	9 (1.7%)	8 (1.5%)
Neither bad, nor good	116 (22.3%)	88 (17%)
Good	363 (69.7%)	379 (73%)
Very good	33 (6.3%)	43 (8.3%)
Total	521 (100%)	519 (100%)

Being 1 is a 'very bad' life and 5 a 'very good' life, the results show a mean rank of 504 in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants, and 537 for those with a low percentage, which indicates that people who live in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants value their lives more.

The following table summarizes the differences found between both types of communities in relation to different selected well-being indicators.

Table 49. Synthesis of well-being indicators that differentiate communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants.

Variables analyzed	Are there differences between communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants?
Household poverty level (Simple Poverty Scorecard)	There are not differences
Education level of the interviewee	There are not differences
Making housing improvements or extensions in the last 12 months	More frequent in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants
At least one member of the household had a job that generated income for the family in the last 12 months	More frequent in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants
Perception of the family economic situation	There are not differences
Changes in the family economic situation in the last 12 months	There are not differences
Participation of a family member in groups, organizations or associations	There are not differences
Degree of trust in the people of the community	Higher degree of trust in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants
Household that receives or received remittances in the last 5 years	There are not differences
Monthly amount of remittances received	Higher monthly amounts in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants
Valuation of life itself	Better valued life in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants
Food Consumption Score (FCS)	There are not differences
FIES scale (ordered according to item severity)	There are not differences

The preceding table shows that there are differences in several of the indicators analyzed. However, there is no clear trend. On one hand, housing improvements or expansions and the receipt of higher average of remittances suggests greater access to economic resources channeled to improve home infrastructure in communities with a high percentage of visas. Most likely, this can be interpreted that communities with a lower percentage of regular migrants tend to have more families with members who have had a job that generated income. Indeed, although a direct interpretation would suggest that more families with members who have jobs that generate income, the average income and access to resources should be higher, it is also possible to think that households that have greater access to resources (for example, from remittances or income from agricultural production on their own land) will have less need to sell their labor (either permanently or occasionally). Note, for example, the commodification of labor through work as agricultural day laborers is an expression of the loss of traditional livelihoods in traditional peasant economies.

In contrast to the previous evidence, two subjective indicators are also observed that would seem to reveal greater well-being in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants. In fact, the results show that the degree of trust in the people of the communities and the value of one's own life, which respectively suggest greater community integration and a greater degree of global satisfaction, are higher in communities with a low percentage of regular migrants. These indicators could be related to a possible increase in inequality in communities with a high percentage of regular migrants due to the formation of migrants' conglomerates or groups related by family ties, who travel based on recommendations from direct relatives. In this way, certain groups associated by family ties would increase their overall income, strengthening specific support networks; while other groups, who did not have access to visas, would remain in a more delicate economic situation. Thus, certain groups would improve their access to resources and others would remain the same, but the differences between some groups and others would increase. In this way, inequality would increase, so those who have not improved their social position would be more aware of the differences, they would tend to perceive greater injustice and feel more discomfort with their regular migrant neighbors (for example, because they do not recommend them, they ask money to do it or they simply keep 'hidden' information that could help them get visas).

In summary, the data does not show a clear impact of the greater availability of temporary work visas on the well-being of the communities. However, this does not mean that there are no such differences. In fact, the results suggest that access to temporary work visas could improve the economic situation of communities, while also generating negative impacts in terms of inequality. Specifically, these negative impacts are associated with a certain loss of unity or integration at community level. Undoubtedly, it would be interesting to carry out future studies in this line.

5.16. Comparison between households with different conditions: regular migration, irregular migration and non-migrant situations

As part of the study, 1,373 households were surveyed, of which 379 were categorized as regular migrants, 213 as irregular migrants, 18 as mixed and 719 as non-migrants. In 44 cases, it was not possible to carry out an effective categorization. This section analyzes the differences between households of regular migrants, irregular migrants and non-migrants based on a set of selected variables. The following table shows the variables analyzed and the results of the statistical tests used. Subsequently, detailed information is presented on statistically significant variables that require additional information for a correct interpretation.



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Table 50. Analysis of differences between families according to migratory status based on selected variables 1.

Variables analyzed	Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	No Migrants	Are there differences between families with different migratory conditions?
People currently living in the household	4.67	4.78	4.87	$F(2, 1,310) = 1.244, p = .29$
Gender of the head of household	23.3% women	28.8% women	29.9% women	$\chi^2(2) = 5.49, p = .064$
Is Spanish spoken at home?	80.2%	86.9%	79.7%	$\chi^2(2) = 5.69, p = .058$
Poverty level (Simple Poverty Scorecard) (higher score = lower poverty)	^a 41.9	^b 38.4	^c 35.4	$F(2, 1,308) = 30.34, p < .001^{**}$
Making housing improvements or extensions in the last 12 months	^a 31.4%	^b 8.5%	^b 12.2%	$\chi^2(2) = 71.45, p < .001^{**}$
At least one member of the household had a job that generated income for the family in the last 12 months	75.5%	77.5%	80.1%	$\chi^2(2) = 3.19, p = .203$
Participation of a family member in groups, organizations or associations	Yes: 13.5%	Yes: 18.8%	Yes: 12.3%	$\chi^2(2) = 5.80, p = .055$
Food Consumption Score (FCS)	^a 59.3	^b 53.4	^b 53.6	$F(2, 1,307) = 15.87, p < .001^{**}$
FIES scale (ordered according to item severity)	^a RM: 544	^b RM: 636	^c RM: 710	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 51.6, p < .001^{**}$

NOTE: Different superscripts indicate subgroups that are statistically different from each other, by using $p < .05$ without adjusting. MR = Mean Rank



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Table 51. Analysis of differences between families according to migratory status based on selected variables 2.

Variables analyzed		Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	No Migrants	Are there differences between families with different migratory conditions?
Maximum schooling of the head of household (higher MR implies higher educational level)	Mean Rank (MR)	^a 734	^b 625	^b 618	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 26.66, p = .007^{**}$
	None	9.1%	19.7%	26.0%	
	Incomplete primary (knows how to read and write)	42.0%	43.7%	34.8%	
	Complete primary	30.5%	24.4%	24.9%	
	Medium (basic)	13.1%	8.5%	8.2%	
	Superior	5.3%	3.8%	6.0%	
Perception of the family economic situation (higher MR indicates a better situation)	Mean Rank	^a 696	^b 637	^b 641	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 9.96, p = .007^{**}$
	Very bad	1.3%	2.3%	1.5%	
	Bad	8.7%	18.3%	15.0%	
	Regular	77.3%	66.2%	74.0%	
	Good	12.4%	12.7%	9.0%	
	Very good	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	
Changes in the family economic situation in the last 12 months (higher MR indicates improvement)	Mean Rank	^a 764	^b 642	^b 603	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 9.96, p < .001^{**}$
	It has gotten much worse	4.5%	6.6%	4.0%	
	It has gotten a little worse	20.1%	28.6%	33.8%	
	Still the same	43.5%	47.4%	51.9%	
	It has gotten a little better	30.9%	16.9%	10.2%	
	It has improved a lot	1.1%	0.5%	0.1%	
Degree of trust in people in the community (higher MR indicates greater trust)	Mean Rank	^a 623	^b 746	^a 645	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 18.83, p < .001^{**}$
	Total mistrust	1.6%	0%	0.6%	
	Mistrust	2.9%	2.8%	3.9%	

Variables analyzed		Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	No Migrants	Are there differences between families with different migratory conditions?
	Neither trust, nor mistrust	22.4%	11.7%	20.6%	
	Trust	53.8%	54%	53.1%	
	Total confidence	19.3%	31.5%	21.8%	
Perception of irregular migration (higher MR indicates worse perception)	Mean Rank	^a 696	^b 595	^b 646	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 12.82, p = .002^{**}$
	Good	10.0%	16.4%	12.8%	
	Neither good, nor bad	29.6%	37.6%	34.1%	
	Bad	60.4%	46.0%	53.1%	
Perception of regular migration (higher PR indicates worse perception)	Mean Rank	^a 630	^{ab} 644	^b 668	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 18.11, p < .001^{**}$
	Good	98.4%	96.2%	92.6%	
	Neither good, nor bad	0.8%	3.3%	6.3%	
	Bad	0.8%	0.5%	1.1%	
Are regular temporary visas a better way to migrate than irregular migration? (Higher MR indicates greater agreement)	Mean Rank	^a 682	^b 635	^b 645	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 15.45, p < .001^{**}$
	Totally disagree	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	
	Somewhat disagree	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	
	Neither agree nor disagree	0.5%	4.7%	4.2%	
	Somewhat agree	1.1%	5.2%	3.1%	
	Totally agree	97.4%	90.1%	91.8%	
I think that there are people in the community who do not want to migrate irregularly, but they would surely want to migrate if they got a visa (higher MR indicates greater agreement)	Mean Rank	^a 676	^b 622	^b 646	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 12.81, p = .005^{**}$
	Totally disagree	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	
	Somewhat disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	
	Neither agree nor disagree	2.4%	10.5%	6.2%	
	Somewhat agree	4.2%	4.8%	4.3%	
	Totally agree	92.9%	84.8%	88.4%	

Variables analyzed		Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	No Migrants	Are there differences between families with different migratory conditions?
When people know that there are regular temporary visas, their desire to migrate irregularly decreases, because they realize that there are more convenient options (higher MR indicates greater agreement).	Mean Rank	^a 672	^b 619	^{ab} 652	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 15.45$, $p = .016^*$
	Totally disagree	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	
	Somewhat disagree	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	
	Neither agree nor disagree	3.4%	12.3%	7.0%	
	Somewhat agree	5.5%	5.2%	4.3%	
	Totally agree	90.0%	82.0%	87.1%	
Valuation of one's own life (higher MR indicates higher valuation)	Mean Rank	685	642	642	KW: $\chi^2(2) = 5.49$, $p = .064$
	Very bad	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	
	Bad	0.3%	2.3%	1.8%	
	Regular	17.5%	22.1%	19.7%	
	Good	71.4%	63.8%	71.4%	
	Very good	10.8%	11.3%	7.1%	

NOTE: different superscripts indicate subgroups that are statistically different from each other using $p < .05$, unadjusted. KW: Kruskal-Wallis.

Table 52. Synthesis of differences between households with different migratory conditions

Variables analyzed	Are there differences between households with different migratory conditions?
People currently living in the household	There are differences
Gender of the head of household	There are differences
Is Spanish spoken at home?	There are differences
Poverty level (Simple Poverty Scorecard)	Non-migrants present the highest level of poverty, followed by irregular migrants. Regular migrants are less poor overall.
Making housing improvements or extensions to the home in the last 12 months	Households of regular migrants carry out expansions and improvements much more frequently than those of irregular and non-migrants.
At least one household member had a job that generated income for the family in the last 12 months	There are differences
Participation of a family member in groups, organizations or associations	There are differences

Variables analyzed	Are there differences between households with different migratory conditions?
Food Consumption Score (FCS)	Households of regular migrant have more diverse access to food than irregular migrant and non-migrant households.
FIES scale	There is greater food security in the households of regular migrants, followed by irregular migrants and finally households without migrants.
Maximum schooling of the head of household	The schooling of heads of household tends to be slightly higher in regular migrant households compared to irregular and non-migrant households.
Perception of the family economic situation	In households with regular migrants, the family economic situation is perceived as slightly better than in households with irregular migrants and non-migrants.
Changes in the family economic situation in the last 12 months	In regular migrants' households, economic situation has improved more frequently in last year, compared with irregular migrants' households and no migrating households
Degree of trust in the people of the community	There are differences
Perception of irregular migration	While in general irregular migration tends to be described negatively, this is more marked in households of regular migrants compared to those of irregular migrants and non-migrants
Perception of regular migration	While regular migration is generally highly valued, regular migrant households tend to be valued slightly more positively than non-migrant households (no differences with irregular migrant households)
Are regular temporary visas a better way to migrate than irregular migration?	Although there is general agreement on this point, regular migrant households agree more frequently than irregular migrant and non-migrant households
I think that there are people in the community who do not want to migrate irregularly, but they would surely want to migrate if they got a visa	While the agreement here is quite clear, it is stronger in households of regular migrants compared to those of irregular migrants and non-migrants
When people know that there are regular temporary visas, their desire to migrate irregularly decreases, because they realize that there are more convenient options	Most respondents agree with the idea. However, agreement in regular migrant households is higher compared to irregular migrant households.
Valuation of life itself	There are differences
Percepción de la migración regular	Si bien la migración regular es en general valorada muy positivamente, las familias de migrantes regulares tienden a hacerlo un poco más que las de no migrantes (no hay diferencias con hogares de migrantes irregulares)
¿Las visas temporales regulares son una mejor forma de migrar que la migración irregular?	Si bien existe acuerdo generalizado sobre este punto, los hogares de migrantes regulares acuerdan con mayor frecuencia que los hogares de migrantes irregulares y no migrantes.
Pienso que hay personas de la comunidad que no quieren migrar irregularmente pero que seguramente querrían migrar si consiguieran una visa	Si bien aquí el acuerdo es bastante claro, es más fuerte en hogares de migrantes regulares en comparación con aquellos de irregulares y no migrantes
Cuando las personas conocen que existen visas temporales regulares, su deseo de migrar irregularmente disminuye, porque se dan cuenta que hay opciones más convenientes	La mayor parte de los encuestados acuerdan con la idea. No obstante, el acuerdo en hogares de migrantes regulares es mayor en comparación con hogares de migrantes irregulares.
Valoración de la propia vida	No existen diferencias

Now, what do these results show?

First, there is very solid evidence that the economic situation of regular migrant households is better. In fact, their poverty levels are lower, they have made improvements or extensions to their homes much more frequently, they have access to more diverse foods, their food insecurity is less, they perceive their family economic situation as better and indicate that they have improved their situation with more frequency in the last 12 months. In parallel, few statistically significant differences are observed between irregular migrants' households and non-migrant households with respect to the aforementioned variables, with the exception of poverty and food insecurity levels. Indeed, the poverty level measured by the Simple Poverty Scorecard and food insecurity measured by the FIES scale is lower in households with irregular migrants compared to households without migrants. These results are very interesting, since they show that there are very marked differences in terms of economic situation between regular migrants' households on one hand, and those of irregular migrants and non-migrants on the other, but not so much between irregular migrants' and non-migrants' households. This would seem to indicate that the regular nature of migration has much greater potential to improve the family economic situation than irregular migration.

Another group of variables that differentiate between households with dissimilar migratory conditions refers to the valuation of migration and temporary work visas. Once again, the differences between regular migrants' households on one hand, and irregular migrant and non-migrant households on the other, were observed without statistically significant differences between the latter two. In first place, this differentiation reinforces the conclusion that the greatest differences seem to be observed based on the regular nature of migration compared to other options (migrating irregularly and not migrating), instead of between those families where there are or were migrants compared to non-migrant families.

However, regarding the specific opinions of the members of different groups, the results are in line with expectations, while regular migrants' households tend to value regular migration more and irregular migration less, in comparison with the households of irregular migrants and non-migrants. Indeed, this was to be expected, as the proximity to regular migration and its positive effects, would typically lead one to value it more. On the other hand, these same people have no difficulty in evaluating irregular migration more negatively since no household member has made the decision to follow that path. At the same time, the same argument could be used to explain why regular migrant households value regular migration more positively than irregular migration, as well as its potential to reduce irregular migration.

Finally, it was also observed that the educational level of the head of household tends to be higher in regular migrants' households compared to those of irregular migrants and non-migrants. This finding is interesting, as it can have two interpretations. First, it could be indirect evidence that regular migration contributes to improving the educational level of household members. This interpretation would be consistent with the fact that the mean educational level of members of regular migrant households is higher than irregular migrant and non-migrant households (KW: $\chi^2(2) = 54.1, p < .001^{**}$).

Table 53. Educational level of household members with different migratory conditions.

Educational level	Regular Migrants	Irregular Migrants	Non-Migrants
None	8.1%	12.5%	17.5%
Incomplete primary (literate)	37.2%	40.2%	36.4%
Complete primary	28.8%	25.0%	25.4%
Medium (basic)	18.4%	14.0%	14.0%
Superior	7.4%	8.3%	6.7%
Mean rank (higher score indicates higher educational level)	^a 3050	^b 2817	^c 2697

NOTE: Different superscripts indicate subgroups that are statistically different from each other using unadjusted $p < 0.05$.

However, there is also an alternative interpretation of the higher educational level of the head of household and family members in regular migrants’ households, compared to irregular and non-migrants’ households. In fact, it could be argued that the highest educational level is a prerequisite that allows households to access visas or, failing that, carry out effective irregular migration strategies. Furthermore, it could also be argued that this higher educational level is an indirect indicator of greater access to economic resources that would ultimately make it possible to access both temporary work visas and irregular alternatives.

However, there is qualitative evidence that seems to dispute these alternative interpretations. First, the cost of accessing temporary work visas is less than the cost of paying the smuggler, even when paying for a recommendation, so less money is needed to migrate regularly than to do it in an irregular way. Additionally, the interviews show that employers do not require workers with a minimum educational level, they only need general knowledge of agriculture. Thus, although it would be convenient to carry out future research to analyze this point in greater detail, it is likely that the higher educational level average in regular migrants’ households indicates an impact of regular migration and not a cause that allowed access to the visa. In this sense, it is also the most consistent interpretation with the set of data to consider that the better economic conditions observed in regular migrants’ households are a consequence of regular migration and not a prior factor that made it possible.

5.17. Problems and challenges of temporary work visa programs from the point of view of different involved actors

In this study, a series of problems and challenges related to Guatemalans accessing to the temporary visa programs of Canada and the United States have been identified. In this section, they are synthesized and differentiated by thematic areas/axes.

5.17.1. Challenges faced by employers and recruiters in Guatemala

There are several challenges that employers and recruiters face when hiring labor in Guatemala. These challenges limit the interest and ability of employers to consider the country's migrant workforce. Some of the challenges are currently being addressed, while others need further attention if Guatemalan worker recruitment is expected to increase and be able to compete with countries like Mexico, which have a long history and tradition of supplying labor to Canada and the United States of America.

1 Guatemala has longer visa processing times

Visas take longer to process in Guatemala than in countries like Mexico. Most noted that United States visas take two to four weeks in Guatemala. This can be double or triple what it takes in Mexico. For Canadian visas, there is a delay of one to two weeks, while passports are mailed to the embassy in Mexico, since it is the only embassy equipped to stamp passports in the region.

These longer processing times delay the arrival of workers and can lead to losses for employers. It is important to point out that the United States embassy made efforts to speed up this process in the last year, achieving to reduce the waiting time to between three and five days, and the Department of Immigration Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala recently generated a direct link with the Canadian embassy in Mexico to facilitate the procedures. However, the perception among recruitment and visa processing companies continues to be that Guatemalan visas take longer.

2 Delays in passports delivery

In addition to the visa processing time, there are delays for workers to obtain Guatemalan passports. Workers who do not receive passports on time cannot apply for visas. In the last two years, the issuance or renewal of passports has taken up to a year. Although the Guatemalan Government has worked to simplify this process and reduce it to one month for visa applicants, not all recruiters seem to be aware of or have access to this benefit.

3 Guatemala has higher recruitment costs than Mexico, particularly for United States employers

Labor recruitment costs are higher in Guatemala than in Mexico, especially for United States employers. This is because many visa processing companies charge premiums to bring workers from Guatemala, travel costs within the country are higher due to longer visa processing times and air tickets are more expensive than the bus trips usually required from Mexico to the United States.

Specifically, visa processing companies charge premiums between \$150 and \$300 per worker to recruit in Guatemala. As noted above, this is due to perceived or actual recruitment challenges in Guatemala. At the same time, since Mexico shares a border with the United States, most workers from Mexico arrive via ground transportation which is less expensive. In Guatemala, most employers buy plane tickets that can cost two to three times per worker. Finally, since United States employers reimburse all the visa-related costs, including travel, lodging and food expenses within the country, a lengthy visa process can result in higher room and lodging expenses. In this sense, the existence of delays and a lengthy visa management process may require multiple trips to the embassy, with accompanying hotel nights. It should be noted that not all employers are concerned about these costs, but those who compete in international or highly competitive markets are.

4

Employers have already established labor networks in other countries and lack incentives to change them

Mexico has participated in foreign worker programs with Canada and the United States for decades. This has resulted in employers and visa processing companies establishing relationships with the workforce in that country. There is a degree of familiarity and certainty when working with recruiters and established job networks. In addition, many employers have built relationships with specific workers or communities and use these networks to expand their workforce through worker-to-worker contracting schemes when needed. Longtime workers are trained in the jobs and can train new generations, whom they recommend.

Consequently, many employers are not interested in establishing new labor networks and training new workers. The exceptions are employers who are dissatisfied with their current workers and those who have a significant turnover of their staff, which prevents them from building lasting relationships. Thus, new employers are more likely to be open to new job sources. However, many companies contact other employers with similar productions in their area and take advantage of their contact/networks.

5

Mistrust and doubts of employers with the Government recruitment agency

(MINTRAB Labor Migration Program). In 2019, the Guatemalan government established a public recruitment agency with USAID funding to facilitate the labor inclusion of Guatemalans abroad. This agency provides free recruitment services to employers interested in hiring Guatemalans through one of the existing temporary visa programs. The program has grown from 15 workers in 2019 to more than 3,446 in 2022, the majority bound for the United States.

However, the program has faced challenges in recruiting skilled workers and building a database of legitimate potential workers. The government claims to have a database of more than 34,000 workers ready to be hired. However, when some employers did request workers, their experience was that the response was slow or could not even be completed. This caused some employers

to be distrustful with the agency, as they were unable to find workers, or the workers were not qualified for the positions. Since then, the agency has been rebuilding its worker databases and establishing protocols for qualifying potential workers. The program seems have had increased success with United States visas since they are currently handling a third of those going to the United States. In contrast, they don't seem to be as successful with Canadian employers, possibly the Canada-oriented recruiting system is much more organized and structured.

6

Mistrust and reluctance of Guatemalan recruiting agencies regarding the mandatory registration of recruiters established by the government

A new regulation (Government Agreement number 50-2022) was approved in 2022, that requires all recruiters operating in the country to register with the Guatemalan government. By January 2023 all recruiters must be registered. This regulation is an effort to register all legitimate recruiters and help control fraudulent recruitment, which is a significant challenge for employers and workers alike. As part of this record, recruiters must include the names and contact information of all their clients.

Some established recruiters are concerned about this requirement and feel it is a government overreach. Some recruiters fear that the government will use these records to take their clients away, since the government has its own recruitment agency and the Labor Migration Program offers free services, there is concern about unfair competition. At least one employer left the recruiter with which they had been working and started working with the Labor Migration Program. However, they switched again the following year due to poor performance. The general feeling is mistrust, they feel that the registry is an effort that affects their business. If the information collected is used appropriately, this mistrust is likely to slowly dissipate.

7

Informal/Fragmented/Decentralized Recruitment System for United States Visas

Recruitment for the United States visa programs in Guatemala is highly fragmented with numerous small recruiters working with individual employers. This system results in a way of working where each established employer has its own recruiters. In contrast, there are few established firms open to new employers or United States visa processing agents, increasing uncertainty and leading many to avoid hiring in Guatemala. Within this framework, MINTRAB's Labor Migration Program and Cierito Internacional can play an important role.

8

Visa processing companies and agents based in the United States do not promote Guatemala

Most employers in the United States contract visa processing firms, attorneys, or agents to process visas and hire labor. These companies, in turn, hire recruiters in each country. In Guatemala, as a result of the informal and decentralized recruitment system that characterizes United States visas, many companies have difficulty finding reliable recruiters. This prevents many United States foreign labor management companies from working with the country, actively discouraging the hiring of Guatemalans and/or charging additional fees. Many of these companies and agents share their concerns with their clients, reporting delayed worker arrivals, illegal visa fees, and higher recruitment costs. The United States visa processing companies need to feel comfortable and have recruiters they trust in order to satisfy the increased demand for workers.

5.17.2. Structure and operation of temporary visa programs

Canadian and United States visa programs have evolved in recent decades to fill labor shortages in agricultural production and other industries that need workers to fill low-skilled jobs. However, they have also generated multiple controversies and have been the subject of discussion among immigration experts, labor rights groups, agribusiness advocates, and legislators. This has led to programs with increasingly complex application processes to ensure protection of the rights of vulnerable foreign workers, compliance with immigration laws and procedures, as well as guarding against the potential to adversely affect the local workforce. For employers who hire foreign labor, these increased regulations have caused a series of challenges that limit the ability of some to participate in or benefit from these programs.

9

Complicated and/or lengthy application process for employers

Employers in both Canada and the United States pointed out that visa applications are too complicated and require increasingly long periods of time. Applications for these programs take up to 150 days for H-2B visas, 75 days for H-2A visas, and 240 days for Canada Ag-stream visas. The procedures require working with multiple government agencies and different errors in the process lead to the denial of the visa. Because of this, most employers hire visa application companies, which adds to labor costs.

10

Increased regulations and costs to hire foreign workers

While most employers are more concerned about application challenges and delays in worker availability, some noted that the costs of recruiting and hiring foreign labor are rising. In both the Canadian and United States visa programs, employers have labor costs associated with recruiting, traveling, and housing foreign workers. In addition, employers, especially those in the United States, pay hourly rates established by the government, that are well above the minimum wages in their regions.

The H-2A and H-2B programs have 200 and 175 bureaucratic rules respectively that raise labor costs (Bier, 2020, 2021), which is a significant challenge especially for small and medium producers (Minkoff-Zern et al., 2022). In fact, hiring migrant workers is costlier than hiring local labor when factoring in hourly pay, recruitment, transportation and accommodation (Kubickova and Neal, 2021; Minkoff-Zern et al., 2022; Roka and Guan 2018; Roka et al., 2017). For example, Florida citrus growers, who hire H-2A workers, pay significantly more than minimum wages, in addition to a recruitment cost of \$2,000 per worker before the first fruit is harvested (Roka et al., 2017). Canadian employers also face similar high costs. According to many employers, this affects their ability to compete with other producers on a global scale. Thus, most employers use foreign worker visa programs as a last resort.

11

H-2B visa limits lead to uncertainty about staff availability

Canadian TFWP and United States H-2A visas have no limits on the number of workers hired by employers. The United States H-2B visa for non-agricultural work, including landscaping, forestry, seafood processing, construction, hotel and restaurant, and other occupations, is capped at 66,000 visas per year. This limit was implemented in 1992, shortly after the H-2B program was created in 1986 (Immigration Act of 1990). Since 2010, the demand for H-2B visas has increased steadily, with requirements from new industries, causing the limit to run out relatively quickly (Nepal, 2021).

As result, employers are increasingly competing for the limited number of visas available. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, causing most employers to submit applications immediately when the program opens each year. Most years, the visa limits are expanded to double the initial size of the program, and even then, there are usually more applications than visas. In these cases, visas are granted through a lottery system. Unfortunately, the time at which visas are approved or denied gives employers little time to consider other alternatives.

For employers, the H-2B program is an increasingly uncertain process, as they don't know if or when they will receive workers. There are numerous factors that can cause some employers to receive workers and others to be excluded from the program. New employers struggle to understand the system and are more likely to fail to get the workers they need due to a series of errors related to timing or the application process.

Additionally, visa extensions are uncertain and, if they do occur, come late, causing some employers to experience delays in receiving workers. The perception of many employers is one of high uncertainty, especially for newer ones. This leads to employers not being able to anticipate the volume of work they may commit, as they do not know if or when workers will arrive. In some years, they are denied visas and must renounce contracts or hire other workers, who are often undocumented. This uncertainty makes many potential employers unwilling to expand their businesses or consider foreign workers.

12

Challenges related to the extension of the H-2B visa limit to countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras)

Over the years, there have been several strategies passed by the United States congress to overcome the H-2B visa limits. These have included waivers for returning H-2B workers, waivers for certain United States territories, and expansion of the number of visas once the limit is reached. More recently, the expansions have included a percentage of additional visas allocated to the Central American Northern Triangle countries and Haiti, as an effort to provide alternatives to undocumented migration.

Employers cite two major challenges related to visa limit extensions and Northern Triangle assignments. First, the extension usually occurs sometime after the limit has been reached and requires congressional approval. This delay gives employers limited time to hire labor and often results in workers arriving later than they need to. Thus, employers complain of lost or incomplete contracts when workers arrive weeks or months late. This fuels the uncertainty associated with this program.

Second, some employers are forced to use Northern Triangle allowances when visas for other countries run out. Employers that seek this alternative not only have to overcome delays in receiving workers, but also need to recruit from unfamiliar countries and integrate new labor unfamiliar with the job. The first year of assignments to the Northern Triangle in 2021, there were complaints of long hiring delays or workers never arriving, prompting employers to cancel contracts. It is important to remember that Guatemala does not have many formal recruiters not tied to specific employers, apart from the government's Labor Migration Program and, more recently, Cierto. As these two recruitment services improve, this challenge could be reduced.

The challenges associated with onboarding workers who are untrained or unfamiliar with employers will be a continued problem. However, this could be overcome if employers build worker networks in Guatemala before facing these problems. Guatemala should see this as an opportunity.

13

Fear and reluctance to report illegal charges related to obtaining visas

As indicated above and as explained below, illegal charges to access visas are very frequent. This primarily includes payments to migrants with visas for referrals to their employers or access fees when visas are managed by unscrupulous informal intermediaries. Within this framework, it would be desirable for those who are forced to make these payments to be able to make this information transparent and denounce those responsible. However, there is a set of incentives to hide these payments instead of disclosing them. In general, cases have reported that, when one person indicates that they had paid to obtain the visa in the embassy interview, the visas of the entire group are denied. On another occasion, when an employer found out what had happened, they stopped working with a local informal recruiter, which meant that no one from the community traveled again. Thus, there are incorrect incentives that lead to denying and hiding illegal payments, which reduces the possibility of generating actions to confront them.

5.17.3. Challenges for workers to access visa programs

Although workers have great interest in accessing temporary work visas in Canada and the United States, they often fail to do so. In this process, they face different problems and constraints that are described below.

14 Insufficient availability of visas to cover the demand

A large number of Guatemalan workers want to migrate to improve their living conditions. In this context, temporary work visas to Canada and the United States appear as a great opportunity. However, due to the limitations on the availability and offer of visas, not all who wish can access them. Although this is based on restrictions or limitations of a structural nature, it is nonetheless problematic for many Guatemalans, who, after not being able to access visas, end up migrating irregularly. In turn, this comes with accompanying problems, suffering, and negative consequences.

15 Access to visas are based on recommendations (worker-to-worker hiring model)

Currently, most of the new workers who access the current visa programs do so, based on recommendations from those who have already traveled. Not all those who traveled have the possibility to recommend neighbors, friends and family, but those who have demonstrated high performance or have a good relationship with employers. Thus, recommendations tend to remain within the same families when they are not exchanged for a payment. In this way, access to visas ends up based on personal relationships and contacts and not based on abilities or personal experience. Two major consequences follow from this. On one hand, visa benefits end up being concentrated in families or specific groups within communities, instead of being distributed more equitably. And on the other hand, the people selected do not go through an independent evaluation process of their ability to carry out the work they must do. Finally, in the cases in which the referred people had to make payments to obtain the visas, they probably do not feel as committed to taking care of the image of the person who recommended them in front of the employer. As a result, this could contribute to increasing job abandonment once at destination, and non-return after the end of the visa period.

16 Illegitimate and illegal charges to access temporary work visas

This research has shown that the requirement of illegal payments to access temporary work visas is widespread. These can include both payments claimed by neighbors as compensation for referrals to employers, as well as by local or informal intermediaries who take advantage of their position to obtain undue extra benefits. In any case, it is important to note the harmful effect of these payments.

17 High cost to enter the program, even when illegal payments are not required

The amounts that people must pay once they have been assigned visas, although they are less than those necessary to migrate irregularly, represent significant amounts if considering the low purchasing power of the families of migrants. Considering administrative expenses, travel within the country, clothing, luggage, and even payment for support services to complete visa procedures, workers may have to pay between Q5,000 and Q10,000, or even more. If it is considered that an average agricultural wage does not exceed Q100 in the communities of origin, then an agricultural worker will need between two and five months to cover only these costs, without contributing all that time to the family income, and even more, if the worker have not had to make illegal payments. In this way, it is very common for workers who obtain visas to go into debt to be able to travel, at least the first time.

18 Lack of information and understanding about the operation of visa programs by workers and public officials

The operation of temporary visa programs is highly complex. On one hand, there are multiple administrative regulations related to the program's structure, but also to the processes of obtaining a passport and visa. At the same time, there are also complexities related to the operation and management of these visas at a practical level. Who offers these visas and how can you apply for them? Do I have to apply for them at the embassy? Which companies deal with recruiting, where are they located, how can you access them? These are common questions asked by those living in the communities where the interviews were conducted and for which people do not have clear answers.

Within this context, there is a certain illusion that the difficulty in accessing these visas is based on the lack of adequate information to know where to go to apply for them. At the same time, once they obtain the visas, many interviewees know that they must make certain payments to access them (passport, visa...). However, there is no certainty about the legitimacy of these payments, what corresponds to them and/or the employers, and even if something in those payments is left for the recruiting companies. Within this complex framework, the interviews carried out in the communities show that people are unaware of how temporary visa programs work. This difficulty is even observed with municipal officials who are interested in the subject. It is striking, but for many of those interviewees, regular migration is much more opaque than irregular migration through coyotes.

19 Existence of deception and scams related to obtaining visas

Within the framework of the strong interest in obtaining temporary work visas and the lack of knowledge of how these really work, all the actors interviewed have highlighted the existence of numerous deceptions and scams that target those who wish to migrate. These scams are multifaceted and can take different forms, as described in previous sections. However, in all cases they involve taking advantage of people's illusions and needs and end up leading to a loss

of confidence in everything related to visas. Unfortunately, this not only harms the people who are scammed, but also generates distrust in all the actors, even in respectable agencies and companies that work with high standards of quality and commitment. At a conceptual level, this also leads to a reduced ability of regular migration to deter irregular migration. In fact, if the possibility of migrating with a visa is not conceived as real or possible due to the loss of confidence in the actors who speak about it, for example, then people will choose to migrate irregularly.

5.17.4. Dynamics and working conditions at destination

Another one of the areas in which problems have been identified is linked to the work dynamics at destination and the conditions in which tasks are carried out. Different difficulties and challenges are discussed below.

20 **Employers with high expectations of production and productivity leads to the abandonment of visas**

Many employment contracts signed by migrant workers include the expectation of high production and productivity levels. Some contracts even specify a minimum production expectation, such as the number of trees planted per day, while others may have production incentives, such as piece rates, to encourage productivity. Workers who struggle to meet employer demands, or cannot keep up with other workers' performance, are often judged harshly. In these cases, workers burn out, become demoralized, and realize that they may not be hired for years to come. For any of these reasons, some are likely to leave work and stay irregularly, especially if they have outstanding debts, including payments made to obtain the visa.

21 **Uncertainty of workers as to whether they will be rehired in the future**

A significant portion of the economic benefits of participating in visa programs comes from participating for multiple years. Workers have personal goals that include buying land and building homes, which require years of involvement. However, accessing visa programs is difficult, as few are available, and many are interested. As a result, workers expect to establish relationships with certain employers or recruiters to ensure continued participation. Workers who recognize that they are unlikely to be invited back for reasons ranging from poor performance to employer bankruptcy may leave their jobs and remain irregular. This is especially true if they have only been involved for a limited number of years.

22 Mistreatment in the workplace

Mistreatment in the workplace within the framework of these visas is a problem that has been extensively studied in scientific literature (Castles, 2006; Tazreiter, 2019; García and Décosse, 2014; Zou, 2018). Although this problem occurs less frequently in regular migration, the results indicate that 5.9% of regular migrants were treated badly or very badly. Although it is a small percentage, this does not mean that it is not a relevant problem that requires attention, especially when power relations are clearly favorable to employers. At the same time, in terms of the system functioning, mistreatment in the workplace can be key since it can decisively contribute to workers leaving their jobs and remaining irregularly in the country of destination.

23 Abandonment of workplace and staying at destination once the visas have expired

Leaving workplaces before the conclusion of the visa period is a major concern for employers, as they had to invest heavily to bring in workers. At the same time, non-return also generates problems at the level of dealt with system itself, since the recruiter and even the country may lose credibility. Undoubtedly, this is a very complex problem; for that reason, it has been dealt with in detail in its own section. It should be noted that this is not a problem independent of the rest. Rather, it seems to be the result of several of the problems listed, such as the high costs of visas, illegal charges, high productivity expectations from employers, lack of an effective recruitment process, and eventual mistreatment by employers.

5.17.5. Negative Community Impacts of Temporary Visa Programs

While it is clear that temporary visa programs have very positive impacts for both migrant families and their communities, emerging negative ones have also been identified that should be considered.

24 Increased inequality at community level

It is clear that temporary visas contribute to improving the income and well-being of migrant families. However, there is also evidence to affirm that they contribute to increasing inequalities at community level. Indeed, it has been observed that the recommendations to obtain temporary visas tend to occur more easily within the families themselves. In this way, it is common for family groups or people connected by strong ties to recommend each other, which will lead certain families or networks within communities to improve their socioeconomic situation. In contrast, the rest of the families will have less access to opportunities or will have to pay for them. In this way, the differences between the families that have access to visas, with several members who migrate frequently, and the rest of families that do not, increase. Although this situation does not negatively affect families that do not have access to visas, it does lead to an awareness of the growing differences that exist between them. Moreover, it is likely that some discomfort will be generated at community level, with complaints to those who travel for not favoring opportunities for those who cannot do it; and even worse, an increase in payment demands to give some the opportunity.

25 Negative impact of migration on family relationships

It is known that irregular migration negatively affects family relationships. However, this study showed that regular migration also negatively affected family relationships in 44.4% of families. Although this percentage is lower than that observed in cases of irregular migration, it is still very high and needs to be considered. Certainly, regular migration is not neutral in terms of family relationships.

26 Ineffective use of remittances

The way families use remittances has strong impacts on their current and future well-being. The evidence shows that families of regular migrants receive remittances in a higher percentage, more frequently, and with higher monthly average values when compared to families of irregular migrants. At the same time, families of regular migrants use remittances more frequently to make investments. However, numerous interviewees highlighted that remittances are often used excessively for consumption, for that reason they do not contribute as much as they could to a long-term improvement in well-being and family income.



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SYNTHESIS

SYNTHESIS

OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION ON THE MAIN FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the capacity of temporary regular migration programs between Guatemala and Canada and the United States to favor the rootedness in origin areas of migrants and promote development dynamics in Guatemala. At the same time, it sought to understand the difficulties faced by both Guatemalans interested in participating in such visa programs and employers in hiring Guatemalans. Below is a summary of the main results, as well as comments and reflections on the study's highlights.

Reasons for migration, and differences between regular and irregular migration

Interviewees explain the high migration rates by referring almost exclusively to economic factors, which is consistent with previous studies conducted in Guatemala and the Central American Northern Triangle (Abuelafia et al., 2019; IOM, 2019). In particular, there is a clear perception that in Guatemala one can survive, but not progress or get ahead, that is, move up socially. However, faced with the option of migrating, they find it preferable to do so with a visa, since irregular migration has inherent risks (even for life), requires a greater economic investment, and contributes to family disintegration due to the need to remain for years abroad. The interviewees highlighted that there is only aspect in favor of irregular migration and that is its higher income, even though they are not always aware that it also implies higher housing and food costs.

Quantitative data shows that both types of migration tend to negatively affect family relationships, although more markedly in the case of irregular migration. This demonstrates that there are still some negative impacts to regular temporary migration, even if they are not as severe as those that come with irregular migration. Finally, there is also a percentage of migrants who reported mistreatment in the workplace, which is lower in the case of regular migrants (5.9% versus 10.3%) but is still worrisome.

Operation of temporary work visas

Canada and the United States have different temporary visa programs for low-skilled foreign workers. In Canada, these are the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) (which does not apply to Guatemala) and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). The latter has a line of agricultural work, one of low-wage jobs and a line of high-wage jobs. The United States has H-2A (agricultural workers) and H-2B (non-agricultural workers) visas. Each program has specific characteristics. However, they generally require employers to first offer the job to local people and then apply to their governments for authorization through highly complex bureaucratic processes.

For this reason, they usually hire professionals or companies that oversee one or more parts of the process, including everything, from visa authorization procedures up to recruiting and supporting workers in their countries of origin. The results show that most Canadian visas in Guatemala are managed with the support of consolidated recruiting companies located in the country that contributes to a more orderly and transparent process. In contrast, a much more fragmented system is observed in the case of the United States, with a strong presence of small recruiters who work in specific communities for a single employer, many of them informal. This situation, in addition to obstruct control and supervision by the Guatemalan state, also limits the entry of employers who cannot find formalized and serious recruiters to work with. In this context, the Guatemalan government recruiting program (MINTRAB Labor Migration Program) has grown to mediate a third of the visas that are destined for the United States in recent years.

Finally, although the idea of “recruitment companies” would suggest that they oversee the selection of the most appropriate workers, the reality is most employers send the lists of the people they wish to hire. These lists typically include workers who have already traveled and respond appropriately to expectations, and new workers recommended by those who have proven to be reliable and productive.

Costs and payments involved in regular and irregular migration

Migrating irregularly requires between Q80,000 and Q160,000 depending on the sources. The calculations related to regular migration depend on the type of visa and the items considered in the analysis. Administrative expenses involve passport, criminal record certificate, stamped visa, and medical certificate (the latter only in the Canadian case) (Q1,900 - Q2,565). Trips to Guatemala City for procedures are also added (variable cost between Q500 and Q2,000). United States employers must reimburse the visa stamp and reasonable travel expenses in Guatemala. Many workers also purchase clothing and luggage for the trip, and some hire support services to organize logistics and paperwork for their visas. Finally, a significant percentage makes illegal payments of between Q2,000 and Q30,000 to neighbors or acquaintances to be recommended to employers and to receive the visa for the first time. To face the costs of migrating (both regularly and irregularly), a vast majority of workers apply for loans, often providing property titles as collateral. However, it is clear that irregular migration is much more expensive than regular migration.

Impact of the availability of temporary work visas on the migratory intention.

The availability of visas to work in Canada and the United States affects people's intentions to migrate in a complex and non-linear way. Initially, the availability of visas reduces the irregular migratory intention while waiting for an opportunity to access a visa. However, those who do not obtain a visa leave irregularly anyway. In general, the quantitative data shows that the availability of temporary visas does not affect migration intention, but it does have a substantial impact on the specific way in which this migration occurs: when visas are available, most migration occurs through regular channels. Finally, since the average number of migrants abroad per family is lower for regular migrants, what decreases is the number of migrants who remain abroad at any specific moment of time. These results are key, as they show that offering visas does not reduce or increase the number of people who migrate or want to migrate, but it does decrease the number of irregular migrants and the number of migrants who remain abroad.

Differences between communities with high and low availability of visas and between families with different migratory conditions

The greater availability of temporary work visas does not seem to have a clear impact on the well-being of the communities. The data suggests that in the communities with the highest percentage of visas, the remittances received are on average higher and housing improvements are made more frequently. However, no significant differences are observed in poverty, food security or educational levels. In contrast, the degree of trust in community members and satisfaction with life are higher in communities with a low percentage of visas. These results suggest that the visas could be improving the economic situation in the communities, but without impacting on substantive indicators at community level. The negative impact on life satisfaction and trust in community members could be a consequence of increased community inequality, the product of closed family or affinity groups that benefit from cross-recommended visas, whilst other groups do not have access to these networks.

In contrast, although no large differences between communities with a high and low percentage of visas were observed, very marked differences were identified in the economic situation according to migratory status. The data shows that the economic situation of regular migrant families is consistently better than irregular migrants and non-migrants: families of regular migrants have lower poverty levels, less food insecurity, access to more diverse foods, and they perceive more often that their financial situation is better and has improved recently. In contrast, there are few differences between families of irregular migrants and non-migrants, which clearly shows that regular migration has much greater potential to improve the family economic situation than irregular migration, and that irregular migration does not necessarily lead to marked improvements compared to the option of not migrating.

Although it could be argued that these differences are not the consequence of the migratory experience, but of inequalities that were already present before migrating, the evidence shows that employers do not care about educational level when selecting migrants and that irregular migration requires greater economic investment than the regular one. This suggests that households with irregular migrants would be more likely to be in a better economic situation before migrating than vice versa.

Visas, remittances, and the use of knowledge acquired abroad

This study conclusively shows that the sending of remittances is different between regular and irregular migrants. Regular migrants are more likely to send remittances more frequently and, on average, the monthly amounts are higher. Although the purchase of agricultural land and the housing improvements are the most common investments financed with remittances. Especially in the case of regular migrants, the purchase of agricultural tools and equipment stands out. At the same time, the usage of remittances to make investments increases over the years in a more marked way in the households of regular migrants. These results unequivocally show that regular migration has much greater potential to improve life quality of households and carry out investments that generate income and development in the communities of origin, particularly the ones linked to agriculture.

Also, the vast majority of migrants acquired knowledge abroad. Although most of them could not use them because they were not advantageous enough, regular migrants are more likely to use them, particularly for agricultural activities. This may be related to the fact that a higher percentage of regular migrants work in agriculture abroad. Derived from this, the knowledge acquired by regular migrants is potentially more useful for sustaining future entrepreneurs and investments.

Deception, fraud, and knowledge about the operation of temporary work visas

The results of the interviews and surveys show a considerable ignorance of the operation of temporary work visas. In fact, there is a shared assumption among the members of numerous communities that the difficulties in accessing these visas are mainly due to the lack of information regarding where and how to apply for them, and not the scarce supply of visas. This situation becomes even more worrisome when it is recognized that this lack of understanding also extends to municipal officials responsible for working with immigration themes. In general, it must be recognized that the information available is scarce and there is not a clear institutional reference that can resolve queries.

Thus, given the great interest generated by visas, the scant information available, and the lack of knowledge about its operation, the existence of multiple scams related to obtaining visas is observed. Claims to pay to sign up for recruitment lists or directly to receive a visa, usually on behalf of reputable recruiters or so-called 'employers' from Canada or the United States. Unfortunately, the spread of these scams seems to generate mistrust with respect to all those who work legitimately with workers' selection. In addition, visas lose value as an immigration alternative by being tainted with the possibility of scams.

The problem of temporary workers' permanence

A low but significant percentage of workers who travel with a visa do not return at the end of their contract. Some of them even do not complete the expected work time with their employers. This situation worries multiple stakeholders, from employers, recruiters, embassies, and community leaders. The reasons that lead to not returning are multiple.

A few of the most prominent are the possibility of earning more money working with other employers or working more hours a day, and the payment of high costs (legal and illegal) to access visas in combination with short stays that do not allow obtaining a significant surplus. At the same time, the workers' perception that they may not be hired the following year often plays a fundamental role. Besides, there have also been reports of cases in which the job is abandoned because it is perceived to be beyond physical possibilities, or there were instances of mistreatment in the workplace. In response to this, recruiters try to select trustworthy people who have ties to their family and communities (preferably people with partners and children). There are even specific cases in which migrants are sought to have endorsements from members of their communities or from organizations of which they are part of. In particular, a recruiter reported asking the workers to sign a return commitment that involves financial penalties if they don't comply.

Labor demand and preferences of Canadian and United States employers

When hiring Guatemalans, Canadian and US employers search for people who can carry out hard jobs that require physical strength. As a result, they often recruit workers from rural regions where it is common to do agricultural work from a young age. In general, it is a requirement to have specific knowledge in the work that will be carried out (since employers will usually oversee the training), instead general experience of agricultural field work which demonstrates that they will be able to carry out the work is considered a requirement. Finally, because employers often hire groups of people and must provide accommodation, they expect workers to be able to get along with others, avoid conflict, and not drink excessively.

On the other hand, employers do not have a preference regarding the indigenous or non-indigenous backgrounds of workers. Regarding gender, they tend to prefer contracting men for most of the jobs, since their interest is focused on strength and physical persistence. In contrast, employers prefer women only in cases in which manual dexterity is sought, especially for harvesting delicate fruits. Also, they must house men from women separately and hiring both tends to increase costs. In any case, it is probable that the high predominance of men is also due in part to the repetition of traditional practices and the scant reflection of employers on this subject.

Although employers do not usually have geographical preferences, they tend to accept the recommendations given by recruiting companies, owners of neighboring farms, or even employees who work in them. In this way, since the predominant recruitment form is the worker-to-worker recommendation, it is observed that employers tend to generate ties with specific countries, regions and even communities. Furthermore, they usually rehire workers with whom they felt satisfied and expand through recommendations. It seems that to hire workers from new regions or countries and to alter the status quo, it is necessary for the employer to be dissatisfied with their workers to make a change.

With respect to recruiters, employers expect them to have the ability to manage the requests they make in an agile manner, to have knowledge about the regulations related to the different visas, do not charge illegal fees to workers, and select or detect workers with a high probability of completing the job period for which they are hired. In this sense, they clearly prioritize the quality of the recruiter's service over cost.

Employer experiences related to hiring Guatemalans

Several employers highlighted the commitment, attitude, lower alcohol consumption, and productivity of Guatemalans compared to other nationalities. They also pointed out that hiring Guatemalans usually requires more time than Mexicans, due to delays in issuing passports and longer times at embassies for visa stamping (in the case of Canada passports must go to Mexico for this procedure). While several of these delay challenges now appear to have been resolved, this perception of longer processing time is still held by employers. United States employers also reported higher costs when hiring Guatemalans due to the need for airfare to get to the country (as opposed to Mexicans), premiums charged by the recruiting companies for the visa processing, and the lack of strong Guatemalan recruiters (this stems from the fragmentation and decentralization of recruiters working on United States visas).

Finally, although MINTRAB's Labor Mobility Program has an increased presence in managing visas for the United States, complaints were heard in several interviews about the difficulty in meeting deadlines and sending workers with the required abilities.

Problems and challenges of temporary work visa programs

As part of the study, 26 problems and challenges related to temporary work visas were identified from the point of view of different stakeholders.

Chart 6. Problems and challenges of temporary work visa programs.

Challenges faced by employers and recruiters in Guatemala

1. Longer visa processing times.
2. Delays in passports delivery.
3. Higher recruitment costs than Mexico, particularly for United States employers.
4. Employers have already established labor networks in other countries and lack incentives to change them.
5. Mistrust and doubts of employers with the government recruitment agency (Labor Migration Program).
6. Mistrust and reluctance of Guatemalan recruiters regarding the mandatory registry of recruiters established by the government.
7. Fragmented, decentralized and more informal recruitment system for United States visas.
8. Guatemala is not promoted by visa processing companies, attorneys, and/or agents based in the United States.

Structure and operation of temporary visa programs

9. Complicated and/or lengthy visa application process for employers.
10. Increased regulations and costs to hire foreign workers.
11. H-2B visa limits lead to job uncertainty.
12. Challenges related to the extension of the H-2B visas force employers to look to countries of the Central American Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras).
13. Fear and reluctance to report illegal charges.

Challenges for workers to access visa programs

14. Insufficient availability of visas to cover the demand.
15. Access to visas based on recommendations (worker-to-worker hiring model).
16. Illegitimate and illegal charges to access temporary work visas.
17. High cost to access the program, even when illegal payments are not required.
18. Lack of information and understanding about how the visa programs work.
19. Existence of deception and scams related to obtaining visas.

Dynamics and working conditions at destination

20. Employers with high expectations of production and productivity that encourage the abandonment of visas.
21. Uncertainty of workers to whether they will be rehired in the future.
22. Mistreatment in the workplace.
23. Abandonment of the workplace and/or staying at destination once the visas have expired.

Negative Community Impacts of Temporary Visa Programs

24. Increased inequality at community level due to temporary work visas.
25. Negative impact of regular migration on family relationships.
26. Ineffective use of remittances.



PROPOSALS

PROPOSALS

FOR IMPROVING REGULAR MIGRATION PROGRAMS AND STRENGTHENING THEIR IMPACT

This section presents a set of proposals aimed at improving regular migration programs and strengthening their impact based on the results of this study, focusing on Guatemala. To facilitate organization, the proposals are divided by areas.

7.1. Strengthening the recruitment system in Guatemala

The recruitment system in Guatemala is less organized and consolidated than in other countries. Mexico, for instance, has a long history of participation in foreign worker programs. Thus, it is necessary to implement actions to strengthen the hiring system in Guatemala, focusing on local recruiting companies. Here are the key recommendations:

1 Consolidate the registration process of companies or recruiting entities in Guatemala and publish descriptive information to facilitate contact with employers

The registry of recruiters carried out by MINTRAB is essential to strengthen the system. This process helps both employers and workers to identify and contact recruiters registered and validated by the Guatemalan government. In this line, it is key that MINTRAB publishes a list of registered recruiters including information on certifications that each one has such as: experience with different types of visas and industries, recruiting capacity and contact information, among others. This list will help employers select the most appropriate recruiters for their needs, as well as help workers verify the legitimacy of the recruiters.

2 Support external quality certification for registered recruiters

Certifications will help recruiters meet higher quality standards and employers can call upon on them with greater confidence. In particular, the importance of the IRIS certification from the International Organization for Migration is highlighted. Other certifications, such as ISO 9000 standards, can also be considered, although they are not specific to recruiters, they are widely known in the business world.

3**Promote the creation of a national coordination table or panel made up of recruiters registered in Guatemala and other key stakeholders**

The national coordination table will be made up of registered recruiters, key stakeholders such as the IOM and the MINTRAB Labor Migration Program. It could be led by the Labor Migration Program, IOM, a different entity created for that purpose, or whoever is established in a timely manner. Its objective will be to carry out a diagnosis and design consensual actions aimed at strengthening the recruitment system for foreign workers in Guatemala. As a result, it will benefit both the country and the participating recruiters themselves. In this sense, the roundtable of recruiters will advocate Guatemalan labor internationally, while collectively overcoming national challenges, including the existence of illegitimate recruiters, illegal charges, and delays in visa and passport processing times, among others.

4**Create a public entity in charge of regulating, strengthening and promoting temporary labor migration in Guatemala (beyond the Labor Migration Program)**

Currently, the MINTRAB's Labor Migration Program functions essentially as a public recruiting agency that competes with private recruiters in the market. At the same time, it carries out regulatory actions, linked to the registry of private recruiters. These dual responsibilities have led to mistrust. Within this framework, there needs to be an entity or sector responsible for advocating the value of Guatemalan workers abroad, by disseminating information about the services of approved recruiters (including the public recruiter) and promoting coordination actions between stakeholders to overcome the challenges faced by the sector, such as passport delays. The national recruiter's coordination panel could be a key activity of this entity. While this role could be fulfilled by the Labor Migration Program, doing so would bring up conflicts with its own role as a recruiter seeking to increase its market share. Today, this conflict can be seen in the fact that it is not considered necessary for the Labor Migration Program to provide transparent recruitment information as is required of private recruiters.

5**Train registered recruiters on the procedures of all available visa programs**

Most recruiters work with only one visa program or one country and have little or no knowledge of the rest. A quick way to strengthen recruiters and improve the services offered to employers is to train existing recruiters on the different visa programs. This training should include legal aspects, the visa application process, procedures, and regulations, as well as information on key organizations that hire migrant workers.

6**Collaboratively develop strategies to overcome the worker-to-worker hiring model and the problem of visa abandonment**

These actions could be carried out within the framework of the national coordination table for recruiters and be led by IOM, the Labor Migration Program, or the entity that would be eventually created to coordinate the strengthening of the labor migration system. The proposed strategies could include generating protocols to address worker selection issues with employers through peer-to-peer recommendations, promoting recruitment protocols that increase employer satisfaction with workers, and identifying key factors to predict cases of high probability of job abandonment or non-return to be considered at the time of selection. In this sense, it would be convenient to generate unified abandonment records under the responsibility of the Labor Migration Program or the eventually created entity in charge of strengthening the system. This would make it possible to identify profiles of workers with the highest dropout rate, employers' characteristics, economic sectors, and geographical areas with the highest incidence, among others; and based on this, develop periodic recommendations especially for recruiters.

7**Develop and/or validate psychometric tools to select workers that best meet the employers' needs**

This proposal aims to develop tools that strengthen the work of recruiters. Given that personality characteristics and social skills that are key for employers (for example, reliability and ability to relate to others) and problems such as abandonment of work or non-return after visas expire; psychometric tools that allow evaluating the presence of the necessary personality characteristics and identifying predictors of non-return could be identified, developed and/or validated. This would make it possible to professionalize recruiters, select more suitable workers for the tasks to be carried out, and avoid bad experiences for employers that end up affecting the image of both recruiters and the country abroad.

7.2. Develop incentives to facilitate hiring of Guatemalan workers

Incentives need to be developed to encourage foreign employers and recruitment agencies to overcome the lack of experience and traditional ties, as well as higher accompanying costs, in hiring Guatemalan workers. Some ideas that could incentivize hiring Guatemalans and reduce some of the existing barriers are listed below.

8**Train first-time visa holders to anticipate working and living conditions in Canada and the United States, so they can function more effectively**

It is key to develop training programs following recommendations from employers, recruiters and workers with years of experience, in order to help newcomers prepare for working and living conditions in destination countries. Training can help develop specific social and interpersonal skills

that some employers demand, generating a comparative advantage over other nationalities. The training curriculum may include information about living conditions and employer expectations related to conduct, cleanliness, cooking, and resolving conflicts with co-workers. It should also help workers to understand their employment rights, employer responsibilities, potential costs, taxes, health insurance, and who to contact if problems arise. INTECAP could be a key partner, as a reference entity in training the Guatemalan labor force, although its purpose and mandate so far is focused on the needs of the local labor market.

9

Generate tools and implement actions to reduce recruitment costs in Guatemala

These actions may include reducing taxes on airline tickets (an initiative currently under consideration by MINTRAB) or negotiating wholesale purchases of airline tickets. Travel costs within the country could be reduced by offering mobile passport services in rural areas and by working with recruiters and embassies to develop virtual interviews and/or visa processing and interview services in decentralized locations.

10

Support efforts aimed at reducing passport and visa processing times

This may include disseminating the agreement between MINTRAB and the Guatemalan Institute of Migration to expedite the delivery of passports in cases of need, exploring alternatives to process and deliver passports by using mobile units or opening decentralized offices in key locations, coordinating with the Canadian and United States embassies to reduce visa processing times by waiving interviews or conducting virtual interviews, and/or inviting the Canadian embassy to issue visas in the country upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

11

Develop links between United States employers and Guatemalan recruiters and workers

Recognizing the success of the IOM project that established relationships between Canadian employers and Guatemalan workers, it is proposed to repeat the same procedure (building on prior learning) to establish similar connections with United States employers. This would imply carrying out a project that can invest resources to bring United States employers and recruiters closer to Guatemala by generating the initial kick for future hiring. Given that the Guatemalan recruiter system is much more developed than when the initial IOM project was implemented, on this occasion it would be essential that the recruiters play a relevant role in the process. Actions that could be implemented include:

- Promote Guatemalan workers with visa processing companies, United States recruiters, and organizations that represent farmers or businessmen in relevant fields.
- Invite these stakeholders to Guatemala to meet the recruiters, visit communities and gain first-hand knowledge of the recruitment system conditions in Guatemala.
- Subsidize recruitment fees with selected recruiters.
- Subsidize part of the travel expenses of workers who obtain a visa for the first time.
- Offer specific incentives for hiring women.

12

Encourage changes in the structure of visa programs

This includes inviting visa policy makers in Canada and the United States to consider the following proposals:

- Create exemptions to the H-2B visa limits for the countries of the Central American Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), as done in the past. The waivers could also prioritize the hiring of women.
- Expand the H-2B visas limits by approving exemptions for workers from the Northern Triangle who have already obtained the visa in the past and have returned to their countries within the established deadlines.
- Allow employers with a solid reputation to have access to streamlined visa application processes (eliminating lengthy and costly procedures).
- Allow workers who have demonstrated reliability by returning to their countries within the established deadlines to access longer visa periods. Multi-year visas can reduce the need for time-consuming and expensive application procedures every year. The programs could still require workers to return home to ensure visas maintain their purpose of addressing temporary or peak work needs.

7.3. Improve workers' access to temporary work visa programs

Workers have limited information about visa programs and the application procedures which contributes to misinformation, illegal charges, mistreatment, and non-compliance with visa expiration. The next section provides recommendations for these challenges.

13 Develop educational outreach material to educate interested workers about the visa programs available

It is important to develop and distribute educational outreach materials in communities with interest in migrating on a regular basis. This material should include information on available visas, application procedures, related costs, duration of visas, types of employment, living conditions and how to identify and avoid scams. Educational materials must be published in the appropriate languages. It is suggested to consider different types of media, including campaigns on social networks, newspapers, radio and web pages.

14 Publish and maintain a web page at a reliable address where information on temporary work visas is provided

The page should contain the information suggested above, as well as lists of recruiters and references from IOM and the Labor Migration Program with official contact information to check for possible scams. It is also recommended to include lists of active worker searches, if any. This effort seeks to reduce scams.

15 Train personnel from selected municipalities to advise and disseminate information on temporary work visas

Due to many municipal officials' lack of knowledge on the operation of temporary work visas, it is recommended to train selected personnel. In doing so, the trained personnel can become a community resource by offering correct and updated information on visas in their municipalities or their area of influence. The training should include information on visa programs, application procedures, registered recruiters, and types of employment. The trained people will share information with other members of local governments and advise interested workers, especially to detect scams and fraud.

16 Develop mechanisms so that workers can file anonymous or protected complaints related to fraud, improper charges and mistreatment by employers, among others

As workers rely on other members of their communities or employers to access visas, they rarely file complaints, what contributes to illegal visa fees or abusive working conditions to be reproduced and remaining undetected. For this reason, there is a need to implement a mechanism that allows workers who have suffered an injustice, whether at hands of a recruiter, a resident from a community or an employer, to provide information or file a complaint without fear of losing their visa or being excluded in the future. Workers who make valid complaints about issues such as illegal fees could even be rewarded by giving them priority in future calls (rather than having their visas withdrawn, which appears to be the current practice).

17**Develop specific financial products for workers who have been selected for visas, so that they do not have to borrow under abusive conditions to pay initial expenses**

This involves developing a financial mechanism that allows workers to take out a loan at fair interest to cover the essential costs of visa processing and other reasonable expenses, guaranteed by future remittances. This product could be developed in dialogue with MICOOPE (Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives of Guatemala). These loans would seek to prevent workers from taking abusive loans with informal lenders that end up reducing the future family remittances.

7.4. Strengthen the impact of remittances in the homes of regular migrants

From a development perspective, it is critical that migration and remittances foster long-term economic change and contribute to upward social mobility in countries of origin. Proposals in this regard are presented below.

18**Develop financial education actions to facilitate more effective investments of remittances**

Considering the limited experience of migrant families to manage the money received and how to use it effectively, it is recommended to develop financial education actions. To start, this includes disseminating basic information and training on banking operations, the difference between consumption and investment, ways of saving, reducing remittance fees, and understanding basic investment strategies (land, new businesses, or housing). At a second level, these initial actions could be expanded to educational programs that help workers and their families critically evaluate investment alternatives and manage small microenterprises, including agricultural production.

19**Provide personalized agricultural and business advisory services**

This includes developing and offering advisory services to assist in the remittance investment process, both in the agricultural and non-agricultural areas. This advice may include agricultural education to boost productivity and/or personalized evaluation of investment alternatives. In this process, the usage of knowledge acquired while working abroad can play a central role. An efficient way of offering these services would be through agricultural cooperatives or companies, that within the framework of their mandate, that, already consolidated agri-food value chains in Guatemala. Thus, these entities can provide long-term advice together with satisfactory purchasing conditions for those migrant workers who, upon returning, promote and modernize their previous agricultural activity.

Develop training or entrepreneurial incubation programs sponsored by employers

It is suggested to develop educational programs and entrepreneurial incubation activities in collaboration with agricultural cooperatives, companies, or employers that have hired migrants. This may include specific training activities in the countries of destination beyond those required by the current job, information on the operation of the enterprise or company for which they work, exchange of knowledge with the objective of implementing or improving agricultural practices in Guatemala or including advice to develop an investment or entrepreneurship upon return. The idea is to explore alternatives for employers to contribute to the development of businesses and entrepreneurships of their workers in their countries of origin. This is informed by the consideration that there are organizations such as cooperatives that can associate this proposal with their own values and principles, and others that can obtain recognition for their poverty reduction efforts. This recommendation, like the previous one, is clearly useful for guiding international development aid projects promoted by agencies such as USAID, Global Affairs Canada, and local and international NGOs.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE
RESEARCH, AND SOME LIMITATIONS
OF THE STUDY**


RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND SOME LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research constitute a relevant contribution to understand the regular migration of Guatemalans to Canada and the United States. However, it is important to explicitly recognize the limitations of the study. First, while the sample size of the surveys conducted in Guatemala is robust, in a strict sense, the results obtained only apply to specific communities that were selected and are not representative of Guatemala as a whole, or even of the departments of Guatemala where the samples were obtained. In this sense, it is possible that the studied dynamics are not the same in the non-studied municipalities or departments. In any case, there are no reasons that invite us to expect very different results in other departments or regions of the country. Thus, **while it is advisable to be cautious with the results of the surveys conducted in selected Guatemalan communities, the findings are robust in describing the dynamics and impacts of Canadian and United States temporary work visas in rural Guatemalan communities and villages.**

The second highlighted limitation refers to the small size of the samples of Canadian employers, both in interviews and surveys. On the one hand, the multiple interviews carried out with stakeholders linked to Canadian visas have allowed the development of solid knowledge about this program (interviews with Guatemalan recruiters who work with Canada, the Canadian embassy in Guatemala, the Labor Mobility Program of the Ministry of Labor, the Immigration Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and numerous workers who participated in the program). On the other hand, it is clear that the research was unable to develop the specific perspective of Canadian employers and contrast it with United States-based employers. **In that sense, it is advisable to be cautious with the employer-related results when thinking specifically the experience of Canadian employers. In the future, it would be advisable to expand the samples of Canadian employers and overcome the pitfalls found during this study to achieve this purpose.**

The results of the study also made it possible to identify research topics of great interest that could be addressed in the future. First, in response to the discussion regarding the most appropriate recruitment strategies, it would be interesting to analyze the differences in employer satisfaction and the percentage of permanence in the destination countries, comparing the selection of workers through recommendations or after evaluation processes carried out by recruiters. **This research would study the factors that contribute to workers leaving their jobs or not returning to Guatemala once their contracts ended, in order to identify and select those with the highest probability of return.**



After recognizing the key role in which remittances are used to promote development processes in the communities of origin, **it is recommended to study 'successful' cases in which remittances have contributed to generating lasting entrepreneurs, to identify the factors that contribute to this result.** At the same time, this study also made it possible to identify a high percentage of families who observe a deterioration of family relationships, even in the case of temporary labor migration. Based on this, the interest in deepening the ways in which migration affects family relationships is recognized, as well as identifying strategies and protective factors that allow minimizing these impacts.

Another subject on which it is advisable to carry out new studies is the mistreatment of regular migrants in the workplace. In fact, this study showed that 5.9% of workers are mistreated in their workplaces. Although it is a low percentage, it is nonetheless worrying. Thus, **it is recommended to study the ways in which this abuse occurs, to offer tools to workers to respond to these situations and to make recommendations to decision makers.** On the other hand, an additional issue that could not be resolved by this research was the real costs involved in regular migration. However, it was possible to identify the expense items in sufficient detail. Thus, in future studies it will be possible to develop a questionnaire that allows the generation of reliable and accurate data based on the results of this work.

Another issue that could not be addressed in detail was the current operation of informal recruiters and intermediaries who work and operate at community level, generally in connection with United States employers. This was even conditioned by aspects related to security of the research team. In future studies it will be interesting to focus on the subject. At the same time, another issue that needs to be expanded on due to its importance is the hiring of women through temporary work visas. What jobs are they selected for? In what ways are they more and less valued by employers? What is the margin to increase the hiring of women? What affirmative actions could be promoted so that the distribution by gender is more balanced? These are all questions worth exploring.

Finally, it is important to remember that this study compared families and communities with different migratory profiles, in order to identify differences. However, it was a cross-sectional study that did not have a pre-established baseline of information on temporary work visas introduction. In contrast, is the research highlighted the importance of implementing future studies that start from a baseline and that are organized to follow visas introduction in territories and communities where they did not exist before, in order to understand the changes that occur over time; particularly, changes in the number of irregular migrants, the intention to migrate, and family well-being indicators. A challenging aspect of this proposed method is the necessity of a longer period of examination, such as a five-year horizon.

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CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the potential of Canadian and American temporary work visa programs in Guatemala. Specifically, to understand the ability of these programs to favor the establishment of roots in the areas of origin of migrants, and to identify the problems that hinder the proper functioning of these programs, from the perspective of workers and employers. For this purpose, a complex methodological design was used, which included interviews with residents of Guatemalan communities, employers from Canada and the United States, and key stakeholders from both territories, as well as a survey that compared communities with a high and low percentage of regular migrants.

The proposal involved unusual strategies that address these issues in the literature, which gives additional value to the study. In particular, it is worth noting the articulation between qualitative tools (aimed at understanding the phenomena studied from the participants' perspective) and quantitative (aimed at quantifying variables and testing hypotheses). The use of multiple information sources was also important, particularly both workers and employers, and contributed to the development of a comprehensive view of the study's subject. Finally, the survey conducted in Guatemalan communities was organized based on the comparison between communities with a high and a low percentage of regular migrants, which made it possible to explore hypotheses and obtain results that could not have been achieved by using standard random sampling. At the same time, it should be noted that the research was thought of as an applied proposal with the purpose of not only generating scientific knowledge but also devising strategies that allow promoting development processes.

The results obtained are multiple and have been synthesized in previous sections. In particular, the reasons for migration, the grasped differences between regular and irregular migration, the operation of temporary work visas, the costs involved, and the impact of visas on the intention and migratory dynamics were analyzed. At the same time, the operation of recruiting agencies, the expectations and demands of employers, the experiences of employers with Guatemala, and the different problems and challenges related to temporary work visa programs were also explored.

It should be noted that the availability of visas does not reduce the migratory intention of those who remain, but it does radically modify the way in which people migrate, namely the drastic reduction of irregular migration. Simultaneously, the remittances sent by regular migrants are higher and more frequent, which explains why these families had better welfare indicators compared to families of irregular migrants and non-migrants. On the other hand, it is observed that the foreign worker recruitment system in Guatemala requires strengthening, particularly the related to the United States visas. Although Guatemalan workers are valued by employers, Guatemala has difficulties such as: higher costs, longer passport and visa processing times, and insufficiently consolidated contacts with foreign employers and visa processing agencies (particularly for the United States).

Due to these challenges, a series of proposals were put forward. Specifically, it was recommended to work in strengthening the recruitment system in Guatemala, developing incentives to facilitate the hiring of Guatemalans, improving worker access to temporary work visa programs, and strengthening the impact of remittances in regular migrants' households. At the same time, it was also proposed to conduct complementary research that could expand on these findings.

It is probable that not all the proposals developed can be implemented and that not all the stakeholders involved even consider them a priority or convenient. However, they constitute a relevant contribution and indicate a direction to follow, especially since many recommendations are clearly within the action scope of different stakeholders who have a genuine interest in facing the identified challenges, contributing to the improvement of living conditions of Guatemalans, and reducing irregular migration.

Finally, greater knowledge of the links between regular migration and development of households and communities of origin in different areas (rooting, poverty reduction, women's empowerment and strengthening of social capital, among others) can be of great interest when promoting development aid projects that focus on specific bottlenecks. This research suggests that articulating the dynamics of remittances with development projects could be highly effective, to the extent that a relevant part of the resources required for the socioeconomic transformation of households and communities could be contributed by the participants of temporary employment programs, rather than coming entirely from conventional development projects.

Undoubtedly, the results of this research have opened multiple action lines. The next step is to implement them.



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**IMPACT OF REGULAR TEMPORARY MIGRATION
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ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS AND MIGRATION INTENTIONS
OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA,
and analysis of barriers and opportunities to scale up the regular migration strategy.**