

# Removed, Returned and Resettled: Challenges of Central American Migrants Back Home

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Manuel Orozco and

Julia Yansura

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## Introduction

Emigration and deportations represent major challenges for Central American countries, particularly El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which have the largest volume of people attempting to migrate and being returned.<sup>1</sup> This report aims to characterize the extent of human mobility from Central America, with a special focus on trends in return migration and what they mean for countries in the region. It considers voluntary and involuntary return, as well as policy responses related to return migration.

The magnitude of human mobility – people attempting to leave home, trying to enter the US, returning home, or being deported – cannot be overstated. To put things in perspective, in 2014, an estimated 130,000 Central Americans crossed the border into the United States, while 100,000 Central Americans were deported from the United States and roughly 150,000 from Mexico.<sup>2</sup> Another way to interpret the scale of emigration and return is that deportations are equivalent to at least 50% of the annual increase in the labor force in Central America. In a way, labor force increases may be augmented by deportations.

The emigration and return of hundreds of thousands of Central Americans each year, often under difficult circumstances, represents a profound challenge for the region. While efforts to receive and reintegrate returning migrants do exist, they are scarce. In many cases, they are struggling to cope with the current scale of returns and deportations.

Specifically, this report finds that

- In 2014, an estimated 130,000 undocumented Central Americans crossed the border into the United States; Since 2010, on average, 100,000 Central Americans have managed to cross the border each year, entering the United States;
- With regards to apprehension and involuntary return, 190,000 Central American migrants were apprehended by US immigration authorities in Fiscal Year 2013, and deportations of Central Americans from the United States and from Mexico are on the rise;
- With regards to voluntary return, in 2009, at the height of the U.S. recession, one third of migrants said they planned to return to their home countries; In 2015, a similar survey showed that two thirds of migrants say they would choose to return to their home country; of those, roughly 15% said they intended to return within a year;
- Though large numbers of migrants are returning – both by choice and by force -- public policies for coping with this influx are limited; In total, there are less than 40 organizations, public or private, working in nearly 50 projects that serve less than 5,000 people; That is, only one in twenty migrants who are returning involuntarily from the US may receive some form of attention.

Under these circumstances, what can governments do to accommodate to the immediate needs and the longer term challenges of coping with the massive influx of returned migrants? Can governments think outside the conventional approach currently taken? Should they be learning from immigrants about their needs if they would have to reintegrate upon return? What else should governments consider to

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<sup>1</sup> While this report includes Nicaragua, it does not offer an in-depth analysis of migration of Nicaraguans into Costa Rica. We estimate that at least 20,000 Nicaraguans enter Costa Rica every year for employment-related reasons.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that there may be some overlap in these figures if, during the course of several migration attempts, a migrant is deported from both Mexico and the United States.

work with a critical mass of people? In what ways can we leverage on the existing development opportunities of migration to cope with return?

## Trends in Central American Migration

Emigration and deportations represent major challenges for Central American countries, particularly El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which have the largest volume of people attempting to migrate and being returned. In 2014, for example, some 130,000 undocumented Central American migrants entered into the United States.

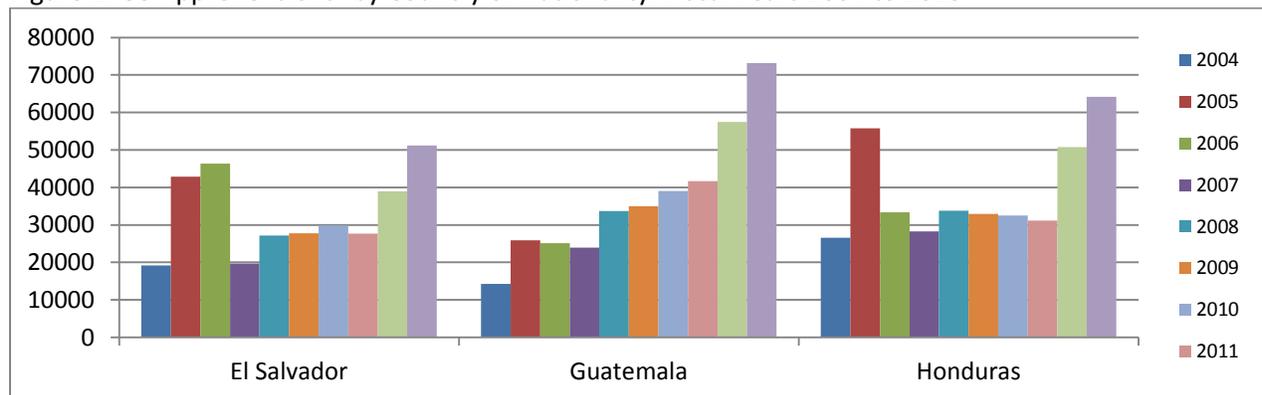
Of course, some of these migrants will manage to enter the country only to be deported later on: two thirds of those who are deported are deported from the border, and the remaining third are deported from within U.S. territory. Others are deported by Mexican authorities before they ever reach the United States.

There are several key issues to highlight here. First, those who come to the United States largely do so by crossing the border. Second, the number of people apprehended has increased substantially from 100,000 in fiscal year 2010 to 190,000 in fiscal year 2013. Third, because not all deportations take place at the border, the amount of deportations is higher than the number of people who enter every year. Fourth, the significance of criminal deportations is important, because the flow of return migrants is diverse and mixed. Finally, child migration is also a growing phenomenon that merits more attention, especially since it involves a vulnerable population with unique needs.

### Increases in Apprehensions

Central Americans have sought migration as a means to improve their economic condition, a trend that has only increased in the post-recession period.<sup>3</sup> One way to identify the extent outflow of Central Americans is by looking at data on the ways people enter the U.S.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1: US Apprehensions<sup>5</sup> by Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2013



Source: Department of Homeland Security, "Enforcement Actions." Available at <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

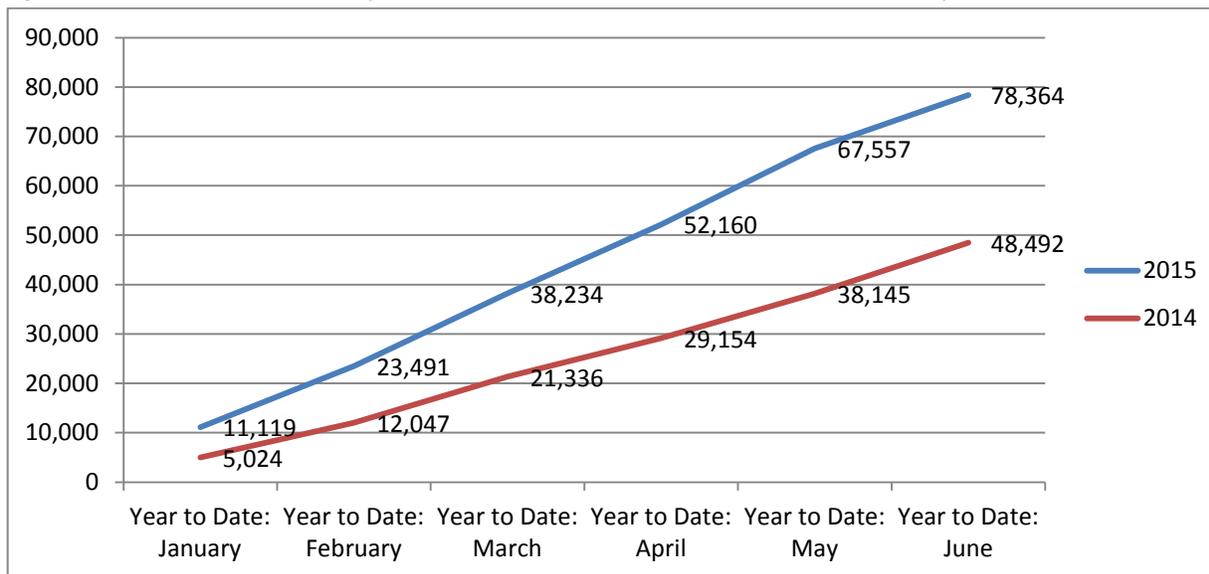
<sup>3</sup> Other reasons such as violence and family reunification have also played a role in emigration from Central America.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. is the primary destination of more than 80% of Central American migrants.

<sup>5</sup> An apprehension is "the arrest of a removable alien by the Department of Homeland Security. Each apprehension of the same alien in a fiscal year is counted separately." See <http://www.dhs.gov/definition-terms>

Large and growing numbers of Central American migrants are also apprehended and deported from Mexico before they ever reach the United States. The figure below, which is reported by the Guatemala government, shows an increase in Central Americans being deported from Mexico in 2015, as compared to 2014. This may reflect overall increases in migration attempts or changes in Mexican enforcement.

Figure 2: Central Americans Deported from Mexico via Land, 2014 to 2015 Comparison



Source: <http://www.migracion.gob.gt/index.php/descargas/category/28-estadisticas-2015.html>

### Entering the United States

Despite these apprehensions, many Central Americans are able to enter the U.S. without legal status.

The exact numbers have been hard to come by. According to a University of Arizona study, the rate of apprehension along the southern border is 76%.<sup>6</sup> This rate is measured through a survey of one thousand detained migrants, many of them Mexicans, on the number of crossings that are “successful” (24%) versus “unsuccessful” or those that resulted in apprehension (76%). This measurement is helpful in that it already takes into account the fact that many people are apprehended more than once. That is to say, the calculation implies that apprehensions represent 76% of all attempts to cross.

However, another method consists of using surveys to find the percentage of migrants that arrive in the US by undocumented border crossings. The results suggest that the vast majority of Central Americans who arriving in the country each year do so via undocumented border crossings. A survey of Salvadorans in El Salvador, for example, asked whether they had a relative in the US, and if so, how they had come to the US. Eighty-percent said the relative crossed the border without papers.<sup>7</sup> From the same survey, a question about non-relatives showed the same result. Moreover, in our August 2015 survey, 80% of adult migrants in the United States also said they came to the US by crossing the border.

<sup>6</sup> Grimes, Golob, and Nunamaker, 2013 “Reasons and Resolve to Cross the line,” BORDERS/The University of Arizona. The report focused mostly on Mexican immigrants.

<sup>7</sup> Orozco Manuel. El Salvador household survey, 2014.

Using this indicator, we estimate<sup>8</sup> that 130,000 Central Americans crossed the US border in 2014. Although border crossings do not account for all types of migration, more than 70% of Central American migration to the US is carried out by crossing borders, the rest being a mix of visa overstay and legal migration.

Table 1: Central American Migrants Entering US by Border Crossing, Estimated

| Country of origin | 2010    | 2011    | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Honduras          | 27,733  | 31,385  | 32,350  | 35,311  | 38,480  |
| Nicaragua         | 4,662   | 5,082   | 4,895   | 5,253   | 5,502   |
| Guatemala         | 36,772  | 39,377  | 42,614  | 38,759  | 42,264  |
| El Salvador       | 34,619  | 35,694  | 38,247  | 42,435  | 44,676  |
| Sub-region        | 103,786 | 111,539 | 118,106 | 121,758 | 130,922 |

Source: Authors' estimates.

### Deportations

Despite these massive inflows, the number of migrants being deported is also substantial. First, U.S. deportations are conducted both at the border and within the U.S. According to official figures, one third of deportations are within the U.S. territory, not entry without visa authorization. Second, the number of U.S. deported migrants does not include all deportations of Central Americans, since many are also deported from Mexico. Third, the rate of deportations of Central Americans in Mexico has increased since 2010.

Table 2: Deportations from the U.S.

| Deportations from the U.S. | 2010   | 2011   | 2012   | 2013    |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| El Salvador                | 20,347 | 17,381 | 18,677 | 21,602  |
| Guatemala                  | 29,710 | 30,343 | 38,677 | 47,769  |
| Honduras                   | 25,121 | 22,028 | 31,515 | 37,049  |
| Nicaragua                  | 1,903  | 1,502  | 1,373  | 1,383   |
| Four countries             | 77,081 | 71,254 | 90,242 | 107,803 |

Source: Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

As the table below shows, many of those being deported from the United States are male. Moreover, most are being deported from the border region, rather than from the interior of the United States.

<sup>8</sup> We use remittance transaction and survey data to determine the number of annual entries to the U.S. Our studies show that 90% of transactions from the U.S. are person-to-person transfers, carried out by 70% migrant adults (90% of the migrant population in the U.S.) who are remittance senders. Moreover, since 2008 our surveys show that between 4% and 5% of interviewed migrants say they arrived that same year of the interview. The result is the following estimate for 2014 inflows to the United States.

|      | Honduras | Nicaragua | Guatemala | El Salvador | Sub-region |
|------|----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 2014 | 45,094   | 6,877     | 52,830    | 59,567      | 164,368    |

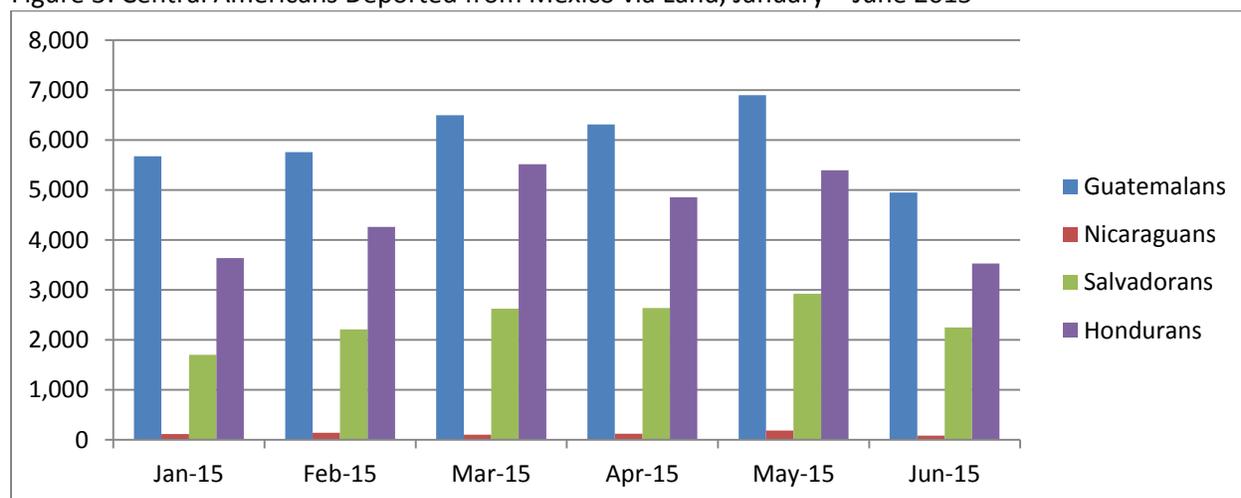
Table 3: Portrait of DHS Removals, FY 2003-2013

|                   | Total DHS Removals | Arrest Location |              | Removal Type |                   |               |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
|                   |                    | Border (%)      | Interior (%) | Judicial (%) | Reinstatement (%) | Expedited (%) |
| Gender            |                    |                 |              |              |                   |               |
| Male              | 91                 | 89              | 94           | 91           | 93                | 86            |
| Female            | 9                  | 11              | 6            | 9            | 7                 | 14            |
| Country of Origin |                    |                 |              |              |                   |               |
| Mexico            | 71                 | 74              | 69           | 56           | 82                | 77            |
| Guatemala         | 8                  | 8               | 7            | 9            | 6                 | 9             |
| Honduras          | 7                  | 8               | 6            | 8            | 7                 | 8             |
| El Salvador       | 5                  | 4               | 5            | 7            | 3                 | 3             |
| Other             | 9                  | 5               | 12           | 20           | 2                 | 4             |
| Total             | 3,676,159          | 2,122,816       | 1,323,043    | 1,284,563    | 1,093,818         | 1,170,402     |

Source: MPI, "Deportation and Discretion: Reviewing the Record and Options for Change," 2014.

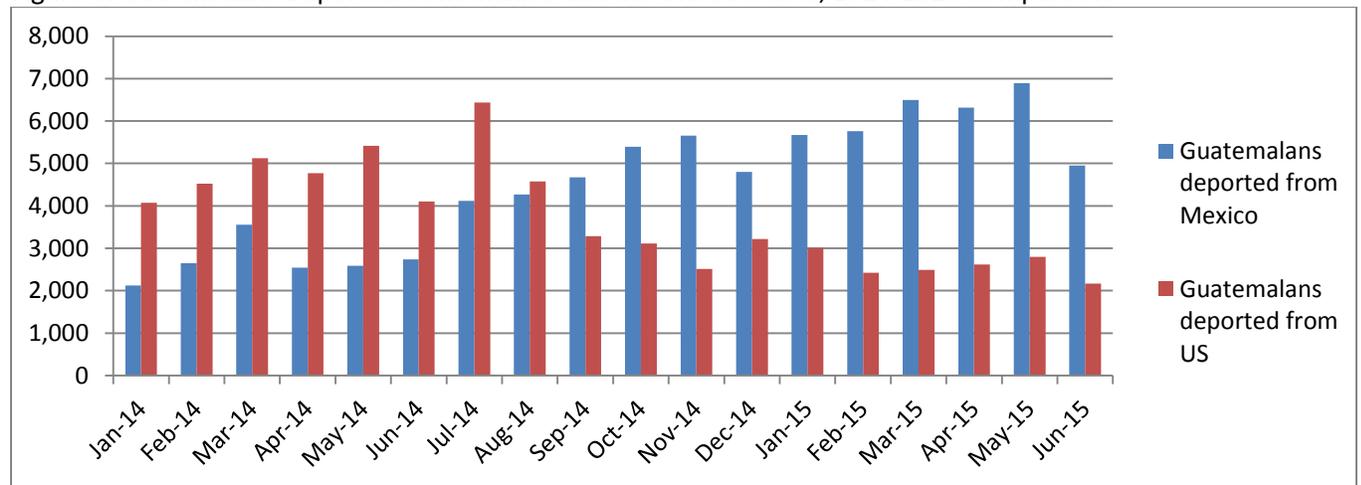
Of course, Central American migrants are also being deported from Mexico. The following figures show trends in Mexican deportations by country of origin. Guatemalans are the largest Central American group being deported from Mexico, followed by Hondurans and Salvadorans. In June 2015 alone, over 10,000 Central American migrants were returned from Mexico before ever reaching the US border.

Figure 3: Central Americans Deported from Mexico via Land, January – June 2015



Source: <http://www.migracion.gob.gt/index.php/descargas/category/28-estadisticas-2015.html>

Figure 4: Guatemalans Deported from Mexico and the United States, 2014-2015 Comparison



Source: <http://www.migracion.gob.gt/index.php/descargas/category/28-estadisticas-2015.html>

### The Magnitude of Deportations

These figures point to the magnitude of people being returned to Central America. This magnitude can be observed in several ways:

- In relationship to the undocumented population that comes into the country, or
- In relationship to the annual labor force increase, for example.

In the first case, despite the fact that large numbers of people are able to cross the U.S. border; more people are deported each year than are successfully entering, according to our estimates. In Fiscal Year 2013, for example, an estimated 130,000 Central Americans entered the United States, while 108,000 Central Americans were deported from the United States and roughly 150,000 from Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

More importantly, perhaps, is the figure that deportations are equivalent to at least 50% of the annual increase in the labor force. While every year nearly 500,000 Central Americans join the Central American labor force, at least half of that number attempts to enter the U.S., one fifth of which is able to enter, and one quarter that is returned.

This trend opens the question as to the extent to which the region's governments of the three main countries are aware of these numbers, which do not include voluntary return. Moreover, emigration, and involuntary [and voluntary] inflow of this labor mobility, points out to shifting dynamics as to the policy priorities to focus on this population which is made up of an able labor force. Of particular relevance is linking these realities to the Alliance for Prosperity and other policy and aid initiatives. As the subsequent sections of the report will show, there are few policies or programs in place that can handle the critical mass of involuntary and voluntary returns.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that there may be some overlap in these figures if, during the course of several migration attempts, a migrant is deported from both Mexico and the United States.

Table 4: Comparing Statistics, Central American Migration to the United States, 2013

|             | Labor force increase | Apprehensions | Unauthorized border crossings (US) | Deportations from United States |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Honduras    | 94,652               | 64,157        | 35,311                             | 37,049                          |
| Nicaragua   | 70,059               | 2,712         | 5,253                              | 1,383                           |
| Guatemala   | 201,991              | 73,208        | 38,759                             | 47,769                          |
| El Salvador | 48,746               | 51,226        | 42,435                             | 21,602                          |
| Sub region  | 415,448              | 191,303       | 121,758                            | 107,803                         |

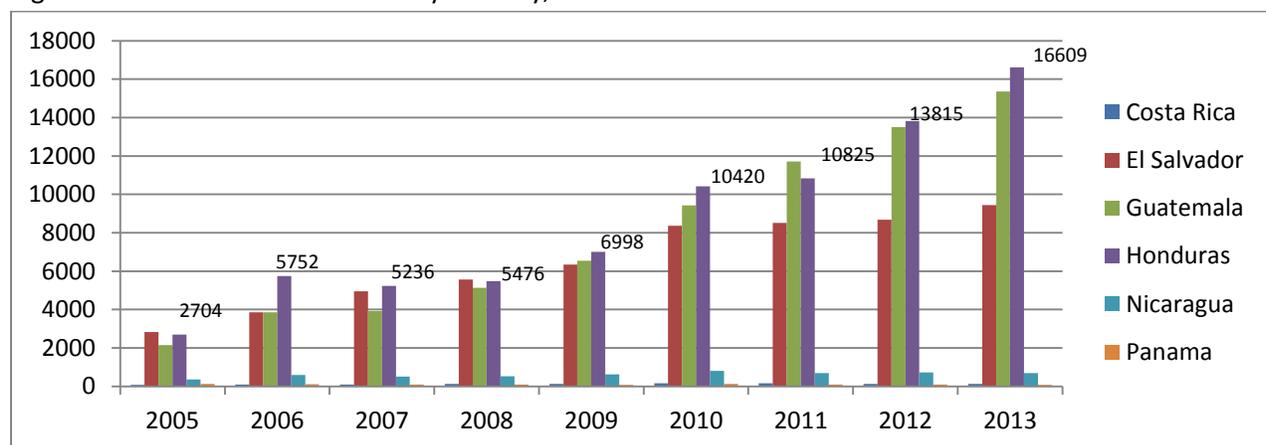
Source: Estimates based on annual remittance transactions and other indicators.

### Criminal Deportations

For countries in the region, another important factor to consider is the type of person removed from the U.S. and returned to Central America. Some migrants who are removed have been convicted of either violent or nonviolent crimes. According to an analysis of all US deportations from FY 2003-2013, criminal deportations amounted to a larger percentage of total deportations under the Obama Administration than under the previous Bush Administration. However, while 41% of total removals in FY 2003-2013 were of people previously convicted of a crime, only 18% were convicted of the most serious, “Level 1”<sup>10</sup> crimes.<sup>11</sup>

The figure below shows criminal removals of Central American migrants. In fiscal year 2013, for example, roughly 17,000 Hondurans with criminal records were removed from the United States out of 37,000 removals and 64,000 apprehensions.

Figure 5: Total Criminal Removals by Country, DHS for Fiscal Years 2005 - 2013



Source: Author’s calculations using Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2013, “Enforcement Actions.”  
<http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

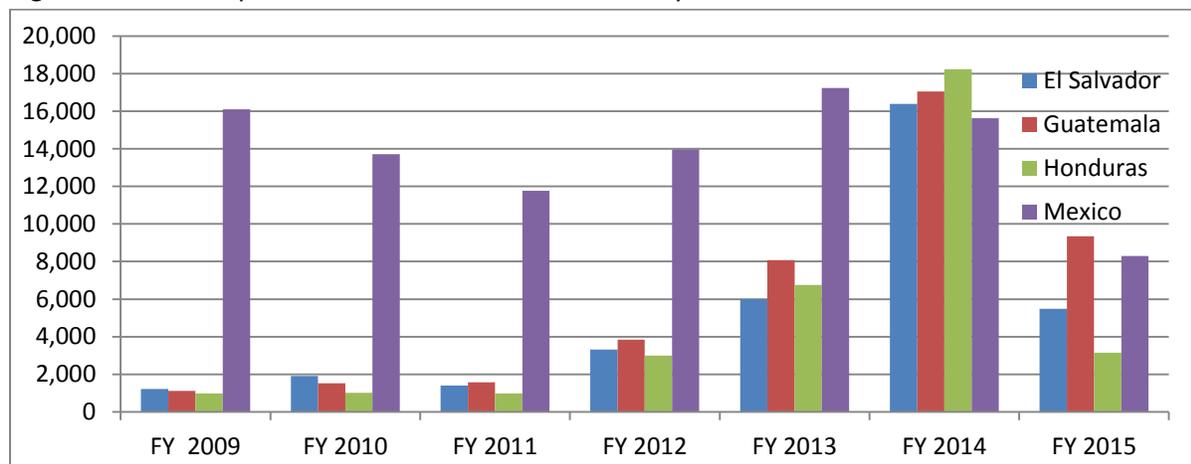
<sup>10</sup> A “Level 1 Offender” is a noncitizen convicted of an aggravated felony (such as murder, rape, sexual abuse, drug trafficking, smuggling, etc.) or two or more felony offenses.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change>

## Child Migrants

The outflow of unaccompanied child migrants fleeing from Central America is another trend shaping migration from the region. Through this trend caught the attention of US policymakers, human rights organizations, and media outlets in the summer of 2014, it is not new. Like adult migration, it dates back to the mid-2000s, intensifying in the post-recession period. While fiscal year 2014 saw record levels of unaccompanied children coming from Central America, fiscal year 2015 has seen slightly lower levels. This decline is likely due to more of these children being apprehended in Mexico before they reach the United States.

Figure 6: Unaccompanied Alien Children Encountered by Fiscal Year, FY 2015 To Date<sup>12</sup>



Source: <http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children>

The decrease in child migrants attempting to cross the U.S. border likely reflects an increase in Mexican enforcement efforts, rather than any substantive improvement in the overall humanitarian situation of this vulnerable population. The table below indicates that the number of foreign minors apprehended (or “rescued,” to use the official terminology) by Mexican authorities has more than doubled from 2013 to 2014. If current levels of apprehensions continue throughout the remaining months of 2015, they will likely have tripled from 2014 to 2015.

Table 5: Foreign Minors Intercepted by Mexican Migration Officials (INM)

| Year and Category         | Foreign minors intercepted by INM |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2013                      | 3,496                             |
| 2014                      | 8,003                             |
| 2015 to date (Jan – June) | 11,893                            |
| With family member        | 5,780                             |
| Without family member     | 6,113                             |
| 0-11 years old            | 4,029                             |
| 12 – 17 years old         | 7,864                             |
| Male                      | 8,060                             |
| Female                    | 3,833                             |

Source: Boletín INM No. 38/15, June 2015. Available at [http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Boletin\\_3815](http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Boletin_3815)

<sup>12</sup> This includes the approximately 9-month period of October 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

## Central American Return— By Choice

Of course, not all return migration is involuntary. Some migrants may reach Mexico and the United States and realize that they need or want to return home for family obligations, different employment options, or a variety of reasons. Other migrants may migrate to the United States with the express intention of working for several years and then returning home to their country.

Table 6: Central American Migrants in the United States

| Migrants    | 2014      |
|-------------|-----------|
| Honduras    | 901,880   |
| Nicaragua   | 275,096   |
| Guatemala   | 1,056,610 |
| El Salvador | 1,191,354 |
| Sub region  | 3,487,080 |

Source: author’s estimate.

There is little information available on migrants who return home by choice. In a 2009 survey of Mexican and Central American migrants, 35% among them responded that they would eventually return to their home country. When asked when, the average was in 5 years, and 6% (or 2% of all migrants) said they would return on that same year, 2009. Bear in mind that this study took place during the worst time of the recession, when more than 10% of migrants had lost their jobs.<sup>13</sup> The table below highlights the case of Salvadorans in the US in 2009 and their interest in returning home.

Table 7: Survey of Salvadorans in the US, 2009

| Are you thinking of returning to El Salvador to live? |                                  | % Yes |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|
| Overall   |                                  | 35.8% |
| Current Residence                                     | Boston, MA                       | 56.7% |
|   | Dallas, TX                       | 53.5% |
|   | Washington, DC                   | 57.4% |
|   | Houston, TX                      | 55.1% |
|   | Los Angeles, CA                  | 30.1% |
|   | San Francisco, CA                | 25.6% |
| Gender  | Male                             | 36.9% |
|   | Female                           | 33.7% |
| Highest level of education achieved                   | University Graduate              | 30.6% |
|   | Some university                  | 35.1% |
|   | High School                      | 44.3% |
|   | Elementary School                | 31.3% |
|   | Did not finish elementary school | 28.2% |
| Occupation  | Kitchen staff                    | 23.5% |
|   | Cashier                          | 21.9% |

<sup>13</sup> Orozco, Manuel. “Understanding the continuing effect of the economic crisis on remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean.” IADB. August 12, 2009.

|  |                 |       |
|--|-----------------|-------|
|  | Carpenter       | 44.4% |
|  | Driver          | 45.7% |
|  | Cook            | 38.2% |
|  | Construction    | 42.7% |
|  | Factory worker  | 59.3% |
|  | Cleaning        | 51.4% |
|  | Maintenance     | 45.8% |
|  | Waiter/Waitress | 29.3% |

Source: Inter-American Dialogue, BMI Study, 2009.

In August 2015, a survey of migrants in the Washington metropolitan area showed that more than 60% say they would want to return. Forty percent of them had an idea of the timing of their return. Of those, 15% said they would return on the same year (5% of all migrants). The response may reflect more the attitudes of migrants about their current legal status and years of separation without families. For example, these migrants have been 15 years in the U.S. compared to those in 2009 who had been in the country for approximately 10 years.

Table 8: Intention of Returning Home to Live, 2015 Survey Results

| Category  |  | Response  |
|---|--|-----------|
| <b>Planning to Return to Live</b>   |  | 67%       |
| <b>By Nationality</b>   |  |           |
|   | Salvadorans                            | 62.8%     |
|   | Guatemalans                            | 86.7%     |
|   | Hondurans                              | 81.0%     |
| <b>By Gender</b>  |  |           |
|   | Male                                   | 71.2%     |
|   | Female                                 | 57.6%     |
| <b>Timing of return</b>   |  |           |
|   | No specific idea of timing             | 59.6%     |
|   | Has a specific idea of timing          | 40.4%     |
|   | Number of years until return (Ave.)    | 8.8 years |
|   | Plan to return within a year           | 19.0%     |
| <b>Primary Reasons for Wanting to Return (% of all affirmative responses)</b> |  |           |
|   | Family back home                       | 38.2%     |
|   | My country – sense of belonging        | 30.9%     |
|   | Want to Retire there, Tired of Working | 20.3%     |
| <b>Reasons for Not Wanting to Return (% of all negative responses)</b>        |  |           |
|   | Violence, Insecurity                   | 38.3%     |
|   | My family is here now                  | 18.3%     |
|   | Happy staying in US                    | 13.3%     |

Source: Survey of Migrants, Inter-American Dialogue, August 2015.

## Reception and Reintegration Efforts in Central America

Faced with large and growing numbers of return migrants, many of whom have been deported under difficult circumstances, countries in the region have scrambled to respond. Despite good intentions, it has been difficult to meet the needs of this population. Existing programs for return and reintegration tend to be small and disparate, with very limited resources. In many cases, they lack the funding to provide either depth or breadth of coverage. Despite some strong efforts, countries in the region are struggling to meet the needs and challenges of returning migrants, especially at the scale that it has been occurring in the post-recession period.

### Outreach to Migrants

Only one in four migrants Central American migrants in the United States have heard of programs that help migrants to return and readjust to life in their home country, as Table 9 shows. This figure can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, migrants living in the United States are not the intended audience for programs helping deported or returning migrants. On the other hand, given the large-scale deportations and apprehensions that have affected Central American migrants and their migrant family members in recent years, it is surprising that there is not more awareness of these programs.

The low levels of awareness may point to the scarcity of existing programs. According to a 64 year old Salvadoran migrant, who had crossed the border and been deported multiple times, “supposedly there are programs, on paper. But when you return, there is nothing there for you, in reality.” After being deported the last time, he returned to the US, where he has been working for the past 5 years.

Table 9: Awareness of Programs for Returning Migrants

| Population Group       |  | Aware of Programs |
|------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Overall                |  | 25.4%             |
| By Country of Origin   | El Salvador                                | 25.4%             |
|                        | Guatemala                                  | 20.0%             |
|                        | Honduras                                   | 23.8%             |
| By Gender              | Male                                       | 26.9%             |
|                        | Female                                     | 22.4%             |
| By Intention to Return | Plans to return                            | 26.2%             |
|                        | No plans to return                         | 23.4%             |
| By Legal Status        | Entered US with Migrant Visa               | 33.3%             |
|                        | Entered US by Undocumented Border Crossing | 24.2%             |

Source: Survey of Migrants in Washington, DC. August, 2015.

Of the 25.4% of migrants who were aware of these types of programs, only 36% (or 9% of the total population) were able to name a specific example. The programs most frequently mentioned were CARECEN, Casa del Migrante, “At the embassy,” and airport reception programs such as “Bienvenido a Casa.”

### Programs Helping Returning Migrants

Assistance for returning migrants is limited, as the table below shows. El Salvador and Honduras have the largest number of initiatives, many of them very recent. In Guatemala and Nicaragua, there are fewer programs, but those that are in place are more long-standing. In general, programs operate with limited staffing. Table 10 provides additional detail on these programs.

Table 10: Primary Programs by Country and Characteristics

| Country     | Number of Programs | Ave. Years in Operation | Ave. Number of Staff |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| El Salvador | 15-20              | 4 years                 | 12 Staff             |
| Guatemala   | Less than 10       | 11 years                | 5 or fewer           |
| Honduras    | 15-20              | 4 years                 | 5 or fewer           |
| Nicaragua   | Less than 10       | 12 years                | 5 or fewer           |
| Regional    | 2                  |                         |                      |

Source: Mapping of Programs, Inter-American Dialogue, 2015.

### Main Activities & Achievements

Many programs are focused on basic reception needs. The review of 48 programs and interviews with more than 20 organizations showed that nearly half of these projects were focusing their attention on the immediate needs of people upon return.

Table 11: Primary Programs, Objectives

| Objectives                 | El Salvador | Guatemala | Honduras | Nicaragua | Regional | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Basic Reception            | 8           | 4         | 7        | 2         | 1        | 22    |
| Labor Force Reintegration  | 5           | 1         | 1        | 2         |          | 9     |
| Economic development       | 1           | 1         | 2        | 2         | 1        | 7     |
| Research and data analysis |             |           | 2        |           |          | 2     |
| Other                      | 3           |           | 4        | 1         |          | 8     |
| Grand Total                | 17          | 6         | 16       | 7         | 2        | 48    |

Source: Mapping of Programs, Inter-American Dialogue, 2015.

Basic reception programs, which are the most common type of program, meet migrants at bus or airport reception centers and provide services such as food, transportation, emergency lodging, and help in terms of contacting family members. Government programs such as “Bienvenido a Casa” provide a certain baseline type of reception, but in many cases, NGOs provide supplementary services. For example, World Vision provides additional food and medical attention above what is offered by the government. Glasswing International also supplements government attention to returning child migrants at reception centers.

Table 12: Primary Activities and Target Populations

| Activities                   | El Salvador | Guatemala | Honduras | Nicaragua | Regional | Total |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Medical/health               |             |           | 6        | 1         | 1        | 8     |
| Other                        | 4           | 4         | 5        | 5         | 1        | 22    |
| Entrepreneurship             | 3           |           | 2        |           |          | 5     |
| Education                    | 3           |           | 2        |           |          | 5     |
| Outreach support             | 3           |           |          | 1         |          | 4     |
| Job training                 | 1           | 2         | 1        |           |          | 4     |
| Target population            | El Salvador | Guatemala | Honduras | Nicaragua | Regional | Total |
|                              |             |           |          |           |          |       |
| All migrants                 | 9           | 5         | 6        | 3         | 1        | 24    |
| Children & Young Adults      | 2           | 1         | 3        | 3         |          | 8     |
| Families                     |             |           | 1        | 1         |          | 2     |
| Victims of rights violations | 2           |           |          |           |          | 2     |
| Other                        | 4           |           | 6        |           | 1        | 11    |

Source: Mapping of Programs, Inter-American Dialogue, 2015.

Beyond basic reception, some programs are focused on longer-term reintegration strategies. The Salvadoran government is a case in point: in recent years, it has expanded its services to return migrants to include workforce reintegration, entrepreneurship, and technical education. Multiple programs in El Salvador are providing labor force reintegration and entrepreneurship coaching. Access to startup capital will soon be available to deported migrant entrepreneurs through a Salvadoran government program. Guatemala is also offering technical education and certification programs in partnership with INTECAP that can help return migrants find better jobs. According to interviews with technical education programs, many return migrants are interested in studying technical courses such as cooking, call center operations, and tourism since these build on existing skills from their time in the US (English language skills, for example) while also providing them an opportunity to find reasonably well-paying employment in their home country upon completion of the course.

Several programs are also involved in improving data and statistics on deported populations, which remains a challenge. Their aim is to better understand these populations and their needs. For example, INSAMI in El Salvador maintains a database of returning migrants, which helps them to better profile the populations they are working with. Indeed, a variety of people working in different sectors and countries pointed to data as a priority as well as an area for improvement.

In terms of achievements, these can be difficult to see. As one program official noted, “it is difficult to see results because many programs have just begun, or are still in process.” According to a mapping of existing programs, 10 have started as recently as 2014. Through specific circumstances vary, reception services tend to offer a minimal level of attention to a large number of migrants, while reintegration programs offer more in-depth attention that typically only reaches around 100 migrants a year. The

tension between breadth and depth of coverage is critical, especially in light of some of the funding limitations that programs face.

### Challenges Facing Programs

Many programs spoke openly about the challenges they face. “We’re trying, but it’s not an easy task,” said one representative.” “The *entire topic* of return migration is a challenge,” a government official mentioned, noting that, despite their best efforts, attention to return migrants is simply “insufficient.”

Many programs noted that a lack of resources has been a major challenge. Both government and NGO initiatives have struggled to find adequate funding. “There’s no funding,” commented another program in Guatemala. “We have had to limit our services due to lack of funding,” noted a religious organization working with deported migrants in Honduras.

Other programs have mentioned the difficulties of scaling existing initiatives to reach larger numbers of migrants. As one Salvadoran program noted, they are playing catch-up, trying to adapt to ever-larger waves of deported migrants. This may be even more problematic for Honduras and Guatemala, which have seen the most dramatic increase in apprehensions and removals over the period 2013-present (See Figure 1). In many cases, governments in the region have struggled to respond to the waves of deportations that they have seen in recent years. As one program official noted, “not all of the countries in the region have the institutional structure to be prepared to handle” a situation of this magnitude. Issues of political instability and corruption may also disrupt current efforts.

Another challenge mentioned has been effectively collaborating with stakeholders. In many cases, government programs are inter-institutional. This can cause challenges in terms of communication and collaboration. As one government official explained, it is important to have clear which responsibilities fall with each institution. “We need to ensure we are functioning perfectly, it’s almost like the mechanics of an expensive Swiss watch,” she noted. Part of this, of course, includes involving the private sector, especially in terms of labor force reintegration. While many programs mentioned meetings and outreach to private sector employers, it remains more of an aspiration than a reality, and none were able to provide any concrete examples of public-private partnerships.

Finally, several programs mentioned the challenge of accessing and maintain accurate contact information. In both Guatemala and El Salvador, reintegration services depend, at least in part, on the programs’ ability to reach out to return migrants. However, contact information is incomplete and sometimes inaccurate, either because migrants are not sure where they will be living upon their return, or because they do not feel confident sharing it with government institutions for a variety of possible reasons. According to one organization working in El Salvador, return migrants are afraid to provide accurate contact details due to the very complex security situation in the communities to which they are returning.

### Challenges Facing Return Migrants

In many cases, deported migrants must try to rebuild their lives in their home country with very limited resources. However, the specific challenges they face depend on their unique case, many organizations noted. For example, return migrants include those who have been turned back in Mexico or attempting to cross the US border. They also include those who have spent several months working in the United

States before being apprehended and deported. Finally, they may include those who have spent many years in the United States.

The challenges facing each of these population groups are unique. Migrants returned from the border, for example, often return to the same difficult situations that originally caused them to decide to migrate. However, they may also face financial issues and debt related to the costs of the unsuccessful migration attempt.<sup>14</sup>

Migrants who have been in the US longer may face a different set of challenges. Those who have developed specific, high-value skills in the US – including, but not limited to English, construction, electricity and plumbing – may need help transitioning to life back in their country. They may need help obtaining or transferring a professional certification so that they can find a job in their area of expertise.

In addition, return migrants may face stigma or discrimination in the communities to which they return. It may be perceived by neighbors or potential employers that they were deported because of criminal behaviors. However, according to a Salvadoran government official, “It’s important to recognize that a huge number of these people have no criminal background of any kind” (see Figure 5).

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, <http://ladobe.com.mx/2015/07/los-migrantes-que-llevan-una-bomba-de-tiempo-por-equipaje/>

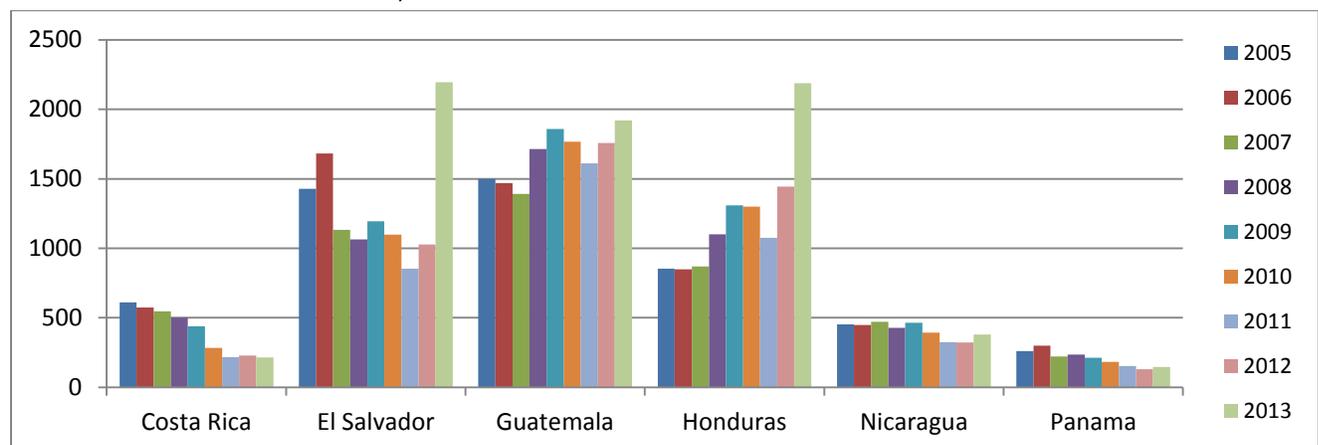
## Appendix A: Understanding US Immigration Enforcement

The issue of deportations has come into the spotlight in the United States, particularly in light of the New York Times Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) investigation which found that “during the three years of his term, Mr. Obama has deported more than 1.1 million immigrants, the most by any president since the 1950s.”<sup>15</sup> Central American and Mexican migrants are among those that have been most affected by these deportations.<sup>16</sup>

In the terminology of the Department of Homeland Security, the primary US government entity tasked with immigration enforcement, the term “deportation” does not exist. Rather, there are a variety of enforcement actions, all of which have slightly different meanings and implications. Migrants who violate the United States Immigration and Nationality Act may be **found inadmissible, apprehended, removed or returned**. These enforcement actions occur at the borders of the United States, in the interior of the country, and at designated sites outside the United States.<sup>17</sup> This report considers trends in each of these types of enforcement, while also noting that for migrants going through these processes, the specificities of this terminology may be confusing and irrelevant in light of the painful and difficult experience of deportation.

With regards to inadmissibility, migrants who attempt to enter the US legally, but are turned away, are considered “inadmissible.” There are a number of reasons for being found inadmissible, including health issues, criminal backgrounds, and previous immigration violations.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note the increase in inadmissibilities among Salvadorans and Hondurans in recent years. However, overall numbers are quite low, which suggests that many Central American migrants are attempting to enter the US through undocumented border crossing rather than via official channels.

“Aliens Determined Inadmissible,”<sup>19</sup> Fiscal Years 2005 - 2013



Source: <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

<sup>15</sup> Preston and Cushman, The New York Times (June, 2012) <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/16/us/us-to-stop-deporting-some-illegal-immigrants.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change>

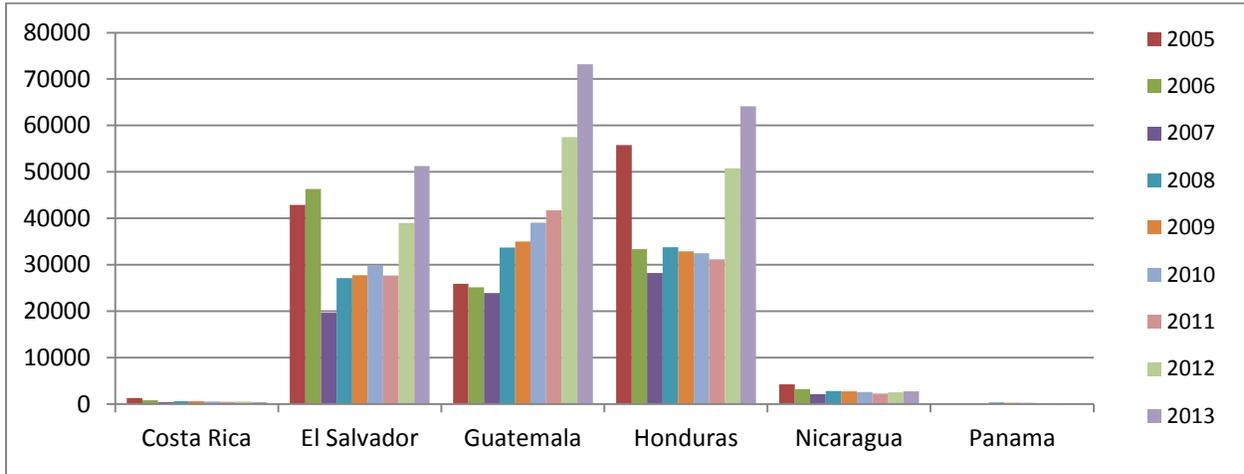
<sup>17</sup> [http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_yb\\_2013\\_0.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_yb_2013_0.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1182>

<sup>19</sup> An “alien seeking admission at a port of entry who does not meet the criteria in the INA for admission. The alien may be placed in removal proceedings or, under certain circumstances, allowed to withdraw his or her application for admission.” See <http://www.dhs.gov/definition-terms>

Compared to inadmissibilities, apprehensions are much more common. Among Central American migrants, there were 192,000 apprehensions in fiscal year 2013 compared to only 7,000 inadmissibilities. Moreover, apprehensions of Central Americans have grown rapidly in fiscal years 2012 and 2013, likely reflecting higher overall levels of undocumented migration from these countries.

US Apprehensions<sup>20</sup> by Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2013



Source: DHS Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2013. Available at <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

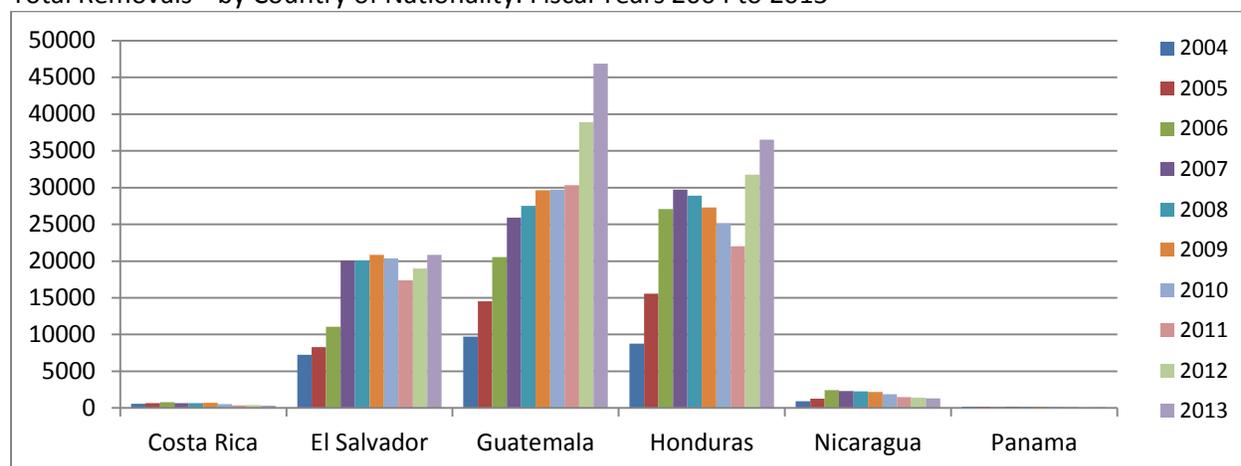
### ***Deportations: “Removals” and “Returns”***

Migrants who are apprehended can either be “removed” or “voluntarily returned,” to use the official language of the US Department of Homeland Security. A removal is a judicial and legal action that remains on the record, whereas a return is a somewhat more voluntary action that has no legal record (this may be a positive thing for migrants if they hope to re-enter the US again in the future).

Central American migrants are, in their vast majority, being “removed” from the US as opposed to “returned.” In 2013, for example, there were nearly 100,000 removals of Central American migrants from the US compared to only 3,000 returns. The figure below provides additional detail on removals by country of origin and fiscal year. The rapid increase in removals of Guatemalans and Hondurans is particularly noteworthy.

<sup>20</sup> An apprehension is “the arrest of a removable alien by the Department of Homeland Security. Each apprehension of the same alien in a fiscal year is counted separately.” See <http://www.dhs.gov/definition-terms>

Total Removals<sup>21</sup> by Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2013<sup>22</sup>



Source: DHS Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2013. Available at <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>.

## The Profile of Deported and Returned Populations

Understanding the profile of returning populations is important in terms of designing effective policies that meet their needs and realities. The following table provides insights into the profile of returning migrants with regards to gender, age, and skills. It also shows what percentage intend to attempt migration again, and within what period of time.

Profile of Deported Populations according to Frontera Sur Surveys, 2014<sup>23</sup>

|                                |                               | Guatemalans        |                          | Hondurans            |                          | El Salvador          |                          |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
|                                |                               | Returned from US % | Returned from Mexico (%) | Returned from US (%) | Returned from Mexico (%) | Returned from US (%) | Returned from Mexico (%) |
| Demographic Profile            | Male                          | 84.6%              | 71.9%                    | 76.2%                | 85.1%                    | 80.4%                | 82.4%                    |
|                                | Female                        | 15.4%              | 28.1%                    | 23.8%                | 14.9%                    | 19.6%                | 17.6%                    |
|                                | Average Age                   | 27 years           | 27 years                 | 29 years             | 27 years                 | 28 years             | 29 years                 |
|                                | Primary education or less (%) | -                  | -                        | -                    | 70%                      | 25.1%                | 29.2%                    |
| Primary reason for going to US | To work or look for work      | 97.3%              | 99.2%                    | 98.4%                | 99.2%                    | 97.9%                | 96.4%                    |
|                                | Family reunification          | 2.0%               | 0.3%                     | 1.5%                 | 0.2%                     | 1.7%                 | 1.9%                     |
| Treatment from                 | Very good                     | 0.4%               | 14.3%                    | 1.0%                 | 19.3%                    | 6.7%                 | 23.0%                    |

<sup>21</sup> Removal is the compulsory and confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States based on an order of removal. An alien who is removed has administrative or criminal consequences placed on subsequent reentry. See [http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_enforcement\\_ar\\_2013.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_enforcement_ar_2013.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> ICE accounted for 75 percent of all removals in 2013, down from 83 percent in 2012. USBP accounted for 20 percent of all removals in 2013, up from 12 percent in 2012. OFO performed 4.9 percent of removals in 2013 and 5.2 percent in 2012. For more information, see [http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_enforcement\\_ar\\_2013.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_enforcement_ar_2013.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> la EMIF SUR contempla flujos que se caracterizan por su origen (Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras), su destino (México o Estados Unidos), y la condición del retorno, si es un individuo devuelto por las autoridades migratorias de México o de Estados Unidos. De la combinación de estos elementos se definen cuadro flujos y al interior de cada uno de estos se identifica al menos una población objetivo. Ver [http://www.colef.mx/emif/bases\\_metodologicas.php](http://www.colef.mx/emif/bases_metodologicas.php)

|   |                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Migratory Authorities                             | Good             | 27.4% | 74.4% | 37.2% | 58.3% | 43.8% | 46.1% |
|   | Okay             | 30.9% | 9.2%  | 38.4% | 18.5% | 31.0% | 25.9% |
|   | Bad              | 14.9% | 2.1%  | 18.1% | 3.0%  | 7.0%  | 4.2%  |
|   | Very bad         | 26.5% | 0.1%  | 5.3%  | 1.0%  | 11.5% | 0.6%  |
| Will you try to enter the US again in the future? | Yes              | 51.8% | 53.7% | 39.1% | 86.9% | 40.7% | 78.8  |
|   | % Within 30 days | 20.1% | NA    | 35.6% | NA    | 42.8% | NA    |
|   | No               | 43.4% | 45.9% | 56.1% | 13.1% | 56.1% | 21.2% |
|   | Not sure         | 4.8%  | 0.5%  | 4.8%  | 0.0%  | 3.2%  | 0.0%  |

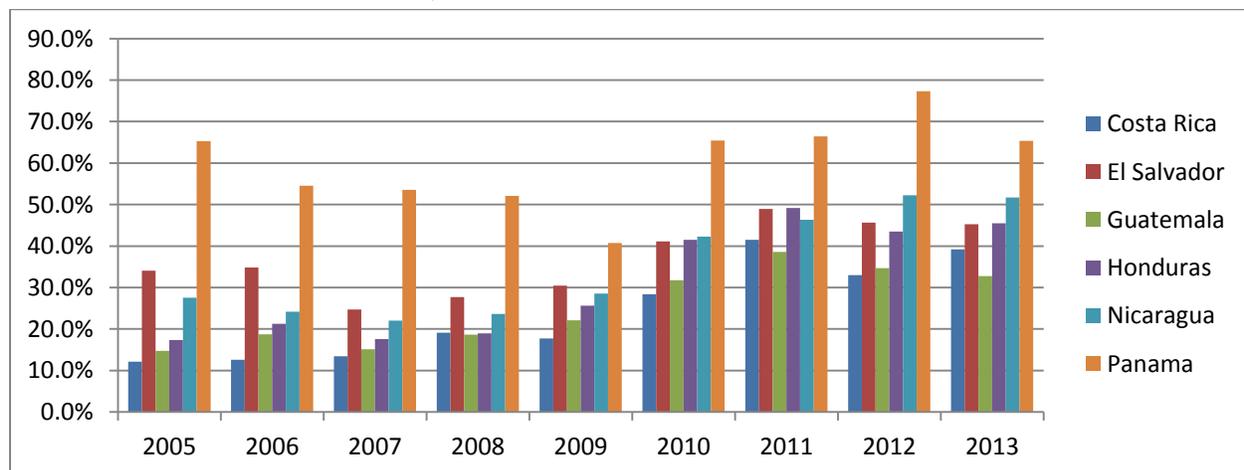
Source: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Consejo Nacional de Población, Unidad de Política Migratoria, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México, [www.colef.mx/emif](http://www.colef.mx/emif)

### **Criminal and Non-Criminal Deportations**

Some migrants who are removed have been convicted of either violent or nonviolent crimes. According to an analysis of all US deportations from FY 2003-2013, criminal deportations amounted to a larger percentage of total deportations under the Obama Administration than under the previous Bush Administration. However, while 41% of total removals in FY 2003-2013 were of people previously convicted of a crime, only 18% were convicted of the most serious, “Level 1”<sup>24</sup> crimes.<sup>25</sup>

Among Central American countries, Panama has the highest percentage of removals that are classified as criminal, as the following figure shows. However, the number of removals of Panamanian migrants is very small. Among countries experiencing larger scale removals, 46% of Honduran removals, 45% of Salvadoran removals, and 33% of Guatemalan removals have been classified as criminal by the US government.

% Removals Classified as “Criminal”, US DHS Fiscal Years 2005 - 2013



Source: Author’s calculations using Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2013, “Enforcement Actions.” <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>

<sup>24</sup> A “Level 1 Offender” is a noncitizen convicted of an aggravated felony (such as murder, rape, sexual abuse, drug trafficking, smuggling, etc.) or two or more felony offenses.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change>

## Appendix B: Survey Questions, August 2015

**Hola, estamos haciendo una encuesta sobre la comunidad latina en DC. ¿Tiene un minuto para participar?**

**1. ¿De qué país es usted?**

**2. ¿Usted se mantiene al corriente de lo que pasa en Estados Unidos?**

**Cómo?** Leo el periódico\_\_ Por internet\_\_ Por la radio\_\_ Otros medios\_\_ TV\_\_

**Nombre de medio(s):**\_\_\_\_\_

**3. ¿Cuál es su impresión de los candidatos para presidente? 0-10 [0 no lo conozco, 1 no muy buena, 10 muy buena] .**

Hilary Clinton\_\_ Joe Biden\_\_ Jeb Bush\_\_ Ted Cruz\_\_ Marco Rubio\_\_ Donald Trump\_\_

**4. ¿Cuál es el problema más importante que enfrenta EEUU en este momento?**

(preguntar primero y si no responde, sugerir de la lista)

- |  |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empleo                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pobreza    | <input type="checkbox"/> Política exterior de EU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Salarios                | <input type="checkbox"/> Educación  | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro: _____             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crimen                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Terrorismo |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relaciones raciales     | <input type="checkbox"/> Salud      |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Migración/reforma migr. |                                     |  |

**5. ¿Usted envía remesas? \_\_\_\_ Sí \_\_\_\_ No**

**6. ¿Cuántas veces al año envía remesas? \_\_\_\_\_ Veces**

**7. En promedio ¿cuánto envía cada vez? US\$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**8. ¿Qué método utiliza para enviar remesas? (Marque todas las que apliquen)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banco               | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agencias de remesas | <input type="checkbox"/> Móvil (aplicación)       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro (especifique) _____ |

**9. ¿Sabe qué compañía usa para enviar remesas?**

- Sí (Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_ Por qué usa esta: \_\_\_\_\_)
- No

**10. ¿Siempre utiliza esta compañía, o a veces usa otra?**

- Sí, siempre usa esta
- No, a veces usa otra (Razón para usar otra: \_\_\_\_\_)

**11. ¿Alguna vez ha pagado facturas u otras obligaciones (como deudas, rentas, recibos de agua, luz, gas, electricidad, teléfono) a través de una compañía de remesas?**

- Sí  No

**11a) ¿Las facturas son suyas\_\_ o de algún familiar\_\_ o ambos\_\_?**

11b) Si no, ¿Usted consideraría hacerlo en el futuro? \_\_\_\_ Sí. \_\_\_\_ No

11c) Si responde sí a 11b, de hacerlo, sería para usted\_\_\_\_, un familiar\_\_ o ambos\_\_?

11d) **Servicios que ha pagado o pagaría**

- |                               |                                    |                                       |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Luz  | <input type="checkbox"/> Teléfono  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotizaciones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agua | <input type="checkbox"/> Móvil     | <input type="checkbox"/> Otros_____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hipotecas |                                       |

**12.¿Usted ha donado dinero a un proyecto filantrópico en su país, desde que vino a EEUU?**

- Sí. **¿Cuál?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cuántas veces** (últimos 12 meses) \_\_\_\_\_  
**¿Cuánto donó en total en los últimos 12 meses?** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- No -> **¿Usted lo consideraría en el futuro?** \_\_\_\_\_

**13.¿Usted piensa regresar a su país en el futuro para vivir?**

- Sí **¿Por qué?** \_\_\_\_\_  
**¿Tiene una idea de cuándo?**  Sí  No **Número de años** \_\_\_\_\_
- No **¿Por qué?** \_\_\_\_\_

**14.¿Usted sabe si hay servicios que ayudan a migrantes que retornan a su país?**

- Sí **¿algún ejemplo que conoce?** \_\_\_\_\_  No

**15. ¿Cuántos años tiene viviendo en EEUU?** \_\_\_\_\_ años

**Cómo entró al país:**  Visa de turista  Visa de migrante (TPS, tarjeta, H, J, G)  Cruzó la frontera

**16.¿Por qué decidió venir a los EEUU?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inseguridad                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Reunificación familiar       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oportunidades económicas/laborales | <input type="checkbox"/> Otras<br>(especifique) _____ |

Datos Demográficos

1) ¿En qué ciudad vive actualmente? \_\_\_\_\_

2) ¿Qué edad tiene? \_\_\_\_\_ años 3) Género: Masc/Fem

4) Educación (*Marque solo uno*)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Universidad completa | <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela primaria               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Algo de universidad  | <input type="checkbox"/> No terminó la escuela primaria |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela secundaria   | <input type="checkbox"/> No responde                    |

4) Ocupación\_\_\_\_\_

5) Ingreso personal anual: (Marque solo uno)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Menos de 10,000       | <input type="checkbox"/> Entre 25,001 y 30,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entre 10,001 y 15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Entre 30,001 y 35,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entre 15,001 y 20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Más de 35,000         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entre 20,001 y 25,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> No responde           |

6) ¿Usted es residente de EEUU? (*TPS, residente, ciudadano, etc*)\_\_\_\_\_