

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

SICREMI 2012



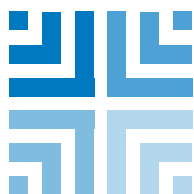
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Organization of
American States



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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

Second Report of the Continuous Reporting System
on International Migration in the Americas (SICREMI)

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Trends in International Migration in the Americas

Immigration to countries of the Americas

2010 saw the first signs of economic recovery in the Americas from the Great Recession of 2008-2009. GDP growth rates increased significantly, from -0.4% on average in 2009 for the countries covered in this report¹ to an average of 5.6% in 2010.

However, the trends in international migration did not always mirror this evolution, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Canada and the United States, after a decline of 12% in 2009 in temporary work migration, registered an increase of 5% in 2010. Permanent migration in these countries saw virtually no change in 2009, and in 2010 a drop of 4%. This type of migration is determined largely by numerical limits specified by the respective governments of these two countries and in recent years has not seen its levels adjusted in response to changes in economic conditions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the improvement in economic conditions in 2010, permanent immigration declined by 9% and tempo-

¹ Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay. Although the United States is not a formal participant in the SICREMI network of migration correspondents from the Americas, its statistics are readily available and have been incorporated whenever appropriate.

rary movements by 6%. Most of this is the consequence of declines in two countries, namely Brazil where the 2010 decline in permanent migration reflected the effect of a regularization in 2009, and in Argentina, which reflected a decline in regularizations from the Mercosur Patria Grande Program. Growth rates in immigration for Latin American and the Caribbean as a whole have fallen continuously from the rates observed in the pre-crisis period in 2007, when the levels of immigration were admittedly low.

The movements into individual countries of Latin America and the Caribbean appear to bear little connection to changes in the state of the national economies in many countries. Indeed, in some whose economies have evolved in a similar way from 2009 to 2010, one sees both large increases in temporary migration in certain countries and large declines in others. It may be that emigration is determined more by conditions in countries of origin than in countries of destination.

For the majority of the countries of the Americas included in this report, immigration is a regional matter, i.e. the majority of immigrants come from the Americas, with the exception of Brazil, Canada and United States where much of the immigration originates outside the Hemisphere. In 2011 intraregional flows within Latin America and the Caribbean were half of the flows of the region towards Canada and United States

In 2010, Asia was the continent of origin for about 45% of immigrants to Canada and the United States, while immigrants from the rest of the Americas accounted for 25%, not including unauthorized migration estimated at around 300 000 in 2009 from a peak of about 850 000 per year in the first half of the decade (Passel and Cohn, 2010).

There was, in addition, a strong concentration of migration from neighboring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. For some destination countries, between 40% to 50% of the immigration comes from a single neighboring country. This was the case for Argentina (from Paraguay), Barbados (from Guyana), Bolivia and Chile (from Peru) and Costa Rica (from Nicaragua).

Asylum seeking in the Americas

For 2010-2011, approximately 13% of the world's asylum requests were made in countries of the Americas, about three quarters of these in the

United States and Canada. Although the United States and Canada are in absolute terms the countries with the greatest number of requests, the number of requests per million population was 1040 in Ecuador, 744 in Canada, 403 in Panama, 211 in Costa Rica, 193 in the United States, and 112 in Venezuela.

Asylum requests in the Americas increased some 7% in 2011 with respect to 2010 with the United States showing an increase of 41% and Ecuador a decline of 55%. 97% of asylum requests from the Americas come from nationals of six countries, in particular Colombia, Mexico and Haiti and to a lesser extent, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Evolution of remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean

Over the course of 2011, remittance flows to Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) showed signs of a solid recovery, reaching growth rates close to those recorded before the start of the global economic crisis. Since the last quarter of 2008, the increases in unemployment rates in traditional sending countries like the United States, Spain, and Japan, and the ensuing drops in incomes among LAC migrants had caused an unprecedented decline in the volume of remittances sent to the region. In 2010, remittances to LAC showed signs of stabilization of these flows and finished the year on a positive growth trend that resulted in an annual volume that was slightly higher than the previous year. In 2011, the countries in the region received a total of US\$ 61,013 billion in remittances, which represented an increase of 6% over the previous year.

Emigration from the Americas to OECD countries

The economic crisis has had a substantial effect on migration from the Americas, in particular to Spain, reducing migration to that country by close to 36% between 2005-2007 and 2008-2010. In absolute terms this means a decline from around 860,000 to 550,000 for the periods indicated.

Legal flows to the United States, on the other hand, have decreased by barely 4%. Recall, however, that the flow statistics for the United States only cover green cards, which grant the right to permanent residence. It is in temporary and unauthorized migration that the largest decreases were observed.

The difficult economic conditions in Spain and the United States appear to have had the effect of redirecting some of the migration flows from the Americas to other OECD destination countries.

The migratory flows of migrants from the Americas towards other countries of the OECD outside Europe grew by 8% (Canada, Chile, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand) and to other countries in Europe by 14% in the 2008-2010 period compared to the period 2005-2007. The total increase in the movement of these two areas amounts to around 105 000, which somewhat compensates for the decrease of 360 000 movements towards Spain and the United States.

The largest declines in expatriation to OECD countries from 2005-2007 to 2008-2010 were observed for migrants from the Southern Cone Region (down over 180 000 over the period) and from the Southern cone (also down by more than 180 000) in these periods. Caribbean countries have actually seen an 11% increase, largely due to migration from Haiti but especially the Dominican Republic, mostly to the United States.

Although economic conditions have become more difficult almost everywhere within the OECD zone, migration movements from the Americas have remained at a relatively high level, with more than 3 million persons for the 2008-2010 period representing a drop of only 8% compared to the level of movements in the 2005-2007 period prior to the economic crisis. Not even the most serious economic downturn since the Great Depression has managed to put much of a dent on migration movements, which continue and will undoubtedly expand as demographic imbalances in developed countries begin to make themselves felt more strongly.

Labor market situation of emigrants from the Americas in 2010-2011

Demographic and geographic patterns of settlement of emigrants from the Americas

Age, gender and region of destination of emigrants from the Americas

Most emigrants from the Americas (82%) in 2010-11 resided in the United States. The share of emigrants from Central America and the Caribbean

living in the United States was even higher than this, and reached 99% in the case of emigrants from Mexico. On the other hand, emigrants from South America resided more in Europe than in the United States. Spain accounted for most of the emigrants in Europe (57%).

Educational attainment of the emigrant population from the Americas

Among emigrants from the Americas, one in three had a low educational level (less than upper secondary) in 2010-2011, compared to 15% with a high level (tertiary). Emigrants from Central American countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras had the lowest share of highly-educated persons (7% on average). Emigrants from the Americas in the United States had much lower educational attainment levels than the native-born or other migrants. This was not the case in Spain, however, where the percentage of low-educated persons is higher for both other migrants (+6) and the native-born (+14) than for migrants from the Americas.

The United States, Canada and Venezuela have the highest share of tertiary-educated persons among their emigrant populations, at fully 60% in the case of the United States and about 45% for the other two countries. Generally, expatriation rates are higher among the highly educated, with Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador being exception.

Labor market outcomes of emigrant workers from the Americas

The Great Recession of 2008-2009 especially devastated the economy of Spain; that of the United States, where an even greater percentage of migrants from the Americas were living, was also strongly affected. Particularly hard hit was the construction sector where many immigrants were working. Job opportunities are now far more scarce and competition from unemployed native-born workers more intense. This is reflected in the labor market outcomes of migrants from the Americas.

2010 and 2011 have seen some initial small signs of recovery in many OECD countries, but the overall situation of immigrants from the Americas in the labor market cannot be said to have improved greatly. Signs of a slight increase in employment and a decline in unemployment after 2009 among emigrants from the Americas in the United States are visible. The situation is not the same in Spain, where the labor market outcomes

of migrants continue to deteriorate, although less so among emigrants from the Americas than among migrants from elsewhere. Although they admittedly remain much more unemployed than the native-born, their outcomes have begun to diverge (favorably) from those of other migrants, which is a positive sign for the future. It suggests that employers are not distinguishing, or distinguishing less, in rehiring between the native-born and other hispanophones.

For women from many countries of the Americas, labor market outcomes have taken an unfavorable turn. This is especially the case with respect to employment and unemployment outcomes, while participation has been more resilient.

On the other hand, there are signs of an improving labor market for Caribbean men in particular and to a somewhat lesser extent, for men from Central America. This reflects, to some extent, improvements in the economy of the United States.

The unemployment situation of low-educated migrants in Spain is especially difficult, averaging 26% for women from the Americas and 36% for men. In the United States the corresponding figures for women and men are 14% and 11% respectively.

Part-time work among emigrant workers from the Americas

Historically a larger share of women than of men has been in part-time jobs in OECD countries. Emigrants from the Americas are no exception: the share of part-time workers in total employment among emigrant women was 16 percentage points higher than among emigrant men, a difference 6 percentage points higher than among the native-born.

With a reduction in the working-age population on the horizon for many OECD countries, it is likely that increases in working hours among part-time workers will be one strategy for increasing economic activity among the resident population. There will thus be considerable potential for increasing working hours on the part of many workers, both native- and foreign-born.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship

In 2010-2011, the OECD area counted more than 1.5 million self-employed from the Americas. The largest contingent was Mexican and was essentially based in the United States. Migrants from Cuba, Canada, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil are next in line.

When migrants are in a position to set up a business and to create jobs, they can have a measurable effect on employment. In Spain and Italy, for example, nearly one out of four entrepreneurs born in the Americas has created jobs for others through his/her business. In Spain, 9 % of persons employed by entrepreneurs overall were employed by immigrants in 2007-08 and this share is growing (OECD 2010c).

The occupational distribution of employment among emigrant workers from the Americas

Although migrants from the Americas are characterized by a much higher percentage of low-educated persons than is the case among other migrants or the native-born in the United States, this is not the case in Spain, where the percentage of low-educated persons is high for all three groups, but where the native-born percentage at (57%) is some 10 to 15 percentage points above those of immigrants. Indeed, relative to most OECD countries, Spain lacks medium-educated workers and it is medium-skilled jobs which in most countries constitute the bulk of jobs present in the labor market.

In the United States, emigrants from the Americas were more likely than natives to work in low-skilled occupations such as construction, cleaning and maintenance, food preparation and serving, production or transportation in 2010-2011. They were also less likely than natives to work in high-skilled occupations such as management, legal, business and financial operations, computer science, architecture or engineering.

The situation in Europe was only somewhat less polarized. They were present in all occupations, but there was a very large over-representation in low-skilled jobs (27% of employment compared to about 8% for the native-born).

In the countries of southern Europe including Spain, there was a very large difference between the educational attainment of retiring workers and that of young residents entering the work-force. Under these circumstances, it seems likely that immigrants were not driving domestic workers from employment, but rather taking on jobs for which there were insufficient numbers of domestic candidates. The fact that such jobs tended to be manual and of relatively low wage levels tend to support this affirmation.

Earnings of emigrant workers from the Americas

Emigrant workers in both the United States and Spain tended to be concentrated in the bottom two income quintiles, with more than 60% of migrants in this situation. In both countries, they were underrepresented in the highest income quintiles. Remittance transfers amounted to about \$US 1500 for every migrant from the Americas who was employed.