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Return Migrants in Honduras

Interpreting Data from the Returned Migrant
Attention System (SIAMIR) 2016–2024

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Inter-American Development Bank
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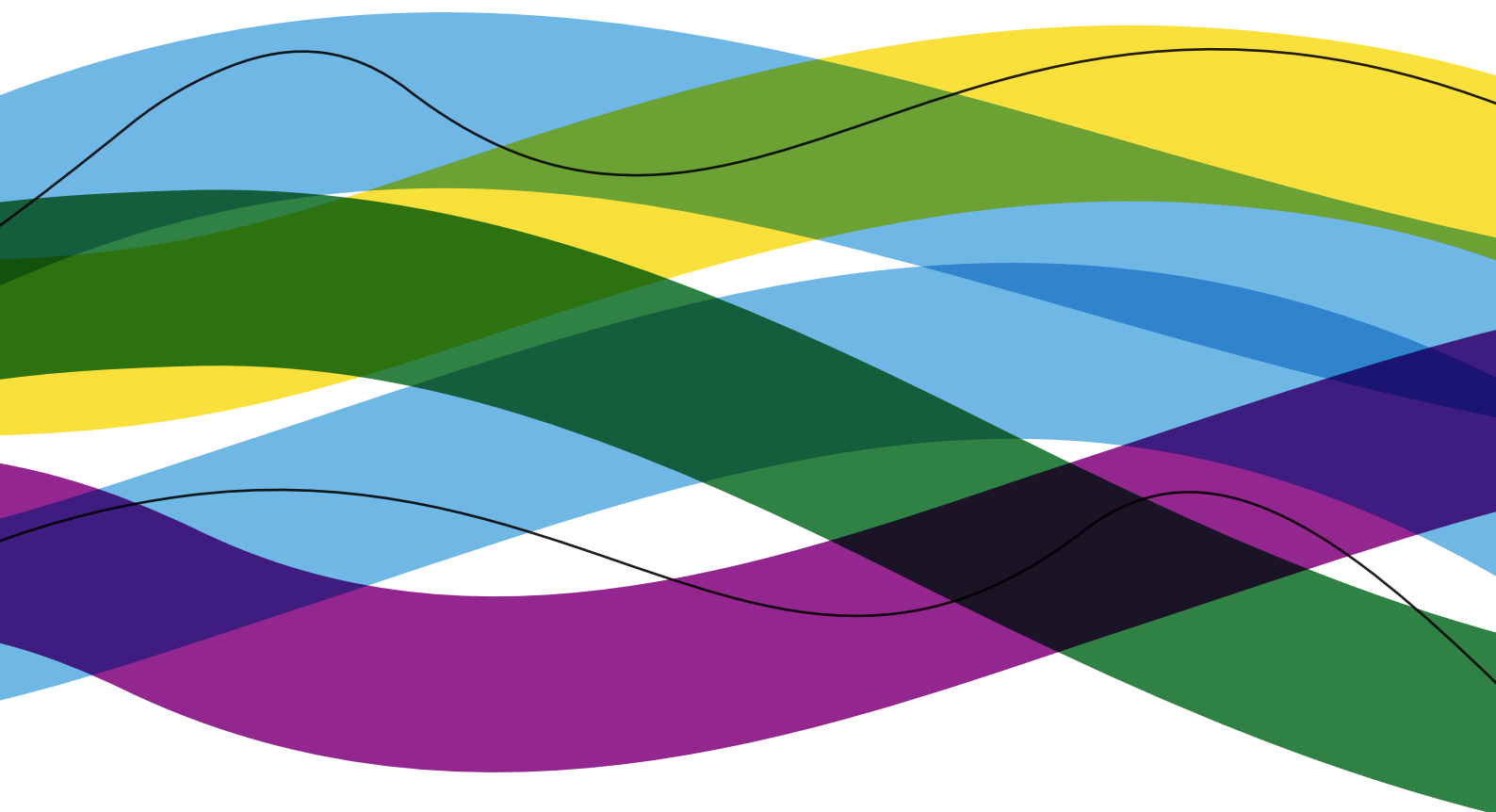
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Secretariat of Social Development – Honduras
Migration Unit – Inter-American Development Bank
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Acronyms

CAMR	Centros de Atención al Migrante Retornado / Returned Migrant Assistance Centers
CENISS	Centro Nacional de Información del Sector Social / National Center for Social Sector Information
DINAF	Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia / Directorate for Children, Adolescents, and Families
FIM	Ficha de Registro de Atención al Migrante Retornado / Form for Returned Migrant Assistance
FOSMIH	Fondo de Solidaridad con el Migrante Hondureño / Solidarity Fund for Honduran Migrants
INFOP	Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional / National Institute for Professional Training
INM	Instituto Nacional de Migración / National Institute of Migration
ODS	Observatorio de Desarrollo Social / Social Development Observatory
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social / Secretariat of Social Development
SEDUC	Secretaría de Educación / Secretariat of Education
SENAF	Secretaría de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia / Secretariat for Children, Adolescents, and Families
SESAL	Secretaría de Salud / Secretariat of Health
SETRASS	Secretaría de Trabajo y Seguridad Social / Secretariat of Labor and Social Security
SIAMIR	Sistema de Atención al Migrante Retornado (SIAMIR) / Returned Migrant Attention System
SRECI	Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores y Cooperación Internacional / Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
UMAR	Unidades Municipales de Atención al Retornado / Municipal Returnee Assistance Units

Executive Summary

An increasingly important dimension of Honduran migration is the rise in return flows. While the number of Hondurans residing in the United States nearly doubled over the past decade, reaching an estimated 1.3 million people in 2024, return and repatriation flows from the United States and Mexico have also increased. In this report, the term “return” refers to the permanent return to Honduras of Honduran migrants, or “returnees,” with particular attention to those forcibly repatriated by the authorities of destination or transit countries (a process and population also referred to as “deportation” and “deportees,” respectively). Driven in part by changes in migration policy and by limited opportunities for legal migration, these returns represent both a challenge and an opportunity for Honduras’s economic development.

This report presents a descriptive analysis of forced return migration to Honduras between 2016 and 2024, based on comprehensive data from the country’s Returned Migrant Attention System (SIAMIR),* which is managed by the Social Development Observatory (ODS). The SIAMIR collects detailed information on more than 345,000 adult returnees and is a key tool for coordination, service provision, and evidence-based policymaking.

Key findings:

- **Most returnees are young adults:** Emigration is concentrated among young adults. The majority report having migrated between the ages of 20 and 29 and spending very little time outside Honduras, most often less than one month. Returnees are predominantly male (79%), although the share of women has increased in recent years.
- **Educational attainment is low, with emerging gender gaps:** More than half of returnees have completed only primary schooling. However, female returnees are more likely than men to have completed secondary or tertiary education. English proficiency remains very limited among returnees; it declined between 2016 and 2020 and has shown only a modest recovery since then.
- **Job skills of returnees have tended to decline:** The share of returnees with work experience in technical or professional occupations, or in health and education has fallen over the 2016–2024 period. There was a post-pandemic uptick in the return of skilled workers, but their share began to decline again after 2023.
- **Returnees often go back to their department of origin:** In most cases, returnees resettle in the same department where they were born, although some departments – particularly Cortés – stand out as destinations for returnees who come from other parts of the country.
- **Repeated returns are not typical:** Nearly 80% of individuals in the SIAMIR database have been returned only once, and fewer than 7% have been returned more than twice. Additional evidence also suggests that most people attempt to migrate only once.

* Acronyms are given in their original Spanish form. See page 8 for a full list.

- **The SIAMIR is a strong data source and should be further strengthened:** It provides timely, detailed information on Honduran returnees. Expanding the system to include voluntary returns and introducing longitudinal follow-up of all returnees would make it possible to monitor reintegration trajectories more accurately over time and to support stronger evidence-based public policies.

Honduras has made substantial progress in strengthening its migration information systems through the SIAMIR, which now constitutes a strategic tool for understanding the dynamics of return migration. Building on this foundation by extending the system to capture a broader range of experiences – such as those of voluntary returnees – and exploring options for longitudinal studies would enable deeper analysis of reintegration over time. Although this approach entails operational and resource-related challenges, it also offers an opportunity to better understand the evolving needs of returnees and to support more inclusive and effective public policy. Continued collaboration between national institutions and international partners will be essential to consolidate this database and to ensure that information on returnees and the drivers of return migration are incorporated into broader strategies for sustainable economic development.

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Introduction

1. Climate-driven migration often appears in practice as economically motivated migration, since climate change reduces yields from traditional agriculture and other work opportunities.

Emigration from Central America in general, and from Honduras in particular, has been high for many years. Honduran migration to the United States has increased considerably over the past decade, with the number of Hondurans residing there rising from approximately 676,000 in 2014 to an estimated 1.3 million in 2024. The decision to migrate is driven by multiple factors, including the search for better economic opportunities, family reunification, security concerns, and the need to escape violence in communities of origin. Climate-related challenges such as droughts, floods, and crop losses are also playing an increasingly important role in migration decisions.¹ These drivers often overlap, underscoring the complex and multifaceted nature of migration decisions in the region. Despite rising migration flows globally, regular migration channels remain insufficient. As a result of stricter border enforcement, limited pathways for obtaining legal residence, and restrictions on access to formal employment, levels of involuntary return migration remain high.

Viewed from a broader historical perspective, two-way flows of economically motivated migration and return are not new phenomena. People seek opportunities where they can find them, generate income, and often choose to return to their countries of origin with the experience and resources accumulated abroad – whether to retire or to invest the capital and skills acquired overseas in new profitable endeavors. In such cases of voluntary return, migrants have largely met their objectives and can generate positive impacts in their home country, not only through the return of financial capital and increased consumption, but also through the accumulation of human capital, knowledge, and skills that can strengthen productivity and local development.

By contrast, some migrants return without having achieved their goals, often because they were unable to remain in the destination country long enough to accumulate capital and skills. Involuntary returnees may be at different stages of their migration trajectory when they are compelled to return to Honduras earlier than planned: some may have only recently embarked on their journey, while others were in the process of building economic and human capital abroad. The development impact of these forced returns is less clear and depends both on what they were able to accumulate prior to repatriation and on how effectively they reintegrate into the labor market and local society upon return.

To anticipate the development impacts of forced return migration and to identify barriers to reintegration, high-quality data are essential for quantifying the returnee population and understanding their profiles and trajectories. Over the past decade, the Honduran State has made notable progress in collecting robust data on these flows, although the analysis and dissemination of this information remain limited. In a context where both the magnitude and nature of return migration are changing, a deeper understanding of these data is critical to ensuring public policies that

2. Children and adolescents are not considered in this report. Given that their migration and return trajectories require a distinct analytical approach, the Inter-American Development Bank, the ODS, and the Secretariat for Children, Adolescents, and Families (SENAF) are planning a dedicated study on child and adolescent returnees.

enhance development gains and reduce the reintegration challenges faced by forcibly returned migrants in Honduras's economy and society.

Drawing on records from the SIAMIR, this report provides an overview of return migration between 2016 and 2024. With detailed information on more than 345,000 adult returnees to Honduras,² the SIAMIR is an essential tool for coordination, service provision, and evidence-based policymaking. By analyzing the demographic profiles and migration trajectories of returnees, this report seeks to inform more targeted policies and identify opportunities to strengthen support systems for those who return. In recent months, the president of Honduras and the Council of Governance (*Consejo de Gobernanza*) have announced new initiatives to improve reception and reintegration programs, and this report aims to support those efforts.

Some migrants return without having achieved their goals, often because they were unable to remain in the destination country long enough to accumulate capital and skills.

1. Returnees as Part of Broader Migration Trends

The return of Hondurans to their country must be understood within a much broader set of migration dynamics across Central America. Over the past decade, migration from Honduras to the United States has grown markedly, with the number of Honduran-born residents in the United States nearly doubling – from around 676,000 in 2014 to approximately 1.3 million in 2024, according to the US Census Bureau (see Figure 1). This increase is driven by sustained outflows over time, with a sharp acceleration in the arrival of children starting in 2021. At the same time, the overall profile of migrants in terms of sex and educational attainment has remained relatively consistent.

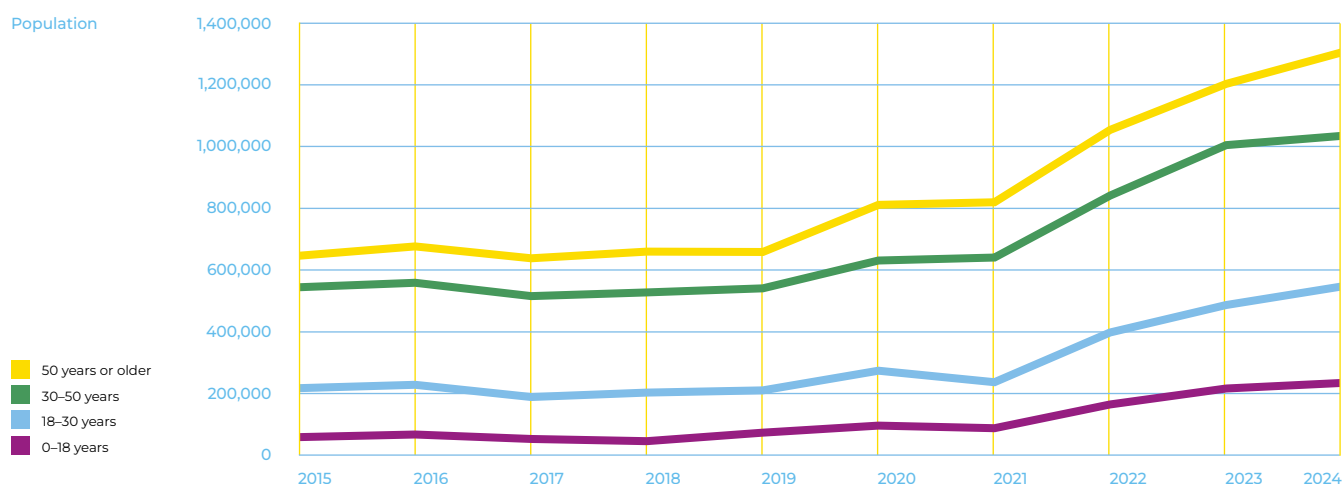


Figure 1. Honduran Population Living in the United States

Source: Authors' calculations based on the Current Population Survey (CPS), US Census Bureau.

Over this period, both unauthorized migration and encounters at the US border increased, particularly in the early 2020s. Although the exact numbers vary by month and year, the number of Hondurans apprehended at the US border reached historically high levels during this time. These patterns mirror trends across the region: migration pressures have intensified in El Salvador, Guatemala, and southern Mexico, pointing to a regional phenomenon rather than a country-specific issue. In all four countries, a combination of limited economic opportunities, security concerns, and environmental crises has driven large numbers of people to migrate, many of them through irregular channels.

Within this broader context, returnees are not a marginal group but a visible segment of a much larger population of migrants. Although deportations from the United States and repatriations from Mexico have fluctuated over the years, they

remain high. During the COVID-19 pandemic, deportations rose sharply as a result of emergency enforcement policies such as Title 42. Even after COVID-19 measures were lifted, repatriations have remained elevated, including from Mexico, which continues to return large numbers of Hondurans.

It is crucial to recognize that not all returnees are the same. Just as the characteristics of those attempting to migrate have changed, so too has the profile of returnees. In recent years, prolonged droughts and the devastation caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 have severely affected food production and rural livelihoods in Honduras and neighboring countries, contributing to rising food insecurity and uncertainty. These environmental shocks, together with long-standing migration practices and aspirations for family reunification, have played a central role in shaping migration decisions. While the policies and decisions of migration authorities that influence returns lie largely outside individuals' control, the returnee population comprises a wide and diverse group of people who attempted to migrate under changing and often precarious conditions.

Return migration therefore cannot be understood in isolation; it forms an integral part of a broader regional migration system shaped by structural drivers, constrained legal pathways, and varying enforcement regimes. From large-scale outward flows to uneven patterns of reintegration, the experience of returnees reflects not only the outcomes of enforcement and removal processes, but also deeper dynamics that continue to drive mobility across Central America.

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2. SIAMIR: History and Scope

3. See <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/unaccompanied-minors-crisis-has-receded-headlines-major-issues-remain>.

4. Government of Honduras, enacted on 15 February 2014.

5. Because data collected by the SIAMIR in 2014–2015 predates the full implementation of the FIM and are less reliable, those years are excluded from the analysis in this report, which focuses on the period 2016–2024.

In 2014, systematic data collection on Honduran returnees began with the creation of the first version of the SIAMIR, developed in response to a sharp increase in returns of children and families during the crisis of unaccompanied minors.³ That same year, the government declared a humanitarian emergency and established coordination mechanisms that later culminated in the creation of the Migration Governance Council (*Consejo de Gobernanza Migratoria*), now the main interinstitutional body guiding migration policy in the country. The Council brings together more than 20 public and private institutions, including the Secretariat for Children, Adolescents, and Families (SENAF), which is responsible for child protection and family reintegration services for vulnerable returnees.

The institutional and legal framework for the SIAMIR was consolidated with the passage of the Law on the Protection of Honduran Migrants and Their Family Members.⁴ This law laid the foundation for better coordination of migrant protection and reintegration efforts, with the objective of safeguarding the rights of Hondurans both abroad and upon return. Within this legal framework, interinstitutional and international cooperation is promoted, and the Solidarity Fund for Honduran Migrants (FOSMIH) was created to finance social and labor-market reintegration programs and to strengthen consular services. During the initial phase of the SIAMIR's implementation in the Returned Migrant Assistance Centers (CAMRs), significant challenges emerged in information management. The secretariats of Education (SEDUC), Health (SESAL), Labor and Social Security (SETRASS), and Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (SRECI); the National Institute for Professional Training (INFOP); the Directorate for Children, Adolescents, and Families (DINAF); and the National Institute of Migration (INM), among other participating institutions, relied on their own forms and registration mechanisms. This fragmentation led to duplicated information, difficulties in tracking cases, and repeated questioning of returnees at a time of acute vulnerability.

To support a more integrated approach to return management, the government introduced the Form for Returned Migrant Assistance (FIM) in 2015 as a single data collection instrument. Developed with the participation of national institutions and backed by international cooperation, the FIM became the cornerstone of the SIAMIR, a more robust national database implemented by the National Center for Social Sector Information (CENISS). The strengthening of CENISS was supported by various international programs and multilateral loans, including from the Inter-American Development Bank, which helped improve information systems in the areas of health, social protection, and social security.⁵ As the lead institution for social information systems in Honduras at the time, CENISS spearheaded efforts to standardize data collection so that the information gathered could effectively inform decision-making and enhance service provision. In 2022, following a change of administration and the creation of the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), CENISS was

transformed into the ODS, which now oversees the management and ongoing development of the SIAMIR.

6. REDATAM, developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), is a system that facilitates public access to microdata. See <https://ods.sedesol.gob.hn/siamir/>.

The establishment of the ODS marked a turning point in the strengthening of the SIAMIR. With support from UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the ODS implemented the REDATAM platform,⁶ which enables detailed microdata analysis and more effective monitoring of trends related to return migration. The IOM, a key technical partner since 2014, has played a central role in building institutional capacities for reintegration, case management, and service coordination. Since 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has joined the ODS, the Secretariat of Human Rights, and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in designing a specialized SIAMIR module to identify returnees who may require international protection; this module is currently in a pilot and refinement phase.

7. "Contribuciones del Estado de Honduras para el Informe sobre los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes." See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/GA76thSession/States/Honduras.pdf>.

Since 2014, the SIAMIR has been used at the three main reception centers for returnees in Honduras: CAMR-La Lima, CAMR-Belén, and CAMR-Omoa.⁷ At these centers, the FIM is completed as part of the initial reception process, making them key entry points for both data collection and service provision. At the CAMRs, returnees are formally admitted by migration authorities, undergo health screenings, receive emergency mental health counseling and social assistance, and complete the FIM with the support of ODS staff. The information collected is then entered into the SIAMIR. Box 1 provides a detailed description of this reception process and the role of the CAMRs.

Although the SIAMIR prioritizes the collection of reliable and timely data, its implementation is constrained by the operational constraints of the CAMRs. Returnees often arrive in a state of acute stress and remain in the centers only briefly, thus hindering efforts to collect more detailed or sensitive information. It is also likely that responses would differ if individuals were surveyed at other points in the migration cycle, such as prior to departure or after achieving a degree of stability following return. Nonetheless, the CAMRs are the only point at which information can be systematically collected from all returnees. By capturing the entire universe of individuals who are forcibly returned to Honduras, the SIAMIR constitutes a unique resource that avoids the sampling bias and measurement error inherent in post-return surveys. In addition to guiding service coordination, these data provide a robust foundation for statistical analysis.

Box 1. Inside the CAMRs: Honduras's Frontline Response to Return Migration

The three Returned Migrant Assistance Centers (CAMRs) are the cornerstone of Honduras's institutional response to return migration, providing a structured and dignified reception process for migrants returning by air, land, or sea.

The first CAMR, now known as **CAMR-Belén**, was established in **San Pedro Sula** and was originally focused on assisting unaccompanied children and families. In response to the growing volume and diversification of return flows, the government subsequently opened **CAMR-Omoa** (in two phases, 2015 and 2016) and **CAMR-La Lima** in 2016, the latter serving adults only. Together, these three centers form a national reception network capable of assisting returnees from the United States, the main destination country, as well as from transit countries such as Mexico and Belize.

A Coordinated Reception Process

Services for returnees at the CAMRs begins before they arrive. Each day, center staff receive advance passenger lists from the US and Mexican authorities. At CAMR-Belén, these lists enable staff to retrieve civil registry documents and prepare individualized information packets for returnees. Returnees arriving at the San Pedro Sula airport are transferred to the corresponding CAMR, while those arriving by bus are taken directly to CAMR-Omoa.

All three centers work in a coordinated manner to ensure the following services:

- **Initial reception and a hot meal** provided immediately upon arrival.
- **Migration screening** to officially register their reentry.
- **Completion of the FIM**, a standardized intake form administered by the ODS. Completing the form takes between three and five minutes per person, and the information is entered directly into the **SIAMIR** database.
- **Health assessments** for all returnees at CAMR-Belén and for women only at CAMR-La Lima.
- **Psychological support**, offered on request to adults at CAMR-La Lima, and provided to all children and women at CAMR-Belén.
- **Child and family protection assessments**, conducted by the SENAF at CAMR-Belén.
- **Guidance on education and reintegration services**, available at CAMR-Belén.
- Distribution of **basic hygiene kits**.
- **Transportation assistance**, including same-day bus tickets to the returnee's chosen destination. For families and unaccompanied minors, **overnight accommodation** when same-day travel is not possible.

A Gateway for Reintegration

Over time, the CAMRs have played an important role in strengthening coordination between the institutions that serve returnees. By bringing together national and local authorities as well as international partners, the CAMRs help ensure that returnees receive immediate assistance. The centers provide a structured entry point for service provision and data collection. In addition to addressing returnees' immediate needs, they also facilitate access to longer-term social, educational, and economic opportunities.

At the same time, the scope of the SIAMIR has been largely defined by the profile of those who are returned. Until recently, the system focused almost exclusively on migrants repatriated by the governments of the United States and Mexico, leaving very limited information on voluntary returnees – those who decide to return on their own after migrating. This is important because forced returns are often associated with more complex development challenges, which demand stronger state policy responses and greater attention from the international community. In 2025, however, the number of Hondurans who returned without being processed in the CAMRs increased, reflecting growing pressures on irregular migrants in the United States. To respond to this dynamic, the SIAMIR was modified to allow the registration of voluntary returnees, provided they can demonstrate having previously resided in the United States. Although this reform expanded the system’s potential coverage, in practice its use remains largely confined to involuntary returnees. Accordingly, throughout this report, when the SIAMIR data are referenced, the term “returnees” refers only to individuals repatriated by the governments of the United States, Mexico, or Belize.

Today, the SIAMIR is used by a wide range of actors, including several secretariats (SRECI, SENAF, SETRASS, SESAL, and SEDUC), as well as municipal entities such as the Municipal Returnee Assistance Units (UMARs) and other local bodies. It serves as a coordination tool for service provision, a planning instrument for social programs, and a vital data source for international agencies working with returnees. Beyond its operational role, the SIAMIR also supports research and public debate by disseminating statistical information through reports, bulletins, and the REDATAM platform. In 2024 and 2025, ODS worked to further strengthen the SIAMIR through new investments aimed at expanding state capacity to accompany returnees and to design migration and reintegration policies grounded in data.

Returnees often arrive in a state of acute stress and remain in the centers only briefly, thus hindering efforts to collect more detailed or sensitive information.

2.1 The Evolving Scope over Time

Although the SIAMIR was launched in 2014, the analysis in this report relies on data collected from 2016 onward, as information from the system's early years – particularly 2014 and 2015, prior to the introduction of the FIM – may be less reliable due to technical difficulties during the initial rollout. As already noted, additional challenges included delays in harmonizing registration processes across participating institutions and temporary interruptions in data collection during the government transition from October 2021 to February 2022. A detailed description of the information collected through the SIAMIR is provided in the appendix.

8. For the full period from 2014 to 2024, the database contains 501,007 records for 370,793 individuals. As mentioned, however, the 2014–2015 data are excluded from this analysis.

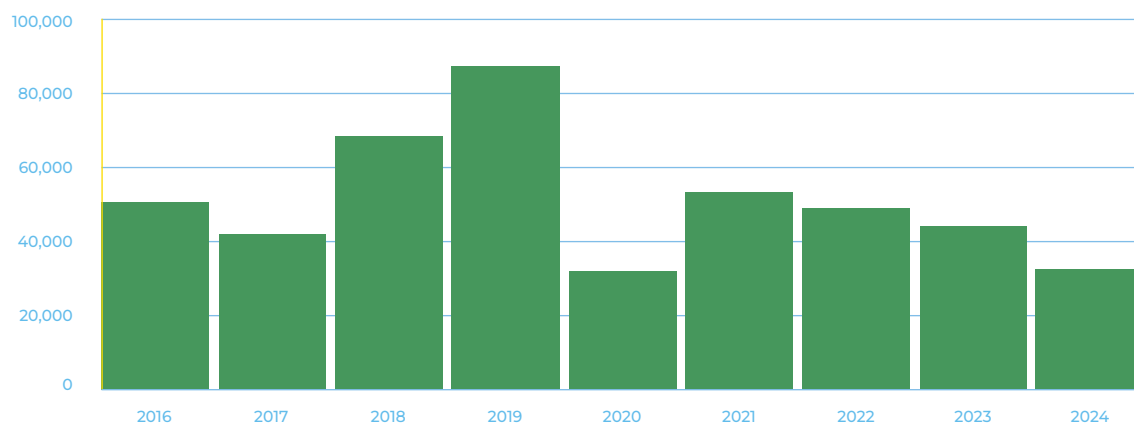
9. Data from the early months of the pandemic are also incomplete, as many returnees were allowed to leave the reception centers without completing the SIAMIR process in order to avoid overcrowding.

The SIAMIR database recorded 460,430 entries corresponding to 345,130 adult returnees between 2016 and 2024.⁸ As shown in Figure 2, the annual number of adult returnees increased steadily from fewer than 60,000 in 2016 to nearly 90,000 in 2019. This upward trajectory was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020,⁹ when the annual total fell below 40,000, before rising again to nearly 55,000 in 2021 and then gradually declining to around 35,000 in 2024. As illustrated in Panel A of Figure 2, these patterns reflect a combination of factors, including conditions in Honduras and shifting perceptions and realities regarding the likelihood of reaching and remaining in the United States.

Panel B of Figure 2 presents the number of Honduran returnees each year, disaggregated by mode of transport (air versus land). Between 2016 and 2021, most returns occurred by land, largely reflecting repatriations from Mexico, which has historically accounted for the bulk of overland returns. From 2022 onward, this pattern shifted, with most returns taking place by air, in line with the rising share of deportations from the United States.

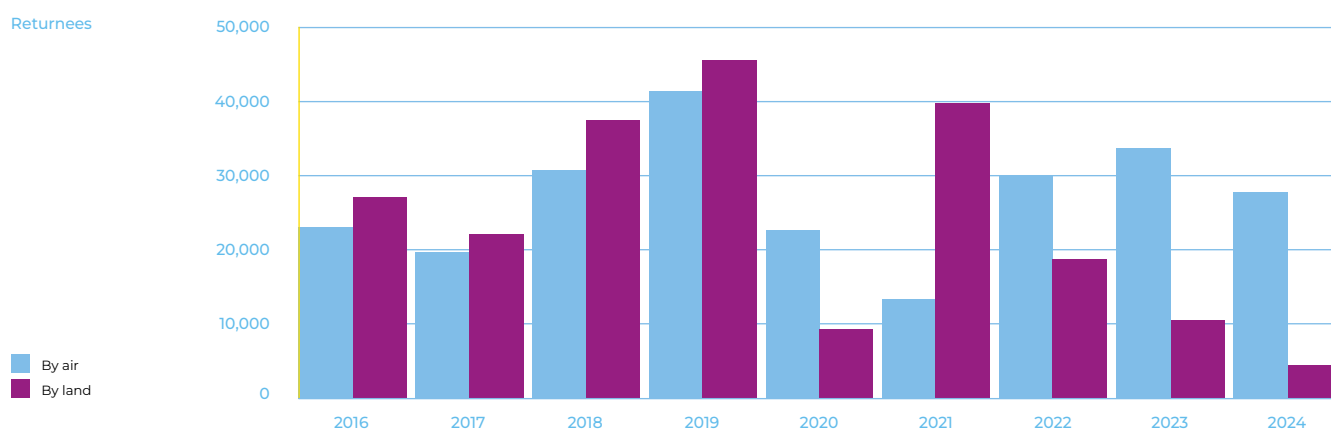
Since 2022, most returnees have arrived by air, reflecting a growing share of removals from the United States.

Returnees



Panel A. Total Annual Returns

Returnees



Panel B. Annual Returns to Honduras by Mode of Transport

Figure 2. Returnees by Year

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

3. Demographic Profile of Returnees

Returnees are Honduran nationals who were residing (or attempting to reside) in the United States, Belize, or Mexico and were subsequently detained or denied legal residence and then returned to Honduras. This group consists of Hondurans who were willing to attempt migration to these countries and to reside there without authorization; in the case of those in Mexico, many were in transit toward the United States. As noted above, the observable characteristics of this population in Honduras may or may not remain consistent over time, as perceptions – accurate or not – about the likelihood of successful migration evolve, and as conditions in Honduras change, altering the perceived benefits of emigration. This section examines the demographic profile of returnees recorded in the SIAMIR and how it has evolved over the 2016–2024 period.

3.1 Age

The age distribution of adult returnees is heavily skewed toward younger age groups. Figure 3 shows that the largest share were ages 20–30 at the time of their return, followed by those aged 30–40, indicating that most individuals who left Honduras for the United States did so as young adults (based on self-reported departure dates, which show that the majority spent less than one month abroad). The proportion declines rapidly after age 40, with relatively few returnees having migrated as middle-aged adults.

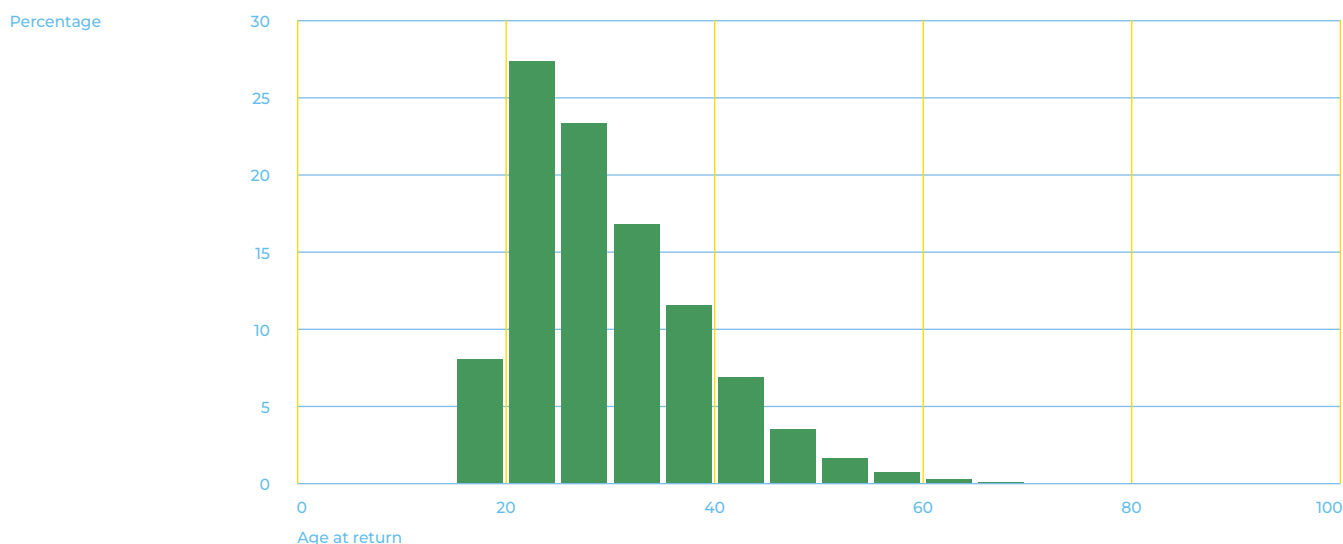


Figure 3. Age at Return

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

This pattern suggests that emigration from Honduras is more common among younger individuals, likely reflecting age-related differences in the propensity to migrate and in the drive to seek economic opportunity. Although not shown in the figure, the average age of returnees has increased slightly over time, rising from approximately 27 in 2016 to about 30 in 2024. This modest upward trend is consistent across both men and women, with no noteworthy differences observed in the age profiles or trends between the two groups.

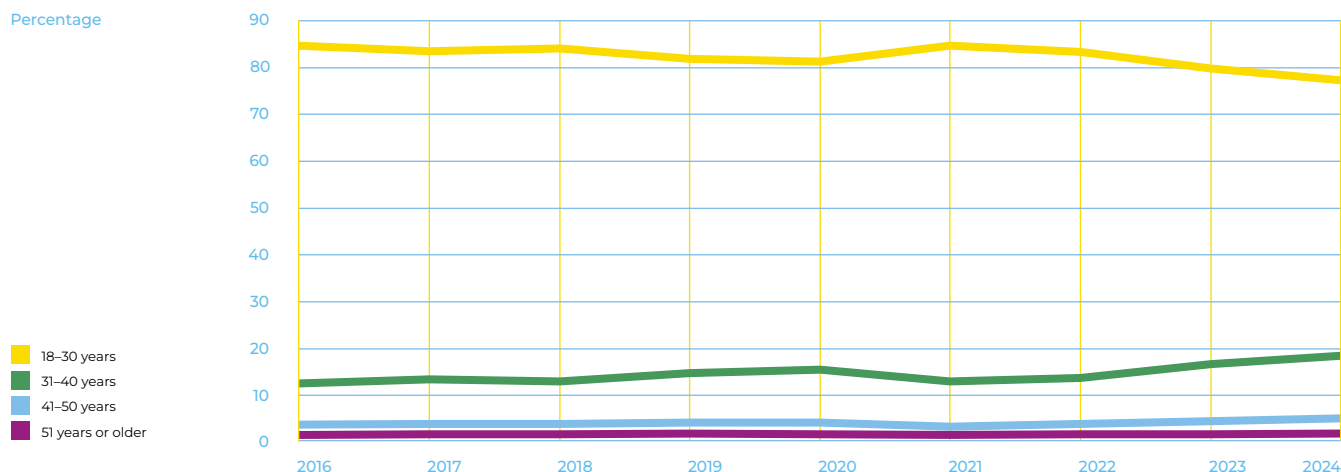


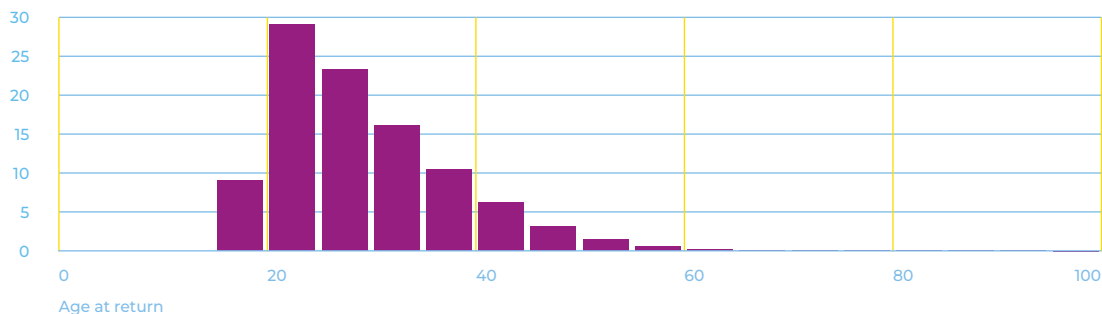
Figure 4. Share of Returnees by Age Group over Time

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The only noteworthy trend in returnees' age over the period is an increase in the share of those 31–40, from just over 10% in 2016 to nearly 20% in 2024. Most of this shift has occurred since 2021, coinciding with the increased share of returnees arriving by air, predominantly from the United States. Because returnees from that country include a larger share of people with longer stays abroad, it is logical that the share of older migrants is higher.

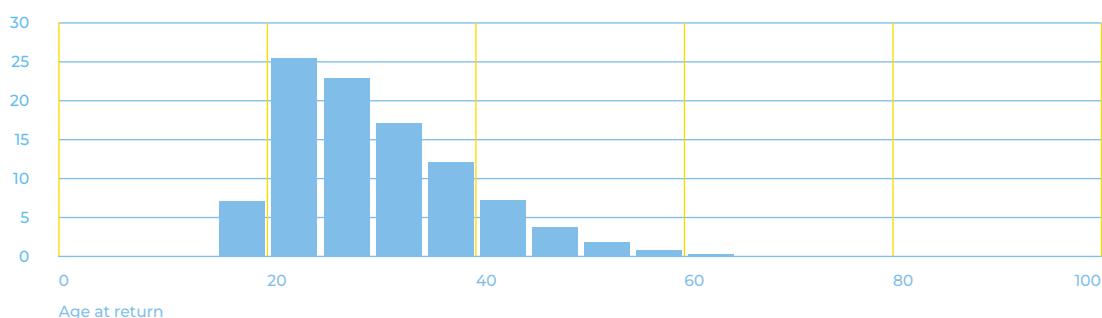
The average age of returnees has increased slightly over time, rising from approximately 27 in 2016 to about 30 in 2024.

Percentage



Panel A. Arrived by Land

Percentage



Panel B. Arrived by Air

Figure 5. Age at Return by Mode of Transport

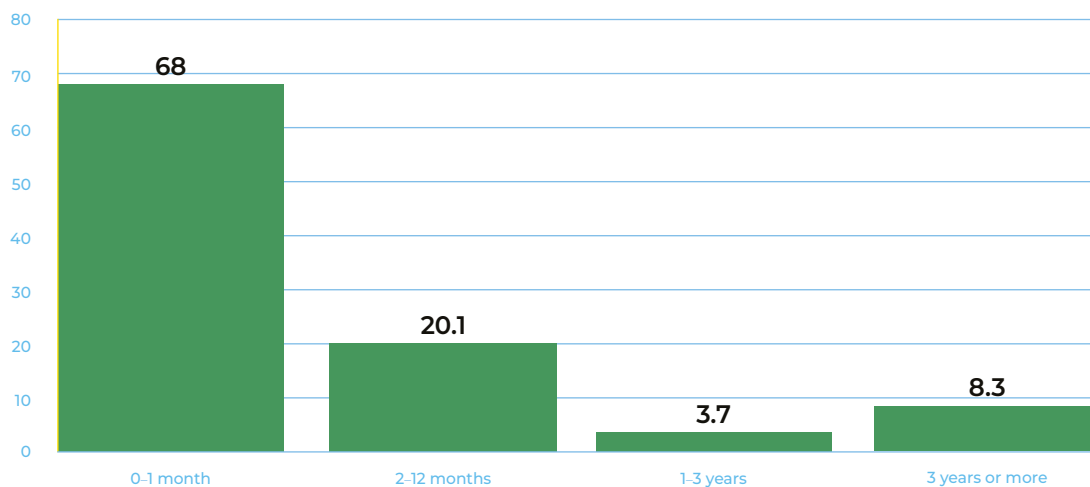
Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Those returned by land (principally from Mexico) skew even younger than those returned by air (mostly from the United States). A cumulative 89.5% of land returnees are under 40, compared to 86% of air returnees. In general, it is presumed that most migrants are seeking to enter and settle in the United States. This is consistent with the fact that returnees from Mexico are typically those in transit, whereas returnees from the United States include more people who managed to reside there for several years.

3.2 Time Abroad

In terms of time abroad, Figure 6 shows that the vast majority of returnees are outside the country for only a brief period before being returned to Honduras. Based on the difference between the date of return and the self-reported date of departure, more than two-thirds of returnees remain abroad for one month or less. Only 20% spend between two and twelve months abroad, and the percentages continue to decline steadily for longer stays. Only 8% of returnees report having spent more than three years abroad, highlighting the relatively short duration of most migration spells captured in the SIAMIR data.

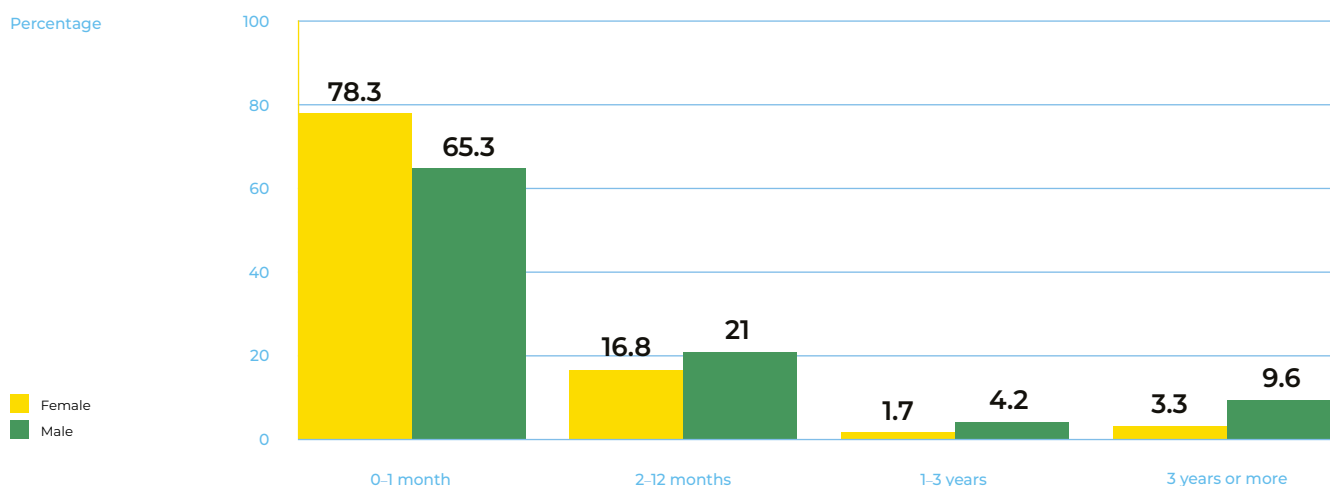
Percentage

**Figure 6. Duration of Stay Abroad**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

As the data in Figure 7 show, both men and women spend only a short time abroad, typically one month or less. This is especially true for women: 73% return within the first month, compared to 60% of men. As the duration of stay increases, the share of returnees declines sharply. For instance, only 4% of men and 2% of women report having remained abroad for one to three years. Overall, the trend indicates that return migration is concentrated within the first few months after departure, with significantly fewer individuals – particularly women – being returned after extended periods.

Percentage

**Figure 7. Duration of Stay Abroad by Sex**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Since 2022, there has been a noticeable decline in the share of returnees who spent only one month or less abroad. Before 2021, this group accounted for between 60% and 70% of returnees, indicating a consistent pattern of rapid returns. However, in 2021 and 2022, when Title 42 provisions were in effect in the United States, those reporting time abroad of one month or less represented between 75% and 80% of returnees. Following the termination of Title 42 in 2022, the share of rapid returnees fell to below 50% by 2024, while the proportions in other duration categories rose accordingly. This decline in the share of people returning shortly after reaching the border suggests a possible adjustment in migration dynamics, driven by the aforementioned changes in enforcement policies and return procedures.

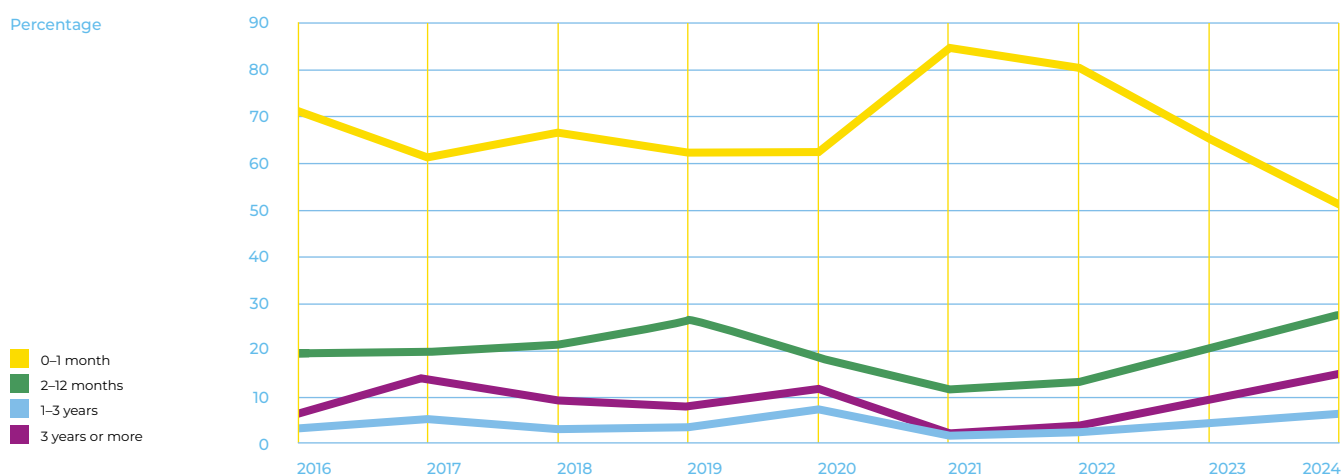
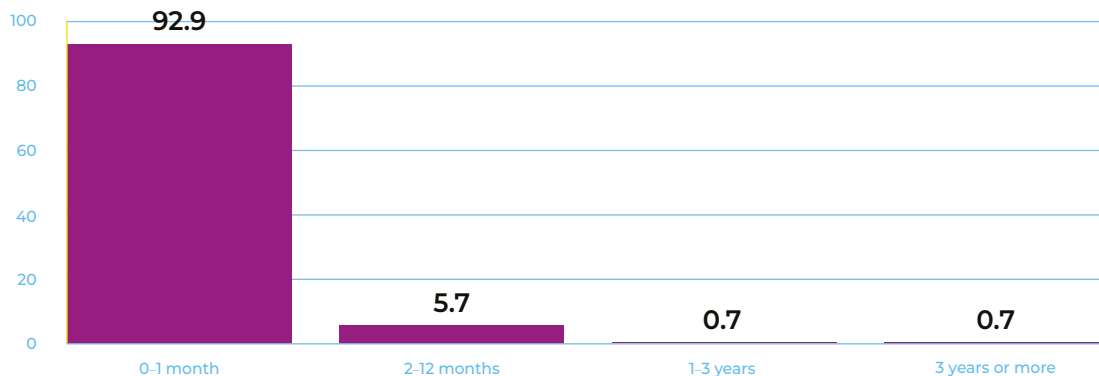


Figure 8. Duration of Stay Abroad over Time

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

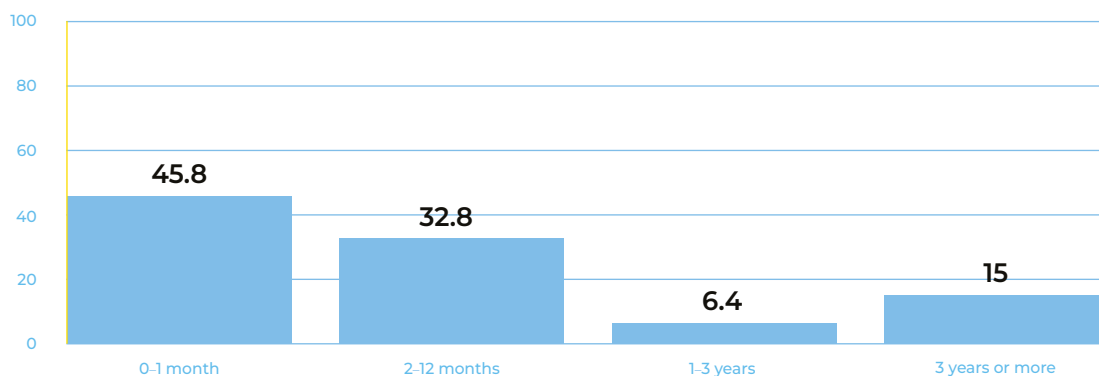
When disaggregated by mode of transport, returnees arriving in Honduras by bus, mainly from Mexico, tend to have spent only brief periods abroad: 93% returned within one month of departure, and an additional 6% within the first year. By contrast, those returning by air, primarily from the United States, are much more likely to have spent longer periods abroad. Only 46% returned after less than one month outside Honduras, and 33% after less than one year. Meanwhile, 21% spent more than one year abroad, and among them, 15% had been away for more than three years. Returnees who succeeded in crossing Mexico appear far more likely to remain abroad long enough to gain work experience and skills.

Percentage



Panel A. Arrived by Land

Percentage



Panel B. Arrived by Air

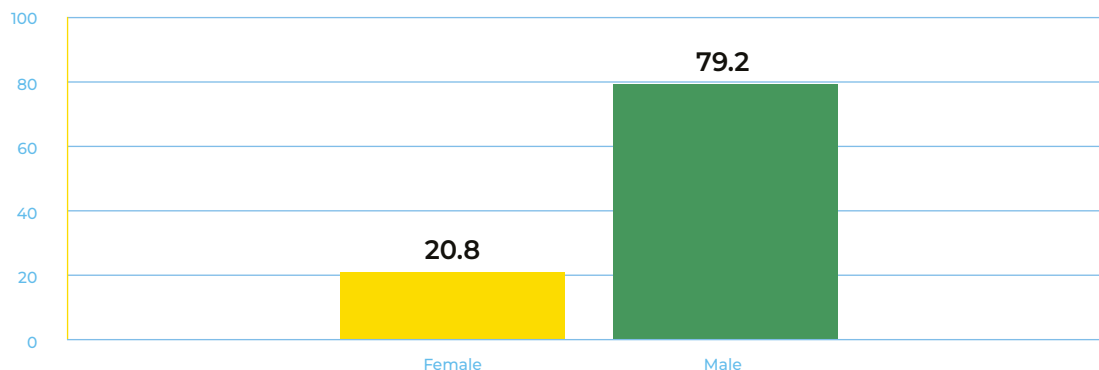
Figure 9. Duration of Stay Abroad by Mode of Transport

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

3.3 Sex

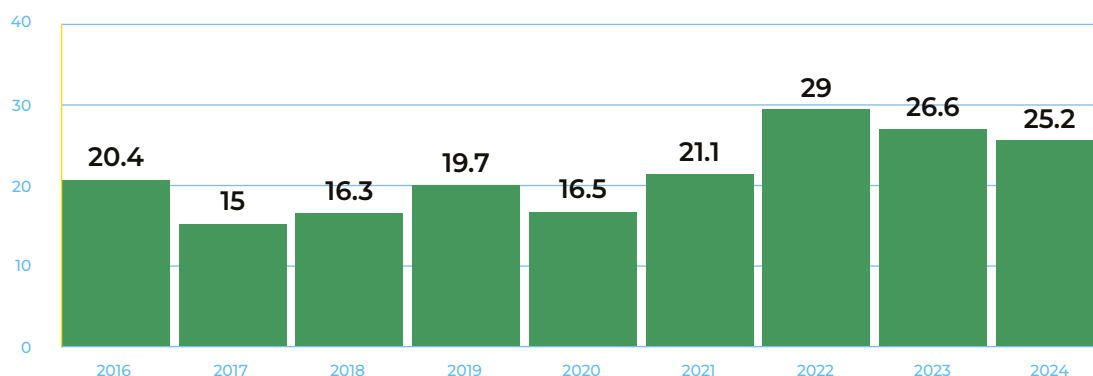
The sex composition of returnees shows marked shifts over time. For the 2016–2024 period as a whole, 79% of returnees were men and 21% were women, indicating a substantial gender gap. From 2016 to 2018, the share of women among returnees remained at around 16%. Between 2019 and 2021, it rose gradually, reaching its peak of just over 30% in 2022. From 2023 to 2024, the female share declined slightly but remained above the levels observed in previous years. Taken together, these data point to a sustained uptick in the share of women among migrants and returnees.

Percentage



Panel A. Sex Composition of Returnees

Percentage



Panel B. Sex Composition of Returnees over Time

Figure 10. Sex of Returnees: Overall and over Time

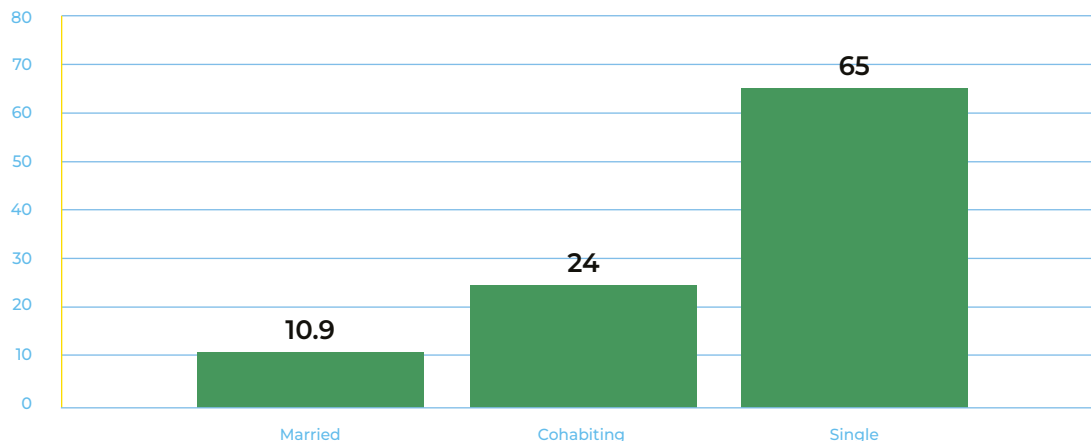
Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

In Honduras, the increase in emigration between 2018 and 2022 – particularly in the post-pandemic years 2021–2022 – and the rising share of women are consistent with an expansion of the population willing to undertake irregular migration. While the underlying causes are not easily identifiable, the outcome is clear: more women are emigrating, and more women are being subject to forced return.

3.4 Marital Status

These age and sex patterns are also reflected in reported marital status. As Figure 11 shows, most returnees (65%) report being single. Twenty-four percent report cohabiting, suggesting that non-marital partnerships are common among returnees. In contrast, only 11% report being legally married, underscoring the low prevalence of formal marriage in this population. Being young and single, or at least not formally married, is associated with a greater propensity to migrate. In this sense, it is not surprising that the majority of women returnees are single.

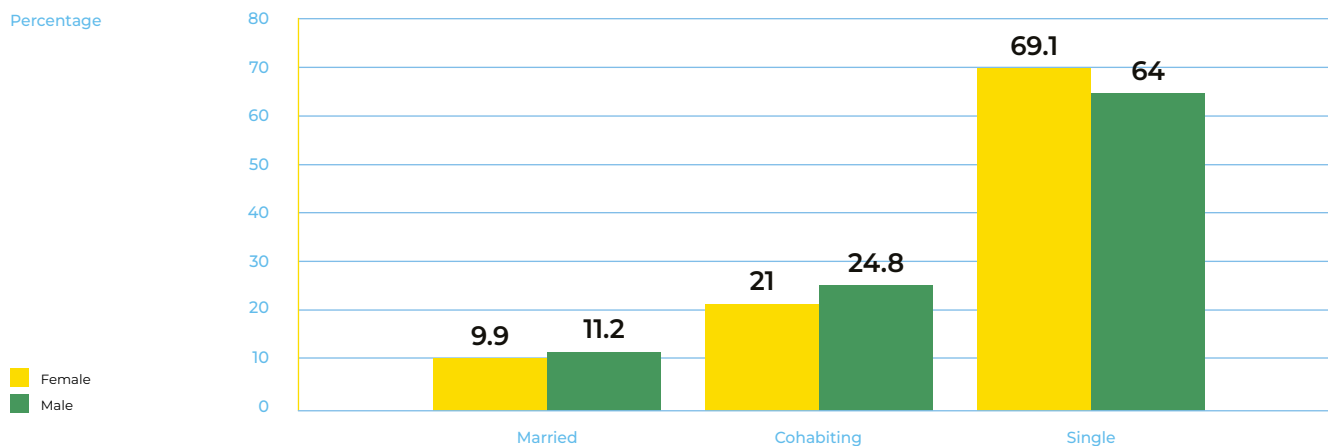
Percentage

**Figure 11. Marital Status**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Figure 12 shows that the majority of both female and male returnees report being single – 69% and 64%, respectively. However, sex differences emerge in relationship patterns. While a higher share of women returnees report being single compared to men, this gap is largely explained by a lower rate of cohabitation among women: 21% of women cohabit in non-marital partnerships, compared with 25% of men. Taken together, those who are single or cohabiting account for the vast majority of returnees. Only 10% of women and 11% of men report being married. Furthermore, because most returnees are young adults, it is to be expected that the share of married individuals is relatively low.

Percentage

**Figure 12. Marital Status by Sex**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Between 2016 and 2021, approximately 70% of returnees reported being single. However, as shown in Figure 13, this share declined notably between 2022 and 2024, reaching 57.8%. Over the same period, the proportion of returnees who reported being married remained relatively stable. The decline in single status appears to be offset by a rise in cohabitation: the share of returnees who report cohabiting increased from around 20% in 2016–2021 to 30% in 2022–2024.

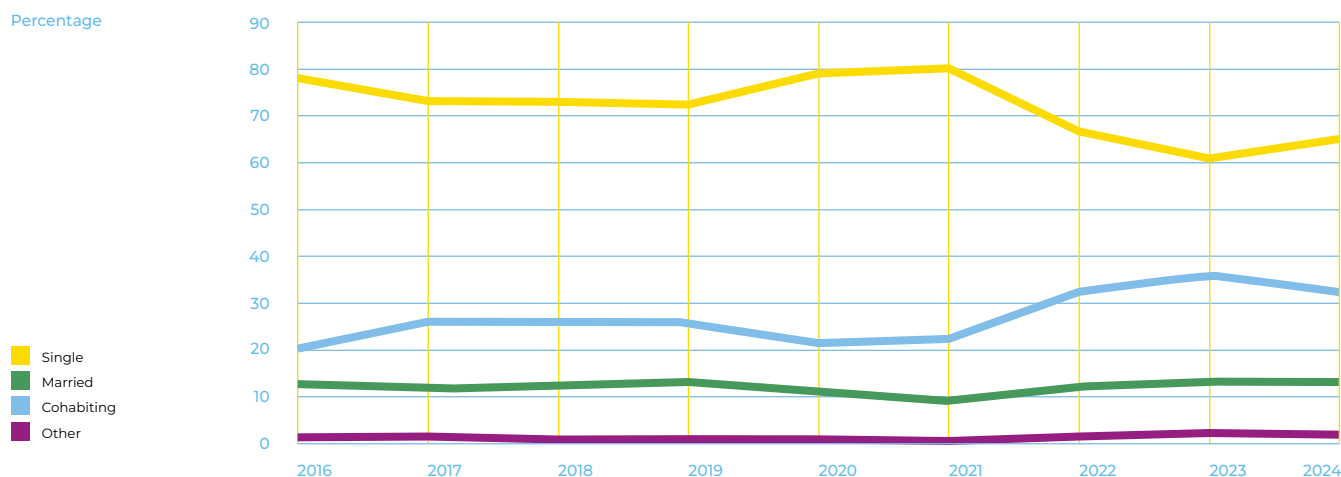


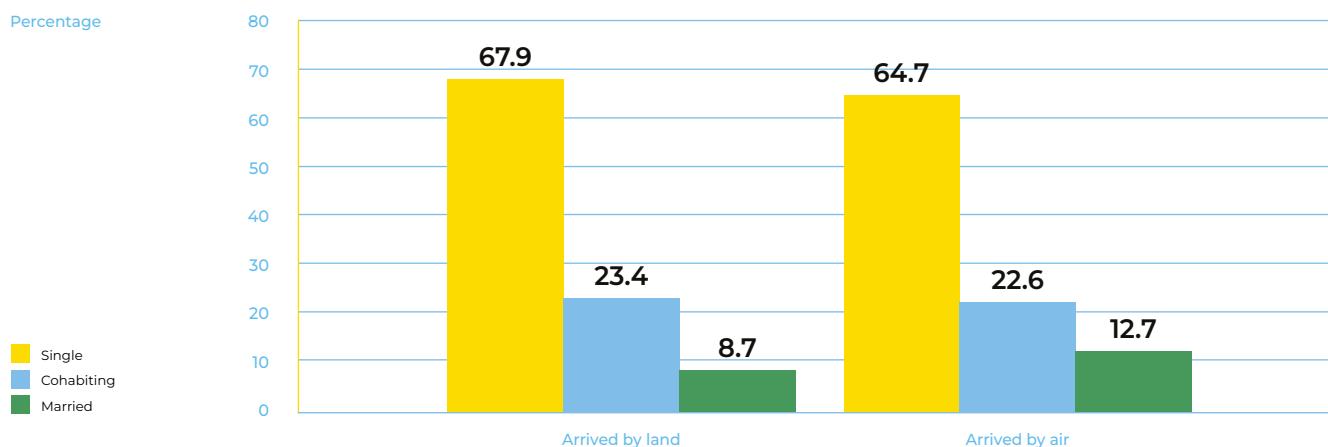
Figure 13. Marital Status over Time

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The share of returnees reporting that they are cohabiting (or married) in 2022–2024 does not mirror the surge in emigration in 2021–2023, as the profile of those migrating now includes more individuals in relationships, despite the decline in the total number of migrants in recent years. These changes suggest a gradual shift in relationship dynamics among returnees, with cohabitation becoming more prevalent. In fact, there is no clear association between marital status and duration of stay abroad (not shown in the figure); instead, the evidence points to a shift in the characteristics of the migrant population, rather than to an effect of stricter migration enforcement.

When the data are disaggregated by mode of transport – an indirect proxy for country of return, with land returns primarily from Mexico and air returns primarily from the United States – the share of married returnees is roughly 50% higher among those returning by air (12.7%) than among those returning by land (8.7%) (see Figure 14). This pattern is consistent with the higher average age and longer durations of stay abroad among air returnees, who, given their relative youth, have a longer window of time during which they may marry. Based on SIAMIR data alone, however, it is not possible to determine whether these marriages occurred in Honduras or abroad.

Percentage

**Figure 14. Marital Status by Mode of Transport**

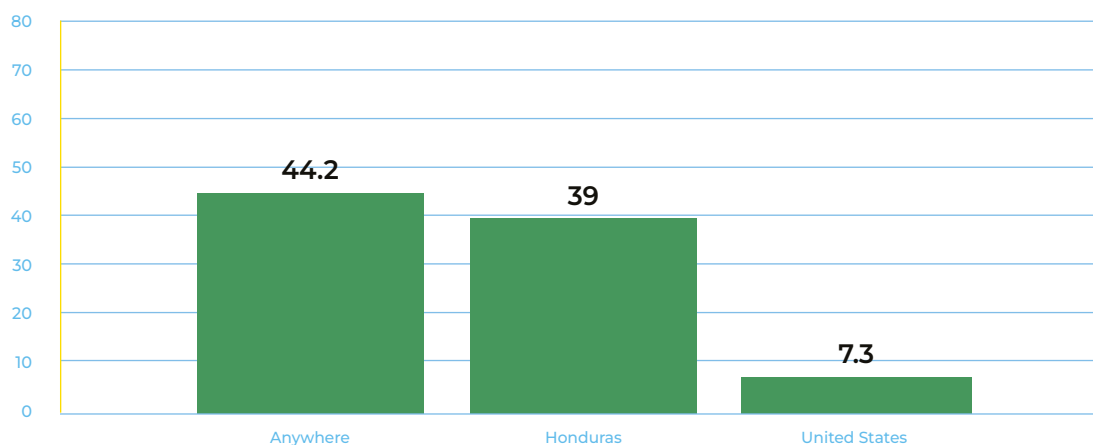
Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

3.5 Children

10. The SIAMIR also records cases of returnees with children in Mexico, but only 214 individuals reported children in that country over the nine years of available data, so these cases are not included in the analysis.

As shown in Figure 15, 44.2% of returnees report having children. Within this group, 39.1% have children residing in Honduras, while 7.3% report having children living in the United States.¹⁰ These categories are not mutually exclusive, as some returnees have children in both countries. Accounting for this overlap, an estimated 2.6% of returnees have children residing in both Honduras and the United States, underscoring the transnational family ties that persist even after return.

Percentage

**Figure 15. Parental Status of Returnees and Children's Country of Residence**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Note: "Anywhere" refers to any country, including the United States, Honduras, any other single country, or multiple countries.

There are notable sex differences in parental status among returnees. As shown in Figure 16, men are more likely than women to report having children: 46% of male returnees have children, compared with 38% of female returnees. This pattern holds for those with children in both Honduras and the United States: 40% of men and 35% of women report having children living in Honduras, while 8% of men and 5% of women report having children living in the United States. Among returnees, 2.2% of women and 2.7% of men have children in both countries. These differences may reflect evolving gender roles in migration and caregiving, as well as patterns of family separation and reunification.

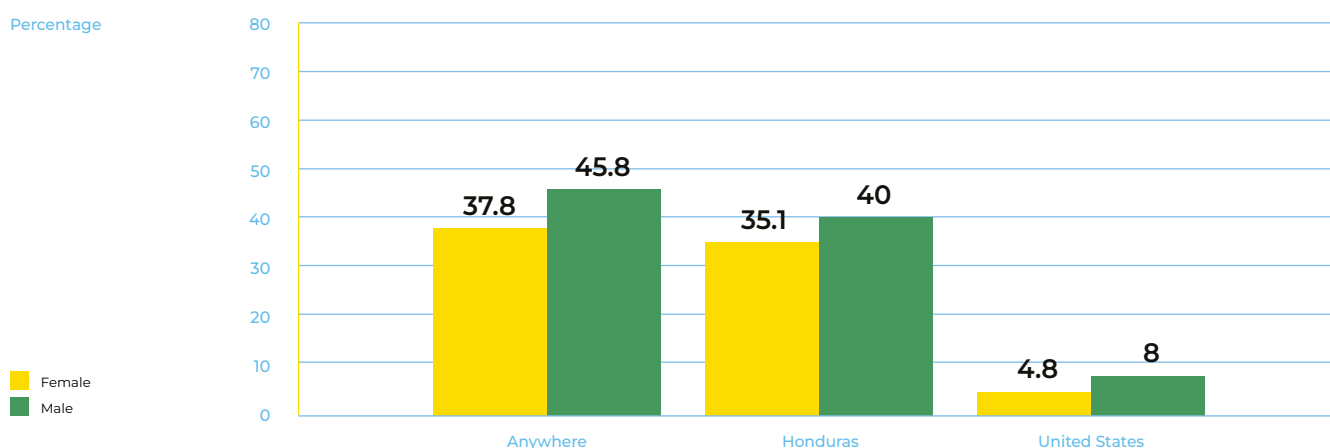
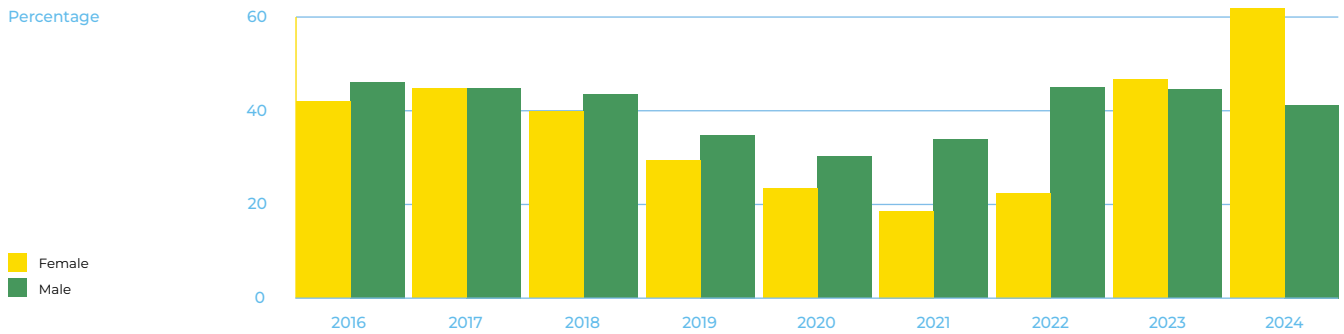


Figure 16. Parental Status of Returnees, by Sex, and Children's Country of Residence

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

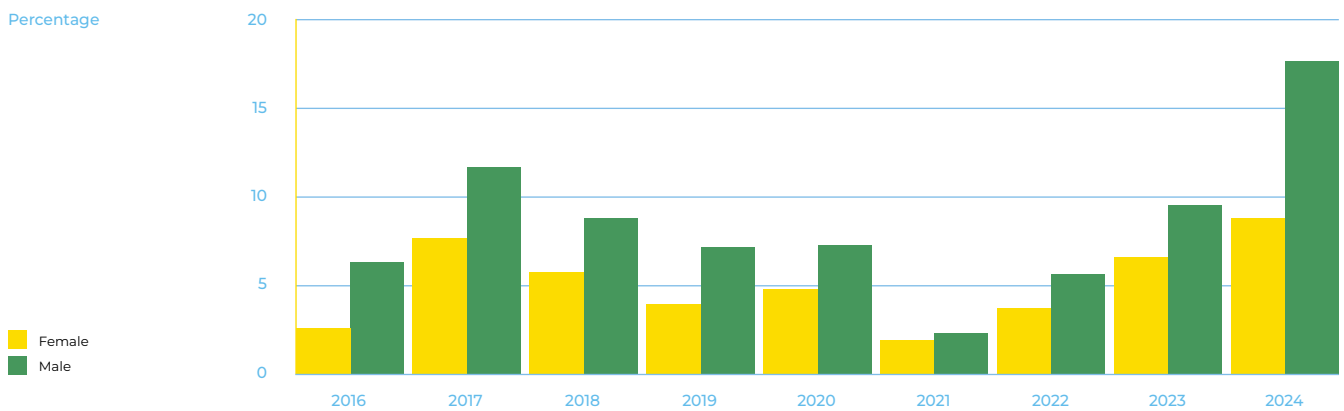
A significant share of returnees have children who remained in the United States, with clear sex differences among parents. Across all years, male returnees are more likely than female returnees to report having children in the United States, a pattern that becomes particularly pronounced in 2024, when the share of men with children in that country exceeded 17.6%, nearly twice the corresponding share among women. This may reflect a lower likelihood of deportation for women with children born in the United States, or a higher overall risk of deportation for men.

Percentage



Panel A. Has Children in Honduras

Percentage



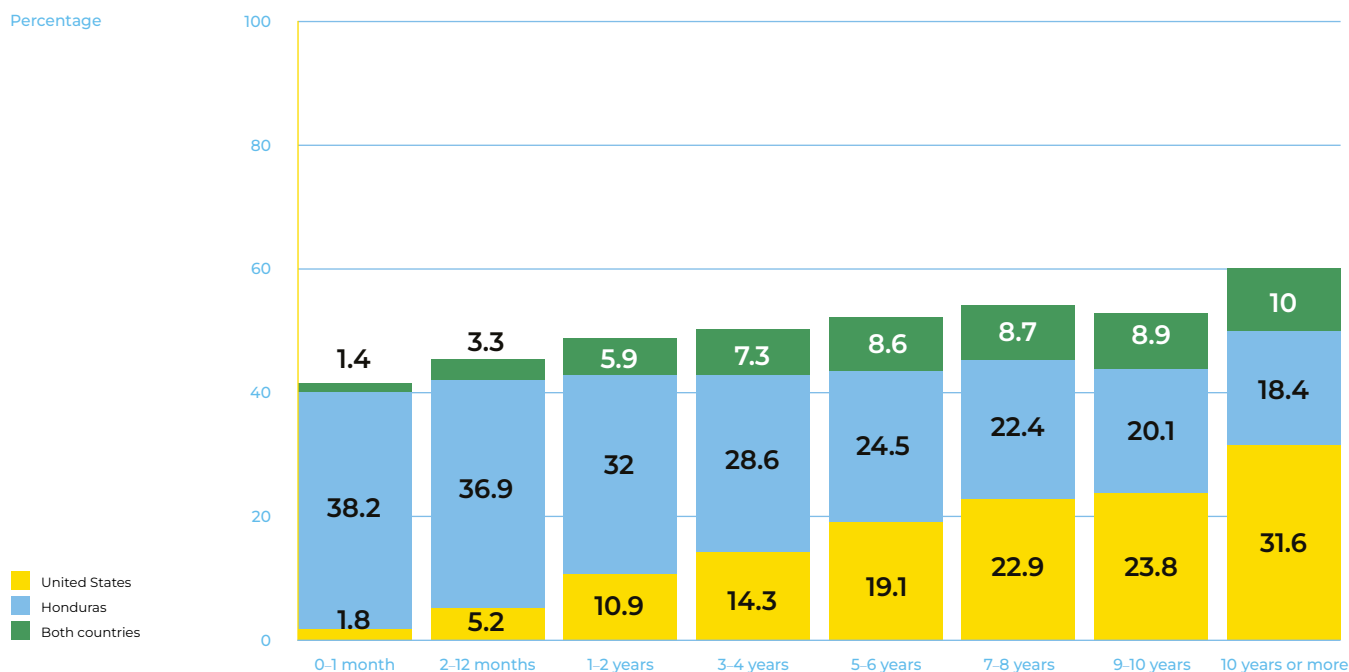
Panel B. Has Children in the United States

Figure 17. Parental Status of Returnees and Children's Country of Residence over Time

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

For much of the nine-year period covered by SIAMIR, men report having children in Honduras more frequently than women. By contrast, in recent years, women returnees are more likely to report having children residing in Honduras. This trend suggests that mothers who have returned to Honduras more recently are either more willing, or in a better position, to return accompanied by their children, possibly reflecting differences in caregiving roles or custody arrangements. It is also possible that women have become more likely to migrate with the aim of sending remittances to those who care for their children in Honduras. Men, for their part, are more likely to form transnational families in which their children remain in the United States after they themselves return. These patterns highlight how the parent's sex directly shapes the family-level consequences of return migration.

Percentage

**Figure 18. Children of Returnees by Time Abroad**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

11. Given the very short stays abroad reported by some parents, it is likely that their children migrated with other relatives or are already adults who migrated independently.

When disaggregated by duration of stay abroad, it is clear that those who have been away longer are more likely to have children in the United States or in both countries, and less likely to have children only in Honduras. Among the large majority of returnees who spent one month or less outside the country, 38% have children in Honduras, 1.8% have children in the United States,¹¹ and 1.4% have children in both countries. By contrast, among those who spent ten years or more abroad, only 18% have children in Honduras, whereas 32% have children in the United States and 10% have children in both countries. Over time, this pattern produces a greater dispersion of families across the two countries and increasing complexity in transnational family arrangements.

Percentage



Figure 19. Children of Returnees by Mode of Transport and Sex

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Unsurprisingly, returnees arriving by land, mainly from Mexico, have a very low probability of having children in the United States, as they generally did not reach that country. Among women returned by land, only about 1% report having a child in the United States, compared with 2.6% of men returned by land. These cases likely correspond to migrants who, on a second or subsequent attempt to migrate, were intercepted and returned by the Mexican authorities. Indeed, of all returnees with children in the United States (whether or not they also have children in Honduras), only 12.6% were returned by land, and nearly three-quarters of these had already been returned at least once before.

By contrast, returnees arriving by air, mainly from the United States, are far more likely to have children in that country: 8.6% of women and 14% of men report having children in the United States, with 4.5% of men having children in both countries. Overall, 87.4% of returnees who left children behind in the United States were repatriated by air, and two-thirds of these returnees were experiencing deportation for the first time.

3.6 Health

12. As noted earlier, to avoid crowding in the reception centers during the pandemic, many returnees were allowed to leave without completing the SIAMIR forms.

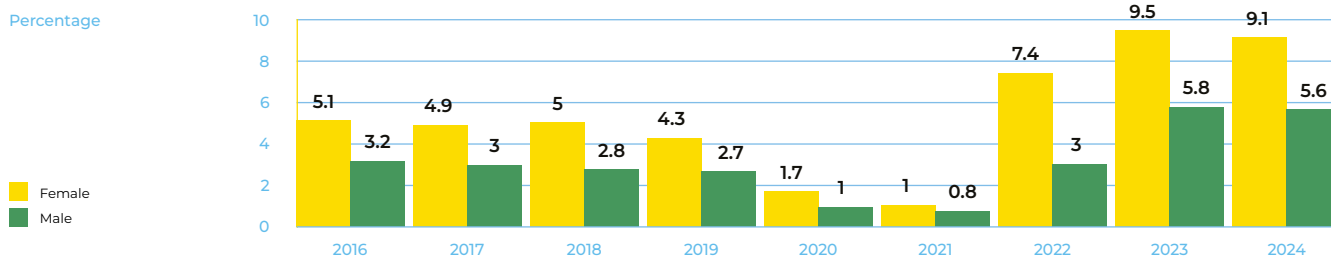
Migration, detention, and return are physically and mentally demanding processes that can lead to adverse health outcomes. However, the share of returnees who report a health condition remains low, at no more than 10%. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 5% or fewer of female returnees reported a health condition, compared with about 3% of men. During the pandemic, these already low shares declined further, falling to just 1–2% for both sexes.¹² After the travel restrictions were lifted, the prevalence of reported health conditions rose sharply, reaching nearly 10% among women and 6% among men in 2023.

When returnees did report a health issue, they were asked to specify the condition. Respiratory conditions were the most frequent (34%), followed by heart conditions and hypertension (13%), neurological disorders (10%), and chronic or metabolic diseases (8%). Digestive and musculoskeletal conditions accounted for smaller shares, while fever and ocular, auditory, dermatological, and psychological conditions each affected fewer than 3% of respondents. Less frequent responses include renal or urinary disorders, anemia, tuberculosis, cancer, and other specific conditions. Notably, 14% of reported cases were classified as “other,” and 4% of respondents who indicated a health problem did not provide additional details.

By sex, respiratory conditions were almost equally common among men (33%) and women (35%). In contrast, cardiovascular and neurological problems were more prevalent among women (16% and 12%) than among men (11% and 9%). Chronic or metabolic conditions affected both groups at similar rates (8%), while women also reported slightly higher shares of musculoskeletal and psychological issues.

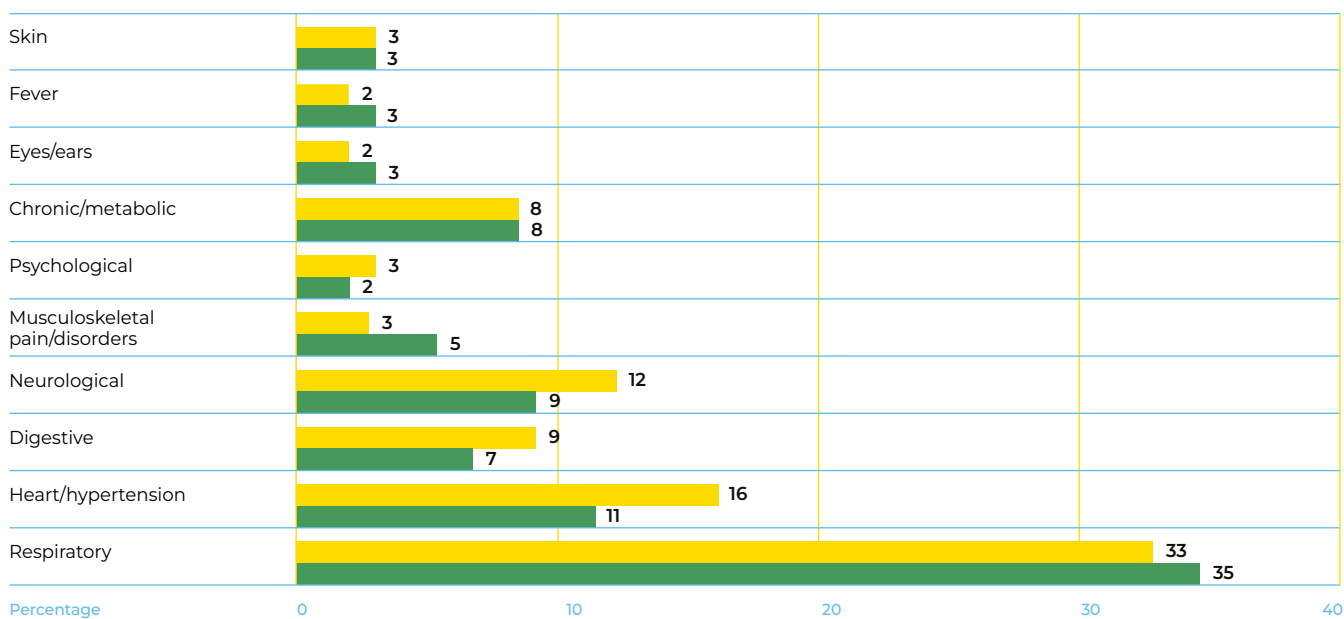
Finally, looking at how reported conditions have evolved over time, we see that respiratory problems have maintained a consistently high prevalence, peaking at 44% in 2019 and 43% in 2022, before declining to 25% in 2024. Heart conditions and hypertension were particularly elevated in 2017 and again in 2023–2024, while neurological conditions showed a gradual increase, reaching 13% in 2024. Chronic and metabolic diseases remained relatively stable, generally around 8–11%. These trends suggest that although the overall prevalence of health problems among returnees remains low, the distribution of conditions has shifted over time, with respiratory and cardiovascular issues continuing to play a central role. The peak in respiratory problems just before the pandemic likely reflects the subsequent decline in transmission resulting from the protective and preventive measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Percentage



Panel A. Prevalence of Health Conditions over Time

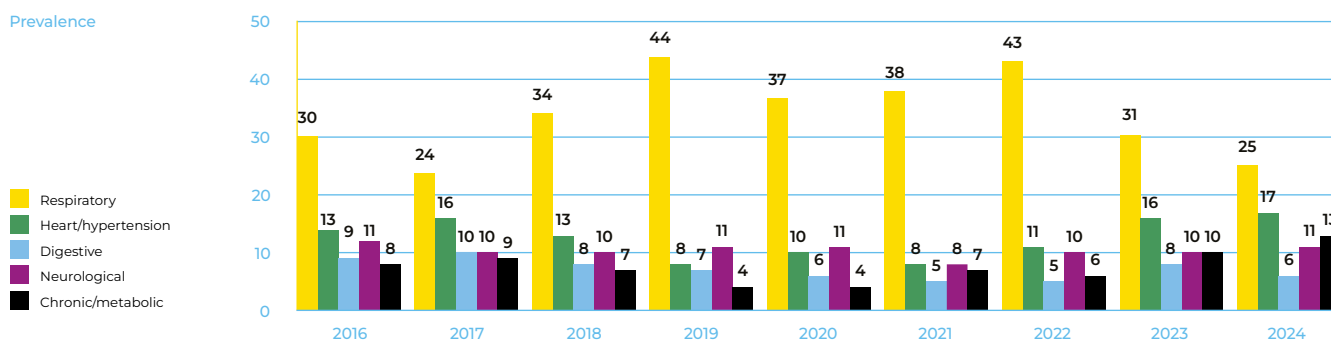
Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.



Panel B. Health Conditions

Note: The figure shows only the ten most prevalent conditions and does not include all reported health problems. As a result, the reported percentages do not sum to 100%.

Prevalence

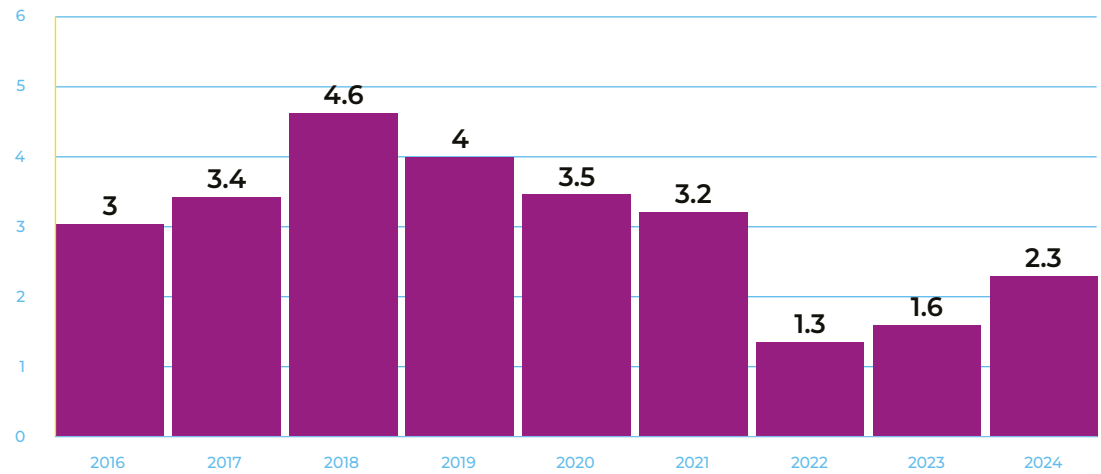


Panel C. Health Conditions over Time

Note: The figure shows only the five most prevalent conditions and does not include all reported health problems. As a result, the reported percentages do not sum to 100%.

Figure 20. Health Conditions over Time by Sex

Percentage

**Figure 21. Pregnancy Rate over Time**

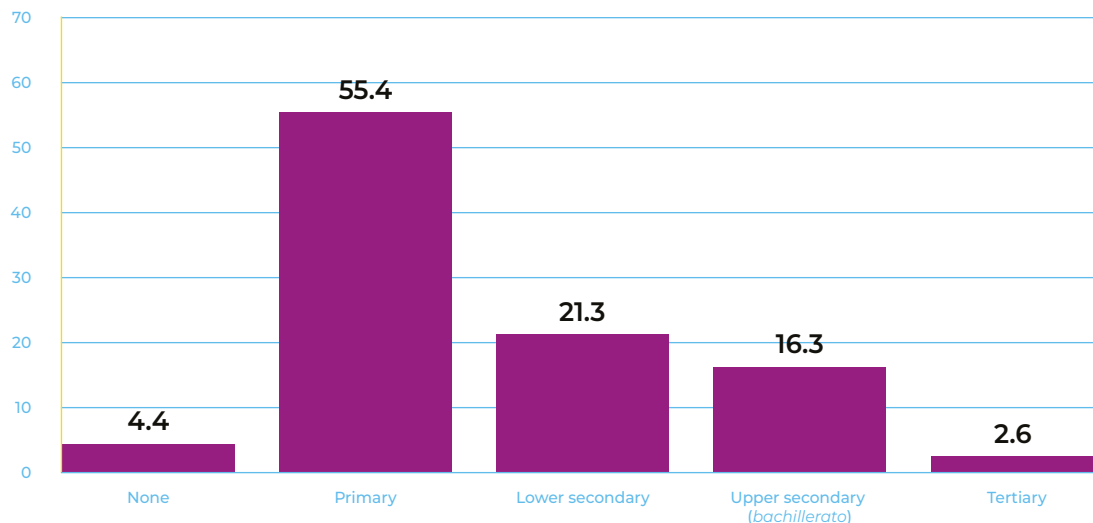
Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

When the analysis turns specifically to women's health, pregnancy among returnees exhibits a distinct pattern. The share of pregnant women peaked at 4.6% in 2018, declined to 1.3% by 2022 – largely due to dynamics in the post-pandemic period – and then rose moderately to 2.3% in 2024. The expiration of Title 42 may have contributed to a reduction in the deportation of pregnant women, although recent trends suggest that this share has begun to increase again.

3.7 Education

Shifting the focus to educational attainment, the data in Figure 22 show that most returnees have only primary education (55.4%), indicating that a large share of this population has low educational attainment. Smaller proportions have attended or completed lower secondary (21.3%) or upper secondary (16.3%), pointing to a relatively limited share with more advanced schooling. Very few cases report pre-primary education as their highest level, or any form of tertiary or university education. This distribution likely reflects the economic profile of those who migrate, particularly individuals migrating irregularly, who face a higher risk of return.

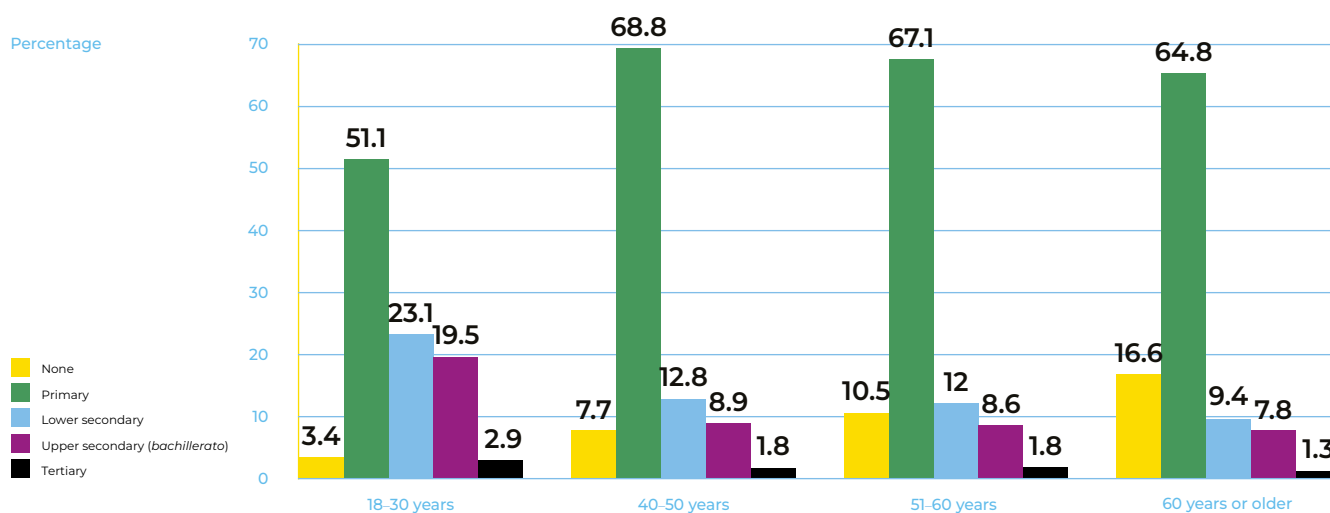
Percentage

**Figure 22. Educational Attainment**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The upward shift in educational levels observed in the data appears to reflect higher educational attainment among younger migrant cohorts. Among those aged 18–30, only 51% have completed at most primary education, while nearly 43% have attended lower or upper secondary school. By contrast, among older age groups, the share of migrants with only primary schooling or no schooling at all is much higher.

Percentage

**Figure 23. Educational Attainment by Age Group**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The data shown in Figure 24 reveal pronounced gender disparities in educational attainment. A much larger share of male returnees (58%) have only primary education, compared with 44% of female returnees. At both upper secondary and tertiary levels, female returnees are more represented than men: 23% versus 14% at the secondary level, and 4% versus 2% at the tertiary or university level. Notably, the shares with no schooling are very low: 3% among women and 5% among men. This pattern suggests that men with higher educational attainment have better employment opportunities in Honduras, whereas women with a similar education are more likely to migrate. As a result, female returnees exhibit, on average, more schooling than their male counterparts.

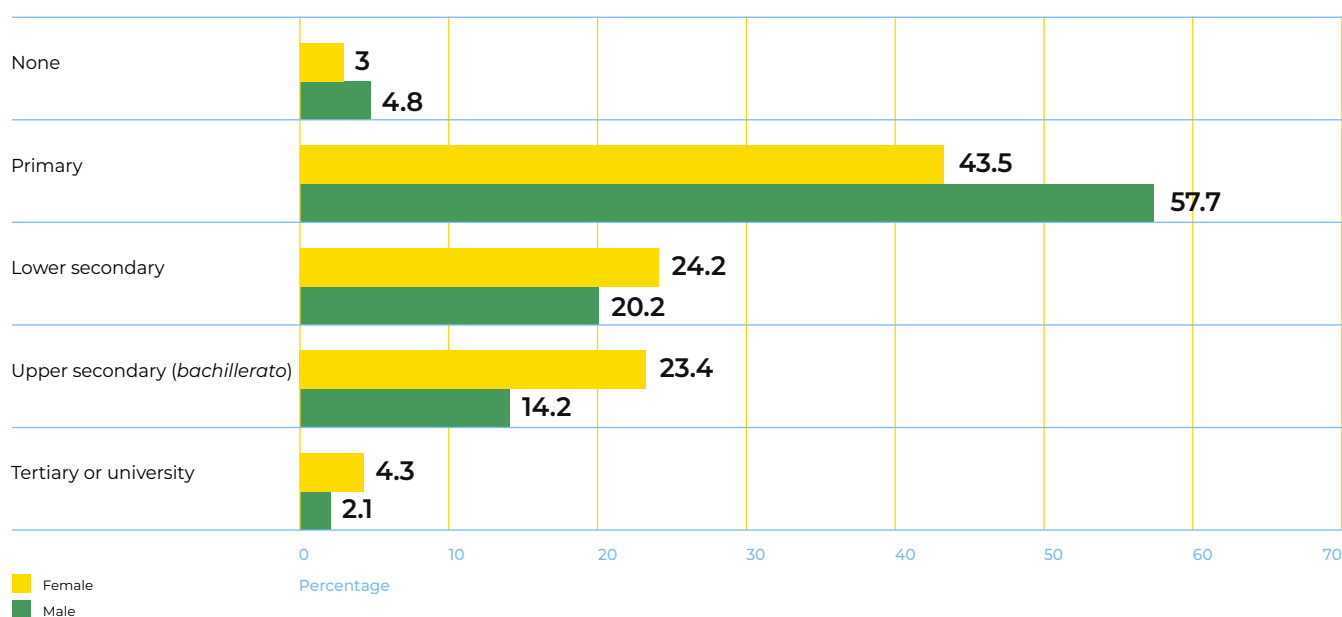
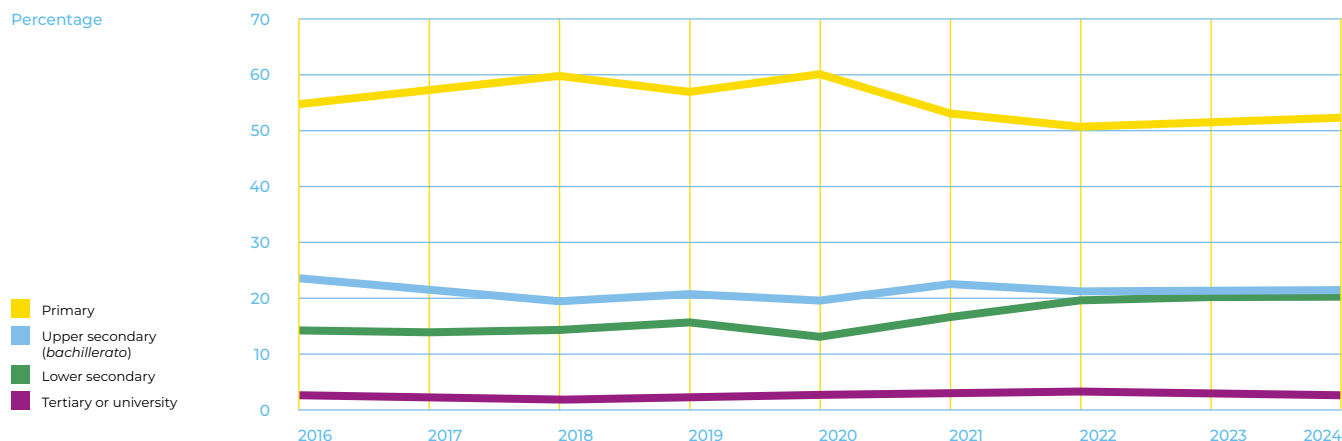


Figure 24. Educational Attainment by Sex

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

As depicted in Figure 25, the educational profile of Honduran returnees has remained relatively stable over the past nine years. The only notable change is a gradual increase in the share of returnees with secondary education, from an average of 14.2% before the pandemic to 19.2% afterward, peaking at 20.3% in 2024. This increase appears to be driven primarily by a decline in the proportion of returnees with lower levels of education, rather than a broad shift toward higher attainment overall. Higher educational attainment among young adults and women, together with the rising shares of these two groups in return flows, seems to account for this pattern. The SIAMIR data record returnees' educational attainment only at the time of return and do not capture their education levels prior to emigration. However, given that most returnees report having spent very little time outside the country, it is highly likely that the observed changes reflect schooling completed in Honduras.

Percentage

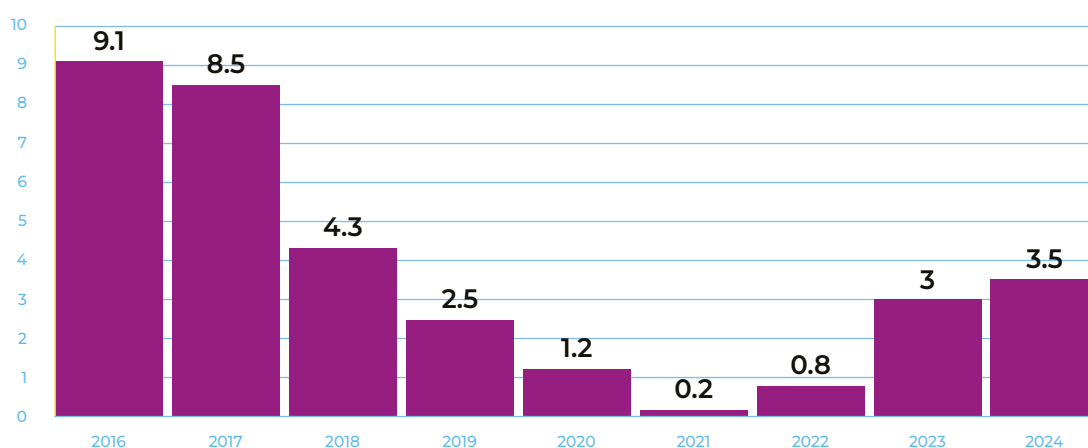
**Figure 25. Educational Attainment over Time**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

3.8 English Proficiency

Turning to English language skills, the data in Figure 26 show a sharp decline in self-reported English proficiency among returnees between 2016 and 2022, reaching a low of just 0.2% in 2021. Although there is some recovery in 2023 and 2024, these levels remain below those observed in 2016–2017, with only around 3.5% of returnees in 2024 reporting any English proficiency. This downward trend may reflect broader shifts in the migrant profile, such as changes in the reasons for leaving Honduras or in the duration of stay abroad. As discussed in the next section, the share of returnees who spent less than two months abroad increased during this period, and shorter stays are strongly associated with lower English proficiency, as shown in Figure 27.

Percentage

**Figure 26. Self-Reported English Proficiency**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Figure 27 shows a clear association between self-reported English proficiency and the duration of stay abroad, measured as the interval between reported departure and return dates. Among returnees who spent less than two months abroad, only 1.3% report being able to speak English; this share increases steadily with longer periods abroad, reaching 11.7% among those who spent between three and four years outside the country and 23.7% among those who were in the United States for more than ten years. These patterns suggest that prolonged exposure to English-speaking environments facilitates language acquisition among return migrants. However, as shown in Figure 6, the majority of returnees spend less than one year outside Honduras.

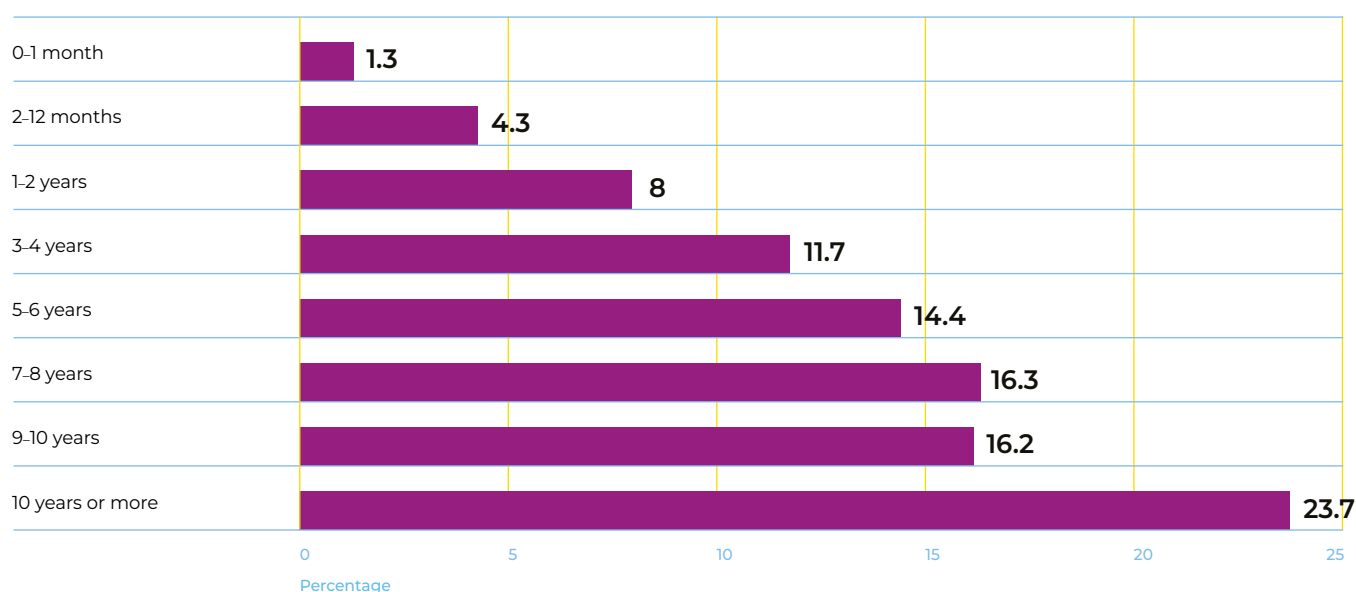


Figure 27. Self-Reported English Proficiency by Time Abroad

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

3.9 Profession, Occupation, and Work Experience

13. ODS staff collect SIAMIR data during interviews with returnees and are responsible for entering the information into the system. Because there was no standard protocol for recording these responses, no predefined categories were available, and the classification used here was developed specifically for the purposes of this report. Accordingly, this analysis should be considered preliminary and subject to further refinement.

Given that economic factors – such as the desire to increase income, send remittances, and save – play a central role in the decision to migrate, examining the work experience of returnees is particularly important. Although the SIAMIR includes a question on work experience, the responses are not coded, which complicates their analysis. For this report, work experience was grouped into 13 categories: professional, health, education, student, sports, technical, arts, business services, domestic services, no experience, construction, not defined, and agriculture and livestock.¹³ When returnees listed more than one type of job, the category was assigned based on the first job mentioned.

- **No experience:** This is an established category in the SIAMIR data and includes around 125,000 returnees.

- **Student:** This is also an established category in the SIAMIR data and includes around 8,000 returnees, among them those who reported internships.
- **Domestic services:** In most cases, this category refers explicitly to domestic work or activities related to household cleaning such as domestic worker or cleaning person (*empleada doméstica, labores de aseo*). It also includes those performing unpaid domestic work, i.e., housewives (*amas de casa*). Overall, it covers more than 23,000 returnees.
- **Agriculture and livestock:** This category includes those engaged in agricultural activities in a general role such as the farmer (*agricultor*) or in more specific roles like coffee grower, fisherperson, and livestock farmer (*caficultor, pescador, ganadero*), as well as those who work in the countryside (*en el campo*) or as day laborers or manual workers (*jornaleros, obreros*). It also comprises jobs linked to agro-industry such as banana packing, coffee company, seafood processing and sugar mill worker (*empaques de banana, empresa de café, limpieza de mariscos, operario de fábrica de azúcar*). More than 96,000 returnees fall into this group.
- **Construction:** This category covers just over 53,000 returnees and spans a wide range of construction-related activities. Construction and masonry (*construcción, albañil*) are the most frequently reported activities, followed by painter, drywall installer, carpenter, and plumber (*pintor, tabla y yeso, carpintero, plomero*). Mentions of housing remodeling and roofing work are also classified in this category.
- **Business services:** Nearly 60,000 returnees with experience in general commerce fall into this category. The most common positions include small business owner, cook, salesperson, driver, shop assistant and customer service representative (*comerciante, cocinero, ventas, motorista, dependiente, servicio al cliente*). This category also includes those who have worked in the public sector, such as government employees, police officers, and members of the armed forces.
- **Technical:** This category comprises those who have held jobs requiring some degree of technical training, though not necessarily formal education. It includes mechanics, welders, HVAC technicians, computer technicians, electricians, assembly plant (*maquila*) workers, heavy-machinery operators, shoemakers, and tailors. Approximately 31,000 returnees are included in this group.
- **Health:** Individuals with work experience in the health sector are classified separately, given their particular value to society. According to SIAMIR, roughly 1,200 returnees fall into this category, including nurses, physicians, dentists, psychologists, pharmacists, and related assistants and administrative staff.
- **Education:** Educators, who play a key role in human capital formation, are also grouped into a specific category. It includes about 2,200 returnees, among them teachers, teaching staff, babysitters, and professors (*maestros, docentes, niñeras, profesores*).

- **Professional:** This category encompasses those with tertiary education and professional occupations such as accountants, auditors, engineers, architects, and other jobs requiring advanced training. More than 5,600 returnees are classified in this group.
- **Arts:** This includes all artistic and creative occupations, covering roughly 500 returnees in categories like artist, musician, artisan, DJ, and tattoo artist (*artista, músico, artesanías, DJ, tatuador*).
- **Sports:** This category comprises around 200 returnees who reported experience as professional soccer players, boxers, jockeys, referees, or sports coaches.
- **Not Defined:** This category includes nearly 54,000 returnees who did not provide information on work experience, whose responses could not be interpreted, or who chose not to answer.

14. For example, experience in the banana or coffee industries is unlikely to have been acquired outside Honduras.

It should be noted that it is not clear whether the “work experience” variable refers to activities undertaken in Honduras or abroad. Based on the nature of many of the descriptions – such as work in national ministries, NGOs, the police or armed forces, and agricultural activities that are uncommon outside Honduras – the experience appears in many cases to refer to employment within the country).¹⁴ There may also be inconsistencies, as returnees with longer stays abroad may be referring to work experience acquired outside Honduras, while those with shorter stays are more likely to report jobs held before migrating.

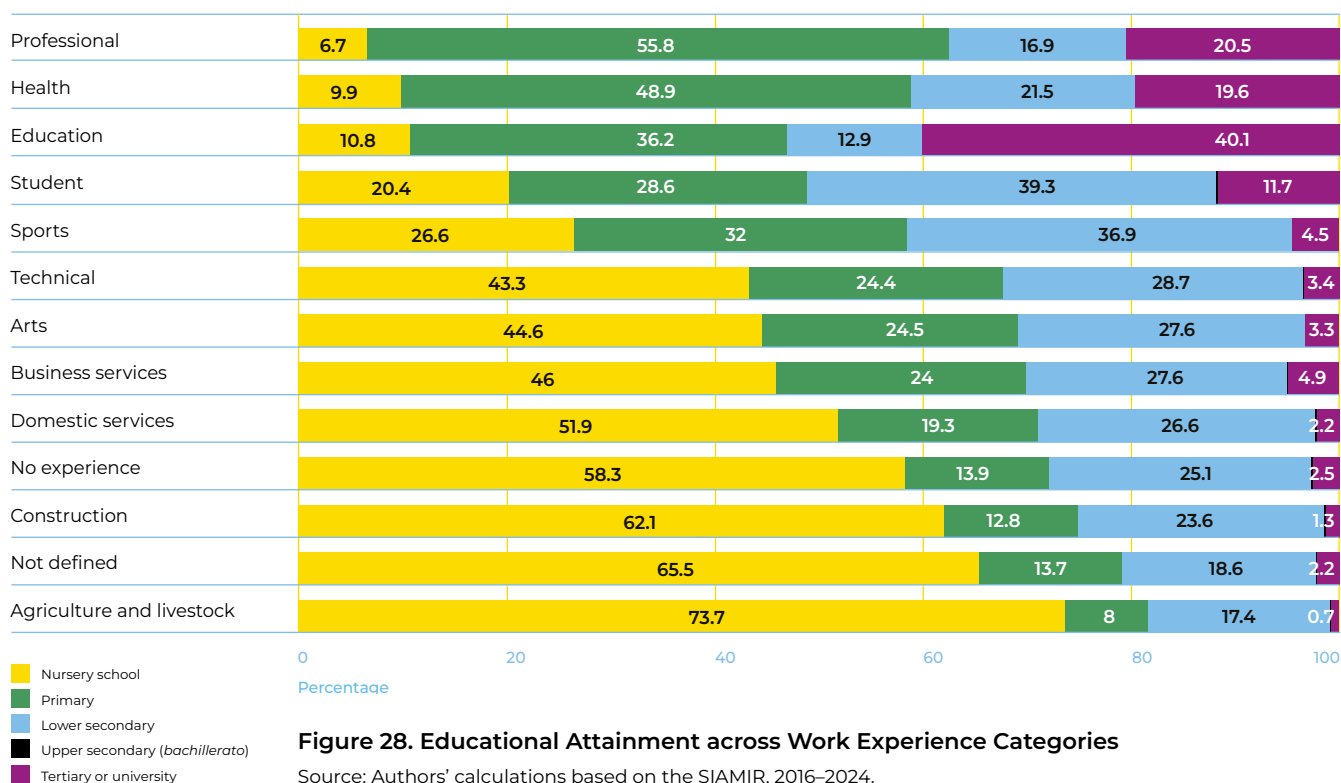


Figure 28. Educational Attainment across Work Experience Categories

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

As initial evidence of the relevance of this classification, levels of educational attainment show a strong correlation with work experience (see Figure 28). At least half of returnees with experience in agriculture, construction, or domestic work, as well as those with no prior experience or an undefined work history, have not completed primary education. By contrast, more than 50% of returnees with experience in commerce or technical occupations have completed primary or secondary education. Among students, professionals, and those employed in education or health, fewer than 10% lack formal schooling, and more than 40% have some tertiary or university education (particularly those employed in education). The clear correspondence between occupational categories and education levels confirms that the classification captures meaningful distinctions among returnees.

The “No experience” category has become less prominent over the nine-year period from 2016 to 2024. It is unclear whether this reflects more systematic recording of returnees’ reported work experience by SIAMIR staff, or an increase in the share of migrants with prior work experience.

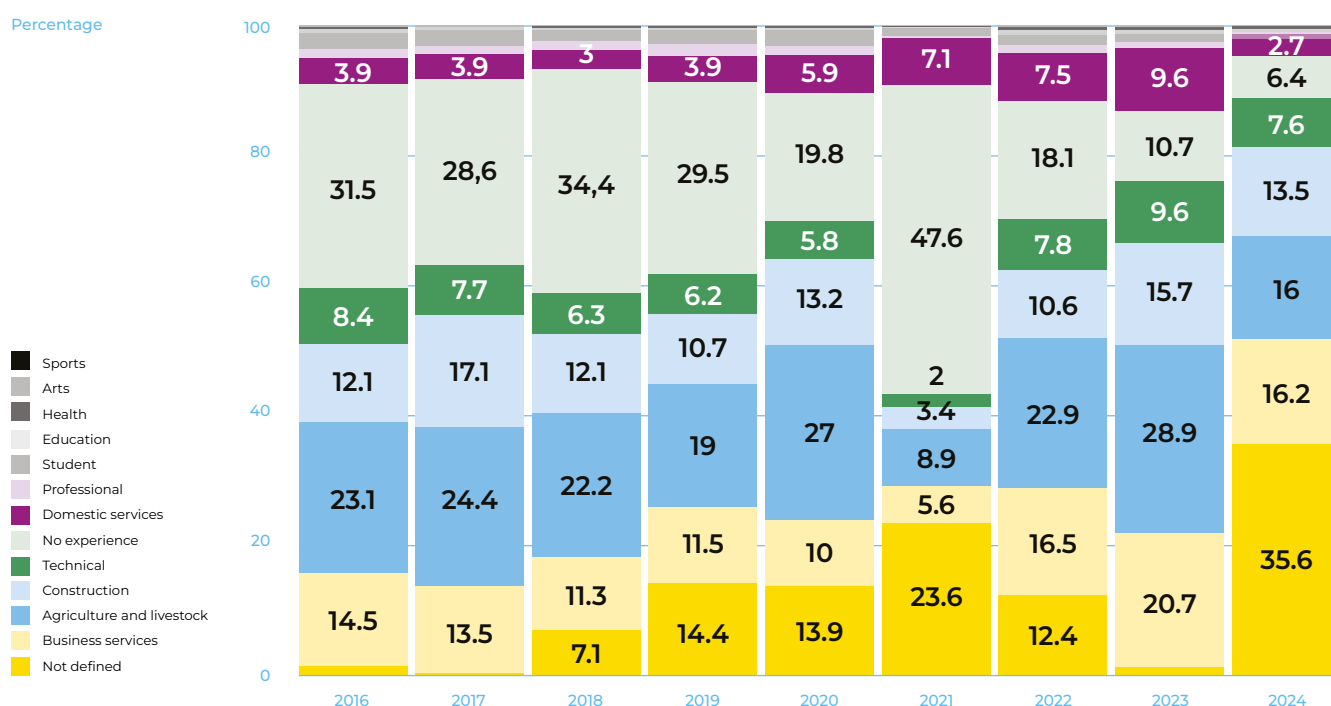


Figure 29. Work Experience by Year

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

At the same time, the share of cases classified as “Not defined” has increased over the period, suggesting that staff responsible for entering the SIAMIR data often leave the work experience field blank when a person does not report previous employment, rather than explicitly recording a lack of experience. Given that both groups share similar educational profiles, the associated information loss is minimal.

Excluding those without a defined work history, the three largest categories are agriculture and livestock, business services, and construction. Agricultural workers account for between 16% (2024) and 29% (2023), excluding 2021, when the pandemic affected data quality. Over the nine-year period, business services and construction each account for between 10% and 20% of returnees, with no clear trend. Technical workers make up between 5% and 10% in all years, except 2021. Only domestic workers exhibit a clear upward pattern, rising from less than 5% before the pandemic to almost 10% in 2023, before falling again to below 3% in 2024. All other categories consistently account for less than 2% of cases.

With regard to higher-skilled occupations, a distinct dynamic emerges: the combined share of these groups declined steadily between 2016 and 2020, recovered in 2022–2023, and then fell again in 2024. Although these shifts are driven primarily by changes among technical workers, other skilled occupations show broadly similar patterns. In the absence of evidence of any systematic factors shaping return from Mexico or the United States, these trends appear to reflect changes in the work trajectories of Hondurans who choose to migrate and assume the risk of deportation. Before the pandemic, those with higher levels of qualification were becoming less likely to migrate, but their share increased during the COVID-19 period and immediately afterward. Today, this migration trend appears to have weakened once again.

Percentage

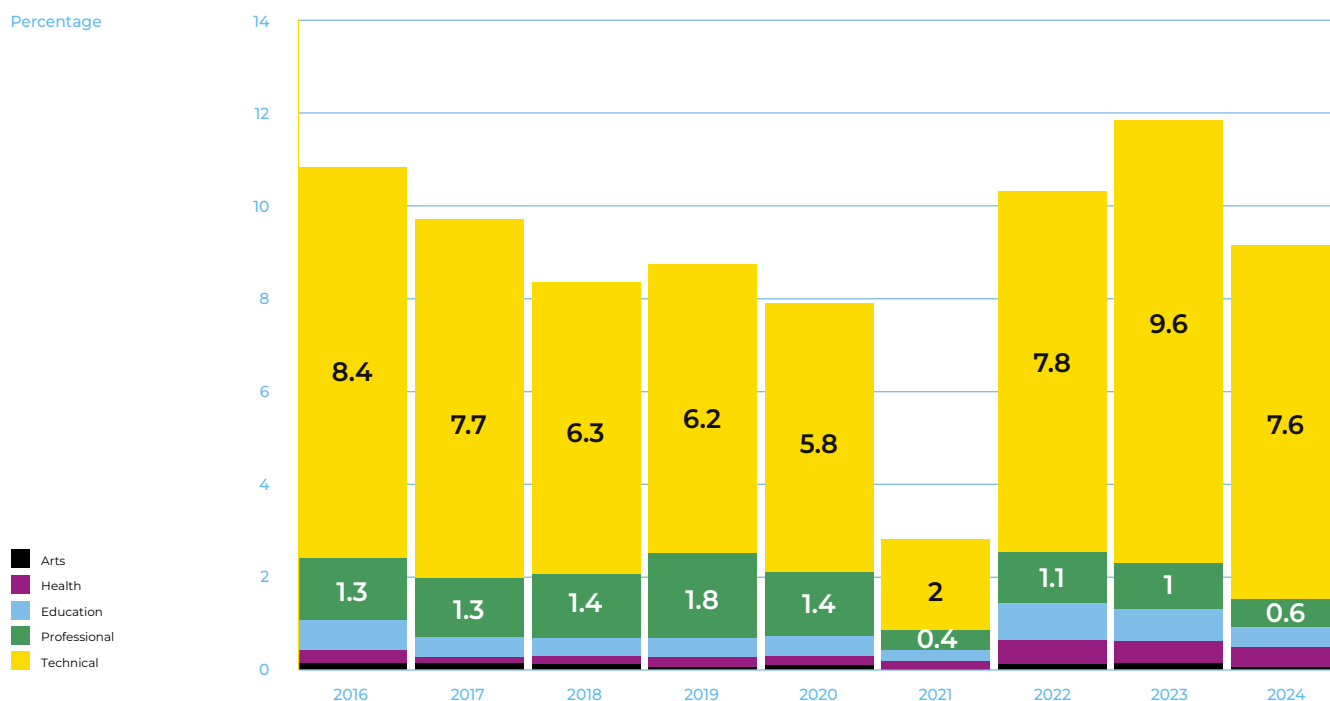


Figure 30. Skilled Work Experience by Year

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

There are also significant differences across work-experience categories in terms of duration of stay abroad. Construction workers (34%) are most likely to have spent more than two years abroad. In addition to these workers, higher-skilled occupations also tend to have remained abroad for longer periods. Returnees with experience in arts and sports, as well as technicians and professionals, each include more than 10% who spent over two years outside the country. Within the group of returnees who spent more than two years abroad, education workers make up only an average or below-average share among the more highly skilled occupations.

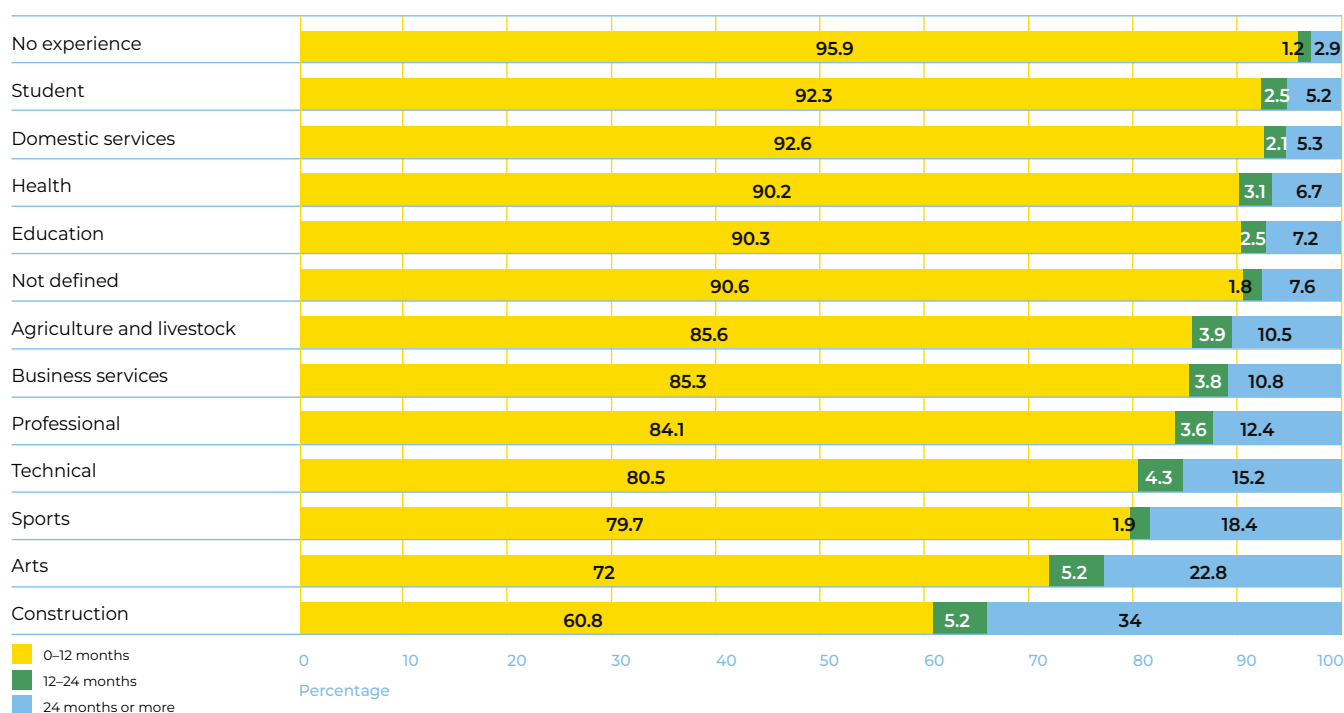


Figure 31. Time Abroad by Work Experience Category

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

It is possible that returnees with more work skills traveled with regular work permits and then remained abroad after their permits expired, although the available data do not allow this hypothesis to be tested. An open question for further research is how construction workers, in particular, have been able to enter and remain abroad longer than those employed in agriculture or domestic work.

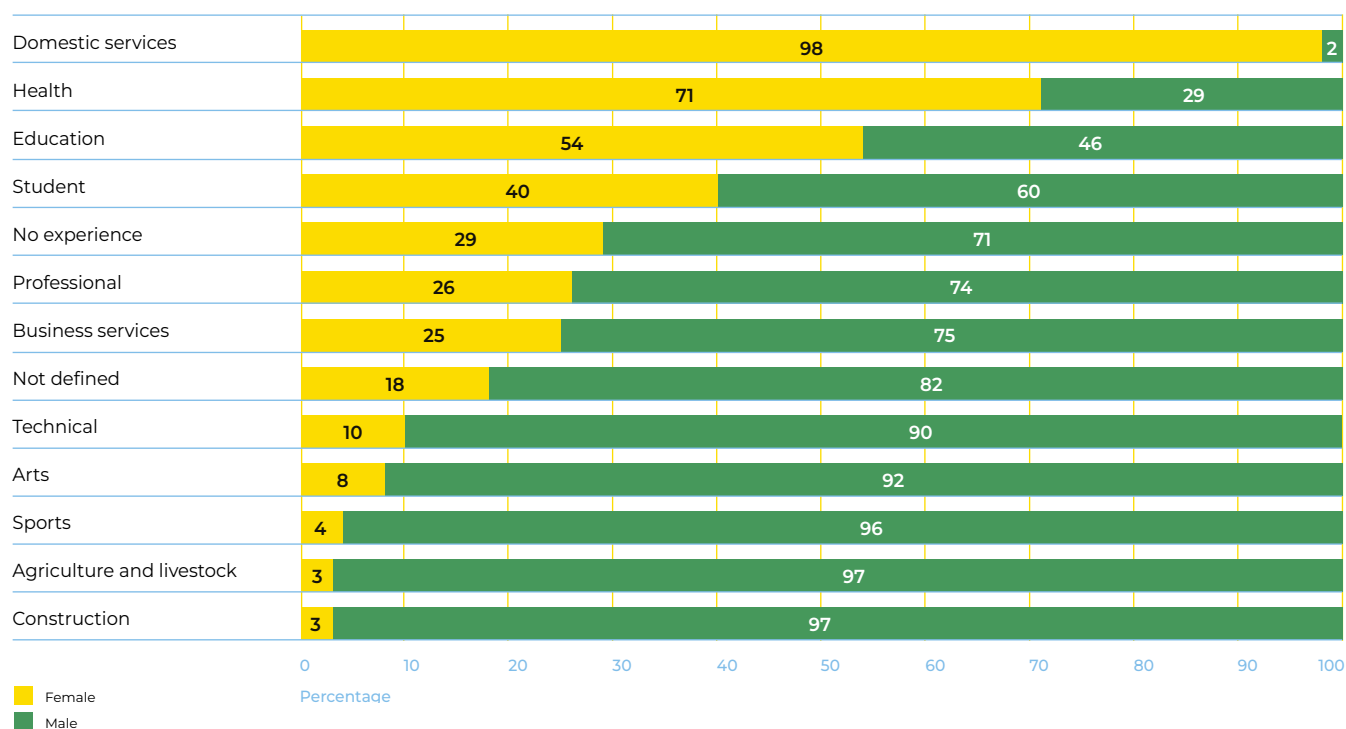


Figure 32. Work Experience Category by Sex

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Given that 79% of all returnees are men, it is to be expected that the most common work-experience categories are those traditionally associated with male employment. However, the fact that the first seven categories shown in Figure 32 (from domestic services through business services) all have female shares above 21% indicates that women are more present in these activities than might be expected based on their overall share among returnees. It is not surprising that domestic services are predominantly female, nor that agriculture/livestock and construction are overwhelmingly male. Likewise, the health and education categories follow expected gender patterns, given the large numbers of women in nursing and teaching. The share of women among students is more than twice that observed among returnees overall. In the case of professionals, as well as workers in business services, the share of women is roughly 50% higher than in the total returnee population, though for business services this is largely explained by the high concentration of female shop assistants.

Students and those without defined work experience are more likely to be returned by land, particularly from Mexico (Figure 33). Although 46% of all returns take place by land, it is notable that the majority of these are concentrated in these work-experience categories. By contrast, more than 60% of returnees in the remaining categories, along with nearly 80% of professionals and construction workers, are returned by air.¹⁵

15. There may also be differences in data-collection protocols across CAMRs depending on the mode of return (land versus air), which could result in less detailed information on work experience for those returned by land.

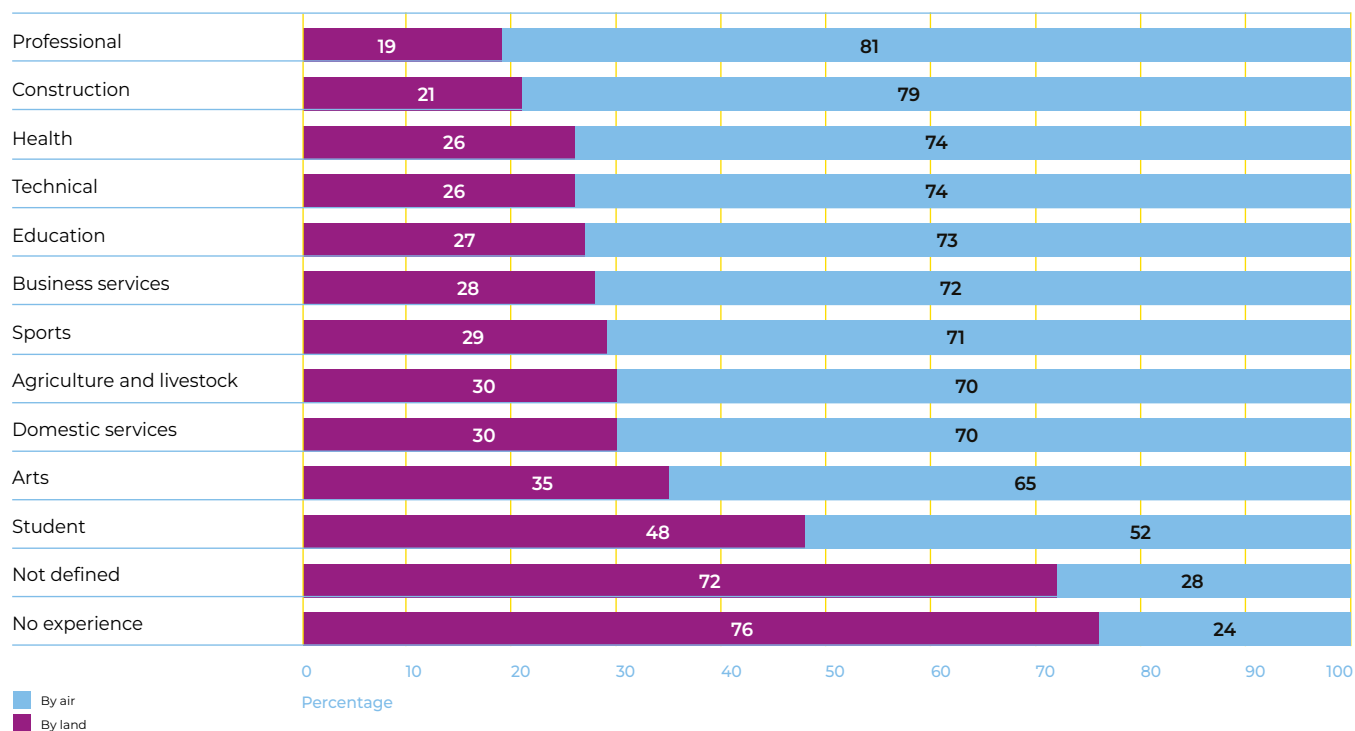


Figure 33. Type of Return, by Work Experience

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

An open question for further research is how construction workers, in particular, have been able to enter and remain abroad longer than those employed in agriculture or domestic work.

4. The Migration Experience

The experience of migrating and returning can significantly shape returnees' capacity for economic and social reintegration, as well as their autonomy and potential contribution to national development. Their reasons for leaving, the obstacles they faced, and the conditions experienced during detention and return all have important implications for this process. Understanding the extent to which returnees have been exposed to these challenges can help guide policies aimed at ensuring rapid and effective reintegration.

4.1 Migration Drivers

As shown in Figure 34, 92% of returnees reported economic reasons as their primary motive for migrating to the United States. Family reunification, cited by 12% of returnees, was also important. Although the questionnaire allowed respondents to report more than one reason, most answers focused mainly on economic or family-related motives. Only 5% cited violence or lack of safety as a reason for migrating, and fewer than 1% selected other options (health, education, or family/domestic violence) as motives for leaving the country.

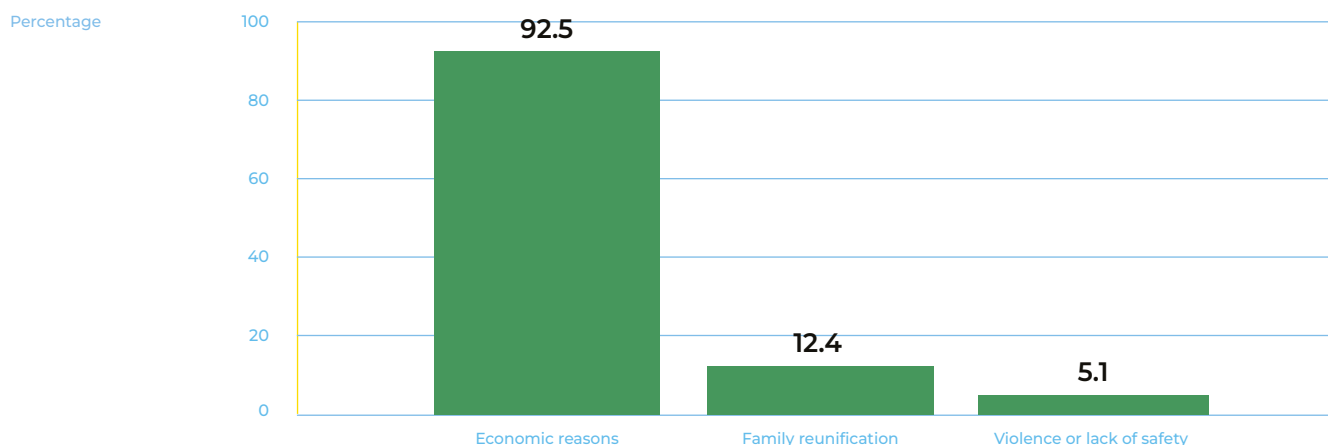


Figure 34. Main Reasons for Leaving the Country

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The relatively low shares citing violence, safety, or health as reasons for migrating may indicate that returnees do not perceive these as their primary drivers, but they may also reflect methodological limitations of the survey. The SIAMIR is intended to capture violence-related motives, yet operational constraints at the CAMRs often make it difficult to explore this topic in depth. Returnees often arrive in a state of acute stress and remain in the centers only briefly, thus hindering efforts to collect

more detailed or sensitive information. It is also likely that individuals would be more willing or able to acknowledge such motives if interviewed at a different point in the migration cycle – for example, before departure or after achieving a degree of stability following return. In other words, the moment of return may not be the most suitable time to probe into sensitive issues. Even so, based on the reported responses, fear of violence does not appear to be the main driver of migration..

Percentage

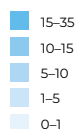


Figure 35. Returnees Citing Violence or Lack of Safety, by Department of Origin

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Although only 5.1% of returnees mention fear of violence, this is an issue that warrants particular attention because of its link to potential needs for international protection. The department-level distribution of those citing fear of violence, shown in Figure 35, is closely associated with the main urban centers. Returnees originating from Cortés (21.3%) and Francisco Morazán (15.6%) – where San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa are located, respectively – are the most likely to report violence or lack of safety as a motive, although this does not mean that fear of violence is confined to an urban-rural divide. When adjusted for population, Atlántida, Yoro, and, to a lesser extent, Cortés, Colón, and Olancho exhibit the highest rates of returnees who identify fear of violence as a reason for migration, whereas Francisco Morazán has a lower share of such returnees (15.6%) than its share of the total population (17.9%).

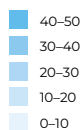
Per 10,000
inhabitants

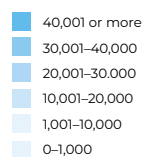
Figure 36. Returnees Citing Fear of Violence per 10,000 Inhabitants by Department

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

4.2 Geography of Emigration and Return

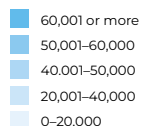
Most returnees to Honduras come from the departments of Cortés, Yoro, Comayagua, Olancho, and Francisco Morazán. These departments also receive the largest numbers of returnees, indicating that they function as the main points of both origin and destination. When adjusted for population, Copán and Colón stand out for their high rates of emigration and return, while Ocotepeque emerges as a prominent destination for returnees. In departments such as Islas de la Bahía, Francisco Morazán, Cortés, Atlántida, Comayagua, Ocotepeque, and Colón, the number of returnees exceeds the number of residents who originally left, indicating that they are net receivers of return migration. However, this pattern may reflect internal relocation following return, driven by factors such as perceived safety, access to services, or the presence of family networks. In some cases, returnees may avoid areas where they previously experienced violence or instability, or may relocate strategically with a view to migrating again.

Returnees

**Figure 37. Returnees by Department of Origin**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Per 1,000 inhabitants

**Figure 38. Returnees per 1,000 Inhabitants by Department**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The green-to-red matrix in Table 1 shows the percentage of returnees by department of origin (rows) and department of intended destination (columns). Each cell indicates the share of all returnees who left from one department and intend to settle in another, and the full table sums to 100%.

Table 1. Return Migration Flows by Department of Origin and Destination (percentage)

		Destination																	
		Cortés	Francisco Morazán	Yoro	Comayagua	Olancho	Atlántida	Santa Bárbara	Copán	Colón	Choluteca	El Paraíso	Gracias a Dios	Intibucá	Islas de la Bahía	La Paz	Lempira	Ocatepeque	Valle
Origin	Cortés	12	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Francisco Morazán	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Yoro	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Comayagua	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Olancho	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Atlántida	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Santa Bárbara	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Copán	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Colón	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Choluteca	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	El Paraíso	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Gracias a Dios	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Intibucá	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	Islas de la Bahía	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	La Paz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lempira	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	
Ocatepeque	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	
Valle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

The most notable pattern is that the majority of returnees go back to their department of origin, shown in green along the diagonal. For example, 12% are from Cortés and return to Cortés, 10% are from Francisco Morazán and return there, and 6% are from Comayagua and also return to Comayagua. Other departments with notable same-department return shares include Yoro (7%), Atlántida (4%), Copán (5%), and Choluteca (3%).

Moves between departments, reflected in the off-diagonal cells, are smaller in magnitude but still reveal certain patterns. For instance, 1% of those from Atlántida return to Colón, 1% of those from Francisco Morazán settle in Yoro, and 1% of those from Cortés move to Atlántida or Francisco Morazán. These flows are concentrated among neighboring departments and suggest localized reintegration dynamics.

Overall, the distribution underscores a strong tendency for returnees to go back to familiar places, while also pointing to a smaller but visible share of internal migration.

Table 2. Return Migration Flows by Department of Origin (percentage)

		Destination																	
		Cortés	Francisco Morazán	Yoro	Comayagua	Olancho	Atlántida	Santa Bárbara	Copán	Colón	Choluteca	El Paraíso	Gracias a Dios	Intibucá	Islas de la Bahía	La Paz	Lempira	Ocotepeque	Valle
Origin	Cortés	78	2	4	2	1	3	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
	Francisco Morazán	5	79	1	3	4	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Yoro	13	2	72	2	1	5	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Comayagua	6	3	2	83	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	Olancho	6	7	2	1	73	2	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Atlántida	12	1	5	1	1	67	1	1	8	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
	Santa Bárbara	22	1	2	1	0	2	62	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
	Copán	9	1	2	1	0	1	5	71	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0
	Colón	9	1	4	1	2	8	1	1	70	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
	Choluteca	9	12	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	68	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	El Paraíso	4	13	1	1	5	1	0	1	1	1	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Gracias a Dios	9	9	2	1	3	23	0	1	8	1	1	36	1	2	0	2	1	1
	Intibucá	5	1	1	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	83	0	1	1	0	0
	Islas de la Bahía	8	2	3	0	1	21	1	0	12	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0
La Paz	4	5	1	19	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	65	0	0	0	
Lempira	7	1	1	1	0	1	3	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	76	2	0	
Ocotepeque	4	0	1	0	0	1	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	81	0	
Valle	8	9	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Table 2 presents the distribution of return destinations by department of origin. Each row sums to 100%, showing, for every 100 returnees from a given department, how many return to their department of origin versus how many settle in another department.

The most common pattern is a return to the place of origin: for example, 83% of those from Comayagua, 79% from Francisco Morazán, and 78% from Cortés return to their respective departments. This return-to-origin pattern is evident across most departments, with particularly high shares in Intibucá (83%), Copán (71%), and El Paraíso (70%).

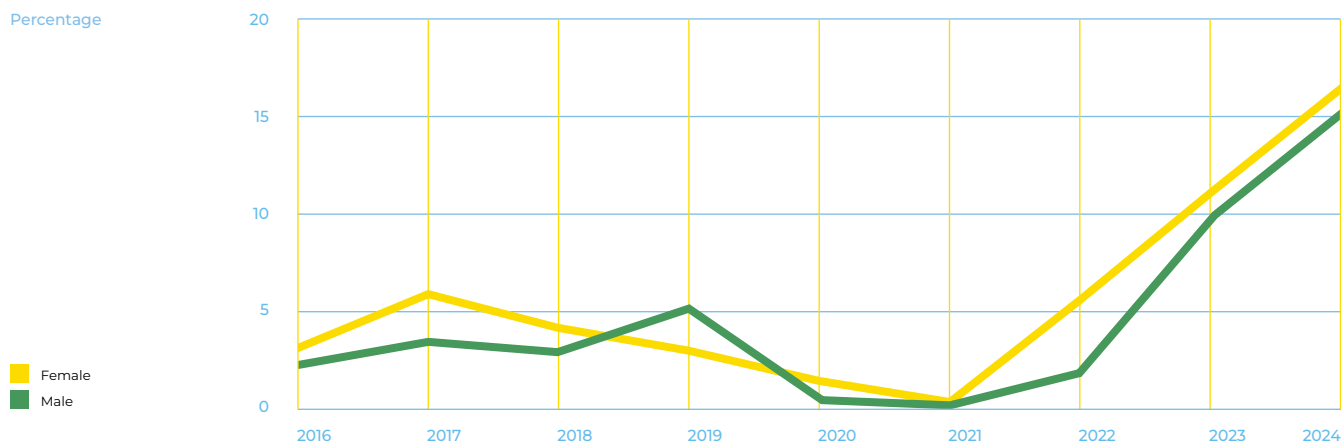
However, some departments exhibit more diversified destinations. In Santa Bárbara, for instance, only 62% of returnees go back to their department of origin, while 22% settle in Cortés, underscoring the department's strong appeal as a destination. Cortés systematically appears as a destination for returnees from other departments: 22% of those from Santa Bárbara, 13% from Yoro, and 12% from Atlántida settle there.

These patterns indicate that, although most returnees choose to return to familiar locations, departments such as Cortés function as hubs for return migration, largely due to labor market opportunities, urbanization, and proximity to the international border.

4.3 Asylum Requests Abroad

An important factor in the process of emigration and eventual return has been the possibility of requesting asylum in the United States and, in some cases, in Mexico. From 2016 to 2022, fewer than 5% of returnees reported having applied for some form of international protection while abroad (see Figure 39). However, in 2023 this share rose above 10%, and in 2024 it exceeded 20%. By definition, all individuals classified here as returnees had their claims ultimately rejected. This implies that either rejection rates increased, application rates increased, or both. There is no robust evidence that conditions in Honduras changed dramatically in 2023–2024 in a way that would have sharply increased the underlying need for protection.

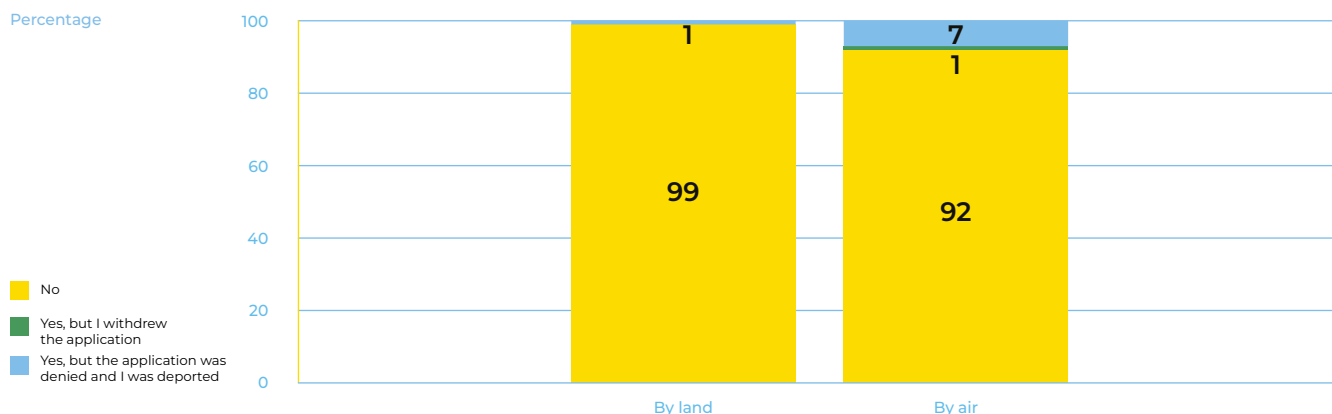
Percentage

**Figure 39. Share of Returnees Who Requested Protection**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

It is likely that applying for asylum came to be perceived, rightly or wrongly, as a potential pathway to remain in the destination country. As a result, migrants appear to have requested protection more frequently, and in the absence of a change in underlying protection needs, rejection rates increased. Analyzing the frequency of asylum requests by mode of return provides additional insight into this pattern (see Figure 40). Applications for protection remain relatively uncommon in both groups but are more frequent among those returned by air, mainly from the United States. Given the growing predominance of returns from the United States in recent years, the increase in the share of returnees who requested protection is understandable, since more applications are being lodged there. Further research is needed to substantiate these hypotheses.

Percentage

**Figure 40. Protection Requests by Mode of Transport**

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Another consideration is the potential connection between having cited fear of violence or lack of safety as a motive for emigration and the likelihood of requesting international protection while abroad. Strikingly, this connection is rather weak. Overall, only 21.6% of those who reported fear of violence as a reason for leaving Honduras went on to apply for asylum while abroad. Across departments, this share varies only modestly, from 19.6% in Colón to 24.7% in Gracias a Dios (see Figure 41). By comparison, just 3.4% of those who did not mention fear of violence requested protection. The limited variation in request rates between these groups suggests there are no major differences across regions of Honduras, or between rural and urban areas, in the extent to which returnees seek international protection.

Percentage

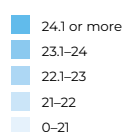


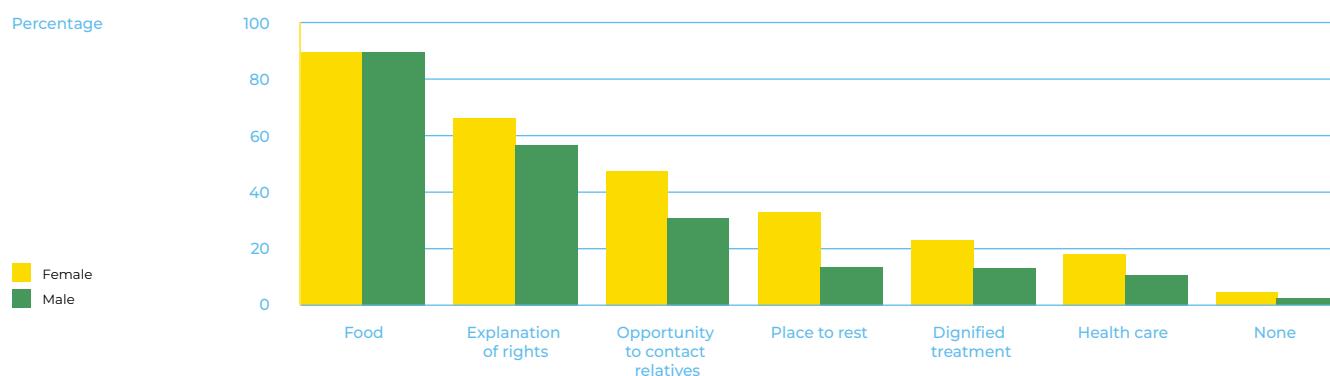
Figure 41. Asylum Requests among Returnees Who Reported Fear of Violence

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

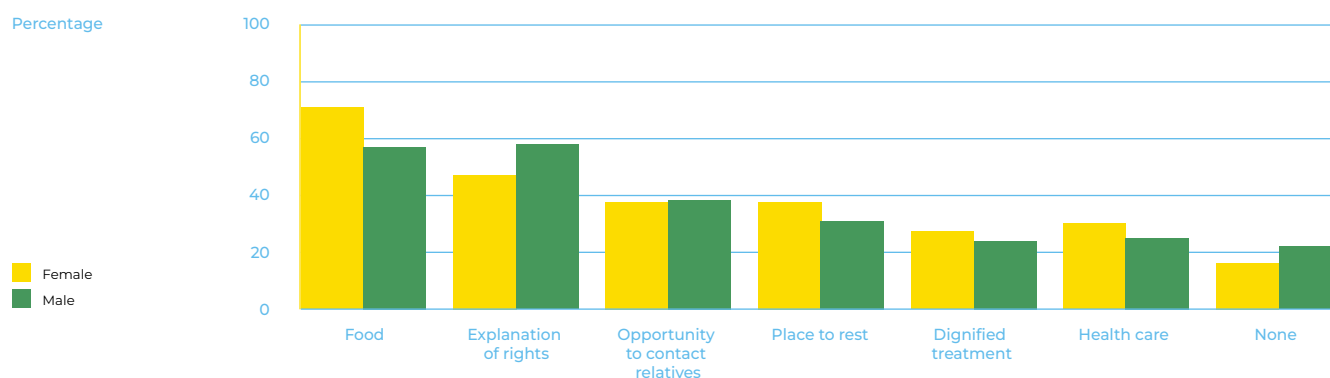
The data also make it possible to examine whether returnees who reported fear of violence decide to settle in a different municipality from the one they left. Among those who neither cited fear of violence when leaving nor requested asylum while abroad, 47% resettle in another municipality. Returnees who applied for asylum are no more likely to resettle elsewhere; the same share also settles in a different municipality, regardless of whether they reported fear of violence. Those who reported fear of violence change municipality in 49% of cases, and those who both reported fear of violence and requested asylum do so in 50% of cases. Although these differences are small, spanning only three percentage points, more than 25,000 Honduran returnees fall into one of these categories.

4.4 Experience in Detention Centers

Using mode of transport as a proxy to distinguish returnees from Mexico and those from the United States, there are notable differences in reported detention experiences between the two groups. According to SIAMIR, access to food and explanations of rights are common in both contexts but are reported more frequently in Mexico than in the United States. By contrast, the opportunity to contact relatives, a place to rest, dignified treatment, and health care are all reported at higher rates among those detained in the United States.



Panel A. Returned by Land



Panel B. Returned by Air

Figure 42. Assistance Received While in Detention

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Gender differences are also more pronounced among those returned by land than among those returned by air. With the exception of explanations of rights, women in both countries report receiving treatment that is at least as favorable as that reported by men, and in some cases better. However, these gender gaps are more marked in the case of Mexico (returns by land) than for the United States.

4.5 Migration Attempts

Contrary to common perceptions, as shown in Figure 43, it is relatively uncommon for individuals to be repatriated multiple times. Of the approximately 345,000 returnees recorded in SIAMIR since 2016, 77% have been returned only once, and 93% no more than twice. Among women, 87% were returned once and 11% twice, meaning that 98% experienced the process only once or twice. For men, the pattern is similar: 74% were returned once and 18% twice, so 92% were repatriated one or two times.

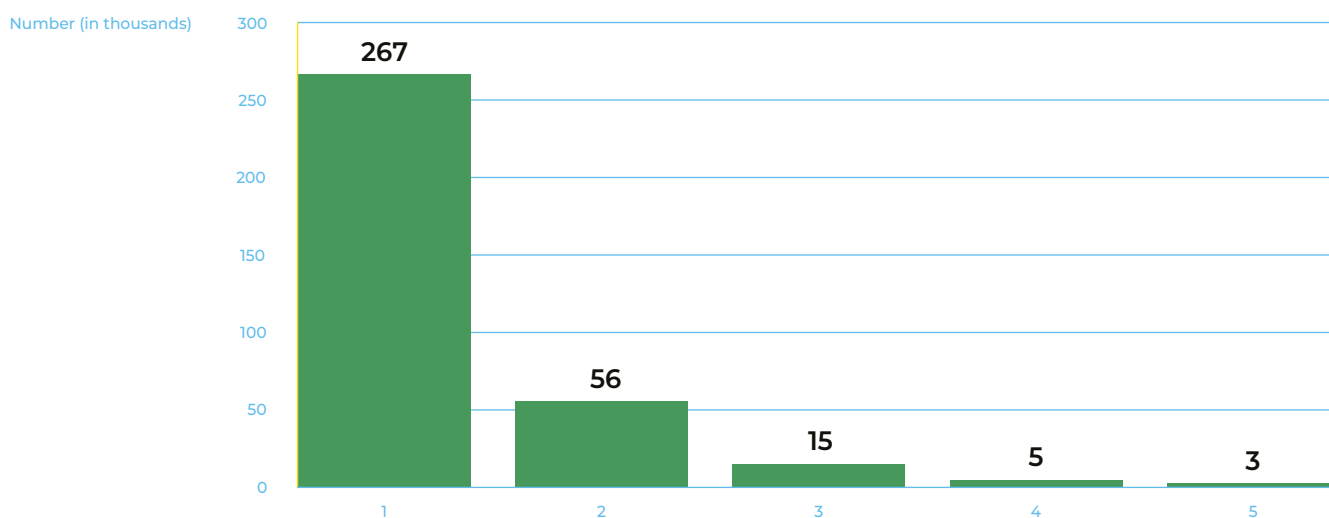


Figure 43. Repatriations After Migration Attempts

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Although these figures do not rule out the possibility that some individuals migrate a second (or third) time and successfully establish themselves abroad without being deported again, the number of such successful repeat migrants would have to be extremely large to account for the low observed rate of repeated returns. The fact that so few people appear more than once in the database (and fewer than 6% more than twice) indicates that while repeat migration does occur, it is far less common than often assumed. Typically, individuals are repatriated once and then remain in Honduras.

The number of successful repeat migrants would have to be extremely large to account for the low observed rate of repeated returns.

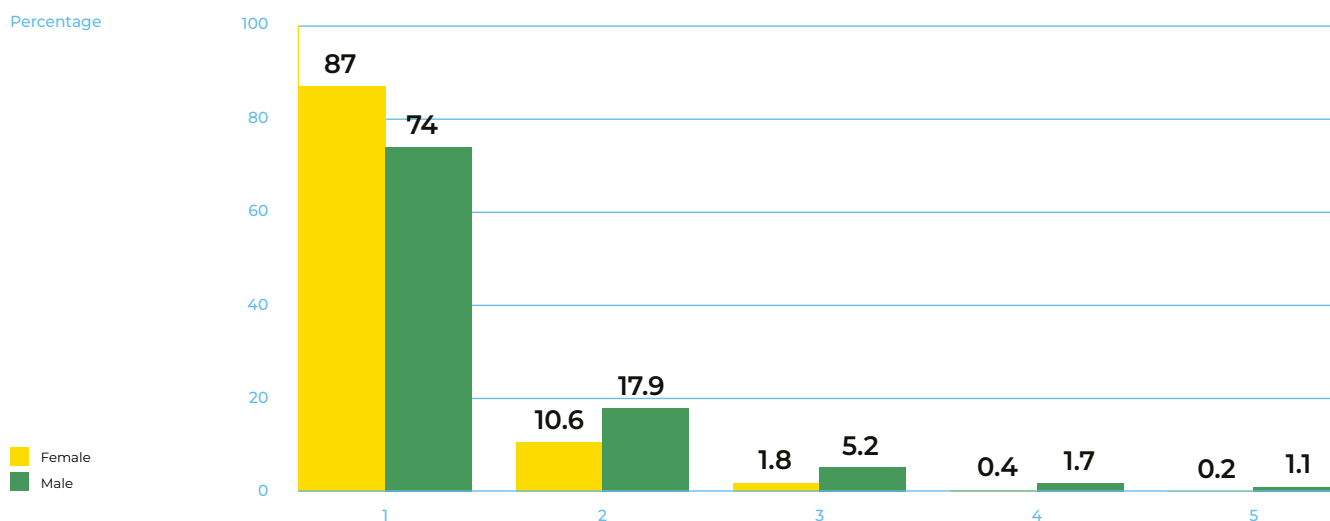


Figure 44. Repatriations After Migration Attempts by Sex

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

It is also possible that some people leave Honduras and, after being intercepted and returned to transit countries such as Mexico or Guatemala, make several attempts to continue their journey without actually returning to Honduras. Nonetheless, the self-reported SIAMIR data suggest that repeated migration attempts are relatively rare. As shown in the upper green cells of Table 3, nearly 75% of returnees report having been returned only once and having just one or two irregular entries into the destination country. An additional 14% (also highlighted in green) were repatriated twice and do not report other migration attempts. In total, 88.7% report no more than two irregular entries and returns, indicating that three or more migration attempts are a clear exception rather than the norm.

Table 3. Self-Reported Irregular Entry and Return to Honduras

		Self-Reported Irregular Entry for the Destination Country				
		1	2	3	4	5
Returns to Honduras	1	64.68	9.14	2.16	0.71	0.72
	2	5.06	8.81	1.42	0.44	0.40
	3	0.87	1.05	1.76	0.37	0.26
	4	0.26	0.18	0.25	0.45	0.21
	5	0.12	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.44

Source: Authors' calculations based on the SIAMIR, 2016–2024.

Note: This table includes only one observation per individual and is restricted to those who reported having entered the country from which they returned at least once (either the United States or Mexico). As a result, it excludes 11% of the population who indicated that they had never entered that country irregularly.

5. Next Steps: What is Missing

5.1 A Retrospective View

Although the SIAMIR has been in use since 2014, it offers only a partial view of return migration. Many Hondurans emigrated and returned prior to this date, yet there are no systematic records documenting their experiences. This historical data gap limits the ability to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of long-term trends in return and reintegration. Even for the years in which SIAMIR has been in place, the data only capture forced returns, meaning that people who return voluntarily remain largely invisible in the records. Consequently, the available information provides an incomplete picture of return migration, omitting a potentially significant share of the returnee population and constraining evaluations of reintegration processes.

To overcome these limitations, it is essential to complement this analysis with national household surveys. While administrative data such as SIAMIR provide timely and detailed information on forced returns, only household surveys can capture a broader range of return experiences, including voluntary returns that typically fall outside government records. Incorporating migration history modules or specific identifiers for returnees into these surveys would make it possible to more accurately estimate the total number of returnees and to track how their profiles and reintegration trajectories evolve over time. Such data are crucial not only for understanding the true scale of return migration, whether forced or voluntary, but also for designing inclusive policies that respond to the diverse realities faced by those returning to Honduras.

5.2 Future Outlook

A key obstacle to understanding reintegration is that Honduras's main data systems do not record who is a returnee. In this regard, the availability of official sources such as SIAMIR offers an opportunity to strengthen the empirical foundation and improve migration policy decision-making. Looking ahead, a priority should be to use this intake information as the starting point for a panel survey that documents returnees' reintegration over time.

Following individuals beyond the initial point of reentry is essential to assess whether they are reintegrating successfully and to identify whether additional support is needed, and in what form. This means learning whether returnees are able to access stable employment, whether they face food insecurity or discrimination, and how they navigate housing, education, and public service systems. It is also important to capture how these experiences vary with the duration of stay abroad, given the recent shift toward longer stays observed in the SIAMIR data.

Although developing a panel survey of this sort will entail logistical and resource challenges, the insights it can generate are critical to gaining a better understanding of return migration. A longitudinal perspective would allow policymakers to move beyond a snapshot of returnees' immediate needs and instead understand reintegration as a dynamic process shaped by time, prior migration experiences, and local conditions. Establishing the infrastructure to collect this critical evidence would not only fill a persistent knowledge gap but also guide the design of responsive, data-driven reintegration policies for Honduras and other countries in the region.

Looking ahead, a priority should be to use this intake information as the starting point for a panel survey that documents returnees' reintegration over time.

Appendix

Summary of the SIAMIR Questionnaire
I. Entry Check
a. Name, accompanying family members, date and contact details b. Place and date of most recent departure
II. Personal Information
c. National ID d. Names of accompanying family members, dates and places of birth e. Sex, age, race f. Marital status g. Children in Honduras and abroad h. Information about parents i. Destination within Honduras j. Other family contacts
III. Health
k. Current health problems l. Pregnant or breastfeeding m. Disabilities
IV. Education
n. Highest education level completed o. English proficiency
V. Profession or Occupation
p. Profession q. Occupation r. Work experience s. Interested in job training
VI. Reasons for Migration, Exit, and Return
t. Place of residence prior to emigration u. Reason for leaving v. Asylum requests abroad w. Destination country x. Family in destination y. Detention and deportation experience

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