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Migration trends in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Introduction

Migration is a globally recognized phenomenon demanding urgent attention because of its multivalent consequences on societies' social, political, economic organization, and cultural and family life. It is a powerful vector of changes of different types and great complexity (Trask, 2020). In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) (see Figure 1), the available information, although partial and heterogeneous, allows for outlining some trends.

In 2019, the United Nations Population Division (United Nations, 2019) estimated that there were 40.5 million migrant population in LAC, equivalent to 15% of the world's migrant population. Mobility has grown, intensified, and expresses heterogeneity in its flows. The current characteristic pattern is mixed migrations, composed of asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied children and adolescents, environmental migrants, migrants in an irregular situation, victims of trafficking, and strand migrants. Many of these flows are forced, and many migrants are in vulnerable situations. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities and has contributed to modifying migratory flows, in some cases accentuating emigration and, in others, the return to the origin countries. However, contrary to expectations, it has also boosted remittances.

This paper has three objectives: 1) to show the main features of mobility in LAC and its specific patterns in three sub-regions; 2) to offer a view of how we can understand the transnational space and transnational families, to analyze some of the gender conditioning factors involved and the use of some resources, such as multigenerational ties in transnational motherhood and parenting; and 3) to show how migration policies for family reunification intervene in the configuration of transnational families, and some of the limitations families face. Finally, based on the above, some recommendations are made.

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Figure 1

Mapa del continente Americano



Mobility patterns in LAC

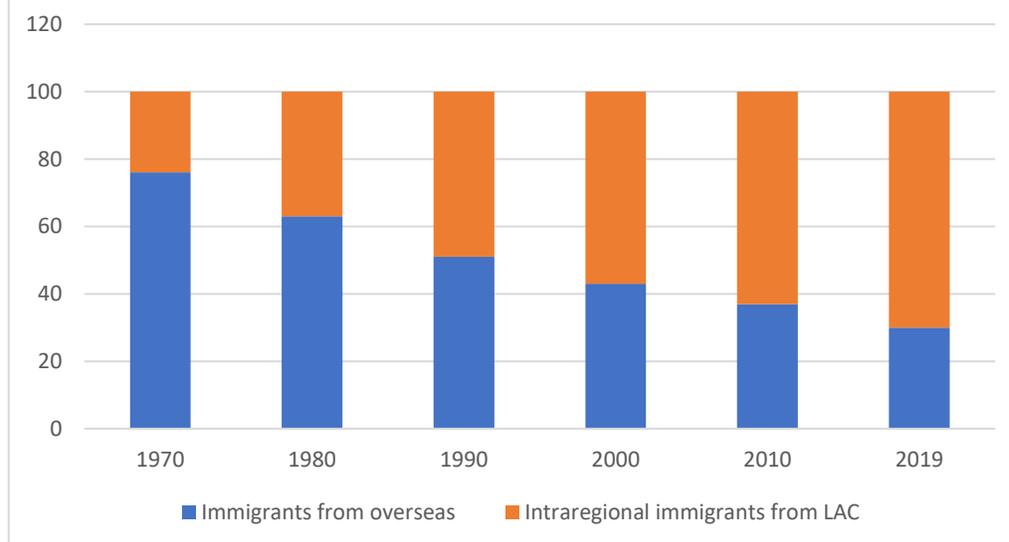
Currently, mobility in LAC presents migration patterns and corridors that give continuity to previous trends but also show significant changes in the volume and direction of its flows and the profiles of migrants. CEPAL (2019a) and Martínez Pizarro, Cano, and Contrucci (2014) have identified three main patterns that have characterized international migration in LAC for the past seven decades: outward emigration from the region, historical immigration from overseas, and intra-regional exchanges. Another less studied pattern is the return to the countries, whether planned or forced. Emigration to developed countries, especially the United States (USA), has been the prevailing pattern, to the point that it is estimated that there are six emigrants for every two immigrants in the region. Although the flow to the USA has decreased in recent years, it continues to be the preferred destination out of the region; the second is Spain (CEPAL, 2019a; Martínez Pizarro and Orrego, 2016).

The second most important pattern is the increase in intraregional mobility. While in 1990, it reached 50% of the total migrant population, in 2019, it increased to 70%. The number of countries where migration takes place has also grown. This is the case, for example, of the recent exodus of more than five million Venezuelans to neighboring or nearby countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile; the movement of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica, and that of Haitians throughout the continent (CEPAL, 2019a; Herrera, 2021; OIM, 2018). In addition, the emigrants' proportion to national populations has increased. In 2019 it reached 21.1% in the Caribbean and Central America, the region's highest proportion. In El Salvador it represented 24.8%, in Jamaica 37.7%, and in Puerto Rico 68.4%. On the other hand, Argentina continues to represent the country with the highest volume of immigration: 2.2 million, a figure representing 19% of the total immigrant population in the region in 2019. Other countries such as Colombia, Mexico, Chile also register significant flows of immigrants (CEPAL, 2019a) (see Table 1 in the Annex).

The third pattern, immigration from overseas to the region, was prevalent until the 1970s, accounting for 70% of the total immigrant population. In contrast, intraregional migration only reached 24%. In 2019 this trend reversed: 70% of the immigrant population is intraregional, and 30% comes from overseas (see Graph 1). Intraregional immigration shows significant flows in fourteen countries, which register more than one million emigrants: Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Peru, Guatemala, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Argentina (United Nations, 2019; CEPAL, 2019a; OIM, 2020).

Several studies have identified the feminization of mobility, children and adolescents' displacement with their families or unaccompanied, and "migrant caravans" as distinctive features of recent mobilities (e. g., Bogado, 2021; Herrera, 2021). They are the new recent protagonists and indigenous migrants forced by environmental issues or conflicts. Another problematic feature is that the transits of migrants of multiple nationalities are longer, whether they go to Chile, Argentina, or the north, to Mexico and the USA. Transit becomes life, with long journeys or extended stays, which has generated new dynamics going beyond the idea of departure and settlement at a destination.

**Graph 1. Latin America and the Caribbean:
immigrant population by origin 1970-2019 (%)**



Source: Information retrieved from CEPAL (2019a: 164)

The Covid-19 pandemic and its confinement measures exacerbated inequalities in the migrant population and created new ones. Recent literature has identified four factors that produce it: 1) migrants' economic integration is precarious, as they usually have informal jobs, with salaries below the law and other labor and social insecurities. 2) the overcrowded conditions of their homes, exposing them to contagion; 3) the growth of xenophobic reactions by the receiving populations and institutional racism in the health and educational systems. And 4) restrictive migration policies and border closures prevent their legal regularization in the destination countries, leading to the internal and international return of migrants to their original communities and countries. All this has led to humanitarian crises in several border areas, has put the health of migrants at risk, and has favored the proliferation of irregular crossings and human trafficking networks (Herrera, 2021; Bogado, 2021; OIM, 2020).

Although migratory flows have been caused primarily by structural factors in the native countries, such as lack of opportunities, poverty, or violence, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, migration has also had positive effects. Among them stands the remittances sent by migrants, especially from the USA to Mexico and Central America, which increased considerably during the pandemic. The World Bank (2022) has estimated that in 2021 LAC was the region that recorded the largest increase worldwide. Remittances increased to USD 131 billion, representing 25.3% over 2020. Countries with double-digit growth rates included Guatemala (35%), Ecuador (31%), Honduras (29%), Mexico (25%), El Salvador (26%), Dominican Republic (26%), Colombia (24%), Haiti (21%) and Nicaragua (16%). Remittances are an essential foreign exchange source for several countries. They represent at least 20% of GDP in some countries, such as El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, and Haiti. These resources have been the main informal social protection mechanism for families and the mainstay that helped them cope with economic difficulties (Herrera, 2021). Migrant remittances, for example, in New York, have also been promoters of local development.

Businesses have been created for the sale of native products and the provision of parcel and money remittance services. In short, a migration infrastructure and transnational businesses are created through remittances (Rivera-Sánchez, 2008).

Mobility patterns in three LAC subregions

The patterns described above show specific features delineating three sub-regions in LAC: Central America and Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America.

Central America and Mexico

This subregion outstands by its interconnected mobility and the large volume of flows between its member countries, resulting in highly complex social, economic, and political processes, and humanitarian crises. The USA has been and continues to be the primary destination for Mexican and Central American migrants (see Figure 2). However, in recent years the Mexican flow has decreased, and that of Central Americans from the northern countries (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) has increased. It is currently the most significant concern and has been boosted primarily by the lack of job opportunities, poverty, and social and gender violence experienced in these countries. The "Caravans of Central Americans" have been a recent distinctive feature of this collective migration of 3,000 to 6,000 migrants transiting together. They are composed of whole families, unaccompanied minors, older adults, people with disabilities, and persons with chronic diseases (COLEF, 2019, 2017; Sedas, Agueberre, Martínez, et al., 2020).

Figure 2



Historically, Mexico has been an origin and transit country but has recently developed a multiple character as a significant place of destination and return. The unprecedented increase in Central American migrants has intensified the transit through Mexican territory (CEPAL, 2019a). In 2019, it was estimated that around 400,000 Central Americans were

transiting through Mexico on their way to the USA. Only one-fifth managed to reach their destination (Sedas et al., 2020; Canales and Rojas, 2018). These migrants are at risk of exposure to predatory violence, sexual abuse, rape, trafficking, food insecurity, discrimination, and social exclusion, among others (COLEF, 2019, 2017; UNICEF, 2018). However, several Central American migrants have settled in Mexico, especially in the southern border states. The restrictions on entry and stay established by the USA government, and the high travel costs, have favored the idea of Mexico as a destination (Rojas, Fernández, and Cruz, 2008; Martínez Pizarro and Orrego, 2016).

As a result, the number of asylum applications from displaced migrants in the USA and Mexico is growing. Their profile in Mexico has changed recently, from single men to entire families, women, and unaccompanied children and adolescents. The deportations carried out by USA governments have also nurtured and deepened this problematic situation. They have unleashed successive "humanitarian crises" due to the lack of protocols to attend to these massive migrations and the insufficient capacity of the origin and destination governments to attend to the labor and psychosocial needs of deported and returned migrants. Several migrants have spent long periods abroad and have broken family ties, so their needs are pressing (CEPAL, 2019b; Canales and Rojas, 2018). The majority of Central Americans deported by USA authorities are men, Guatemalans with low levels of education or high school level in the case of Hondurans and Salvadorans, and a third of Guatemalans are indigenous (CEPAL, 2019a).

Mexico also stands out as a country of origin, transit, destination, and return of unaccompanied Central American children and adolescents. About two-thirds are boys, and one-third are girls, their average age is 15 years, and they lack social protection, although the governments of these countries have established some legal child protection measures (Orozco and Yansura, 2015; CEPAL, 2019a). However, every year in the northern Central American countries, 700,000 young people reach the working age of 14 or 15 years, as established by their legislation. Such legislations contribute to reinforcing the idea that young people can undertake the search for better job opportunities by migrating to the USA or Mexico. This factor is compounded by others, such as family reunification, the need to leave behind domestic or social violence situations, the consequences of natural disasters, and poverty boost the idea of migration as an option.

[The Caribbean](#)

Migration has a very high impact in this subregion because countries and their populations are small (see Table 1). Migrants from this subregion represent about 20% of the total population of the Caribbean. In 2019, the USA and Canada concentrated 77% of the emigrated population (CEPAL, 2019a; Martínez and Rivera, 2016) (see Figure 3). Two patterns distinguish mobility. The first relates to disaster situations and events caused by climate change, and the second refers to the emigration of the skilled labor force. Natural disasters have had a powerful impact on these countries. They displaced more than 6.5 million people, primarily Cubans and Haitians, between 2008 and 2017, resulting in significant material and infrastructure damage. For example, in 2017, Hurricane Irma damaged 90% of the island of Barbuda, leading to a complete evacuation (OIM, 2019; CEPAL, 2019a). Add to this the settlement patterns produced by rural-urban migration

making the adverse consequences more concerning. Much of the urban population growth continues in disaster-prone areas in low-elevation coastal zones (CEPAL, 2019b; Martínez Pizarro et al., 2014).

Figure 3



Therefore, assistance and protection have been a challenge for the Caribbean, not only because of insufficient and confusing information on the beneficiaries of humanitarian visas and people in temporary shelters but also because the support in areas such as health and education implemented by governments has been insufficient (OIM, 2019; CEPAL, 2019a). Substantial development of policies related to climate change is thus required.

The second pattern that distinguishes mobility in the Caribbean is the emigration of skilled persons. It records the highest rates in the world and poses challenges. For example, in Jamaica, the emigration of skilled women from the health and education sectors has created labor shortages, and hindered the accumulation of institutional knowledge and knowledge-sharing with less skilled workers. Despite a recent increase in the return migration of retirees to the Caribbean, the decline in highly skilled labor averages 70%. Nevertheless, emigration has also offered opportunities. The most important are remittances, stimulating financial activities, promoting trade and investment, and reducing poverty among migrants and their families. Among the migration policies that have shown positive effects are those of the Jamaican government that seeks to link international migration with development. For example, it has introduced measures that reduce the cost of sending remittances and has adopted international agreements aimed at the diaspora to facilitate labor migration, portability and transfer of pensions, and incentives to invest in Jamaica (CEPAL, 2019a).

South America

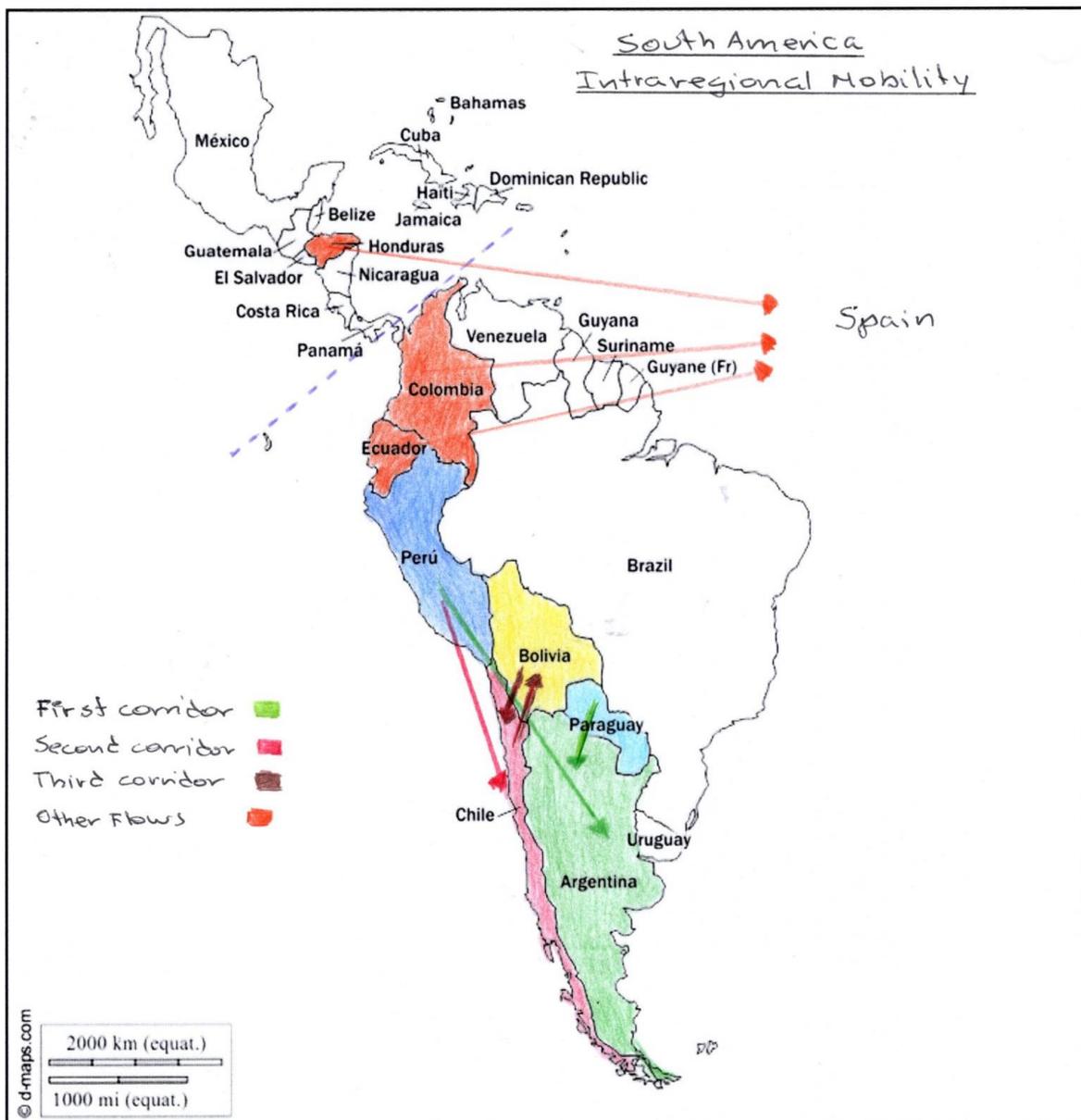
The growth of intra-regional mobility distinguishes this subregion, which places several countries as scenarios of emigration, immigration, transit, and return. Above all stands women mainly engaged in paid domestic work, including caring for children or older adults (Valenzuela, Scuro, and Vaca, 2020; Gonzalez Torralbo, 2013). Historically, this type of work in Latin America has been an essential source of labor, mainly for women from poor, indigenous, and Afro-descendant households. Its roots are linked to slavery, the *hacienda* tradition, and women's work in colonial manor houses, which extended into the twentieth century (Kuznesof, 1989; Hutchinson, 2014). With industrialization and urbanization, their demand gradually increased in the middle classes, in addition to the upper sectors. Their expansion has been such that in the second half of the 20th century, Latin America had the highest proportion of paid female domestic workers in the world (Soto, Soto, González, et al., 2016; Hutchinson, 2014).

Women workers' mobility has grown, and their flow no longer represents a national rural-urban displacement but has also created important international migration flows. Several Mexican and Central American women have the USA as their primary destination, or Mexico in second place (Rojas et al., 2008). Many others from Central America or northern South American countries, such as Honduras, Ecuador, and Colombia, go to Spain (Herrera, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2020). South America, on the other hand, is characterized by women's mobility to neighboring countries. This mobility has shaped the so-called "global care chains" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Gonzalez Torralbo, 2013) and migratory corridors in Latin America, fed by women's mobility from lower income level countries to developed countries or those with higher income levels. Within these chains, there flows a transfer of tasks little appreciated by the local population to women from other countries, who are willing to accept them in exchange for minimal remuneration (Soto et al., 2016; Valenzuela et al., 2020). Care chains have resulted in a widening inequality gap within and between countries. Commonly, domestic and care workers do not have social security coverage and sustain informal contracts, which reduces their bargaining power vis-à-vis their employers. Women depend on the remunerations established by the latter. Socially, the employer-worker relationship is structured intersectionally based on class, race, and ethnic prejudices; their work is not highly valued and is associated with low social status (Herrera, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2020).

Three migration corridors have been identified in this subregion: Peru-Paraguay-Argentina, Peru-Chile, and Bolivia-Chile (see Figure 4). Argentina and Chile have implemented significant measures to improve domestic and care workers' labor and social security, attracting many women from neighboring countries. In the first corridor, Paraguayan women migrate to Argentina. They come from rural areas, are young, and have a low educational level, unlike Peruvian women, who come from cities, have more education (including postgraduate studies), and have held skilled or semi-skilled jobs in their origin country (Messina, 2015; Dobrée, González, and Soto 2015). Usually, Chile has received migrants from neighboring countries. However, recently more countries have added to the flow, such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and, especially, Venezuela. Chile's immigration increase has quadrupled since 1990, and it is among the highest immigration countries, with migrants coming from this subregion (Martínez Pizarro

and Orrego, 2016). The third corridor, from Bolivia to Chile, is distinguished by its circular pattern. Workers migrate in a temporal, repetitive, and cyclical manner and do not seek to settle in Chile, unlike many workers in the first and second corridors. Being uninformed about the rules and benefits linked to obtaining residency and the involved economic costs leads women to opt for circular migration. In addition, it allows them to work relatively close to their homes, see their children, and provide income for their families. However, this situation places them at a disadvantage because the labor relationship is established under extreme vulnerability and risk of abuse and violation of their rights (Leiva and Ross, 2016; Valenzuela et al., 2020).

Figure 4



An understanding of transnational space and transnational families

The definition of the transnational space in the debate about understanding transnational families created by migration has been crucial. This space refers not only to the place of origin and destination of migrants but also to a social space constructed by migrants and their families from the broader conditions that shape their lives. Transnational families construct and reproduce their lives in a deterritorialized manner (Appadurai, 2003; Sorensen, 2008) beyond national borders. Therefore, overcoming the so-called "methodological nationalism" and the idea that the nuclear family is the only referent guiding family construction and reconstruction is crucial (Levitt, 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Several studies have questioned the idea that family separation due to migration generates mainly adverse and disintegrative effects (marital abandonment, separation, divorce, teenage pregnancy, and poor school performance, among others). This view does not consider other effects of mobility; the capacity of families and their members to cope with the constraints they face in their daily interactions. The multiple ways in which migration transforms, reorients, and changes the order of priorities in family relationships; and how spousal and parent-child relationships move into the transnational social space (Pribilsky, 2004; Appadurai, 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Herrera, 2008; Sorensen, 2008).

The transnational space involves high complexity. Since family life occurs in various settings or territories, different normative, organizational, political, economic, institutional, symbolic, linguistic, and socio-cultural traditions are involved in their formation. To manage this complexity, families and their members evaluate the available resources at their disposal and decide their migratory strategies and the family arrangements that suit their needs. Based on these, they create a sense of unity and collective well-being and stay together (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). In the decision-making process, not only members of the nuclear family are considered, but also members of kinship or extended family networks and even the community.

Decision-making regarding mobility implies that family structures and arrangements, their views about gender and intergenerational relations, family roles, and parenting may be transformed, reoriented, and negotiated among members of the nuclear family and the kinship or extended family network. Redefinition may involve considerable tensions and conflicts. It is common for the family structure to change, but some traditional views and gendered attributions of family responsibilities remain unchanged. Therefore, transnational families must mediate existing inequalities among their members, including differences in access to mobility, individual and family resources, different types of capital, and lifestyles (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Sorensen, 2008; Bustamante, 2014).

It is essential to consider that gender inequality in family relations pre-exists before migration. Thus, it will likely influence transnational family formation in the newly settled destination. The literature has insisted that migration social networks and transnational families are not necessarily egalitarian spaces (Herrera, 2008; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). In fact, despite the changes achieved towards greater freedom and autonomy for women and more egalitarian relationships, life in this space continues to be profoundly gendered. Thus, flows in the transnational space include economic resources and the so-

called social remittances (Levitt, 2001; Bustamante, 2014), which circulate back and forth. Social remittances are, among others, different norms, values, and beliefs around gender relations, parenting, and care. They are especially significant for the experience of migrant women as mothers, wives, partners, or relatives of male family members since patriarchal patterns of family organization generally prevail in Latin American societies. Women (and men) are pressured through informal social control mechanisms to fulfill their traditional obligations as caregiving mothers, wives or partners, and daughters in the destination country. Gossip, for example, is a powerful informal control mechanism (Debry, 2009; Pribilsky, 2004; Sorensen, 2008; Bustamante, 2014) that may affect the reputation, especially of women in their families and communities. In this sense, rather than allowing women to use migration as a means to obtain relief from family constraints, transnational ties may confine them to traditional gendered practices (Debry, 2009; Bustamante, 2014).

Extensive literature has documented how familism has historically characterized Latin American and Caribbean societies and is part of kinship's cultural and organizational baggage. It has shown the variety of supports and exchanges between family nuclei and the kinship or extended family network (Esteinou, 2008). Familism has moved to the transnational space and has become a social remittance insofar as it is an organizational mechanism of support (economic, emotional, and care) at a distance. One of the organizational forms it takes is the activated multigenerational links through which other types of social remittances also flow. Many studies have documented how today, transnational families rely more on them to provide support, especially in parenting and caregiving tasks (Bengston, 2001; Bustamante, 2014; Romo, 2008; Barros, 2006; Mummert, 2019). Multigenerational ties thus represent a latent network of kinship connections ready to serve as a safety net and as an alternative resource of love, support, and comfort for children's well-being. It is an essential resource for migrant single mothers with limited resources.

However, this multigenerational support is also marked by gender differences, as grandmothers primarily assume the care of grandchildren when their parents migrate (Mummert, 2019). Their role (and that of grandfathers) is crucial for reinforcing the culture and identity of the native country. Through conversations with their grandchildren and in everyday life, they convey language, values, and customs and promote the development of a sense of belonging to the native culture. At the same time, grandchildren learn about the destination country's culture through their relationship with their migrant parents. Likewise, grandparents can provide emotional support, for example, when children's parents migrate or for integration and maintenance of ties at a distance (Bustamante, 2014).

However, familism expressed in multigenerational relationships often implies tensions and conflicts. Furthermore, they may activate - as we saw above - informal social control mechanisms according to expectations and values associated with traditional gender roles. Geographic distance, legal restrictions, and different expectations and values between grandparents-parents-grandchildren can generate emotionally charged situations. If not properly managed, they can weaken grandparent-parent relationships and erode bonds with grandchildren (Bustamante, 2014). Also, the resources available to grandmothers may be limited and hinder their tasks, all of which produce tensions. It is the case, for example, of several Guatemalan grandmothers (Rojas et al., 2008) who are illiterate and face difficulties

guiding their grandchildren in their school performance. Other inequalities intersect, such as ethnic/racial or rural-urban backgrounds. For instance, indigenous grandmothers receive fewer remittances than non-indigenous and have less decision-making power because they are subject to male authority figures in their family and community (Escobar, 2008).

The role of family reunification migration policies in shaping transnational families

We have seen that poverty, labor market characteristics, and social and family violence have been crucial structural factors driving migration and transnational family formation. Migration policies have also greatly affected transnational families because they have been restrictive and tightened, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The USA, Spain, and several Latin American governments have significantly decreased migration by closing their borders, placing stricter controls, or trying to reverse it through massive deportations (Canales and Rojas, 2018; Bogado, 2021; Cueto, García and Burgueño, 2019).

However, it is also necessary to consider the fundamental role of family reunification migration policies, as they establish the terms under which migrants and their family members are allowed to enter and settle in destination countries. Indeed, there is a close relationship between policies, migratory trajectories, and transnational families (Herrera, 2008). These regulations are assessed by families when a member wishes to migrate and make decisions. These policies may facilitate or restrict migratory flows and the conditions under which they occur, strengthening, hindering, or weakening families. Family reunification policies can contribute to their well-being or expose them to processes of exclusion and risk.

Family reunification policies have surpassed labor policies for some time and regularly molded people's mobility. However, there are some differences between countries. For example, in the USA (the preferred destination country for Latin American and Caribbean migrants), these policies have been at the center of immigration legislation, and many visas have been granted for this purpose. However, the system is stagnating and collapsing due to the high demand. On the other hand, many requirements must be met for family reunification to be approved. Considering that many migrants send remittances to their families and rely economically on themselves, it is very likely that they will continue to have limited resources to meet the requirements and thus materialize the reunification. Therefore, the option of the irregular route, such as hiring a *coyote*, may be considered more effective for emigration than requests for family reunification (Herrera, 2008; Martínez Pizarro et al., 2016).

The European Union countries have viewed the family reunification policy as part of social cohesion policies for the last two decades. The family is seen as the vehicle for integration, cushioning cultural shocks and supporting to face the migrant harsh work conditions. However, this rhetoric has contrasted with a practice of ever-tighter cutbacks and restrictions. Indeed, apart from family reunification, asylum, and service sector work contracts, legal migration in most countries has been virtually closed since the 1970s. In recent years, most labor positions demanded in Europe concentrated in the service sector, especially in domestic work, including children and elderly care, activities considered primarily female. This explains why Latin American women far outnumber men and helps

to understand the growing feminization of migratory flows (Sorensen, 2008; Herrera, 2008).

Spain is the second destination for Latin Americans migrating out of the region and has followed European guidelines. Although it has also granted a considerable proportion of visas for family reunification to Latin American migrants, especially women (coming, for example, from Ecuador, Colombia, and Honduras), their vulnerable economic conditions challenge complying with the requirements for the approval of their applications. In addition, Spanish legislation establishes that the right to family reunification is lost when children reach the age of majority. For this reason, in contrast to the USA case, migratory project strategies are built around this policy, and transnational motherhood becomes a transitory strategy, especially for single-parent families headed by women (Herrera, 2008; Sorensen, 2008). To access residency and legal status, some Latin American women, for example, marry a European man or a migrant with legalized status because this facilitates family reunification. This involves new relationships and transnational family structures (Sorensen, 2008).

Stricter immigration policies in the U.S, or the administrative collapse when there is the possibility of reunification, have led to the stabilization of transnational families. Moreover, reunification at the destination is no longer a goal or is achieved by clandestine means. Consequently, transnational multigenerational motherhood, fatherhood, childhood, and multigenerational parenting have become more durable. Often, they imply forced arrangements (Sorensen, 2008; Bustamante, 2014). In fact, migrants, before leaving, already know that family projects involve the formation of new family arrangements, and they are experienced as part of the life cycle (Herrera, 2008).

For some transnational families, especially when the woman has migrated, leaving the children behind, there are several reasons why family reunification may no longer be the desired goal. Some include the material and emotional hardships of reunion, the resulting family conflicts - especially intergenerational -, the limited resources for women to cope with, the arrival of new children in the destination country, or when new partners emerge. Some of the resulting outcomes are family structures that are both presential and transnational, where affective and material ties may be unstable. Furthermore, the legal recognition of stepchildren from other nationalities may be obstructed (Herrera, 2008). In many cases, the native country ceases to be the only point of reference, which may weaken the desire for reunification.

Despite all these structural and institutional constraints and limited options, it is important to conclude by emphasizing that migration, and the transnational families created in this process, have increasingly become informal social protection mechanisms. Migration is no longer primarily considered a strategy for social ascent but has become a forced and self-protection type (Salazar, 2017; Salazar and Voorend, 2019). Likewise, transnational families are protection mechanisms that rapidly generate solidarity mechanisms to absorb the impacts that originated from the transformations derived from migration (Escobar, 2008).

Conclusiones

With the information presented in this paper, we can conclude that the mobility patterns that stand out in the LAC region are the increase in emigration from Mexico, the countries of northern Central America, and the Caribbean, primarily to the US, and intra-regional migration in South America. These flows significantly impacted families, their forms of organization, and reproduction. Most of them show ambivalent outcomes, although we can highlight some of their positive and negative features.

Remittances that migrants send to their family members and relatives left behind are the most important positive outcome. They have helped to counteract poverty, even during the pandemic, and boosted local and transnational development. Family organization and kinship networks at the transnational level have also been positive as informal mechanisms of social protection and safety nets, especially for single families. They express the solidarity and familism that have characterized these societies and can be understood as part of the social remittances we pointed out. Through them, multigenerational parenting has been activated, and they have been an essential emotional and care support. However, an adverse effect of the above is that this familism and solidarity often rests on and reproduces gender and intergenerational inequalities.

As a negative aspect, we can conclude that a substantial part of the migratory flows is due to the precarious economic conditions and situations of social violence, be it gendered at the domestic level and in the social and political context of the origin countries. Mobility has thus tended to be forced and is not seen as a voluntary and informed option. On the other hand, the “Caravans” or migrant massive movements have shown the institutional capacity shortcomings to manage these flows orderly and protect migrants’ rights. Furthermore, the increasingly restrictive measures, far from being a viable solution, have promoted illegal and disorderly migration, the growth of criminal organizations linked to human trafficking, and have given rise to humanitarian crises that have accentuated the social and psychological suffering of migrants and the vulnerability of families.

A concerning issue is the migration of adolescents from the north of Central America. As the legislation of their countries authorizes their condition as workers, they migrate looking for options. This situation exposes them both in their countries and destination countries to more significant disadvantages and vulnerabilities that violate their rights.

Recommendations

Our recommendations align with The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection published last June (The White House, 2022a, 2022b), signed by 21 countries in the Americas. It represents a significant effort to “strengthen national, regional and hemispheric efforts to create the conditions for a safe, orderly development, human and regular migration, and strengthen international protection and cooperation frameworks” (The White House, 2022a). The measures are articulated in four pillars aimed to promote: 1) stability and assistance to the communities; 2) expansion of legal avenues; 3) human management of migration; and 4) coordinated emergency response. Considering these pillars, the Declaration proposes a shared approach to reduce and manage irregular migration and intends to work to:

- “Convene multilateral development banks, international financial institutions and traditional and non-traditional donors to review financial support instruments for countries hosting migrant populations and facing other migration challenges without prejudice to existing financing priorities and programs”.
- “Improve regional cooperation mechanisms for law enforcement cooperation, information sharing, protection-sensitive border management, visa regimes and regularization processes, as appropriate and accordance with national legislation”.
- “Strengthen and expand temporary labor migration pathways, as feasible, that benefit countries across the region, including through new programs promoting connections between employers and migrant workers, robust safeguards for ethical recruitment, and legal protections for workers’ rights”.
- “Improve access to public and private services for all migrants, refugees, and stateless persons to promote their full social and economic inclusion in host communities”.
- “Expand access to regular pathways for migrants and refugees to include family reunifications options where appropriate and feasible, in accordance with national legislation” (The White House, 2022a).

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Annex

Table 1. Latin America and the Caribbean: immigrant and emigrant population with respect to the total population, by country of residence and of birth 2019

Region/Country	Total population	Immigrants		Emigrants	
		Number	% of Total pop	Number	% of Total pop
North America					
Mexico	127,575,529	1,060,707	0,8	11,796,178	9,2
Central America					
Costa Rica	5,047,561	417,768	8,3	150,400	3,0
El Salvador	6,453,553	42,617	0,7	1,600,739	24,8
Guatemala	17,581,472	80,421	0,5	1,205,644	6,9
Honduras	9,746,117	38,933	0,4	800,707	8,2
Nicaragua	6,545,502	42,172	0,6	682,865	10,4
The Caribbean					
Cuba	11,333,483	4,886	0,0	1,654,684	14,6
Haiti	11,263,077	18,756	0,2	1,585,681	14,1
Jamaica	2,948,279	23,468	0,8	1,111,021	37,7
Puerto Rico	2,933,408	266,828	9,1	2,007,347	68,4
Dominican Rep.	10,738,958	567,648	5,3	1,558,668	14,5
Trinidad & Tob.	1,394,973	59,249	4,2	334,304	24,0
South America					
Argentina	44,789,677	2,212,879	4,9	1,013,414	2,3
Bolivia	11,513,100	156,114	1,4	878,211	7,6
Chile	18,952,038	939,992	5,0	650,151	3,4
Colombia	50,339,443	1,142,319	2,3	2,869,032	5,7
Ecuador	17,373,662	381,507	2,2	1,183,685	6,8
Paraguay	7,044,636	160,519	2,3	871,638	12,4
Peru	32,510,453	782,169	2,4	1,512,920	4,7
Venezuela	28,515,829	1,375,690	4,8	2,519,780	8,8

Source: Information retrieved from CEPAL (2019a: 163)

