

**Sociodemographic and Migratory Factors in the Economic and Social  
Reintegration in Tijuana of Aging Mexican Deportees****Factores sociodemográficos y migratorios en la reintegración económica y social en Tijuana  
de los deportados mexicanos envejecidos**Alejandra Santiago Vargas,<sup>1</sup> Rafael Alarcón Acosta,<sup>2</sup> & Luis Enrique Calva Sánchez<sup>3</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The massive deportation of Mexicans from the United States, including aging adults, has shocked the lives of millions of families. The main purpose of this article is to analyze the sociodemographic and migratory factors that influence the economic and social reintegration of aging deported Mexicans. For this purpose, a mixed methodology is used, combining descriptive statistics from the Survey of Migration at Mexico's Northern Border (EMIF Norte) with five semi-structured interviews about the life histories of older adults who now reside in Tijuana. The main findings of this study reveal that the longer the residence in the United States, the greater the legal consequences of deportation. In addition, strong social networks in both countries and command of the English language positively affect integration. On the other hand, advanced age, low educational attainment and a chronic disease such as diabetes hinder this process.

Keywords: 1. migration, 2. deportation, 3. aging, 4. Tijuana, 5. United States.

## RESUMEN

La deportación masiva de mexicanos de Estados Unidos hacia México, incluidas las personas adultas mayores, ha conmocionado la vida de millones de familias. El objetivo central de este artículo es analizar los factores sociodemográficos y migratorios que influyen en la reintegración económica y social de los mexicanos deportados envejecidos. Para este fin, se utiliza una metodología mixta, combinando estadísticas descriptivas provenientes de la Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México con cinco entrevistas semiestructuradas sobre las historias de vida de adultos mayores que ahora residen en Tijuana. Los hallazgos principales de este estudio revelan que entre más larga fue la residencia en Estados Unidos, mayores son las consecuencias legales de la deportación. Por otra parte, las redes sociales fuertes en ambos países y el dominio del idioma inglés afectan positivamente la integración; por el contrario, la edad avanzada, una escolaridad baja y una enfermedad crónica, como la diabetes, obstruyen este proceso.

Palabras clave: 1. migración, 2. deportación, 3. envejecimiento, 4. Tijuana, 5. Estados Unidos.

Received on: October 16, 2020

Accepted on: March 3, 2021

Online publication: November 30, 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

The massive formal deportation of Mexicans from the United States, including aging adults, has shattered the lives of millions of families. This process started to grow rapidly after the attacks on September 11, 2001, because the Congress had already facilitated this process by passing a number of laws, in particular, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, IIRIRA, in 1996.

A foreigner may be deported after being detained when trying to enter the country without legal documentation, this is also the case for a legal permanent resident if he or she is accused of committing a serious crime. The machinery to deport foreigners, which is part of the immigration act, includes returns and removals. Returns relate to individuals detained while trying to cross the border into the US without proper documentation, or when they are considered inadmissible. Removal is applied to immigrants accused of committing a crime; including undocumented illegal reentry, which has legal consequences in the future.

According to Meissner, Kerwin, Chishti and Bergeron (2013), increasingly, there are more noncitizen individuals experiencing removal after the recent interaction between the criminal justice system and immigration law enforcement. The list of noncitizens includes legal permanent residents, temporary visitors and undocumented individuals. The hardening of the judiciary system toward noncitizens began in 1988 with the passing of a number of laws such as the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996, followed by IIRIRA in the same year. As a result, there are now five different crime categories, which in case of a conviction, may be used to deport noncitizens: crimes of moral turpitude, controlled substance offenses, firearms or destructive devices offenses, crimes of domestic violence or crimes against children and aggravated felonies. Many of these crimes may be retroactively prosecuted (Meissner *et al.*, 2013).

At the beginning of his administration, on January 25, 2017, former president Donald Trump released an executive order titled *Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States* (The White House, 2017), by means of which he expanded the priorities that make any noncitizen removable from the US. Among them one finds not only those who have been convicted for a criminal offense but also accused of, those who have participated in fraud related to their representation regarding official affairs, public-benefit programs abusers, those who did not leave the country after being removed, and those who “in the judgement of an immigration officer, otherwise pose a risk to public safety or national security” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017b, s/n).

Likewise, in 2019, the Trump’s administration extended expedite removal to the interior of the US and reactivated the Secure Community Program, which Barack Obama suspended in his administration. An analysis of data from the US Department of Homeland Security (2019) reveals that as a consequence of this, the US government formally deported more than four million four hundred thousand Mexican citizens between 1998 and 2018. Among the millions of deportees, many were expelled to the city of Tijuana, in Baja California, and a large part of them has decided

to settle in the border city, which neighbors the city of San Diego, in California. According to data from *Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México*, EMIF Norte [Survey of Migration at Mexico's Northern Border] (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte *et al.*, 2020), in the years 2017-2019, 40 percent of the total number of aging deportees was sent to Tijuana.

A greater effort on the part of US immigration authorities to remove noncitizens puts the stability of thousands of people at risk and affects those at ages when it is more complicated to restart a life project, as it is the case of aging adults. The main objective of this article is to analyze the sociodemographic and migratory factors that influence the economic and social reintegration of Mexicans who were formally deported from the United States when they were 50 years of age and older.

In order to reach this goal, a mixed methodology is used. The quantitative part focuses on the analysis of EMIF Norte to estimate the annual number of events of this aging deported population and its percentage in the total flow for the period from 2007 to 2019. Subsequently, from a three-year database, the individuals' sociodemographic and migratory characteristics as well as their removal processes are analyzed. The qualitative analysis of the sociodemographic and migratory characteristics is based on five semi-structured interviews on the life histories of aging deported persons conducted between February and April 2020, to determine the extent at which their economic and social reintegration in Tijuana has been successful or limited.

In addition to this introduction, the article is composed of three other sections. In the first section, the theories that are useful to explain the deportation of aging persons and their social and economic reintegration to Mexico are reviewed. The second section includes the sociodemographic and migration profile of the deported aging individuals based on EMIF Norte data. In the third section, the five semi-structured interviews with aging deportees who seek to start a new life in Tijuana are analyzed. Finally, in the conclusions, the main findings and their theoretical implications are underscored.

#### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF AGING DEPORTED PERSONS

In this article, we have as a central objective to analyze the deportation and social and economic integration of migrants formally deported from the United States at the beginning of old age, when they were 50 years of age and older, by examining their sociodemographic and migratory backgrounds. González and Ham (2007) consider that people from 50 to 64 years of age are transitioning to old age and most of them are in good physical health, they are able-bodied, self-sufficient and in productive conditions. We want to understand what these aging adults do to rebuild their lives after being separated from their families and the places where they lived for many years. If aging is accompanied, among other things, by diminished autonomy, loss of economic capacity and health deterioration by chronic and degenerative diseases (Ham, 1998), deportation implies a great challenge for this population.

It is likely that due to their long residence in the US, most of the aging deportees do not have the benefit of a pension in Mexico, as they are unable to meet the requirements of *Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*, IMSS [Mexican Social Security Institute] (IMSS, 2019). Moreover, although some aging migrants may be entitled to a pension in the US because of their long labor career under a legal immigration status, the Social Security Administration states that after deportation, individuals lose this benefit (Social Security Administration, 2020).

The aging deportees share the situation of other Mexicans who remained in Mexico, where a significant proportion of them is still working at advanced ages due to lack of economic security coverage at old age maybe because they do not receive a pension, or if they do, the amount is meager (Montoya and Montes de Oca, 2009). In this sense, aging adults tend to look for family support, but they do not stop toiling and carry on working under precarious conditions (Garay Villegas and Montes de Oca Zavala, 2011). In addition that the incomes are low for the aging population in general, they are different for men and women. For men, incomes come from governmental benefits, pensions and labor wages; while for women, these mainly come from governmental benefits, donations and pensions (Nava Bolaños, Ham, & Ramírez López, 2016).

What theories can be used to analyze the economic and social integration of migrants formally deported from the US to Tijuana at the beginning of old age? It is necessary to adapt the theories of integration or assimilation as it is called in the US and was designed to analyze this process in immigrants born outside the destination country (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gordon, 1964). For this reason, we consider aging persons deported to Tijuana as *new immigrants*. This is indeed a methodological strategy as deportees from the US are Mexican citizens for they were born in this country.

According to Alarcón, Escala and Odgers (2016), the theories of social and economic integration shall start from the relationship between the migrant who “incorporates into” and which “is incorporated by the receiving society (Shnapper, 2007). According to Pastor and Ortiz (2009, p.1), the integration of immigrants may be defined as “improved economic mobility, enhanced civic participation and the openness of the receiving society toward immigrants”. For this reason, it is required to examine the attitudes and particular actions of the receiving society to effectively integrate immigrants. It is well-known that deportation confers a stigma that causes rejection in sectors of Mexican society, which is aggravated when it is combined with the systematic discrimination against the elderly.

The analysis of the migrants’ economic integration must comprise labor market integration, the creation of businesses in the United States and Mexico and real-estate ownership in both countries (Alarcón et al., 2016). Given Mexico’s economic context, which has noticeably aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the deportees’ advanced ages, formal employment is difficult to find, in this way the most vulnerable deportees, because of advanced age, health status or poor schooling, can only be hired as employees, or else become self-employed in the informal sector of the economy.

To analyze the economic and social reintegration of aging deported individuals it is fundamental to analyze their sociodemographic characteristics such as age, schooling, health status, including addictions such as alcoholism, the presence or not of family members and access to social networks. Among migration characteristics, their experience and labor skills, migration status in the US, time of residence in this country, the causes and legal consequences of deportation, as well as their future plans must be examined.

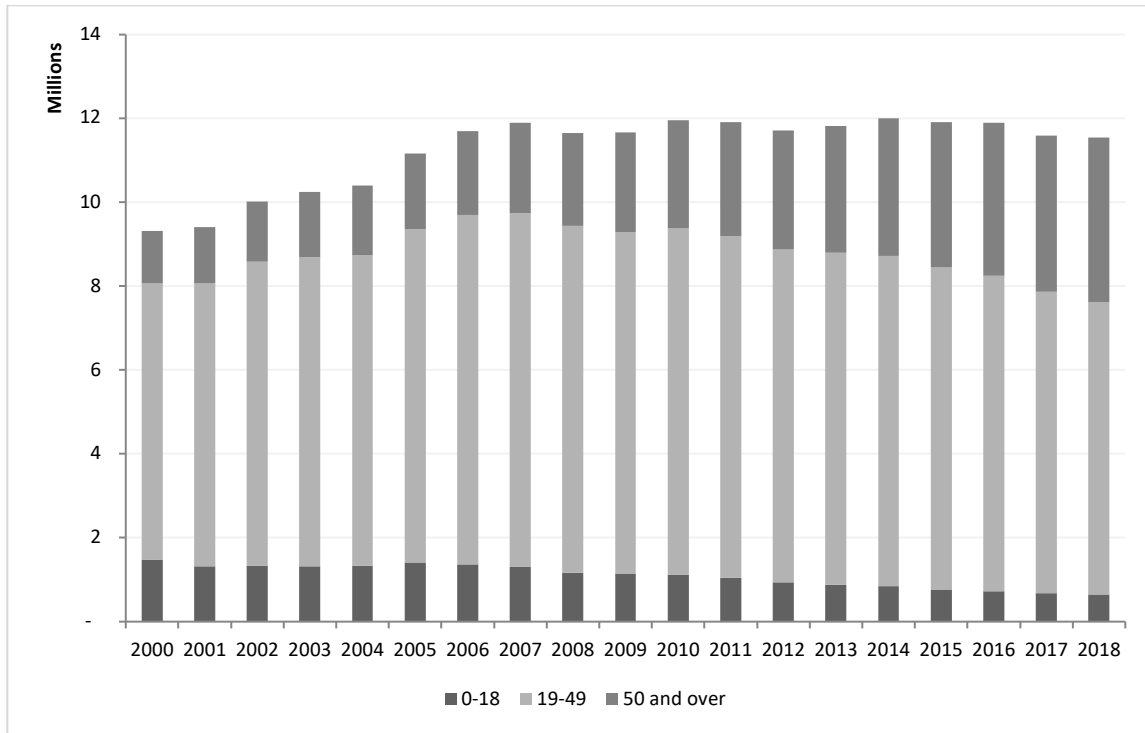
This research uses a qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews in which the life histories of the aging deportees are reconstructed, while the most important elements in their trajectories are emphasized. To this end, the paradigm of life course is very useful. It is defined as the interdisciplinary study of human life development by means of the conceptual relationship between biological and psychological development processes, life development regarding social and cultural regulations and the sociohistorical context (Lalivé d'Épinay, Bickel, Cavalli, & Spini, 2011). This approach has three conceptual analytical tools. Trajectory refers to a path over the course of life that may vary, change direction, degree and proportion. The individuals' transitions refer to movements in various spheres such as family configurations, school completion and incorporation and departure from the labor market. Finally, turning points refer to major modifications or changes in the course of life (Blanco, 2011).

#### MEXICAN PERSONS 50 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER DEPORTED FROM THE UNITED STATES

The United States is the main destination of international migrants in the world. In 2019, this country had a population of 327 million people, out of which 50.6 million were immigrants, and from them, 11.5 million were born in Mexico, according to our own estimations based on the American Community Survey (ACS) (Ruggles et al., 2020). In previous decades, the Mexican population quickly grew from 4.5 million in 1990 to close to 12 million in 2007. However, as noticed in Figure 1, this number stagnated and even decreased in some years, in such manner that over the second decade of the XXI century, the number of Mexican immigrants oscillated between 11.5 and 12 million.

The stagnation in the number of Mexicans in the US produced the zero-sum immigration scenario, however, this did not mean the absence of immigration from Mexico to the United States. The zero-sum scenario is the result of several factors. On one side, it is explained by a higher return, as the number of Mexicans and their children who moved from the US toward Mexico between 2005 and 2010 accounted for 1.4 million, almost twice as much as those who returned between 1995 and 2000. Simultaneously, emigration decreased, as only 1.4 million Mexicans emigrated to the US between 2005 and 2010, in comparison with the three million who did so between 1995 and 2000 (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). These changes are explained, among other factors, by the sustained increase of border enforcement by the end of 1993 and in 2008, the emergence of the global recession which affected the employment of Mexicans in the US (Massey, Pren, & Durand, 2009).

Figure 1. Mexican Immigrants Residing in the US by Age Group, 2000-2018



Source: own elaboration with data from *American Community Survey* from 2000 to 2018 (Ruggles et al., 2020).

One of the effects of the decline of emigration to the US is the aging of the age structure of Mexicans who live in this country. In Figure 1, it is shown that in 2000, about 13 percent was 50 years of age and older; by 2018, this percentage almost triplicates as it reaches 34 percent. The above implies that in this last year, there were about 3.9 million Mexican immigrants who were 50 years and older. Within this group, there were few changes in the age distribution between 2001 and 2018. Most of them, are between 50 and 59 years (56.7% and 52 %). Nearly a quarter are between 60 and 69 years of age (27% and 28.6%), and the rest are 70 years and older. However, the difference is that at present, the population has been living longer in the US; in 2001, 13.1 percent had been living there for 10 years or less; while in 2018, this percentage sinks to 5.4 percent. Conversely, most of them has lived in the US for 21 years or longer (81.5%). This is perhaps because there is less migratory circulation, which is identified with data from EMIF Norte, specifically, with the flow from the south toward the US. As the number of events of Mexican individuals who reach the border with the aim of entering into this country changed from 748 000 to only 46 000 between 2008 and 2017. These estimations are ours, based on data from EMIF Norte (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, et al., 2020).

Many Mexican individuals who are aging in the US benefitted from the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* of 1986, becoming legal permanent residents and later, in some cases, naturalized citizens. They thus escaped from the potential reach of the deportation system (Massey, Pren & Durand, 2009). Albeit, it is important to point out that naturalization is not easy to obtain. For

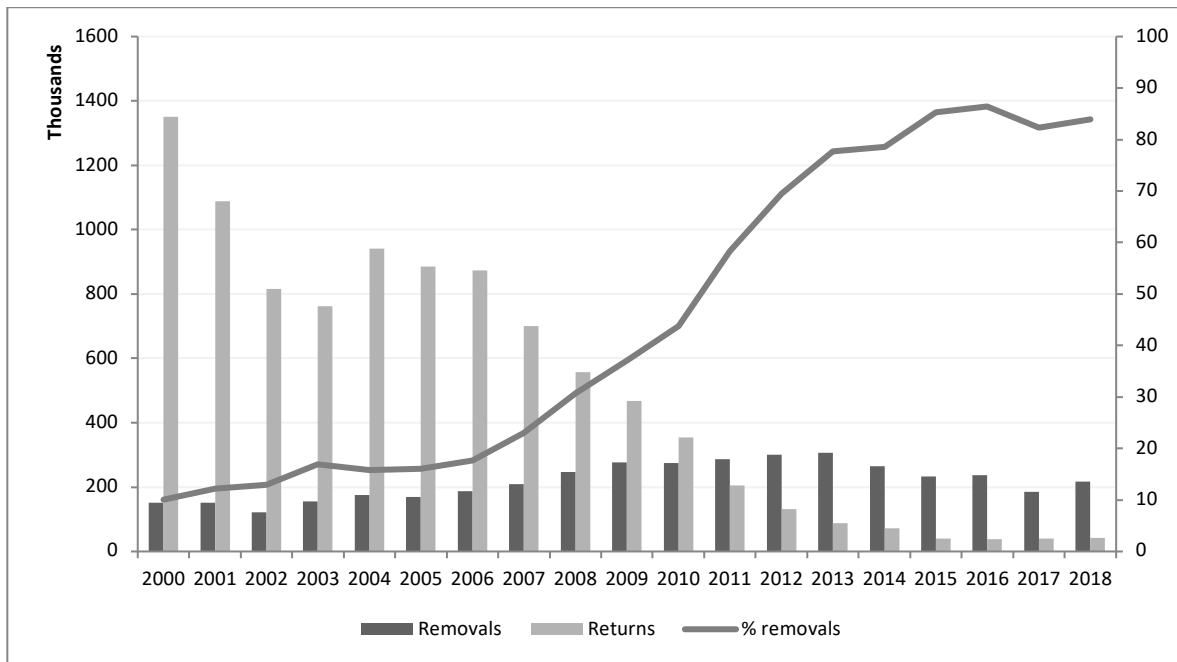
example, between 1999 and 2004, there were 3.6 million naturalization applications and about 1.3 million were rejected, some of which were immediately turned over to deportation. (Kanstroom, 2007). According to data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2019), for the fiscal year 2018, 11 percent of the 810 548 applications was rejected.

Mexicans are the main immigrant group that becomes naturalized: 131 977 in the fiscal year 2018. It is also the largest immigrant group and the one that takes the longest to go from legal permanent residence to naturalization: in 2018, the median was 11 years (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Early in the XXI century, almost a half of Mexican migrants 50 years of age and older did not have US citizenship (52.2%), and in spite of some variations, this percentage continued up to 2018 (own estimations based on ACS). Based on the above, it can be expected that about half of Mexicans 50 years of age and older may be deported even if they have legal permanent residence.

The massive formal deportation of noncitizens experienced an important growth as of 1996, when IIRIRA was approved by US Congress and had a differentiated enforcement in the presidential administrations of Clinton, Bush, Obama and Trump. As verifiable with data from the US Department of Homeland Security (2019), there was a prevalence of returns in the Clinton's administration: 108 700 removals and 1.42 million returns (averages of fiscal years in the presidential term). Removals rose during the Bush's administration (251 500 removals and 1.03 million returns), however, removals increased even more during the Obama's term (382 900 removals, and 273 300 returns). Despite Trump's threats, removals decreased in 2017 (288 000 removals and 100 700 returns).

The most relevant fact in the increase in the number of formal deportations is to point out that it will be more complicated for these individuals to reenter the United States. If they are detained crossing the border illegally, they might be incarcerated for a number of years.. It is important to point out that, in the case of deportations of Mexicans, removals prevail at present (Figure 2). In 2000, 90 percent of deportations of Mexican migrants were returns, which has minor legal consequences in the future for migrants who try to re-enter the US. However, in 2018, the contrary is observed, for about 83 percent of the deported Mexicans followed a removal process with serious legal consequences for those who try to cross without documents into the US.

Figure 2. Number of Events of Mexican Immigrants Deported by US Immigration Authorities, by Type of Deportation, Fiscal Years 2000-2018



Source: own elaboration based on data from US Department of Homeland Security (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2018).

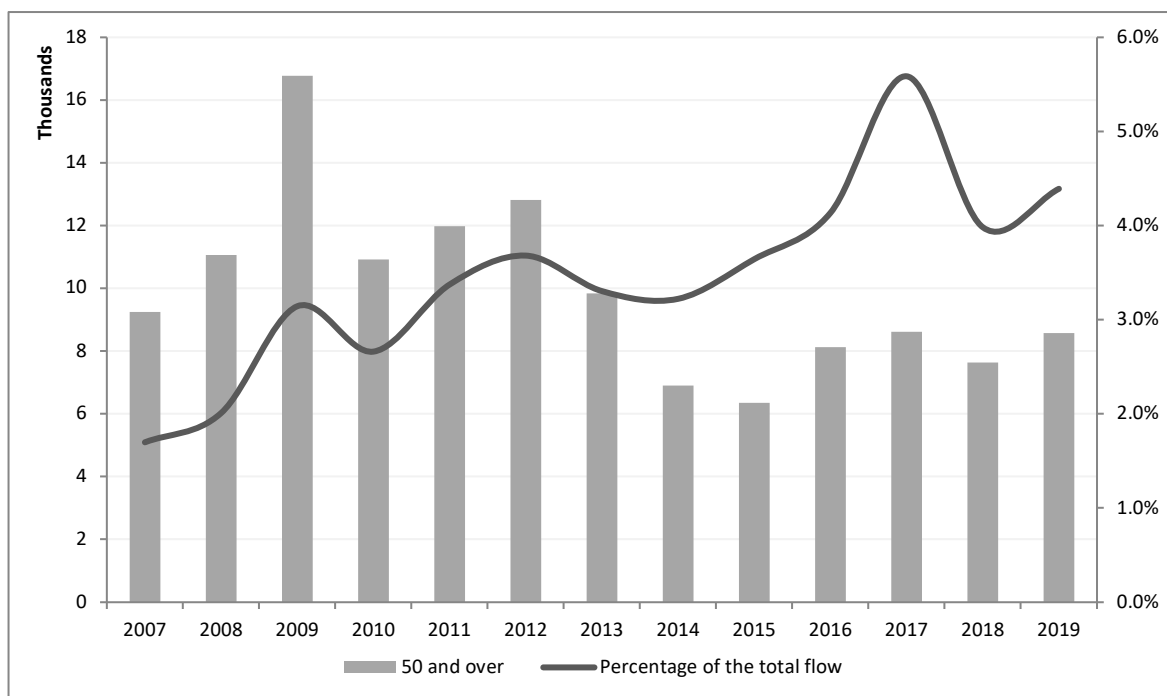
To identify the presence of aging persons, 50 years and older, among the Mexican population deported from the US, the Flujo de Devueltos of EMIF Norte was analyzed (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020). The annual number of events of this population and its percentage of the total flow for the years 2007-2019 were calculated. Subsequently, from a joint database for the years 2017 to 2019, we analyzed the characteristics of the individuals and their deportation processes. We decided to use three years to increase the sample size. In the database for these three years, we identified a set of 437 events associated with the deportation of the population of 50 years and older. Due to the above, it must be understood that these data represent the average situation for the set of events observed in this period. In addition, for analytical and comparison purposes, we created two groups according to the age of the migrants (from 18 to 49 and 50 or more). We also created other two groups, according to the duration of the last stay in the United States (less than a year and one year or more).

Data from the survey refer to events recorded within a period of time, a figure that is usually higher than the number of people who participate in the flow. However, in the present context, the probability of a person to partake in the flow more than once within a short period of time is low. For example, according to data for 2019, only 10 percent of the events corresponds to individuals who over the last 12 months were returned more than once.



Bearing the previously described methodological aspects in mind, Figure 3 shows the annual numbers of events of aging population (50 years and older) and the percentage that these individuals represent in the total flow. The results show that the phenomenon has decreased in absolute numbers. Early in the period, the annual amount reached more than 16 000 events, that is to say, almost twice as much as in recent years. This decline is partially explained by the general tendency of expulsions of Mexicans from the US, mainly because the flow of those who seek to cross the border without documents has decreased. Nevertheless, the decline in the aging population group is not so steep: if we compare the average of the three first years and that of the last three, we can observe that the general flow decreased 67 percent, whereas the number of aging population events dropped only 33 percent. Another way to account for the previous behavior is the increase in the percentage that the aging population group represents in the total flow. In 2007, it was 1.7 percent; by 2019, it had increased to 4.4 percent, and in 2017 it reached 5.6 percent (see Figure 3). What these figures show is that the deportation of the aging population is a phenomenon that may continue and even increase because a portion of these migrants already resides in the United States and, as previously explained, their percentage in the age structure of the Mexican population in the US has increased.

Figure 3. Number of Events of Aging Mexican Immigrants Deported by US Immigration Authorities, 2007-2019



Source: own elaboration with data from Emif Norte from 2007 to 2019 (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020).

The profile of the migrants deported from the US (see Table 1) shows that it mainly comprises men, principally in the case of events of individuals who spent a year or longer in the United States;

this is the case for the aging population and also for those under 50 years. Among the aging population with stays under a year, there are 81.1 percent of events of men, while 91.4 percent for those with stays longer than a year. For the population under 49 years, these percentages increase to 88.7 and 94.5, respectively. It is noteworthy that the percentage of men is very high, mainly in events associated with lengthy stays; that is to say, persons who already live in the US, this implies that there is a higher proportion of men among noncitizens or because of their activities they are more susceptible to be deported. This difference has been analyzed by Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013), who found a disproportionate concentration of working-class Latino men among deportees, particularly engaged in occupations affected by the 2008 global financial recession such as manufacturing and construction.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Mexican Immigrants Deported by U.S. Authorities according to Age and Duration of Stay in the U.S., 2017-2019

		Age groups and time of stay in the U.S.			
		18 to 49 years		50 years and older	
		Less than a year	More than a year	Less than a year	More than a year
Sex (%)	Man	88.7	94.5	81.1	91.6
	Woman	11.3	5.5	18.9	8.4*
Passed or attended a year in school (%)	Yes	97.2	98	85.9	85
	No	2.8	2	14.1*	15*
Can read and write a message (%)	Yes	97.9	99	90.7	93.4
	No	2.1	1	9.3*	6.6*
English proficiency Level (%)	Very well or average	11.2	55.7	19.8	55.8
	Does not speak or not well	88.8	44.3	80.2	44.2

\* NB: Sample with fewer than 30 cases.

Source: own elaboration with data from EMIF Norte from 2017 to 2019 (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020)

After being expelled to Mexico, these persons will have to afford their basic needs, either asking for support from their relatives or friends, nongovernmental organizations or looking for a job on their own, for this reason, it is relevant to find out the tools that are useful for them when looking for a job such as English-language command and schooling. In regards to education, it is noticeable that among the aging population, basic literacy (being able to read and write a note) is almost 10 percent. Concurring with this result, it is noticed that about 15 percent of these individuals did not pass any grade in formal education. Among the younger migrants, these percentages noticeably decrease, which is explained by the generation divides in education access hence, this variable

shows a scenario of greater disadvantage for the aging population, in case they intend to incorporate into the labor market in Mexico.

As for English proficiency a finding that may seem contrary to the previous one is observed. In comparison with the younger population, the aging population declares more often that they speak English well or average. Among those who had a stay of less than a year in the United States, 19 percent declares that they speak English well or average. Among those who stayed more than a year, this percentage reaches 55.8.

In some cases, deportation from the United States entails family separation. Data from EMIF Norte show that for 2017-2019 period, families of a high percentage of deported aging persons still live in this country, which may negatively influence reintegration in Mexico, not only in emotional but in economic terms as well. According to the analyzed data, a quarter of the aging population that spent more than a year in the US left underage children there. Moreover, a high percentage of this population left close relatives. Among those with stays longer than a year, 75.6 percent points out that their spouse or partner is in the United States; this percentage drops to 16 for those with short stays. If they are asked about children, percentages are similar, even higher (73.9% and 30%, respectively).

Persons deported from the US are identified and detained under various circumstances; some trying to cross the border without documents, while others after living in the country for many years. Some individuals are charged with serious crimes, others with violating immigration law. All these aspects will have effects on the deportation process and also on the punishment imposed on a possible return. Table 2 shows indicators that illustrate these processes and the differences between the groups. In relation to the detention place, for the aging population that lived for more than a year in the US, 33.2 percent was detained at home or at work. For those who spent a shorter time in the US, it is only 2.2 percent. A high percentage was detained on the street or a highway (55.8% and 36.5%, respectively). A third group was detained for crossing the border or in the desert (4.5% and 60% respectively). Even though there are some differences, the scenario above is similar for the population between 18 and 49 years. Among these differences, one finds the case of those detained on the street or a highway— possibly at a check point or because of a traffic violation—, the percentage for individuals under 50 years of age is 65, almost 10 points higher than among the aging population.

Table 2. Selected Indicators of the Detention and Deportation Process in the US of Mexican Immigrants, according to Age and Duration of Stay, 2017-2019

		Age groups and time of stay			
		18 to 49		50 years and older	
		Less than a year	One year or more	Less than a year	One year or more
Place of detention	House/ Work	2.2	28.6	2.2*	33.2
	Street/ Highway	33.8	65.0	36.5	55.8
	Crossing / Desert	62.0	1.2	60.0	4.5*
Detention in the US for a crime that led to prison	Yes	6.8	39.7	9.7 *	36.3
	No	93.2	60.3	90.3	63.7
Deportation hearing	Yes	24.4	57.4	34.2	57.7
	No	75.6	42.6	65.8	42.3
Banned from entering the US for some years or forever	Yes	48.3	75.0	59.9	74.0
	No	51.7	25.0	40.1	26.0

\*N= sample with fewer than 30 cases.

Source: own elaboration with data from EMIF Norte from 2017 to 2019 (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020).

Another relevant aspect in the process of deportation from the US is having spent time in jail or prison which carries consequences regarding the punishment by US authorities in relation to a future documented reentry. There are also consequences in their reintegration in Mexico, as discrimination may take place while looking for a job. Data for the 2017-2019 period show differences among the aging population according to time of stay in the United States. Among those who stayed less than a year in the US, 9.7 percent was detained for a crime that took them to prison, this percentage reaches 36.3 percent for those who were in the country for a year or longer. The situation for the population under 49 years of age is very similar (6.8% and 39.7%, respectively).

Table 2 also shows aspects related to the deportation process. For the aging population with short stays, 34.5 percent had a deportation hearing, while it was so for 57.7 percent of those who stayed longer than a year. For the younger population the situation is very similar. As a part of the deportation process from the US, immigration law enforcement considers punishments that prevent the migrant from applying to any kind of visa that would allow them to enter the country for five, 10 or 20 years or even a ban for life, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

Most of the deported aging adults receive these sorts of punishments: 74 percent of those who were in the U.S. for more than a year and 59.9 percent of those with a short stay. These percentages are similar to the ones observed among the population between 18 and 49 years of age (75% and 48.3%, respectively). The difference of 11.7 units between the two groups that spent less than a year in the US, is partly explained because there is a higher proportion of people with no previous migration experience among the younger group.

Migrants deported to Mexico have to make relevant decisions in relation to their immediate future. Slightly more than 10 years ago, most of them had the intention to return to the US within a short time (seven days). This expectation has radically changed nevertheless, and now very few contemplate this option. For the aging population who lived in the US for less than a year, 85.4 percent states they will not try to return to this country again. This percentage slightly increases in the case of those who had a longer stay (88%). In the survey, those who stated they would not try to reenter the US in the short term were asked whether they will try to return within the next three months, the answer is still negative (93.8% and 91%, respectively). They are asked once again if they will try to enter some time and the general answer is no (81.5% and 70.9%, respectively). If the percentages above are compared with the events of people under 49 years of age, a similar scenario is observed. The largest difference takes place in the last of these indicators, though differences are under 6.8 percent.

#### EXPERIENCES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF AGING PERSONS IN TIJUANA

In this section, five semi-structured interviews are used to analyze the social and economic reintegration of aging persons deported from the US to Tijuana in order to find out to what extent this reintegration has been successful or limited. For this purpose, we examine the role of sociodemographic and migration characteristics in this process. For the sociodemographic characteristics, special attention is paid to age, schooling, health status, family in Mexico and access to social networks. Among the migration characteristics, we considered issues such as migration experience and labor skills, history and migration status in the US, time of residence, causes and legal consequences of deportation and future plans. We interviewed three women and two men, aged between 54 and 60 years of age. No one was living with a spouse or partner and everyone completed basic schooling, their time living in the US was between 20 and 50 years and their first migration was undocumented. The snowball technique was utilized to identify the participants, fieldwork was carried out between February and April 2020. On average, the interviews lasted for two hours. The respondents' informed consent was obtained and the information was modified or generalized in order to prevent the participants from being identified.

## SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

*Deportation changed my life, but I survived. I made my dream come true in Mexican territory*

Dulce is 60 years old, she is from Puebla, is single and has only one daughter born and living in the United States. She completed secondary education in Mexico and lived for 21 years in the US. She was deported several times, in 2010 for the last time, when she was 50, and has been living in Tijuana for 10 years. Her migration history started with the departure from her community toward Mexico City, where she worked as a housemaid. Her motivation to migrate to the US was to look for *a better future* and was supported by her brothers who were already in the country. Early in the nineties, she hired a *coyote*, who guided her to cross the border, she arrived in Los Angeles, California, where she was hired in a vegetable packing company, later she went on to have a series of jobs.

She crossed the border without legal documentation several times. On one occasion, she was detained and had her fingerprints recorded. Her final detention took place at the end of 2008, at a car checkpoint in Los Angeles, while she was driving. She was accused of *illegally reentering* owing to her previous deportations and was sent to prison for a year and a half. In 2010, when she was released, she was immediately deported. Her daughter was 13 and stayed with Dulce's sister. Dulce supported her from Tijuana so that she could be able to continue studying.

My daughter visits me, I feel resigned now, I know my daughter is alright, happy. I have nothing to do there. I was in the US... worked hard, lived well, but had no freedom. The only thing I miss from the US is my daughter. She came very happy because she wanted to be with her mother... we lived together, though, but she didn't adapt and as heartbreaking as it was I sent her back to L.A. with her aunt (Dulce, personal communication, March 23, 2020).

While in Tijuana, Dulce found a job in a restaurant, then she worked looking after an elderly person, who later died, and she had to look for another job. Her new employment in food production became her own business; she has created strong ties with her neighbors and employees, who support her if she is sick.

Although she considers her own *story successful*, she emotionally tells us that it is a "tremendous struggle and sadness, dull mornings, days without food" (Dulce, personal communication, February 19, 2020). She experienced alcoholism for some time, in spite of having her own business and good income. Presently, she considers she is well, both economically and emotionally.

I have my own food production business and a car. My daughter already finished school. I'm a committed pro immigrant activist... deportation changed my life, but I survived. I made my dream come true in Mexican territory (Dulce, personal communication, February 19, 2020).

*Although my roots are here, I made my life there*

Pilar is 60 years old, she was born in the state of Durango and completed secondary education. She is divorced and her children live in the US, where she lived for 20 years, studied English and took a course to learn how to take care of ill people. In 1995, she migrated together with her husband and five children, crossing the border in San Ysidro using legal documents of other individuals. Never, until she was deported in 2015 at the age of 56, did she return to Mexico; she has been living in Tijuana for five years now.

Two years after entering into the US, she divorced from her husband due to domestic violence and decided to stay in the country. She began working in restaurants and then, looking after elderly and sick people. In 2015, she was involved in a minor car accident, though she was only a passenger, this event triggered her deportation:

They asked us for an identification... they told us we were just declaring and verifying data because we were not in the system. We got there and were asked some questions and they let us go, though we had to go to court, and la *migra* was already there (Pilar, personal communication, April 2, 2020).

She decided to sign her *voluntary return* because she was afraid of affecting her youngest child, who was a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) applicant. Deportation to Tijuana was beneficial for her, as in this city lived two of her youngest daughters. In spite of being supported by all her children, she points out that she did not like totally depending on her family, so she decided to look for a job. She expresses being discriminated because of her age.

I realized that it would be difficult to find a job. I met a friend who had been deported as well, she had a business and needed someone to support her as a cashier and as an accountant. While working with her, I was offered some other jobs when they realized that I spoke English and noticed that despite age, people can do many things (Pilar, personal communication, April 2, 2020).

Pilar suffers from hypertension and hyperthyroidism. In the United States, she went to a community hospital. In Mexico, one of her brothers declared she was an economically dependent individual and enlisted her in a federal health care system. She has never had addiction problems. She considers that the relationship with her children is very good and that technology was central to maintain this relationship. Her children have been enquiring on a pardon from an immigration judge in order to apply for a tourist visa. "Sometimes I think it would be good, but then I see no point in that because my children can come to visit me; they have a life there, they don't need me. Although my roots are here, I made my life there" (Pilar, personal communication, April 2, 2020).

*I used to get angry when they thought I was a gringa*

Dolores is 60 years old, she was born in Tijuana and was taken in an undocumented way to California when she was 13 years, her stay in this country lasted 50 years. She studied up to high school, she took courses on human resources and business, she is fairly proficient in English. In 2010, when she was 51, she was deported and received a 10-year ban, ever since she has been

living in Tijuana. While she was in the US, she obtained her green card, though it was revoked after deportation. Her children live in the US.

Her mother told her that her father had been a Bracero and that they came from Jalisco, then they moved to Tijuana, where Dolores was born. Later, her father took them to a farm in the US, after some time they all obtained legal permanent residence. Each year, they visited Ensenada, she states that ever since she liked *Mexican culture*:

I used to get angry when they thought I was a gringa. I'm Mexican! My last name was American, I took my first husband's surname. I loved my roots and, as you can see, God sent me here... my own husband told me: *Hush, I'm going to deport you myself!*... then, I ran into trouble and got deported (Dolores, personal communication, March 27, 2020).

Dolores worked in human resources in doctors' offices, stores and restaurants, she also worked in social services as she is bilingual. At 19, she married a US citizen, they had a child when she was 27 and divorced two years later. Then, she had another partner with which she had two other children, though the relationship lasted four years as her partner died when she was pregnant with her third daughter, who died at 16, when Dolores was already deported in Mexico. She asked for a permission at the US consulate to attend the funeral, but it was denied.

Dolores points out that her addictions caused her police arrests, which later became a formal deportation. In the US, she started to do drugs with a view to losing weight, but the situation worsened when she combined them with alcohol, which turned into two driving-under-the-influence charges. Due to these infractions, she was sentenced to do community service. The punishment was depressing for her as she considers she had *bottomed out*. One weekend, she did not attend the service because her car had broken down and she was arrested as she had not appeared. She was sent to jail for three months and then to a detention center, where she was for six months until her deportation in 2010.

During her detention she underwent detox and joined a church. Sharing time with asylum seekers and victims of trafficking who sheltered in religion to face their problems motivated her to do the same. She decided to settle in Tijuana to be closer to her children and start from scratch. She uses her family network in such city. She looked for a job in hotels and supermarkets, with no favorable response, then she started selling food for six months. However, after "having some drinks" her family decided to send her to a rehabilitation center for one year.

Later on, she applied for a job in a call center, but she did not know how to use a computer and did not get the job. She decided to take a computing course while taking care of elderly people, that lasted for three years. Finally, the fourth year she was hired in the call center, even though she finds it stressful, she says she is thrilled because she is saving for her pension in Mexico and has labor benefits.

She has blood pressure problems and has been told her liver is damaged and has been treated in public hospitals (*Seguro Social*). She supports on her church group, Alcoholics Anonymous, and also is part of a group of deported mothers. She is fully independent and recently rented a flat.



She is interested in returning to the US, nevertheless if she does not manage to, she will stay in Tijuana. She supports her children she left behind and she does not do drugs nor drinks alcohol anymore. She wants to buy a car, start her own business and would like to pursue a degree in History because she wants to find out more about her country (Dolores, personal communication, March 27, 2020).

### LIMITED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

*In Tijuana, I'm always ready to go because I want to go back there again*

Bruno is 54 years old, comes from Michoacan, where he completed elementary education. He has four children and four grandchildren, all of them born in the US. He is divorced, he married in the US with a woman from Michoacan, but after a first deportation, they separated definitively. Owing to this fact, he also lost his green card. His first undocumented migration was at 13, one of his uncles supported him. Later on, the same uncle supported him with the paperwork to obtain legal permanent residence through IRCA. In 2018, after living in the US for 41 years, he was deported because of D.U.I. charges and illegal reentering. When he arrived in the United States, he worked in a restaurant for 16 years, then he worked in agriculture, construction and gardening. In the end, he opened a bakery, which remained in the hands of his children and ex-wife:

I was detained because I was driving drunk after leaving a bar. I was stopped on the freeway and straight to the court, that time, I got deported and they gave me five years as punishment, but I entered again and got deported again, but now they gave me ten years. I was in prison for 15 months (Bruno, personal communication, March 16, 2020).

In Tijuana, he started working as a security guard. He states it took him seven months to find a job as he did not have the papers needed and also because of his age. This work does not meet all his basic needs, and he is supported by his children.

Bluntly, truth is here you only earn enough to eat badly, I earn 1 600 pesos a week; if my children wouldn't help me, I would have run toward Michoacan. I pay a rent of 2 400 pesos and I eat every day on the street... I don't buy anything here, shoes or clothing, I have everything brought from the US (Bruno, personal communication, March 16, 2020).

He points out he prefers to remain in Tijuana instead of returning to Michoacan because he is closer to his children, who live in Southern California, and due to the violence in his community in Michoacan, where he owns a house and real estate inherited from his father. "Being here in Tijuana, I'm always *ready to go because I want to go back there again* and I don't like it here really... that's why I haven't even tried... my whole life is there" (Bruno, personal communication, March 16, 2020).

Although drinking alcohol triggered his migratory problems, he claims that it is under control. During his previous deportation, he stayed in *Casa del Migrante de Tijuana*, a shelter for migrants,

and became used to attending to church, although he also admits it is because of his age. He is planning to stay in Tijuana until his children arrange his immigration status, but in case they will not be able to, he will return to the US without documents:

My boys are on it, I have refrained myself because they do not want me to go, they are trying hard to get me a pardon and take me back there. If it is denied, I think I'll go once again across the mountain, there's no other way! I had a house there, we are still paying for it, we have a bakery, and everyone is working to pay the debts, we have a future there (Bruno, personal communication, March 16, 2020).

### *I have to start again*

Gustavo is 59 years old, comes from the state of Guerrero, completed elementary education and is separated from his wife. He was deported in 2011, he has been living for nine years in Mexico. His migration history started in 1991, he crossed through Tijuana with no documents and headed to Washington to live with his siblings. He lived in the US for 20 years, without returning. He was deported at the age of 51.

The reason for his detention was to accumulate five traffic tickets for driving without a license. Police detained him at a store, he was taken to the county hall to pay for the tickets and he was imprisoned, that same day he was deported to Tijuana, with a 10-year ban. When he arrived in Tijuana, he lived there for four years, then he was in Ensenada for eight months, however due to his diabetes, he decided to go to Toluca, as suggested by a brother who lived there, to have a doctor to take care a foot infection, as at the border zone, medical attention was more expensive.

From Toluca he moved to Morelos and was 13 months there. Over his stay in Morelos, he worked as a driver. However, due to the 2017 earthquake, he decided to return to Toluca and was there for some months. He did not manage to have a good relationship with his brother, so he decided to return to Ensenada, where he was hired in various cultivation fields for two years. By the end of 2019, he suffered another infection in his foot, returned to Toluca, but one of his toes had to be amputated. Then, he returned to Tijuana and found a job as a security guard, he works 12 hours a day for 1 600 *pesos* a week.

He does not receive any family support. He married in Mexico before emigrating to the United States; later on, he paid a coyote to cross his wife and oldest son. Over time, they had four more children in the U.S. Three years after his deportation, the relationship with his wife ended. All of his children live in the US and has little communication with them. In Ensenada, he started a relationship with a woman, but because of his health and trips to Toluca, they separated. He visited Guerrero twice, but he did not fit with his relatives and considers the place is violent.

He does not think of returning to the US, he would like to obtain a visa to visit his children, because as a consequence of his deportation one of them developed addiction problems and he feels responsible for that. His plan is to rent a room for he wants a place to care for the healing of his foot, he will do the paperwork to obtain his driving license and look for a job as a driver.

From the analyzed cases, we can argue that it is not easy to decide if the economic and social reintegration has been successful or limited. However, following Pastor and Ortiz (2009), economic and social reintegration will be successful if in spite of deportation, improved economic mobility, enhanced civil participation and the experience of living in an immigrant-receiving society are attained. To determine this situation, the following indicators were fundamental: having a steady job with a good wage and benefits, the creation of businesses, the opportunity to access decent housing and the ability to establish relationships of friendship and solidarity with other people in Tijuana. Future plans reveal the degree of social and economic reintegration.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this research, a mixed methodology was used to analyze the process of deportation and economic and social reintegration in Mexico of persons 50 years of age and older who have been deported from the US, combining descriptive statistics from EMIF Norte with five semi-structured interviews about the life histories of persons who now live in Tijuana. From this information, we identify sociodemographic and migratory factors that facilitate or hinder a successful economic and social reintegration for aging adults.

The analysis based on data from EMIF Norte discloses that among aging adults, the percentage of men surpasses 80 percent. Among those with stays longer than a year, 75.6 percent states that their partners or spouses are in the United States, while 73.9 percent has children there. In this same group, more than a half (55.8%) was detained on the street or on the highway. Furthermore, the longer the residence in the US, the higher the percentage of those who committed a crime, were in jail or prison, had a deportation hearing or were banned from legally returning to the United States for five, ten, twenty years or even for life.

The advanced age of all the participants is a factor that makes it difficult for them to find a formal job, as in Mexico employers prefer to hire younger workers with higher schooling and command of some tools such as computers. Due to their age, these individuals did not have access to an education to learn these skills in Mexico, this way, in the beginning of their life in Tijuana, they obtain precarious jobs with low incomes that are barely enough to rent a place to live and buy food.

This is clearly insufficient, as in the long term, these aging adults will have to take care of the chronic diseases some of them already suffer, such as, diabetes. In this sense, it is very relevant to have access to health care and ensure this service, for example, by means of a pension. It is significant that one of the respondents is especially proud to be adding to her pension, though surely, as in most of the cases in Mexico, it will be insufficient to support herself.

Out of the five respondents, the three women show an economic and social integration that may be considered successful, while the two men display serious limitations in this process. This makes us wonder, are women capable of reintegrating better in Mexico after deportation from the United

States?. Obviously, this cannot be affirmed with five cases, however it is a very interesting research question for the future.

After a complicated beginning in the labor market in Tijuana, two of the female respondents speak of their satisfaction in using skills they acquired in the United States such as the ability to speak English, which enables, even aging adults, to work in call centers, which offer higher wages than jobs in the informal sector. These accomplishments, which include a business to sell tamales, help mitigate the nostalgia and pain of being separated from children and relatives who remained on the other side of the border.

Access to social networks in Mexico and the US is a key resource for successful integration, as it offers monetary support to afford expenses in Tijuana, which includes access to decent housing. However, strong social networks in the US are fundamental as well to motivate the desire of one of the respondents to reenter this country, in an undocumented way, for he considers his life is there. This particular case contradicts an important finding of EMIF Norte (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte et al., 2020), which shows that most aging deportees do not have the intention to return to the United States without legal documents.

Health status also defines the likelihood of a successful integration, since ailments such as diabetes, alcoholism and addictions to other drugs that most of the respondents experienced at a certain point in their lives, in addition to their devastating physical effect, hinder the opportunity to find formal employment. The lack of general health care coverage in Mexico is part of the rejection on the part of the receiving society. Similarly, widespread violence does not help the appropriate settling of Mexicans deported from the US. On the contrary, the solidarity and support of many people and institutions, such as migrant shelters, show the openness toward the newly arrived on behalf of Tijuana society.

The experiences of the respondents show that migrants are not the only ones affected by deportation, as it entails the fracture of families and the separation of spouses and children who decide to stay in the United States. For this reason, Tijuana is a strategic place for deportees who try to restart their lives, as they are able to be close to relatives who live in Southern California, and where they find better labor conditions than in other places of origin in southern Mexico. These places are not attractive for them, they even notice the presence of organized crime, in this way, they prefer to go to other localities in Mexico.

Although this research did not have as an objective to obtain findings that could become public policy recommendations, it can be indeed stated, that it is plausible that the deportation of aging adults will continue in years to come. According to estimations from EMIF Norte, over the last decade there were, on average, nine thousand annual events of Mexicans, 50 years of age and older, who were deported from the US. Furthermore, nearly 1.9 million Mexicans, 50 years of age and older, who live there do not have US citizenship, so they are at constant risk of deportation.

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