

Migration from Guatemala to USA

(Destination Countries)

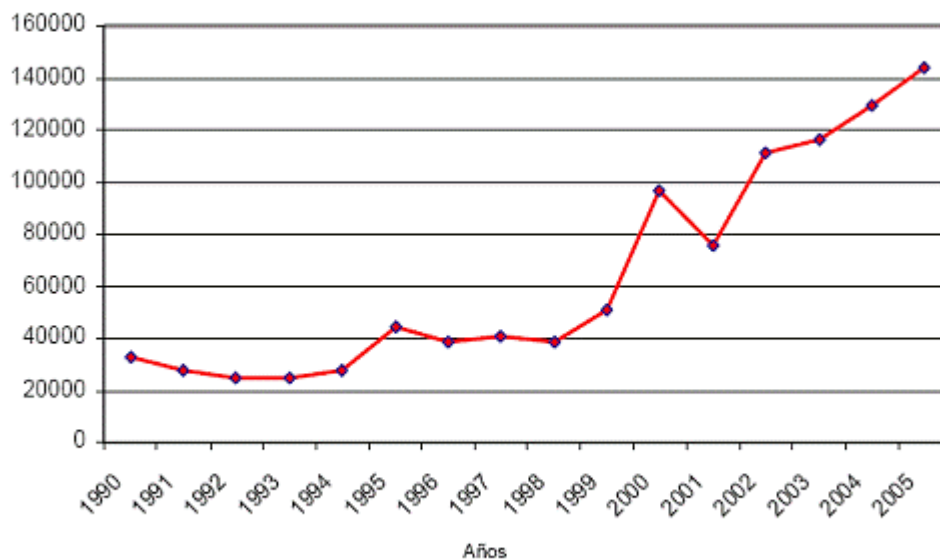
- **Beginning and evolution of Guatemalan Migration to the United States**

As in other Central American countries, emigration from Guatemala began as a slow, but steady, movement. Subsequent to the 1976 earthquake, and with the beginning of internal conflicts in Guatemala during 1980s, there was a considerable increase in the number of migrants leaving the country. According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2000), the migrant population quintuplicated between 1980 and 1990.

Data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM/ OIM) shows an increase in Guatemalan migration to the U.S. beginning in 1998 and then a dramatic and exceptional reduction in 2001 that would correspond to the effects of 9/11. Later, these migratory flows recover their dynamism, reflecting a steady growth.

The following graph shows the number of emigrants per year from 1990 on. (IOM,2005) .

Gráfica No. 4 TENDENCIA DE LA MIGRACION DURANTE EL PERÍODO 1990-2005*



Guatemalan migration presents different tendencies and interconnected causes: internal migration (rural-rural or rural-urban), forced internal displacements, refugees and petitions for international asylum, temporary labor emigration and interregional migration.

During the last two decades of the 20th century (1980-2000), large groups of the population were mobilized, fleeing from the dangers of armed conflicts in the Central American region, and in Guatemala, in particular. As a result of the armed conflict in Guatemala, between 1982 and 1983, more than 400 indigenous villages were destroyed, causing the forced internal mobilization of

more than 1.5 million Guatemalans and the exit of more than 150,000 mostly indigenous people, who looked for refuge in the border region with Mexico. (Source: Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico - CEH- (1999: 167-274), in IDH Guatemala, 2006)

Destinations for the majority of Guatemalans include the United States (60% unauthorized), Mexico and, recently, Canada (related to assisted temporary labor migration programs). According to the IOM (2006), the United States is the chosen destination country for 98.2% of emigrants. Some Guatemalans have also emigrated to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Belize.

- **Number of Guatemalans residing in the United States**

The IOM (2006) estimates that the Guatemalan population living in the United States reached 1,178,000 people in the 2006.

- **Feminization of Guatemalan migration to the United States**

Given the difficulties involved in travelling by land from Guatemala to the United States via unauthorized routes, the majority of those who migrate in this manner are men. It is estimated that 72% of the resident population living abroad are men and 28% are women.

- **Distribution by age**

Most Guatemalan migrants are between 15 and 44 years of age, that is, of a working age. This demographic characteristic also has a direct effect on fertility rates in the communities of origin.

- **Level of education**

According to data from the IOM (2005) , 50.6% of the population residing abroad has some degree of primary education: 23.5% did not complete primary school and 27.1% migrated having completed their primary studies. 7.0% traveled with incomplete secondary education, while 12.0% had concluded. 5.5% of the population traveled without having completed informal studies and 17.3% had them completed. 1.2% of migrants had some university education and 0.6% (7,527) emigrated having completed their university studies.

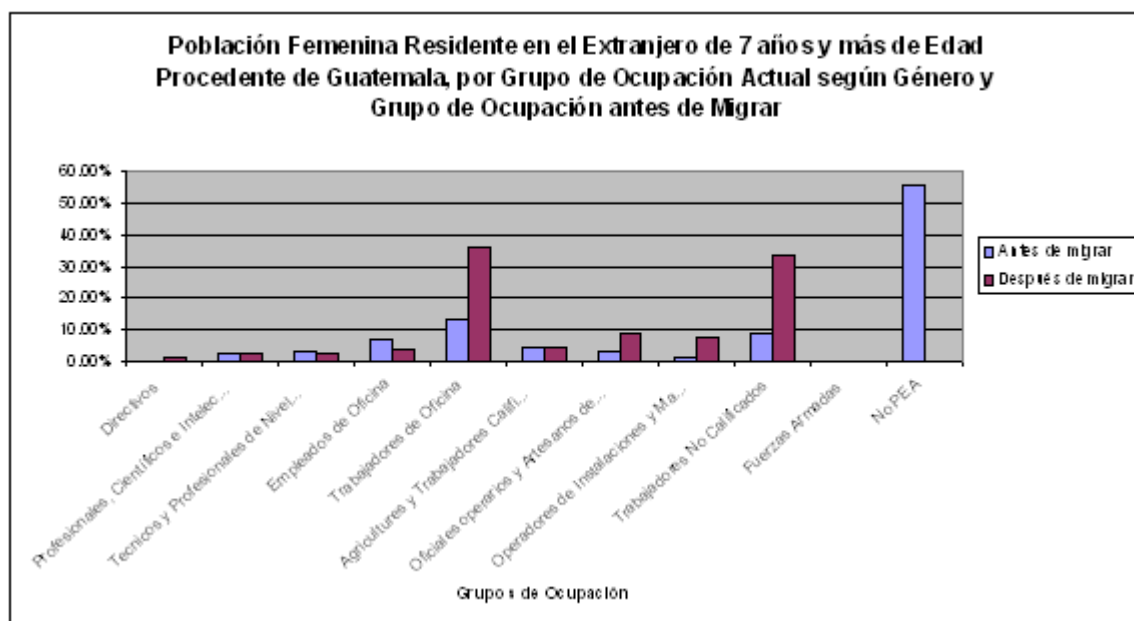
The migration of Guatemalan professionals is possibly related to the globalization of markets or to the migrants' desire to improve their economic and social situation outside of Guatemala. Many define this process as "brain drain"; what is certain is that Guatemala has lost highly qualified human capital, as just 3.7% of Guatemalans migrate without any level of schooling.

If we compare the proportions of male and female migrants with no formal level of education, or having only completed informal studies, we note that the proportion of women in this category is higher. Additionally, the proportion of women with complete or incomplete post secondary (university) education is only slightly inferior to that of men (1.06% versus 1.15%).

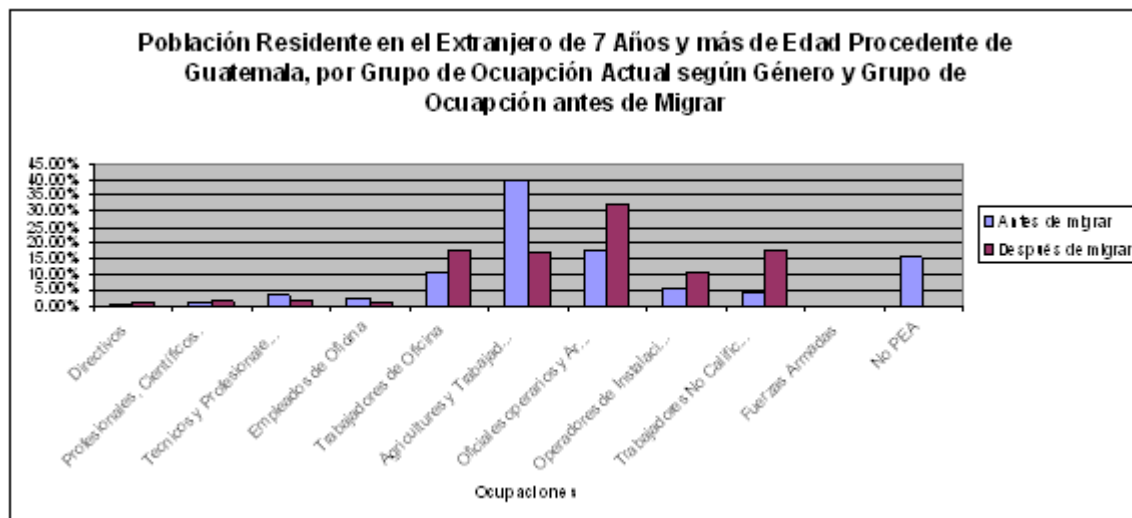
- **Labour Insertion**

According to the IOM (2002) , 87.9% of the population living abroad in 2002 (estimated to be 1,237,050 people) was economically active.

Information from this source indicates that occupied women that emigrated worked in the services and sales sector (30.2%), as unskilled workers (20.5%) and as office employees (16.8%). Many women who decided to emigrate had some education. As we can see, the category of economically inactive women is high before migrating (more than half), but disappears after the migration. Amongst women who were economically active before migrating, the occupations such as “service workers and sales representatives” and “unskilled workers” are relevant before and after migrating, but reflect a greater percentage after migration, since it absorbs the previously inactive women.



The following graph shows the relocation of the emigrant men in the labor market while they are abroad. A dramatic drop in the employment rate in the agricultural sector is observed. A good proportion has managed to hold positions as professionals and the rate of directors has increased. Mid-range technicians and professionals have become craftsmen working in unskilled activities. On the other hand, the people who went away to study in the United States now occupy these positions. This same phenomenon occurs with the office employees.



Of the population which was economically inactive before migrating, 55.6% were students and 44.4% housewives. Nevertheless, these people enter to work in the remunerated labor market after migrating, which increases the rate of economically active people to 23% of the total number of people surveyed.

- **Sending and utilization of remittances**

According to the IOM (2006) , households receive a monthly average of \$309 USD in remittances.

The results of the annual survey indicate that 50.3% of remittances are spent on basic consumption -food (43.1%), clothing and footwear (3.0%), transport (1.0%), household appliances (0.8%) and other expenses (2.4%).

Additionally, it was estimated that 14.1% of remittances were designated for intermediate consumption related to investment and production. In other words, recipient households are investing 10.0% of their remittances in merchandise and products that generate a surplus value to production, 1.3% in facility rentals, and 2.8% in other expenses (equipment maintenance, promotion, etc.) that are indispensable activities for generating surplus value. However, there has been a reduction in spending in this area as compared to 2005, since a greater proportion of the population this acquiring and constructing real estate.

Results from the IOM survey indicate that 21.5% of remittances are destined for investment and savings. Households are investing their remittances in savings (9.0%), the purchase of real estate (5.9%), houses (4.1%), machinery (1.1%) and animals, such as cows and chickens (0.3%). This category also includes the construction and repair of houses affected by the Hurricane Stan (0.04%), as well as the 1.1% of remittances designated for the purchase of insurance policies.

It was also determined that 14.2% of remittances are invested in social services, such as health (8.3%) and education of the family (6.0%).

According to the IOM (2005) , the use of remittances differs according to gender. Women utilize remittances for basic consumption, whereas men designate them more for intermediate consumption, investment and savings and social investment.

Use of Remittances according to Sex (2005)

	Consumption	Intermediate Consumption	Savings and Investment	Social Investment	Total
Men	45.82%	22.31%	15.78%	16.09%	100.00%
Women	63.34%	12.13%	12.40%	12.13%	100.00%

Source: Elaborated by author, according to OIM 2005.

These figures support the conclusions found in the CEPAL's study of Guatemala (2000) which found that men who send remittances do so as future family providers, thus they try to save this money or to invest it. Women, on the other hand, consider themselves more as agents of the household survival and, therefore, send remittances in order to cover the family's basic expenses.