

# **Current view of international migration in Latin America<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract** International migration is not a new phenomenon in Latin America but we have seen it undergo substantial changes in recent years. For decades, Latin America was thought of as a region that primarily received immigrants, with the exception of Mexico and some of the Caribbean countries. Also, although intraregional migration has always been of considerable magnitude, it has generally been considered as a phenomenon focused on only some countries. However, important changes have occurred in the region since the 1980s, which have resulted in new forms and migratory patterns. In contrast to past eras, international migration has not only intensified but rather extensified. As a result, migratory flows have diversified in their origins, destinations, and forms due to the cumulative processes called globalization. This paper offers a panorama of international migration in Latin America. The first section analyses the characteristics of Latin American migration, compared to other international migratory fluxes. We provide information about the three main migratory fluxes: the traditional migration towards the United States, the emergent migration to Europe (mainly to Spain), and new dynamics of migration inside the region. In the second section we turn back to the analysis of the relationship between migration and development, in order to study two relevant phenomena: the role of international migration in receiving countries and the role of Latin American migration in sending regions. We conclude with a general reflection on the new era of international migration in the contemporary globalised world, and the role of Latin American migration in this world context from the viewpoint of sending countries and regions.

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## **Introduction**

International migration is not a new phenomenon in Latin America but we have seen it undergo substantial changes in recent years (Pellegrino, 2003). For decades, Latin America was thought of as a region that primarily received immigrants, with the exception of Mexico and some of the Caribbean countries. Also, although intraregional migration has always been of considerable magnitude, it has generally been considered as a phenomenon focused on only some countries.

However, important changes have occurred in the region since the 1980s, which have resulted in new forms and migratory patterns. In contrast to past eras, international migration has not only intensified but rather *extensified*. As a result, migratory flows have diversified in their origins, destinations, and forms due to the cumulative processes called globalization (Canales and Montiel, 2007).

Accordingly, we can discuss four aspects which manifest the diversity and complexity of international migration in Latin America. These are namely:

1. Formerly a region which received immigrants, Latin America has become an important zone of emigration, especially to the developed nations. This fact can be referred to as a great march from the South to the North. Although the United States has become the principal destination of Latin American emigration, there are also important flows directed to Europe (Spain, principally) and Japan. It is estimated that in 2002, 760,000 Latin Americans immigrated to the United States, and at the same time, another 230,000 went to Spain. In both cases, Latin Americans represented 50% of the total immigrants in those countries (Canales, 2006).
2. Intraregional migration has also diversified and increased. Since the 1980s, new migratory routes have arisen, with new destinations and emigration countries. Simultaneously, some countries have become transitory stops for emigrants (Villa and Martínez, 2001; CEPAL, 2002). In this new context, we can no longer catalogue countries in simple and static terms. Frequently, a country is both the origin of emigration and the destination of intraregional immigrants as well. In this way, intraregional migration becomes more complex as it incorporates a growing multiplicity of migratory situations and forms.
3. We should also note the growing complexity and diversity of the different forms of migration. We need to add other types of definitions to the already classic ones of permanent and temporary migration. Examples of these are: circular migration, cross-border migration, returns migration and undocumented migration, among others.
4. Finally, we need to recognize the diversity of people that actually migrate (Pujadas and Massal, 2005; Pedonne, 2006). Examples of this are the migration

of women, indigenous populations, and family migration (children and senior citizens, primarily), among others. The participants of the migratory flow have become more visible. This is true in the case of women, whose immigration for many years was invisible, subsumed and associated with male migration.

All these changes demonstrate the increasingly complex and diverse patterns of migration routes. This raises the need to reconstruct our views and approaches to the analysis and understanding of this phenomenon. Considering the above, the objective of this text is to document, with recent statistical information, the characteristics of Latin American emigration to Spain and The United States and to record it into the great march from the South to the North. This will allow us to appreciate the diverse migratory forms and their participants.

We present a panoramic vision of contemporary international migration in Latin America. Particularly, we begin with an analysis which allows us to contextualize Latin American migration within the framework of the so-called new era of global migration (Castles and Miller, 1993). Secondly, we will focus on a comparative analysis between Spain and The United States, both of which are currently the principal destinations of Latin American emigrants. This comparative analysis is based on migration volumes, as well as the socio-demographic profiles of the migrants and their insertion into the labor force.

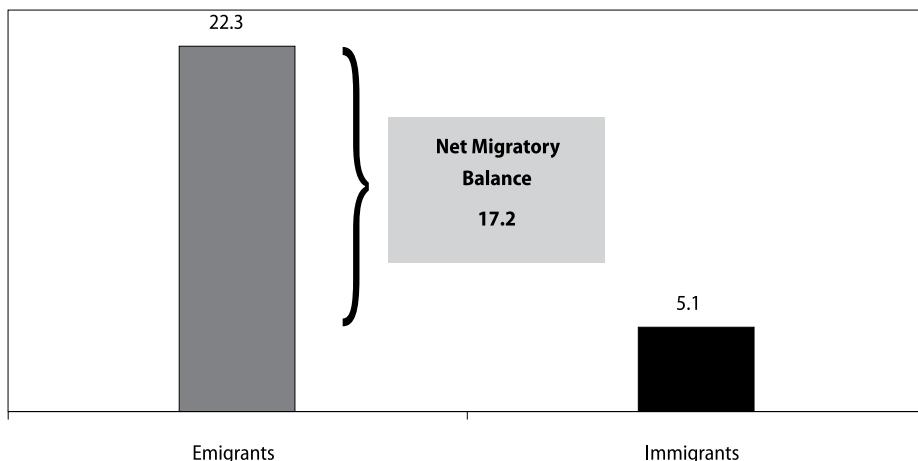
### **Latin American Migration in the Contemporary Global Context**

The current view of Latin American international migration is radically different than the one that prevailed 100 years ago in the region. At the beginning of the 20th century, Latin America, together with North America (USA and Canada) and Australia were the international immigrants' principal destinations (Delauney and Tapinos, 2000). In all these cases, the immigrants sought to benefit from expansion capitalism. On the other hand, at the dawn of this new millennium, Latin America is now one of the main regions of population expulsion to the principal economies of the developed world - United States, Europe, and to a lesser extent, Japan (Pellegrino, 2003).

By the year 2000, there were 22.3 million Latin Americans residing in a country that was not the one of their birth. Of these, 19.2 million lived in a country outside of Latin America, while the other 3.1 million became intraregional migrants. This means that they lived in Latin America, but not in their birth country. In contrast, in the same year, there were only 5.1 million international immigrants in all of Latin America. Of this group, only 2 million came from countries outside of the region, while the other 3.1 million belonged to the above-mention intraregional group

(Figure 1). Subsequently, we can identify and describe three basic aspects regarding Latin America's role and profile in the contemporary migratory situation at the international level.

**Figure 1.** Emigrants, Immigrants, and Net Migratory Balance (in millions), Latin America (circa 2000)



Source: Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 200. The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

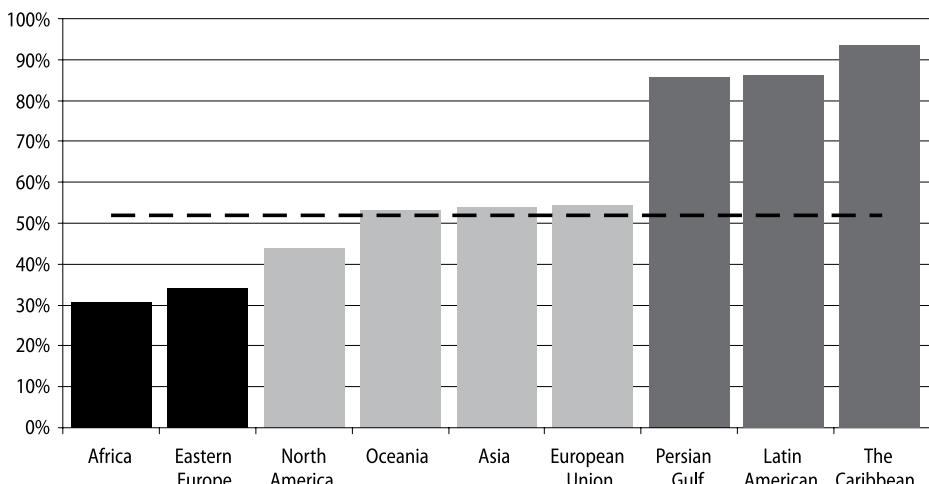
#### *Intra and Extra-regional Emigrants*

Globally, it is estimated that there were 175 million international emigrants around the year 2000. Of these, 48% were migrants that moved within their region of origin (intraregional migrants), and the other 52% were extraregional migrants. This was the case in Oceania, Asia, The European Union, and to a lesser degree, North America. Meanwhile, in Africa and Eastern Europe there was a greater prevalence of intraregional migration than extraregional movement. Specifically, while the Africa and Eastern Europe are important expulsive population regions, extraregional emigration represents less than a third of the total emigration in those zones (Figure 2). In other words, more than two thirds of their emigrants move to another country within the same region.

In contrast, Latin American migration presents a very different pattern. In this case, much like the Caribbean and the Persian Gulf, more than 85% of Latin American emigrants (19 million people) move to a country outside of their region of origin. However, Latin America is the region with the second highest volume of

extraregional emigrants. It is second only to Asia, which has 33 million migrants. In fact, Latin American generates 21% of extraregional emigration, while the Caribbean and the Persian Gulf supply only 2.8% and 1%, respectively. In addition, although Asia generates the greatest volume of extraregional emigrants (34%), they represent less than 1% of the population of that continent. The 19 million Latin American emigrants, in contrast, represent 3.8% of the continent's population. This places Latin America as the region with the highest rate of extraregional emigration in the world.

**Figure 2.** Extraregional emigration as percentage of total, according to major international regions (circa 2000)



Source: Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 2000. The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

The data indicate that the migratory pattern in Latin America is very different from the rest of the world. The predominance of extraregional movements in the region indicates Latin America's important role in contemporary international migration. This process can be understood more clearly within a globalization framework. In other world zones with higher internal and intraregional movement, factors such as environment, history and regional powers appear to have a greater influence.

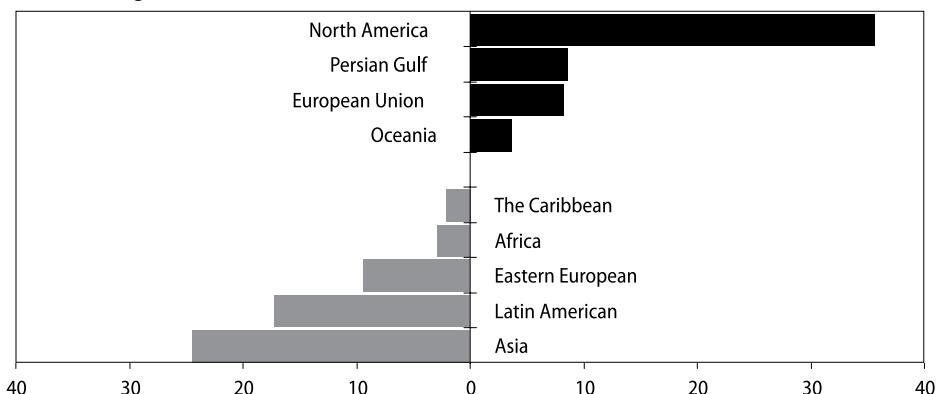
#### *From South to North: Migratory patterns in the global economy*

Net Migration (NM) gives us another indication of contemporary international migration. Observing Figure 3, we can clearly identify net emigration regions

in opposite of the net immigration regions. The population expulsion regions are part of the third world: Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. In contrast, the regions that attract population belong to the developed world: North America, The European Union, and to a lesser extent, Oceania. The Persian Gulf countries are the exception to this rule. This can be explained by the importance of petroleum in the region and its important strategic role in the global economy.

Figure 3 shows that we can define contemporary international migration as a great march of the southern hemisphere workforce to the more developed north. Latin America, not only participates in this great movement, but it actually supplies almost one third of the net interregional migrants. This places Latin America as the region with the second highest net global emigration, after Asia.

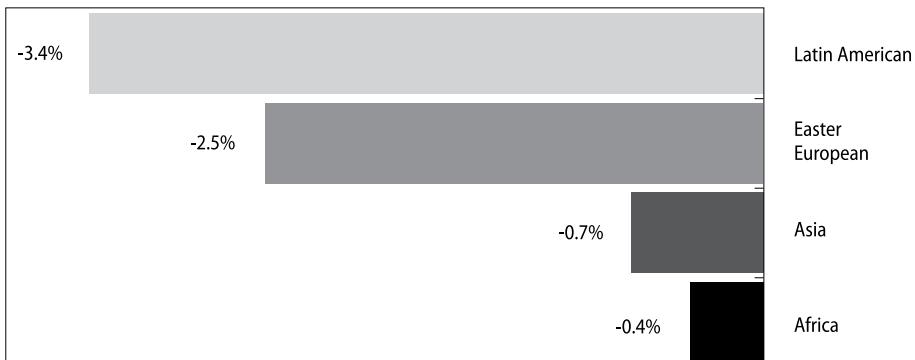
**Figure 3.** International Net Migration (Millions of people), according to the major international regions (circa 2000)



Source: Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 2009 The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

Latin America has a negative net migration balance about 17.2 million people. This means that the region has the second highest absolute population loss globally. It is preceded only by Asia which has a negative net migration balance of 24 million people. The importance of Latin American international migration is especially clear when we look at net international migration rates. As it can be observed in figure 4, Latin America has the highest relative rate among regions that have high net emigration volumes. Latin America's Net Migration represents 3.4% of their total population. In contrast, Asian and African Net Migration represent only 0.7% and 0.4%, respectively. Eastern Europe is the only other region with a relatively important net migration rate (2.5%). However, it is still lower than the one in Latin America.

**Figure 4.** Net Migration Rates, according to the major regions of international emigration, (circa 2000)



Source: Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 2009 The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

As a result of net international emigration, Latin America has a negative net migration balance to all other regions in the world. As it can be seen in table 1, there are more Latin Americans in all other regions of the world than there are immigrants from the same areas in Latin America. Along with the Caribbean countries, Latin America maintains a negative net migration balance with the rest of the world.

**Table 1.** Immigrants, Emigrants and Net Migration, according to the major international regions, Latin America (circa 2000)

Regions	Emigrants	Immigrants	Net Migration
Total	19,197,414	2,004,727	-17,192,687
North America	15,511,756	479,205	-15,032,551
The Caribbean	218,227	36,059	-182,168
Union European	1,805,653	1,129,452	-676,201
Eastern European	245,790	56,578	-189,212
Asia	980,327	270,006	-710,321
Persic Gulf	155,346	2,387	-152,959
Africa	197,102	24,896	-172,206
Oceania	83,213	6,144	-77,069

Source: *Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 2009* The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

## An Overview of Contemporary Global Migration

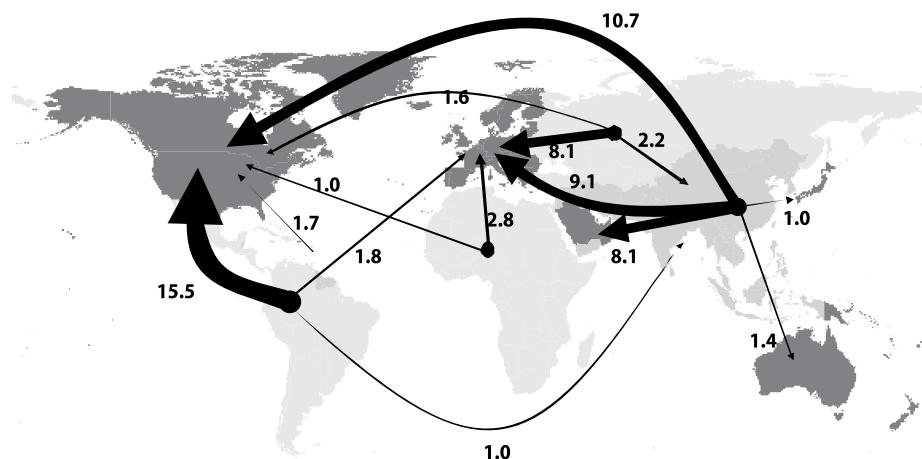
The panoramic view of contemporary global migration, available in Map 1, shows us that there are a great variety of migratory flows. This gives us the general

impression of the globalization of the process. Specifically, there are large migratory flows from almost all of the less developed regions of the world into practically all areas and countries of the more developed ones.

A detailed analysis shows that global migration is composed of a great variety of local flows. Through this, we can establish the migratory specialization of each region. For example, Africa has a clear concentration of migrants in the European Union. Effectively, there were 2.8 million Africans living in the European Union in the year 2000. This figure represents more than two thirds of all extraregional African emigrants. Furthermore, approximately two thirds of these migrants lived in only three countries: England, Germany, and France.

There is a similar situation with Eastern European extraregional emigration. In this case, more than 60% of these emigrants are residents in European Union countries (Germany, primarily). This concentration of migration is even greater in Latin America. Approximately 80% of Latin Americans immigrate to North America (mainly The United States). At the same time, just another 10% (1.8 million people) reside in a European Union country (principally Spain).

**Map 1.** Migratory flows among large international regions  
Millions of people, circa 2000



Source: *Global Origin Data Base, Updated March, 2009* (version 4). The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. University of Sussex.

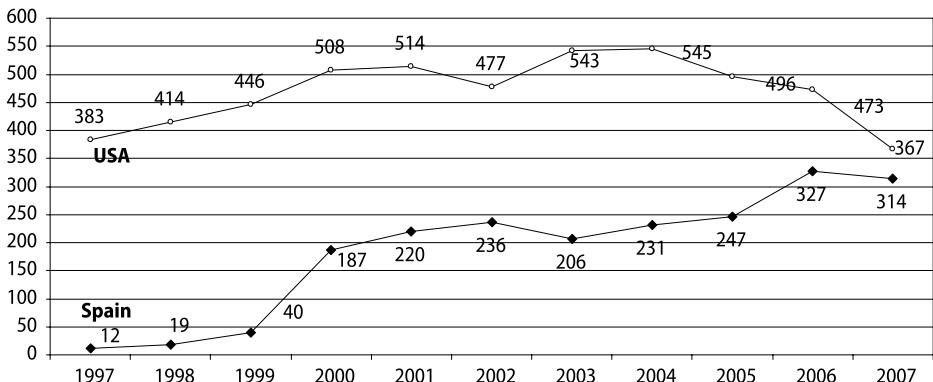
Only Asian emigrants move to a greater variety of destinations. Basically, one third of them live in North America, another 30% relocate to The European Union, while 25% reside in the Persian Gulf. This represents not only a greater variety of destinations, but also a more homogenous distribution.

In summary, with the exception of Asian emigration, there is a generally high origin-destination concentration in contemporary international migration. It is clear that contemporary South-North migration has its roots in globalization. Also, global migration is composed of a large variety of locally determined flows. Each one of these flows defines a singular migratory experience. However, when put together, they make a common pattern of global mobility.

### **USA and Spain: Current Latin American Immigration**

Until the year 2000, the United States was, without a doubt, the main destination of Latin American extraregional emigrants (Villa and Martínez, 2001; Pellegrino, 2003; Canales, 2006). However, Europe, especially Spain, has become a second front for Latin American emigration in recent years. At the end of the 1990s, the USA received Latin American emigrants at a ratio 17 times greater than Spain. In other words, for every one Latin American that migrated to Spain, there were another 17 that moved to The United States. This began to change in the year 2000. Between the years 2000 and 2005, the ratio shifted to 3:1, i.e. for every 3 emigrants that moved to the United States, one migrated to Spain. Furthermore, this ratio was reduced to the point that by the year 2007, Latin American emigration to the USA was only 17% greater than that of Spain. If the trend continues, it is likely that this situation could be inverted in the future. However, this could depend on how the global economic crisis affects migrants and their host countries (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Latin America, 1997-2007. Annual Migratory Flow to the United States and Spain  
(Thousands of people)

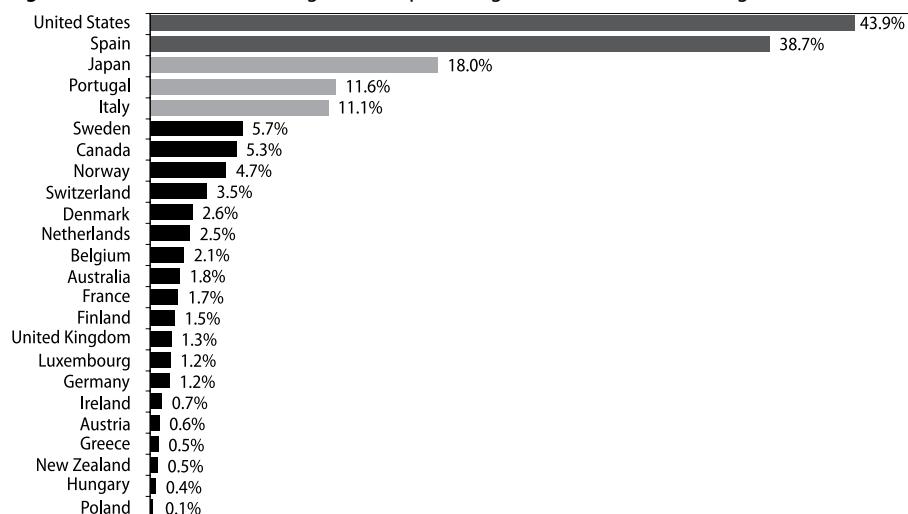


Source: INE, España, *Padrón municipal de población*, and Census Bureau, USA, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement*.

The predominance of the USA as a destination for Latin Americans is due to Mexican migration to that country. In fact, if we exclude Mexico from this analysis, we can see that other countries' migration to Spain has surpassed their migration to the United States since 2001. Actually, since 2006, migration to Spain is almost double than to the USA. During the biennium 2006-2007, 840,000 Latin Americans immigrated to the United States (473,000 in 2006 and 367,000 in 2007). Of these, 530,000 came from Mexico and only 310,000 came from the other 19 countries in the region. At the same time, 641,000 Latin Americans immigrated to Spain (327,000 in 2006 and 314,000 in 2007). In the Spanish group, only 12,000 emigrated from Mexico and 629,000 came from other Latin American countries.

These data indicate that Spain and the United States are the two principal destinations for Latin American migrants. This is mirrored by the fact that Latin Americans are the largest groups of migrants that these countries receive. Around the 2005 year, 44% of all immigrants in the USA and 39% in Spain were from Latin America. In contrast, Latin American migrants composed only 18% of the immigrant population in Japan, less than 12% in Portugal and Italy, less than 6% in Sweden, Canada and Norway, and the numbers were almost insignificant in other OECD countries (Figure 6). However, in Latin America not all countries have the similar migratory patterns. We can identify markedly different migratory patterns for each region and country. On the one hand, Mexicans and Central Americans have a very strong tendency to immigrate to the United States. On the other hand, South Americans show a strong preference for Spain.

**Figure 6.** Latin American Immigrants as a percentage of OECD countries Immigrants. (Circa 2005)



Source: OECD. <[www.stats.oecd.org](http://www.stats.oecd.org)>.

In the first case, between 2000 and 2006, more than 97% of the emigrants from Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala migrated to the United States. The population that emigrated from these countries to Spain or another European country is almost statistically insignificant. There was a similar situation in Honduras for the same time period. There, 84% of its emigrants went to the United States while only 16% migrated to Spain. Similarly, in Cuba there is a strong preference for the USA. Although immigration to the United States is not as strong as it once was and immigration to Spain has become more and more frequent, the ratio was still 3:1 in favor of the United States during the period of 2000 to 2006.

This situation is reversed in the case of South American emigrants. At the aggregate level, less than 30% of South Americans migrate to the United States. Instead, they show a strong preference to emigrate to Spain (and Portugal in the case of Brazil). In Peru, emigration to Spain was almost double than to the USA during the period 2000-2006. Also, in Argentina and Colombia, the ratio was 3:1 in favor of Spain. It is worth noting that the Colombian case is particularly striking, because until a few years ago, most Colombian emigration was aimed at the United States and to a lesser extent, Venezuela.

This preference for Spain is even more pronounced in the cases of Ecuador and Uruguay. In both countries, emigration to Spain was five times greater than to the United States. Ecuador is the country that has had the greatest migratory flow to Spain. As a matter of fact, from 2000 to 2006 almost one in four Latin Americans that arrived in Spain was from Ecuador. Bolivia is perhaps the most extreme case. Between 2000 and 2006, Bolivian emigration was nine (9) times greater to Spain than to the United States. Specifically, more than 200,000 Bolivians immigrated to Spain while only 21,000 went to the United States. Finally, Brazil, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic have a more mixed immigration profile. There, emigration to Spain and the United States was proportionally similar and almost equally divided. Brazil is a special case because emigration to Portugal is as important as Spain. At first glance, Brazilian emigration to the USA appears to be double that of Spain. But, if you consider Portugal, the situation is almost equal.

This migratory specialization is illustrated in Map 2. Here we can fully and clearly identify at least three large migratory regions. Mexico, Central America, Cuba and Haiti show a clear emigratory preference for the United States. In contrast, South American migrants, with the exceptions of Chile, Venezuela and Brazil, strongly prefer to move to Spain. There is also a third area where both migratory destinations are equally important. These countries are: Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Finally, there are the countries which have very low levels of emigration. They are: Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and Chile.

**Map 2.** Latin American Countries According to Principal Destinations of Recent Emigration (2000-2006)



Source: INE, Espana, *Padrón municipal de población*, 2001 a 2007, and Census Bureau, USA, *Current Population Survey*, March Supplement, 2000 a 2006.

### Socio-demographic Profiles of Latin American Migrants

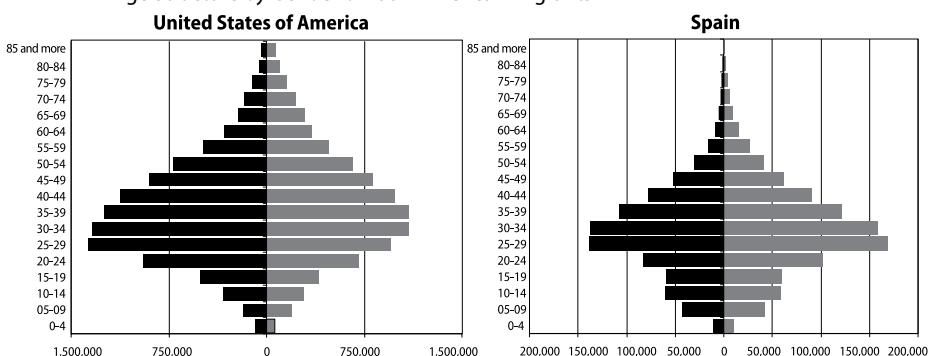
The socio-demographic profile of Latin American immigrants in Spain and the United States shows fairly heterogeneity, depending on the region and country of origin. In some cases the emigrants are primarily male and have a low level of education; in other situations, there are a high proportion of female migrants while in others, we see the participation of senior citizens. The last one indicates that we are talking about a migration which renews itself very slowly. In this section, we give a brief socio-demographic characterization of Latin American immigrants using three measures: age structure, sex and level of education.

## Age Structure

Generally, Latin American migration follows the classic age pattern in that the majority of the emigrants are young, economically active adults. This is true in both the United States and Spain. Figure 7 shows that the large majority of the migrants are between the ages of 20 and 49 years old. In Spain, more than 71% fall in this category and approximately 65% in the United States. This is true for men and women. This age structure reflects the fact that Latin American migration to Spain and the United States is essentially labor-based. Also, the absence of youngster migrants reinforces this idea. Family migration is really very low and statistically insignificant.

Figure 7. The United States of America and Spain, 2008

Age Structure by Gender of Latin American Migrants

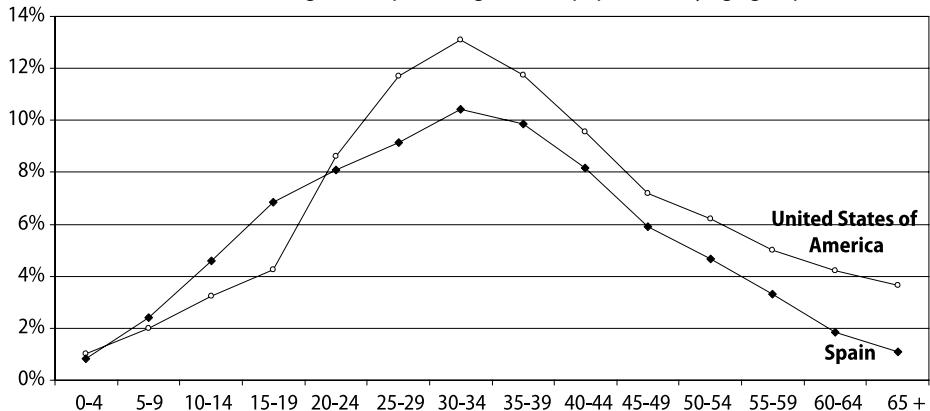


Source: INE, Espana, *Padrón municipal de población*, 2008, and Census Bureau, USA, *Current Population Survey*, March Supplement, 2008.

Since the majority of Latin American migrants are young, they have made a large contribution to the population dynamics of both Spain and the United States. Latin American immigrants between the ages of 25 and 35 constitute 10% and 12% of the resident populations of the same age group in Spain and the USA, respectively. This means that in Spain, 1 in 10 people between these ages is a Latin American immigrant. In the United States, this figure is approximately 1 in 8.

This highlights the large contribution that Latin American immigrants have made to the growth of the populations of young people in Spain and the United States. Since the end of the 20th century, both of these countries experienced the final stages of the Demographic Transition, a phenomenon that occurs primarily in the absolute and relative reduction of children and young people, as direct result of declines in fertility and birth rates. In fact, Spain's fertility rates actually fell below the population replacement level (Adsera, 2006; Lee, 2003; Pérez, 2003; Cooke, 2003.)

**Figure 8.** United States of America and Spain, 2007  
 Latin American immigrants as percentage of total population, by age groups



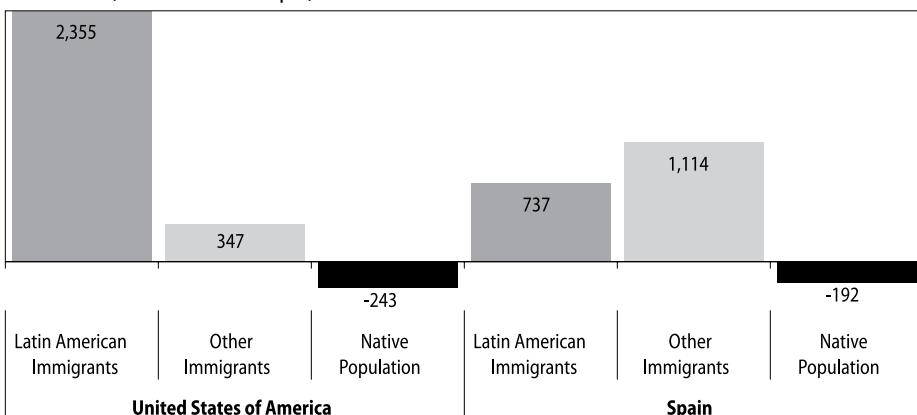
Source: INE, Espanña, *Padrón municipal de población*, 2008, and Census Bureau, USA, *Current Population Survey*, March Supplement, 2008.

Without international immigration between 2002 and 2007, in both countries the populations of people between 20 and 49 years would have been reduced significantly. Specifically, the native populations would have been reduced by almost 192,000 people in Spain and 242,000 in the United States if the immigrants had not arrived. This is important because these are the people who are at the height of their productive and reproductive capacities.

The immigration of young Latin Americans has not only compensated for the declining fertility and birth rates, but it has also caused important growth in the populations of this age group (United Nations, 2001; Domingo i Valls, 2006). Effectively, the immigrants between the ages of 20 and 49 increased the population by 2.7 million people in the United States and by 1.8 million in Spain. Thus, between 2002 and 2005, the population of 20 to 49 year old increased by 2% and 8.5% in the United States and Spain, respectively.

These data show that international immigration greatly contributes to the demographic sustainability of the populations of the United States and Spain. The structural importance of this age group population rests in two complementary factors. First, they are the demographic base that supports the biological reproduction of all human populations. And second, in this age group has the largest proportion of economically active population in each country. Both factors are the basis for demographic, social and economy reproduction of every society.

**Figure 9.** The United States of America and Spain, 2002-2007.  
 Population Growth of 20 to 49 Year-Olds, by Migratory Status  
 (Thousands of People)



Sources: INE, España, Padrón municipal de población 2002-2007, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2002-2007.

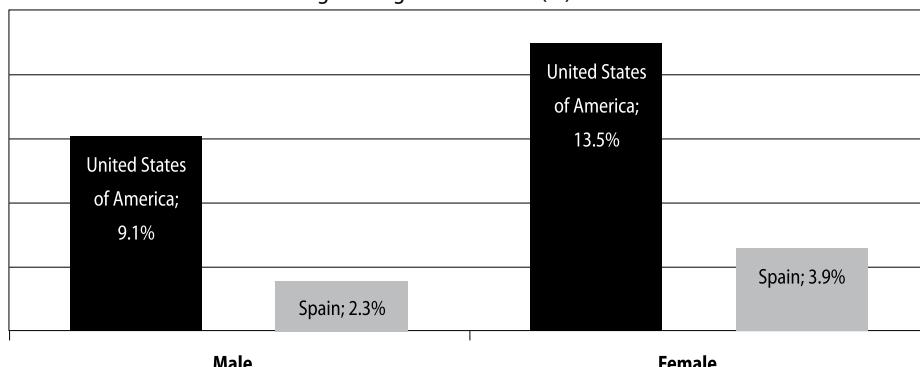
In Spain and the United States, immigration fulfills a similar transcendental demographic function. However, it is true that there are certain specific differences to take into account. In the USA, the contribution of immigrants is based mainly on ones from Latin America. However, the situation in Spain is more balanced. In the USA, Latin American immigrants have contributed with 87% of population growth of the group of 20 a 49 year-olds while in Spain, that number is only 40% for the same population. In other words, the contribution of Latin American immigration to demographic reproduction, society and the economy in the United States is indisputable. Spain, in contrast, has received a wider variety of immigrants, principally of African and European origin. This can be explained by the fact that Latin American immigration to Spain is a relatively recent phenomenon compared to that of the United States.

The longer tradition of Latin American immigration to the United States is also reflected in other indicators as well. One prominent indicator is the number of Latin American immigrants over 60 years old in both Spain and the United States. Labor migration is concentrated among young and active participants. We begin to see the natural aging process of the immigrant population over time, which is then reflected in a higher number of elderly subjects who had immigrated years before. Subsequently, we can expect a low proportion of Spanish immigrants to be over 60 years old, since Latin American immigration to that country is a relatively new phenomenon. In contrast, we can expect that

there will be a higher proportion of elderly immigrants in the United States, since this country has had an extensive history of Latin American immigration.

The data support this hypothesis (Figure 10). In Spain only 3% of all Latin American immigrants are over 60 years old. In the United States, on the other hand, 9.1% of the male migrants and 13.5% of the female ones are over 60 years old. In other words, 1 in 10 Latin American male migrants and 1 in 7 females are over the age of 60 in the USA, while in Spain the over 60 years old immigrants are much smaller. Only 1 in 40 men and one in 25 women are over 60 years old.

**Figure 10.** United States of America and Spain 2008  
Latin American Immigrants Aged 60 or Older (%)



Sources: INE, España, *Padrón municipal de población* 2008, and Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2008*.

The difference in the age structure regarding migrants over 60 years old indicates two different and complementary situations. In the case of the United States, the higher presence of migrants over 60 years old reflects the longer migratory tradition and history of Latin American emigration to that country. This is reflected to a certain degree in the aging of the permanent immigrants to the USA. However, the high presence of 20-49 year olds also indicates that Latin American immigration to the United States is constantly renewing itself. There is 150 year-old tradition of Latin American migration to that country (Durand and Massey, 2003). It is also true that this process has been cyclical and that has increased significantly in recent decades.

While there has always been Latin American emigration to Spain, it is only in the last decade that it has become statistically significant. This is due to two factors. Until the late 1980s, Spain was not a migratory attraction country. To the contrary, it was a country with high emigration to other countries, especially other European ones (Domingo I Valls, 2006, Cabré, 1999). Also, Latin American migration

was concentrated to the United States until the beginning of the 1990s. In 1996, Latin American migrants represented less than 0.5% of the resident population of Spain. That figure actually reached almost 5% in 2008. The immigration rate of Latin American increased almost ten times in only 12 years.

#### *Sex composition on Emigration*

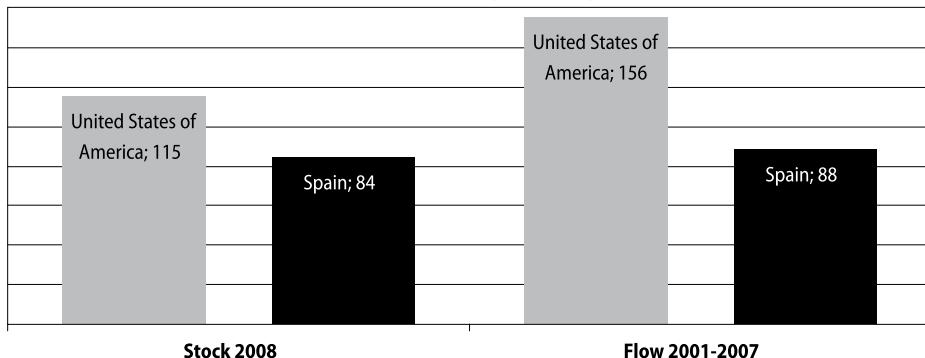
One demographic dimension which distinguishes and characterizes the migratory process is the varying participation that men and women have in each flow. Sometimes there are flows which are primarily female and at other times, principally male. There are also flows which are characterized by equal sex distribution. The difference in the sex composition of a migration is usually the result of the labor conditions and social integration in the destination country and how these conditions affect men and women, which are primarily defined by gender relations. Controlling for sex helps us to understand how varying social conditions affect people, especially women, in every sphere of social life (In our case, migration). We can observe divisions based on gender relationship in the case of Latin American migration.

Comparisons of sex ratios (Number of males per 100 females), shown in figure 11, from the Latin American migrations to Spain and the United States give us an impression of the differences in their gender compositions. If we observe the accumulated stock or the recent flows (2001 to 2007) of migrant residents in both countries, we can clearly see that there was a higher participation of female migrants to Spain while in the United States there was a greater male participation. Among the Latin American migratory stock in Spain, there were only 84 men for every 100 women while in the USA, the situation was inverted. In that country, there were 115 men for every 100 women. These differences are even more marked in the case of the recent migratory flow. In Spain, the ratio has not changed a lot, with fewer than 90 men for every 100 women. However, in the United States the sex composition difference has increased to more than 150 men for every 100 women.

As it can be observed, Latin American migration to the United States is primarily masculine in nature while Spanish immigrants tend to be female. This greater presence of female migrants in Spain (and in general, the rest of Europe) has been widely documented in diverse texts and research (Pedonne, 2006). This female predominance can be explained by Latin American women's incorporation into the service industry, especially caretaking (children, elder people, and sick people, among others) and domestic service (housecleaning). This incorporation has been dubbed as the transnationalization of the maternal and industry care (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Herrera, 2005).

The predominance of male migrants in the United States can be explained by the long-standing migratory tradition of Mexicans and Central Americans who tend to work as agricultural or construction day-laborers. These are economic sectors which are traditionally and overwhelmingly male (Bustamante, 1997; Canales, 2007).

**Figure 11.** The United States of America and Spain, 2001 to 2008  
Sex Ratio of Latin American Immigrant by Migratory Form



Sources: INE, España, Padrón municipal de población, 2001 to 2008, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2001 to 2008.

The different behaviors of the migrants (stock and flow) in both countries illustrate a second level of differentiation in the dynamics and migratory behavior of men and women in the United States as opposed to Spain. The first level of differentiation is in the sex ratios, seen above. The second level refers to the sex composition among the stock and flow in both countries. In Spain, there are hardly any differences in this sense. However, in the USA, the sex ratio in the flow is markedly higher than that the one prevailing in the stock, although in both, there is a male predominance (Figure 11).

In the United States, more than 60% of the Latin Americans that arrive every year are male and less than 40% are female. However, this relationship begins to modify when we talk about permanent migrants. Of this group, only 53% are men and 47% are women. These differences indicate that Latin American women have a greater propensity to establish permanent residency in the United States. In contrast, Latin American men are less likely to do so. Indeed, if these propensities to settle in the destination country (U.S. in this case) are different, then there should be significant differences in sex ratio between the flow and stock migration.

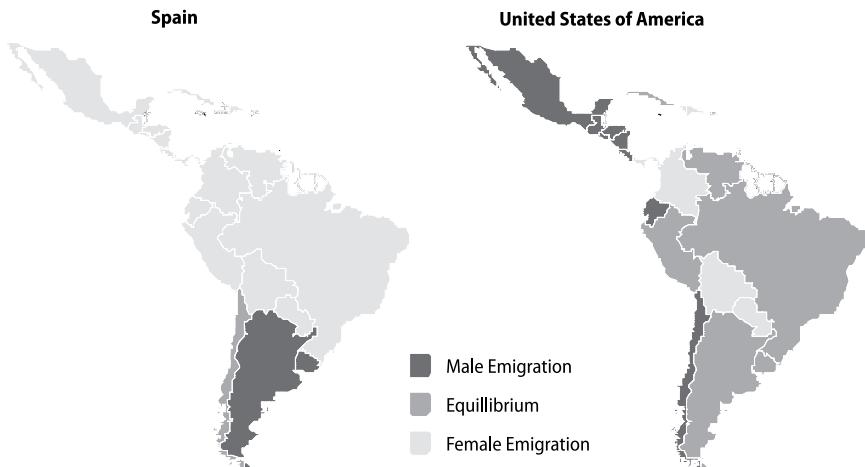
These observed differences illustrate the different migratory behavior between Latin American men and women in the United States. More men than women tend to migrate to the United States. However, among those same migrants, the women are more likely to establish permanent residence there. In contrast, men tend to have a circular and temporary migration and eventually they return to their communities of origin.

In the case of the United States, this different migratory pattern is, to some degree, expected, especially if we consider the importance of Mexican and Central American migration. Their migration has traditionally been temporary and circular. It is well-known that temporary migration is essentially masculine in nature. This is reflected in the high masculine sex ratio which prevails in the annual flow. However, the return of these migrants would significantly reduce the differences in the sex ratio of the stock.

In contrast, apparently, there are no significant behavioral differences between the migratory flow and stock in Spain. This indicates that men and women have a similar propensity to establish permanent residence and/or return to their countries of origin. In other words, whether the propensity is to go or stay, it is practically the same for men and women. With no doubt, this is an important behavioral difference between Latin American emigrants to Spain and those that head to the United States.

A specific analysis of sex differences in migration by origin-destiny country offers us a regional view of these variations (Map 3). In the case of Spain, in general, there is a pattern of feminization, with the exceptions of Argentina, Uruguay, and to a lesser extent, Chile. In the other countries, there is a clear domination of female emigration to Spain. Actually, in El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, women represented almost two thirds of those countries' total emigration to Spain.

**Map 3.** Sex composition of emigration to Spain and the United States of America, according to countries of origin  
Latin America, 2006-2008



Sources: INE, España, Padrón municipal de población, 2006 to 2008, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006 to 2008.

When discussing Latin American emigration to the USA, there is a more heterogeneous situation. Along with countries that show a high masculine predominance, there are also countries which have a highly feminized migration as well. In the first case, there are the countries that have a long-standing tradition of migration to the United States. They are: Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Ecuador. In the second case, there are countries that also have a long history of migration like: Colombia, The Dominican Republic and Haiti.

It is interesting to contrast migration selectivity by sex based on the specific Latin American country of origin, as shown in table 2. First, there are countries where migration to both countries is primarily female. This is the case of Colombia, The Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Paraguay and Panama. Furthermore, the migration sex ratio in these countries is less than 80 men for every 100 women. That is, more than 56% of these migrants are female. There are also countries where the migratory pattern is divided. Specifically, in some countries, there is a pattern of feminine migration to Spain and masculine migration to the United States. These countries are: Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

**Table 2.** The United States of America and Spain, 2006 to 2008  
Sex Ratio of Latin American Immigrant, according Country of Origin

The United States of America			SPAIN		
Male	Equilibrium	Female	Male	Equilibrium	Female
Guatemala 171	Argentina 104	Haiti 92	Argentina 107	Chile 99	Ecuador 94
Honduras 134	Uruguay 104	Colombia 79	Uruguay 105	Venezuela	88
Mexico 125	Venezuela 101	Dominican Rep. 77		Peru	87
Chile 123	Brazil 99	Bolivia 77		Costa Rica	87
Costa Rica 121	Peru 99	Paraguay 63		Cuba	81
Ecuador 118	Cuba 96	Panama 59		Panama	79
El Salvador 110				Bolivia	78
Nicaragua 105				Mexico	78
				Colombia	76
				Guatemala	71
				Brazil	69
				El Salvador	64
				Dominican Rep.	58
				Paraguay	53
				Honduras	52
				Nicaragua	51

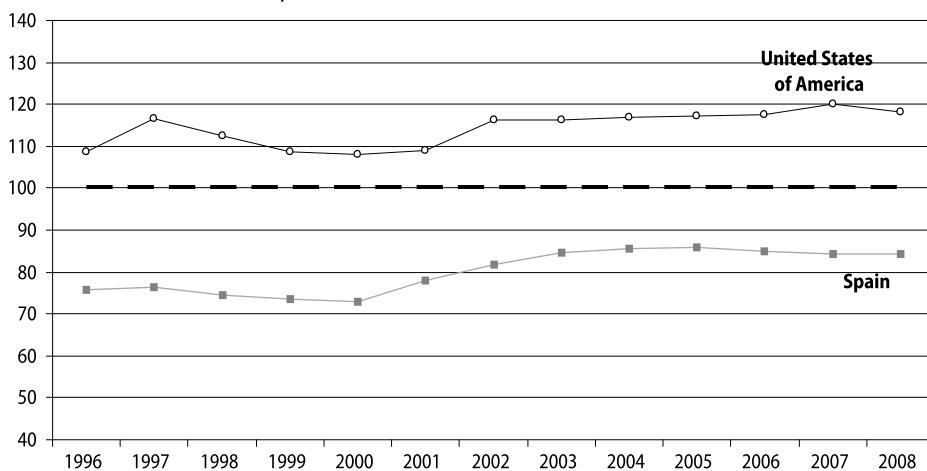
Sources: INE, España, Padrón municipal de población, 2006 to 2008, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006 to 2008.

There are countries where the emigration to Spain is masculine while it is feminine in nature to the United States or vice versa. In other situations, emigration is

primarily male to both countries. In addition, other countries have a more balanced migration pattern or they have a masculine pattern to the United States but a more equal pattern to Spain (in the case of Chile). Others have a more feminine emigration to Spain, but it is more balanced to the United States (Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Cuba). Finally, still others have a masculine emigration pattern to Spain, but it is more balanced to the United States. This is the case in Argentina and Uruguay. In all of these situations, there is a migratory pattern which tends to be more masculine or feminine, but only to one of the destination while the other one tends to have a more equal gender balance.

Finally, it is worth noting that over the long term, the sex ratio has been relatively stable although there have been some cyclical variations which do not alter the structural pattern, as it can be observed in figure 12. In the United States, for example, the sex ratio has maintained itself at more than 115 men for every 100 women since the mid '90s. It was only from 1999 to 2001 that the sex ratio dropped somewhat, but this never indicated a feminization of the migration pattern. Something similar but inverted has occurred in the case of Latin American emigration to Spain. Here, the sex ratio has always been less than 85 men for every 100 women, although it has modified a bit in recent years.

**Figure 12.** United States of America and Spain, 1996-2008  
Sex Ratio of Latin American Immigrants  
(Number of Men per 100 Women)

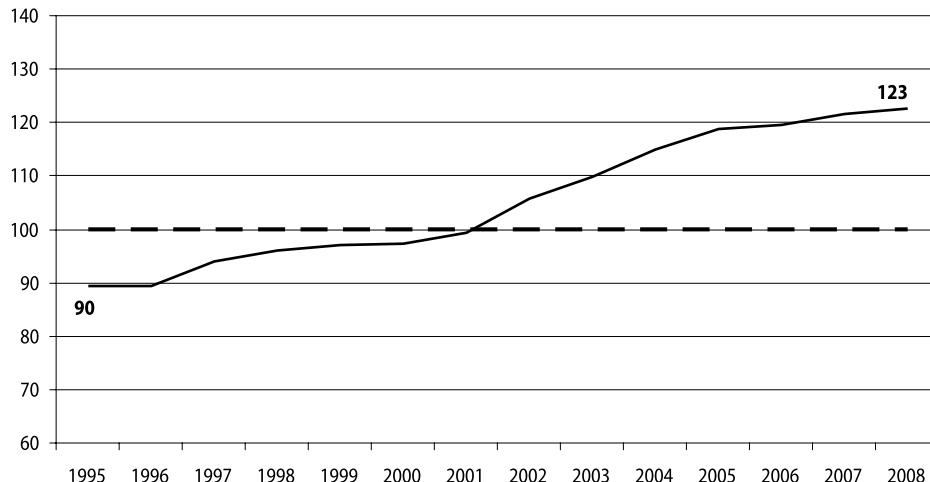


Sources: INE, España, Padrón municipal de población, 1996 to 2008, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1996 to 2008.

The relative stability of the sex ratio indicates that there are structural differences between Latin American emigration to the United States (more masculine) and

emigration to Spain (more feminine). Furthermore, the stability of this pattern applies to almost all the countries in the region. The only exception to this is Central American emigration to the United States (Figure 13). Here, emigration was markedly feminine in the mid '90s and it has been markedly masculine in the last few years. From 1995 to 1996, the sex ratio was 90 men for every 100 women, while that same ratio has been more than 120 men per 100 women since 2006.

**Figure 13.** United States of America, 1995-2008  
Sex Ratio of Central American Immigrants  
(Number of Men per 100 Women)



Sources: Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1995 to 2008*.

#### *Level of Education*

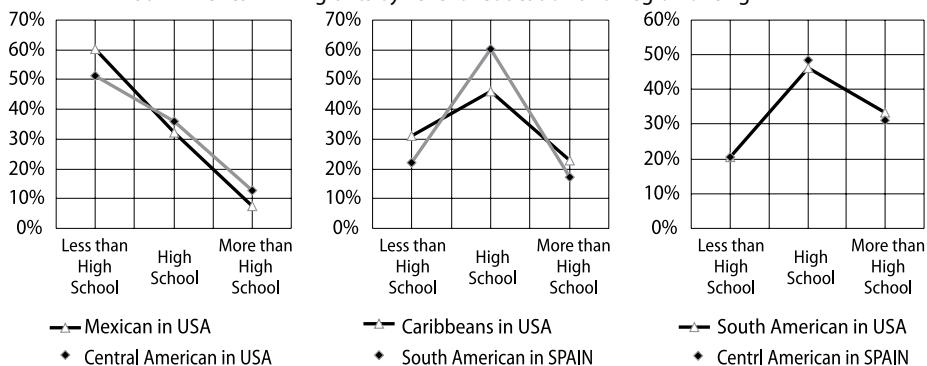
Migrants' educational level is also a factor of the migratory selectivity and differentiation which characterizes individual flows. Indeed, we can describe migration flows in terms of the average level of education of the migrants. This allows us to analyze and compare the specific characteristics of each migration flow. Furthermore, by comparing migrants' average level of education compared to the norm for their own country or society of origin; we can analyze the level and type of selectivity which prevails in migration flows. For example, there are countries and regions where the selectivity is in favor of those who have high levels of education and there are ones in which the opposite situation is true.

There appear to be three types of migration flows from Latin America to the United States and Spain in which this type of analysis is appropriate. In the first case, the migrants from Mexico and Central America who go to the United States

overwhelmingly have very low levels of education. This is true compared to both other Latin American migration flows as well as compared to migrants from other regions too. Here, 60% of Mexicans and 51% of Central Americans have not finished high school. Furthermore, only 8% of Mexicans and 13% of Central Americans have some post-secondary education (Figure 14).

**Figure 14.** United States of America and Spain, 2007

Latin American Immigrants by Level of education and Region of Origin



Sources: INE, España, *Padrón municipal de población*, 2007, and Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement*, 2007.

In contrast, compared to other Latin American emigrants, the South American migrants who immigrate to the United States and the Central Americans who move to Spain, tend to show higher than average levels of education. In both cases, nearly one third of the migrants have university or professional studies (although not necessarily completed). Additionally, almost half of them (between 46% and 48%) have finished high school. Furthermore, only 20% of these migrants have less than high school studies.

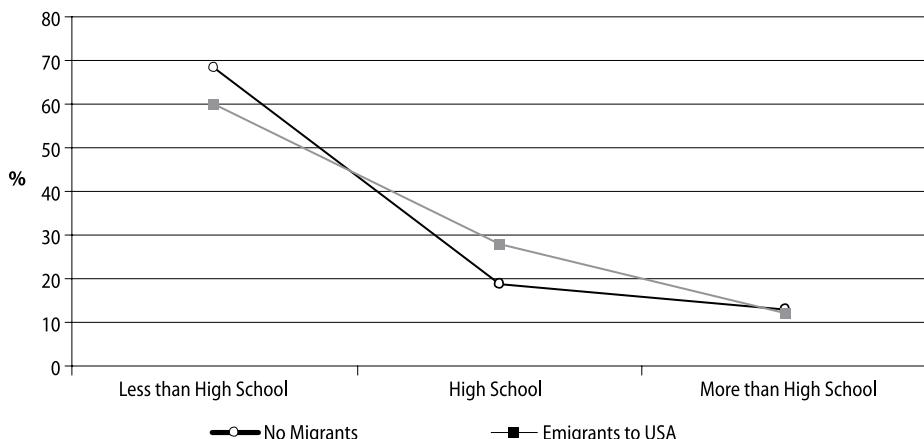
Finally, the South Americans that migrate to Spain and the Caribbean that go to the United States tend to have an intermediate level of education. In other words, their level of education is much higher than the Mexicans and Central Americans in the USA, but lower than the second group from South America and Caribbean. Specifically, there are a high percentage of migrants who have finished high school but not a particularly large number of people who have professional or university studies.

Considering these facts, it is interesting to compare the educational profile of the South American migrants that go to the United States in relation to the ones that go to Spain. While the immigrants in Spain demonstrate a high level of education, the ones that immigrate to the United States have an even higher one. This difference is due to at least two factors. The first one is the longer migratory tradition of South Americans going to the United States. The second factor is due to the differences in

the countries of origin of the South Americans who go to Spain as opposed to those who go to the United States, as we saw above.

However, despite these differences, it is very interesting to note that in almost all these cases, the migrants have a higher level of education than the prevailing one in the Latin American population. Overall in Latin American America, there is a descending curve of education. That is, as students progress through their educational trajectory, fewer and fewer students continue their studies. The differences between countries can be quite pronounced depending on whether the major turning point of the curve is in middle school or high school.

**Figure 15.** Mexico, 2007. Population over 25 Years Old, by Educational Level and Migratory Status



Sources: Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2007*, and INEGI, Mexico, *II Conteo de Población, 2005*.

Even though Mexican migrants have the lowest levels of education, we can still see migratory selectivity in this group. As it can be observed in figure 15, the proportion of emigrants with low levels of education (less than high school) is smaller than that of the Mexican population as a whole. Also, the proportion of migrants that have an intermediate level of education is higher than that of non-migrants. Finally, among migrants and non-migrants, the proportion of individuals that have high levels of education (more than high school) is very similar in both groups.

#### *Labor Participation of Latin American Immigrants*

In spite of the differences of Latin American emigrants in regard to levels of education, age and sex, most of the migrants face similar labor conditions in their destination countries. The migrants face similar working conditions which are

marked by social exclusion and vulnerability. In this regard, an analysis of the socio-economic profile of migrants will allow us to illustrate the precarious economic and living conditions of many of the Latin American emigrants. In the following section, we will present statistics on job position and income levels of Latin American immigrants in Spain and the United States.

### Economic Participation

Latin American migration to Spain and the United States is essentially driven by labor and economic factors. This is the reason that we see very high levels of participation among economically active adults. It should be noted that this high level of economic activity occurs across all levels of education, as we documented above. However, when we compare the labor situation of men and women, we see important differences (Figure 16).

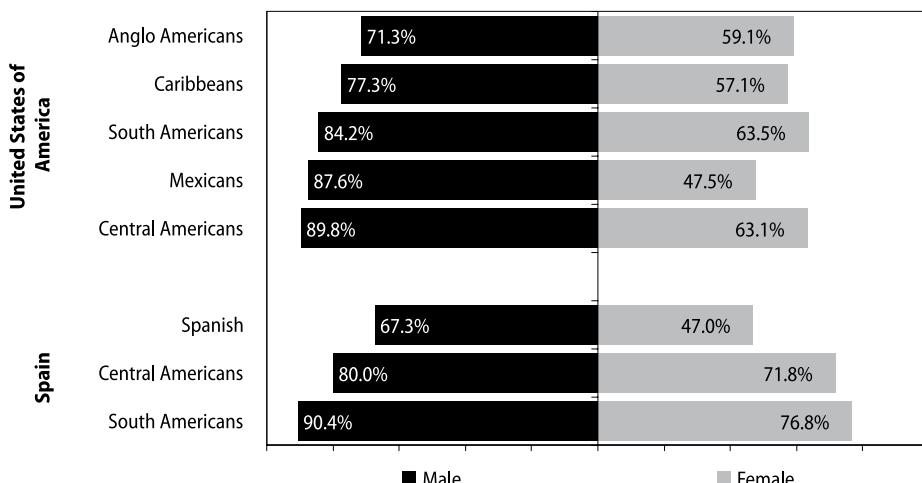
Latin American male immigrants systematically demonstrate a higher than average level of participation in the labor market than the native populations of Spain and the United States. In Spain, South American male migrants have a labor participation rate of 90% and Central Americans and Caribbeans have an 80% rate. Both these statistics are far higher than the 67% of the native Spanish population. The situation is similar in the United States. Mexicans and Central and South Americans have an average participation rate which is between 13 and 19 percentage points higher than Anglo-American men. Only the Caribbean male immigrants (Cubans, Dominicans and Haitians) have a rate which is closer to the average for Anglo-Americans. Even so, it is still six points higher.

The situation is somewhat different for women, however. In Spain, there is a similarly high level of female immigrant participation in the labor force while in the USA there is greater heterogeneity among the female migrants according to country and region of origin. In the Spanish case, all female Latin American emigrants maintain a high level of economic participation, generally above 70%. However, in contrast, only 47% of native Spanish women of working age actually participate in the labor force. So, the differences between native and immigrant women appear to be larger than the male ones when we discuss women's economic activity in Spain.

The situation is very different in the United States. Participation appears to be driven by region of origin. Female immigrants from Central and South America show around 5% higher level of economic participation than native Anglo-American women. In contrast, Caribbean women show levels of employment that are very similar to the native one. Finally, Mexican female immigrants have a level of

economic participation that is much lower than other immigrants' levels as well as that of Anglo-American women.

**Figure 16. United States of America and Spain, 2007**  
Economic Activity Rates, by Migratory Status and Sex



Source: Ministerio del Trabajo, Spain, Encuesta de Población, Primer Trimestre, 2007, and Census Bureau, United States of America, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2007.

In both countries, as you can see, there is sex differentiation when we discuss Latin American male and female immigrants' employment rates. In Spain, both male and female migrants have levels of economic activity that are much higher than the national average. In contrast, in the United States, this is true only for male immigrants. There, the situation is more heterogeneous for women, but in general they tend to have a level of economic participation which is similar or lower than the national average.

The case of Spanish highlights the particular situation of female immigrants in which they have employment levels that are much higher than the national average, especially for women. This is very relevant to the fact that Latin American migration to Spain is markedly female in nature, as we previously discussed. This means that we are talking about a migration that is female and labor-based.

### Employment

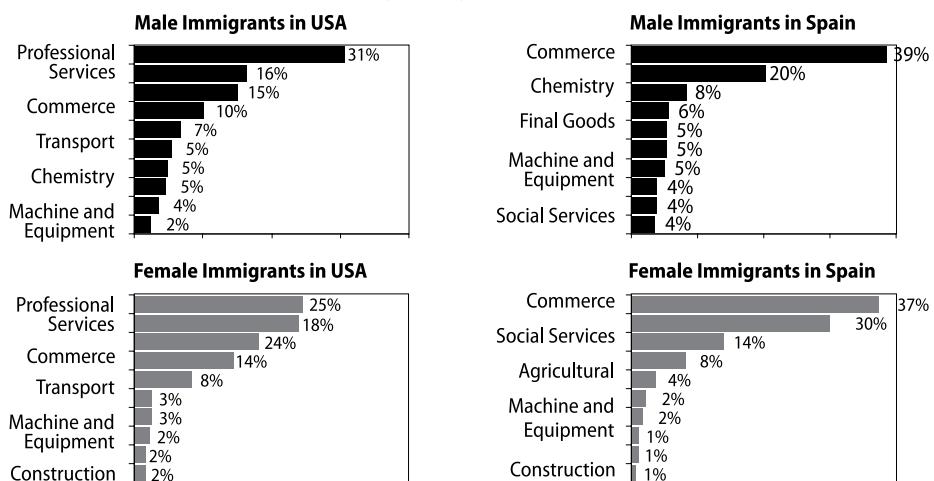
The previous data clearly illustrate the hypothesis that Latin American migration is essentially motivated by occupational factors. By the same token, the migrants are exposed to conditions of vulnerability and insecurity that characterize the changes in the labor market in the developed nations. These changes occurred due to processes

of globalization and labor flexibility. They are marked by the segmentation and polarization of different occupations and the employment structure itself (Canales, 2007, Sassen 1998). In this context, it is important to take note of sex differences regarding employment conditions and how they are reconfigured in the case of Latin American immigrants.

Firstly, we can see that in both Spain and the United States, Latin American migrants tend to work in very specific employment sectors. The men work predominately in the construction industry. This industry employs 31% of the male migrant work force in the United States and 39% in Spain (Figure 17). The labor situation for Latin American women is more heterogeneous. In the United States, almost 50% of them work in professional and social services. Another 18% work in personal services industry. These are very different fields, especially in terms of remuneration and labor conditions. Without a doubt, professionals have better labor conditions than in the social and personal services. These differences are probably due to the fact that immigrants from South America tend to have higher levels of education than the ones from Mexico and Central America. Therefore, South Americans are more likely to have a professional career while Mexican and Central American women are more likely to work in the personal services (Canales, 2006).

**Figure 17.** United States of America and Spain, 2007

Latin American Immigrant by Employment Sector and Sex



Sources: Ministerio del Trabajo, Spain, *Encuesta de Población Activa, Primer Trimestre, 2007*, and Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2007*.

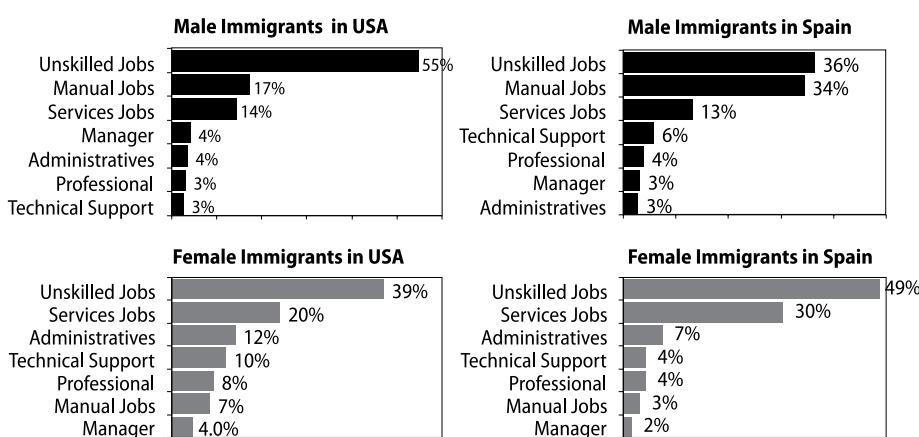
In Spain, on the other hand, also shown in figure 17, only 14% of the Latin American immigrant women work in professional services, 37% are employed in the personal services and 30% work in the commercial sector. Compared to the United

States, there is greater concentration into fewer labor sectors and there is also greater homogeneity in employment. This could be due to the fact that when compared to the USA, Latin American migrants come from a smaller group of countries, which could explain this greater homogeneity in employment.

These figures are important because these are the employment sectors which have high levels of job insecurity that make the migrants more vulnerable economically. To illustrate this, we can analyze the type of occupations in which Latin American immigrants work (Figure 18). In this regard, the data speak for themselves. In almost all cases, the majority of the jobs available were for unskilled labor. In the United States, 33% of the Latin American men and 39% of the women were employed in these kinds of jobs.

In Spain, the employment situation is somewhat different and more polarized in terms of sex differences. On the one hand, 47% of Latin American women work in unskilled positions and other hand, only 27% of men do so. Subsequently, unskilled jobs are not the norm for Latin American men. As a matter of fact, 34% of them can be classified as skilled manual laborers (probably in construction). This higher participation in more skilled labor positions is probably due to the fact the men employed in these positions are from South American countries. As we saw before, these immigrants are more likely to be recent migrants, come from fewer countries, and tend to have an intermediate to high level of education which then qualifies them for better position.

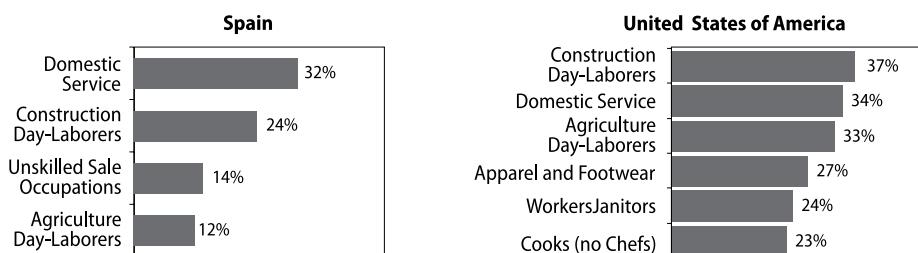
**Figure 18.** United States of America and Spain, 2007  
Latin American Immigrants by Occupation and Sex



Sources: Ministerio del Trabajo, Spain, *Encuesta de Población Activa, Primer Trimestre, 2007*, and Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2007*.

In addition to these differences, it is interesting to note the influence that Latin American immigration has on particular occupations in both Spain and the United States. In the case of the United States, for example, Latin American immigrants compose 37% of day-laborers in construction, 34% of domestic workers, 33% of agricultural workers, and 27% of all employees in the textile and shoe industries (Figure 19). In Spain, as well, Latin American immigrants compose 32% of domestic service workers and 24% of day-laborers in the construction industry. These large contributions of workers illustrate the dependency that certain industries in both countries have on Latin American immigration. The case of domestic service workers is especially important because it directly highlights not only migratory differentiation, but also social class distinctions that limit and contextualize Latin American immigrants' social and economic integration into the societies of the developed world.

**Figure 19.** United States of America and Spain, 2007.  
Latin American Immigrants in Selected Occupations



Sources: Ministerio del Trabajo, Spain, *Encuesta de Población Activa, Primer Trimestre, 2007*, and Census Bureau, United States of America, *Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2007*.

## Conclusions

International migration is one of the best examples to illustrate structural inequalities between the countries and regions associated with globalization. Latin America is not immune to these processes. Actually, the mobility of its population has contributed to the diversity and ever-increasing complexity of migration patterns. As we can see, one of the most relevant facts about Latin America is that it has changed from being a region that once attracted migrants to a region of emigration, contributing to the great march from the South to the North. This mirrors world population movements in this era of globalization.

Effectively, Latin American migration has not only intensified, but rather it has *extensified*. This is true in terms of its origins, destination countries and its migration forms. Until the 1970s, Latin American emigration was almost exclusively intra-regional and it was primarily among neighboring countries. Today, in contrast, we

can observe two important modifications. First, these intra-regional movements have spread beyond cross-border flows. Secondly, emigration has increased exponentially towards the developed world, especially the U.S., and more recently in Europe, Japan and Australia (Pellegrino and Martinez, 2001).

In this paper, we have used recent statistical information to document the characteristics of Latin American emigration to the United States and Spain. As we have seen, these two countries are the primary destinations of Latin American emigrants. To this effect, we have seen that this new emigration is directly linked to changes in the production structure and labor markets in the developed economies. These changes are a result of the processes of employment polarization and segmentation in a globalized world. In this sense, the integration of immigrants into the U.S. and Spanish economies is constrained by the contractual processes of deregulation and labor flexibility of markets, giving rise to new forms of labor differentiation and segregation (Stalker, 2000).

Indeed, different forms of labor flexibility directly affect the structure of occupations, employment levels and wages, as well as labor relations. The international employment structure has been transformed to favor part-time jobs, working at home and other forms of outsourcing. This inevitably leads to job insecurity and increased vulnerability of workers to these new labor market operating conditions (Castells, 1998).

This resulting heterogeneity is the basis for new forms of polarization and segmentation of labor markets. They result in different forms of exclusion, discrimination and social segregation which affect migrant workers, among others (Sassen and Smith, 1992). In particular, the strategies of flexibility and labor deregulation are the basis for new types of employment for the migrant population. Therefore, this situation has direct implications on the dynamics of migration and their changes in the last decade. The structural situation allows us to explain not only the growth of migration, but also its new forms, socio-demographic profiles and employment conditions, all of which we have documented above.

In general, there has been an increase in emigration in all Latin American countries, though not in the same proportions. Without a doubt, Mexican migration is the largest. This group currently contributes more than 60% of Latin American emigrants to the United States. However, there are two facts we should take into account. First, emigration from even small countries is increasing. This is the case of El Salvador, which has the highest per capita emigration rate to the United States in Latin America. Also, Ecuador has the largest volume of migrants to Spain. Secondly, in contrast to Mexican migration which is almost exclusively to the United States, the situation in the rest of Latin America is more complex. Europe has become a

destination which is equally or more important than the United States for Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Colombians, and more recently, Argentines. Similarly, Japan is now an important destination for Brazilians and to a lesser extent, Peruvians.

The socio-demographic profile is complex and diverse. In general, Latin American emigration is labor-driven. It essentially involves young, economically active adults aged 15 to 39. However, there have been some exceptions. The most extreme case is that of Cuban migration, which was renovated in the last decade as a result of the crisis affecting the Cuban economy in the nineties. However, the new influx has not been enough to reverse the aging process of the Cuban population that now lives in the United States.

Accordingly, there is wide diversity in the composition of migrant populations. Migration to Spain is principally female in nature, while in the United States, the situation is more heterogeneous. Mexican and Central American migrants in the United States are primarily male. In contrast, Dominican, Haitian, Colombian, Bolivian and other South American emigrants to the United States tend to be female.

In terms of the employment of Latin American immigrants, the situation is not very diverse. In particular, we note that, with some exceptions, Latin Americans tend to be exposed to varying conditions of precarious employment and occupational segregation. In this regard, we presented data which allow us to document three different aspects of this particularly vulnerable labor situation.

- First, Latin American immigrants have a systematically higher level of economic participation than the native populations of both Spain and the United States.
- Second, this high level of employment is frequently marked by job placement in positions which are unstable, precarious, and unskilled.
- Finally, this high level of employment insecurity and vulnerability means that Latin American migrants often have lower levels of social protection and more instability. They are strongly affected by deregulation and the precariousness of their working conditions since they often find themselves employed in domestic service as well as the agricultural and construction industries.

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