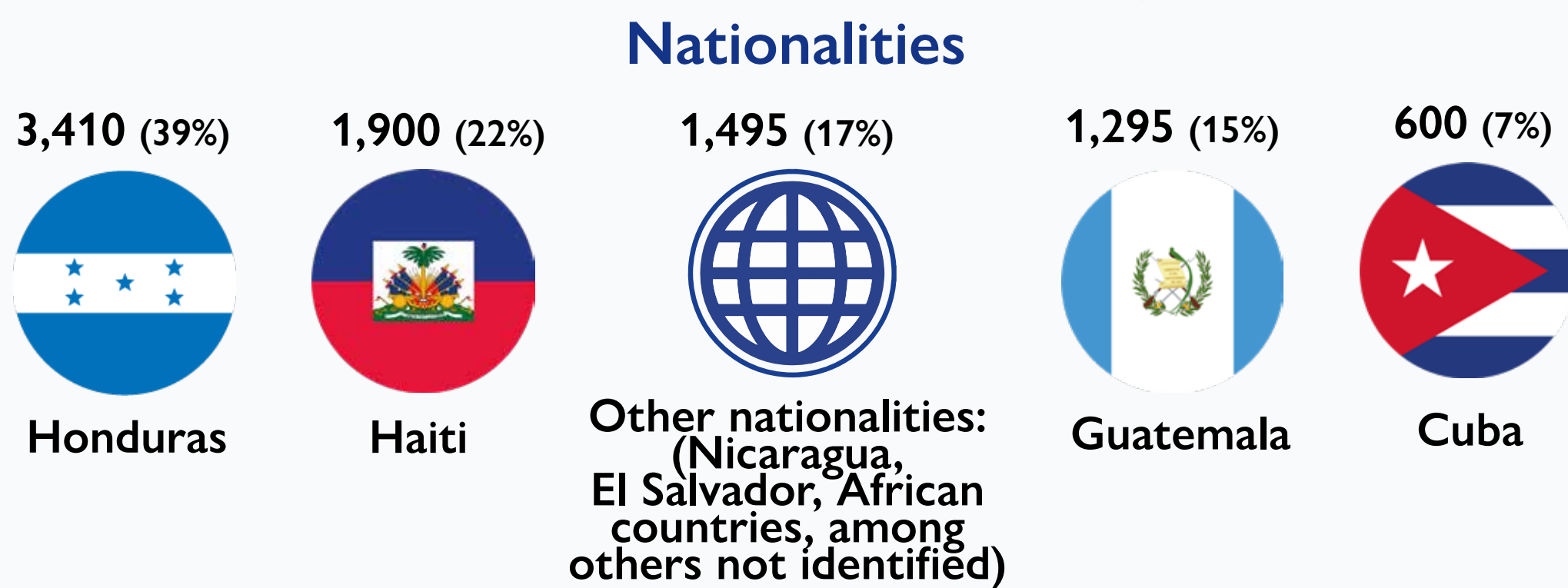
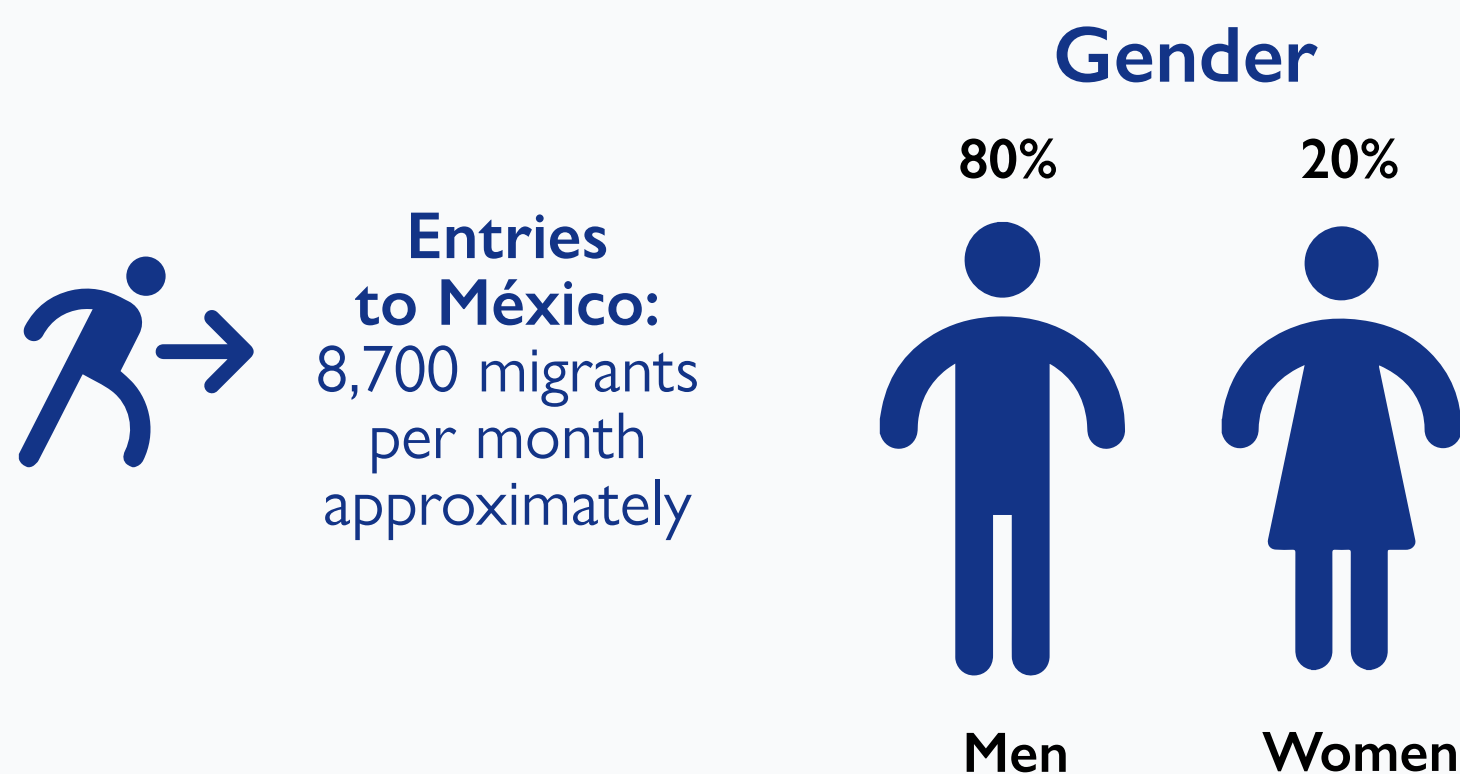


▶ Highlights

**i** **IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOWS**

An irregular migration flow is understood to be the number of international migrants who arrive (enter) or depart (exit) a country during a period established irregularly through unofficial crossing points. These data are a dynamic measure for counting the number of people who cross a border and include those migrants who cross one or more times in a set period.

The data collected show the perception of key informants, so the data is interpreted as averages and general estimates of the situation.



**Exits from Mexico:**  
No exits from Mexican territory were identified under an irregular transit migration flow.

**People stranded at the border:**  
No stranded people were identified in the border communities of southern Mexico.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sources: 7 Key informants

The DTM (Displacement Tracking Matrix), through the sub-components flow monitoring and mobility tracking, is a methodology whose purpose is to quantify and analyze trends in migration flows and the presence of migrants in specific locations during a specific period. Data were collected from face-to-face interviews with strategically selected key informants from the civil society, non-governmental organizations, and government entities.

Information was obtained from interviews with key informants from the Directorate of Migration and International Politics of the Tapachula City Council, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), Ayuda en Acción (Help in Action) México, the Mexican Red Cross, the La 72 Migrant Shelter, and the Civil Society. In addition, interviews were conducted with local transporters and merchants. These interviews were carried out in Ciudad Hidalgo, Tapachula (Chiapas), and Tenosique (Tabasco) during the month of June 2021.

The data collected are the result of the systematic recording of field observations; they show the perception of key informants consulted on transit migration flows<sup>1</sup>, under a daytime schedule. In both cases, estimates may be biased due to the difficulty of estimating irregular flows that are not recorded by the authorities. Furthermore, there are important discrepancies between the estimates of population flows by different key informants, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Therefore, the results of this report are general approximations of the situation.

## LOCATION



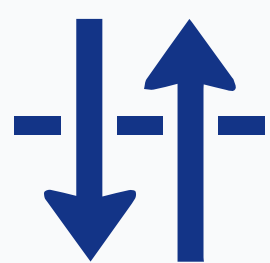
<sup>1</sup> This report does not contemplate the quantification or characterization of irregular cross-border migration flows.



Suchiate River, Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico © IOM 2021



In March and April 2021, the Government of Mexico met with its counterparts from Honduras and Guatemala in order to implement measures aimed at containing migration. In addition, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) agreed with the Government of the United States a deployment of more than 10,000 soldiers on the southern border<sup>2</sup>. The Mexican Government is committed to a migration policy of containment, which continued during the May.



With the measures taken in 2020 by Mexico and Guatemala to contain migration on the southern border, the presence of the National Guard and the National Institute of Migration is now permanent. These are checkpoints with the presence of elements, not systematic travel documentation control. The purpose of this presence is to monitor the area and, in suspicious cases, request the relevant documentation. In the same way, they are in charge of providing care to those who apply for refugee status.



At the end of April, President AMLO met with the governors of Tabasco and Chiapas to discuss an increase in military presence on the southern border of Mexico with the purpose of protecting migrants, particularly children, and avoiding potential negative situations against this population<sup>3</sup>.



Building on its containment strategy, the Mexican Government is making efforts to extend the "Sembrando Vida" (Sowing Life) program<sup>4</sup> in El Salvador and Honduras. In different press conferences, the president has stated that, in Honduras, 431 growers are already planting trees. In El Salvador there are already 1,070 growers registered in this program<sup>5</sup>.



The recent harmonization of the "Migration Act" and the "Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum Act regarding migrant children", which defines that girls, boys and adolescent cannot be detained or confined in migration stations, has generated a new dynamic in migration flows.



Key informants indicate that, since the deployment of the National Guard to contain irregular migration on the southern border, migrants are choosing to diversify their migration routes to avoid detention. This situation increases the vulnerability risk of migrants by exposing them to human trafficking by organized crime networks that operate in these sectors.

<sup>2</sup> Animal Político (Political Animal). AMLO agrees with the US to have 10,000 soldiers prevent migrants from crossing the southern border. (April 12, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> Martínez, S., La Razón. AMLO: Military presence will increase on the southern border to protect migrant children. (April 21, 2021)

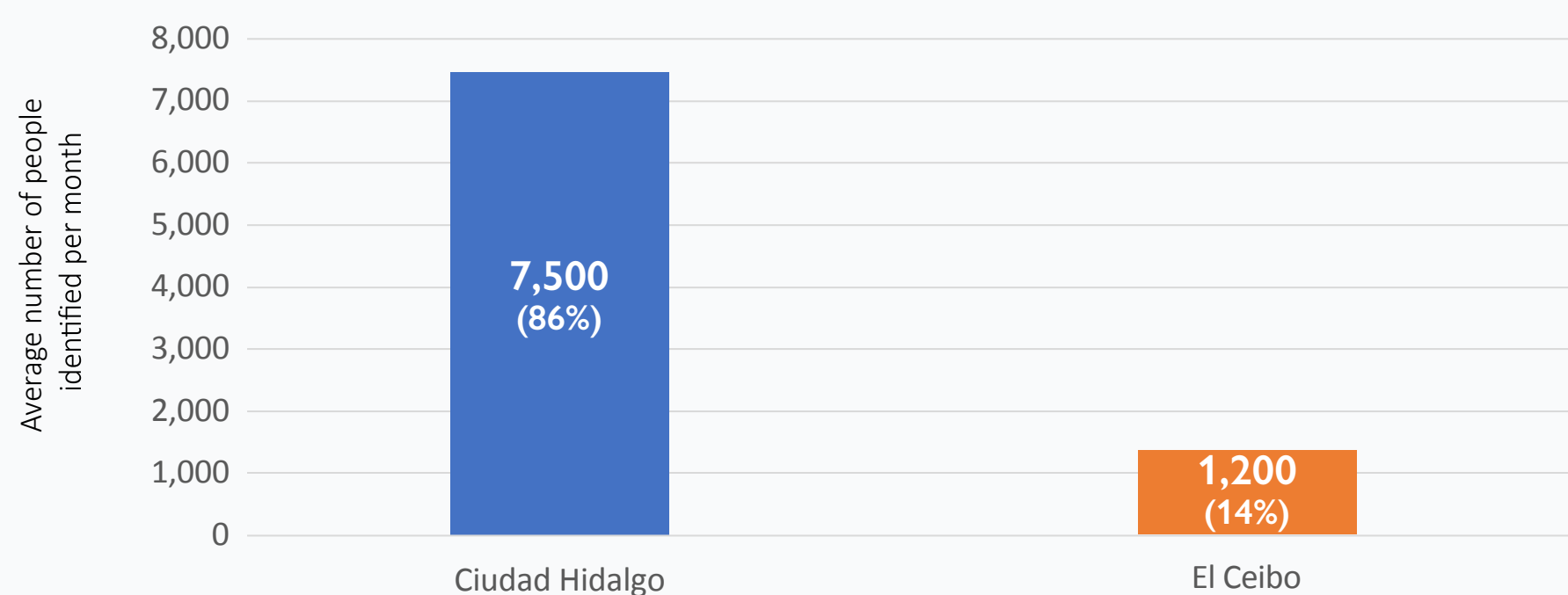
<sup>4</sup> This program of the Mexican Government involves the promotion of planting fruit or timber trees. Its objectives are to rescue the countryside, reactivate the local economy, and regenerate the social fabric of the communities. <https://www.gob.mx/bienestar/acciones-y-programas/programa-sembrando-vida>

<sup>5</sup> Garduño, R y Martínez, F., Sembrando Vida already has experience in Central America: AMLO. (23 April 2021)



## IRREGULAR INCOMING MIGRATION FLOWS

**Graph 1. Estimate of irregular migration flow entering Mexico by border location, May 2021.**



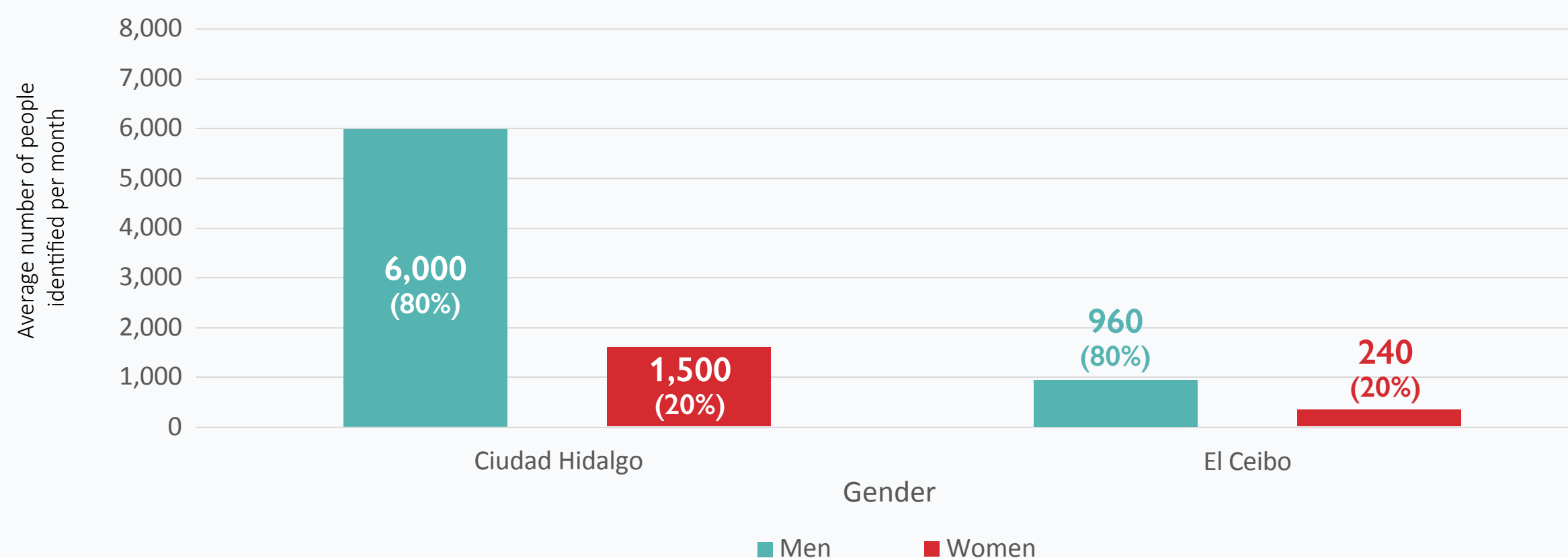
According to the data collected through key informants, there is a trend in the concentration of irregular migration flows entering through Chiapas, specifically Ciudad Hidalgo. Approximately 7,500 people entered this border town during the month of May, which means 86 percent of the irregular migration flow detected at the border during this month.

The Suchiate River (natural border between Mexico and Guatemala) is the informal crossing point on which a lot of the town dynamics are concentrated. Migrants in transit opt for other entry points with less presence of Mexican authorities; they also travel at night, which makes it difficult to obtain accurate data to quantify the migration flows entering Mexican territory.

It is important to note that Ciudad Hidalgo is a place of transit; the immediate destination of migrants who enter through this border is the city of Tapachula, with the aim of applying for refugee status in Mexico. The border town of Ciudad Hidalgo is located 40 km from Tapachula, connected by Road 220, a 50-minute drive or six hours on foot, on average.

On the other hand, El Ceibo only reports 14 percent of the migration flows detected, that is 1,200 migrants. One of the reasons why the town has lost importance as an irregular migration route is that the train “La Bestia” (The Beast) has discontinued service given the start of the “Tren Maya” (Mayan Train) project . It has been determined that migrants are choosing to cross through the towns around Frontera Corozal, located in the Ocosingo municipality, one of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ).

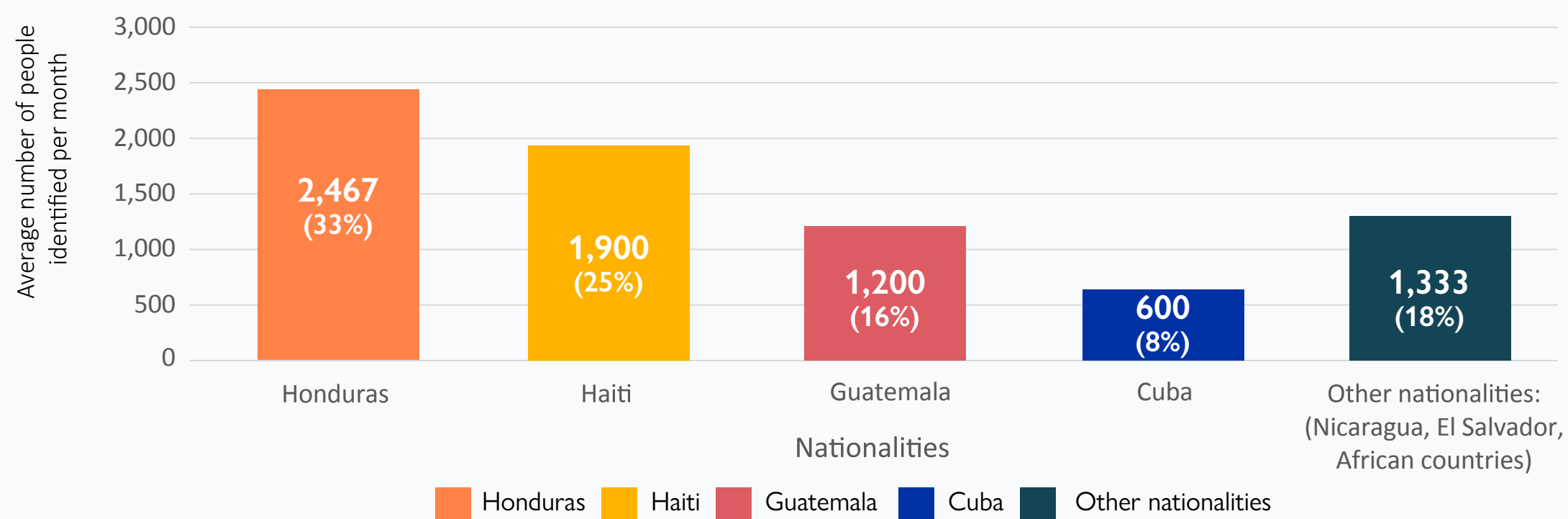
**Graph 2. Estimate of irregular migration flow entering Mexico by border location and gender, May 2021.**



<sup>6</sup> “La Bestia” is the name of a network of cargo trains for the transportation of fuel and construction materials, among others, that traveled along the railways of Mexico, and which was used by migrants to travel free of charge to the north of the country. The “Mayan Train” project consists of the renovation of these rail networks in the southeast of Mexico, whose route runs through the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo.

In both border locations, men are the most represented population in migration flow according to key informants, representing approximately 80 percent, and they migrate in travel groups. However, it should be underscored that in Ciudad Hidalgo there is a growing trend identified, migrant groups made up of extended families in which between 5 and 10 people travel, and in which children under 5 years of age, older adults and pregnant women can be found.

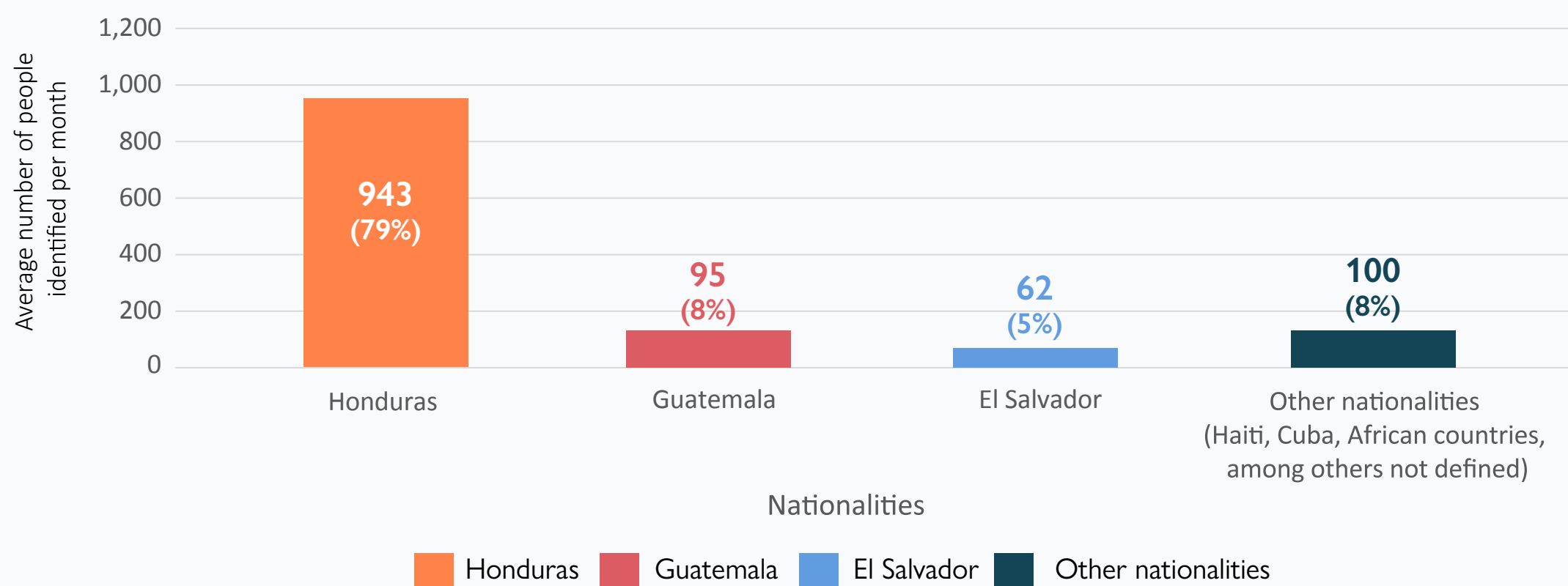
**Graph 3. Main nationalities identified by key informants in the irregular migration flows entering Mexico through Ciudad Hidalgo, May 2021.**



The key informants underscored the presence of people from Honduras and Haiti in the composition of the irregular migration flows. With respect to the people from Honduras, this trend is associated with events such as the disasters caused by hurricanes Eta and Iota, and their subsequent impact on the livelihoods of these people. Another reason for mobility is family reunification; it has been determined that many people who migrated in previous years (many of them by means of caravans) have facilitated migratory networks, both in transit countries and in the destination country, so migrants currently have more information to make their journey.

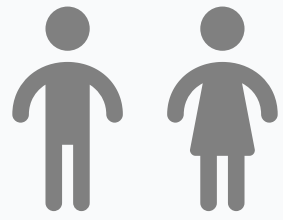
In addition, it should be noted that the people who use the route between El Ceibo and Tenosique are people with a low budget to finance their migration journey. This route can be traveled on foot in three or four days; it is historically recognized for entailing greater risk for migrants, especially in terms of extortion, physical and sexual assault, kidnapping, and recruitment for human trafficking by local organized crime networks.

**Graph 4. Main nationalities identified by key informants in the irregular migration flows entering Mexico in El Ceibo, May 2021.**





## PEOPLE AT RISK DUE TO VULNERABLE SITUATIONS IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOWS ENTERING MEXICO



Every day, between 100 and 150 unaccompanied adolescents are detected while entering



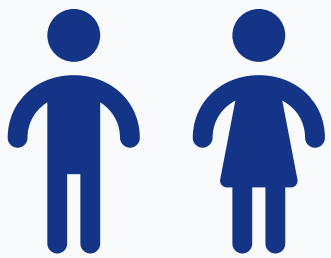
Map of the support, hazards and roadblocks created by the shelter "La 72" Tenosique, Mexico © IOM 2021



There are great limitations for key informants to be able to quantify, in general terms, the people within the migration flow who are at risk due to vulnerable situations, which is why they only have the ability to identify those who have requested humanitarian aid or require an intervention to receive it.



The harmonization of the "Migration Act" and the "Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum Act regarding migrant children", in November 2020, has impacted the dynamics of migration for migrant children. Testimonies indicate that the entry of children is increasing since some of them travel in groups, especially those between 0 and 5 years of age.



On the other hand, the increase in unaccompanied adolescents between 12 and 17 years of age should be noted, mainly of Honduran nationality. According to key informants, since February 2021 the detection of unaccompanied adolescents has been increasing upward; the reasons this population has to migrate are associated with economic factors and driven by the loss of livelihood in Honduras following the disasters by hurricanes Eta and Iota, as well as family reunification in the countries of destination.



Regarding the LGTBIQ+ population, people with disabilities, and people suspected of carrying COVID-19, according to key informants, during May no people belonging to these groups were detected. It should be noted that, during the previous months of 2021, it has been possible to identify profiles of LGTBIQ+ people in Tapachula, who indicate persecution and violence in their countries of origin due to their gender identity, orientation or sexual characteristics as their reasons for migrating. In addition, at least 10 people with physical and mental disabilities were detected; the conditions that stand out include birth defects or physical disabilities resulting from accidents during their migration journey. In Tenosique, a COVID-19 outbreak was detected in the La 72 Migrant Shelter



In Tapachula, racism and discrimination against migrants is classified as a risk for the migrant population from Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador. Relations with the community are classified as neutral according to key informants; there is financial contribution for the local population by migrants due to the increased demand for rentals and essential services. However, the same local population is against social programs that benefit the migrant population.

## CONCLUSIONS



Currently, irregular migration flows entering Mexico are made up of population at risk of vulnerability, within which children, adolescents, pregnant women, and the elderly stand out; they require specialized care in terms of protection, food, health, mental health, and access to justice.



In recent months there has been an increase in migration flows of Haitians and Hondurans, who are heading to Tapachula to apply for refugee status. Efforts are recognized with respect to their economic integration into the community, mainly in the rental of temporary housing, and there are emerging programs by local authorities; however, abuse and discrimination persist.



Although flows have been constant at the aforementioned borders, Frontera Corozal has become one of the main entry points for migrants. One of the factors that has caused an increase in irregular migration flows at that border is the absence of the National Guard and the National Institute of Migration (INM) due to the resistance of communities.



Field work by IOM officers. © IOM 2020

This publication was possible with the support from the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the United States of America Department of State, in the framework of the Western Hemisphere Program. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Government of the United States of America. This publication has not been officially edited by IOM.