



DTM

Displacement
Tracking Matrix

Monitoring of Migration Flows in
Tapachula and Tenosique, Mexico
Round 2 | Protection of Migrants in
Vulnerable Situations | April 2022

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Itinerant sales of migrants in the Miguel Hidalgo Central Park. Tapachula, Mexico. © IOM April 2022

BACKGROUND



Tapachula (state of Chiapas) and Tenosique (state of Tabasco) are two of the main receiving cities of migrants in southern Mexico because of their location on the border with Guatemala. Tapachula is a multicultural city due to the historical arrival of migrants attracted by the number of migration services found there, while Tenosique, though considerably smaller, is positioned as an important transit city for migrants arriving in Tabasco from northern Guatemala and looking for a city where they can regularize their migratory status.



In April there was a sharp decrease in the arrival of migrants in both places, but what stands out is the diversity of nationals from Honduras, Haiti, Cuba, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Tapachula. A very particular phenomenon detected in Tapachula through participant observation is that the migrant population has organized several movements for migrating in large groups to other municipalities where they can start their migratory paperwork at the National Institute of Immigration (INM), since the institute's offices in Tapachula are saturated. This is not a common situation among migrant groups, but to repeat, this practice was detected in April.



These mass movements of migrants have posed a major challenge for local authorities given the increased number of applications for humanitarian visas (“visitor cards for humanitarian reasons”, or TVRHs for their Spanish acronym). During the last reporting period the authorities have speeded up the granting of TVRHs to ease the backlog of existing migratory petitions. According to the Monthly Bulletin of the Migration Policy, Registry, and Identification Unit, close to fifty percent (11,501) of national TVRHs were issued in Tapachula alone during the first quarter of 2022¹.



The increased number of applicants for refugee status in Mexico is notable. According to the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR), there were 29,574 applicants during the first quarter of the year, surpassing by 31.7% the number of applicants recorded during the same period the previous year when an historical record had been set. Of this figure, 19,288 applications were filed in Tapachula, accounting for 65% of all applications nationwide.



Tenosique, for its part, recorded the arrival of migrant groups consisting of families from Central America, mainly Guatemala and Nicaragua, with a strong presence of children and adolescents. Especially noteworthy was the identification of unaccompanied children and adolescents, primarily from Honduras and Nicaragua. Some of these children and adolescents formed groups to travel for greater safety along the way and sought to arrive directly to the La 72 shelter in Tenosique.



Another event identified along the migration route to Tenosique is the high incidence of violent early-morning robbery on the El Ceibo – Tenosique highway connecting the city of Tenosique with the Tabasco-Guatemala border. Also identified was the robbery of Caribbean nationals traveling on foot in the municipal capital during early morning hours.



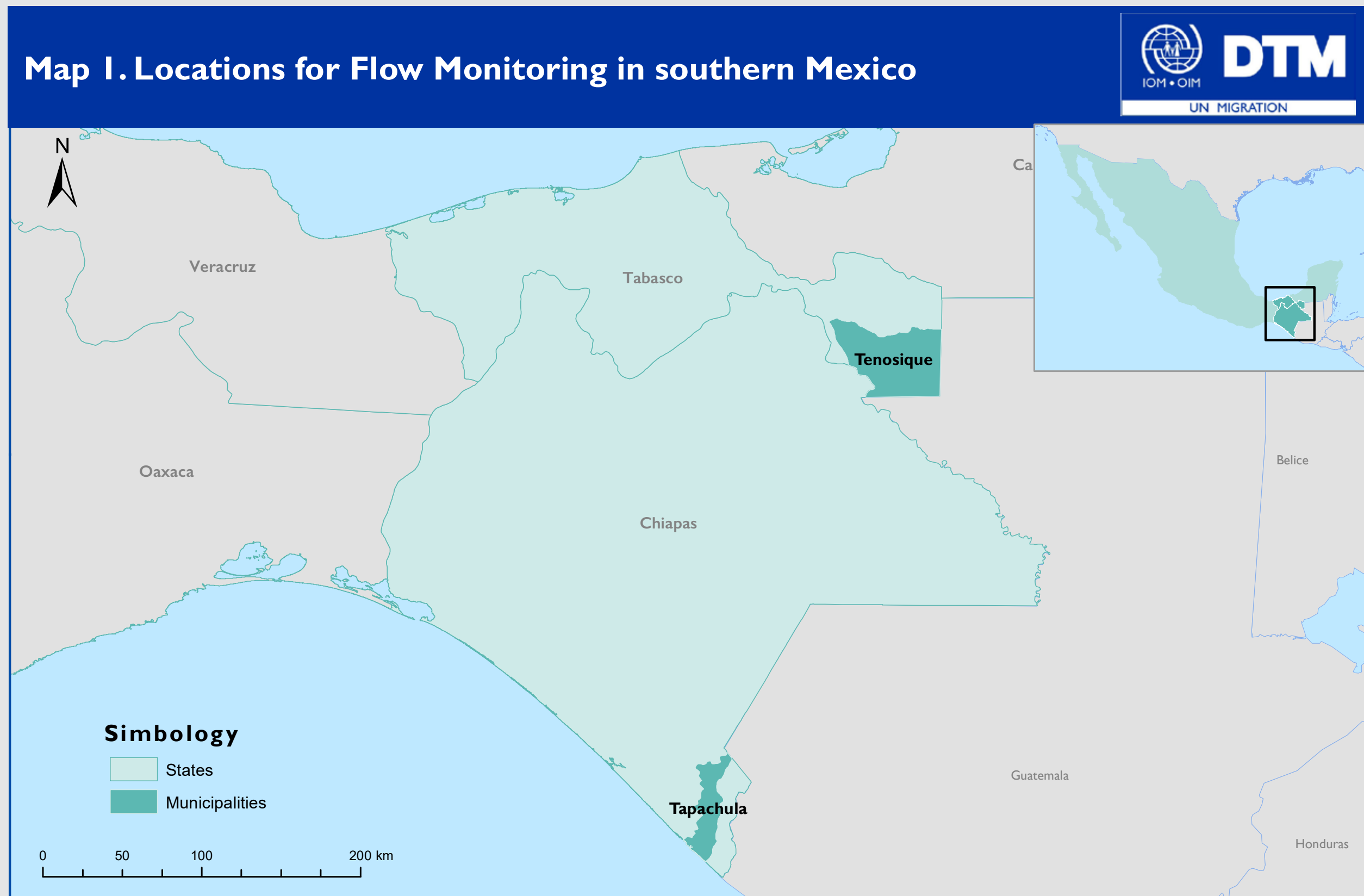
Despite the recorded cases of early morning robbery, migrants have continued to opt for arriving and leaving Tenosique during these hours when there are fewer authorities present, considering the risk is worth it to reach their destination.

¹ Source: Boletín_2022.pdf (politicamigratoria.gob.mx), page 92.

METHODOLOGY

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. This study used the mobility tracking and surveys components, which are designed to quantify the presence of migrants and generate data for understanding their socioeconomic and migratory characteristics.

The study consists of three rounds of monitoring. This report gives the results of round two, corresponding to April 2022, and focuses on the findings regarding the protection of vulnerable migrants. The cities serving as study areas are Tapachula in Chiapas and Tenosique in Tabasco, both border sites in southern Mexico.



The round two surveys of migrants were conducted during the first week of April from Monday, April 4, to Friday, April 8. In both cities, spaces such as parks, plazas, shelters, and shelter surroundings were selected as high migrant concentration points.

The interviews were conducted by an outside consulting team, though the team members were trained, coordinated, and supervised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for this study. Each city had a team of four interviewers with an equal balance of males and females.

Out of a total of 323 interviews, 321 were effective and two were invalid (the required consent was not given); 69% of the interviews were conducted in Tapachula and 31% in Tenosique. Probability sampling, clustered by high migrant concentration points, was used².

² The “cluster” probability subcomponent refers to selection of a population sample that has all the study variables with the selected group accurately representing the entire target population. Source: atlantiaserch.com

METHODOLOGY

Data analysis was based on the compiled interviews at high migrant concentration points selected strategically in each city (Tenosique and Tapachula). The results of the week's worth of interviews were extrapolated to the universe of the observed migrant population. For the purposes of this report, the total extrapolated data from 321 effective interviews will be visualized in 778 migrants checked by means of direct observation. The Tapachula data will be referred to in graphs on 69% of all migrants and the Tenosique data will be referred to on the remaining 31%.

The samples collected in the field have a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Because of the number of interviews achieved for the two cities, the sample can be considered representative according to the standards of representativeness. To clarify, however, this representativeness corresponds to the public spaces where the interviewing was done, so the sample is not representative of the cities as a whole.

It should be mentioned that the following obstacles were faced in the field data collection for round two: smaller number of migrants present in public spaces due to fear of arrest by migration authorities, low migrant population turnover in public sites, interviews with reduced randomness, data collection time strictly limited to one week, lack of confidence of migrants for agreeing to interviews due to disagreements with migration authorities, large groups of migrants leaving during the data collection week, and stormy weather conditions during working hours.



Migrant Prosecutor's Office. Tapachula, Mexico. © IOM April 2022

³ Extrapolation is defined as the “the estimation of results beyond the range covered by existing data.”

Source: www.aragon.unam.mx/fes-aragon/public_html/documents/oferta_academica/ingenieria/interpolacion-temario.pdf

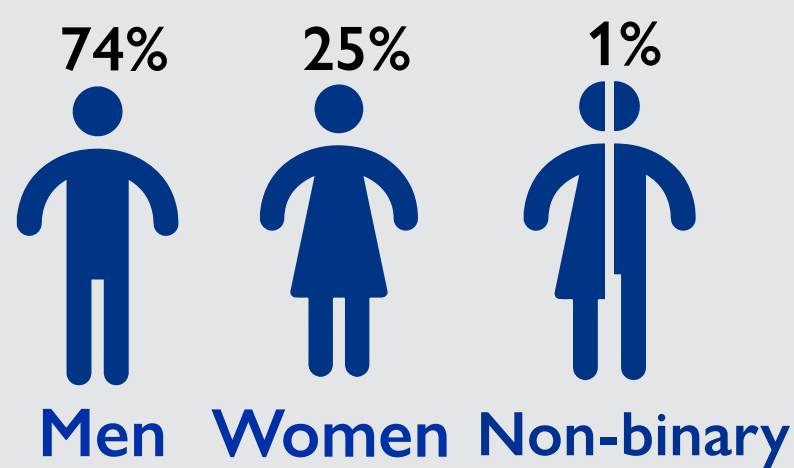
RESULTS

MAIN FINDINGS

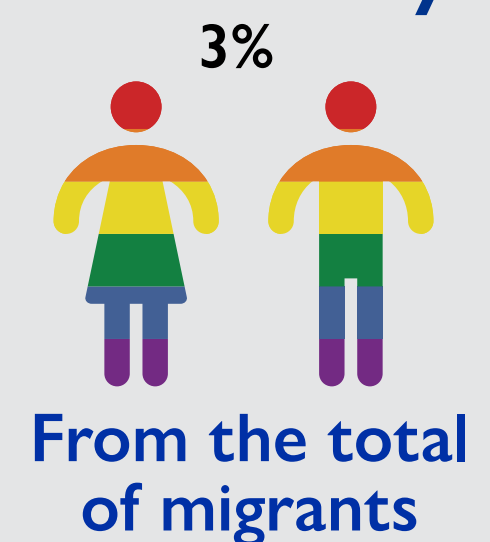


778 migrants:
538 persons in Tapachula (69%) y 240 persons in Tenosique (31%).

Gender



LGBTIQ+ Community



Migrant population is highly represented by young migrants (average age 33 years old)



Honduras (25%)



Guatemala (5%)



El Salvador (5%)



Some 76% of respondents lacked immigration documents and 65% had applied for refugee status in Mexico



Two percent of the surveyed women were pregnant and 93% said they needed some kind of maternity care.



Some 79% of migrants are unemployed primarily because they lack a work permit, are victims of discrimination, or are caring for children and adolescents or the elderly.



Lack of information, financial obstacles, and legal barriers prevent pregnant women from accessing maternal and infant health care services in Mexico, primarily in Tapachula.



One-fourth (24%) of the respondents are living on the streets, primarily in Tapachula.

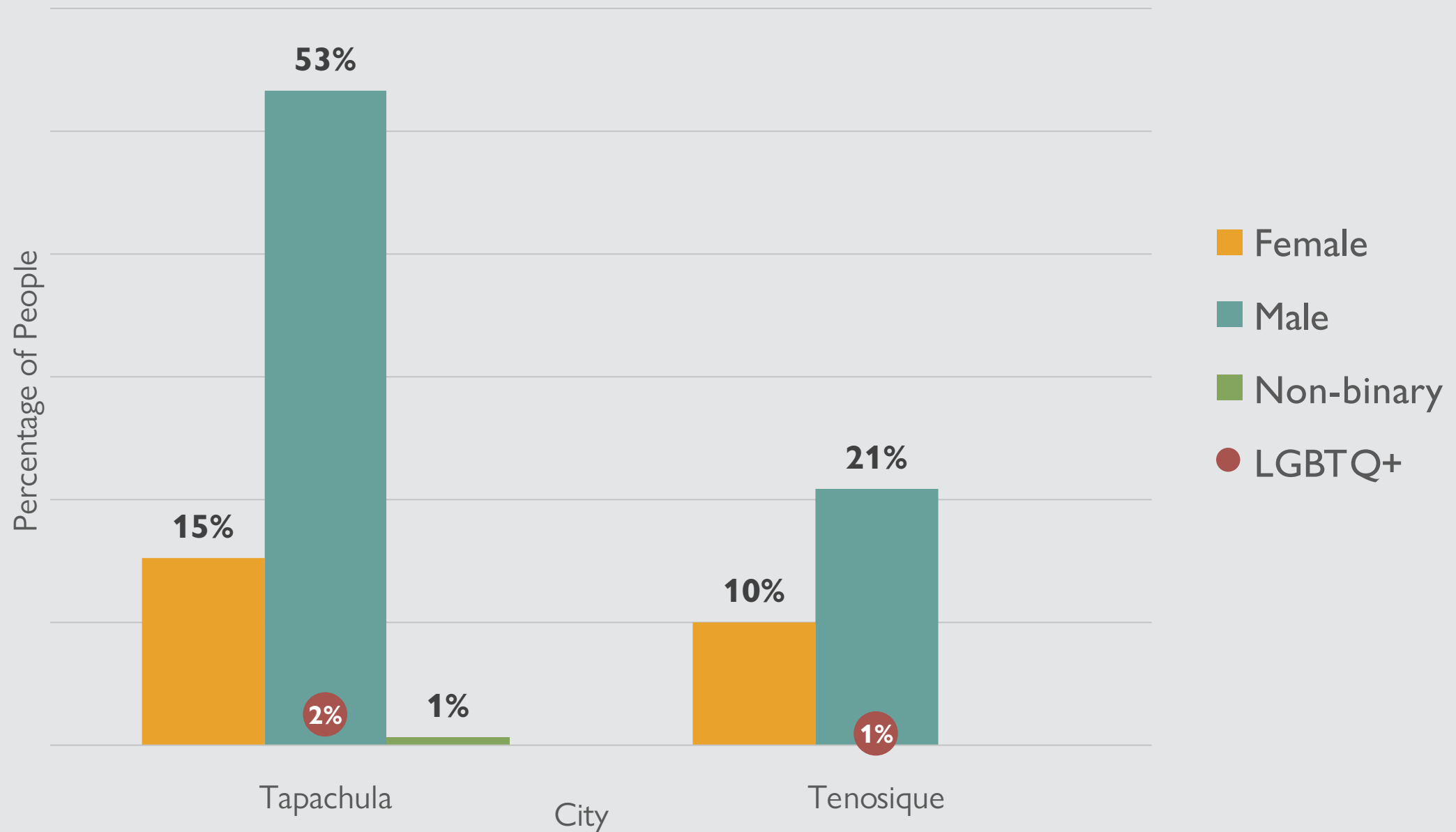


Reasons for expulsion of their countries of origin
The main reasons that migrants consider to leave their countries are insecurity and threats at a personal and family level (67%).

Demographic, Social, and Migration Profile

Graph 1. Percentage of Interviewed Migrants by Gender and City

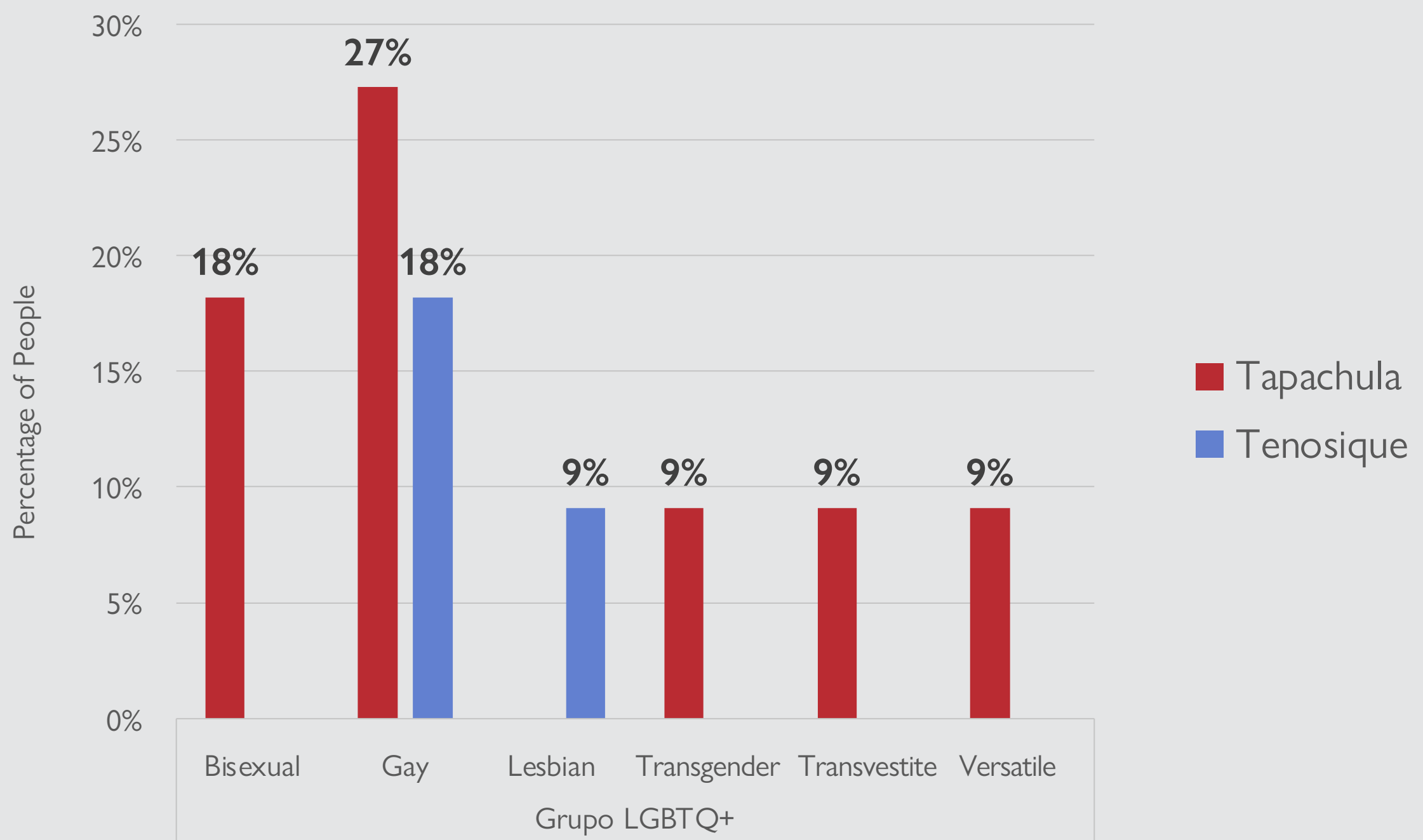
n=778



Of the interviewed migrants, **69% were located in Tapachula and 31% in Tenosique.** Distribution by gender shows **74% were males and 25% were females.** Gender distribution by city is more unequal in Tapachula than in Tenosique. One percent said they were non-binary.

Graph 2. Group with which Members of the LGBTQ+ Community Self-Identified

n=27



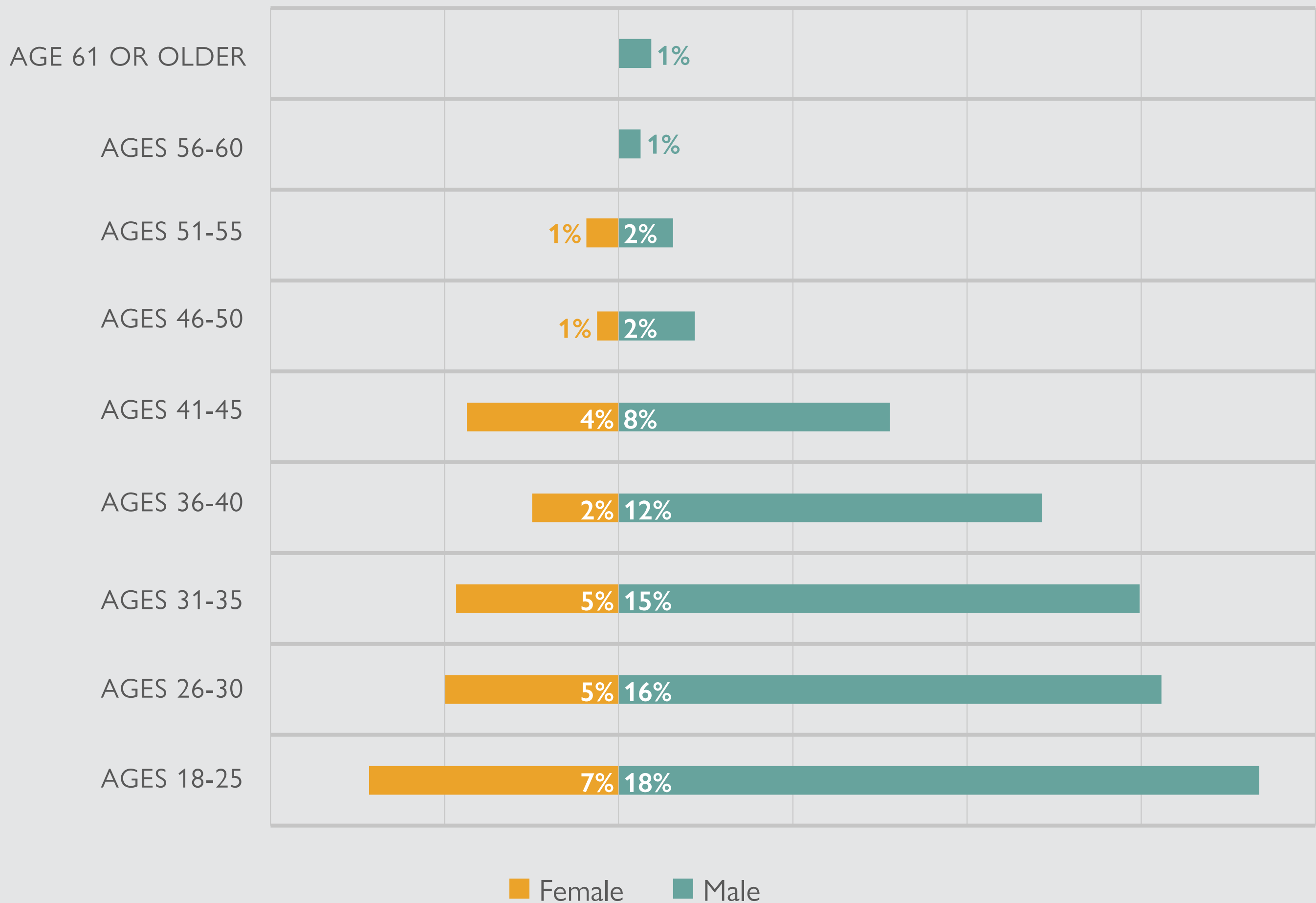
Three percent of the interviewed population was identified as LGBTQ+, located primarily in the city of Tapachula. **The main LGBTQ+ group with which members of the LGBTQ+ community identify was gay (45%),** who were located in both cities. The next largest group was bisexual (18%), who were only identified in Tapachula. Only the lesbian population was identified in Tenosique.

Respondent Population Pyramid

According to the population distribution by age groups, **almost 50% of the migration flow consisted of young migrants**, since the predominant group of respondents fell within the ages of 18 to 25 (26%), followed by the group of respondents with ages 26-30 (21%).

Graph 3. Population Pyramid by Gender and Age Group

n=778

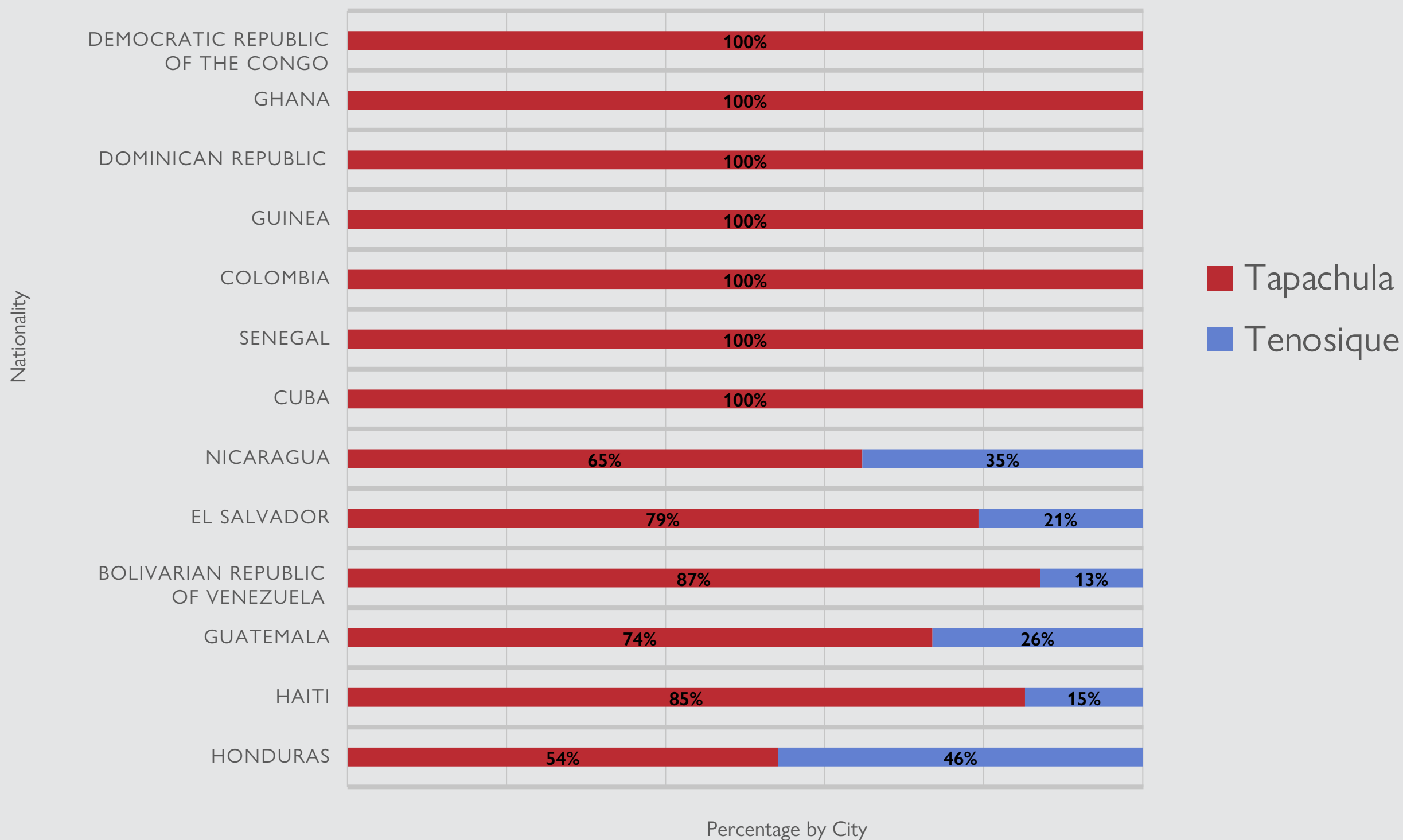


The 30-40 age group also represents a major portion with 35% of the total migration flow. Together, these age groups account for 81%, a clear indicator that the migration flows consist of a young population, the average age being 33 years. In both cases, males accounted for the largest percentage in each age group.

Nationality and Regions of Origin

Graph 4. Representation of Nationalities by City

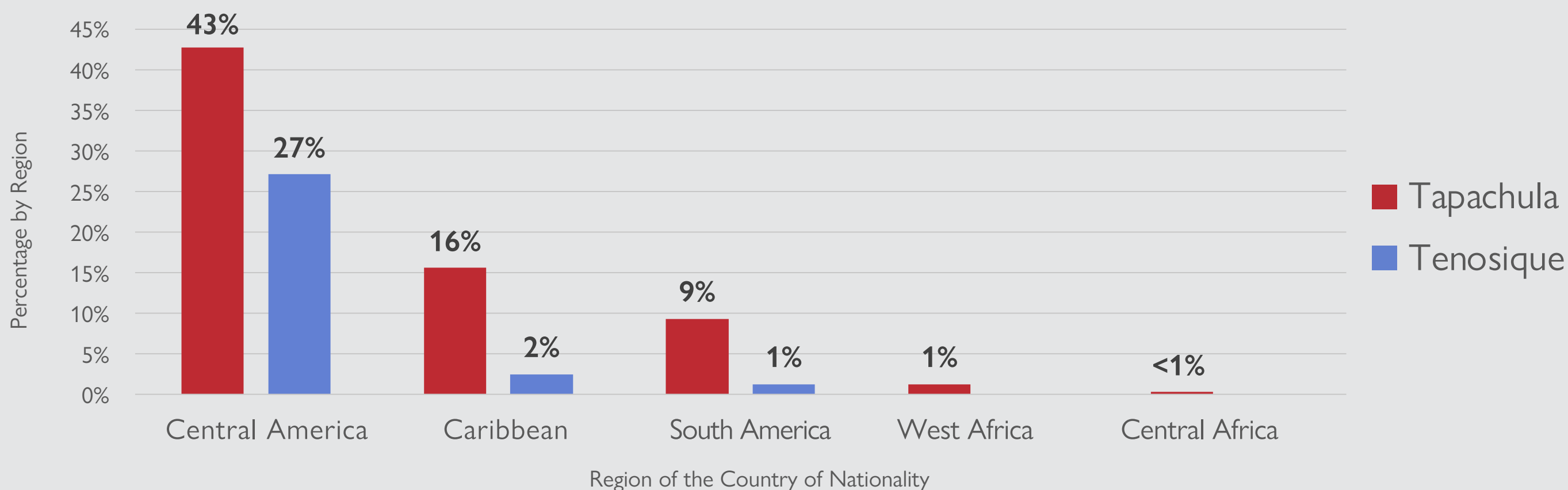
n=778



The distribution of migrants by nationality indicates that most are from Honduras (45%), followed by Haiti (17%) and Guatemala (11%). Nationals were also found from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Senegal, Colombia, Guinea, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represented a total of 28%. Only two percent of the migrants said they had a second nationality⁴.

Graph 5. Percentage of Migrants by Region of the Country of Nationality and by City

n=778



The distribution of migrants by nationality is not the same for the two cities. Individuals from the Central American, Caribbean, South American, and central and western African regions were identified primarily in the city of Tapachula. In the city of Tenosique, most of the identified migrants were from Central America, with the exception of the population from Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The arrival of extra-regional migrants to Tenosique represents a change in the historical pattern of nationalities that tend to pass through Tapachula.

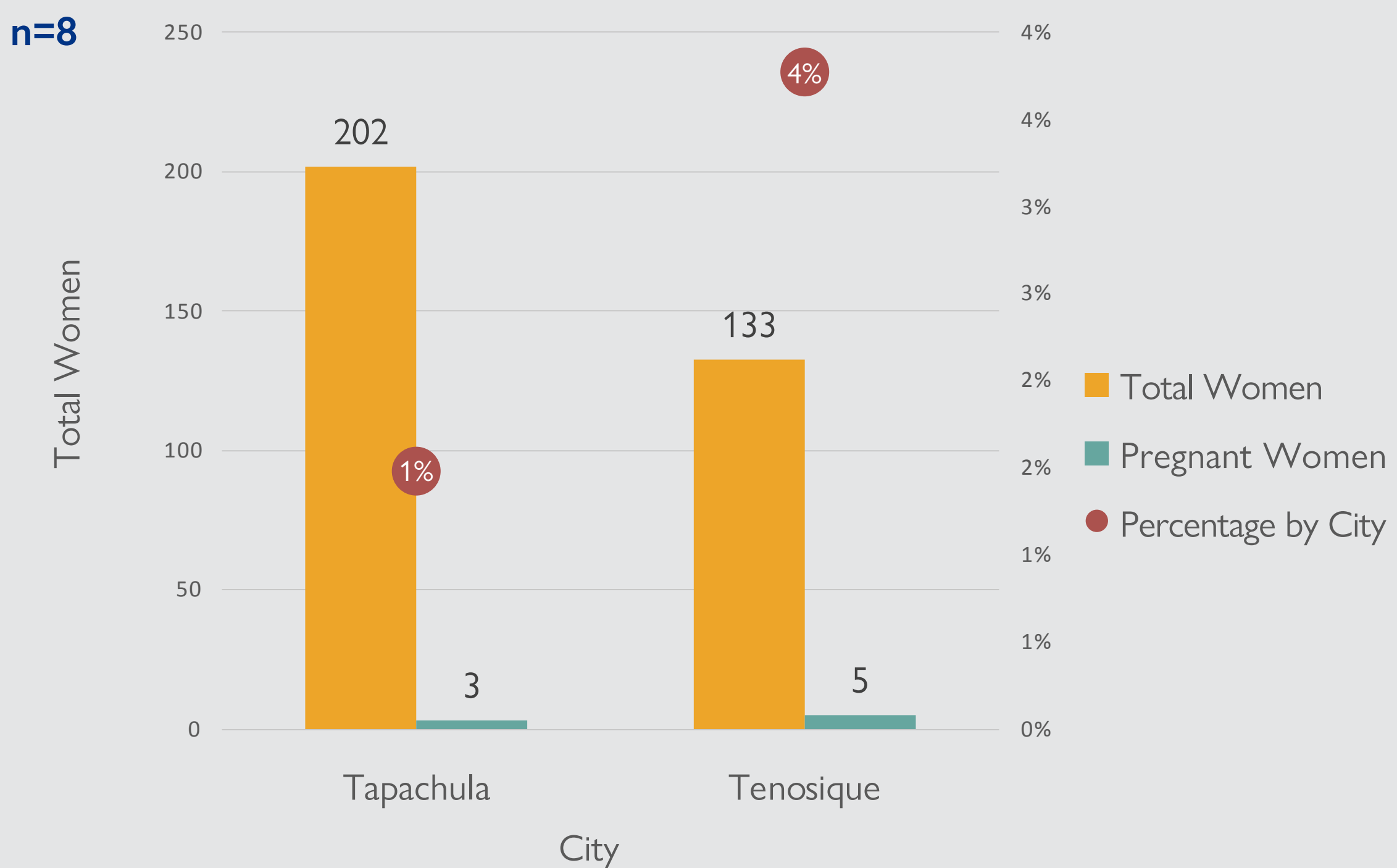
⁴ The second nationalities recorded were those of Honduras, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.



Pregnant Women and Maternal And Infant Health (Respondents and Companions)

Two percent of the identified women were pregnant at the time of the interview and were distributed primarily in the city of Tenosique (63%)⁵.

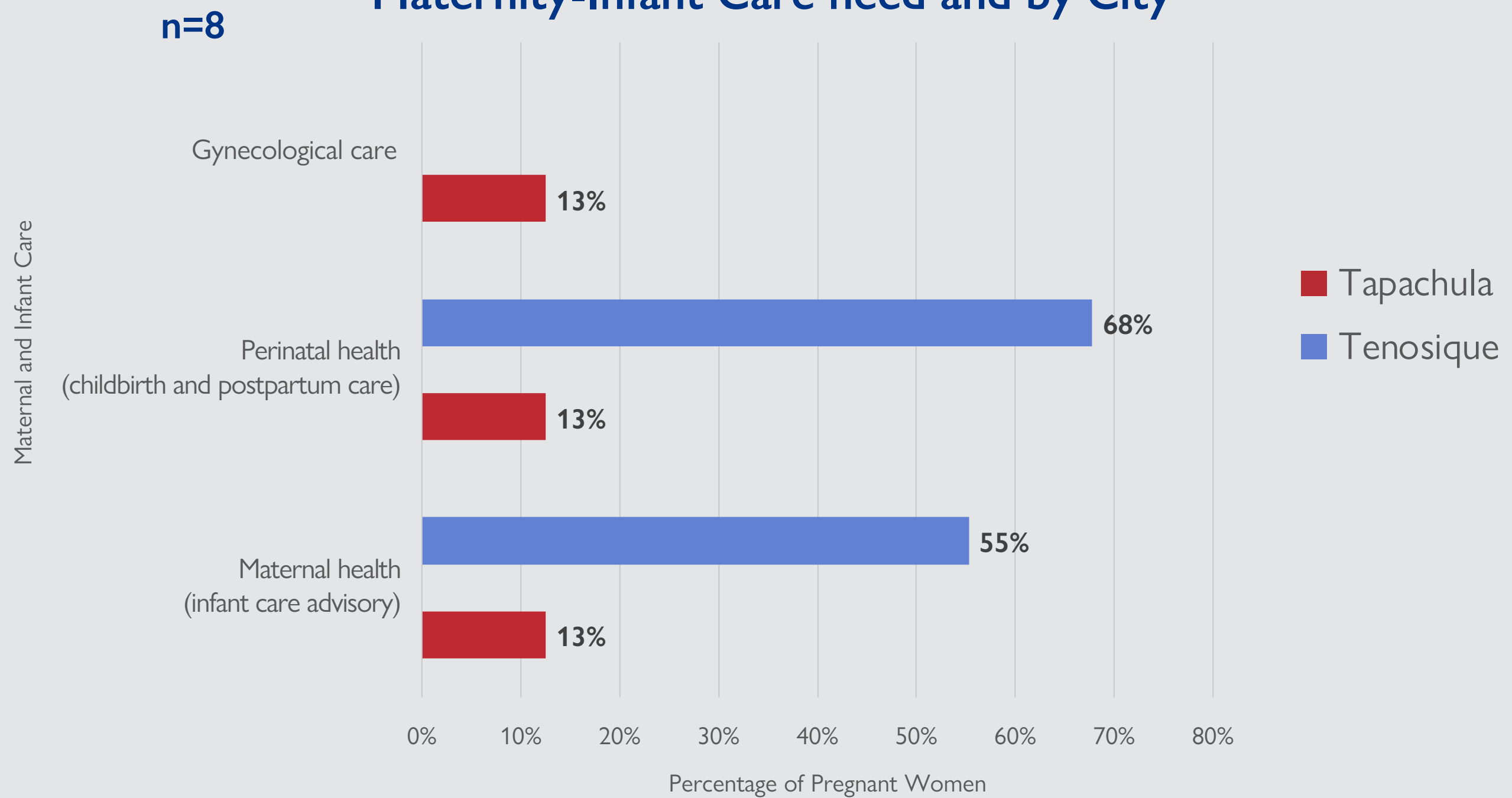
Graph 6. Percentage Distribution of Pregnant Women by City



⁵ Pregnant women were identified among both the respondents and the persons accompanying the respondents. Both data were combined in the analysis of the data for pregnant women.

Health Care Needs

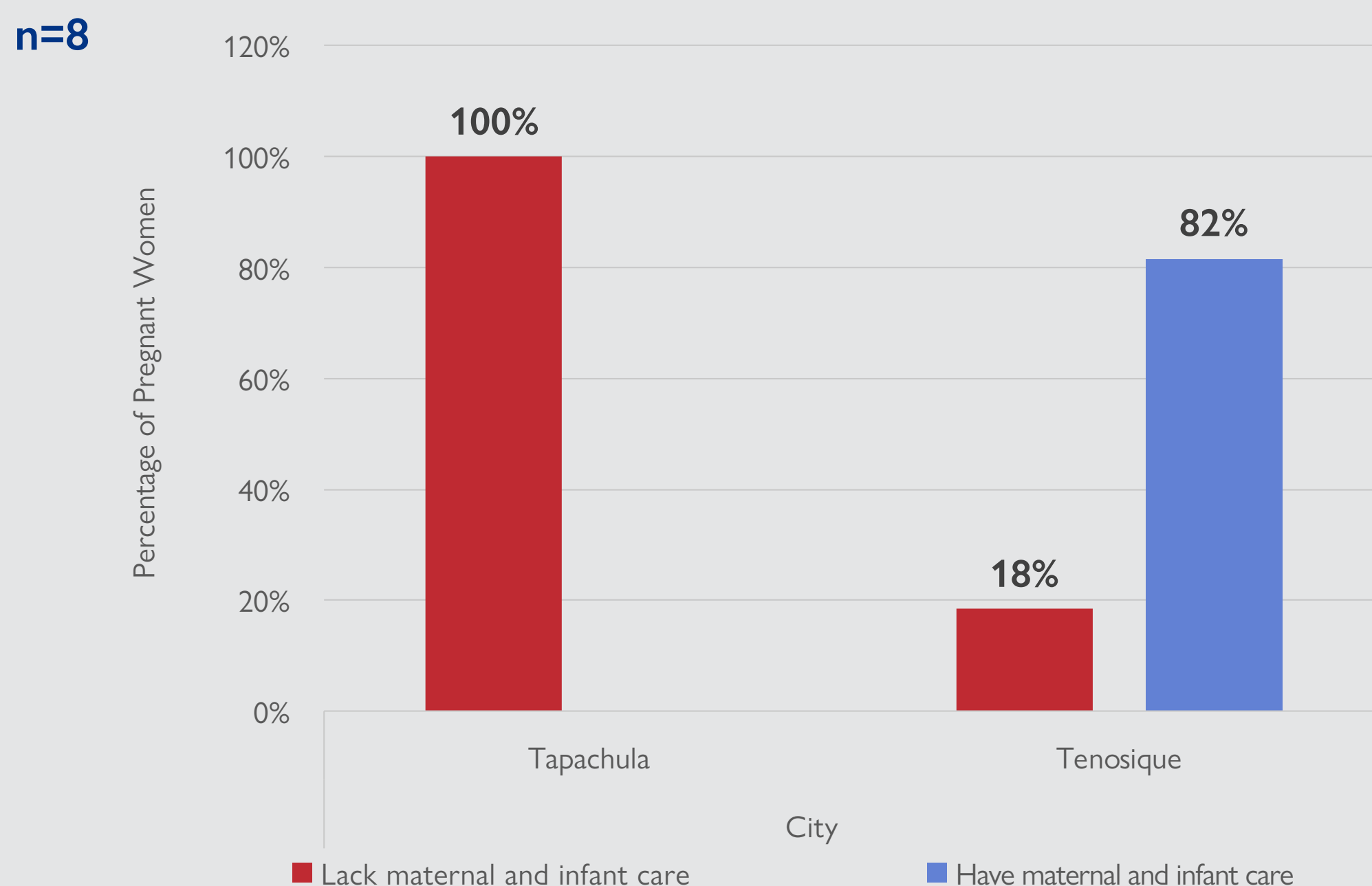
Graph 7. Percentage of Pregnant Women by Maternity-Infant Care need and by City



Some 98% of the pregnant women said they needed some type of maternity care. Some 80%, located primarily in the city of Tenosique, said they needed prenatal health care. Some 68%, mostly in Tenosique, needed maternity care while those requiring gynecological care (25%) and infant care (13%) were all located in Tapachula.

Access to Services

Graph 8. Percentage of Pregnant Women Lacking Access to Maternal and Infant Care Services by City

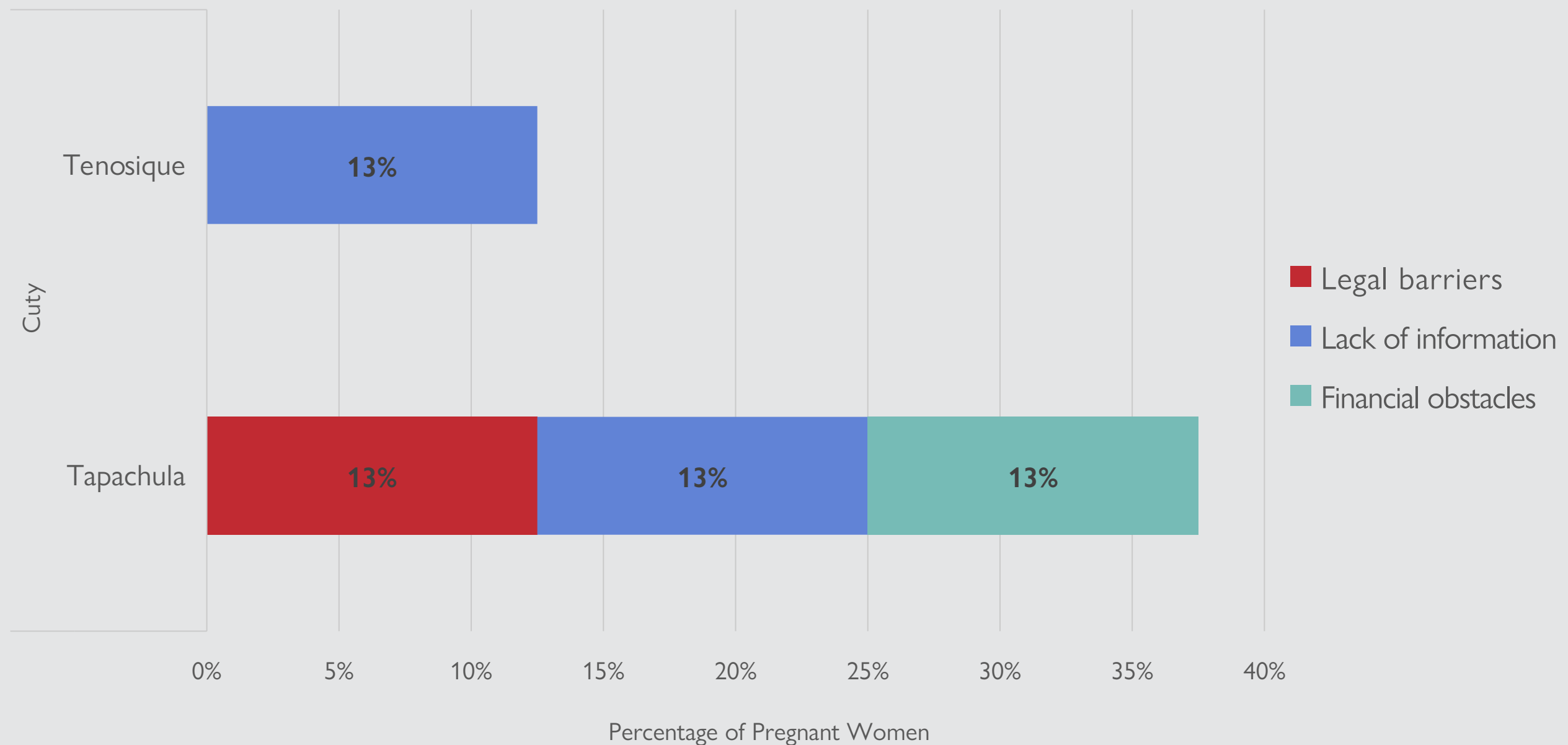


Some 47% of all pregnant women said they lacked maternity-infant care and that the main reason is the lack of information (26%); this was found in both cities. In Tapachula, legal barriers (13%) and financial obstacles (13%) were also identified as limiting factors.

Reasons for Impeded Access to Services

Graph 9. Reasons for Impeded Access to Services for Pregnant Women by City

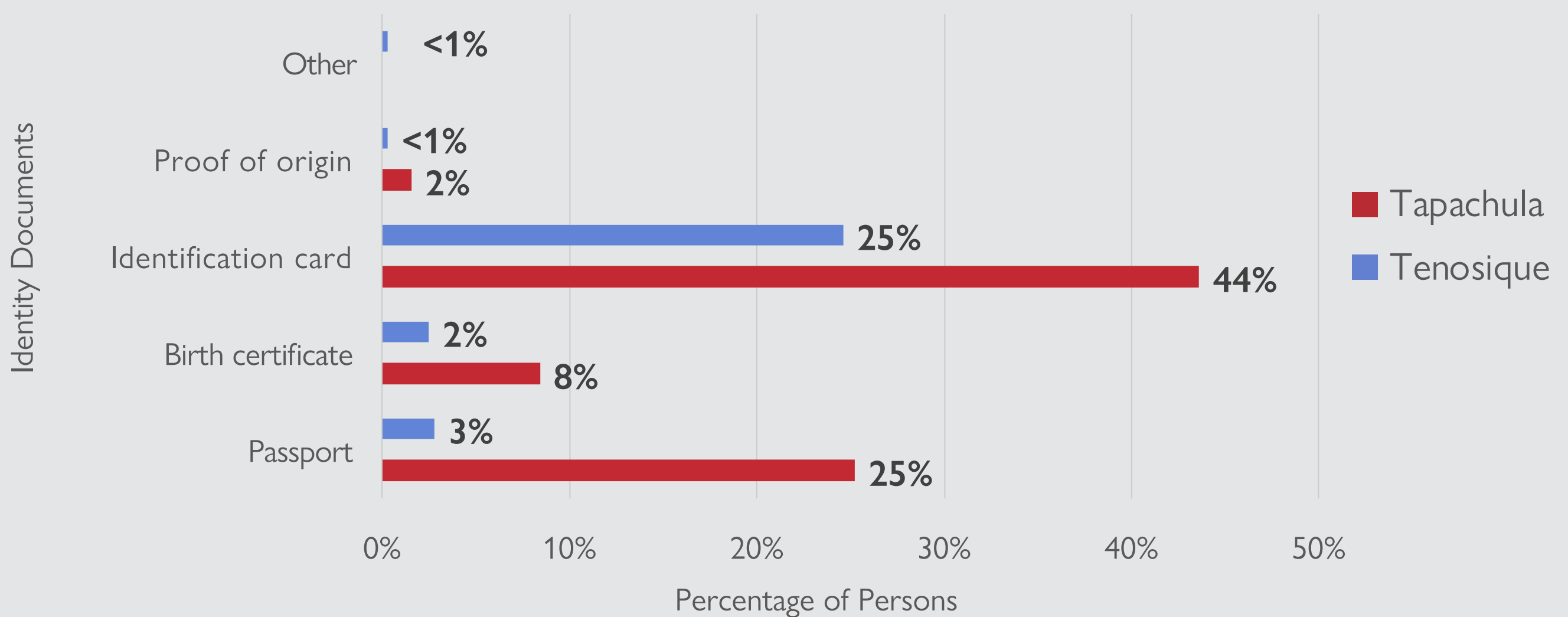
n=8



Migratory And Employment Status (As Vulnerabilities) Migration Documents

Graph 10. Percentage of Individuals by Type of Identity Document, by City⁶

n=851

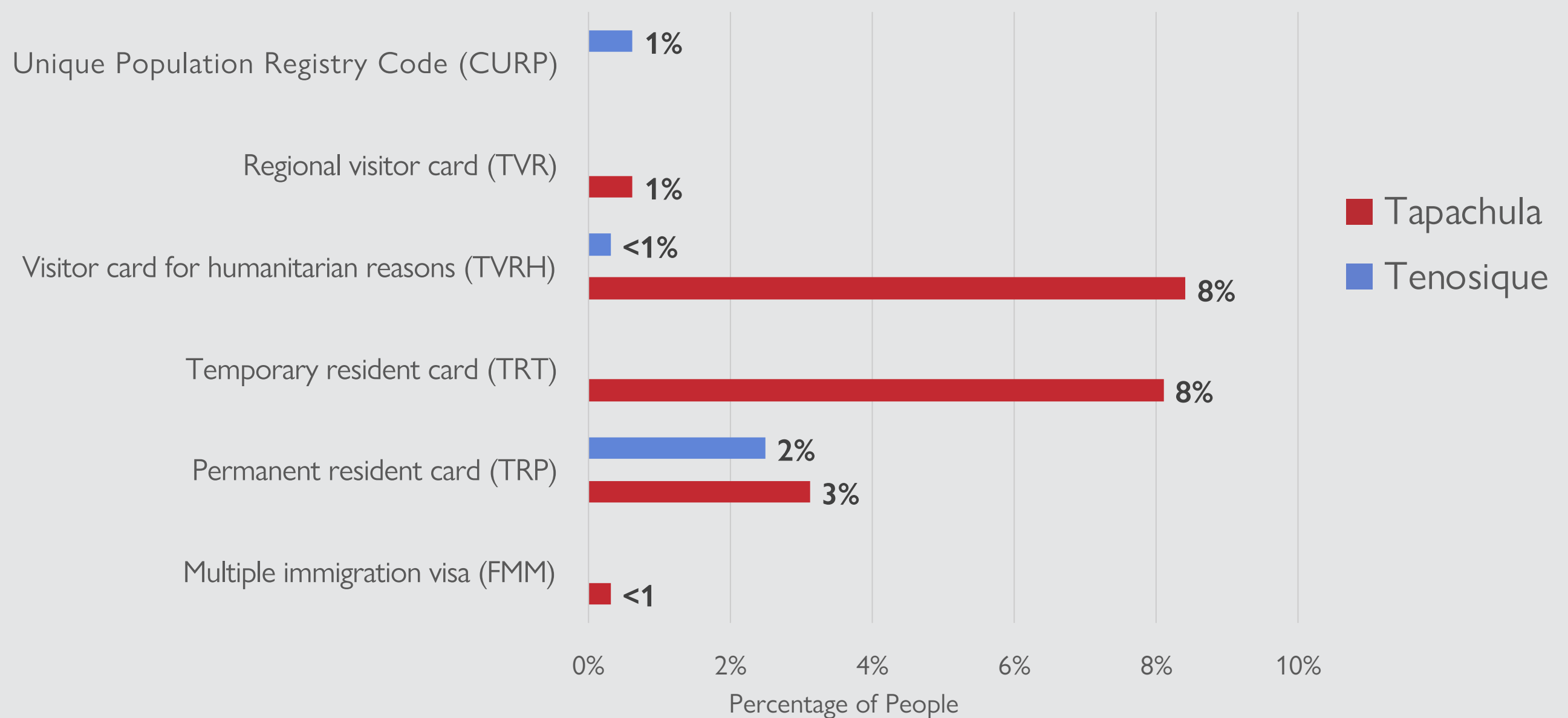


Some 94% of the interviewed migrant population had identity documents from their countries of origin, mainly identification cards (68%) and passports (28%). With respect to the type of immigration document, **however, only 24% of all respondents, identified mainly in Tapachula,** had a document such as the temporary resident card (TRT for its Spanish acronym) (8%) or the visitor card for humanitarian reasons (TVRH). Out of all migrants interviewed in Tenosique, women more frequently tended to have migration documents (55%), while in Tapachula the difference is much greater for men holding migration documents (77% of all migrants interviewed in this city).

⁶ A person may have more than one identity document. The percentages of the total number of migrants are individual for each document.

Graph 11. Percentage of Individuals by Type of Immigration Document, by City

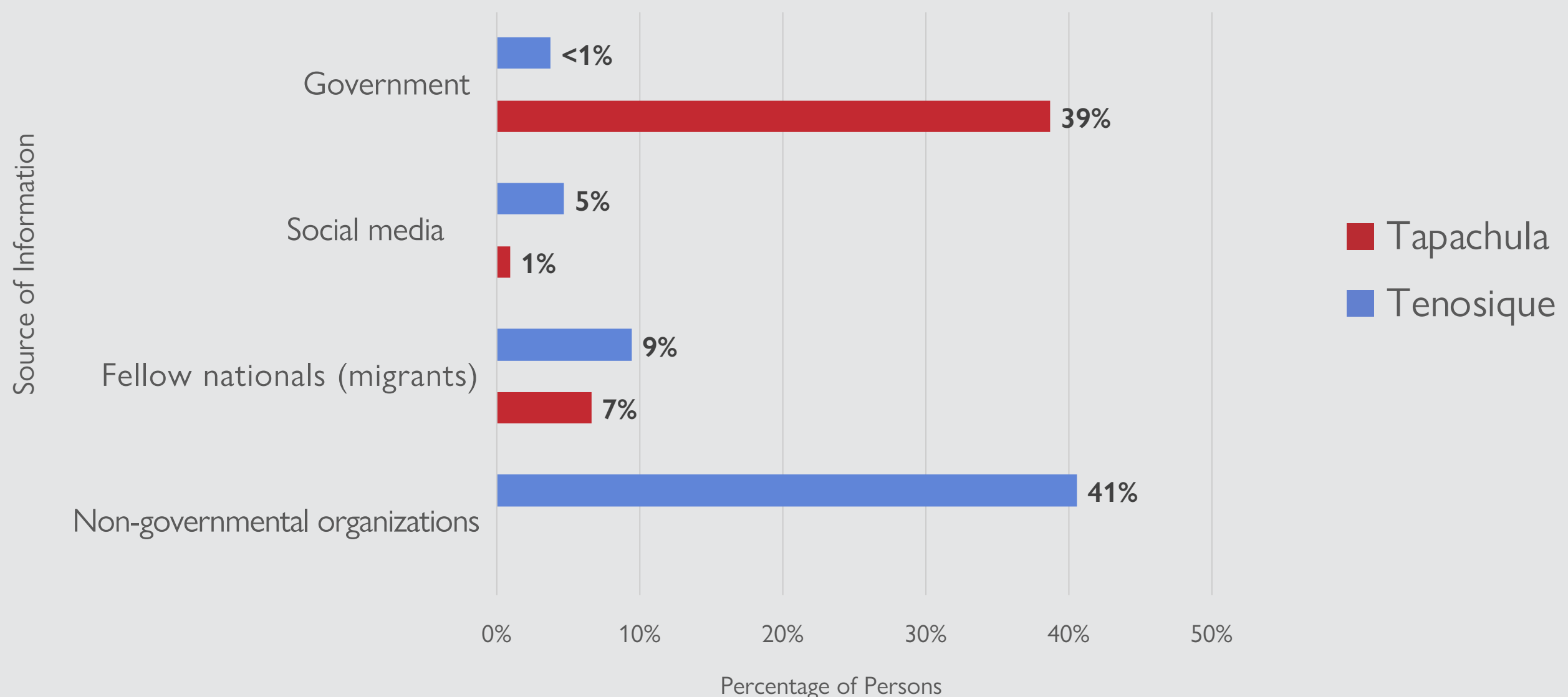
n=187



With regard to access to information on the possibilities of migration status regularization, **only 33% of migrants had information on their possibilities.** Their information was provided mainly by the government (42%) in the case of Tapachula and mainly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (41%) in Tenosique.

Graph 12. Organization or Institution Where Information was Received on Immigration Paperwork

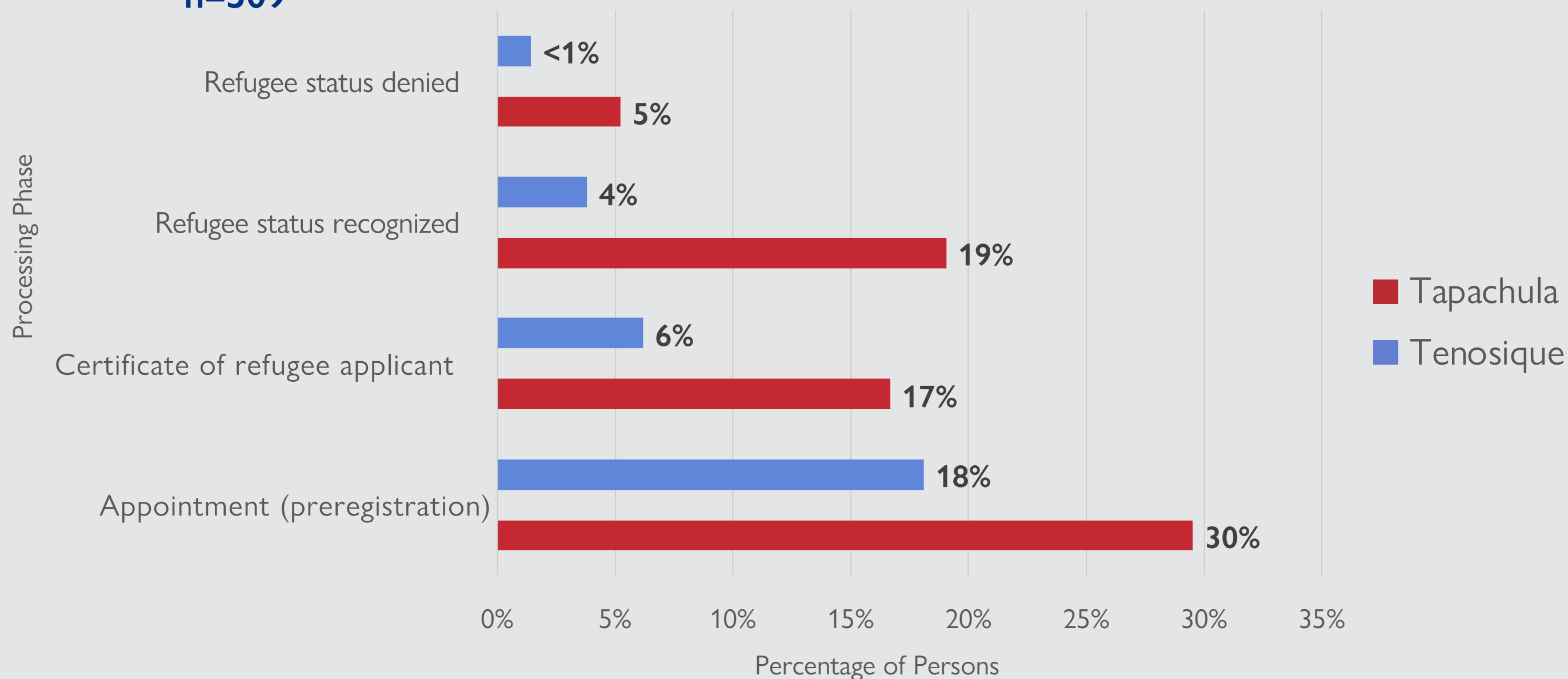
n=269



One of the main ways migrants entering Mexico sought to regularize their status was by applying for refugee status. It is worth noting that little over half of the interviewed migrant population had applied for refugee status and that, within this group, 48% were in the appointment stage⁷, 23% had a certificate of refugee applicant, 23% had already been granted refugee status in Mexico, and 6% had been previously denied refugee status in Mexico.

⁷ The appointment is the initial phase of the refugee application process at COMAR. It consists of going to the COMAR office and filling out a document with the data of the person interested in registering their application for refugee status in order to have the right to a future appointment where they will be formally registered at COMAR for an interview in which they will be evaluated to determine if they are eligible for refugee status.

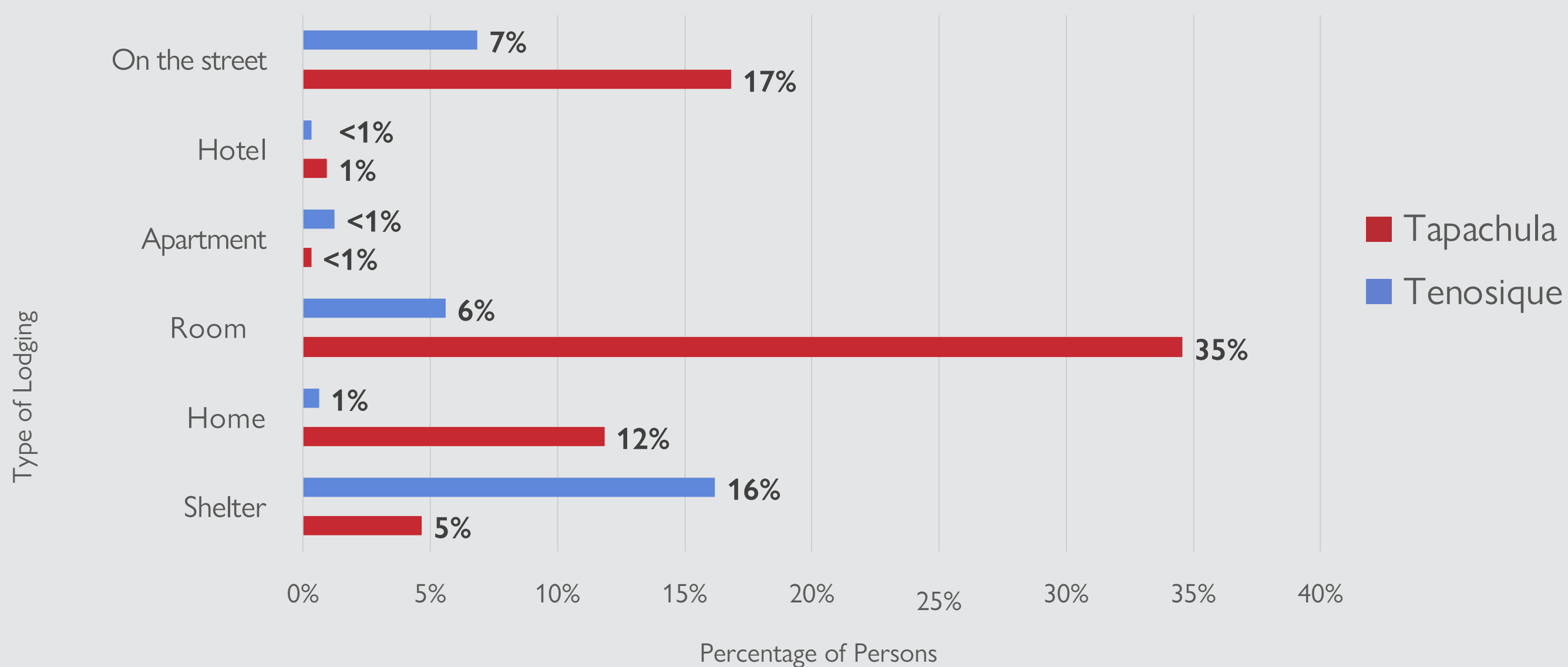
Graph 13. Distribution of Migrants by Processing Phase, by City
n=509



Access to Lodging

One factor affecting the vulnerability of migrants is not having a safe place to rest and spend the night. It should be noted that one-fourth of the respondents were living on the streets (24%), although the remaining 76% had access to a roof, mainly in rooms (40%) and shelters (21%).

Graph 14. Type of Lodging where Migrants Stay, by City
n=778



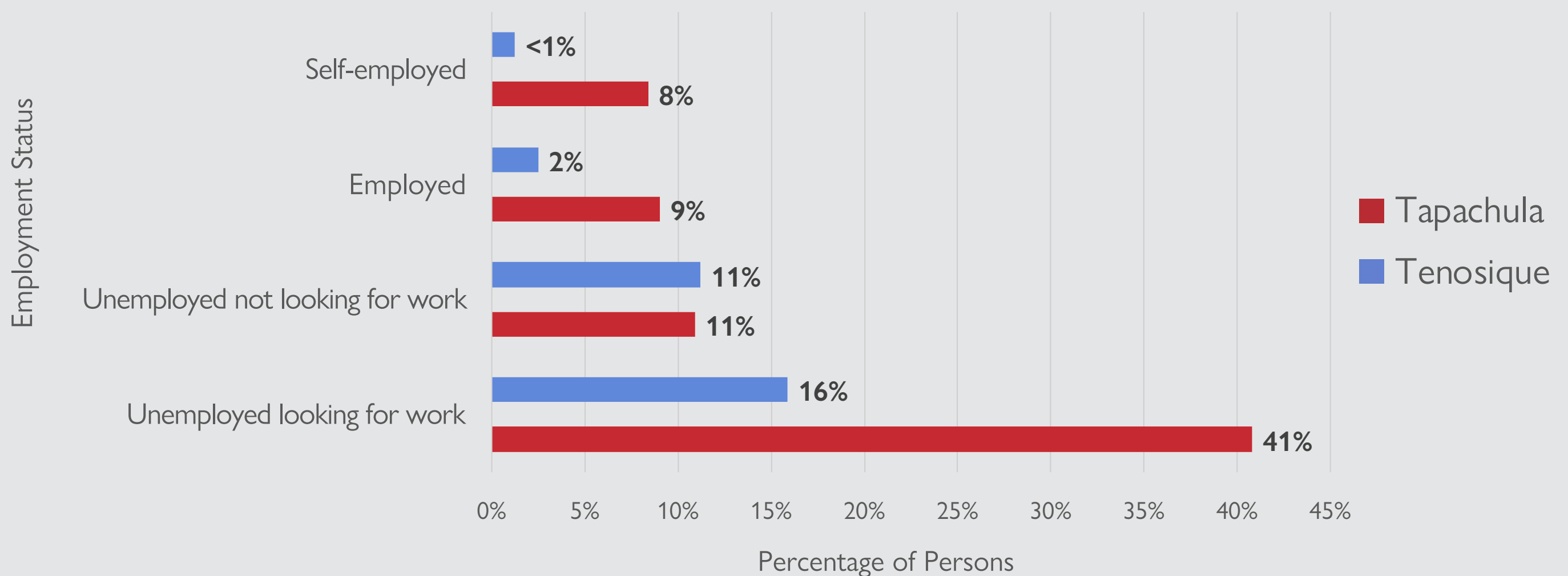
Of all the migrants identified in Tapachula, **most were lodged in rooms (50%) while persons in street situations came in second place (24%)**. In Tenosique, most were staying in shelters (53%) and, as in Tapachula, persons in street situations were the second largest group (22%).

With regard to the way migrants found lodging, **57% found it on their own and 42% found it through the suggestions of friends or acquaintances**, while fewer than 1% either found it through agencies dedicated to providing migrant care services or did not indicate how.

Current Employment Status

The employment situation in southern Mexico has historically been challenging for the migrant population looking for a means of living while in transit. **This came out in this study since most migrants were unemployed (79%), divided into 57% looking for work** (mainly in Tapachula) and 22% not looking for work (percentagewise the same in both cities).

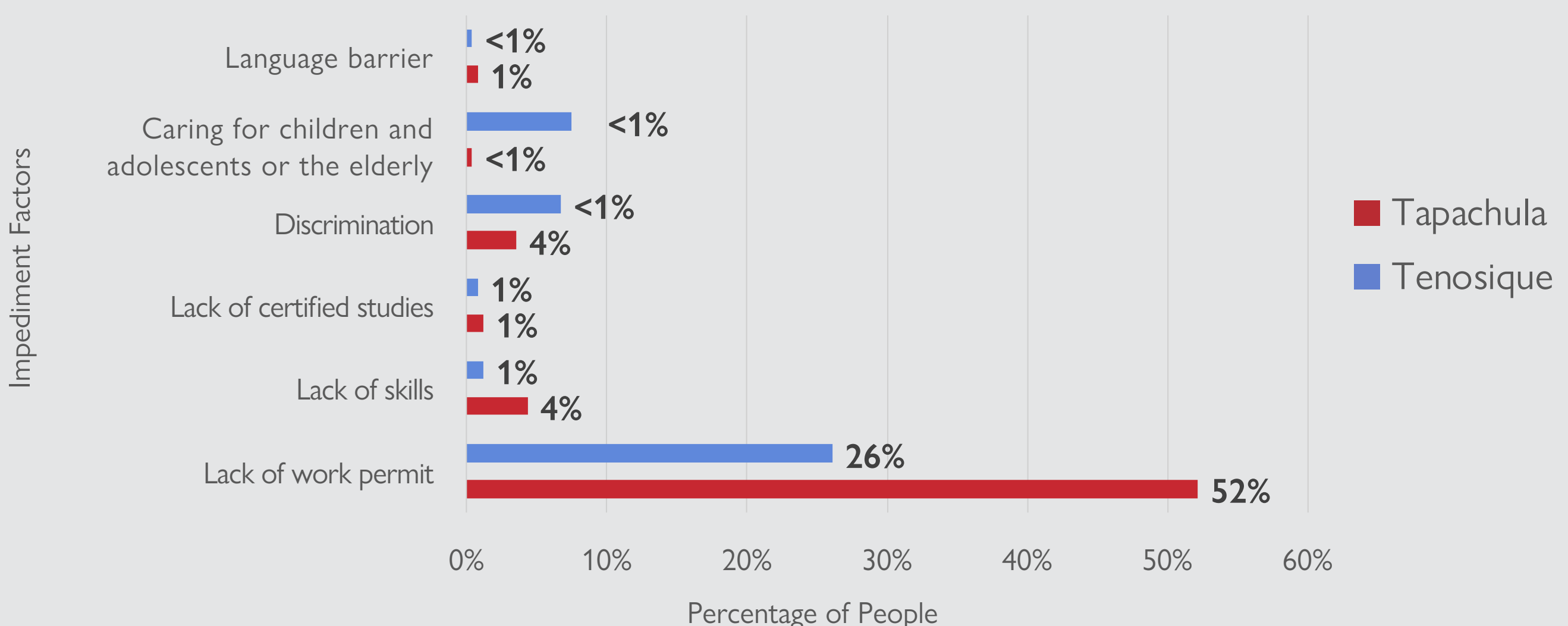
Graph 15. Employment Status of Migrants, by City
n=778



Some 21% of respondents, mostly in Tapachula, **were working as employees (11%) or on their own (10%)**. One of the main sources of employment resorted to by migrants is the Program for the Welfare of Persons in Situations of Social or Natural Emergency (PESN), a federal program that provides jobs in the cleaning, repair, renovation, and construction of public spaces for urban improvement. **Self employment, especially in the commercial sector, is another alternative migrants tend to opt for.**

Factors Preventing Access to Income-Generating Activities

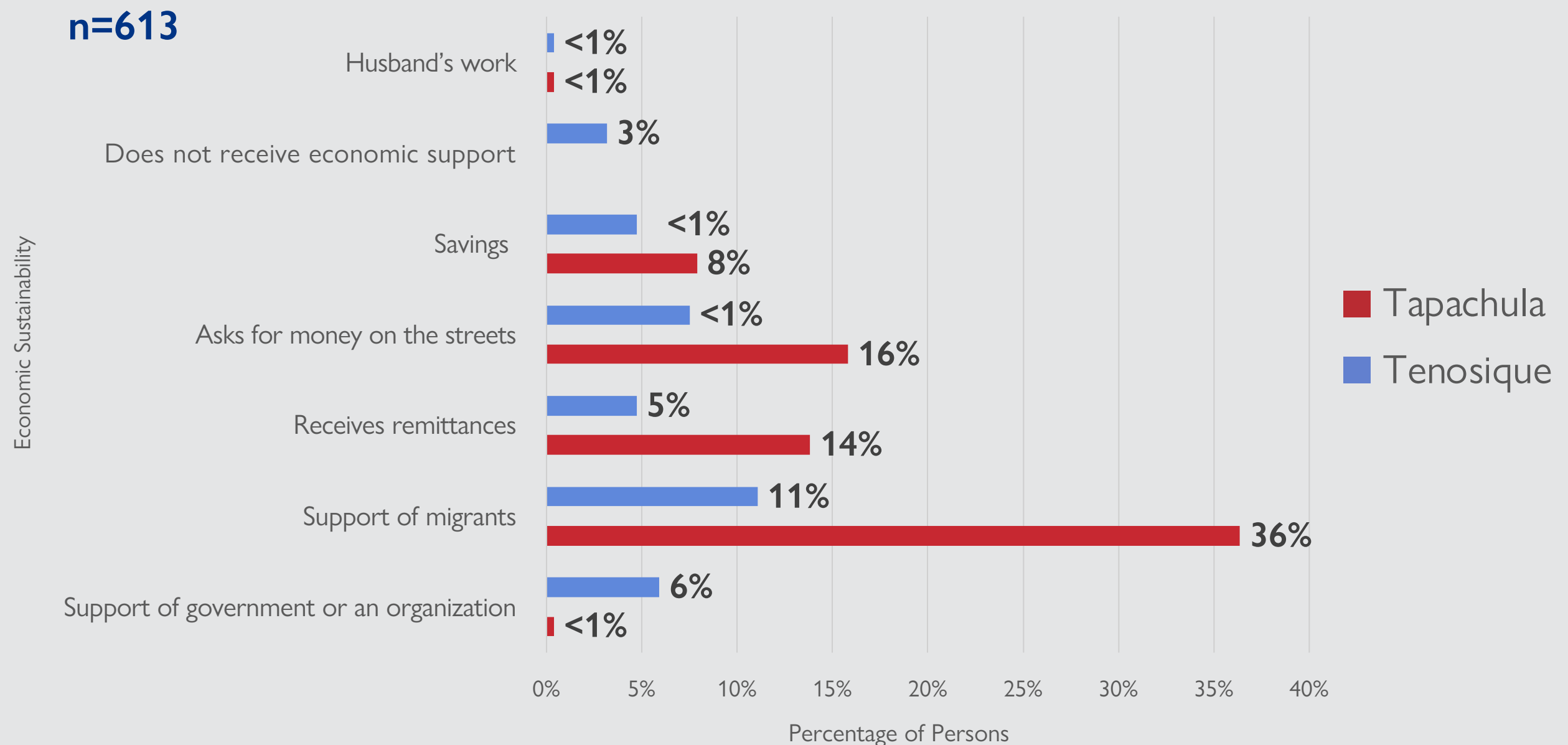
Graph 16. Factors Impeding Access to Income-Generating Activities, by City
n=613



Migrants who said they were unemployed attributed this mainly **to the lack of a work permit (78%) and to discrimination (10%)**. In Tenosique, **caring for children and adolescents and/or the elderly was a notable factor (8%)** that prevented migrants from accessing economic activities.

Sources of livelihood for Those Without Work

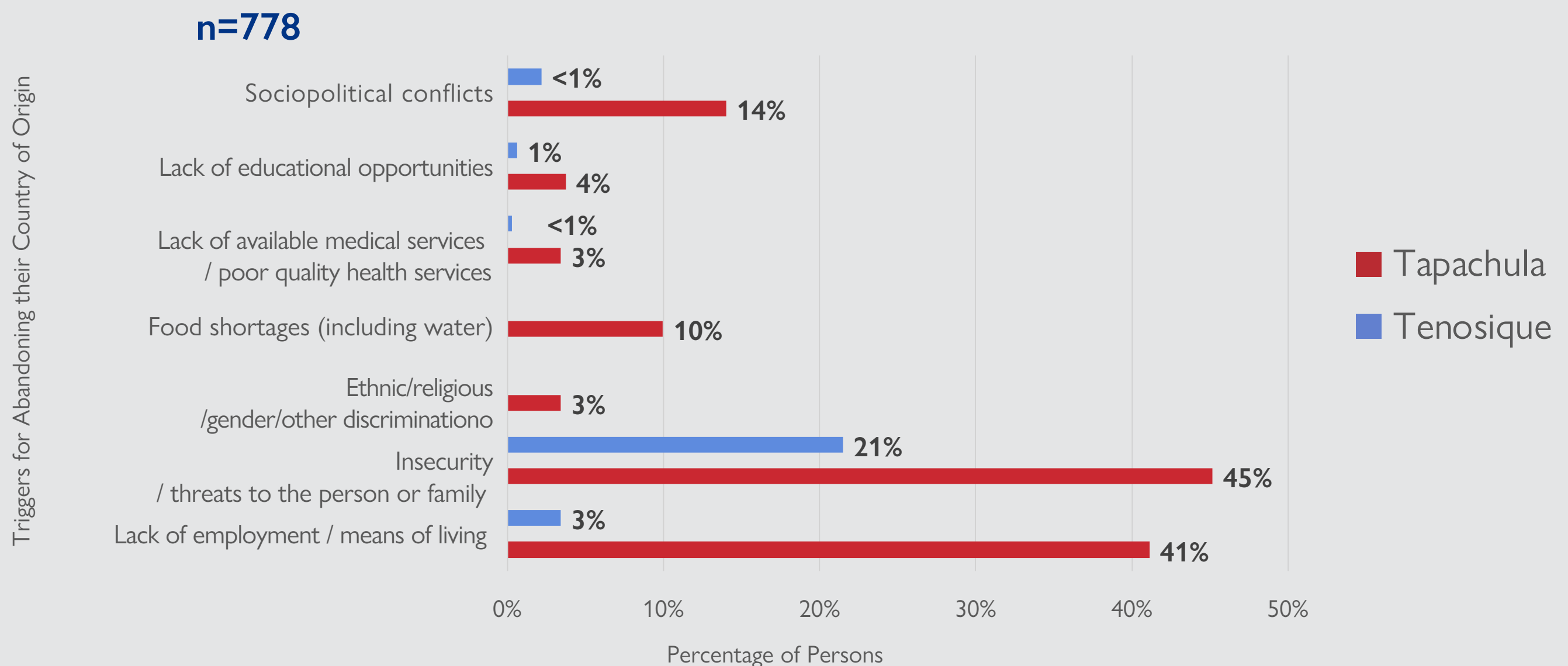
Graph 17. Economic Sustainability for Migrants Without Work, by City



Some 47% of unemployed migrants supported themselves economically through the help of other migrants, 23% begged for money on the streets, 19% were receiving remittances, 13% were using their savings, 6% were receiving aid from the government or an organization, and 1% were supported through the work of their partner (husband). **Some 3%, all in Tenosique, said they were not receiving any economic support.**

Reasons For Migration

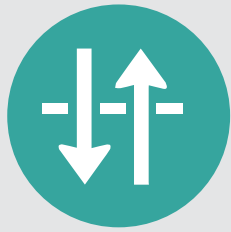
Graph 18. Decisive Factors for Abandoning the Country of Origin



Of note among the main factors for emigration indicated by the interviewed migrants was, in first place, **insecurity and threats to the individual or family (67%), and in second place the lack of employment or means of living (45%)**. The migrants also selected other factors such as **social and political conflicts (16%), food shortages (including water) (10%), lack of medical services (4%) and educational services (4%), and discrimination (3%)**. The natural disasters, environmental degradation, or climate change factor was chosen as a slightly important factor by fewer than one percent.



CONCLUSIONS



Events such as the arresting of people in public spaces and the organization of migrant groups for leaving the cities had repercussions on migrant population concentrations in public spaces considered for the monitoring of migrants.



The arrival of extra-regional migrants to Tapachula showed a steady arrival of migrants from the African continent. Tenosique, for its part, continued to experience the arrival of Haitian and Venezuelan migrants, who traditionally had not been using it as a transit city. This indicates that the Tenosique migratory route has been popularized among extra-regional migrant groups.



IOM was able to identify a wide range of the LGBTIQ+ population in the migrant population arrivals to Tapachula from different regions of the world. In addition, the existence of organizations that provide care and support for this population group help make it possible for LGBTIQ+ persons to express their sexual orientation more freely.



The Tenosique migratory route has a strong presence of family groups as a means of protection against the risks of the route; most of the pregnant women travel in these groups. When they reach a city such as Tenosique that is not oversaturated with a demand for services, pregnant women find it easier to access maternal and infant care services. Nevertheless, pregnant women face a constant lack of information on access to medical services in both monitored cities.



The proportion of the migrant population that has documents that support their immigration status is barely a quarter and the Temporary Visitor Card, as well as the Visitor Card for Humanitarian Reasons, are the most requested by the migrant population. Considering that 65 percent of the people surveyed has started a refugee application process, you can understand that the rate of approved applications is very low.



Free lodging services such as shelters are not enough to accommodate migrants requiring temporary no-cost lodging in Tapachula and Tenosique. This has forced a quarter of the migratory flow to spend the night on the streets, increasing potential risks for the migrant population, especially vulnerable groups.



The lack of employment opportunities, added to discrimination, lack of documentation, and unpaid activities such as caring for family members, kept almost 80% of the respondents from being able to generate a means of living, so they seek to survive through the support of other migrants, begging for money on the streets, receiving remittances, or receiving economic support from the government or an NGO.



Old Municipal Palace of Tapachula. Tapachula, Mexico. © IOM April 2022

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