

EMERGENCY TRACKING SOUTHERN BORDER MONITORING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

MEXICO

JUNE 2020



HIGHLIGHTS



95%

has decreased the migration flow in land internment points



58%

of the organizations interviewed are operating normally at the border



27%

of the people requesting services are Honduran



31%

identify that migrants have arrived at the border during the second half of May

METHODOLOGY

This report is a baseline assessment of the status of official Points of Entry (PoE) and service delivery for migrants on Mexico's southern border, specifically in Tapachula, Suchiate in the State of Chiapas, and Tenosique and Villahermosa in Tabasco. The information on points of entry is derived from the efforts of the IOM Mexico mission in evaluating the official PoE at the national level. The evaluation of service delivery for migrants is done through the identification of organizations and institutions in the field, based on the sector-wide approaches set out in the IOM Operational Framework for Emergency Migration Situations. The information in this report is collected by IOM Mexico staff in Chiapas and Tabasco through interviews with 27 key institutional informants working in the municipalities mentioned above: National Migration Institute, Jesuit Refugee Service, Guatemalan

Consulate in Ciudad Hidalgo, Tapachula Migrant Assistance Office, Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano A.C., Albergue Jesús El Buen Pastor, Por la Superación de la Mujer A.C., Honduran Consulate in Tapachula, Asylum Access, Una Mano Amiga en la Lucha contra el SIDA A.C., Médicos del Mundo, Guatemalan Consulate in Tapachula, Albergue DIF Viva México, United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the Public Prosecutor for Immigrants, Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees, Albergue Belén, Save the Children, National Human Rights Commission, Regional Office of the Procurator for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, State Human Rights Commission, Centre for Comprehensive Care in Chiapas and National System for Comprehensive Development of the Family.

CONTEXT OF THE SITUATION

On 11th March 2020, due to the alarming levels of spread and severity of the COVID-19 virus, the World Health Organization declared a state of pandemic. In this situation, on 23rd March 2020 the General Health Council of the Ministry of Interior of the United Mexican States recognized the epidemic as a serious disease of priority in the national territory.

The federal government applied the “Sana Distancia” campaign from 23rd March to 31st May, promoting isolation at home, the application of basic measures to prevent contagion, and instructing the closure of non-essential establishments for emergency health care, including businesses, schools, and institutions at all three levels of government. In this campaign, the restriction of mobility in general was voluntary and only some states initiated the “Hoy no circula” program on a mandatory basis for the entire vehicle fleet, such as Mexico City.

In the case of the governments of Chiapas and Tabasco, they also began the “Sana Distancia” campaign in parallel with the federal government, applying the same recommendations on the suspension of activities, including procedures, applications and legal proceedings. On 1st June, the campaign “El Semáforo de Riesgo Epidemiológico” (Epidemiological Risk Traffic Light) began to move towards a new normality. It is a weekly monitoring system to regulate the use of public space according to the risk of COVID-19 infection.

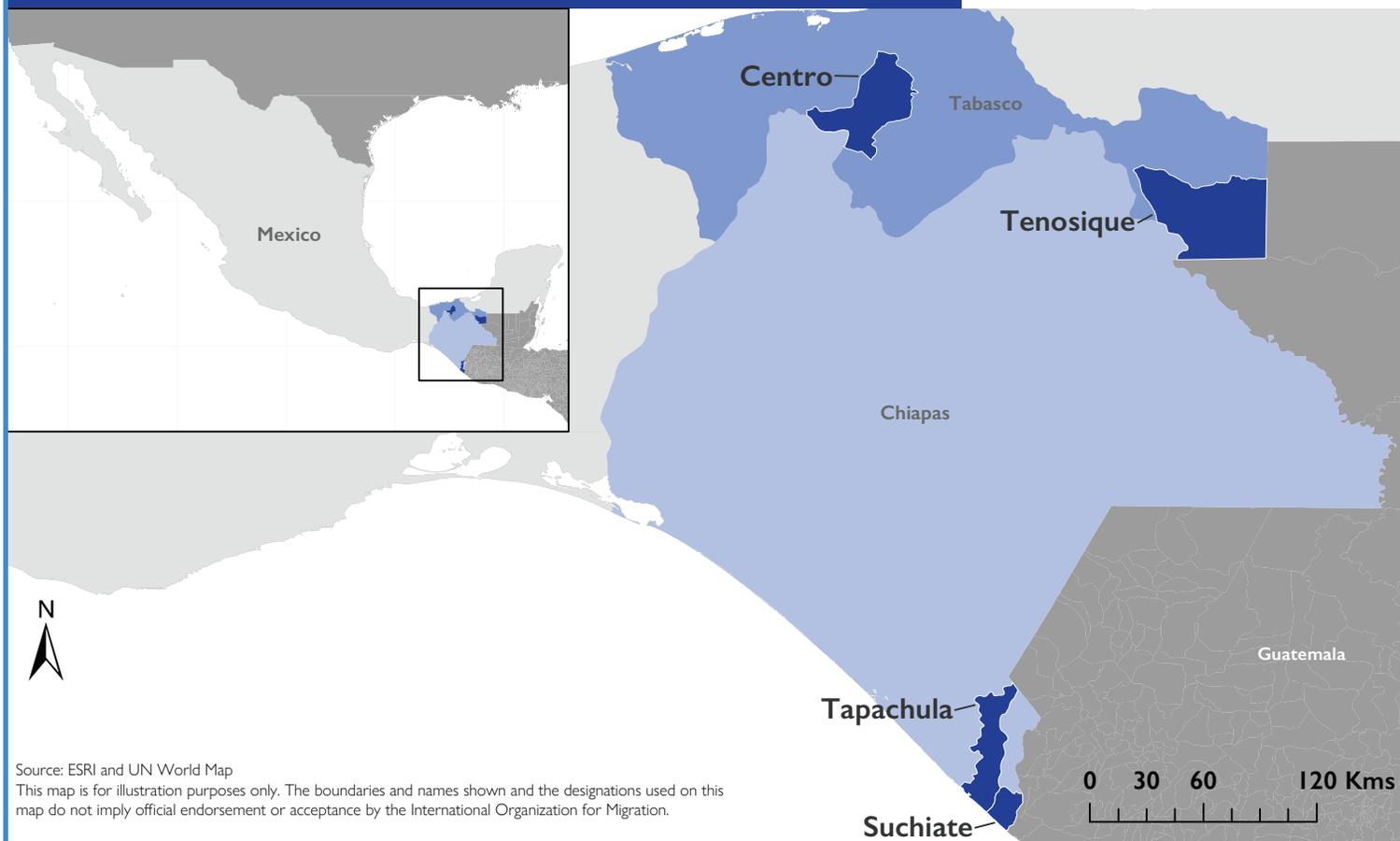
In the first weeks of June, the traffic light for the whole country was red, maintaining restrictions on non-essential economic activities. In Chiapas and Tabasco, the traffic light is still red, except that Tabasco is one of the states with the highest hospital occupation.

In addition, in Tapachula, Villahermosa and Tenosique there are migrants who are waiting for a migration decision from the Mexican authorities. This situation complicates not only the mobility of migrants across the border, but also those who were already stranded in these municipalities. Hence the provision of services within the framework of a humanitarian response becomes a priority need, in response to the demands of a settled migrant population without a defined migration status.



LOCATION

Location map



OFFICIAL POINTS OF ENTRY EVALUATION

The border posts in Mexico have not closed the passage of migrants during the period of the declaration of the pandemic, but transit has been closed for cross-border trade.

In general, the Points of Entry (PoE) in Tapachula are those that present the greatest dynamism in the migration flow, especially the International Airport. About land PoE, although the entry and exit of migrants is authorized. The rejection of the migrant population destined for Guatemala by people living in the border communities on the Guatemalan side has been identified. Even though most of the affected population are returned migrants, acts of violence have been identified due to fear of COVID-19 infection by local people, so the insecurity of migrants has intensified.

Health authorities are present at all border posts and apply health protocols to migrants. In the case of Tapachula International Airport, health measures and restrictions on some flights to defined destinations have been increased.

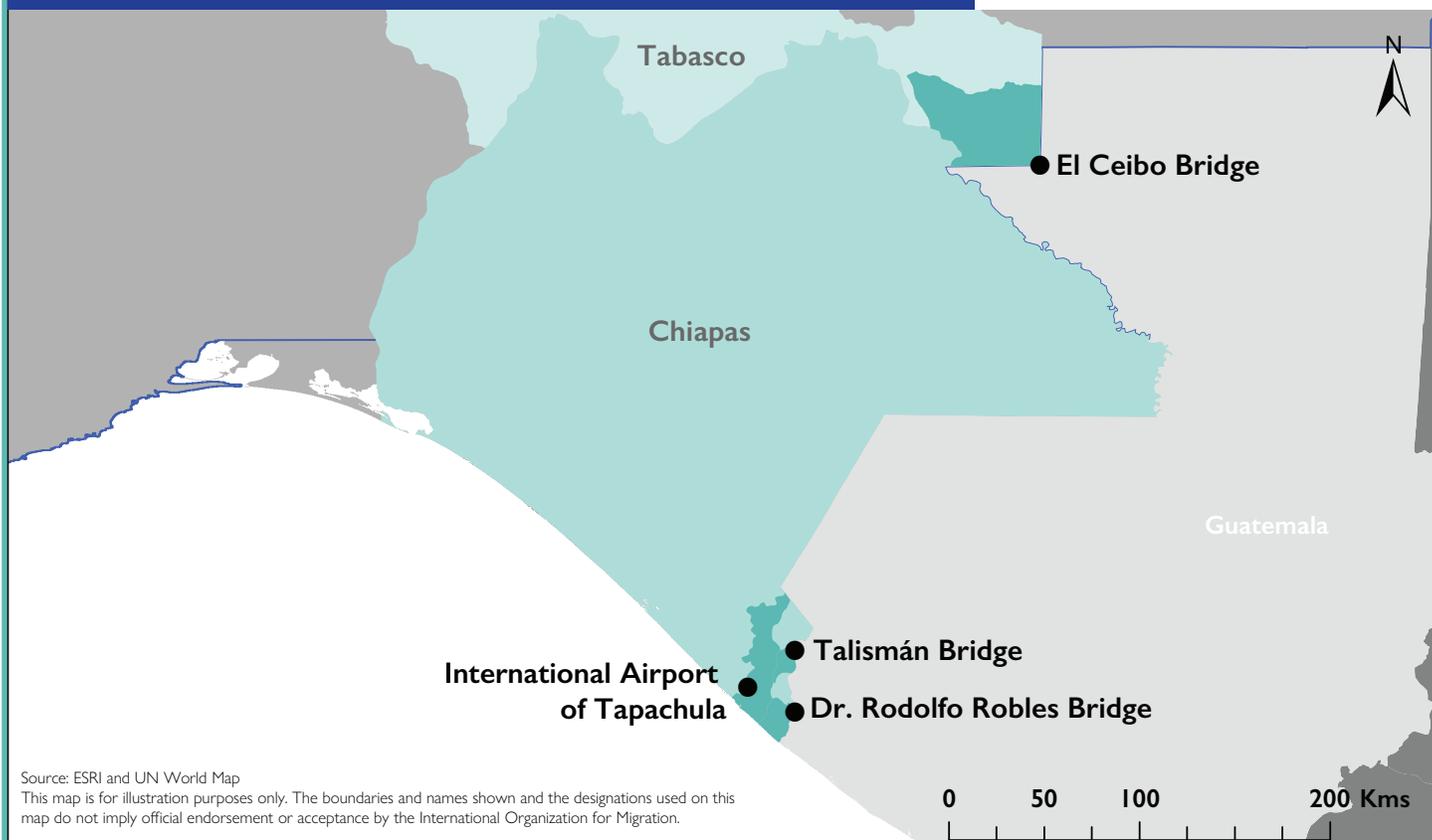


1
By air



3
By land

Location of the points of land internment and airports considered

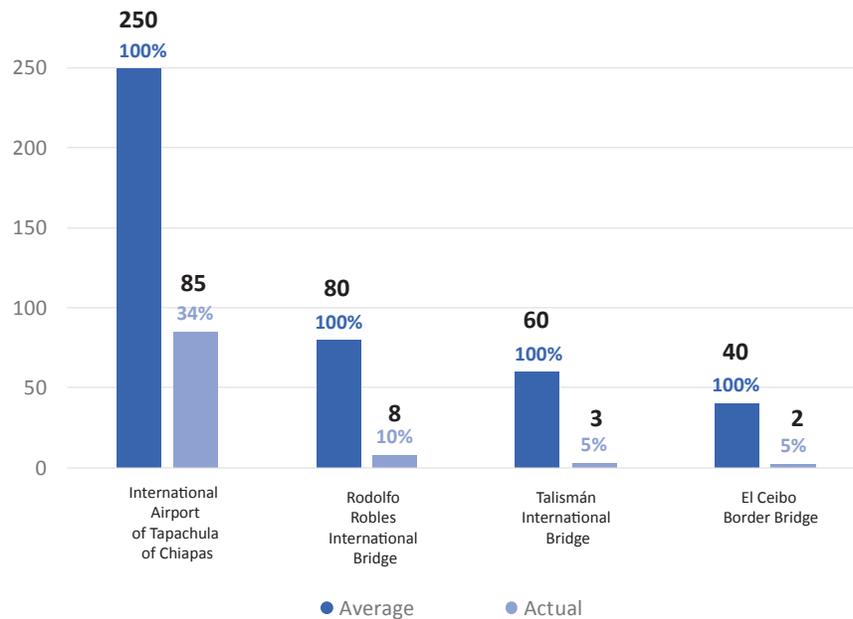


INS AND OUTS

Tapachula International Airport is the point with the greatest migrant flow. Around 85 people enter and leave the airport every day, which is equivalent to 34% of its normal dynamics in a non-pandemic scenario. Only five daily flights remain in operation with single destination and departure from Mexico City.

During the month, the airport has been an internal transit point for migrants of Central American nationalities who intend to return to their countries of origin, mainly because they were stranded in northern Mexico.

On the other hand, the migration flow at the land entry points is minimal and it is estimated that only less than ten people enter daily, with the Rodolfo Robles International Bridge being the one with the most movement. The bridge is located between Ciudad Hidalgo (Mexico) and Tecún Umán (Guatemala). Most of the people who pass through these points are cross-border migrant workers (traders) and returnees.



AFFECTED POPULATIONS

	International Airport of Tapachula of Chiapas	Rodolfo Robles International Bridge	Talismán International Bridge	El Ceibo Border Bridge
Nationals	●			
Regular travelers	●			●
Returnees		●	●	
Refugees				●
Migrant workers		●	●	

PUBLIC HEALTH

The points of entry points generally comply with the provisions of the standard operating procedures and health evaluation of migrants. Border personnel are trained by the Mexican Ministry of Health, and in the case of Tapachula, efforts have been reinforced with the support of the Chiapas State Workers' Social Security Institute.

In addition, there are specialized medical staff from the same institutions for care and referral of cases, and availability of information material such as pamphlets and posters on the prevention of the spread of the virus.

It is important to note that, as part of the safety protocol, temperature measurements are taken with digital thermometers, antibacterial gel is provided, and a health declaration form is requested.

The Talismán International Bridge and the Rodolfo Robles International Bridge are the places with the greatest limitations for the prevention of the spread of the virus. The areas with the greatest weaknesses are related to the promotion of hygiene and the prevention of contagion when suspicious cases have been identified.

		International Airport of Tapachula of Chiapas	Rodolfo Robles International Bridge	Talismán International Bridge	El Ceibo Border Bridge
Standard operating procedures	Presence of health authorities	●	●	●	●
	Application for handling people flow, occupational health and staff safety, detection, registration, notification and reference of sick passengers	●	●	●	●
	Has trained staff	●	●	●	●
	Information about COVID-19 is provided on the site	●	●	●	●

		International Airport of Tapachula of Chiapas	Rodolfo Robles International Bridge	Talismán International Bridge	El Ceibo Border Bridge
Prevention and control	Presence of hand washing stations	●	●	●	●
	Hand washing stations equipped	●	●	●	●
Health evaluation	Application of a health evaluation protocol	●	●	●	●
	Temperature recording	●	●	●	●
	Filling in the declaration health form	●	●	●	●
	Infrastructure for crowd control and safety of screeners		●		●

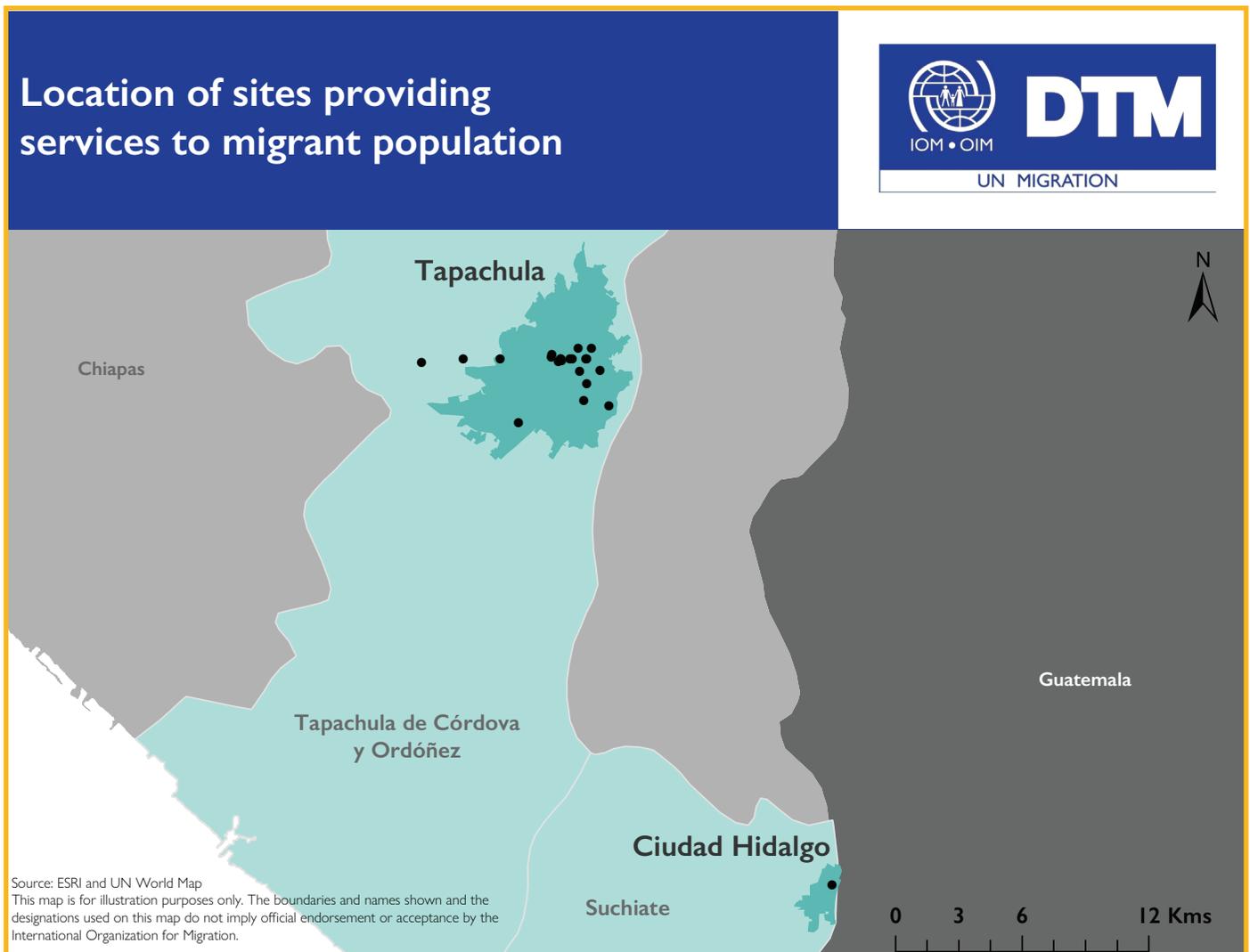
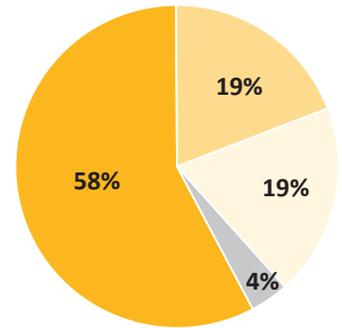
		International Airport of Tapachula of Chiapas	Rodolfo Robles International Bridge	Talismán International Bridge	El Ceibo Border Bridge
Protective equipment	For staff and other workers on site	●	●		●
	Mouthguards available for suspicious cases	●			●
	Availability of an isolated space for evaluation of suspicious cases	●			●
Reference system	Implementation of a referral system for suspicious cases	●	●	●	●
	Efficient reference system	●	●	●	●



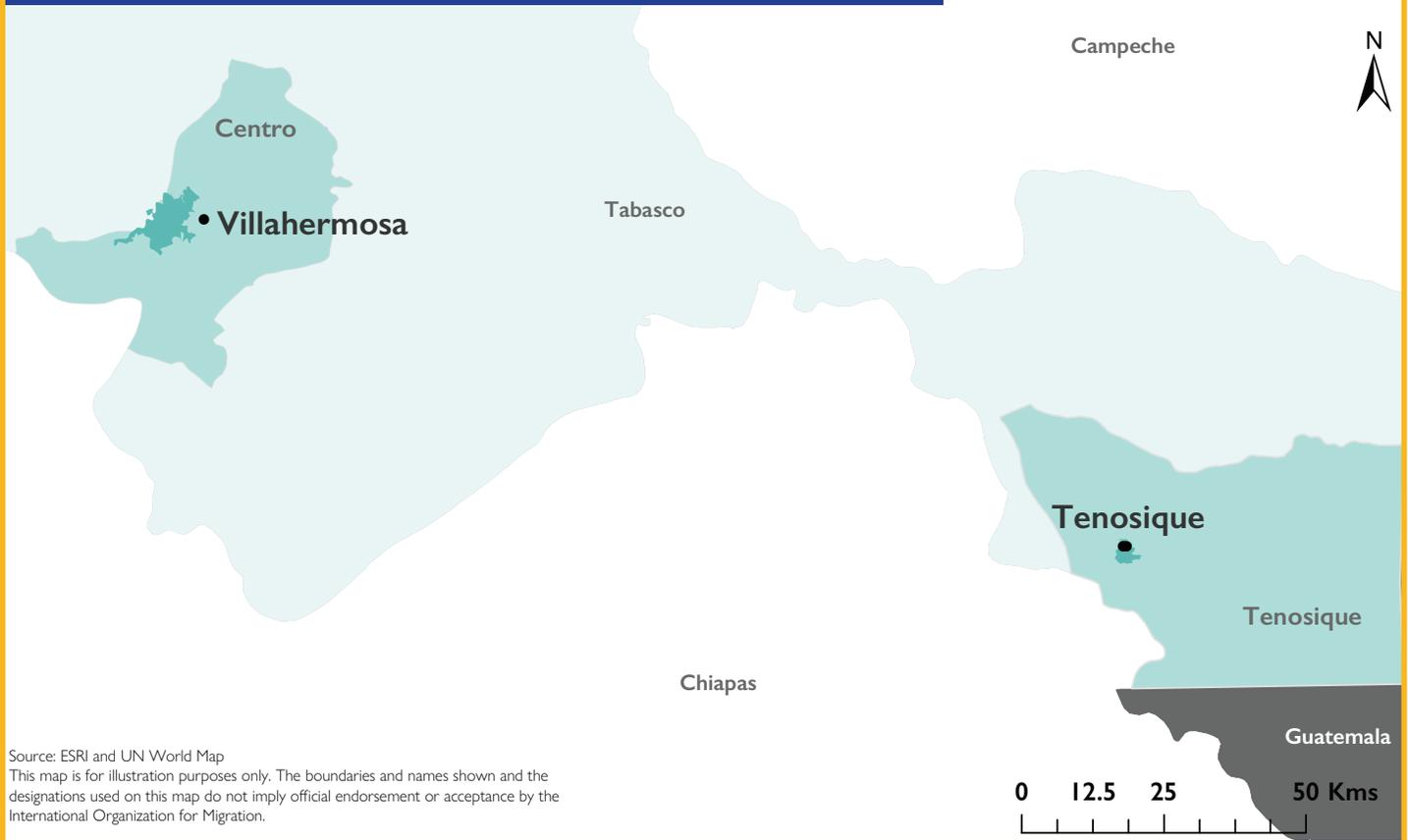
SERVICE DELIVERY EVALUATION

The evaluation was carried out with 26 organizations present in Tapachula, Villahermosa and Tenosique. Of these, 35% are civil society or non-governmental organizations, 23% are government institutions, 15% are consulates, 12% are autonomous institutions, 11% are international organizations and 4% are religious organizations. Most of the organizations that continue to operate are civil society organizations and are mainly responsible for providing services related to access to justice, shelter, protection of populations in vulnerable conditions (gender-based violence, mental health, migrant children, among others), education and inter-institutional coordination.

- Operating
- Limited face-to-face operation and remote
- Remote operations
- Closed operations



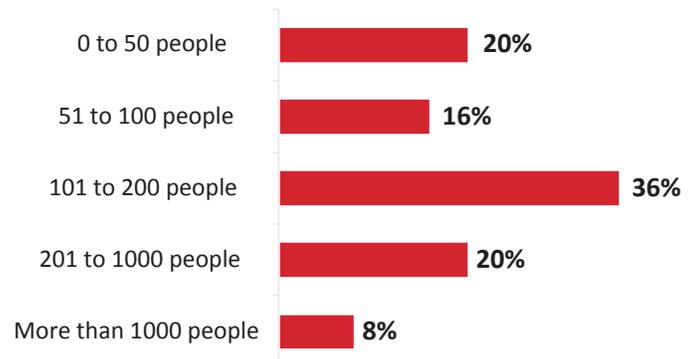
Location of sites providing services to migrant population



Organizations and institutions have attended at least 10,000 people during the month. There is a downward trend in the number of people using the services compared to the previous month. However, this behaviour is identified with the evolution of the pandemic: as the months go by, the number of people using services decreases.

The organizations that serve the greatest number of people are those focused on access to justice, protection of people in vulnerable conditions, especially protection of children and victims of gender-based violence.

Number of people attended to during the month



CHARACTERIZATION OF MIGRANTS ACCESSING SERVICES

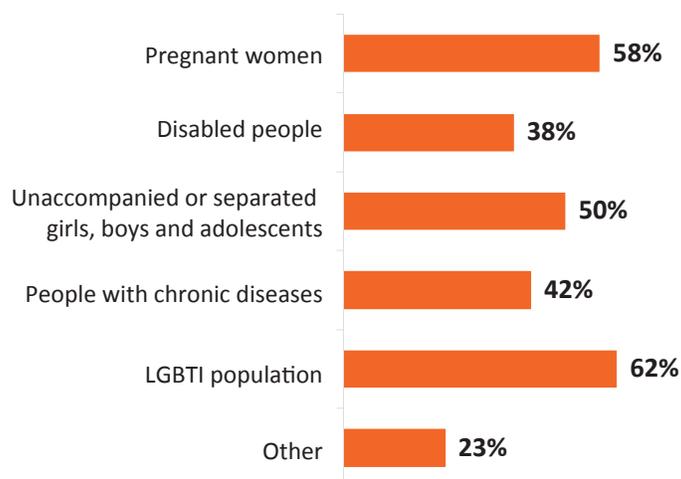
Sex and age groups



Highlighted nationalities attended in the last month



Vulnerable migrants

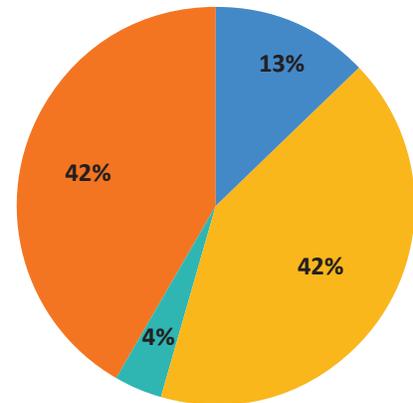


SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

MONTHLY ATTENDANTS

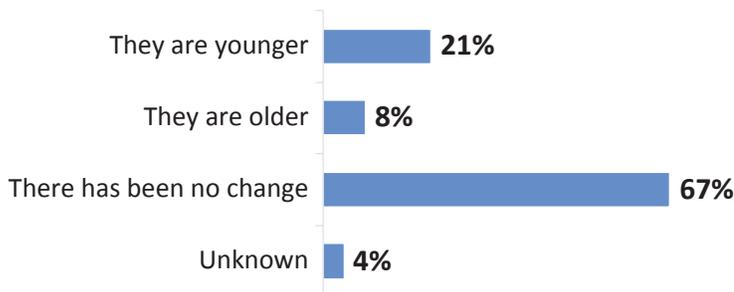
About the profile of the migrants attended, there is no pattern to the recurrence of people with a certain profile. However, during the last month, 42% of the organizations indicated that more men than women requested the services, especially in areas such as access to justice, shelters and protection of migrant children. The main nationalities in this case are people from North Central America. On the other hand, only 4% indicated that more women than men attended in the month, in areas of protection and protection of people in a condition of vulnerability and people of Haitian nationality.

Has the number of men or women changed?

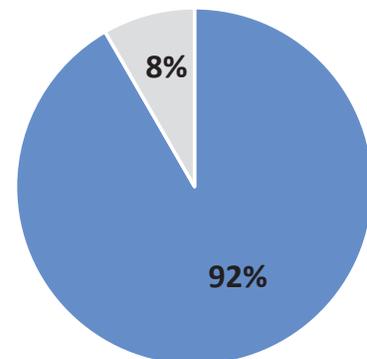


- Unknown
- There has been no change
- More women than men
- More men than women

Has there been any change in the age range of applicants?



Has the nationality of the applicants changed?



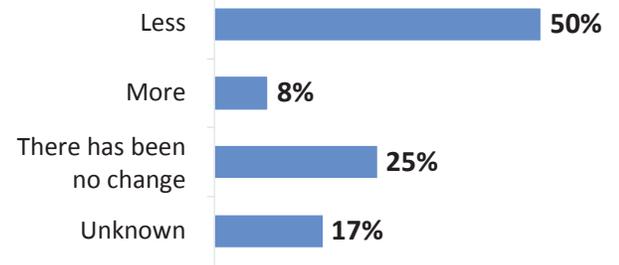
- The same nationalities than before
- Other

SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

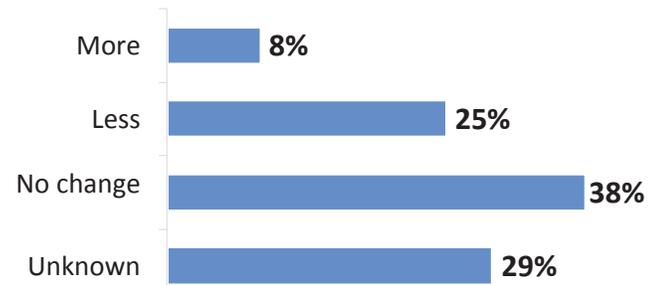
CHANGES IN THE PROFILE OF
THE MIGRANT POPULATION IN
A VULNERABLE CONDITION

The people who have requested services during the month are characterized by being mostly vulnerable. The increase in the severity of cases of gender-based violence among both migrant and Mexican women is noteworthy, as is the care provided to people with chronic diseases. There is a concern regarding migrant children, since cases have been detected where their parents have died as a result of COVID-19 and it has not been possible to follow up on them or there has been a severe decrease in the number of cases requiring protection. In the case of unaccompanied children, it has not been possible to process assisted voluntary returns to the countries of North Central America because the borders are closed. This means that a significant number of children are stranded in Tapachula.

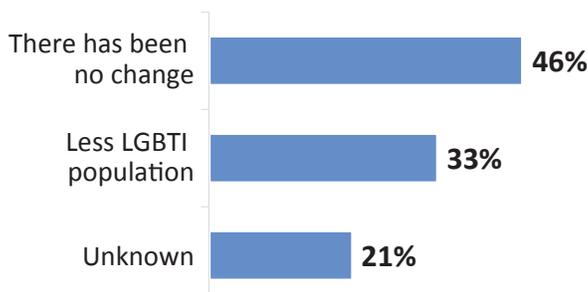
Has the presence of
older adults changed?



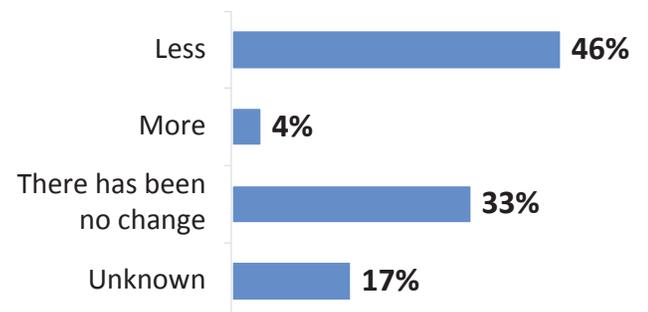
Has the number of
pregnant women changed?



Has the presence of the LGBTI
population changed?



Has the presence of children
and adolescents changed?



SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

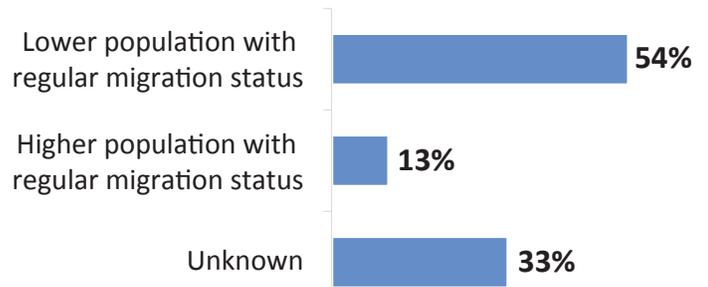
CHANGES IN THE PROFILE OF
THE MIGRANT POPULATION
BY MIGRATION STATUS

The consular services are the ones that report the greatest amount of attention to people in an irregular condition, who ask for more guidance on ways to regularize their situation in Mexico, mainly people from North Central America who have initiated procedures for refugee applications. It should be noted that these people have been in Mexico since before the pandemic and are therefore people who have settled for a long time.

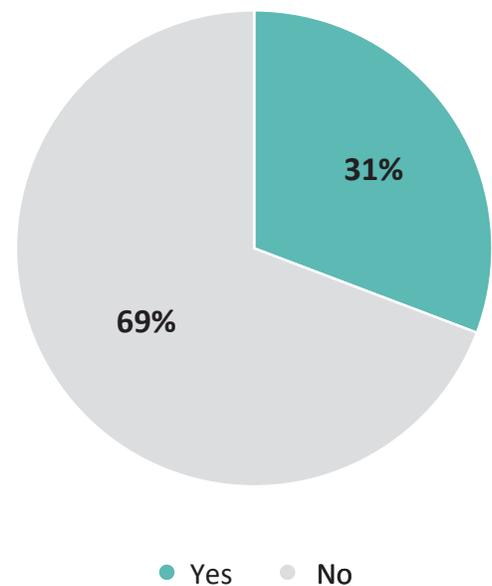
In addition, an increase in the number of procedures for the loss of documents has been identified, especially in the case of people from outside the region who are still waiting for their migration decision.

On the other hand, key informants consider that since April 2020, with the closure of borders, migrants continue to enter Tapachula through irregular points such as the Suchiate River, although in smaller quantities.

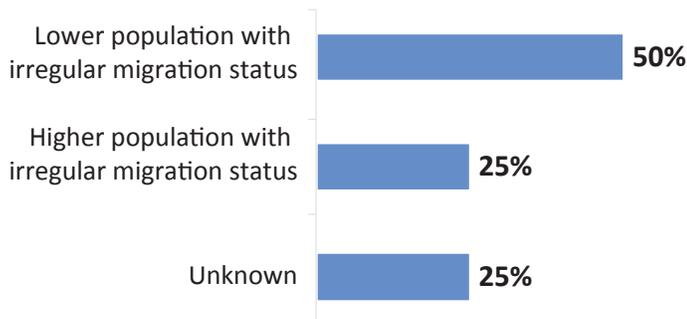
Have you noticed any changes in the presence
of people with regular migration status?



Have you identified whether the time of arrival
of migrants to Mexico has been recent
(last 2 weeks)?



Have you noticed any change in the presence
of people in an irregular migratory situation?

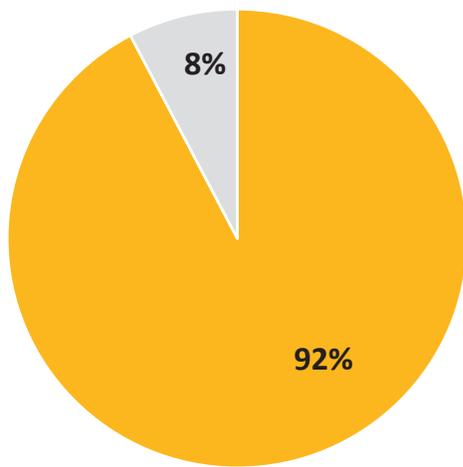


SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

CHANGING DEMANDS FOR SERVICES

The needs of people who do use the services of these organizations have increased. It has been identified that the decrease in income due to lack of employment has caused migrants and their families to be homeless or, on the contrary, to have cases of housing overcrowding. It has been reported that migrants request various services, which are not necessarily associated with the services that the organization or institution provides.

Has there been any change in the number of migrants requesting your organization's services due to the pandemic?



● Yes ● No



CLOTHING

↑ 23%

Six organizations indicated that they have had a higher demand in requests for clothing, even though 14 of them indicated that they do not offer the service and therefore are unaware of the need in the migrant population.



SHELTER

↑ 35%

Nine of the organizations indicated that they have received more people requesting the service of shelter or accommodation. The shelters have had to close their operations or reduce their capacity, leaving many migrants in a state of homelessness for this reason.



HYGIENE PRODUCTS

↑ 42%

The need for hygiene products is the second highest demand during the month, with 11 organizations indicating that they have received these requests, although ten have indicated that they cannot provide these products to migrants.



FOOD

↑ 46%

Food assistance is the service with the highest demand during the month, and 12 organizations indicated that more migrants requested this service during the month.



FAMILY REUNIFICATION

→ 42%

The majority of migrants have not used these services in the organizations identified. Eleven 11 indicated that they have not received applications for family reunification and seven indicated that there has been no change with respect to the decrease or increase in this issue.



TRANSPORTATION

↑ 23%

Twelve organizations indicated that they do not provide the service, so they are unaware of the need in migrants. On the other hand, six indicated that there has been an increase in the number of people requesting these services and five that they have not received any type of related request at all.



PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE SERVICES

↑ 35%

Despite the current situation, only nine organizations indicated that they have a greater demand for psychosocial care services, except that the nature of these organizations focuses on protection.



INFORMATION ON ACCESS TO PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

↑ 35%

Nine organizations reported receiving requests from migrants for information on access to physical health services. The migrants who require these services are not necessarily related to symptoms of COVID-19, but related to chronic diseases.



PROTECTION TO PEOPLE IN A VULNERABLE CONDITION

↑ 31%

Eight organizations expressed concern, specifically about the increase in demand for these services and the severity of cases, especially for people with chronic diseases.



INFORMATION ON ACCESS TO TESTING FOR COVID-19

→ 69%

Despite the current context, 18 organizations indicated that they have not received requests for information on access to testing for COVID-19 and only five indicated that there is a greater demand from migrants. It should be noted that these organizations and institutions are consulates, shelters and NGOs.



REPORTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES

→ 42%

Four organizations indicated an increase in demand for services due to reported cases of human trafficking. Two of them are civil society organizations that ensure the protection of migrants in general.



MEDICATION

↑ 38%

Assistance with medication is the third service that most migrants request and for which they have received the greatest demand. This is associated with the number of people with illnesses that have been treated during the month.



PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

→ 31%

Seven organizations expressed concern, specifically about the increase in demand for these services and the severity of the cases.



ORIENTATION FOR FUNERAL SERVICES AND REPATRIATION OF BODIES

↑ 35%

Nine organizations indicated that they have identified that more people are requesting orientation for funeral services. On the other hand, seven of them indicated that the number of people requesting orientation has decreased.



LABOR REFERRALS

↓ 35%

Nine organizations indicated that the demand for labor referrals has decreased considerably and only six indicated that they have had an increase in requests.



LEGAL ADVICE

→ 23%

Eight organizations mentioned that they do not provide this service, so they do not know if migrants require legal advice or counsel, but six of them indicated that they have not received applications for the service and only four have indicated that applications for support have increased. The latter organizations provide these services.



VOLUNTARY RETURN INFORMATION

↑ 35%

Nine organizations stated that they have identified an increase in the number of people requesting information for voluntary return. Also, seven indicated that they do not provide the service, so they are unaware of the need. Only four organizations indicated that they had not received any such requests for information.



MIGRATION REGULATION AND PROCEDURES

↑ 23%

Nine organizations indicated that they do not provide these services, so they do not know if it is a need for the population they serve. However, no organization detected that there are fewer requests. On the contrary, six organizations indicated that there has been an increase in the need for migrants to regularize.



APPLICATION FOR REFUGEE OR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

→ 35%

Nine organizations indicated that they have not received any requests from migrants to apply for refuge or international protection in Mexico. On the other hand, five indicated that the demands have been greater and seven indicated that there has been no significant change in the general trend.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE SERVICES

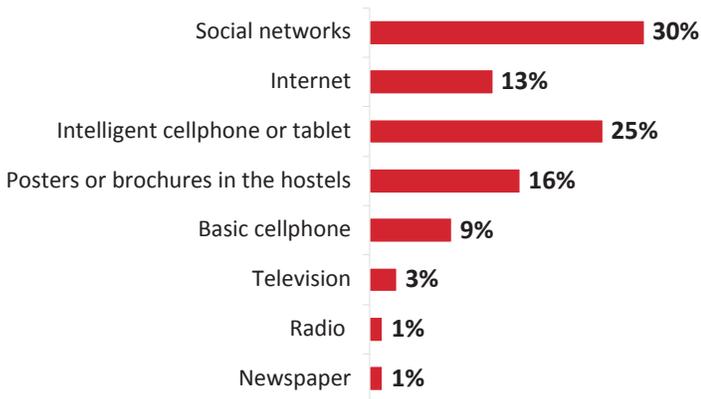
→ 31%

Eight organizations stated that the demand for the service in access to justice services remains stable, and three organizations indicated that there is greater demand, specifically civil society organizations.

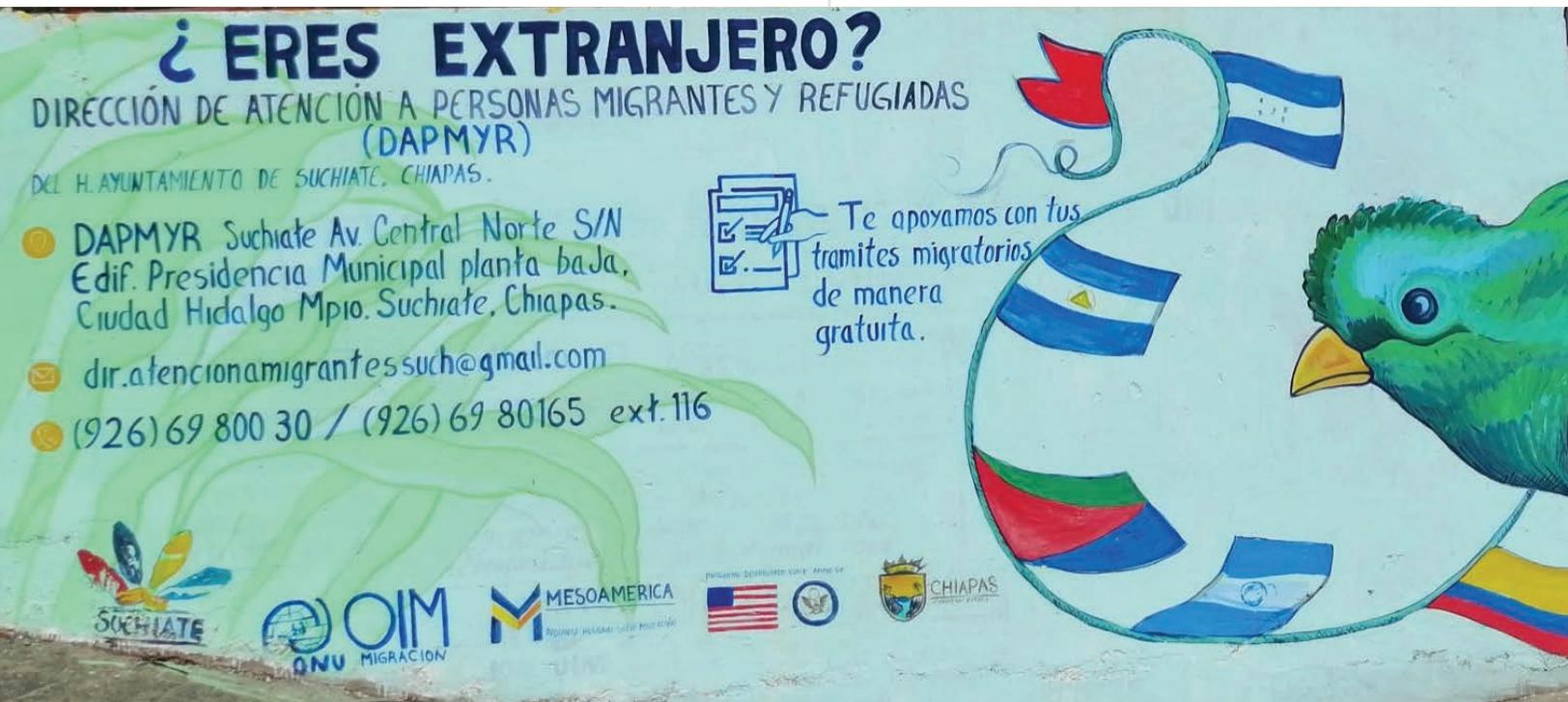
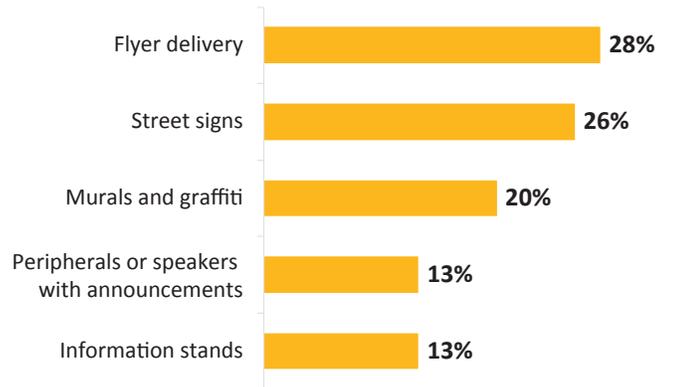
INFORMATION ACCESS

Ninety-two per cent of key informants indicated that they are aware of the means most used by migrants to inform themselves. Regarding the use of the Internet, 67% indicated that some people have the capacity to access the Internet and 92% said that migrants access the Internet through smartphones that they share with family and friends. Regarding access to social networks, 46% indicated that migrants use Facebook to inform themselves and 43% said migrants use WhatsApp to interact with others.

What are the means of communication most used by migrants?



Face-to-face communication: which are most effective in informing migrants?



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