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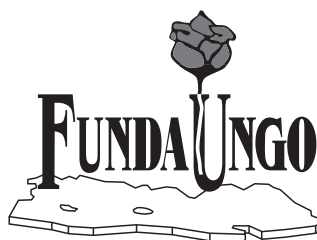
Decision Points:
The Changing Dynamics of Emigration Intentions in Northern Central America

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PRESENTACIÓN

Due to the interest generated in the public debate regarding the migration from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America towards the United States, it seemed opportune to publish in English the working paper: "Decision Points: The Changing Dynamics of Emigration intentions in Northern Central America", written by Dr. Jonathan Hiskey from the Department of Political Science in Vanderbilt University.

It is our purpose that this contribution by Dr. Hiskey can be used as a reference for those interested in the study of migration in the Central American region.

Versión en español

Debido al interés generado en el debate público sobre la migración de los países del Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica hacia los Estados Unidos, nos ha parecido oportuno publicar en idioma inglés el documento de trabajo: "Decision Points: The Changing Dynamics of Emigration Intentions in Northern Central America", elaborado por el Dr. Jonathan Hiskey, del Departamento de Ciencia Política de la Universidad de Vanderbilt.

Es nuestro propósito que los resultados de esta contribución del Dr. Hiskey sirvan de referencia, para las personas interesadas en el estudio del fenómeno migratorio en la región Centroamericana.

With images of young mothers and their infant children sleeping on the floors of U.S. detention centers, caravans of thousands of Central Americans working their way through Mexico, and, most recently, the emergence of what are essentially refugee camps scattered across the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border, emigration from the northern Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras stands as one of the most prominent inter-American issues over the past several years. Reminiscent of the massive human outflow of Salvadorans and Guatemalans during those countries' civil wars of the 1980s, the recent surge in emigration from the northern region of Central America has coincided with an explosion of crime and violence within the region, much of which is related to the pervasive presence of gangs and drug trafficking organization (Arce 2014; Gagne 2016; Gonzalez-Barrera, et al. 2014; Menjívar and Drysdale-Walsh 2017). Given these events over the past several years, and the dramatic change in traditional migration patterns along the U.S.-Mexico border that have accompanied them, questions concerning the drivers of emigration are now front and center among both scholars and policymakers alike. Whereas answers to such questions twenty years ago were largely settled, with a majority of migrants crossing the border being young Mexicans leaving home in search of economic opportunity in the United States, migration patterns in recent years are far less clear with respect to who is migrating and why they are leaving. In the following pages, relying in large part on AmericasBarometer survey data from Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), this chapter explores those questions, focusing in particular on the significant role that non-economic factors have played in the migration decision among individuals from this region in recent years.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Part one examines trends in emigration from northern Central America over time through two metrics. The first offers a look at the commonly used measure of the number of individuals apprehended at the U.S. border, with data from 2007-2017 offering the country of birth of those apprehended. Next, trends in the principal survey-based measure of migration behavior are examined through analysis of the emigration intentions of Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Honduran respondents surveyed biennially since 2004 as part of LAPOP's *AmericasBarometer project.* While not offering a direct measure of migration behavior, the "emigration intentions" item serves as a useful proxy for those who do in fact decide to emigrate from their home country. The final section of part one provides a more detailed analysis of data from the 2016-17 *Americas Barometer* survey that included an additional emigration intentions question that focused specifically on the role insecurity played in respondents' plans to emigrate.

After reviewing the trends in both actual and intended emigration, part two of the chapter turns to an analysis of those factors most strongly associated with the reporting of emigration intentions among survey respondents of the northern Central American countries. In addition to looking at those socioeconomic and demographic factors long viewed as important predictors of migration behavior, such as age, gender, and an individual's connections with a migrant network (Massey, et al. 1998; Massey, et al. 2002), this section also explores the role that respondents' experiences with crime and corruption, as well as feelings of insecurity, play in pushing individuals to consider emigration as a viable life option.

In the process, a model of emigration intentions among residents of northern Central America is examined and found to stand in contrast to the typical economic-based model of migration behavior found in other settings and time periods. The idea that the drivers of migration, or at least emigration intentions, have changed in fundamental ways as a reflection of the insecurity crisis afflicting the northern Central America region is further explored through a comparative analysis of the 2016/17 model results with a similar model run using data from 2010. Such a comparison allows for an assessment of the ways in which the determinants of emigration intentions have changed from 2010 to 2017.

The central conclusion from this section is that the socioeconomic and demographic profile, along with the relative weight of economic and insecurity factors, has changed in significant ways during that time period. In the concluding section of this chapter, a discussion is offered of the implications of these changes in migrant profiles from Central America over the past several years.

1. Trends in Emigration Intentions

A central question for observers of U.S. immigration patterns over the past twenty years concerns the reasons behind the watershed changes in both the numbers and profiles of those seeking entry into the U.S. by crossing the U.S.-Mexico border that have occurred between the early 2000s and the present day. Though characterized as "a crisis" by many on the U.S. side of the border, the reality suggests that in terms of the numbers of individuals attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, levels are lower than they have been in nearly four decades. The change in the profiles of those crossing the border has been just as dramatic, with the predominant pattern of Mexican immigration to the U.S. now replaced by flows from Central America.

Relying first on the most commonly used metric of U.S. immigration flows, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apprehension data, we can see from Figure 1 that the first element of these watershed changes is the dramatic decline in the number of individuals attempting to cross the border over the past 20 years. After reaching a peak of over 1.6 million individuals apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol agents in 2000, that number had dropped to just over 300,000 in 2017 before increasing slightly in 2018. Though the numbers for 2019 are not yet official at the time of this writing, there does appear to have been a significant increase from 2018 apprehension numbers, indicating a trend that deserves future analysis.

Regardless of any increase in 2019, though, the fact remains that both overall numbers and, as importantly, the country origins of those attempting to enter the U.S. across its border with Mexico have changed dramatically. For as Figure 1 also reveals, whereas the vast majority of individuals apprehended in 2000 were from Mexico, the number of individuals from countries "other than Mexico" surpassed those from Mexico in 2014 and has continued to trend upward since, reaching a high of over 244,000 in 2018.

Figure 1. U.S. Southwest Border Apprehensions, 2000-2018
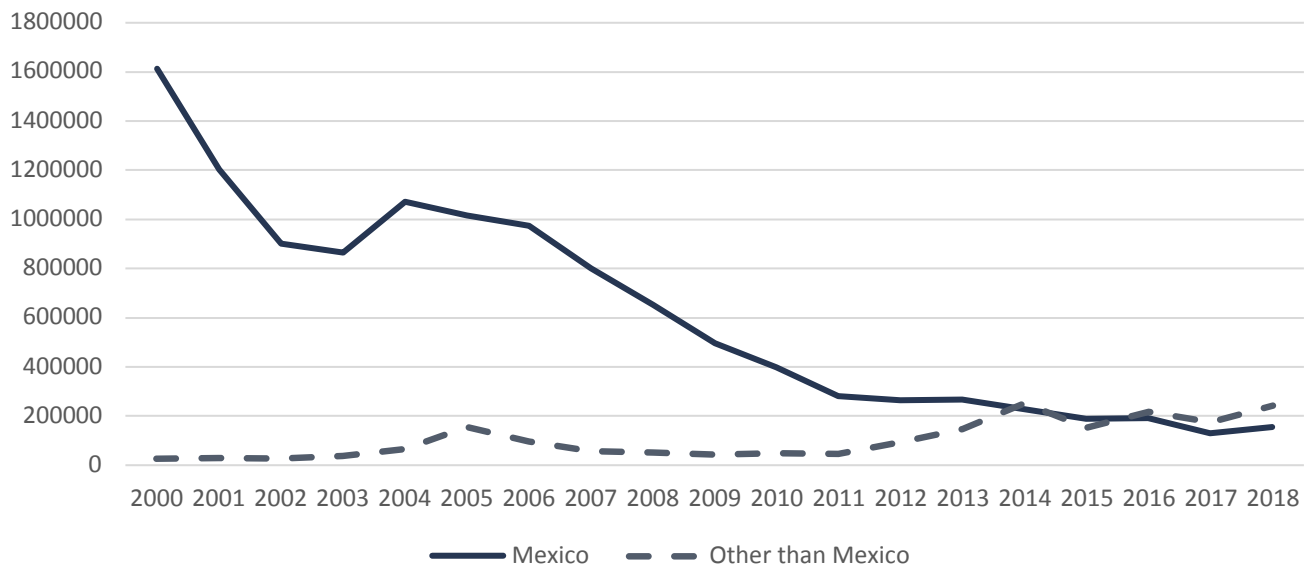
Source: Customs and Border Protection 2019a.

Figure 2 makes clear the primary countries of origin for those individuals categorized by the U.S. CBP as "other than Mexico," with those from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador making up 92 percent of that category in 2018. Also notable in Figure 2 is the degree to which the number of those apprehended at the U.S. border from Guatemala increased between 2017 and 2018, while the number of individuals from El Salvador began to decline in 2016.

Figure 2. U.S. Border Apprehensions, 2007-2018
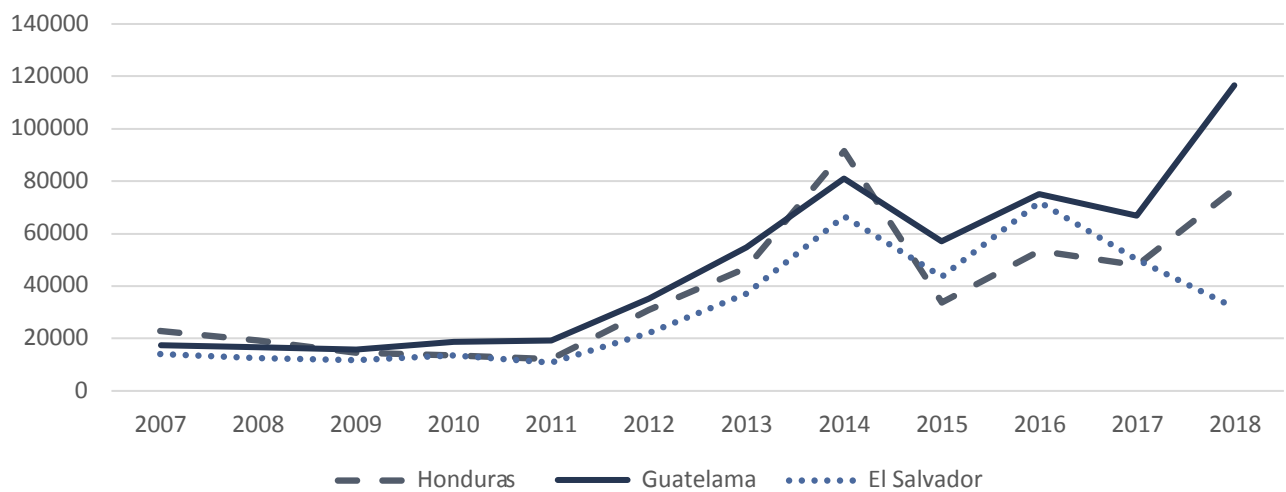
Source: Customs and Border Protection 2019b.

The apprehension data provided by the CBP offer a standard and widely-used metric of actual immigration flows available on an annual basis[1]. These data do not, however, offer any opportunity to explore the individual-level factors associated with migration behavior.

It is in this area of inquiry where survey data, like those collected through LAPOP's *Americas Barometer* project, are essential for identifying and understanding the demographic, socioeconomic, attitudinal, and experiential characteristics of those most likely to leave their home countries.

As noted above, asking respondents about their emigration intentions does not capture their actual migration behavior. There is, however, a growing consensus among migration scholars that survey items such as those used in the *Americas Barometer* survey instrument, do serve as a reasonable proxy for actual behavior. For example, in a recent study of the relationship between survey-based measures of respondents' emigration intentions and actual migration flows across 160 countries, Tjaden, et al. (2018) find "a strong association between emigration intentions and recorded bilateral flows to industrialized countries, as well as between intentions and aggregated out-migration" (p. 36). Similarly, Hiskey et al. (2018), Creighton (2013) and Ryo (2013) all offer substantial support for the notion that the standard "emigration intentions" item provides important insight into the individual-level factors associated with those most likely to emigrate.

The item of interest for us in this chapter is worded as follows in LAPOP's *Americas Barometer* survey instrument:

> "**Q14**: Do you have plans to live or work in another country in the next three years?" (en español esta redactada de la siguiente manera: **Q14**: "Tienes usted intenciones de irse a vivir o a trabajar a otro pais en los proximos tres años?")

This item has been included in the *AmericasBarometer* survey since 2004, and thus in addition to offering the opportunity to examine the individual-level factors associated with potential emigrants, also allows for an evaluation of aggregate response trends across a substantial number of years.

Further, the 2016/17 round of the *AmericasBarometer* carried out in the northern region of Central America included an additional emigration intentions item that specifically asked individuals if they were planning to leave due to security concerns. The exact wording of that item is as follows:

> **Q14A:** "In the previous 12 months, have you considered emigrating from your country due to insecurity?" (en español esta redactada de la siguiente manera: **Q14A:** "En los últimos 12 meses, ¿ha considerado emigrar de su país debido a la inseguridad?")

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1. Though widely used, this metric is not without flaws as it rests on the assumption that the ratio of those apprehended to the total attempting to cross has remained the same over time. Given the substantial increase in border security investment by the U.S. government since the mid-1990s, this assumption is tenuous at best. Rather, it is likely the case that substantial decline in apprehension numbers since that time reflects an even greater decline in those attempting to cross, as presumably the rate of apprehensions has increased with the heightened border security efforts.

As is evident, this item (Q14A) differs from the more general emigration intentions item (Q14) in two important ways. First, it does not provide respondents with a future-oriented time frame that specifically directs respondents to think about their emigration plans over the next three years. Rather, it simply asks respondents whether they have "considered emigration." Second, and relatedly, the item directs respondents to consider the previous twelve months and report whether, during that time, the thought of emigrating due to insecurity had occurred to them. Thus while similar in some ways, the differences between Q14 and Q14A are essential to keep in mind when modeling those factors most associated with each item. Most importantly, the insecurity intentions item should not be considered as simply a subset of those reporting emigration intentions in response to the first item. Rather, as I demonstrate below, there may be quite a few individuals who responded "yes" to one of the items and "no" to the other.

With those caveats in mind, I now turn to an evaluation of both of these items, focusing the bulk of our analyses on the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer[2]. To begin, and provide context to the data from 2016/17, a brief review of trends in emigration intentions among Mexican (as a point of comparison) and northern Central American respondents over time is provided. Of particular note in these data is the sharp increase in the percentage of Central American respondents with such intentions in 2014 and 2016/17 after reaching a low in 2012. Though Mexico follows this trend as well, the post-2012 increase is not nearly as sharp as those of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. These patterns then roughly correspond to the CBP apprehension data in terms of the rapid increase in Central Americans attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in recent years, suggesting again that at a minimum the "emigration intentions" item can work reasonably well as an estimate for migration behavior among individuals of these countries.

Figure 3. Emigration Intentions in Mexico and Central America, 2004-2016/2017
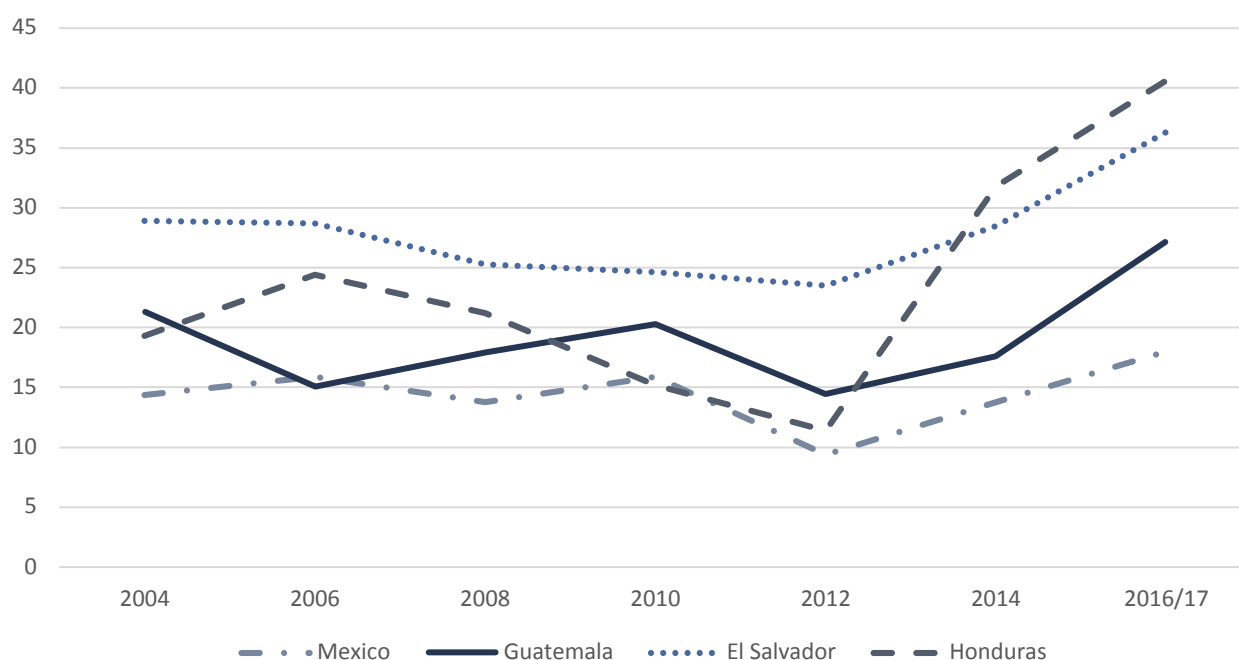
Turning to an examination of the insecurity-related emigration intentions item asked in 2016/17, I explore whether this item will simply identify the subset of respondents who identify insecurity as their motivation behind their emigration plans or if this survey item generates a new group of respondents reporting emigration plans. Further, we may surmise that those individuals responding "yes" to both of these questions are those with the strongest desire to emigrate while, conversely, those replying "no" to both items are those individuals with the firmest plans to stay in their home country.

Figure 4 first offers the percentage of individuals from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras that responded affirmatively to the two items. From these aggregate percentages, we can see that in Guatemala, those with thoughts about leaving due to insecurity seem to be a subset of the 27% of respondents who reported intentions to emigrate on the Q14 item. In El Salvador and Honduras, however, the interpretation is less clear. In El Salvador there are slightly more respondents who reported "insecurity intentions" than those reporting "general intentions." This suggests that there are in fact distinctions made among respondents in terms of how they responded to the two items. Similarly, in Honduras, only slightly more respondents expressed "general intentions" to emigrate when compared to those reporting "insecurity intentions". What is not clear from this figure, though, is how much variation existed in the combination of responses to these two items. To make better sense of these response patterns, Table 1 offers a breakdown of individual responses to both questions.

Figure 4. Respondents with General and Insecurity-Related Emigration Intentions in Northern Central America, 2016/2017 (%)

Legend: Emigration Intentions / Emigration Intentions Due to Insecurity
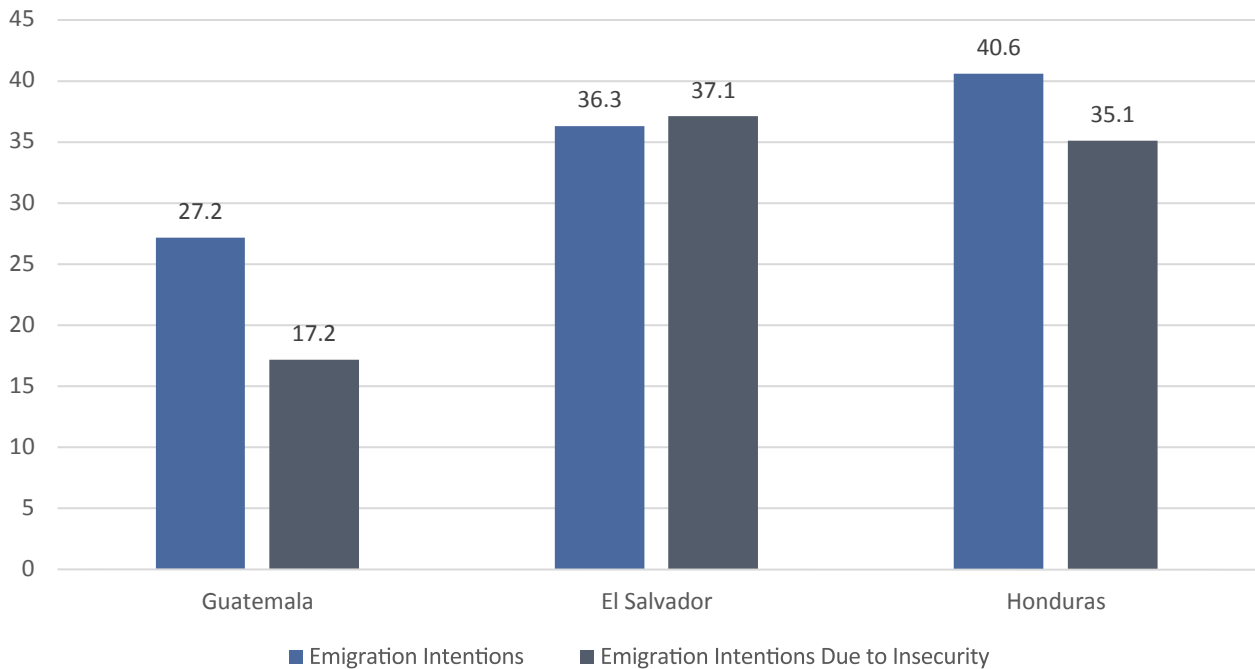
Such a breakdown allows us to construct four categories of respondents:

1. Those who responded "No" to both Q14 and Q14A
2. Those who responded "No" to Q14 but "Yes" to Q14A
3. Those who responded "Yes" to Q14 but "No" to Q14A
4. Those who responded "Yes" to both Q14 and Q14A

The one clear expectation regarding these four categories is that the largest percentage should emerge for Category #1 – those who responded "no" to both items – as it is well-established that in most cases the vast majority of a country's population is either unwilling or unable to emigrate. Secondly, we should gain some insight in how significant a role insecurity plays in the emigration decision for individuals in each country by comparing respondents who replied "yes" to the general intentions item in terms of how they responded to the "insecurity intentions" item (Categories #3 and #4). The one category that lacks a clear interpretation is #2 – those who said "no" to the general intentions item but "yes" to the insecurity item. One possible way to understand this combination of responses is that it captures those individuals who have less certain plans about emigration but for whom insecurity in their home country has reached an unbearable level.

Table 1. General and Insecurity-Related Emigration Intentions, 2016/17

| | General Emigration Intentions (Q14) | Insecurity Emigration Intentions (Q14A | |
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Guatemala	Yes (%)	10.4	16.8
	No (%)	6.8	66.0
El Salvador	Yes (%)	25.7	10.6
	No (%)	11.5	52.2
Honduras	Yes (%)	25.0	15.5
	No (%)	10.1	49.3

What the results displayed in this table indicate is that there was indeed quite a bit of movement among respondents when offering responses to the two items. We also see the differences across the three countries in terms of the response patterns, with a significantly higher percentage of Guatemalans reporting no intentions to emigrate, while the percentage of respondents replying "yes" to both items was more than two times higher in both Honduras and El Salvador than the rate in Guatemala. Finally, there were roughly an equal number of respondents in each country that fell into the difficult-to-interpret Category # 2, ranging from 6.7 percent in Guatemala to 11.4 percent in El Salvador. These similar numbers across the three countries perhaps lend support to the

idea that respondents falling into this category were less certain about their emigration intentions but reacted to the insecurity prompt in Q14A.

Overall, these results suggest a greater role for feelings of insecurity in the emigration plans of Salvadorans and Hondurans when compared to their Guatemalan counterparts in 2016/17. This would be consistent with previous work on emigration intentions among citizens of the three countries, as well as the Department of Homeland Security's own assessment of the emigration dynamics behind the surge of unaccompanied minors coming from the three countries in 2014, that concluded "many Guatemalan children . . . are probably seeking economic opportunities in the U.S. [while] Salvadoran and Honduran children . . . come from extremely violent regions where they probably perceive the risk of traveling alone to the U.S. preferable to remaining at home" (as quoted in Gonzalez-Barrera Krogstand and Lopez 2014). Hiskey, et al. (2018), in an analysis of emigration intentions among respondents from the three countries, also find significant differences between the factors most strongly associated with emigration intentions among Guatemalans and those among Salvadorans and Hondurans, with respondents from the latter two countries appearing to be driven far more by crime victimization and insecurity considerations than those from Guatemala.

In the section below, this possibility is further explored through a multivariate analysis of emigration intentions for the three countries. Before conducting such an analysis, however, an overview is provided of the temporal trends for a select number of factors commonly associated with emigration intentions among residents of northern Central America such as receipt of remittances, crime victimization, and experience with corruption.

2. *Factors Associated with Emigration Intentions*

Receipt of remittances is an indicator that consistently emerges in research as a powerful predictor of emigration intentions, and one long associated with actual migration behavior (see, for example, Massey, et al. 1998; Massey et al. 2002). The theoretical mechanism driving the association between receipt of remittances and migration lies in what Massey and colleagues (1998) have referred to as the "friends and family" effect. In short, there is an abundance of support for the idea that the more established one's connections are to a migrant living abroad, the more likely she will be to consider emigrating herself due to the reduced information costs about how to make such a journey that comes from knowing an individual who has already done it and, if she receives remittances, the possibility to use that income to pay the economic costs of migration. Thus, knowing whether or not an individual receives remittances offers a powerful indication of her emigration plans in the future.

As seen in Figure 5, the percentage of respondents from each country that reported receipt of remittances (in the previous twelve months) did not vary much between 2004 and 2017, with the numbers for El Salvador in particular remaining fairly steady around 25% throughout that time period. In Honduras, just as with emigration intentions, there is a 13 percentage point increase in those reporting receipt of remittances following 2012, but that increase is only slightly above the percentage reached in 2006 and 2008, prior

to the 2008-09 global recession. Guatemala stands apart from the other two countries once again, this time in terms of its lower share of respondents receiving remittances. As is clear, this percentage has consistently been lower than that of El Salvador and, at times, of Honduras. The increase in 2017 to a level of 13.2 percent, though, is consistent with recent surges in the number of Guatemalans leaving their country in search of greater economic opportunity but still only at the levels reached in 2004 and 2010.

Figure 5. Remittance Recipients across Northern Central America, 2004-2016/2017
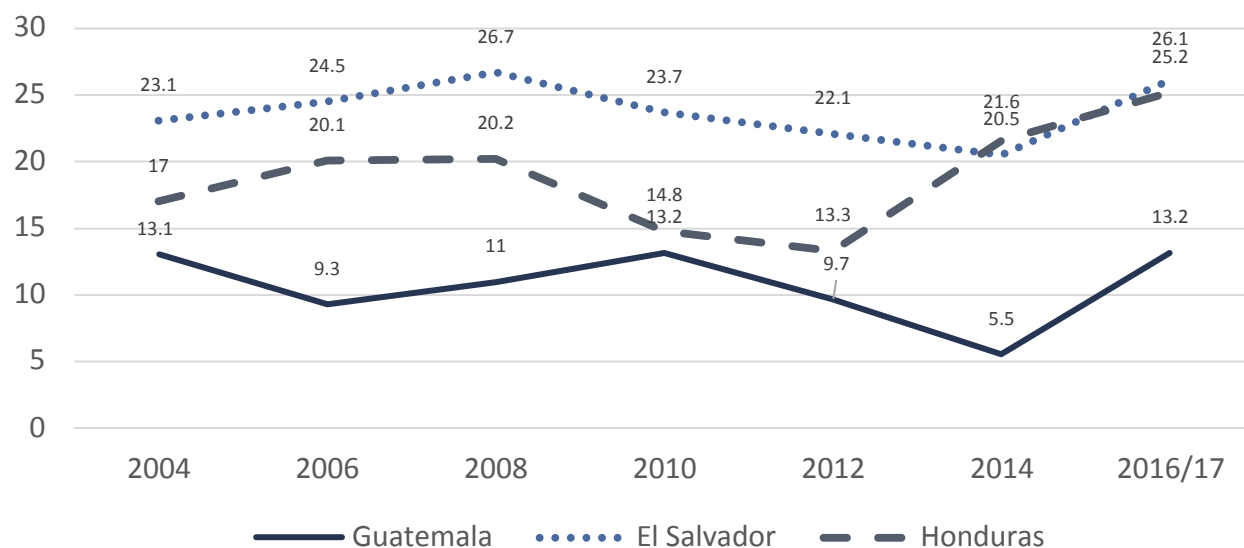
Figure 6 offers an overview of the different rates of emigration intentions among remittance recipients and non-recipients for the three countries. Consistent with expectations, those respondents receiving remittances, an indication of strong connections with a migrant living abroad, are more likely to report plans to emigrate themselves than their counterparts who do not receive remittances. This "intentions gap" between recipients and non-recipients has remained around 15% since 2004, widening to 26% in 2014 but returning to 14% in 2016/17. This pattern offers strong support for the notion that receipt of remittances serves as an important predictor of emigration intentions in the region.

Figure 6. Emigration Intentions Among Remittance Recipients and Non-Recipients in Northern Central America, 2004-2016/2017
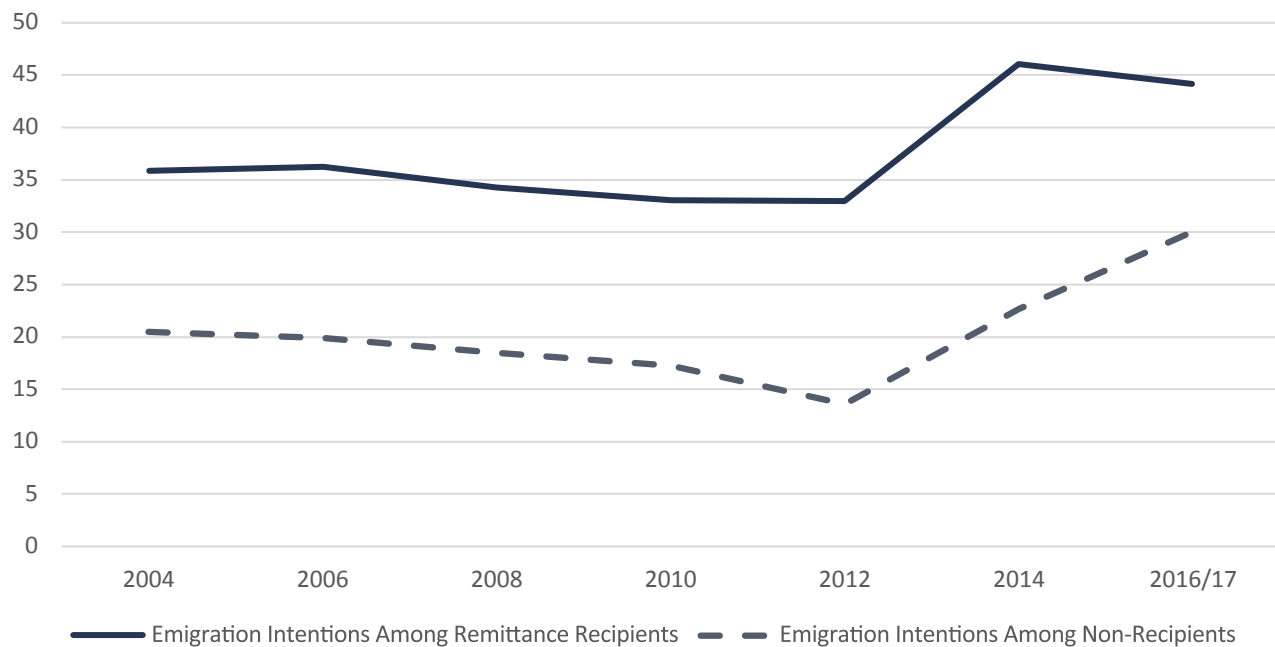
A second robust finding in work on the conventional predictors of migration in this region is that males tend to be more likely to leave for another country than females. Though often overstated a bit, it is the case that over the years the gender ratio of Central America migrants has skewed somewhat toward males. In fact, one element of the recent surge in Central Americans arriving at the U.S. border that has caught the attention of the media and policymakers has been the increased percentage of females among those arrivals. As Table 2 highlights, while still only representing about one out of every four individual apprehended at the U.S. border, there was a significant increase in this percentage that began in 2014 and reached a high in 2017.

Table 2. Female Apprehension Rates Along the U.S. Southwest Border, 2011-2018 (all countries)

Fiscal Year	Total Apprehensions	Annual Change Total Apprehensions (%)	Female Apprehensions	Female Apprehensions as Percent of Total
2011	327,577	--	42,590	13.0
2012	356,873	8.9	51,620	14.5
2013	414,397	16.1	68,645	16.6
2014	479,371	15.6	119,415	24.9
2015	331,333	-30.9	71,463	21.6
2016	408,870	23.4	100,515	24.6
2017	303,916	-25.7	80,857	26.6
2018	396,579	30.5	95,980	24.2

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, 2019a; 2019b.

Given these trends in the U.S. border apprehension data, the question arises whether similar patterns will be evident in the *AmericasBarometer* data over time as well with respect to the gender breakdown of the emigration intentions item. Figure 7 suggests that in fact the emigration intentions item does seem to capture the increased prevalence of emigration among females in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. While the gap between male and female respondents who reported plans to emigrate reached its narrowest in 2012, we see the percentage of female respondents with such intentions exceeded 20% for the first time in 2014 and continued to rise sharply in 2016-17, reaching nearly 30%. These patterns again offer a measure of support for the idea that the AmericasBarometer emigration intentions item is capturing to some extent changes in the actual migration patterns taking place in the region over time.

Figure 7. Emigration Intentions Among Males and Females in Northern Central America, 2004-2016/2017

Emigration Intentions Among Male Respondents

Emigration Intentions Among Female Respondents
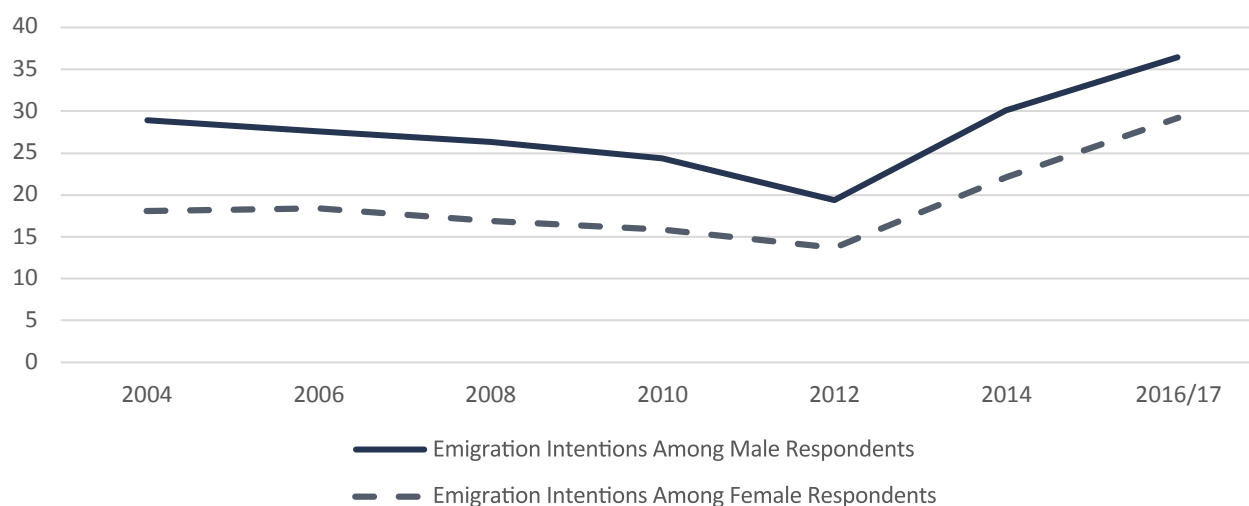
Violence and insecurity have plagued Central America for years, yet there is still a paucity of research on the role these issues play in the emigration decision (exceptions include Lundquist and Massey 2005). The next factor then is crime victimization within a respondent's household. To assess both the respondent's experiences with crime as well as members of her household, the LAPOP *AmericasBarometer* includes two items that allow for a measure ("anyvictim") that assesses whether any member of a respondent's household, herself included, has been victimized by crime in the previous twelve months. The first victimization item asks the respondent directly about her experiences and is worded as follows:

VIC1EXT. *"Now, changing the subject, have you been a victim of a criminal act in the past twelve months? That is to say, have you been a victim of robbery, assault, fraud, corruption, extortion, threats, or another type of criminal act in the past twelve months? (en español esta redactada de la siguiente manera:* **VIC1EXT***. Ahora, cambiando el tema, ¿ha sido usted víctima de algún acto de delincuencia en los últimos 12 meses? Es decir, ¿ha sido usted víctima de un robo, hurto, agresión, fraude, chantaje, extorsión, amenazas o* **algún otro tipo** *de acto delincuencial en los últimos 12 meses?)*

The second item asks the respondent about the experiences of other members of the household and is worded as follows:

VIC1HOGAR. Has any other person living in your household been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, has any other person living in your household been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats or any other type of crime in the past 12 months? (en español esta redactada de la siguiente manera:**VIC1HOGAR**. ¿Alguna otra persona que vive en su hogar ha sido víctima de algún acto de delincuencia en los últimos 12 meses? Es decir, ¿alguna otra persona que vive en su hogar ha sido víctima de un robo, hurto, agresión, fraude, chantaje, extorsión, amenazas o algún otro tipo de acto delincuencial en los últimos 12 meses?)

Combining responses to these two items allows for the creation of a "household victimization" measure. Both of the component items have been included in each round of the *AmericasBarometer* since 2010, providing an opportunity to evaluate crime victimization trends for the period of time that corresponds with the rapid increase in Central American emigration. Figure 8 reveals two distinct patterns, with crime victimization rates steadily declining in Guatemala, moving from 39 percent in 2010 to 23.8 percent in 2016/17, while remaining relatively stable between 28 and 38 percent in El Salvador and rising from 24 to 35 percent in Honduras.

Figure 8. Percent Respondents with Crime Victim in Household, 2010-2016/2017
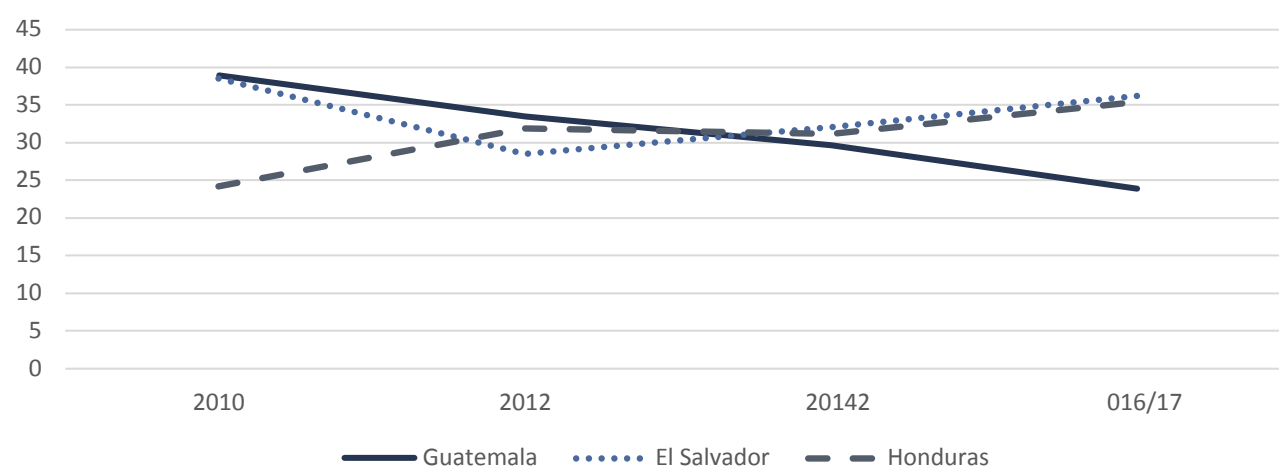
A question that then arises is whether there are any discernible differences between crime victims and non-victims regarding their emigration intentions. As Figures 9 and 10 suggest, there do in fact appear to be substantial differences. Though only suggestive of a connection between crime victimization and emigration intentions, what we see in the two figures is a dramatic increase between 2010 and 2016/17 in the percentage of victims expressing emigration intentions compared to the emigration plans among non-victims during this period. In 2010, the emigration intentions gap between victims and non-victims was only notable in El Salvador, but in looking at Figure 10 we see that by 2016/17 there is a substantial difference between victims and non-victims with respect to their emigration plans.

Though certainly not conclusive, these increasing rates of victims who report intentions to emigrate comport well with much of the research on this question carried out throughout the three countries (Carey and Torres 2010; Córdova 2019; Cruz 2012; 2011; Malone 2012; Menjívar and Drysdale-Walsh 2017) of a fundamental change in the role that crime victimization has played in emigration patterns among the three countries since 2010. We further explore this proposition below through an examination of multivariate analyses of 2010 data and similar data in 2016/17.

Figure 9. Emigration Intentions Among Crime Victims/Non-Victims, 2010

Chart data:
- Guatemala: Crime Victim in Household 23.4, No Crime Victim in Household 18.1
- El Salvador: Crime Victim in Household 35.8, No Crime Victim in Household 17.6
- Honduras: Crime Victim in Household 17.4, No Crime Victim in Household 14.5

Legend:
- ■ Emigration Intentions/Crime Victim in Household
- ■ Emigration Intentions/No Crime Victim in Household
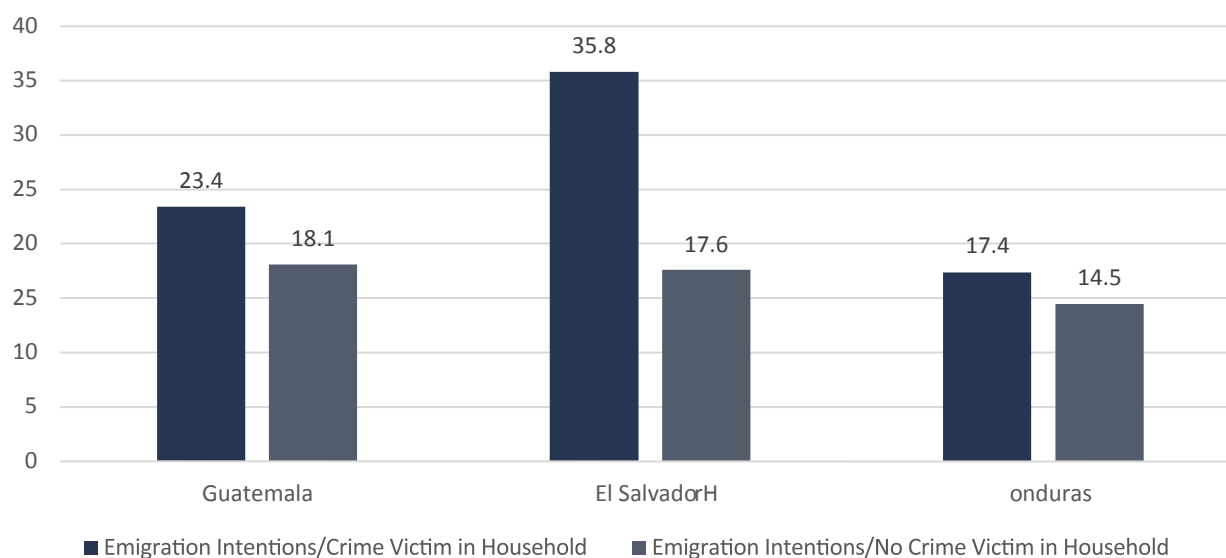
Figure 10. Emigration Intentions Among Crime Victims/Non-Victims, 2016/17

Chart data:
- Guatemala: Crime Victim in Household 37.4, No Crime Victim in Household 23.9
- El Salvador: Crime Victim in Household 50.9, No Crime Victim in Household 28
- Honduras: Crime Victim in Household 52.8, No Crime Victim in Household 33.7

Legend:
- ■ Emigration Intentions/Crime Victim in Household
- ■ Emigration Intentions/No Crime Victim in Household
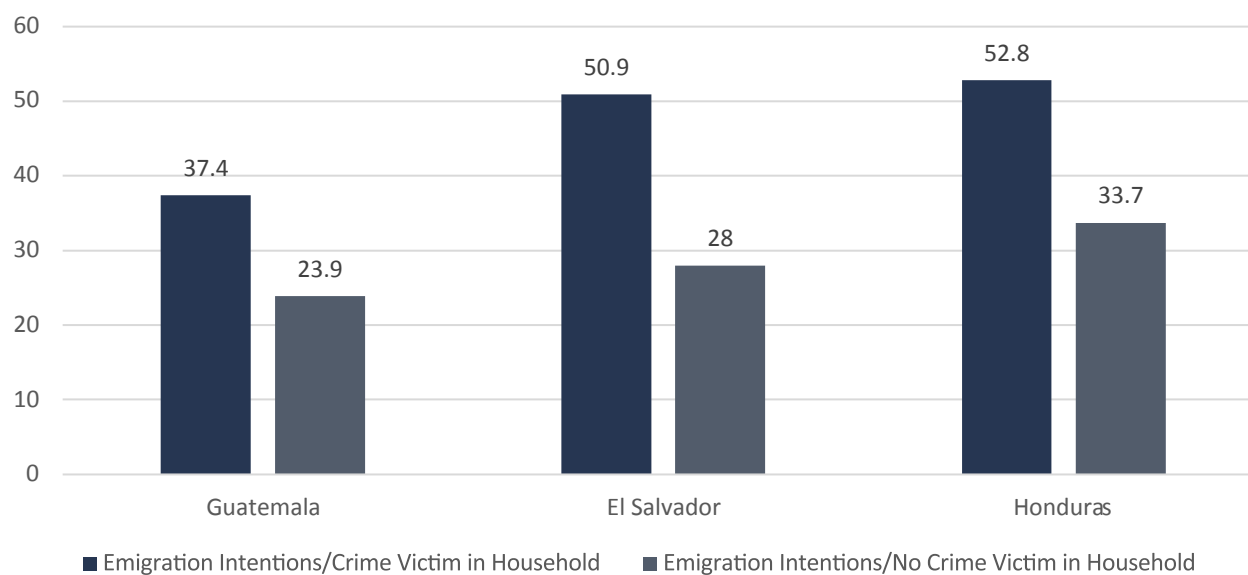
Before moving to those multivariate analyses, however, I examine one final potentially important factor in the emigration decision, corruption victimization. Since 2004, the *AmericasBarometer* has included a series of items that asks respondents whether or not in the previous 12 months they had been asked for a bribe by a variety of public officials (e.g. police officer, judge, hospital staff, etc.). The general wording of these items is as follows:

EXC2. Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months? (en español esta redactada de la siguiente manera: **EXC2.** ¿Algún agente de policía le pidió una mordida (o soborno) en los últimos 12 meses?)

Combining an individual's responses to these items allows for construction of a dichotomous variable that simply captures whether a respondent has been victimized by corruption in the previous year or not[3]. Figure 11 below offers the 2004-2017 trend for this item across the three countries of interest.

Figure 11. Corruption Victimization in Northern Central America, 2004-2016/2017

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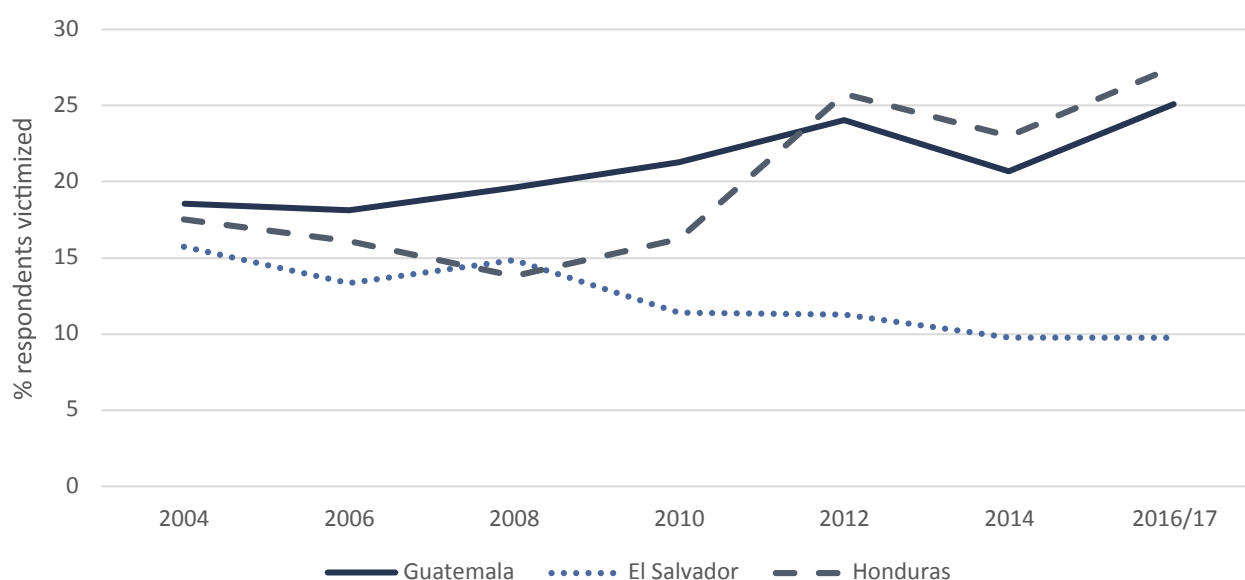
3. The wording of each of the corruption items is as follows:
   EXC2. ¿Algún agente de policía le pidió una **mordida** en los últimos 12 meses?
   EXC6. ¿En los últimos 12 meses, algún empleado público le ha solicitado una **mordida** ?
   EXC11. Para tramitar algo en el municipio, como un permiso, por ejemplo, durante el último año, ¿ha tenido que pagar alguna suma además de lo exigido por la ley?
   EXC13. En su trabajo, ¿le han solicitado alguna **mordida** en los últimos 12 meses?
   EXC14. ¿Ha tenido que pagar una **mordida** en los juzgados en este último año?
   EXC15. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿ha tenido que pagar alguna **mordida** para ser atendido en un hospital o en un puesto de salud?
   EXC16. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿tuvo que pagar alguna **mordida** en la escuela o colegio?

Here we see that it is El Salvador that appears to have separated itself from the other two countries in terms of corruption victimization rates, moving from over 15 percent in 2004 to around 10 percent in 2016, while in Guatemala and Honduras, the rate reached a high of 25.1 and 27.5 respectively in the 2016/17 round of the *AmericasBarometer*. Thus while the decline in El Salvador has been relatively modest over the 7 rounds of surveys since 2004 (~5 percentage points), there now is a substantial gap between this country and its two neighbors with respect to the percentage of respondents victimized by corruption.

It remains to be seen, however, whether or not corruption victimization influences individuals' emigration plans. From a simple bivariate analysis, it appears that corruption does play a role in the emigration decision. In 2016/17, close to 12% of respondents in the three countries reported being asked for a bribe by a police officer. Among those corruption victims, 49% reported plans to emigrate. For those respondents that were not victimized by police corruption in that year, a much lower percentage (33%) were making plans to emigrate. These results can only be suggestive, though, as we need to employ a multivariate analysis of emigration intentions in order to assess the relative contribution of each of these factors in the emigration decision.

3. *Modeling Emigration Intentions*

In order to evaluate those factors most likely to influence individuals' emigration decisions, I turn now to multivariate analyses and, recognizing the binary nature of our dependent variable of interest (emigration intentions), I use logistic regression models. Included in these models are a range of variables that capture the socioeconomic and demographic factors commonly associated with emigration, along with numerous other factors that theoretically should capture the crime, corruption, and insecurity features of life in northern Central America that have become so prominent in recent years. If it is the case that these conditions are contributing to the emigration plans of Central Americans, evidence should emerge in the subsequent models.

To that end, I analyze three distinct models for each of the three countries. The first employs the standard "emigration intentions" item (Q14) as the dependent variable, using the 2016/17 *AmericasBarometer* data. The second then uses the "insecurity intentions" item (Q14A) as the dependent variable with the same set of independent variables in order to evaluate any notable differences between these two measures of emigration intentions. Finally, I again analyze the core "emigration intentions" item (Q14) in order to compare model results using 2010 data and the 2016/17 data. Here the expectation is that important differences should emerge in the results for these two models that correspond with the changing conditions in the region between 2010 and 2017, with crime, insecurity and corruption playing a more substantial role in the emigration decision for the 2016/17 model.

The variables included in the model were selected based on previous research on the drivers of emigration intentions in northern Central America (e.g. Hiskey, et al. 2018). These include the following:

1. Respondent Age: 1=16-25; 2=26-35; 3=36-45; 4=46-55; 5=56-65; 6=66 and older
2. Gender: Female=1
3. Level of Education: 0=None; 1=Primary; 2=Secondary; 3=Post-Secondary
4. Wealth Quintiles
5. Location: 1=Urban
6. Receive Remittances: 1=Respondent received remittances in previous 12 months
7. Family Economic Situation: 1="Not enough and having a hard time"; 2="Not enough, and are stretched"; 3="Good enough, with no major problems"; 4="Good enough and can save"
8. Respondent/Member of Household Crime Victim: 1=Yes
9. Corruption Victim: 1=Yes
10. Perception of Neighborhood Insecurity: 1="Very safe"; 2="Somewhat safe"; 3=Somewhat unsafe"; 4="Very unsafe"
11. Trust in Local Government: 1="Not at all" – 7="A lot"
12. System Support Index[4]: 0="Not at all"; 100="A lot"

As noted above, these variables are designed to capture the demographic, socioeconomic, experiential, and attitudinal correlates of emigration intentions across the three countries of interest. Among the demographic set of factors, an expectation based on extant research would be that younger, male respondents who report receiving remittances will be most likely to express intentions to emigrate. Secondly, to the extent that economic factors do exert influence on one's emigration plans, we should find those in the lower wealth quintiles and those that offer a negative assessment of their household economic situation more likely to consider emigration. Finally, again based on previous research (e.g. UNHCR 2015), we expect victims of crime and corruption, as well as those who perceive their neighborhood as unsafe, to be more inclined to have plans to emigrate. Similarly, those who have little or no trust in their local government and limited levels of support for their political system more generally should be more likely to see emigration as a viable life plan.

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4. Questions in the system support index include: B1. To what extent do you think the courts in (country) guarantee a fair trial? (Read: If you think the courts do not ensure justice at all, choose number 1; if you think the courts ensure justice a lot, choose number 7 or choose a point in between the two.) B2. To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)? B3. To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)? B4. To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)? B6. To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)? For more information on the construction of the system support index, see Cohen et al. (2017), pp.132-133.

Table 3 displays the results for the two emigration intentions items (Q14 and Q14A) for 2016/17 while Table 4 offers a comparison of the results for the 2016/17 model of Q14 alongside the results of this same model using the 2010 data. If a change has occurred in the dynamics of emigration across the three countries of interest in recent years, evidence should appear in this comparison of models, with the crime and insecurity variables emerging as more predictive in the 2016/17 model than in the 2010 analysis.

I turn first, though, to a discussion of the results in Table 3 that models responses for the "general intentions" and the "insecurity intentions" items. Perhaps most notable when comparing the results of these two models is the consistency across the core demographic, socioeconomic, and migration connection variables included in the models. With few exceptions, in both sets of models for all three countries, the usual suspects of age, gender, receipt of remittances, and family economic situation are consistently strong predictors of one's emigration intentions. For age, the results support a wealth of previous work that finds the typical "migration age window" to be between 18 and 35. Similarly, with the exception of the Guatemala and El Salvador models for Q14A, we find females significantly less likely to express emigration intentions than men. It is notable, however, that this effect subsides substantially for the "insecurity intentions" models, suggesting that gender becomes less influential when narrowing in on those individuals considering emigration due to high levels of insecurity.

Not surprisingly, the strongest and most consistent results among these standard predictors of emigration intentions is for the "receive remittances" variable. Here we see across the board that an individual who reports receipt of remittances is significantly more likely to consider emigration herself, regardless of whether those emigration plans were driven by insecurity or not.

Table 3. Determinants of Emigration Intentions Across Northern Central America, 2016/2017

	Guatemala		El Salvador		Honduras	
	Emigration Intentions	Insecurity Intentions	Emigration Intentions	Insecurity Intentions	Emigration Intentions	Insecurity Intentions
Age	-.376*** (.05)	-.05 (.058)	-.418*** (.045)	-.174*** (.043)	-.411*** (.045)	-.201*** (.044)
Gender (Female=1)	-.404*** (.134)	-.258 (.155)	-.262* (.123)	-.087 (.123)	.546*** (.122)	-.248* (.124)
Level of Educ. (0=None; 3=Post-Prim.)	.108 (.1)	-.03 (.115)	-.031 (.1)	202* (.099)	.173** (.098)	176 (.1)
Wealth Quintile	-.04 (.055)	-.144** (.064)	.08 (.047)	.055 (.048)	-.068 (.05)	-.062 (.051)
Urban (=1)	-.035 (.137)	-.357** (.159)	.261 (.141)	189 (.142)	.052 (.127)	.107 (.13)
Receive Remittances (=1)	.594*** (.18)	.531*** (.205)	.521*** (.137)	.629*** (.138)	.724*** (.139)	.443*** (.14)
Family Econ. Situation (1=Not enough; 4=Good)	-.43*** (.088)	-.383** (.101)	-.434*** (.082)	-.536*** (.083)	-.367*** (.077)	-.449*** (.08)
Member of Household Crime Victim (1=Yes)	.004*** (.002)	.005*** (.002)	.006*** (.001)	.007*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)	.007*** (.001)
Corruption Victim (1=Yes)	.004*** (.002)	.005*** (.002)	.004*** (.002)	.005*** (.002)	.004*** (.002)	.006*** (.001)
Perception of Neighborhood Insecurity	.004** (.002)	.006*** (.002)	.009*** (.002)	012*** (.002)	.002 (.002)	.01*** (.002)
Trust in Local Govt.	-.001 (.002)	.001 (.003)	.003 (.002)	.0001 (.002)	.0001 (.002)	.001 (.002)
System Support	.007* (.004)	.001 (.004)	-.009*** (.003)	-.011*** (.003)	-.008*** (.003)	-.01 (.003)
Constant	.247	-.561	.806 (.379)	.023 (.372)	1.48 (.321)	.257 (.321)
Nagelkerke R² Log likelihood N	.149 1421.22 1328	.105 1143.44 1336	.22 1648.29 1487	242 1637.86 1494	.222 1673.76 1413	.221 1625.98 1426

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

This finding offers further support for the "friends and family" proposition discussed above. When one knows someone who has already migrated, and knows her well enough to receive remittances, the information and likely financial costs of emigration become more manageable, allowing the individual to view emigration as a viable life plan.

Moving from those variables that are commonly associated with emigration intentions, I now turn to the results from the crime, corruption, and system support variables included in the model. Most striking among the results for these variables is, again, their consistency across the three countries and the two specifications of the dependent variable. Having a crime victim in the household, direct experience with corruption government officials, and one's perceptions of neighborhood insecurity all are strongly related to whether or not an individual reports plans to emigrate. Most striking here is the absence of any significant difference between the model results for the "general intentions" item and the "insecurity intentions" item. In both cases, these insecurity variables appear to be strong predictors of intentions. What this suggests is that even among those respondents who said "yes" to the "general intentions" item but "no" to the insecurity item, crime and corruption still played a significant role in their decision.

These results then perhaps highlight the difficulty in efforts to pinpoint and disentangle the motivations behind emigration for many individuals. While it may have been possible to characterize the young, Mexican male in 2000 who left his country for work in the U.S. as an "economic migrant," what we see in the results presented here is that a complex combination of economic and security motivations are at work in the emigration decision of today. For those considering emigration in 2016/17, the heightened insecurity, poor governance, and unprecedented levels of crime were all important push factors that, when combined with standard demographic and socioeconomic factors, contributed to the new profile of migrants from these countries in recent years. Put another way, while demographic and migration connections remained important in 2016/17, these models point to the emergence of crime and insecurity as critical factors in understanding who is seeking to leave these countries and why.

In order to further explore this tentative conclusion regarding a new profile of potential migrants emerging in the past few years in the northern Central American countries, I now turn to the results in Table 4 that offer a cross-time comparison of model results. Here I run the same set of variables discussed above with the 2010 *AmericasBarometer* data and compare those results to those found using the 2016/17 data. What emerges comports well with the notion that there were indeed changes in the migration (or at least emigration intention) dynamics from these countries between 2010 and 2017. For in looking at the results of the two models across the three countries several markers of these changes are evident.

First, in both years there is a striking consistency in the impact that the demographic, socioeconomic, and migration connection variables appear to have in identifying those respondents with emigration intentions. Specifically, and again with very few exceptions, age, gender, family economic situation, and receipt of remittances all performed similarly in 2010 and 2016/17. Of note, though, is the apparent stronger role that gender played

in 2010, with women being less likely to report emigration intentions than in 2016/17. Though certainly not conclusive, the changes in the strength of the gender variable between 2010 and 2016/17 suggests a migrant profile in 2010 that is more consistent with the standard economic migrant profile of previous decades than the profile that emerges from the 2016/17 data. This too comports with the bivariate analysis discussed in the previous section that found a substantial increase in the percentage of females reporting emigration intentions in the 2014 and 2016/7 surveys.

Table 4. Determinants of Emigration Intentions in Northern Central America Across Time

	Guatemala		El Salvador		Honduras	
	Emigration Intentions (2017)	Emigration Intentions (2010)	Emigration Intentions (2016)	Emigration Intentions (2010)	Emigration Intentions (2016)	Emigration Intentions (2010)
Age	-.376*** (.05)	-.355*** (.058)	-.418*** (.045)	-.375*** (.052)	-.411*** (.045)	-.769*** (.082)
Gender (1=Female)	-.404*** (.134)	-.445*** (.147)	-.262* (.123)	-.529*** (.132)	-.546*** (.122)	-.58*** (.157)
Level of Educ.	.108 (.1)	.0001 (.126)	-.031 (.1)	.149 (.102)	.173** (.098)	.083 (.139)
Wealth Quintile	-.04 (.055)	-.021 (.065)	.08 (.047)	.079 (.053)	-.068 (.05)	.091 (.065)
Urban (=1)	-.035 (.137)	-.219 (.174)	.261 (.141)	.329* (.155)	.052 (.127)	.111 (.173)
Receive Remittances (=1)	.594*** (.18)	.936*** (.189)	.521*** (.137)	.555*** (.145)	.724*** (.139)	.777*** (.196)
Family Econ. Situation	-.43*** (.088)	-.287** (.113)	-.434*** (.082)	-.365*** (.088)	-.367*** (.077)	-.049 (.106)
Household Crime Victim (1=Yes)	004** (.002)	.003* (.002)	.006*** (.001)	006*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)	.0001 (.002)
Corruption Victim (1=Yes)	.004** (.002)	.002 (.002)	.004** (.002)	.004** (.002)	.004** (.002)	.003 (.002)
Perception of Neighborhood Insecurity	.004** (.002)	.003 (.002)	.009*** (.002)	.001 (.002)	.002 (.002)	-.002 (.003)
Trust in Local Govt.	-.001 (.002)	.002 (.003)	.003 (.002)	.001 (.003)	.0001 (.002)	.002 (.003)
System Support	.007* (.004)	-.002 (.004)	-.009*** (.003)	-.006 (.004)	-.008*** (.003)	-.003 (.005)
Constant	.247	.088 (.394)	.806 (.379)	-.07 (.409)	1.48 (.321)	-.229 (.47)
Nagelkerke R^2 Log likelihood N	.149 1421.22 1328	.121 1202.92 1287	.22 1648.29 1487	.19 1500.39 1527	.222 1673.76 1413	.198 1113.46 1514

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

Offering more support for these differing profiles are the results from the crime, corruption, and system support variables in the model. For the crime, corruption, and insecurity variables, what is notable and suggestive of a change in emigration intention dynamics is the relative lack of significance revealed for these variables in the 2010 model. In no country does one's perception of neighborhood insecurity play a significant role in predicting emigration intentions in 2010, while in the 2016/17 model, this variable emerges as a meaningful predictor of intentions in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Similarly, only in the case of El Salvador does corruption victimization obtain significance in the 2010 models, while in the 2016/17 models, this variable is significant across all three countries. Crime victimization also appears to change its role in the emigration intentions story of 2010 and 2016/17. Though marginally important in Guatemala and clearly a factor in El Salvador in 2010, in 2016/17 crime victimization had a consistently significant positive effect on respondents' emigration plans.

Finally, and perhaps most clearly indicative of the changing dynamics of migration that occurred in the region between 2010 and 2016/17, is the different role that one's level of system support appears to play in the two time periods. Whereas in 2016/17, system support in El Salvador and Honduras appears to have had some measure of influence on one's willingness to leave (while curiously in Guatemala it was marginally significant in the opposite direction), in no country did system support have any meaningful impact on one's emigration plans in 2010. This change over time suggests that for those in 2016/17, governance issues in El Salvador and Honduras had reached such a point where individuals who reported low levels of faith in their political system viewed it as beyond repair, thus contributing to their thoughts about emigration. More broadly, all of these differences in model results across the two time periods under study are consistent with the wide range of other evidence we have available to us that a fundamental change has taken place in the migration dynamics of these countries (e.g. UNHCR 2015; Hiskey et al. 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter set out to first offer a brief look at trends in emigration intentions among residents of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, and then to explore the question of whether a change in the profile of those individuals reporting such intentions has occurred in recent years. Through analysis of Vanderbilt University's *AmericasBarometer* data, the results largely offer support for a growing body of research in recent years on the decidedly non-economic sources of the surge in migration from these countries. Whether through qualitative accounts and interviews of those who have already left (e.g. UNHCR 2015) or quantitative empirical accounts of the drivers of migration (e.g. Hiskey et al. 2018), the consistent narrative emerging from this research is that while demographic and economic considerations will always play some role in driving people to consider emigration, crime, insecurity, and lack of confidence in the government to fix these problems have all come to the fore in terms of why people are choosing to leave these three countries today.

The results presented here essentially tell this same story. Further the contributions of such non-economic factors come more clearly into focus when analyzing the 2016/17 data, whereas the profiles emerging from the 2010 analysis still suggest potential emigrants who for the most part were driven largely by economic considerations. Though crime victimization had emerged as important in El Salvador in 2010, its impact on the emigration decision becomes abundantly more clear across all three countries by 2016/17. Similarly, corruption victimization, feelings of insecurity in one's neighborhood, and general support for one's political system – all factors that do not fit the standard economic migrant narrative – only emerge as significant factors in all three countries in 2016/17.

The implications of these changes in the profile of those most likely to consider emigrating from this region in recent years are many. First and foremost, these findings lend further support to efforts to change the dominant narrative in most policy debates, both in the U.S. and the home countries of these individuals, regarding who is leaving and why. While economic factors will rarely be completely left out of the decision calculus of any emigrants, the findings presented in this chapter and elsewhere suggest economics are no longer the primary impetus behind the recent surge in migrants. Rather, what we can infer from the numerous reports of the rising costs of human smuggling and, and the magnitude of the debt individuals are willing to take on in order to have a fighting chance to successfully emigrate from their countries (e.g. Greenfield, et al. 2019), is that the decision to leave one's home in recent years often leaves individuals worse off financially than if they were to have stayed home. The decision point it seems, increasingly is driven by fear, insecurity, and poor governance rather than prospects for earning more money. Thus efforts to deter those seeking to leave become less likely to succeed when compared to a situation where the majority of potential migrants are simply setting off in search of economic opportunity.

Similarly, the policy options currently proffered by both sending and receiving government officials to dissuade individuals from emigrating appear not to have fully recognized the changing profile of the individuals seeking to leave, and the reasons why they are leaving. Rather than orienting policy exclusively toward convincing/deterring young men to stay home through job creation programs or, on the U.S. side, enhanced deterrence efforts, there are distinct policy challenges that come with the new profile of migrants in recent years. Among these challenges are increased need to focus on the policy needs of women seeking (or forced) to leave their homes. First among these gender-based issues that calls out for immediate attention is the pervasive non-enforcement of domestic violence laws in some parts of these countries (see e.g., CNDH 2017; Schmidt and Buechler 2017). If nothing is done to address these and similar issues, it is likely that no amount of deterrence efforts will have a sustained impact on reducing the number of those seeking to leave.

Finally, the question of what these changing profiles of emigrants from the northern region of Central America imply for the social, familial, economic, and political fabric of the thousands of sending communities across these three countries also needs interrogation. While the outflow of those individuals more closely approximating the traditional economic migrant carried with it consequences for sending communities as well, the more recent flow of migrants, and their more diverse profiles, suggests that entire communities may be affected in new and distinct ways from sending communities of the past. The education and parenting challenges for children who have been left in the care of a grandparent, the economic challenges of the departure of small business owners due to pervasive extortion efforts by gangs, and the political void left by those who may have been most likely to work to effect change from within (see e.g. Canache, et al. 2013) are just a few of the areas where this new face of Central American migration may manifest itself in unexpected ways. The first step in addressing these challenges, however, is in more fully understanding who is leaving and why. Our hope is that this chapter has contributed in some way to taking that first step.

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