

# Haitian Migration and Circulation in Latin America

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INTERUNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE for  
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and Innovation



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The Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub unpacks the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration and inequality in the context of the Global South. The Hub works to shift the production of knowledge about migration and its consequences toward the countries where migration takes place, engaging with contested concepts and definitions, decentring research processes and generating new evidence and ideas. The project's ultimate aim is to translate knowledge and ideas into policies and practices which improve the lives of migrants, their families and the communities in which they live.



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INURED's mission is to contribute to the development of high-level research and scientific training in Haiti with the aim of improving the educational, socioeconomic and political conditions of Haiti's people. As a "think and do" tank, INURED's collaborative research program provides data analysis, multidisciplinary research and evaluation techniques as tools for Haiti's policymakers to address the wide range of issues affecting Haiti.

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## ACRONYMS

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHE	Institut Haïtien de l'Enfance
ILO	International Labour Organization
IHSI	Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique
IMJA	Instituto Maria e João Aleixo
INURED	Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MIDEQ	Migration for Development and Equality
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
MSPP	Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population
OAS	Organization of American States
ObMigra	Observatório das migrações internacionais
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONM	Office National de la Migration // National Office of Migration
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WHO	World Health Organization



Haitians in Necoclí, Colombia, waiting for boats to cross the Gulf of Urabá. Photo © INURED







## FOREWARD

**M**igration, mobility, and circulation are characteristics inherent to any society. However, in Haiti, these regular patterns of population movement have expanded substantially, to the detriment of Haiti itself. For Haitians, decades of sociopolitical instability, economic crises, acute social inequality, violence, and the United Nations' peacekeeper-induced cholera outbreak, all compounded by earthquakes and climate change-driven environmental calamities, have intensified the population's mobility, leading many Haitians to live abroad. Haiti's struggle to establish functioning democratic institutions in the post-dictatorship era (1986 onwards) has been further exacerbated by the significant foreign policy interference of powerful countries compounding a unique form of elite political and institutional capture in Haiti, fragmenting Haiti's social fabric, eroding public trust while failing to provide Haitian citizens with the most basic services. Within this context of despair in the country's future, Haitians, particularly the youth, have created different avenues for hope, using pathways of migration.

Historically, scholars have framed Haitian migration within the dominant South-North paradigm that characterizes global literature on the topic. Emigration from Haiti to the United States, Canada, and France has been studied, with limited attention paid to destination countries in the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic, or others. However, efforts to deepen our understanding of recent Haitian migration have broadened this dominant paradigm by acknowledging the significance of migration within the Global South, such as the migration of Haitians to Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, and other neighboring countries since the January 2010 earthquake. Recent attention has increasingly recognized the potential impact of this South-South migration phenomenon. This study underscores the urgency and importance of exploring this relatively new migration route in the Latin American context and its potential to foster development and equality or reinforce the longstanding systems of inequality that have plagued the region.

While Haiti's current challenges both drive migration and limit the country's potential to foster economic, societal, and human development at home, part of the solution will require managing and leveraging migration for development and equality. There is an urgent need to further mainstream migration into Haiti's development policies. To do this, coherent policy on migration and development must be based on recent and informed studies, yet such studies have been lacking. This report aims to fill this gap.

In 2018, the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) funded a five-year study through the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) hub to unpack the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration, equality, and development in the context of the Global South. The challenge is to understand how migration can contribute to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and positive outcomes in countries of the Global South. To that end, the UKRI/GCRF funded a MIDEQ network of research and delivery partners from the Global South in 12 countries constituted in six migration corridors, one of which is Haiti-Brazil. The Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), a research institute based in Haiti, focuses on the Haiti-Brazil/Chile migration corridor. In this report, we present the findings from our study on that corridor.

These findings are the result of five years of fieldwork, empirical analysis, and policy discussions through document analysis. The report provides an in-depth understanding and analysis of the history, state, patterns, and contexts of Haitian migration to countries in Latin America, with a particular focus on Brazil and Chile. It complements our prior effort to examine how the various dimensions of migration affect key sectors in Haiti: the labor market, agriculture, education, and investment and financial services (please see OECD & INURED 2017). Further, this report documents and analyzes key dimensions of Haitian migration that are often misunderstood, such as the decision to migrate, the role of intermediaries, gender inequality, and circular migration within South America, as well as migration from

South America to Mexico onward to the United States and, at times, Canada. Implemented between May 2019 and February 2023, this study includes data from 3 primary sources:

1. A national household survey administered in Haiti
2. An ethnographic study of a sub-sample of survey participants
3. Ethnographic network tracing of Haitians in Brazil and Chile

In addition to these three primary sources, we use findings from document analysis and a data set from a survey collected by our MIDEQ partner institution in Brazil, Instituto Maria e João Aleixo (IMJA), to generate contextual analysis or complement our findings on the conditions of Haitians living in that country. This report is based on triangulation of those data sources—using different sources of data and analytical approaches to corroborate or shed additional light on the findings.

As the most comprehensive study of Haitian contemporary migration in the Global South, this report is a vital instrument intended to guide policymakers in integrating migration with sustainable human and societal development. It is part of INURED's ongoing, urgent effort to rebuild Haiti from the devastating impacts of human-made crises and cascading environmental disasters. This call to action invites immediate dialogue and encourages all stakeholders to contribute their perspectives. Together, we can leverage a better understanding of the landscape of Haitian international migration when formulating sound development strategies that can improve the course of the country's trajectory.

This report would not be possible without the steadfast professionalism and commitment of INURED's researchers in Haiti and Brazil, namely Orliche Fortin, Kéthia Charles, Pierre Rigaud Dubuisson, Dabouze Estinvil, Catherine Hermantin, Myrlande Placide, Mário da Silva Fidalgo, David Jasmin, Vitor Henrique de Siquiera Jasper, David Jean Bart and Florence Thelusma, whom we acknowledge for their invaluable contributions to this study. INURED is indebted to the following staff: Maculée Alphonse, Stéphanie Gagerie, Kelly Aurélien, Henriques Defonce, Fresna Civil, Jackson Donacien, and Bonald Toussaint for their invaluable services. We acknowledge the dedication of the following field team members: Djimy Alexandre, Immaculene Jean Louis, Lourdy Mackentouche Jean Figaro, Elisée Saint Pierre Simon, Merline Jouthe, Brenuma Sébien, Daphnide Delva Noël, Bill-Dany Rebecca, S. Wilny Stecy Esther Juny II Labonté, Mannoly Andoizin, Claude Alexis, Pierre Alex Rovensky Pacombe, Cherline Jean-Avoir, Shnyder Joseph, Noelsaint Dieufait, Shneider Alcerès, Josué Barthélemy, Elna Louis, Germina Lubin, Dullin Pétion, Wandel Varis, Guerla Jean François, Vasty St. Fleur, Jean Hernous Logiste, Victor Widly, Marie Glenaise Exavier, Garry St-Dic. We thank you for the effort you put into the realization of this study.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Haitian migration has increased within the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, especially migration to Brazil and Chile, following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. This report highlights the drivers of these new migratory patterns, revealing the circulatory nature of Haitian migration in the region. The report also explores the longstanding regional inequalities and the persistent vulnerability of a people we intentionally refer to—wherever possible—as “on the move” in lieu of the term “migrant”. The study was conducted in the context of the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) hub funded by United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) / Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

### Methodology

*Haitian Migration and Circulation in Latin America* details the findings of a mixed methods study undertaken by the Haiti-based Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED). The report’s empirical fieldwork, document analysis, ethnography, and policy discussion provide an in-depth understanding and analysis of the history, state, patterns, and contexts of Haitian migration to countries in Latin America, with a particular focus on Brazil and Chile. The study’s overarching themes included migrant decision-making, gender dynamics, and the role of intermediaries. We used a comprehensive, mixed methods approach drawing from diverse data sources about network compositions and migration costs, routes, and movement modalities within and between countries. As the core axiom of our approach, we place people’s experiences at the center of our analysis. Placing Haitians’ multidimensional experiences of migration, their voices and concerns at the core of knowledge production on migration and vulnerabilities, requires an approach that relies on transdisciplinary methodologies, whereby ethnography and other qualitative methods are combined with quantitative modelling, network analysis, and artistic production to generate a more complex understanding of people on the move and their communities. Data sources include:

- household surveys (949 households)
- ethnography
  - in-depth interviews (158 participants)
  - focus groups (8 focus groups with 55 participants)
  - field observations
- ethnographic network tracing (of 109 participants capturing data on a total of 181 participants)
- document analysis

For such a complex mixed methods and multidisciplinary study, we triangulated at three levels: methods, data collections, and analyses, using established perspectives in the social sciences. We further complemented the analysis using survey data of Haitians living in Brazil, collected by the MIDEQ team in Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Maria e João Aleixo (IMJA).

## Summary Findings

### Decision to migrate

Haitians migrating within Latin America are young people, more highly educated than their peers in Haiti, whose decision to migrate is largely influenced by multiple factors, in this order: family/friends at their destination, the host country's migration policies, potential travel routes, and employment opportunities. The desire to migrate remains prevalent: more than one-third of all households reported at least one family member contemplating migration that year. Notably, this response was positively associated with youth members of urban, migrant households.

### The challenges associated with migration

The most common challenges reported pre-departure, during transit, and/or at destination were financial. More than 50% of participants reported experiencing financial difficulties in securing official documentation needed for the journey. Financing the journey itself was reportedly the second greatest challenge, and 57% reported paying for the services of intermediaries, who played essential roles in procuring official documents and arranging travel.

### Gender and migration

Fewer Haitian women migrate than men, and their journey is often facilitated by family reunification schemes or the assistance of a partner already at the destination. Migration for employment featured prominently in the decision-making process; however, securing employment was also the greatest challenge encountered at destination, with a 15% disparity in employment levels between women and men, at 54% and 69%, respectively. Despite similar education levels, women were less likely than men to report labor opportunities as their rationale for migrating, at 82% and 90%, respectively.

### Benefits of migration

The overall benefits of migration to households in Haiti, although evident, were not substantial. Just under one-third (32%) of households in Haiti report improved income as a benefit of migration, while slightly more than that report that having a household member abroad specifically improved their access to food. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest share of remitting practices involved USD \$100 - \$299 per transfer, reported by one-third of households. Of households receiving remittances, one-third report starting a business with those resources, and women were more likely than men to do so, at 35% and 26%, respectively.

### Challenges: Racism and xenophobia

Haitians in the labor market in both Brazil and Chile report vulnerability. In Brazil, racism and xenophobia shape the labor market, where black immigrants often occupy the worst positions and face exploitation and discrimination, the manifestations of representations and narratives that define the conditions of poverty, blackness, indigeneity, and rurality in the country. In Chile, societal representations of that country as modern, civilized, and of white European heritage contrast with the racial paradigm and stereotypes with which Haitians and Afro-descent populations are framed.

### Circulatory migration, mobility, and perilous routes

Historically, Haitian migration in the LAC region has been characterized by circulation from Haiti to the Dominican Republic to Cuba and elsewhere and then back to Haiti. Haitian circular migration today is a complex, collective project that often encompasses multiple migrations from Haiti and then onward—dangerous additional journeys toward better opportunities and/or away from the challenges of host country integration. Historic and hemispheric anti-Black collective racist representations and stereotypes in the LAC region compound the challenges for migrating Haitians. Yet migration remains a core strategy of Haitians' struggles to exist.



### **Migration and Development: Decapitalization of Human Assets in Haiti**

Haiti's current migratory exodus within the region is troubling for at least two reasons: 1) Haitians on the move do not necessarily plan to return to the homeland and 2) these are the very people who (should have) benefitted from the influx of resources that was designed to aid in Haiti's post-disaster reconstruction. While this report does not focus on the privileged professionals and educated youth who fled the country to destinations in the Global North, such as the United States, Canada, and France, among other countries, it sheds light on yet another layer of the human capital crisis that plagues Haiti. Since 2010, the LAC region has become another migratory outlet for Haiti's educated youth, individuals in the prime of their working years, who have little faith in the country's reconstruction efforts and whose hopes for the future remain dim. Like their predecessors, Haiti's migrating youth seek to improve their lives and that of their families. Yet, unlike their predecessors who left for a specific destination and type of work, they also seek to redress their disillusionment with a country that has failed to invest in them, no matter where that search might lead them. For this reason, we refer to them as Haitians on the move. As study results reveal in this report, for many of those migrating in the LAC region, yesterday's destination can become today's transit country, and today's transit country may become tomorrow's destination. Here, mobility and movement become a continuous pattern.

### **Conclusion**

Migration is a high-risk, high-reward strategy for Haitians, irrespective of their legal status. The risks include discrimination, labor exploitation, and predation, which are greater for those migrating with irregular legal status. Successful migration includes better employment opportunities, increased access to higher and specialized education, the ability to support one's family, and increased social mobility in Haiti. The minimal gains enjoyed at the household level suggest that migration is due more to the level of social exclusion and vulnerability Haitians face at home than to expected rewards at their destination. For many families, the success of one household pioneer is expected to make possible the migratory aspirations of other family members. As more family members migrate, the burden of supporting households in Haiti is reduced. Migration is thus a strategy that helps communities across Haiti survive, particularly during the country's numerous crises. Yet despite the significant contributions Haitians living abroad make to sustain their families and communities, migration has failed to yield substantial development of any kind.

It can be argued that migration is the most important crisis confronting Haiti today. When the most educated and ambitious youth leave the country, they take with them the critical human resources needed to achieve social progress. Although migration cannot and should not be curtailed in the immediate future, effective policy options must leverage migration to contribute to the development of Haiti itself. An effective policy 1) protects the rights and access to justice for Haitians living outside of the homeland, 2) incentivizes the engagement and return of leaders, professionals, and technicians of Haitian descent, 3) develops a favorable climate for attracting investment, 4) channels the economic resources offered by those living abroad to develop and bolster social programs and services and 5) meaningfully engages those living abroad in homeland politics. Haitians on the move must be viewed as a resource to contribute to homeland reconstruction and development. Until that time, migration will occur at the expense of Haiti's own development.

## METHODOLOGY

This report is the outcome of a comprehensive, mixed-methods study drawing from a diverse range of data sources collected between May 2019 and February 2023. The first source was a household survey conducted in Haiti from 15 November 2020 to 30 January 2021, within the context of the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub. This survey, designed and executed by INURED, reached 949 households in both rural and urban areas of Haiti. The second source was an ethnography that included 158 qualitative interviews, eight focus groups (comprising 55 individuals), and extensive field observations in Haiti. The third data source was an ethnographic network tracing study of 181 Haitians in Brazil and Chile. The overall aim was to gather data on network compositions, migration costs, routes, and movement modalities within and between countries. For the analysis of such a complex mixed-methods and multidisciplinary study, we use three levels of triangulation: methodology (survey, ethnography, document analysis); data sources; and analysis, using established perspectives in the social sciences (Barnard, 2000; Caruth, 2013; Turner et al., 2017; Schensul et al., 1999). To further enrich our analysis, we compare our findings with survey data of Haitians living in Brazil, collected by the MIDEQ team in Rio de Janeiro, IMJA, allowing us to reflect on their living conditions in Brazil, the countries of transit and destination, and allowing us to understand the challenges faced by Haitians from multiple perspectives.

### Source 1: Haitian Household Survey

The survey population included households in Haiti, the composition of which include migrants living in Brazil or Chile at the time of the interview. Since a list of households was unavailable and the study population was concentrated within several cities and towns (OECD & INURED, 2017), the preferred sampling scheme was cluster sampling in two stages at three levels. At stage one of stratification, five cities and their surroundings (metropolitan areas) were selected randomly from a list of 15 major cities in Haiti, from five departments, as highlighted in **Table 1**. Three of these cities are among the most densely populated in the country: Port-au-Prince, in the Ouest department; Cap-Haïtien, in the Nord; and Saint-Marc, in Artibonite. Jérémie, located in Grande-Anse, and Mirebalais, in the Centre, are among the least populated. Mirebalais is notable for two additional characteristics: a) its geographic centrality in Haiti and b) its proximity to the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. Within the cities are defined segments of what the “Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d’Informatique” (IHSI, 2004) refers to as *‘Les sections d’énumérations’* (SDEs) or primary sampling units (PSUs). The total of PSUs in the five metropolitan areas constitutes the frame from which SDEs were selected to be surveyed.

For stage two of the survey, we proceeded using three levels. At the first level, a total of 25 SDEs were selected using probability proportional to size. To align with MIDEQ’s sampling strategy, a split sample approach was used (re: migrant households vs. non-migrant households). The surveys were conducted in two different clusters in each SDE: one for households that included migrants living in Brazil or Chile and the other for those that did not.<sup>1</sup>

At the second level, a cluster of 34 households was randomly selected, guaranteeing an equal chance for each cluster to be represented in each group of households. At a third level, within each chosen cluster, households were counted prior to the survey and eligible members listed. From that list, one eligible person per household was randomly selected to be interviewed so that each household had an equal chance to be represented.

<sup>1</sup> Non-migrant households are households that do not have members who migrated to, were living in, or returned from Brazil or Chile but may have migrants in other countries.

**TAB 1 : IHSI Population Estimates by Department (2015 and 2022)**

	<b>2015</b>		<b>2022</b>	
<b>ADMIN-1 (Département)</b>	<b>IHSI Pop. Estimate</b>	<b>Proportion of Total Pop.</b>	<b>UNFPA Pop. Projection</b>	<b>Proportion of Total Pop.</b>
Artibonite*	1,727,524	16%	1,766,306	16%
Centre*	746,236	7%	784,432	7%
Grande-Anse*	468,301	4%	490,619	4%
Nippes	342,525	3%	356,492	3%
Nord-Ouest	728,807	7%	727,142	6%
Ouest*	4,029,705	37%	4,190,080	37%
Sud	774,976	7%	833,468	7%
Sud-Est	632,601	6%	656,170	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,911,819</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11,334,611</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Sites included in the sampling.

*Sample size.* Since we had no information on the variability of the characteristics to be measured within the targeted populations, which would allow us to calculate the ideal size of our samples, we used the proportion of 50% recommended in this case by most statistics protocols. A confidence level of 95% (typical value 1.96) with a margin of error of 3.36% was used in the calculation of the sample size.

Although we originally planned to include 850 households, considering a 5% non-response rate, we were able to collect data on 949 households. Of those, 543 had a household member currently living in Brazil or Chile (for at least 3 months and up to 10 years) while 406 had no household members meeting that criteria. The eligible person identified in the household was interviewed.

The survey instrument is divided into two parts and contains 11 sections. Part one (sections 1 to 6) pertains to all households regardless of migration status. Sections 1 and 2 entail the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the household. Sections 3 through 6 explore Information and Communications Technology (ICT), community, inclusion and solidarity, migration aspirations, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Part two (Sections 7 to 11) focused solely on households with migrants living in Brazil or Chile at the time of the interview. Section 7 captures basic, individual-level demographic and socioeconomic data on up to three migrants who used to live in the household. Data on these individuals were collected by proxy through the head of the households. All sections, with the exception of Section 7, focused exclusively on the most recent migrant. Section 8 pertains to the migrant's decision-making, Section 9 explores remittance transfer patterns, Section 10 covers topics related to the arts and culture, and Section 11 explores the impacts of migration on household members.

### Source 2: Ethnography of participants in Haiti

The ethnographic data were collected in parallel with the survey. The ethnography consisted of in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, and mapping. INURED developed interview guides around three themes also explored in the survey: migrant decision-making, gender, and the use and roles of intermediaries. Questions regarding decision-making were formulated around the following sub-themes: the specific dimensions of the Haitian migration process; structural constraints in migration decision-making; sources of information; public policy and migration laws; and migration and safety. Questions regarding the gendered nature of migration were formulated under the following sub-themes: forms of inequalities faced during decision-making, migration, and at destination; gender differentials in migration; and the impacts of migration processes and structural constraints in the homeland. Questions regarding the use and roles of intermediaries in the migration process were formulated around the following sub-themes: characterizing intermediaries in Haiti; forms of inequalities; mapping patterns of migration facilitation and intermediation; and mapping outcomes and consequences of the use of intermediaries. Interview guides were developed in Haitian Creole, translated, and back-translated to French and English. Interviews were undertaken throughout the duration of the study as several migrants were interviewed multiple times.

### Source 3: Ethnographic Social Network Tracing

INURED implemented another, smaller study, the *Ethnographic Social Network Tracing of Haitians on the Move*, to examine the trajectories and social networks of Haitians on the move in Brazil or Chile. The network study used a semi-structured questionnaire combined with in-depth interviews and, where possible, observations. As in the household survey in Haiti, participants who responded to the questionnaire were asked to provide information for 1-3 destination countries per person, including themselves, totaling a maximum of nine destination countries per participant. We gathered network data on 181 Haitians on the move in Brazil or Chile using information provided by 109 people surveyed. In the Ethnographic Social Network Tracing, participants were asked to provide details on themselves as well as up to two additional migrating persons in their network. Inclusion criteria for the study entailed those having migrated to Brazil and/or Chile at some point in their migration trajectory. Participants were asked basic household information, such as how many people in the household had migrated to Brazil and/or Chile and their relationships to those migrating individuals. Then, interviewees were asked to provide data on each migration journey they had attempted by country of destination. Interview guides were developed in Haitian Creole and implemented by three INURED researchers in Brazil, two of whom were of Haitian descent. The interviews were transcribed, translated from Creole to French and Portuguese, and back-translated for accuracy. Participants were interviewed multiple times in order to follow their integration at destination and/or migration trajectory.



## ADDRESSING HUMAN SUBJECT PROTECTION

### Research Protocol, Informed Consent, and Safeguarding

The MIDEQ-Haiti study protocol was submitted to INURED's Institutional Review Board, which approved its implementation in February 2020 (Authorization #: MD-S-020-2019-2023). INURED's IRB ensured that the study met established ethical guidelines and protected the rights and welfare of study participants both in Haiti and Brazil. The research team developed a field manual for researchers and then created a research protocol for the protection of respondents and researchers involved in the study, as well as a personal and health safety protocol. The manual and protocols attached to the consent forms were submitted to INURED's IRB and approved by the latter. The research protocol defines the terms of confidentiality protection and safeguarding in accordance with the rules and obligations held by INURED on the protection of human subjects in research (rules and obligations certified by the Office for Human Research Protections ID: IORG0007192). The forms approved by the IRB were used by the researchers in the field.

### Pandemic and Sociopolitical Challenges in the Field

The COVID-19 pandemic and the extreme sociopolitical crisis served as the backdrop to the study and persisted as we began conducting fieldwork. In addition, investigators encountered personal security challenges on the ground. In Haiti, gang activity, which was spreading to provincial regions once regarded as safe, was a serious concern for our investigators. In some cases, the decision was made to conduct telephone interviews in lieu of face-to-face interactions. This solution was facilitated by the fact that some of INURED's investigators are residents of the area, who could discreetly return to the study site to collect the phone numbers of selected participants.



Migrating caravan in Chiapas, Mexico. Photo © INURED

## FINDINGS

**TAB 2 : Descriptive Statistics: Basic Demographic Characteristics**

	Total (%)
<b>Urban / Rural</b>	
Urban	424 (45%)
Rural	525 (55%)
<b>Department</b>	
Ouest	309 (33%)
Artibonite	189 (20%)
Nord	188 (20%)
Centre	150 (16%)
Grande-Anse	113 (12%)
<b>Age</b>	
Average Age	40
<b>Household Composition</b>	
Average # in Household	4.9
Average # of Males	2.3
Average # of Females	2.7
Average # of Youth (<18)	1.5
<b>Gender</b>	
Female-headed Household	611 (64%)
Male-headed Household	338 (36%)
<b>Migration Status</b>	
Migrant	543 (57%)
Non-migrant	406 (43%)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single/Never Married	329 (35%)
Married	272 (29%)
Cohabiting / Common-law	228 (24%)
Separated / Divorced	58 (6%)
Widow/Widowed	55 (6%)
Don't know / Refuse to Respond / NA	7 (<1%)
<b>Religion</b>	
Protestant	410 (43%)
Catholic	386 (41%)
No Religion	88 (9%)
Vodoun	50 (5%)
Muslim	2 (<1%)
Other / Don't know / Refuse / NA	13 (1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>

### Socioeconomic and Cultural Contexts of the Studied Population

The analyses in the following sections are based on triangulation of data from all three sources. In each section, we start with the quantitative findings from the Haitian Household Survey, followed by a synthesis of all three data sources.

To establish the basic characteristics of the Haitian Household Survey sample, descriptive statistics of the demographic profile are provided in **Table 2**. The sample included 949 households from five out of ten departments in Haiti: 33% in Ouest (309), 20% in Artibonite (189), 20% in Nord (188), 16% in Centre (150), and 12% in Grande-Anse (113). Just under half (45%, or 424) of all households were urban, and 55% (525) were semi-rural or rural.

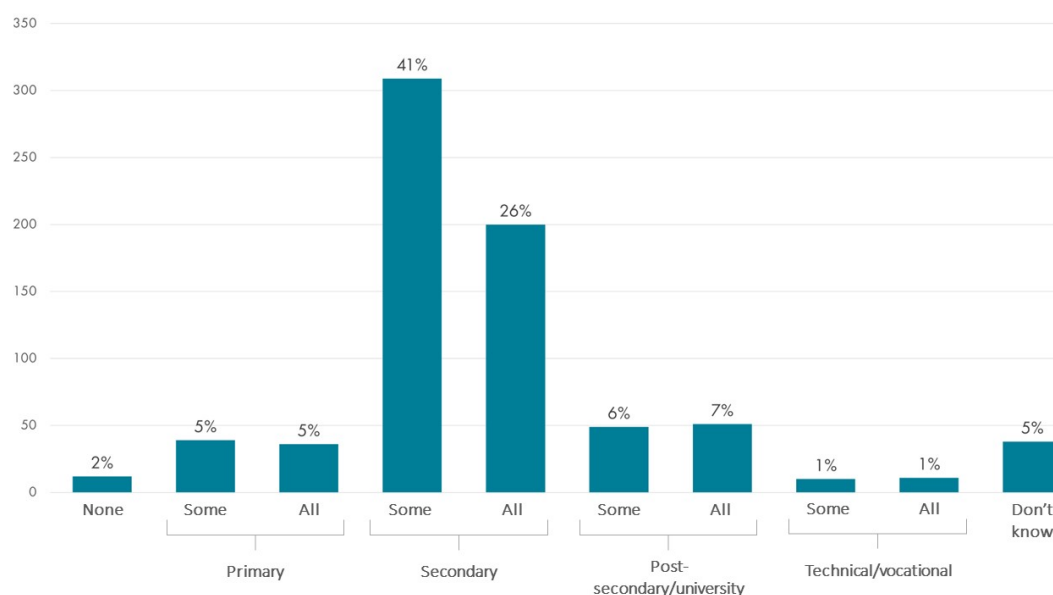
Household heads were 40 years old on average, with 4.9 people living in the household. This aligns with Haiti's national statistics office, which reported an average household size of 4.5 in 2014 (IHSI, 2015). More female- than male-headed households were included in the sample at 64% (611) and 36% (338), respectively. On average, there were slightly more women than men per household, at 2.7 and 2.3, respectively. The average number of youths (under 18 years old) per household was 1.5.

Data on those who migrated reveals that, of the 761 individuals who had migrated in the sample, 41% (309) had some secondary schooling, and 26% (200) had completed secondary school. Thirteen percent (100) had some post-secondary education (6%, or 49) or had completed their tertiary studies (7%, or 51). This suggests that Haitians migrating to South America have comparatively higher levels of formal education than their counterparts in Haiti.

According to official statistics from UNESCO, disaggregated by country, Haiti had a primary school completion rate of just 46% in 2020 and a secondary school completion rate of just 16.8% in that same year

(UNESCO, 2022). Further, the relatively high level of educational attainment of the migrating population in Brazil/Chile is supported by primary data collected on Haitian migrants by the MIDEQ team in Brazil, where 44% of interviewed migrants reported having completed secondary school or above. Another 6% had completed some or all technical or vocational studies. **Figure 1** shows the breakdown of the educational attainment of those who had migrated in the study sample, as reported by the household head.<sup>2</sup> There were no notable differences in educational attainment by gender.

**FIG 1: Educational Attainment of People Who Migrated in the Study Sample**



*\*Categories with less than 1% of responses were excluded from the visualization: Some graduate school (1 response); Completed graduate school (0 responses); Other (1 response); and Refuse to respond (1 response). There were three migrants for whom the respondent did not specify any educational attainment (NAs).*

Prior studies (OECD & INURED, 2017) corroborate these data as the majority of Haitian migrants are, in fact, Haiti's youth, who tend to be more highly educated than older populations. There is a positive correlation between educational attainment and the propensity to migrate as those who have completed secondary school often find it difficult to find steady employment. Further, pursuing a university education is also challenging because the State University of Haiti, a public institution that charges nominal fees, has a limited number of seats and is, therefore, quite selective, while the cost of a private university education is prohibitive for many families (INURED, 2010; Marcelin et al., 2024). With limited options for employment or further studies, many youths opt to migrate. Between 2010 and 2015, approximately 19,500 student visas and student visa renewals were issued to Haitian nationals at Dominican diplomatic offices abroad (DGM-DR, 2015). In fact, academic diplomas featured prominently among the official documents interviewees cited as critical to their departure:

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the person who migrated was not interviewed. Individual-level migrant data (n=761) was provided by proxy through the head of household, who was asked for details regarding 1-3 migrants, starting with the one who left most recently.

**Interviewer:** *When you were [getting ready to] migrat[e], what did you prepare in terms of documents?*

**Louis (pseudonym):** *...health certificate and a criminal background check, archival extract, my passport and all of my [secondary school] documents and the invitation letter.*

**Jocelyn (pseudonym):** *My [secondary] school documents and the seminars I took, passport, archival extract.*

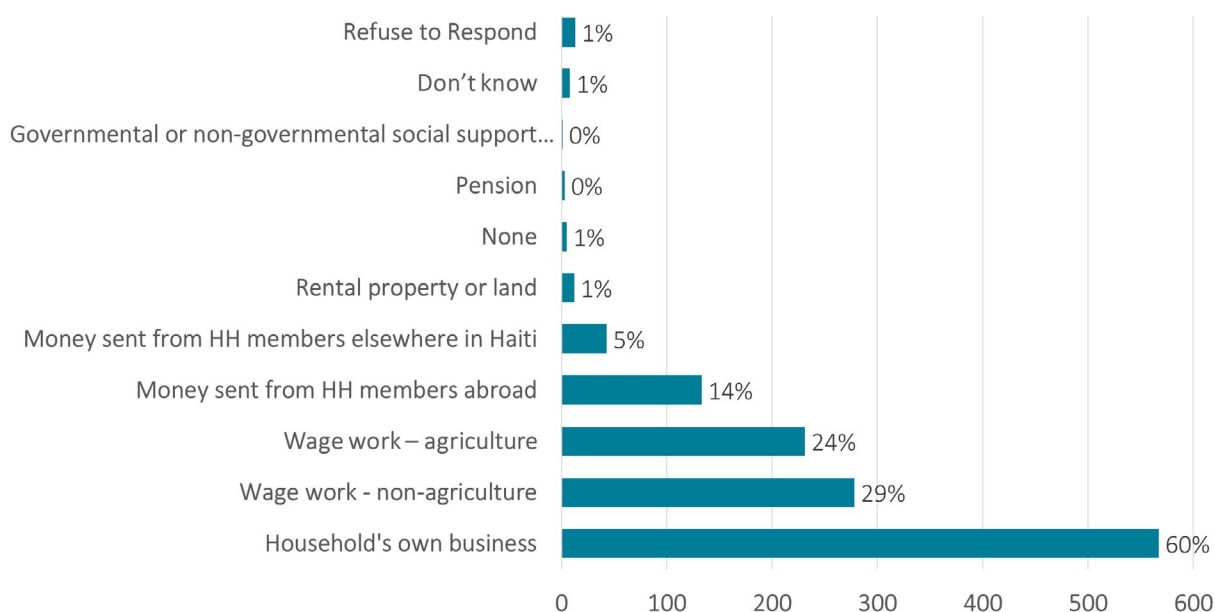
**Jules (pseudonym):** *...passport, archival extract, baccalaureate 1 and baccalaureate 2, Covid-19 test.*

**Laurent (pseudonym):** *...my bachelor's degree in civil engineering and all of my papers...*

Securing gainful employment in Haiti is a challenge even for college graduates. And for those college graduates fortunate enough to work for international NGOs, when those projects eventually come to an end, as they typically do, those employed struggle to integrate into the local labor market. Unable to secure comparable compensation from local firms or organizations, they continue seeking opportunities with other international firms offering more competitive remuneration packages. However, many decide to migrate (Lemay-Hébert et al., 2019)

Households were asked about their socioeconomic status. More than half (60%) reported their own business as the main source of income (See **Figure 2** for details of the frequencies and proportion of responses to each category). To account for engagement in more than one economic activity, up to two responses were allowed, causing the total proportions in the figure to exceed 100%.

**FIG 2: Main Income Generating Activities**



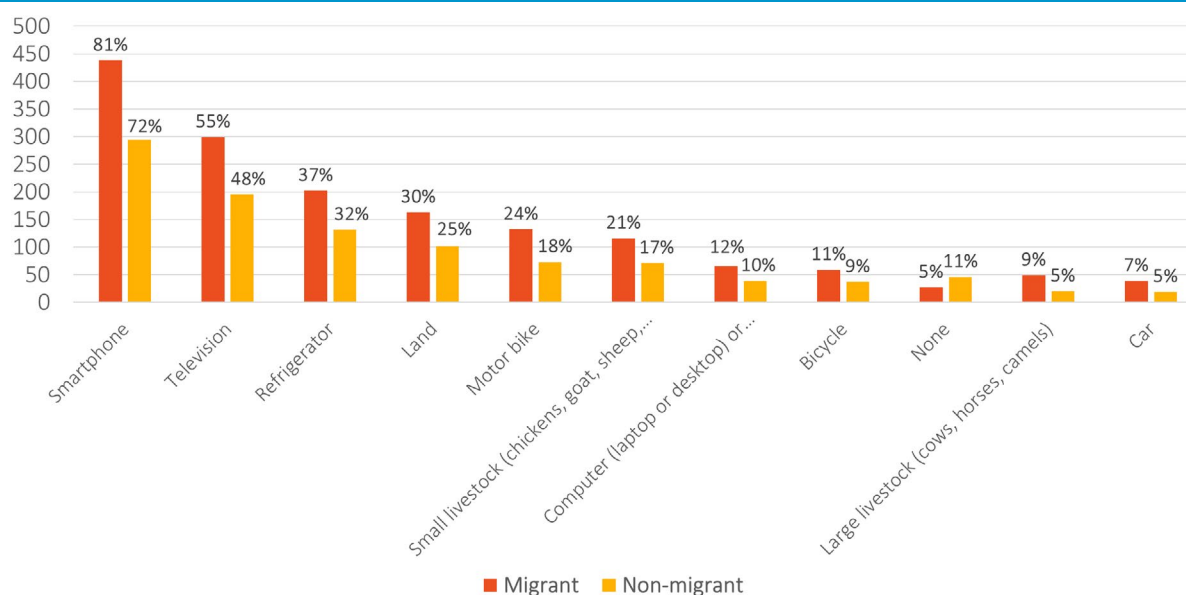
When asked about their monthly income, just under half (46%, 434) of participants reported they did not know, while 10% (95) refused to respond. We hypothesize that these responses reflect fluctuations in earnings associated with self-employment. Moreover, irregular or seasonal labor may also be highly volatile and not linked to fixed monthly estimates of earnings. This is consistent with World Bank (2019) findings that “unforeseen expenditures” and “variations and gaps in income” were the main reasons Haitians cited for living beyond their means. For the 404 households that responded to this question, median reported monthly household income was 10,000 Haitian



Gourdes (HTG) (USD \$107). The average was higher at 12,738 HTG (USD \$136), due to values at the higher end of the income distribution: 18% (72 of 404) of households reported earning more than 25,000 HTG (USD \$267) per month. The highest reported value was 100,000 HTG monthly, approximately USD \$1,075.<sup>3</sup> Non-migrant households reported lower values, on average, than migrant households: 11,910 versus 13,275 HTG (USD \$127 versus USD \$142) per month. Non-migrant households also exhibited a higher number of *Don't know* responses than migrant households, with 49% of households reporting this as compared to 44% among migrant households.

In terms of asset ownership, another variable related to household wealth, more than three-quarters (77%, or 732) of all households reported owning a smartphone, 52% (494) reported owning a television, and 35% (333) reported owning a refrigerator. Findings from a 2018 microeconomic study in Haiti had found much lower proportions of ownership of these assets at 60% (smartphone), 37% (television), and 16% (refrigerator) (FinScope, 2018). Migrant households had higher proportions of ownership of all assets. The largest differences were observed in smartphone (+8%), television (+7%), and motorbike (+6%) ownership (see **Figure 3**).

**FIG 3: Selected Asset Ownership for Migrant and Non-migrants**

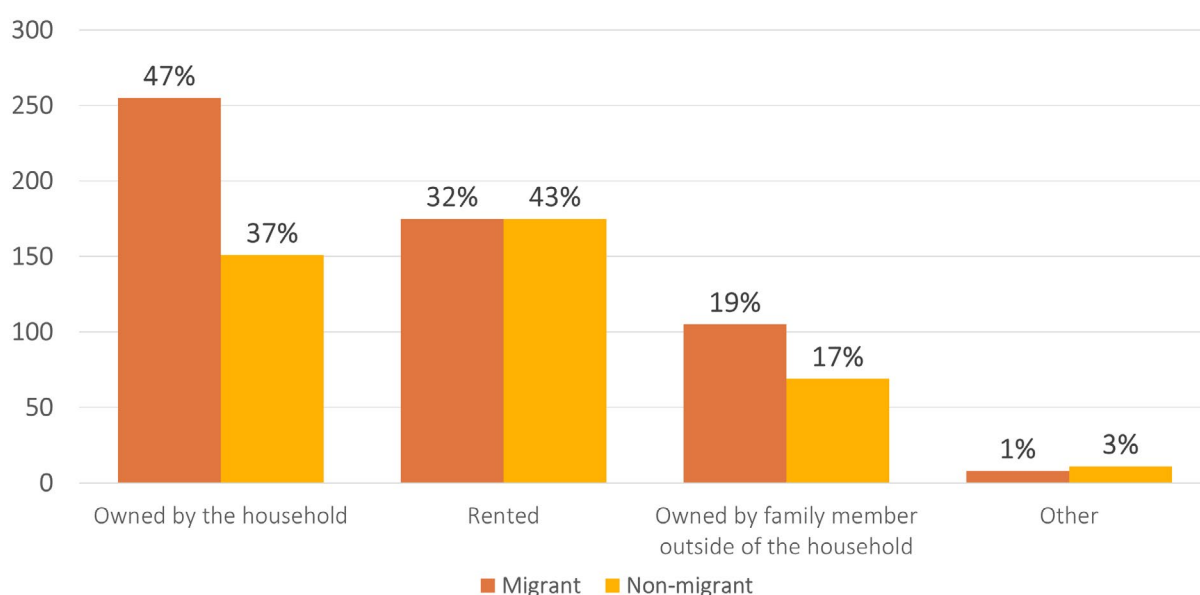


As can be seen in **Figure 4**, home ownership status differed between migrant and non-migrant households. Almost half (47%, or 255 of 543) of migrant households reported owning their home compared with 37% (151 of 406) of non-migrant households. Consistent with prior studies (see Joseph, 2017), ethnographic observations in the field suggest that home construction in Haiti is an important symbol of the return on investment in migration. The families of many people who migrate from their households build homes in Haiti using cement blocks, which serve as a symbol of social mobility. This is similar to the investment processes described in Joseph's ethnography of migrant households in Haiti (2020). The reverse is true for home rentals, with 32% of migrant households renting versus 43% of non-migrant households. Household migration status was significantly associated with home ownership status,  $\chi^2(3, N = 949) = 15.1, p = 0.002$ . This may suggest that family members of urban provenance are either financially better off or better positioned to support a family member's migration journey and, more likely to migrate.

<sup>3</sup> The exchange rate used for the USD calculations in this report is the official exchange rate by the World Bank for the year 2020 of 93.51 HTG per USD. It is important to note that the Haitian Gourde has since appreciated against the dollar, with the official exchange rate in 2021 being 89.23 HTG/USD.

This is further supported by the survey data collected from migrant Haitian families living in Brazil, who reported far more technological assets than the general sample. Among those who have migrated almost all (98%) reported owning smartphones; 91% reported owning a refrigerator; 76% reported television ownership; 74% reported owning a personal computer; and 10% reported owning a car (IMJA, forthcoming). However, much lower proportions of land (7%) and livestock ownership (<1%) were reported in the sample in Brazil (ibid). If the areas of asset and home ownership are appropriate indicators of household socioeconomic status, migrant households at origin and, especially, at destination, tend to enjoy higher socioeconomic status than non-migrant households in Haiti, although it is important to highlight that there may be unobserved factors other than migration status that influence socioeconomic status of our study participants.

**FIG 4: Home Ownership Status for Migrant vs. Non-migrant Households**



Migrant households often benefit from the remitting practices of those living abroad, suggesting that they may experience an elevation in economic status in Haiti because of others' migration. During numerous interviews, economic factors were evoked as influencing the decision to migrate. Family members in Haiti considered their financial support as an investment made by those living elsewhere, and the possession of more assets and higher economic status of migrant households shows the return on that investment. Though remitting practices vary, the yield for migrant households is undeniable:

**Interviewer:** *In your opinion, how often do people in Haiti receive money from family in Brazil or Chile?*

**Jeanne (pseudonym):** *Some send something each month because some [individuals who have migrated] choose to pay school fees. Some choose to pay rent [so] they send it to you annually. And some family members don't have a date, you might...need something and you give them a bill...So there is no precise date for them to send the money.*

While it may be hypothesized that migrant households are financially better off than non-migrant households due to remittances, this hypothesis is complicated because some non-migrant households may also have non-household family members and/or friends abroad who financially assist or support them. In this manner, the diaspora may serve as a form of capital that non-migrant households can also draw upon, albeit less frequently, to assist them.

**Interviewer:** *Who helped pay for you to migrate to Brazil or Chile?*

**Jean Robert (pseudonym):** *There were many family members in the U.S., France, who helped me. There were my (maternal) aunts and uncles. I even had a cousin I have never met in the US who helped me. They know that if they help me, I will help my family in Haiti, and it becomes less of a burden to them.*

As evidenced here, a number of factors contribute to disparities in socioeconomic status between migrant and non-migrant households. These disparities may pre-date the departure of the first household member or reflect the return on their investment in migration itself. This is an area for further scientific scrutiny as it may help in developing policies that build on these investments made in the homeland at the household and national levels.

Differences in the ownership of assets were also pronounced between urban and rural households. The most significant differences were observed in the ownership of land, where almost half (47%, or 198) of rural households reported owning land compared to 13% (67) of urban households. While land ownership is an important asset, in rural Haiti this asset is often the result of shared inheritance (Kelly et al., 2019; USAID, 2010). Therefore, the issue of individual versus collective ownership comes into play as well as land tenure. This suggests that there are many outstanding questions regarding rural land ownership as an immediately convertible asset that facilitates migration, as land is not necessarily individually owned and, therefore, must be negotiated. In the main MIDEQ survey data, urban provenance was significantly associated with home ownership, with rural households showing higher proportions of land ownership than urban households  $\chi^2 (3, N = 949) = 54.07, p < 0.001$ . Perhaps intuitively, rural households also exhibited higher proportions of small (79% rural versus 21% urban) and large livestock (88% rural versus 12% urban) ownership than urban households.

When asked about access to basic commodities, slightly under half of all households (45% or 428) reported having a basic energy source (i.e., electricity). Differences in access to electricity were apparent between urban and rural households, with 54% (283) of urban households reporting access compared to 34% (145) of rural households. Limited access to energy partially explains urban households' higher proportion of television ownership (66% urban vs 35% rural) and of other electronic assets. In another study, 40% of Haitian adults (15+) reported access to an electrical connection (FinScope, 2018). Of those, 45% reported an illegal connection, 35% an individual connection, 16% an Electricité d'Haïti (or collective connection), 4% other sources, and 1% solar panels (ibid).

Access to and use of technology is a much more common asset in urban than rural areas. Survey data further shows that while only 18% (95) of urban households reported no one in the house accessing the internet, almost one-third (31%, or 133) of rural households reported the same. According to UNICEF (2020), around 80% of school-aged children in Haiti did not have regular internet access during the COVID-19 pandemic, versus 49% in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region overall.

In our study, most households (93%) reported having access to a toilet or latrine of some kind (including household/communal latrines and household flush/non-flush toilets), mostly latrines (58%), followed by household non-flush toilets (16%), or flush toilets (10%). Five percent (5%) of households reported having access to both a household toilet and a latrine while 6% reported having access to neither<sup>4</sup>. Notably, only one-fifth (20%) of households reported having access to running water. These findings confirm the persistence of the precarity of the population with respect to WASH facilities recorded in studies such as the FinScope study (2018) and the national EMMUS 2016-2017 study (IHE & ICF, 2018). Although the potential for comparison between these different data sources is limited, we can deduce that many households in Haiti still lack access to proper WASH facilities, which are more available in urban than rural areas.

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<sup>4</sup> Five households (rounded up to 1%) did not report a toilet type, which is why the total of those households that reported access to a toilet or latrine and those that explicitly reported no toilet is 99%.

### The Collective Nature of Migrant Decision-Making

Haitian youth comprise the largest segment of Haiti's migrating population. While some find the inability to pursue their tertiary studies in Haiti as a motivating factor to migrate, such a pursuit is, in fact, a means to an end. We hypothesize that the realization that they may be relegated to a life of unemployment or underemployment propels many youths to consider migration. This is a reality Haiti's educated youth, both male and female, must contend with, and that is reflected in the percentage of those reporting the search for employment as their reason for migration: 87% of the 761 migrants interviewed by proxy.

When the head of household in Haiti was asked why the most recent migrant had chosen Brazil/Chile versus another country, 32% reported that they had family/friends there, 30% reported easy access (location, migration policy), and 28% reported better job opportunities/wages. The data collected directly from Haitians living in Brazil (IMJA, forthcoming) included the same indicators with similar results. Notably, data from the social network survey reveal that two-thirds (57% or 103) of participants in the general sample reported migrating to the first destination for work. Among those ages 18 to 25, the percentage is slightly lower at 52%, which we hypothesize may reflect the intention to pursue tertiary studies at their destination. The proportion of those migrating for employment jumps to more than two-thirds (69%) for the second destination country.

**Interviewer:** [...] what compels women to leave the country and migrate to Brazil or Chile?

**Jeanne (Pseudonym):** Many things compel them to do this. Sometimes they don't find work or they realize they are getting older and they aren't doing anything in the country...they have expenses, they need money, (so) they go!

**Interviewer:** Do you think these are the same reasons men decide to leave the country?

**Jeanne (Pseudonym):** Hmph, yes, exactly! Imagine, the man is here, he can't find work. When they leave that's what they always say. Haiti has insecurity, Haiti has no work, (in) Haiti even if you (engage in) petty commerce it doesn't [pay] so they go elsewhere. It's always the same thing, they want to make money... the country doesn't offer them anything, so they leave...

While individual factors may inform the decision to migrate, these factors have a collective impact on families. As questions are framed regarding the personal experiences of migrating individuals, study findings show that the decision to migrate is often a collective one. In an in-depth interview, one male who migrated explained how the decision was not his own but a decision made by family members abroad who were offering various types of support:

**Jean Daniel (pseudonym):** I wasn't the one who chose Brazil. My family was doing [this] for me and I didn't have a choice. They didn't send me to Brazil, they sent me to Chile. I was in Chile 6 months and things weren't good at all so I had to work hard to save some money then I went to Brazil. I had one close cousin in Chile and unfortunately her husband didn't agree for her to host us (him and his brother). So, I was living in Chile without family.

**Interviewer:** So, when you arrived in Brazil what did you do?

**Jean Daniel:** I had my mother's cousins in Brazil, and they gave me a lot of support. They hosted me and gave me a lot of support, thank God.

In this case, extended family abroad was intimately involved with the migration process: his migration trajectory was influenced by the lack of support received from family in Chile, resulting in his onward migration to Brazil, where he did find sufficient support.

During focus groups and interviews, it was revealed that family members abroad often take on the responsibility of helping close family members in Haiti in many ways, including with their trip to Brazil or Chile. During a focus

group, one mother in Haiti explained: *My son is actually in Chile. It was his father who lives in the US who took the initiative to make him migrate to Chile.*

Even among some migrating individuals, decisions may be made early on to help a family member join them abroad. One male, who had been living in Brazil for less than two years, detailed his immediate plans to have his remaining brothers join him:

*I have plans to bring my other brothers in Haiti to Brazil. I am going to have them go through the Dominican Republic. One of them is going to the Dominican Republic next month, God willing. I already sent him USD \$100 for the Dominican visa, but the visa is USD \$300. I am hoping my cousin can contribute USD \$100 because at the end of the month, God willing, I will send USD \$100. The trip will cost me a lot of money.*

*I am going to send him an authorization letter while he is in the Dominican Republic since we have the same last name so he can come and join me here because in Haiti they don't provide visas easily anymore. I will have both of the boys go through the Dominican Republic so that they can come but one of them is going in February (2021), God willing, afterwards I will have [brother's name] twin go to the Dominican Republic too and while they are in the Dominican Republic, we will do our best (fe jefo) to get them both. I have already spoken to my mother's family that are abroad and they have agreed to support me with airline tickets for the trip to Brazil.*

These two brothers in Haiti are not only encouraged to migrate but will have the financial support of family members in Brazil, the US, and France. While this young man has four siblings in Haiti, two brothers and two sisters, he has decided to invest in the migration of the two brothers. Both interviews reveal the centrality of transnational family networks and migration capital in migrant decision-making among Haitians.

Family members living abroad are very much implicated in the collective decision to migrate. We hypothesize that this is largely because family members in Haiti may represent a significant financial burden for those living abroad. Helping them migrate may be a strategy of economic disengagement employed by members of the diaspora. In this regard, we caution that family involvement in migrant decision-making among those living in Haiti versus abroad requires further scientific scrutiny. Of Haitian respondents living in Brazil, just 14% reported knowing no one in Brazil before migrating (IMJA, forthcoming). Almost two-thirds (64%) reported having family members already in Brazil before departure, and slightly more than one-third (34%) reported having friends and/or members of their local communities in Haiti now living in Brazil (ibid). Since this was a multiple-response question, the proportions will not add up to 100%.



## **Migrant Decision-Making in Post-2010 Earthquake Haiti: Seized Opportunities and Favorable Policy Contexts**

### **Labor Opportunities and Shifting Migration Policies in Brazil**

Prior to 2010, the Haitian presence in Brazil was insignificant, with only a few students attending university on scholarship (Nieto, 2014). Since then, Brazil has become home to the fourth-largest Haitian migrant population in the world (Fidalgo, 2020). This rapid rise resulted from a peacekeeping mission and diplomatic events after the 2010 earthquake. Bilateral diplomatic ties between the two nations increased with Brazil's leadership of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) beginning in 2004 (Joseph, 2017; INURED, 2020a; Montinard, 2019). This relationship led to significant contributions to Haiti following the earthquake in terms of humanitarian assistance, investments in infrastructure, and efforts to combat the cholera epidemic that would culminate in the complementary protection of Haitian migrants vis-à-vis a humanitarian visa schema in 2012 (INURED, 2020a).

Several factors made Brazil an attractive destination for migrating Haitians. Many Haitians—and others—migrated there due to its rise as a BRICS state and a regional power in the Global South (INURED, 2020a). Haitian migration to Brazil coincided with its growing GDP, with an increasing need for manual laborers and decreasing unemployment (Cárdenas, 2014; INURED, 2020a; IOM, 2023). Brazil was a particularly alluring destination due to the availability of construction jobs and unmet demand for low-skilled workers prior to and during the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic games (Joseph, 2017; INURED, 2020a; Yates, 2021). It is well documented that most of these precarious construction jobs were taken by Haitian migrants (Virginio et al., 2022). Haiti, at the same time, faced an arduous post-earthquake reconstruction effort, along with state-sanctioned violence, increased corruption, and a worsening economic outlook (INURED, 2012; 2017).

Another important factor attracting Haitians to Brazil was the humanitarian visa schema, Resolução Normativa 97 (RN-97), launched in 2012 in response to the unprecedented flow of undocumented Haitians to Brazil's northern borders and the ensuing humanitarian situation (Montinard, 2019; Vieira, 2014). This visa offered complementary protection to Haitians and was drafted in response to widespread human rights abuses and human trafficking due to Haitians' mostly irregular status (INURED, 2020a). The total number of visas to be issued was capped at 1,200 annually until April 2013, at which time RN-102/2013 was passed with the express purpose of removing this annual limit (Dubuisson, 2020). As of 2020, more than 100,000 Haitians had been granted permanent residency status in Brazil (MJSP, 2023).

Although the Haitian population in Brazil was estimated to be approximately 143,000 in 2020, and despite favorable visa conditions for Haitians, a large proportion of those who migrated to Brazil left for Chile in response to Brazil's economic downturn (INURED, 2020a; Yates, 2021; IOM, 2023). Just as the 2016 Olympic games, which had drawn many Haitians seeking employment to Brazil, were underway, the economy would stagnate, and political instability as well as corruption would increase (Yates, 2021). In fact, between 2015 and 2016, Brazil's economy shrank by almost 7%, and unemployment nearly doubled (Wejsa & Lesser, 2018; INURED, 2020a). Moreover, as often happens in turbulent times, there was a rise in racism and xenophobia, leading to acts of violence perpetrated against Haitians in Brazil (TeleSUR, 2015). Anti-immigrant sentiments also gave rise to the election of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro as president in 2018. These, among other factors, influenced many Haitians to migrate to Chile, some directly from Haiti and others from Brazil.

### **Chile: Cost-Benefit Analysis and Migrant Decision-Making**

Once a migrant-sending nation, Chile became a regional destination country for migrants beginning in the 1990s (Reveco, 2018). Chile stood out as one of the region's most stable countries in the mid-2010s, both economically and politically (Yates, 2021). As Chile did not require visas, only an invitation letter, Haitians in Brazil and Haiti

made their way there. After entering on a tourist visa secured at destination, Haitians could request a temporary visa by providing proof of employment (Carrasco, 2020). Between 2015 and 2020, more than 180,000 Haitians entered Chile (DEM, 2020), 103,000 in 2017 alone (Yates, 2021). By 2018, Chile, a country unaccustomed to hosting black populations, would begin to restrict the entry of Haitians after the election of the conservative Piñera government (Cárdenas, 2014).

At the same time, Chile was also experiencing record migration from Venezuela. Against the backdrop of rising xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in 2018, the Chilean government responded by imposing new tourist visa requirements on Haitians, aimed at curtailing migration. The new policy required that tourist visas be issued solely by the Chilean embassy in Port-au-Prince. Further, those with tourist status no longer qualified for family reunification. The new policy prevented Haitians already in the region from migrating to Chile while creating an enormous backlog of visa applications in Haiti. In Chile, job opportunities for Haitians decreased, fueled not only by discrimination but by temporary economic contraction in the country due to COVID-19 and related lockdowns (USFAS, 2023). No longer authorized to work under the new tourist visa scheme, many Haitians were forced to seek employment in the informal sector, often under precarious conditions and for low compensation (INURED, 2020a).

In a 2022 survey on the immigrant population in Chile, 43% of Haitian men and 41% of Haitian women reported suffering discrimination due to their nationality (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones, 2022). Haitian women faced the most discriminatory experiences among all nationalities surveyed, and Haitian men's own experiences of discrimination were second only to Colombian men (*ibid*).

By 2019, because of the new visa requirements, more Haitians were registered leaving than entering Chile for the first time since 2010 (Yates, 2021). This is partially explained by the high visa application denial rate, with more than two-thirds (69%) of all Haitian visa applications being denied between 2018 and 2020 (*ibid*). Although the Chilean government was successful in limiting the documented entry of Haitians into Chile by mid-2020, at that time, there were an estimated 237,000 residents of Haitian nationality in Chile, comprising the third-largest immigrant population in the country, behind only Venezuela and Peru (Yates, 2021; UNDESA, 2022).

Just as Haitians chose to leave Brazil for Chile around the mid-2010s, restrictive migration policies, economic stagnation, and rising xenophobia in Chile resulted in onward migration, notably towards the US-Mexico border (Morley, 2021; Yates, 2021). These realities underpin how the migration policy context—at home, at destination, and in transit countries—and realities on the ground convert destination countries to transit countries (Beine et al., 2016). In the following section, we focus on the role of intermediaries who also navigate these shifting realities across borders in response to the demand for migration. The booming market of intermediaries in Haiti reveals how migration policies in the region, when implemented without proper multilateral cooperation, can have unintended consequences that render migrating Haitians vulnerable.

### The Challenges of Migration Preparation and Transit: The Role of Intermediaries

#### Difficulties Encountered and the Use of Intermediaries

It is not easy to migrate from Haiti, and 25% (137) of households reported that the migrating family member faced difficulties before departure. Significant differences exist between male- and female-headed households in terms of reporting difficulties before departure, with a higher proportion than expected of male-headed households reporting difficulties,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 519) = 5.72, p = 0.017$ .

**TAB 3: Types of Difficulties Encountered Before and During Migration in the Corridor <sup>5</sup>**

	Total (%)
<b>Before Departure (n=137)</b>	
Problems securing documents to migrate	76 (55%)
Did not have money to migrate (to cover documents and/or transportation)	48 (35%)
Victim of corruption/bribe at the airport	29 (21%)
Other	9 (7%)
Don't Know	2 (1%)
<b>During Transit (n=75)</b>	
Did not have enough money to pay for passage	30 (40%)
Victim of theft in transit	16 (21%)
Smuggler/intermediary abandonment in transit	9 (12%)
Victim of theft/bribery from an official	7 (9%)
Arrested/Imprisoned	4 (5%)
Victim of sexual violence in transit	1 (1%)
Other	13 (17%)

<sup>5</sup> The denominator used for computing proportions was the total number of households that replied that they had difficulties at each stage in the table, stated to the right of each header in the table.

**Table 3** shows the frequencies and proportions of reported difficulties encountered at the first two stages of the migration project. The most frequently cited problem before departure from Haiti was the difficulty and expense of securing migration documents (55%), a process that is often arduous and slow, adding to the cost, contributing to the second most frequently cited difficulty pre-departure: funding the trip itself. More than half (57%) of participants reported paying an intermediary—whether an individual or institution—to assist them with trip preparation. Proportions of *Yes* and *No* responses for male- (58%) versus female-headed (55%) households to this question were almost identical.

Only 9% of households reported that the migrating individual experienced challenges in transit in the survey-conducted in Haiti; however, the MIDEQ team in Brazil (IMJA) found that 29% of migrants reported experiencing extortion or bribery in transit (IMJA, forthcoming). This may be related to the proxy nature of the questions posed to Haitian households, as Haitians abroad may withhold worrisome information from family members at home. Interestingly, all other categories of this question had 3% or fewer responses to the survey carried out in Brazil, and 65% of households reported None of the above (IMJA, forthcoming).

The social network sub-study allowed for a closer examination of the use of intermediaries among migrants and their social networks in the LAC region. As in the larger study, participants of the sub-study were asked if they or the migrating individual they identified for the study had paid someone or an institution to help prepare the trip, with just over half (54% or 144 of 265) reporting that they did. No apparent differences between women and men were observed.

In the social network data, differences were observed in the order of destination country with regard to the use of intermediaries, a facet that was not observable in the main MIDEQ dataset. For the first destination country (the journey from Haiti), 49% (89 of 180) of respondents reported that they had paid someone for help, compared to 68% (43 of 63) for the second journey. A multiple-response question asked what types of services migrants received from the person hired to assist them. Considering all destination countries, 58% (83 of 144) reported hiring someone to help with the purchase of a ticket or make other travel arrangements, 56% (80) for document preparation, and (44%) (63) reported hiring an intermediary to facilitate the acquisition of travel documents.

The proportion of Haitians hiring an intermediary for document preparation was significantly higher for the first destination country than for others, with 75% (67 of 89) of respondents selecting this response for country one, as compared to 28% and 8% for countries two and three, respectively. We surmise that the need for an intermediary to secure documents (e.g., birth certificates, transcripts, passports, etc.) decreases with each trip. With respect to the general use of intermediaries, irrespective of the type of service, the proportions increase as the migrant goes to more and more countries, jumping from 28% (24) for the first country to 70% (30) for the second and 75% for the third country. Moreover, men in the sample were more likely to use intermediaries than women, with 49% (45 of 92) of males reporting this versus 35% (18 of 52) of females. We hypothesize that this may be because females are more likely to migrate under family reunification and receive the necessary assistance preparing their trip from their significant other at destination. However, it is important to note that increasing numbers of women are migrating independently to Brazil (Marcelin & Cela, 2024).

Through interviews, focus groups and observations, we were able to extract more intimate details about intermediaries, how they are perceived, and their roles and impacts on migrants and their family members in Haiti. This interview excerpt provides an example of one participant's experiences using an intermediary in Haiti.

**Roberson (pseudonym):** *I have contacted a “raketè [intermediary]” in Haiti so that he can get me an appointment for [Name of 3rd brother] to apply for a visa because it’s the appointment that’s difficult [to get]. But once it’s submitted to the Embassy you can chill [ou met tèt frèt] you’ll get the visa.*

**Interviewee:** *You trust this person?*

**Roberson:** *It’s not because I trust him but it’s because it’s the only option because Haiti is a country of “rakèt [racketeering]”.*

**Interviewee:** *How did you find this person?*

**Roberson:** *This is what he does for a living, and he’s done this for many people already. For a long time, this is how it’s been.*

**Interviewee:** *But did you know him, or did someone refer you?*

**Roberson:** *Thanks to one of my teachers that he’s helping migrate along with his entire family. He helped my teacher’s friend get a Brazilian visa within 21 days for USD \$1,300. But I am not rushing. I told him I just need the appointment because I won’t have this amount of money to give him and be able to buy an expensive airline ticket.*

**Interviewee:** *Wow, that’s no small amount of money. But will [Brother #3] still go through the Dominican Republic?*

**Roberson:** *Once I get him the appointment he won’t need to go through the Dominican Republic. I will just buy the airline ticket for him for a direct flight. He was only going to go through the Dominican Republic because he was going to do a “rakèt” but now once he submits (an application) and gets a visa it will be legal.*

**Interviewee:** *Ok, I understand. It makes more sense.*

**Roberson:** *Yes. He asked USD \$300 for the appointment. I just need to speak with [Brother #3], he’s in the provinces and doesn’t have [phone] reception. I need to put him in contact with the person for more information and so that he gives the money.*

What this suggests is that the cost of services may not be fixed and depends on a range of factors, such as the urgency or turn-around time of the service requested. Another study participant detailed his frustration with an inefficient system that exploited him despite having paid a bribe to expedite the release of his criminal record. The document is required for the naturalization process in Brazil:

*Well, they gave me the document, but they made a mistake on it. I had to pay more money for them to correct it. They’re a bunch of empty heads working in the government office in Haiti. After all this time waiting when they finally gave it to me, they gave it to me with errors. Now I had a date this week when they were supposed to give it to me and they’re already giving me the run around (yo gentan ap woule m) ... Although I complained (tire pye) so that I wouldn’t have to pay they told me, “No,” so what can I do? I resigned myself, once you’re dealing with Haitians it’s not easy for your things to go well... This really disturbs me, and I am tired of getting upset with myself over this nonsense. Haiti is a nation of discouragement...*

Many households (40%) reporting the challenges of the migration project explained that the migrating household member did not have enough funds to cover their journey. We hypothesize that this results from irregular migration in which migrants are subject to exploitation by smugglers, bribes demanded by local officials, and spikes in costs as demand has substantially increased.

As most commercial flights out of Haiti have been suspended or discontinued in recent years, some due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most Haitians seeking to migrate to Latin America must transit through the Dominican



Republic. Agencies have taken advantage of increased demand for outmigration, the inaccessibility of consulates to the average Haitian, and inefficiencies of the public sector to facilitate migration. Although Dominican Law 875 stipulates that visa applications shall be made in person and directly at Dominican diplomatic offices abroad, there have been allegations of cooperation in illicit activities between Dominican consulates and Haitian travel agencies (Listín Diario, 2022a; 2022b). In some cases, Haitians have been handed fraudulent documents, creating a situation in which migrants spend significant sums of money and wait months, only to be detained crossing the border without proper documentation (ibid).

It should be noted that social media is playing an increasingly important role in facilitating undocumented migration. Social media has become a key arena for travel agencies to market a range of services that facilitate migration and grow their business (Pichardo, 2022). In addition, for many Haitians migrating through South, Central, and North America, social media has become a vital source of migration information. For example, a great deal of news media has been published in the context of the September 2021 clashes between migrating Haitians and border police in Del Rio, Texas, where more than 10,000 people on the move of different nationalities were squatting in an informal camp under a bridge (Associated Press, 2021; Ulmer, 2021). One such article contends that WhatsApp was a principal source of information for Haitians migrating towards the US-Mexico border at that time (Associated Press, 2021). In 2021, a post with specific instructions on how to navigate the trails to the US's southern border appeared in a Facebook group for Haitian migrants residing in Chile that had 26,000 members at the time of publication (ibid). Reuters interviewed one migrant who claimed that he sent directions to those behind him by phone to help them navigate (ibid). Another migrant shared a WhatsApp message showing 15 stops through Mexico that he claimed were being shared on social media amongst networks of Haitian migrants (ibid).

During interviews with migrants, they shared many YouTube videos posted by individuals on the trail documenting the reality of the trek across South and Central America as well as news reports of migrant-serving organizations. We gathered several videos created by the migrants themselves that delve into the harsh conditions Haitians on the move were experiencing, particularly in the Darien Gap (Marcelin and Cela, forthcoming). These videos were used as corroborating evidence for their shared stories to reaffirm some migrant-serving organizations and disavow others that they believed were not serving them while profiting off of their desperate circumstances.

What these data show is that news and social media feature prominently as part of migrant decision-making and strategy, particularly among undocumented populations. In many ways, social media platforms democratize access to credible information. They have facilitated the circulation and settlement of Haitians in South America, a continent largely foreign to most Haitians only a decade earlier. However, there are also inherent risks associated with the use of social media. The quality of information may be questionable as the context is constantly evolving, and misinformation may place migrants and their families in danger.

Interestingly, according to survey data from Brazil, although most Haitians who have migrated (66%) in the sample reported not experiencing any of the listed difficulties, more than one-quarter (29%) reported experiencing extortion or paying bribes (IMJA, forthcoming). Further, 3% of survey participants reported being victims of theft, 2% had incorrect or insufficient documentation, 2% reported falling severely ill, and 1% reported not having enough food or water during the journey (ibid).

### The High Costs of Migration

For many Haitians, the cost of migration, particularly irregular migration, can be high. When asked, most migrant households reported spending between USD \$3,000 and \$5,000. It has been estimated that those who migrated irregularly from Haiti to Brazil spent anywhere between USD \$1,500 and \$6,000 (Fouron, 2020). Almost half, 46% – or 39,000 out of 85,000 – of the Haitian arrivals to Brazil between 2010 and 2017 entered irregularly, mostly through the Amazon region (ibid). More recently, irregular migration and the use of intermediaries by Haitians in the region are likely to have increased due to COVID-19-related restrictions and their disproportionate socio-economic impacts on migrant populations (WEF & IOM, 2020; İçduygu, 2020). In addition, as detailed at the end of the previous section, the indispensable role of intermediaries in Haitian society positions them to exploit the population at critical moments. Intermediaries have recently been able to set exorbitant prices for visa procurement and other services with impunity (Pichardo, 2020). The accumulation of these often unforeseen costs is a key factor in the high costs of migration from Haiti.

Only 13% (71 of 543) of migrant households reported a loan as the main source of funding for the most recent individual's voyage; 15% of female-headed households chose this response compared to 10% of male-headed migrant households (see **Table 4**). Further, sources of these loans differed by gender in the sample. More than one-third (35%) of female-headed households reported obtaining a loan from a bank or credit union compared to 20% of male-headed households. In addition, 45% of male-headed households reported relatives, friends, or community members as the source of the loan versus 27% of female-headed households. According to the results of the survey implemented by IMJA, even fewer Haitians living in Brazil reported using a loan to fund their migration: 4% reported obtaining a loan from family or friends, 2% reported obtaining a loan from a bank or credit union, and less than 1% reported loans from informal agents (IMJA, forthcoming)

**TAB 4 : Reported Amounts Spent to Migrate by Gender of the Most Recent Migrant**

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Between USD \$1000 and \$1999</b>	9 (4%)	7 (2%)	16 (3%)
<b>Between USD \$2000 and \$2999</b>	20 (10%)	50 (15%)	70 (13%)
<b>Between USD \$3000 and \$3999</b>	37 (18%)	69 (21%)	106 (20%)
<b>Between USD \$4000 and \$4999</b>	23 (11%)	23 (7%)	46 (9%)
<b>USD \$5000 or more</b>	8 (4%)	17 (5%)	25 (5%)
<b>Don't Know*</b>	99 (48%)	164 (49%)	263 (49%)
<b>Refuse to Respond*</b>	8 (4%)	4 (1%)	12 (2%)
<b>NA*</b>	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	2 (<1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>540**</b>

*\*These outcomes were excluded from the statistical testing below due to low expected cell frequencies. This explains the smaller sample size and the lower-than-expected degrees of freedom reported for both genders of household and the gender of the most recent migrant in the tests below.*

*\*\*There are three NAs for migrant gender that are not displayed in the cross-tabulation.*

When asked about the cost of the most recent migration journey, migrant households reported significant differences by gender. A significant relationship was found at the .05 – but not at the .01 – level between the gender of the household head and total migration cost,  $\chi^2$  (5, N = 529) = 14.18,  $p$  = 0.02. The most remarkable differences between expected and observed values are in the *Don't know* category, containing the most responses of any category: 265 or 49% of all responses. More than half (54%, or 186) of female-headed households responded *Don't know* compared to 40% (79) of males. There were also more male heads of household than expected who reported that the migrating individual spent USD \$5,000 or more on their journey. Moreover, the distribution of migration costs by the gender of the most recent migrant is also similar when comparing men and women, yet the relationship between the gender of the most recent migrant and reported migration cost was insignificant at the .05 level,  $\chi^2$  (6, N = 540) = 9.89,  $p$  = 0.13. Please see **Table 5** for the cross-tabulation of this variable by the gender of the most recent migrant.<sup>7</sup>

**TAB 5: Source of Loans by Gender of Household Head**

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Relatives, friends, community members</b>	14 (27%)	9 (45%)	<b>23 (32%)</b>
<b>Bank/credit unions</b>	18 (35%)	4 (20%)	<b>22 (31%)</b>
<b>Money lenders</b>	12 (24%)	5 (25%)	<b>17 (24%)</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	<b>3 (4%)</b>
<b>NA</b>	4 (8%)	2 (10%)	<b>6 (8%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>71</b>

The different results of the independence tests by the gender of the household head versus the gender of the most recent migrant are most likely due to the *Don't know* category, which exhibits a similar distribution for the gender of the most recent migrating individual but very different proportions for the gender of the household head. Female heads of household are likely to know less about the migration process as they are largely excluded from the decision-making throughout. It may also be indicative of the marginalized role of women in Haitian society in general in which they are rarely in roles of formal leadership and, therefore, excluded from consultations and decision-making processes (INURED, 2017).

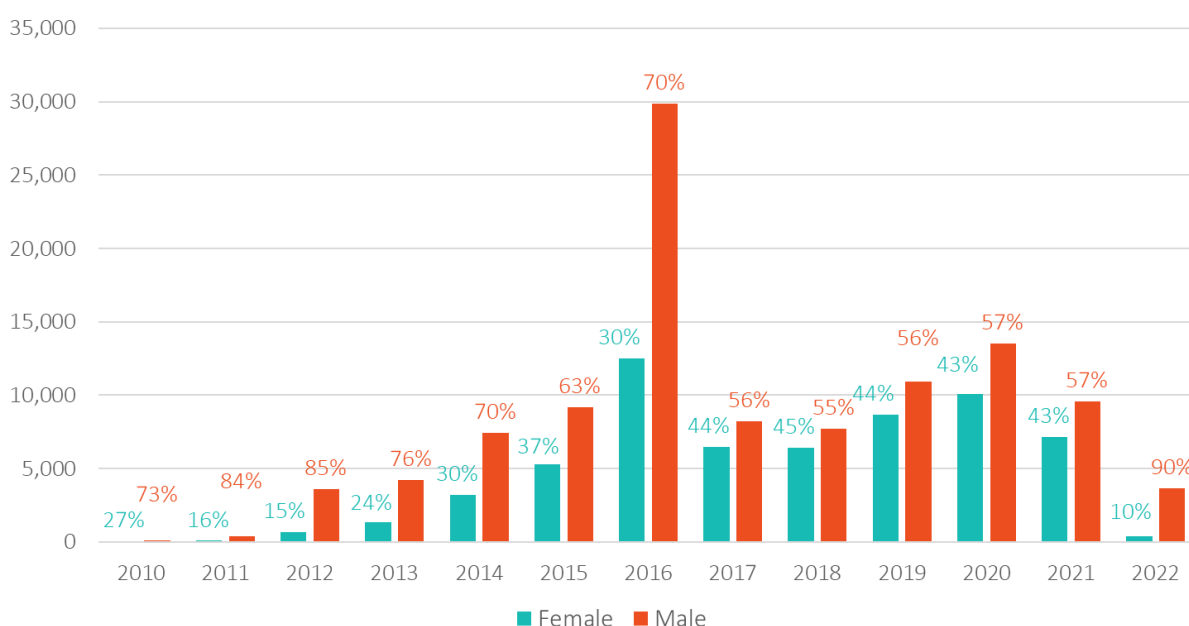
Our data suggests that women were proportionally more likely to use a bank loan to facilitate their migration. To some degree, this contrasts with data on financial inclusion and gender which suggests that women were slightly more likely to be excluded than men at 47% and 45%, respectively (FinScope, 2018). However, this may be linked to the positive relationship between educational attainment and migration (Orozco, 2006; OECD & INURED, 2017; INURED, 2020a) and may suggest that women migrating to Brazil or Chile, typically under family reunification programs, tend to have higher levels of education and, potentially, income, consistent with their male partners. INURED and the United Nations University published a study on financial inclusion and migration in Haiti in which we further discuss the challenges faced by Haitians, their migration projects, and their lack of financial inclusion in Haiti (FAST & INURED, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Data on the most recent migrant is a computed variable that was not explicitly asked by the survey instrument. It was extracted from the gender of either migrant #1, #2, or #3, depending on which was most recent. If a household only reported data for one migrant, then the gender of migrant #1 was considered; if data were provided on two migrants, migrant #2 was considered, etc.

### The Gendered Nature of Haitian Migration to South America

Between 2010 and 2022, 64% of registered Haitian arrivals to Brazil were male, with significant differences by period. Between 2010 and 2016, for example, the proportion of Haitian male registrations was 70% or above for all years except one, 2015, when 63% of arrivals were male. This coincides with the economic downturn in Brazil. We hypothesize that fewer Haitian men saw Brazil as an optimal destination, while Haitian women continued to migrate for family reunification. After 2016, the male proportion of arrivals remained below 60% for all years except 2022, when 90% of Haitian arrivals were male. See **Figure 5** below for a breakdown of these data.

**FIG 5: Haitian Arrivals to Brazil by Gender and Year of Registration (Registered by the Federal Police and SISMIGRA), 2010 to 2022\***



\*The green bars show the proportion of female arrivals.

The official data of the Brazilian Federal Police and the MIDEQ Destination survey in Brazil reveal the gendered nature of Haitian migration to Brazil since 2010, which is impacted not only by destination country conditions (e.g., labor market demands and perceptions of the gendered division of labor) but also by conceptions of gender in Haiti, where households prioritize migration by gender, with men being viewed as more “fit” to migrate due to their privileged access to education and job opportunities.

Individual-level migrant data shows that, proportionately, women were more than three times more likely than their male counterparts to migrate for family reunification at 11% (31) and 3% (16), respectively. These results are similar to the 2014 national migration study (13% of women versus 5% of men) (OECD & INURED, 2017). It is more likely and accepted that men migrate, and there is an overall reluctance for women to migrate unless accompanied or heading to a trusted host at their destination. When the individual’s own agency is the main factor that determines who will migrate within the household, gender differences were also apparent. More men viewed the decision to migrate as an autonomous one (48%, or 95) compared with 39% (135) for women. Thus, Haitian women’s migration often depends upon—or must be facilitated by—someone else.

Haitian women’s lack of autonomy to migrate is a result of their perceived fragility and dependence upon and

vulnerability to men. As the demographic data and prior studies reveal (Cela et al., 2023; INURED, 2017; 2020a; 2020b; World Bank, 2015; 2022c), Haitian women are less financially autonomous and often dependent upon men. In a prior publication, using both in-depth ethnographic and survey data, we discussed how Haitian society, in many ways, epitomizes a continuum of intersectional inequities that create a path dependency for vulnerability (Cela et al., forthcoming; INURED, 2020a; Marcelin & Cela, 2023). The path dependency also informs layers of hierarchy in Haiti, including gender dynamics. Ethnographic network tracing of Haitians on the move shows how gender-based hierarchies are reproduced along the migration trails and in destination countries (Cela et al., forthcoming). As this study found, and others have highlighted, Haitian women who have migrated to Brazil or Chile are typically assisted by a partner already living in the destination country. In migrant households, men generally migrate first and subsequently facilitate their partners' (and children's) migration as Carine (pseudonym), living in Brazil, explained: *"It was my boyfriend who arranged for me to come to Brazil; he didn't want me to be far from him."*

However, the proportion of long-term, single female migrants increased drastically following the economic downturn in Brazil in 2015. Since 2010, most migrant women registered as residents in Brazil were single, at 65%. The years 2018 (77%) and 2019 (81%) included the greatest proportion of single migrant women (OBMigra, 2020a). The number of Haitian women registered by the Brazilian Federal Police increased every year starting in 2010, except in 2017 and 2020, and reached a maximum of 16,219 in 2019 (ibid). While many Haitian women migrate under the auspices of formal family reunification processes, others are joining an intimate partner informally, as Carine explains above. Depending on the time period, in this case, prior to 2017, Haitian women could simply take a direct flight to Brazil to be united with their partners. After that period, they would have needed to transit through the Dominican Republic, which necessitated a visa, to join their partner. Similarly, up until 2018, a woman could join her partner in Chile with a letter of invitation. Therefore, while these data suggest that Haitian women are increasingly migrating on their own, family reunification remains their dominant goal when migrating to South America. Differences were also noted when examining employment, as 90% (436) of men migrated in search of employment compared to 82% (224) of women, despite our findings showing no difference in education between male and female migrants. Data from the 2014 national survey of migration (OECD & INURED, 2017) paint a similar picture, although with some key differences between migrating males and females regarding labor, as 67% of men versus 48% of women reported seeking employment opportunities as their reason for migration. In the 2014 migration study sample, 59% of participants reported migrating for work, much lower than the MIDEQ sample. This may indicate the higher prevalence of labor migration in the Haiti-Brazil and Haiti-Chile migration corridors. This assertion is based on the fact that while the national migration study sample includes households with migrants in any country, the MIDEQ sample includes only those households with migrants in Brazil or Chile.

While fewer Haitian women than men may consider employment their primary motive for migration, the data reveal that this may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ethnographic data reveal fewer opportunities for women, particularly in Brazil's labor force, although they are expected to seek employment and contribute financially to the household. Study findings corroborate the challenges Haitian women face integrating the labor market in Brazil and Chile. For example, the proportion of women reportedly unemployed or looking for work in the host country is more than twice that of men, at 32% and 14%, respectively. The proportion of current employment for men is also significantly higher than for women: 69% versus 54%. These results show that although women may have similar educational attainment and propensity to migrate for employment as men, their labor outcomes in Brazil and Chile are markedly different, and they experience much higher levels of unemployment and, concurrently, lower levels of paid employment.

The data overwhelmingly reveal that, compared to their male counterparts, Haitian women face more significant challenges in integrating the labor market. Official data from the Brazilian Ministry of the Economy reveal that



Haitian men made a median monthly salary of R\$ 1,491 in 2020, compared to R\$ 1,387 for Haitian women (OBMigra, 2021). Although this difference of approximately 7% may appear relatively low, it is important to consider that Haitian nationals are among the lowest paid laborers in Brazil. Another study supports these findings, indicating that the average wage of Haitians in Brazil was between R\$ 900 and R\$ 1,500, close to the statutory minimum wage, in an environment where the purchasing power of the average consumer has severely decreased since the turn of the century (Virginio et al., 2022). Moreover, the median salary of female Haitian laborers in Brazil only increased by R\$ 276 or 25% between 2011 and 2020 (OBMigra, 2021). As outlined by Portes et al. (2022), this reflects a system of gender oppression that operates within Brazil's deeply racialized class hierarchies. Brazilian scholars, among them Mamed (2017), investigated the migration paths of Haitian women who reside and work in the Southern region of Brazil, particularly within the agribusiness meat industry. She highlighted how the Brazilian labor market is marked by gender and racial inequalities, which leads to the precarious integration of Haitian women. Especially within the meat industry, they experience long hours, low wages, and adverse working conditions (Mamed, 2017).

In Haiti, the high prevalence of informal labor among women was observed in the household survey data. Reported sources of income by male- versus female-headed households differed the most in having a household business—54% of male-headed households compared with 63% of female-headed households and engaging in non-agricultural wage work—38% of male-headed households compared with 25% of female-headed households. The gendered nature of household businesses is consistent with women's exclusion from the formal economy (INURED, 2020a), resulting in their disproportionate participation in the informal economy (i.e., petty commerce), otherwise classified as their own businesses. These gender differences are also apparent in the survey data at destination, where 40% of study participants reported being unemployed and looking for work, and just over half (51%) reported being employed or self-employed (IMJA, forthcoming). However, while 46% of females reported being unemployed or looking for work, a much lower proportion (36%) of males reported the same (*ibid*). As would be expected, significant gender differences were seen in the primary sector of economic activity, with, for example, 18% of men reporting working in civil construction and just four (<1%) women reporting the same (IMJA, forthcoming). Women were more likely to be employed in lodging/accommodation or food services (13% women versus 5% men), wholesale or retail trade (17% women versus 14% men), and domestic work (9% women versus 2% men), while 8% of women reported not knowing their sector of economic activity (versus 3% of men) (*ibid*). These results largely support previous findings about the gendered nature of migration, particularly with respect to labor migration.

## The Challenges of Host Country Integration

### *Integration in Brazil*

Migrant households were most likely to report difficulties at the destination, at 39% (211 of 543), with finding work reported as the main challenge (69%). The proportion of responses to problems with integration (29%), problems securing official papers (27%), and problems finding housing (23%) were all similar. In summary, the financial aspects of the trip dominate the reported difficulties and are present at each stage of the journey. Although migration for employment is a principal factor influencing this corridor, the many households reporting employment-related issues as the main problem facing migrants at their destination shows how the labor market integration of Haitians in Brazil and Chile is a challenge on its own. More male than female heads of household reported difficulties encountered by the migrating individual at the destination, although these differences were not significant at the 0.05 level (but were at the 0.10 level);  $\chi^2 (1, N = 516) = 3.56, p = < 0.06$  respectively.

These findings are bolstered by IMJA's study findings in Brazil. When asked to identify the two most challenging

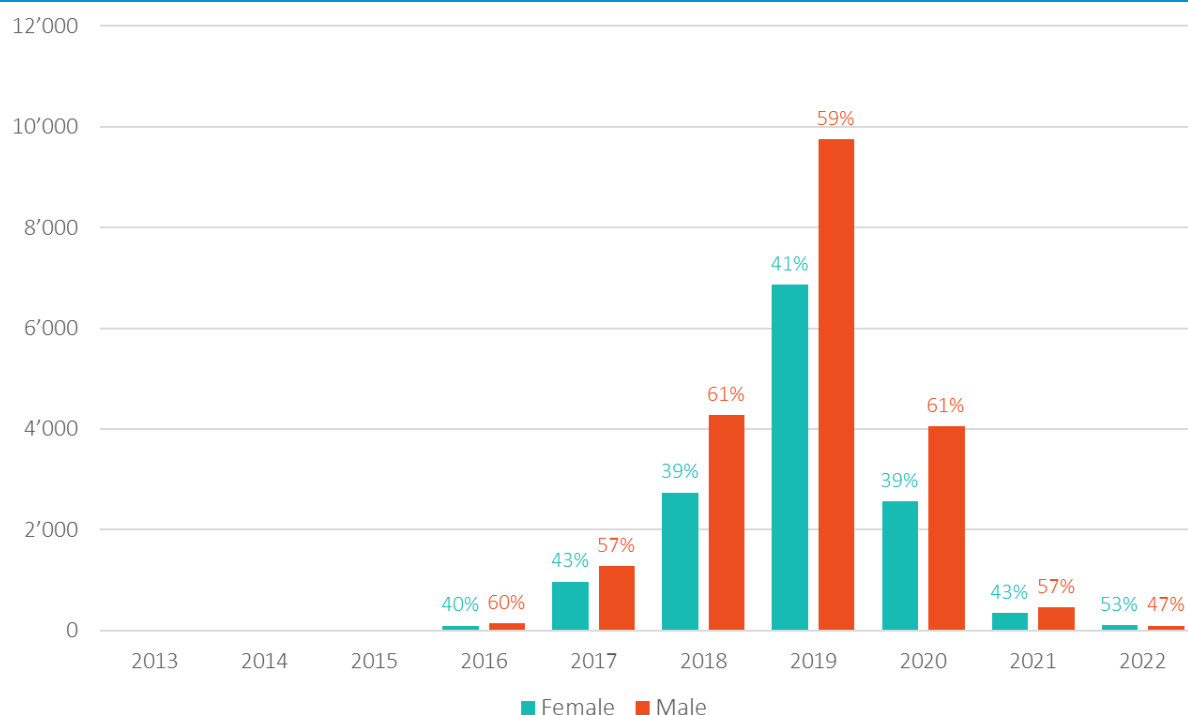
aspects of their experience in Brazil, 53% of participants selected work conditions, more than twice as often as any other response category. The second highest frequency of responses was for *The state bureaucracy* (at 23%), followed by *Not being treated with respect / Feeling discriminated against* (17%).

In Haiti, heads of households' greatest worries were about the employment situation in Brazil or Chile (38% or 209). Just over one-fifth (21% or 114) cited no worries, and 17% (90) cited the migrating individual's irregular status or deportation. Proportions were relatively low regarding health, integration, discrimination, and housing. In Brazil, one in five survey participants reported being unemployed or looking for work at the time of the interview in the general sample, with almost half of women (46%) reporting being in this situation compared to 36% of men (IMJA, forthcoming).

Between 2019 and 2020, Haitian arrivals registered by the Brazilian Federal Police increased by nearly 19%, indicating that COVID-19-related restrictions did not suppress yearly registered arrival figures, although only 35 and 61 Haitians were registered in April and May out of almost 24,000 registrations in 2020 (ibid). Between 2020 and 2021, however, a decrease of 28% in registered arrivals was observed. Although only data up to November 2022 was available at the time of this report, further decreases are expected between 2021 and 2022 (until November 2022, there were 6,646 Haitian arrival registrations).

When examining the gender breakdown of Haitian arrivals, the 3-year moving average of the proportion of female arrivals increases steadily from 19% between 2010 and 2013 to above 40% at every period between 2016 and 2018 (SISMIGRA, 2022). The proportion of women fell in 2016 (the year of the economic crisis in Brazil), to under one-third (30%). This is most likely due to the precarity of socioeconomic conditions in Brazil that year, which disproportionately affected migrating populations, especially women working in the service industry. According to official data, however, Haitians still compose the second-largest nationality (following Venezuelans) registered in the foreign labor force, at around 28% in 2021 (OBMigra, 2022), down from a maximum of 39% in 2020.

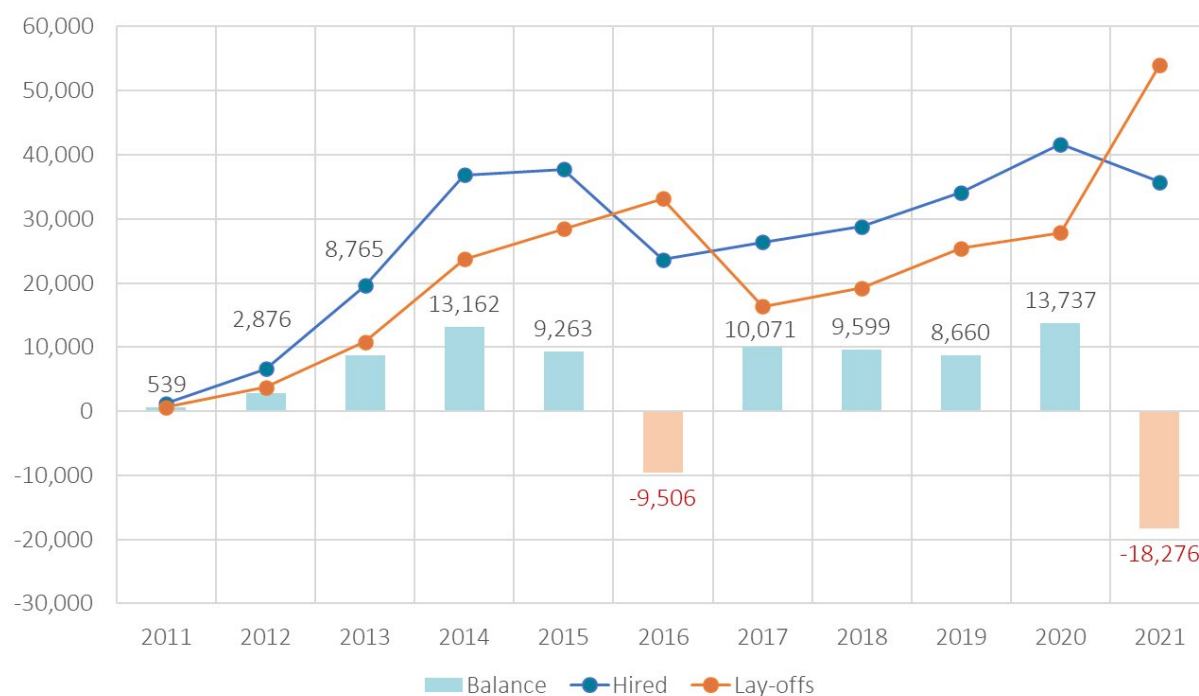
The pattern is similar for children under 15 years of age, with proportions increasing steadily from 0% between 2010 and 2011 to 11% in 2020. Like the proportion of women, the proportion of children under 15 years of age dropped in 2016 but then resumed its upward trajectory (SISMIGRA, 2022). The proportion of Haitians between 15 and 24 years of age exhibited the highest increase since 2010, from under 1% to around 30% in both 2020 and 2021. The proportion of elderly Haitians (65+) registered in the SISMIGRA system remained under 1% during the entire period under study (OBMigra, 2020b).

**FIG 6: Haitian Asylum Claims in Brazil by Gender, 2013 to 2022**

Source: Authors' own calculations of data downloaded from DATAMIGRA, Portal de Imigração Laboral.  
<https://datamigra.mj.gov.br/#/public>

### Haitian Labor Market Integration in Brazil

Beyond low and unpredictable wages, economic inflation and currency fluctuation also intensified the vulnerability of Haitians in Brazil—including Brazilians of Haitian origin—as is apparent by their dependence on “wages below the value necessary for social reproduction” (Virginio et al., 2022). The inflation rate of the Brazilian real reached over 9% in 2015 and remained over 8% in 2016, such that the median rate today has less purchasing power than in 2011 although it has, in gross terms, increased. Household debt in Brazil more than doubled between 2005 and 2016, indicating worsening living conditions for the masses (ibid). Between 2011 and 2020, inflation rates more than tripled, with the Brazilian real decreasing from approximately 1.67 per USD to 5.16 (World Bank, 2022a). The economic downturn in Brazil starting in late 2015 significantly impacted the livelihoods of many Haitians, as seen in the official data published by the Brazilian Ministry of Labor shown in **Figure 7** (INURED, 2020a). In 2016, many more Haitians were laid off (33,173) than hired (23,667) in the formal labor market, resulting in a negative balance of just under 10,000. This phenomenon coincides with the end of the World Cup games in Brazil in 2016, which attracted many Haitians to the country and was the source of many manual labor jobs in construction. In 2019, the informality rate (economic activities outside the state-sanctioned sectors in the formal economy) in the Brazilian labor market reached its highest level since 2016, standing at 41.1%. Consequently, despite decreasing unemployment during that period, workers faced significantly more precarious and less secure conditions (IBGE, 2019). The year 2021 was the only other year exhibiting a negative balance with over 18,000 more Haitians laid off than those who were hired for positions, almost double the rate in 2016.

**FIG 7: Number of Haitians Hired/Laid off and net Balance by Year, 2011 to 2021**

Of the 52,841 Haitians registered in the formal labor market in Brazil in 2019, just 1.5% (819) were classified as “skilled workers,” and just 0.01% (41) were considered “highly skilled” (OBMigra, 2020a). Official labor statistics from the Brazilian Ministry of the Economy show that 9,528 Haitian women were formally hired and 5,429 fired in 2020, a net increase of 4,069 jobs (the highest net increase between 2011 and 2020), compared to 7,708 and 5,298 in 2019 (*ibid*). Thus, 2020 recorded a net increase of 2,410 Haitian women remaining employed over the prior year (*ibid*). These women are mainly engaged in the agro-industrial sector in Brazil, with the two main activities (not including Other) reported in both 2019 and 2020 being laborers in poultry and swine slaughterhouses, with more than half (3,918 or 54%) of the net increase of Haitian women in 2020 attributed to those activities (*ibid*). This is compared to just 19% in 2019, showing how Haitian women’s involvement in this sector is increasing (*ibid*; also Mamed 2017).

The agricultural sector, which includes agro-industrial businesses where many Haitians work, is known to have the second-highest turnover rate in Brazil (Virginio et al., 2022). The civil construction sector, where most Haitians, especially young men, have historically been employed, has an 87% turnover rate (*ibid*). This underlines how dependent the country has become on the exploitation of these critical sectors—without which Brazil’s period of “neo-development” in the 21st century would not have been possible—through the employment of a vulnerable, and therefore flexible, workforce (*ibid*). The increase in the participation of Haitian women in the agro-industrial sectors may have been due to the impact of COVID-19 on the food and beverage (restaurants) and hotel industries, as both these sectors hired far fewer Haitian women in 2020. Migrants working at slaughterhouses during the pandemic faced an elevated risk of contracting Covid-19 (Granada et al., 2021). These slaughterhouses continued their operations throughout the pandemic as they were classified as essential services by the Brazilian government.

An investigation by the Labor Prosecution Office in the State of Santa Catarina unveiled instances of negligence by companies/industries in this sector regarding virus control measures, including a lack of social distancing,

inadequate ventilation, and insufficient provision of proper masks. It is essential to acknowledge that the official statistics do not capture those Haitians involved in the informal economy in Brazil.

Due to the economic downturn that started in 2015, more Haitians were registered leaving than entering Brazil between 2016 and 2018 (INURED, 2020a; Morley, 2021). Conditions for Haitians in South America became more precarious and uncertain as employment opportunities in two of the largest economies dwindled, a global pandemic emerged, and legal status in Chile became increasingly difficult to obtain. The unprecedented inflow of Venezuelan migrants and refugees at the same time led to increased xenophobia, exacerbating the challenges faced by Haitians migrating in the region (INURED, 2020a). As their reality drastically changed, more Haitians decided to *pran wout la*.<sup>8</sup>

### Integration in Chile

According to the latest estimates of the foreign-born population in Chile, 180,272 Haitians resided there in December 2021, composing approximately 12.6% of the immigrant population that year, a decrease from 13.9% in 2018 (DEM, 2023). In Chile's recent National Migration Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Migración), which includes a representative sample of migrants aged 18 or older who arrived in Chile between 2016 and 2020, Haitians represented the second largest migrant population, at just under one-fifth (19%), though Venezuelans far outnumber all other nationalities at 45% (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones, 2022). Haitians in the sampled population had the highest proportion of participants aged 30 to 39 of any nationality, and only 4% of Haitians were above 50 years old (ibid). Haitians were the least likely to have children and, more significantly, of those with children, the least likely to live with their children (48%) (ibid). In 2019, Haitians made up just under one-fifth (18%) of the migrant workforce in Chile (Sehnbruch et al., 2022). More than one-third (36%) of Haitians estimated to be in Chile in 2020 were women, the same yearly proportion since 2018 (ibid). In both 2021 and 2022, the proportion of permanent residencies issued to Haitians was the lowest since 2015, with just 6% and 4%, respectively, reflecting a steady decline in Haitian permanent integration into Chilean society and likely the reason behind their onward migration within and beyond the region (see **Figure 8**).

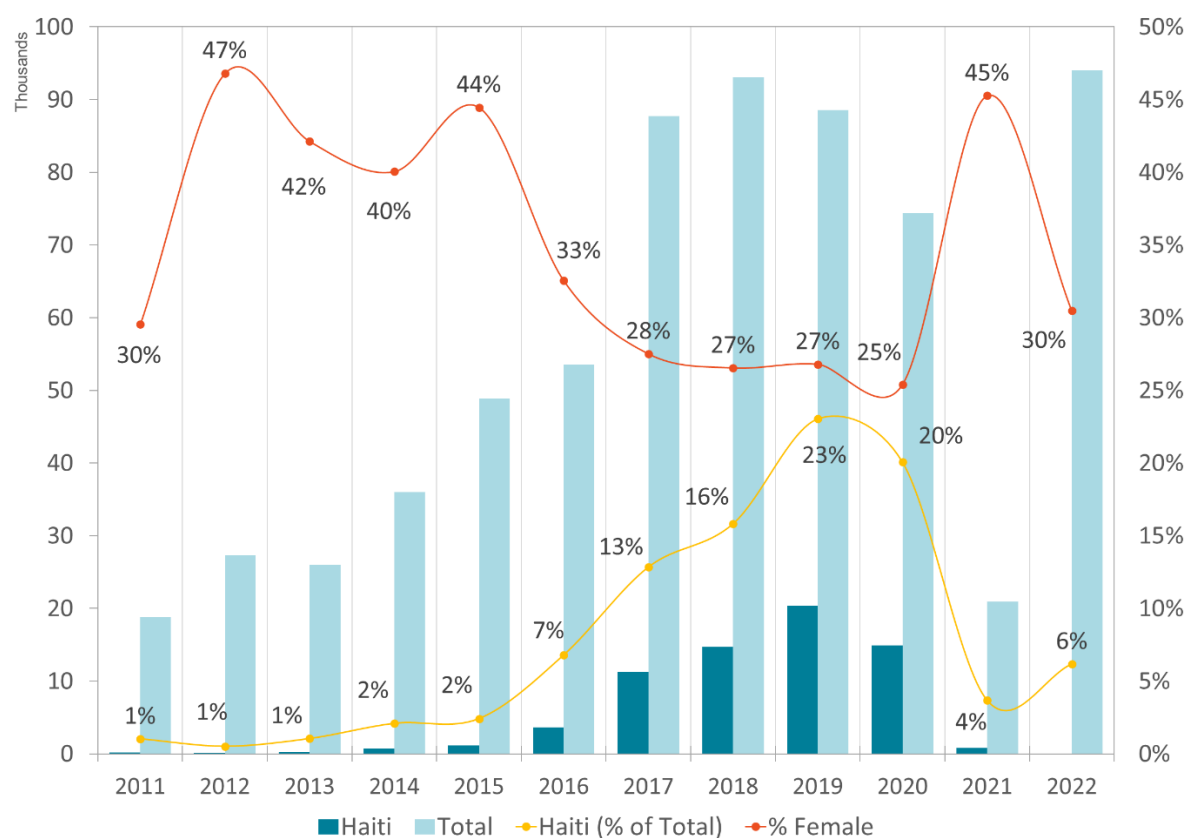
Haitian presence in Chile steadily increased after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, with steeper inclines registered between 2016, which corresponds with Brazil's economic crisis, and 2019. But the migratory landscape in Chile began to shift in 2018, as the conservative Piñera government took power and permanent residencies issued to Haitian migrants declined significantly. Thus, although the population of Haitians in Chile remains significant, the number of Haitians traveling to the country has declined, and many Haitians already in Chile chose to migrate onwards to the US-Mexico border (Morley, 2021). The stagnation in numbers of Haitians migrating to Chile in the last three years is likely caused in part by increasingly restrictive migration policies towards Haitians, including the 2018 requirement changes, from a letter of invitation to a tourist visa that could only be obtained at the embassy in Port-au-Prince, prohibited employment, which offered no possibility for family reunification (ibid).

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<sup>8</sup> This Haitian Creole expression translates to "Get on the road" and in this context is a reference to the decision to migrate over land to the US-Mexico border.



**FIG 8: Permanent Residencies Issued to Haitians, Total Residencies Issued in Chile and Proportion of Residencies Issued to Haitians (of Total Residencies Issued) by Year, 2011 to 2022\***



\*Only data for the first six months of 2021 are available at the time of writing.

Source: INURED's calculation based on Chilean INE-DEM data (INE-DEM, 2021)

The situation for Haitian asylum seekers in Chile is in stark contrast to that of those in Brazil, as Haitians are largely absent from official Chilean refugee statistics. Haitians represented less than 1% of asylum claims on average, with only 75 claims filed between 2010 and the first segment of 2021 (DEM, 2021c). Notably, more than half (59%) of all Haitian asylum claims during this time were filed by women, including 81% of the 2021 claims. (DEM, 2021b). Overall, only 701 people were recognized as refugees in Chile between 2010 and 2021 (SJM, 2022).

Moreover, the Chilean government approved a program of voluntary returns in 2018 that has been largely criticized by the media as a “coerced repatriation,” in which Haitians must sign a document promising not to return to Chile for a minimum of nine years in exchange for the ticket (McDonnell, 2021). The initiative repatriated more than 1,300 Haitians on at least nine “humanitarian flights” (ibid).

### Migration's Impact on Households in Haiti

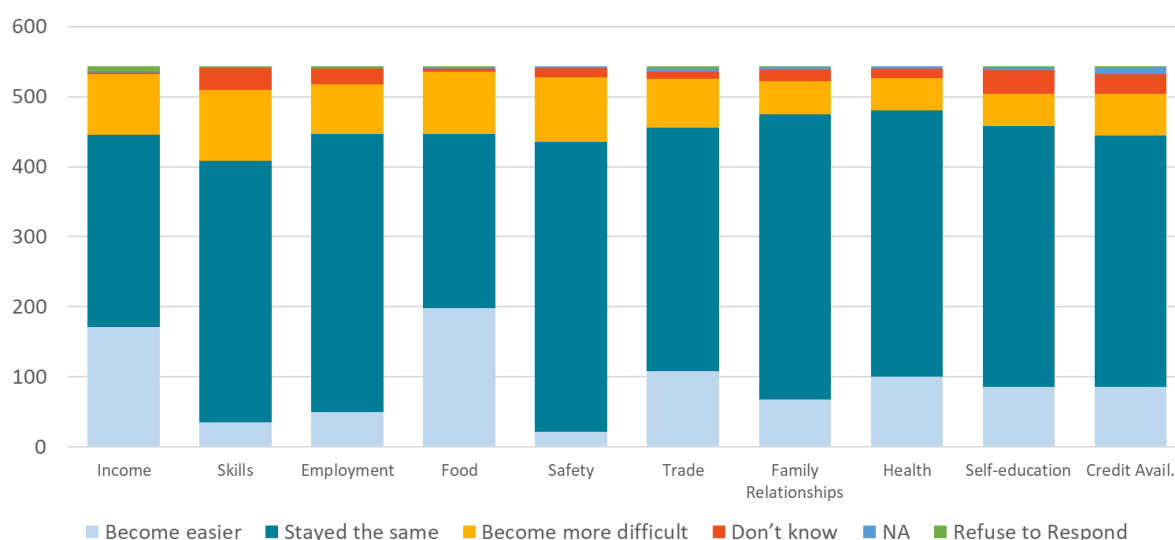
When asked what challenges had arisen for the household due to the migration of the latest household member to Brazil or Chile, more male than female participants reported *No challenges*. In contrast, more female- than male-headed households reported an increase in workload for family members in Haiti due to the migration of a family member, at 11% and 7%, respectively. The latter results suggest that female-headed households may suffer disproportionate impacts of migration resulting from lost labor, although the differences are not great. As migrants tend to be positively selected in Haiti (i.e., they tend to come from the upper end of the income distribution), households may lose key human capital when educated family members migrate (Acosta et al., 2006; OECD & INURED, 2017). Moreover, as men in Haiti are likely to enjoy higher educational attainment and wealth status, income losses may be greater when male members of the household migrate (Cela et al., 2022; Gammage, 2004).

A series of ten indicators were asked about the impact of household members' migration (**Figure 9**). Most migrant households cited that their situation remained the same regardless of the indicator. Over one-third (36%, or 198) of households noted that their situation became easier with relation to food availability, the highest proportion observed for this category across the series of indicators. During interviews and focus groups, some participants explained that in addition to remittances, some migrants send food to their families:

*[Migrant families] receive clothes, food, because some transfer companies, like the person who is abroad pays the money and they deliver food to you.*

*There are all sorts of cases, but you know the majority or the highest percentage help their [family members] get beans in order to live, to eat, for them to get up in the mornings and buy a bag of bread or buy a cup of akasan<sup>9</sup> [...] not everyone has something to eat every day or to make their child's lunchbox. They send the little they can so the people can [survive] because they aren't doing anything in Haiti. Most are unemployed so they send this money so that [their family] can live a few days [longer].*

**FIG 9: Impact of Migration on Households**



<sup>9</sup> Akasan is a maize-based breakfast drink.



People transiting through Costa Rica. Photo © INURED

Income is the second-highest indicator, with 32% of households reporting that their situation related to income became easier. We hypothesize that while migration may serve as a strategy for survival, by and large it is most effective when more family members are able to leave Haiti.

Regarding increased difficulties due to migration, professional skills were the most often cited indicator, at 19% (102). This is followed closely by safety, cited by 17% (93). Food availability and income were also cited often. These results support other findings in this report suggesting that migrant households are likely to suffer losses in terms of human capital that may or may not be compensated for by its members' departure.

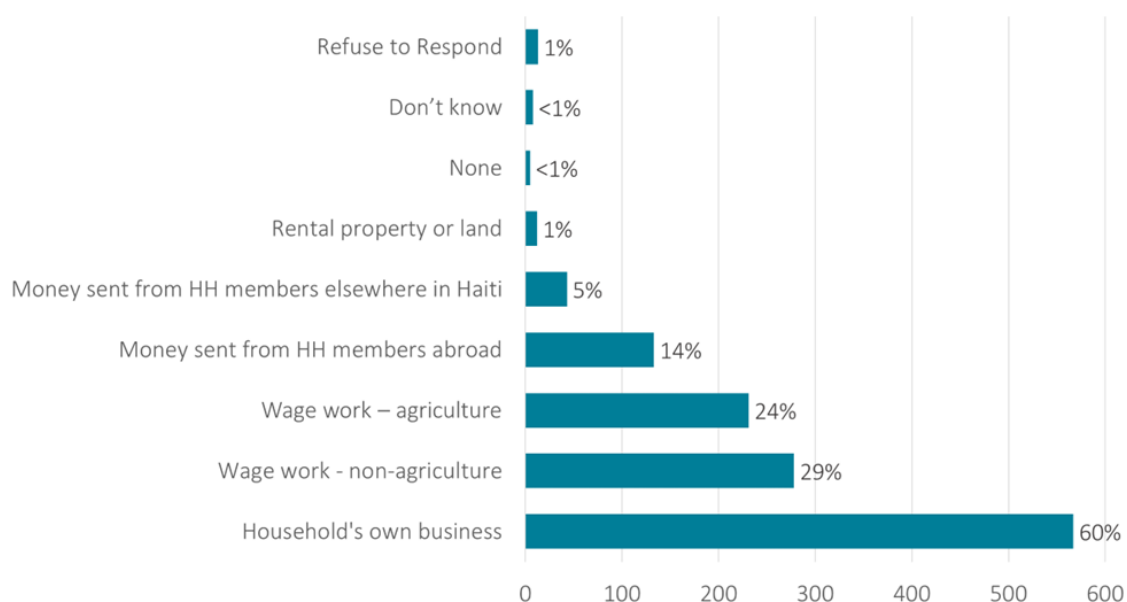
Women and men reported differences in the impacts of migration. Thirty-seven percent of male-headed households reported that earning an income became easier after a member of the household migrated, compared with 28% of female-headed households. The opposite pattern was observed when household heads were asked about migration's impact on family relationships, with 15% of female-headed households reporting that family relations had improved, specifically "become easier," compared with 8% of male-headed households. Regarding safety, 20% of female-headed households indicated that safety had become an issue since the migration of the most recent household member. Male-headed households were less likely to report an increase in safety issues at 13%. Thus, while female-headed migrant households report an improvement in family relationships after migration, they disproportionately suffer negative impacts on the household's income and sense of safety when compared to their male counterparts.

### South-South Migration and Haiti's Changing Remittance Landscape

Almost two-thirds (63%, or 342) of migrant households reported receiving remittances from the migrating household member in Brazil or Chile during the first semester of 2020. Virtually the same proportion of migrants interviewed in Brazil reported sending remittances to Haiti at 62% (IMJA, forthcoming). In Haiti, around 5% (17) of households reported remittance amounts of USD \$300 or greater; 77% (263) reported amounts of USD \$299 or lower. One-third (112) of remittance-receiving households selected the interval of USD \$100 to USD \$299, followed closely by the interval between USD \$50 and USD \$99, at 30% (104) (see **Figure 10**). It is important to note that conditions are strained both in Brazil and especially in Haiti, creating a situation wherein the vulnerability and marginalization of most Haitians in countries of destination (characterized by their “super-exploitation”) is compounded by the expectations of the family in Haiti (Virginio et al., 2022). While on the one hand, these individuals have the obligation to remit and support their families in Haiti, the labor market and broader socioeconomic structures in Brazil, for example, “constrain their reproductive activities to reduce their financial costs in Brazil with collateral effects on their resting time, and physical and psychological health” (ibid, p. 10). So, while Haitians engage in international migration to improve their lives and that of their family members at home, they often find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of remittance sending while unable to lead decent lives themselves.

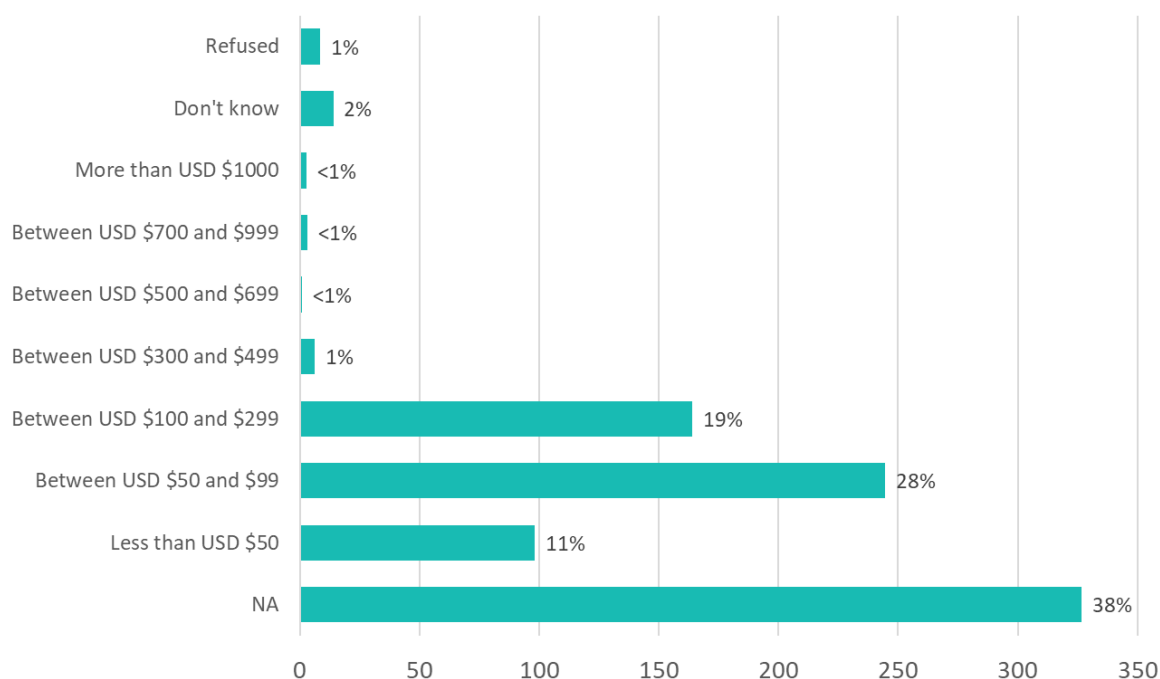
Male-headed migrant households reported receiving higher remittances than female-headed migrant households before the COVID-19 pandemic: 46% of male-headed households reported receiving \$100 USD or more, as compared to 33% of female-headed migrant households. In another survey conducted to assess the multisectoral impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Haitian households, the differences between male and female-headed households were even more pronounced. Of a sample of 109 migrant households, 60% of male-headed households reported receiving more than \$100 USD as compared to 39% of female-headed households while more women than men reported receiving less than \$100 USD (52% and 34%, respectively). The same pattern was observed at destination among the sample of migrants interviewed in Brazil, female migrants reported lower amounts than males: just under one-fourth (23%) of males reported sending \$100 USD or more as compared to 17% of females. This is another response where women were more likely to report *Don't know and Refuse to respond* than men (47% and 36%, respectively).

**FIG 10: Reported Remittance Amounts at Origin (n=342) First Semester 2020**



A greater proportion of migrant households reported receiving remittances in the 2014 national migration study, 75%, versus 63% in the current study (OECD & INURED, 2017). Remittances were reported as an annual average amount in the 2014 sample and thus are not comparable to the present study. That study found around USD \$850<sup>10</sup> sent annually to the 75% of households receiving remittances (ibid). The higher proportion of households receiving remittances in the 2014 study likely reflects the very different migration profiles of households included in the sample. Migrating populations in the 2014 sample, for example, had spent much more time in the destination country than those in the current study, with 30% having spent more than ten years in the destination country (an exclusion criterion for the present study). Eligibility criteria for the 2014 study included households with migrants in any country. Haitian migrants have created significant enclaves in the US, Canada, and France, more established destinations than post-2010 earthquake destinations such as Brazil and Chile. The gender composition of the samples was also different: 46% of the migrating population in the 2014 national study were women versus just 36% in the present sample. In the 2014 study sample, 52% of migrants were in the US; 12% in the Dominican Republic; 9% in Canada; and 9% in France. Only two were living in Chile and none in Brazil.

**FIG 11: Reported Remittance Amounts at Destination (n=541), IMJA – First Semester 2021**



Of the 342 households receiving remittances from Chile or Brazil, just under one-third (107 or 31%) had started a business. A higher proportion of female-headed households (74 or 35%) reported starting a business with remittances than male-headed migrant households (33 or 26%). This could reflect, again, women's exclusion from Haiti's formal labor market and their related propensity to engage in petty commerce and the likely use of remittances to support these informal financial endeavors. Both men and women were most likely to start businesses related to petty commerce (the informal sector). Although Haitian women have higher labor market participation than men,

<sup>10</sup> These estimates, in 2014 dollars, were using publicly available exchange data for the year 2014. A value of .022 USD per HTG was considered.

most are employed in the informal sector (IHSI, 2010). This is partly explained by limited educational opportunities for women in Haiti and, in part, has caused an increase in the migration of Haitian women with limited educational attainment (BIT, 2015). In Brazil, data on labor market participation of Haitian migrants is incomplete, particularly for women, due to the large extent of their participation in the informal job market (Cavalcanti & Tanhati, 2017). It is important to note that informal remittance channels are relatively prevalent in Haiti, especially in rural areas, where 40% of remittances are received via alternative channels such as family and friends (classified as “Other”) (World Bank, 2019). The same study reveals that receipt of remittances through informal channels is preferred second only to Money Transfer Operators (MTOs) (ibid). These findings elucidate the difficulties in obtaining accurate information on remittance transfers based on secondary data sources, such as those provided by MTOs.

The 2014 national migration study asked those planning to migrate about the reasons for this decision. The greatest difference by gender was in the responses to *It is easier to find a job elsewhere*, as 40% of men reported this, as compared to 30% of women (OECD & INURED, 2017). The proportion of male respondents reporting that *Working conditions are better elsewhere* was also higher than for female respondents, at 21% and 14%, respectively. Women (30%) were more likely to report that they *Had friends or family elsewhere* than men (22%). In addition, women were slightly more likely to report intending to *Migrate to study abroad*: 22% of men versus 24% of women.

To examine the impact of migration and remittances on business ownership as a main source of income,<sup>11</sup> we configure two logistic regression specifications, detailed in **Box 1**. We find that neither migration to Brazil/Chile nor migration and remittances were significantly associated with business ownership at the household level in the study sample, confirming the 2014 study.

**BOX 1:**  
**The Impact of Migration**  
**and Remittances on**  
**Business Ownership at**  
**the Household Level**

To further explore the relationship between migration, remittances, and business ownership, two probit models were configured, as follows:

$$Prob(Business) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Remit + \beta_2 Migration + \beta_3 Controls + \varepsilon$$

Where *business* represents business ownership as a household's main source of income and takes on a value of 1 if a household reported their own business as a main source of income and 0 if not. *Remit* represents a remittance dummy variable, taking the value of 1 if the household reported receiving remittance and 0 if not. *Migration* takes on a value of 1 if the household has current migrants in Brazil or Chile and 0 if not. *Controls* represent the household-level controls included in the specification and  $\varepsilon$  represents the error terms, capturing the unobserved factors that impact business ownership.

The household level controls included in the specification included age, household size, and urban/rural. Data on educational attainment was not available at the household level although this is known to be related to business ownership. In the table below, specifications A and B differ in that A just includes *migration* while B includes *remit*.

**Impact of Migration and Remittances on Business Ownership**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>At least one migrant in Brazil or Chile</b>	0.075 (0.14)	-
<b>Receives Remittances</b>	-	0.054 (.078)
<b>N</b>	923	528

Standard errors are given in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

<sup>11</sup> Data was extracted from a multiple-response indicator, where households were asked about the two main sources of income. Household's own business was one response category.



### **Naje Pou Soti [Swim Your Way Out]: The Desire to Migrate**

When asked, 37% (347) of households included members who had plans to migrate within the past year, and 61% (579) did not. These variables were tested for independence of gender, which showed that gender (of the household head) and intentions to migrate were not related,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 926) = 0.84, p = 0.36$ . As may be expected, age and intentions to migrate were related, and the chi-square test of independence provided strong evidence of this in the sample,  $\chi^2 (24, N = 531) = 26.75, p = < 0.001$ .<sup>12</sup> When comparing the expected versus the observed values used for the chi-square test, younger people had more intentions to migrate (and lower frequencies for not intending to migrate), than older people.

In addition, the intention to migrate within the past year was higher in urban (39% or 203) than rural households (34% or 144). The differences were even greater between migrant (42% or 228) and non-migrant households (29% or 119), with the former much more likely to aspire to migrate. The latter results show that a household's propensity to engage in migration in this corridor may increase if someone from the household has already migrated. It is known that social networks play an important role in Haitian migration patterns in the region, as having a household member abroad represents a viable source of information about the process (Joseph, 2017; Costa de Sá, 2015). Nieto (2017) claims that these transnational social networks outweigh structural factors such as favorable migration policies in the decision to migrate.

Survey data suggest that the migration decision is not made autonomously. As one-fourth of households reported that loans from family members, friends, and community members supported the migration journey, these supporters exercise some level of influence over the decision and can discourage migration by simply not funding it. The qualitative data provides some insights into how decisions are made, by whom, for whom, and why. The exchange below with a migrant living in Brazil is illuminating. He is single and migrated to Chile with his older brother. He left Chile to join extended family in Brazil after finding it difficult to secure regular employment, with his older brother eventually joining him in Brazil. During this interview, the younger brother shared their plan to have their siblings in Haiti join them in Brazil. Immediate efforts were underway for a third brother to join them, who would be followed by the fourth brother. There appeared to be an intention to have the sisters join them but no clear plan.

**Interviewee:** *So, only the girls will stay [in Haiti]?*

**Roberson (pseudonym):** *Yes. But as long as the four of us boys are out [of Haiti] we will think about what to do for the girls. Brazil will not be advantageous for the girls that's why we haven't planned that [for them] but in agreement with my mother's family we have other plans that might be possible for the girls. We are following the developments (nap ret swiv) and we're praying.*

**Interviewee:** *Do you think [the girls] should leave Haiti?*

**Roberson:** *Well, in all cases, yes. We are going to make a "chenn solidarite" (chain of solidarity), one reaches the hand toward the other.*

This exchange suggests that the decision to migrate for women is determined by men—in this case their brothers. Men are prioritized as potential migrants, and families invest in their journey. The experiences of migrating males, along with family members abroad who are financially supporting the migratory process, will eventually determine the fate of their sisters in Haiti.

<sup>12</sup> The chi-square testing for this question by age and gender excluded the categories Don't know, Refuse to respond, and N/A.

### Haitian Circulatory Migration: Opportunities and Vulnerabilities in the LAC Region

The intense circulation patterns of Haitians in the LAC region defy classical paradigms of origin and destination countries as Haitians circulate to and through various countries, particularly in South America. As we have begun to illustrate, Brazil has waned significantly as a destination country, as increasing numbers of Haitians have migrated onward to Mexico and/or the US. The same is true for Chile. Yet, Brazil remains important as many Haitians have and continue to settle there. The following discussion of the results from the social network survey focuses on the details of specific migrant trajectories as well as the vulnerabilities migrants experience at different stages of their journey.

In the social network data collected in Brazil and Chile, just over one-third (37% or 67) of respondents were women, and four-fifths (81% or 88 of 109) were men. When examining the proportion of men interviewed by proxy (M2; M3), this proportion decreases by almost half, with 44% (or 26) being men. The sample of migrants was relatively young, with an average and median age of 25. Most (60%) had completed secondary school or had higher levels of educational attainment (including technical/vocational school). A minority (15%) reported completing just some or all primary school.

Social network study participants were asked to provide the current country of residence for each migrant, to which just under three-fifths (56% or 102) cited Brazil, one quarter (46) Chile, and 14% (or 25) Mexico. Eight lived elsewhere, including the Dominican Republic, South Korea, Canada, and Ecuador. Almost half (46% or 84) had left Haiti only once; 29% (or 52) returned and remigrated; and 12% (21) had left Haiti three or more times illustrating the increasingly circulatory nature of Haitian migration. Most (92%, or 166) Haitians reported first migrating in 2010 or after. This proportion is much higher for Brazil (>99%) and for Chile (98%), indicating that the study sample mirrors the observed flows to these countries, which virtually all occurred in the post-earthquake period.

As outlined previously, the survey collected the same indicators for a second destination country, accounting for 68 individuals who migrated at least twice. Brazil remained a top destination, with 27 Haitians—or 40% of those who reported—migrating twice. Brazil was closely followed by Chile at 29% (20) and Mexico at 12% (8). Of the 22 participants who migrated to three destination countries, more than half (59%, or 13) reported the Dominican Republic as the first country, followed by Brazil (23%, or 5) and Chile (9%, or 2). These results illustrate that besides serving as an important destination for seasonal labor, the Dominican Republic is a key transit country for South-South migration from Haiti. This is supported by findings from the 2014 study, which revealed that most return migrants in the study sample were from the Dominican Republic (OECD & INURED, 2017). Haitians migrating to the Dominican Republic are mostly low-skilled laborers who are more vulnerable than other groups migrating from Haiti to other destinations (ibid). As the current study elucidates, many Haitians migrate to the Dominican Republic temporarily for employment or use it as a transit point at which to take commercial flights to other countries in Latin America. One interviewee, a 25-year-old male who had resided in the Dominican Republic for 12 years, then moved to Chile, and eventually Brazil, elaborated on the motivations behind his decision to move from the Dominican Republic to Chile:

*Because the Dominican Republic has been so hateful to Haitians and they didn't want to give me documents and I could work, but without documents. Now, when I'm working, working without documents, I don't have any privileges: insurance, those things. And they tend to pay less too. It's like exploitation. And when, after the earthquake, Chile decided to accept Haitians and so I decided to go there too because they were offering documents and I could work and study, because I always had this intention of doing a doctorate. That's why I went to Chile to be able to study and work.*

We paid particular attention to the trajectory of those who migrated to three destination countries to gain insights into where countries in the LAC region fit within the order of their journeys. Among them, more than half (59%) reported Chile (8) or Brazil (5) as the second destination country, followed by Mexico (14%, or 3). Although Brazil still ranks first as the third destination country of this subgroup, Mexico represents the second-most reported country at 27% (6), followed by the US at 14% (3). Other countries (French Guiana, Ecuador, Chile, and the Dominican Republic) were only reported once. As is apparent in **Table 6**, a non-negligible proportion of migrants reported taking the same routes (as measured by destination country order). **Figure 12** shows some of the main routes used by Haitian migrating in the LAC region between 2010 and 2022. Although the trajectories were identified by country name only in the social network study, there is clear overlap between **Figure 12** and **Table 6**.

**FIG 12: Haitian Migration Circulation in the LAC Region (2010 to 2022)**



In another trajectory spanning an entire decade, a male participant traveled to Brazil in 2011 and was joined by his (female) partner in 2014. In 2016, they left for Mexico together and finally journeyed to the US in 2021. Spanning an even longer time, a female respondent (M1) traveled to the Dominican Republic in 2004 and was only joined by her (male) partner in 2016. In 2017, she migrated to Chile and was joined by her partner the following year. They both migrated to Mexico together in 2021 in hopes of entering the US.

**TAB 6: Unique Trajectories Reported for the Subset of Migrants Reporting Three Countries**

N	Country 1	Country 2	Country 3
3	Dominican Republic	Chile	Brazil
3	Dominican Republic	Chile	Mexico
3	Brazil	Mexico	United States
2	Chile	Brazil	Mexico
1	Dominican Republic	Brazil	Chile
1	Dominican Republic	Peru	Brazil
1	Dominican Republic	Panama	Ecuador
1	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Brazil
1	Dominican Republic	Chile	Dominican Republic
1	Dominican Republic	Brazil	Mexico
1	Dominican Republic	Brazil	French Guiana
1	Brazil	French Guiana	Brazil
1	Brazil	Chile	Brazil
1	Cuba	Venezuela	Brazil
1	Ecuador	French Guiana	Brazil

The Dominican Republic is a key transit country, with just one participant reporting the Dominican Republic as the third destination country. It must be noted, however, that this participant returned to the Dominican Republic after migrating to Chile. The two migrants with trajectories from Chile to Brazil and then to Mexico were brothers who traveled together. That participant mentioned that they did not have a fixed place in mind but wanted to improve their living conditions and were searching for employment opportunities. Family members in the US and France—not in South America—had influenced them to migrate. Both brothers ended up in Mexico, hoping to enter the US.

One couple detailed completely different trajectories, and the woman's travels lagged significantly behind the man's. He left Haiti in 2003 for Chile and migrated onward to Brazil in 2013 and then to French Guiana in 2015. This male participant (M1) specified that he was traveling to obtain employment. His female partner migrated to Brazil in 2014 (family reunification) and consequently migrated onward to French Guiana in 2015 together with her partner for employment purposes. Her third destination was listed as Brazil, where she returned in 2016. Again, family reunification was listed as the main driver. We suspect that the fourth destination country of the male participant would have been Brazil, as his partner listed family reunification as the main reason for migrating to Brazil on her last journey, but the survey only collected information for three destination countries.

### Difficulties at Origin, in Transit, and at Destination

For every country of destination specified, migrants were asked about difficulties encountered at origin, during transit, and at destination. The same set of indicators was asked in both the MIDEQ and the social network study. Just over one-third (35%, or 63) of study participants reported encountering difficulties before migrating, including problems obtaining travel documents (83%, or 52), not having enough money for the journey (10%, or 5), or being victims of corruption at the airport (5%, or 3).

The MIDEQ origin survey yielded the same ranking order, although the proportion of difficulties prior to migrating was much lower, at 14%. The remaining two response categories yielded the same proportions as the social network study. Destination countries two and three yielded similar proportions of migrants who encountered difficulties at 32% (22 and 7, respectively). The distribution of responses for destination country number two yielded the same order in terms of ranking, although the sample was much smaller at 22. Seven participants reported difficulties before traveling to country three: five did not have enough money to migrate and two reported problems obtaining documentation for travel.

Fewer participants (14%) experienced difficulties during transit to destination country one. The difficulties reported were as follows: five (21%) reported not having enough money for the trip; four (17% each) reported intermediary abandonment, paying an official, or being a victim of theft. The proportion of respondents reporting difficulties during transit to countries two and three was much higher, at 43% and 41%, respectively.

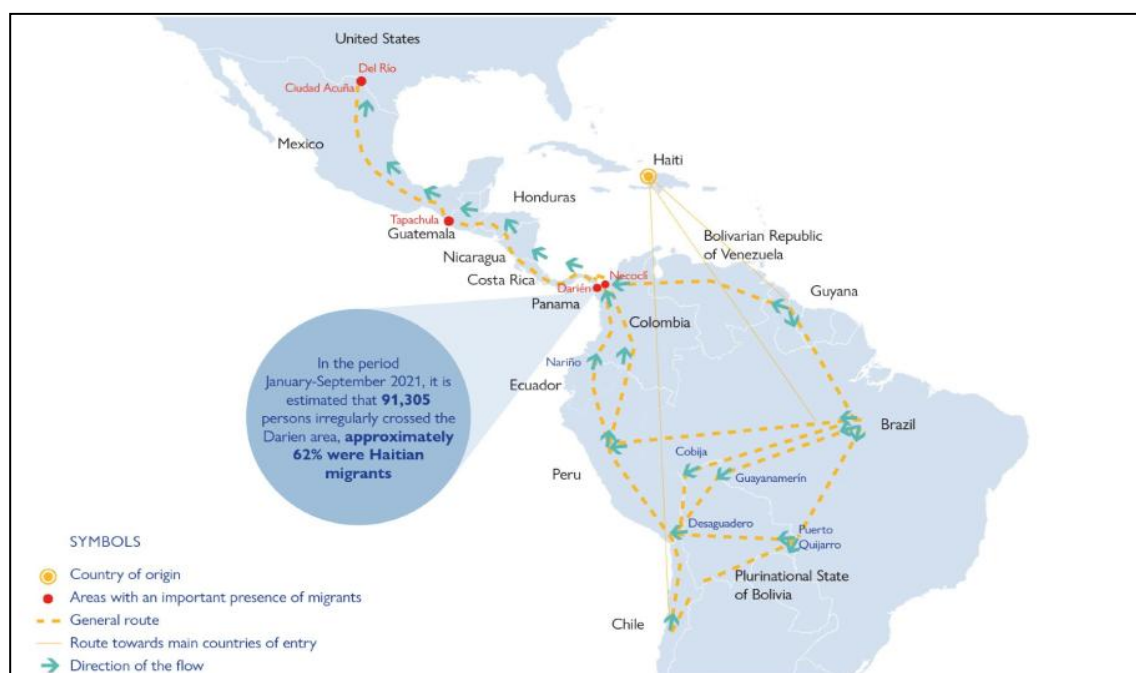
Almost three-quarters (73%, or 131) of migrants reported difficulties encountered at destination country one, where 40% of participants faced difficulties finding work. See **Table 7** for the breakdown of the details of these difficulties.

**TAB 7: Difficulties Once at Destination for Destination Country One**

	Frequency	%
Problems finding employment	53	40%
Language, food, climate	38	29%
Problems obtaining legal documentation	13	10%
Discrimination	8	6%
Problems finding housing	6	5%
Health problems	2	2%
Other	13	10%

There are many dangerous trails that Haitian migrants traverse in the context of this intense South-South circulation. One such passage is the Darién Gap, a very dense and rugged jungle separating Colombia and Panama. This border zone between Colombia and Panama is one of the most dangerous migration trails in the world—and a major passage used by many Haitians migrating onward from South America to the US-Mexico border (INURED, 2020a). See **Figure 13** for a map depicting flow of Haitian migrants throughout the Americas, including a snapshot of data from the Servicio Nacional de Migración de Panamá about Haitian crossings of the Darién Gap. According to more recent data, in 2022 the proportion of Haitians registered crossing the Darién region decreased significantly, most likely due to increasingly restrictive migration policies for Haitians in the region, including a 2020 Panamanian decree requiring Haitian nationals to hold a visa before traveling through Panama, and the increase in Venezuelans migrating towards the United States' southern border (Martínez, 2023).

**FIG 13: Circulation of Haitians On the Move in the Americas, 2010 to 2021**



*This map is for illustration purposes only. The names and borders indicated herein, as well as the descriptions, do not entail official recognition or acceptance on behalf of the International Organization for Migration. Source: Servicio Nacional de Migración de Panamá. Irregulares en tránsito frontera Panamá-Colombia, n.d. (7 Oct 2021)*

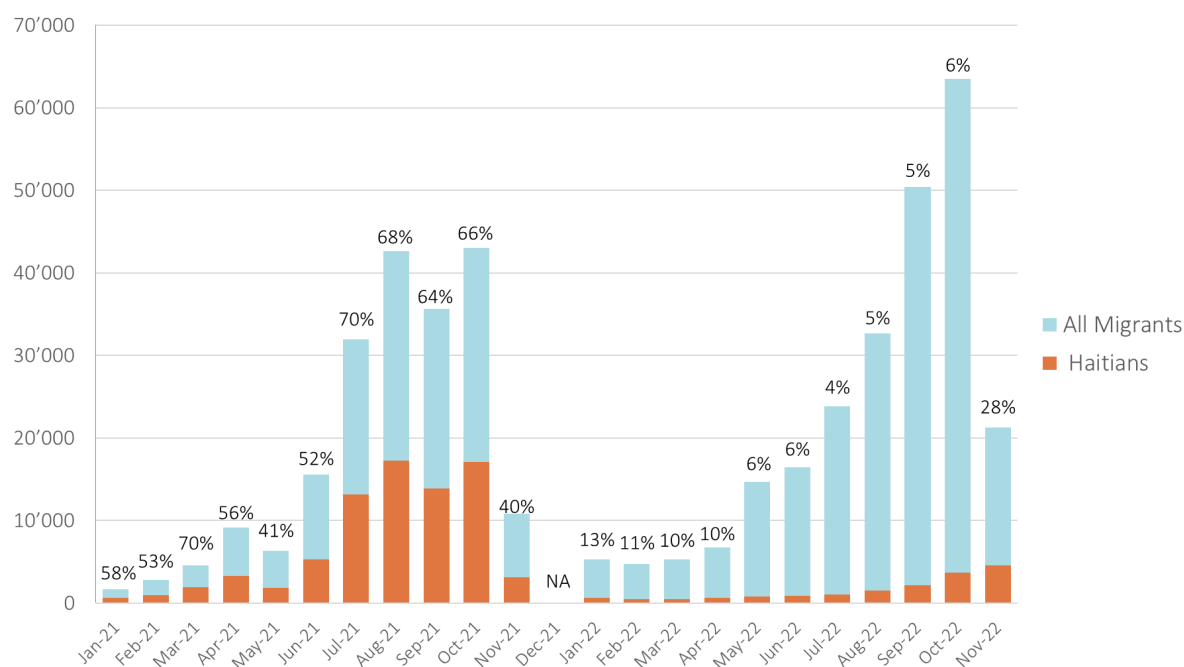
Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM)



From January 2019 to January 2023, just over 126,000 Haitians were detected transiting through the treacherous Gap (SNM-P, 2023). In July 2021, the number of Haitians migrating along this trail began to increase dramatically (**Figure 14**). In 2021, 58% of all migrants recorded there were of Haitian origin, spiking to 68% (17,279) in August 2021 (ibid).

In 2022, the percentage of migrants traveling through the Gap who were of Haitian nationality fell significantly to 11% and began increasing to 28% in November 2022 and 41% in January 2023. The numbers of Chilean and Brazilian nationals detected crossing the Darién increased dramatically in 2022. We speculate that some of these persons may be of Haitian origin (possibly children), reflecting the number of Haitians who have completed the naturalization process in these countries in South America. We also suspect that Venezuelans figure prominently among this population of naturalized Chileans detected although it is impossible to determine this with the publicly available Panamanian data. On April 11, 2023, the US, Panama, and Colombia announced a two-month campaign to tackle irregular migration in the Darién region, aimed at combatting the increasing numbers of migrating populations attempting to reach the United States (Martínez, 2023). In the first three months of 2023, approximately 90,000 migrants traversed this border region (ibid).

**FIG 14: Haitians and All Migrating Populations Recorded in the Darién Gap, January 2021 to January 2023**<sup>13</sup>



Source: Authors' own calculations of data from the Panamanian Servicio Nacional de Migración (Retrieved 12 April 2023)

<sup>13</sup> The proportions in the figure indicate the percentage of Haitians versus all migrants recorded in a specific month.

**TAB 8: Returns by Repatriating Country, 2021 to February 2023**

	<b>2021</b>	<b>Jan – Nov 2022*</b>	<b>Jan – Feb 2023**</b>
United States	14 934 (76%)	14 893 (68%)	926 (4%)
Cuba	1 362 (7%)	2 913 (11%)	568 (3%)
Bahamas	1 997 (10%)	2 410 (11%)	654 (2%)
Turks & Caicos	750 (4%)	1 725 (8%)	518 (2%)
Mexico***	546 (3%)	NA***	NA***
Others	40 (<1%)	46 (<1%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 629</b>	<b>21 987</b>	<b>24 057</b>

\*Figures for December 2022 were not available on the IOM Haiti website at the time of writing.

\*\*IOM was tracking repatriations by air and sea only until 2023, when land repatriations were included.

\*\*\*Mexico was excluded starting in 2022.

Source: IOM, Migrant Returns and Reception Assistance in Haiti / Air & Sea reports.

In early 2023, pushbacks to Mexico and forced repatriations seemed to have no end in sight. The Biden administration announced new measures to reduce irregular migration at the US-Mexico border through an expanded parolee initiative (Cela, 2023; White House, 2023). Up to 30,000 people monthly from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Cuba would be eligible for this new parole process (ibid). However, undocumented individuals who crossed the borders of Panama, Mexico, or the US after the announcement was made on January 5, 2023 are ineligible for the program (ibid).



Haitians entering Nicaragua. Photo © INURED

## DISCUSSION

The steady and increasing exodus of Haiti's youth since 2010 has been caused by the layers of socioeconomic, political, and environmental crises that have plagued the island nation for centuries and were exacerbated by the 2010 earthquake (Torrado, 2021; INURED, 2017; 2020a). The humanitarian intervention following the 2010 earthquake brought with its UN peacekeepers a cholera epidemic (Marcelin & Cela, 2021), that was officially eliminated after claiming approximately 9,800 lives only to reemerge again in 2022 (ASFC, 2024; Marcelin & Cela, 2022; Rubin et al., 2022). Stalled and contested elections would lead to a sociopolitical crisis that included nationwide protests (Peyi Lòk) against the sitting government that shuttered many institutions for several months. Within two months of emerging from Peyi Lòk protests, the country was locked down once again, this time by the COVID-19 pandemic from March to June 2020 (INURED, 2020b). During COVID-19, Haiti's already stagnating economy was pushed to the brink as food and basic commodities became unaffordable for most (Joos, 2018; Marcelin & Cela, 2021). In the period following the pandemic, Haiti faced a parliamentary crisis, with no legislature and a president ruling by decree (Economist, 2020) only to be followed by a constitutional crisis in which the end of the sitting president's term was in dispute (Dupain & Hu, 2021). President Moise would remain in office, his authority challenged by opposition and civilian groups alike (Isaac et al., 2021) until he was assassinated at his residence in July 2021. The assassination would further exacerbate crises in Haiti as his successor's legitimacy was challenged (King & Kahn, 2021). Haiti would experience another major earthquake claiming 1,400 lives and injuring approximately 7,000 just one month following the assassination (Cabas et al., 2023; OCHA, 2023). Multiple crises and a leadership vacuum resulted in rampant gang violence across Haiti's cities leading to the collapse of public security and rule of law and systemic abuse (BINUH, 2024; ICRC, 2023; UNSC-Panel of Experts, 2024).

### Path Dependency and Vulnerability

These political, economic, and environmental crises foreground the broad impoverishment, unemployment, underemployment, and social and gender inequalities the average Haitian faces (INURED, 2017). Haiti's human development, Gini, and transparency indices rank it among the lowest in the LAC region and the world (INURED 2017; 2020a; World Bank, 2015; 2022). Community and intimate partner violence remain key features of this post-plantation society (Cela, 2017; Cela et al., 2023; Marcelin, 2015; Marcelin & Cela, 2019; Reza et al., 2014). Access to justice is an exception reserved for the privileged few (INURED, 2017; Marcelin & Cela, 2019). This combination of factors has compelled many Haitian households to turn to migration as a survival strategy (Cela et al., 2022; INURED, 2020b). Unprotected at home, Haitians on migrant trails in the Americas find themselves unprotected abroad, particularly the undocumented (Marcelin & Cela, 2023).

Migrating within the LAC region, Haitians face a situation of generalized vulnerability that starts in Haiti and follows them as they circulate within the region. Noting the rise in migration from Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, decision-makers in the region have deemed Haitians environmental or economic migrants due to challenging post-earthquake living conditions in Haiti, as those with means migrated to countries in the Global North while new opportunities for migration emerged in the Global South, primarily for Haiti's poor and working classes. Brazil's need for low-skilled workers and favorable policy context made out-migration possible for some of Haiti's vulnerable populations as well as the urban and rural poor. This new migration frontier also provided some relief to Haiti's educated yet unemployed and underemployed youth (and adults), allowing them to search for a place to make a living and possibly support their families back home. However, Haitian migration in the region must be understood as a continuing search, as this migrating population faces xenophobia and discrimination abroad as they seek better opportunities outside their homeland.

This view of Haitians as economic migrants obscures their historic experiences of marginalization and violence at home. The absence of a social contract that guarantees the right to live for ordinary citizens, the capture of the Haitian state by the country's predatory elite, and the failure of politics and governance, combined with the most severe consequences of climate change and cascading disasters make migration the prevailing option for many families and for Haitian youth.

Within the region, concerted efforts have been made to discourage Haitian migration and limit Haitians' integration at destination. The Dominican Republic judgment 168/13 rendered an estimated 200,000 Haitian residents of that country stateless (INURED, 2017). Since 2019, many countries in the region have returned tens of thousands of persons of Haitian descent to Haiti, not only from the Dominican Republic and the US, but also from the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Chile, and Mexico (IOM, 2023). Since 2018, increasingly restrictive migration policies and visa requirements for Haitians from states such as Chile and Panama have also contributed to their vulnerability while negatively impacting protection outcomes. These policies have curbed official migration while encouraging irregular migration, rerouting Haitians through the region, and, in other cases, changing their migration destinations.

In March 2023, Brazil became the first nation in the region to draft a policy explicitly acknowledging the deteriorating security situation in Haiti as a main driver of migration to Brazil. Brazil extended its commitment to protecting Haitian migrants and their families by extending the humanitarian visa until 2024 and expediting family reunification (Globo, 2023). While the impact of this new policy remains to be seen, this suggests that the Lula government will take a more favorable approach to Haitian migration than that of his predecessor.

Perhaps one of the most apparent forms of vulnerability of Haitian migrants in the region is the consistent increase in repatriations to Haiti despite the deteriorating conditions in the country. Although not explicitly explored in the current study, there has been a recent uptick in repatriations, including deportations and illegal pushbacks from the Dominican Republic to Haiti (Isacson, 2022). In 2023, more than 250,000 Haitians were deported, including individuals and families in need of international protection. As of March 2024, the government of the Dominican Republic had deported more than 23,900 Haitian people (Associated Press, 2024). We suspect that the population impacted the most by these deportations are undocumented, seasonal laborers who transit across the multiple porous land borders between the two countries.

Deportation by the US government has also been documented by many international organizations and United Nations Agencies (IOM, 2023; UNDOC, 2023; UNHCR, 2023). The Human Rights Watch (2023) reports that 59,000 Haitians were deported from the US between February and October 2022. The same organization deplored the "shameful hypocrisy" of the US government in "forcibly returning Haitians," citing the systemic risks for violence and abuse faced by Haitian deportees. In November 2022, the Office de la Protection du Citoyen (OPC) called for the Haitian government to protect the human rights of undocumented Haitians abroad through sustained advocacy and diplomatic engagement of host country governments (OPC, 2022). With no elected officials remaining in office, this call has seemingly fallen upon deaf ears.

### **The Impact of Policy Changes on Haitian Migration in the Americas**

Over the past decade, Brazil has become home to the fourth largest Haitian diaspora population, whereas before the 2010 earthquake, the Haitian population in Brazil was virtually non-existent. While some have praised Brazilian policymakers for opening their doors to Haitians and finding a pragmatic legal mechanism to do so, others have suggested that the system is designed to draw Haitians in and capitalize on their vulnerability (Virginio et al., 2022), but even without such intent, the reception of Haitians has been "arbitrary and unplanned" (United Nations University, 2023).

Brazil has exhibited both a pragmatic and reactive approach to the protection of Haitians that has enabled

their mass migration to the South American country. Originally considered environmental refugees (not fleeing persecution) by the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) of Brazil's Ministry of Justice, Haitians would not be afforded the protections stipulated in the Refugee Convention of 1951. Although the initiatives were partially economically motivated, RN-97 and -102 led to a large wave of Haitian migration. Brazil has struggled to overcome the tension between recognizing migration as a human right and security-oriented measures (Feldman-Bianco, 2018). While Brazil has provisioned the issuance of visas at Brazilian embassies other than Port-au-Prince since 2013, it has been noted that many Haitians continued their journey by land from Quito, Ecuador, arriving in Brazil with irregular status in the face of significant bureaucratic backlogs (Cárdenas, 2014). Haitians must rely on the goodwill of the Brazilian state to revalidate these special visas, which the current (or future) government may decide not to renew, leaving them with little to no legal recourse.

Similarly, Haitians, both in Haiti and Brazil, would head to Chile in the years following the 2010 earthquake due to Chile's favorable visa regime. Between 2016 and 2020, one in five newly arrived migrants in Chile were of Haitian origin (SNM-C, 2022), making the country host to the third-largest Haitian population in the world. Unlike Brazil, Chile had never been home to a large Black population. With the election of a conservative government, more restrictive policies were enacted aimed at discouraging Haitian migration by making it harder to enter the country and obtain residency status. Through a series of executive orders and the passage of a new migration law in 2021, Chile would make it increasingly difficult for Haitians to immigrate. Moreover, in response to pressure from the Chilean state, direct flights from Port-au-Prince would be discontinued in 2018 (Haiti Libre, 2018). The message was clear: Haitians were not welcome in Chile. This great shift in the migration policy landscape would lead many Haitians to migrate onward, some to Brazil and others northward toward the US-Mexico border.

Panama has, and continues to, play an important role as a transit country. The infamous Darién Gap is difficult due to both rough terrain (Martínez, 2023) and the Colombian drug cartels, who have found a lucrative enterprise in serving as guides for those seeking safe passage (Wolf, 2023). While the US, Colombia, and Panama are currently undertaking efforts to reduce Gap crossings, many, including Haitians, still attempt to do so, some from as far away as China and India (ibid).

### **Brokering Migration: The Role of Intermediaries in Haitian Migration**

Social networks play a key role in Haitian society for the privileged as well as the most vulnerable. These networks can provide access (educational institutions, employment, investors, etc.), expedite services, or simply ensure that the service is rendered. Thus, using intermediaries in all facets of life in Haiti is the norm, and migration is no exception. Intermediaries play a key role in the decision to migrate, the choice of destination, and the planning and execution of journeys to and within Latin America. An intermediary may be a family member or friend, a (former) colleague or classmate, or a contact provided by one of these entities (Montinard, 2019). Therefore, the term intermediary is employed here with no moral judgment. The quality or rendering of services—or failure to do so—is where moral judgment comes in, as some intermediaries, even those who prey on the vulnerable, are vital to successful migration.

As illustrated in this study, many Haitians travel through the region with undocumented status, at times taking advantage of favorable policy contexts. This study shows that the migrant trail toward South and North America can be rife with unforeseen events. Haitians who apply for a humanitarian visa at the Brazilian embassy in Ecuador may leave the country to continue their journey overland to Brazil when faced with untenable wait times (Cárdenas, 2015). In many regards, such unforeseen circumstances make intermediaries indispensable as they help make migration aspirations a reality, sometimes at a significant cost to migrating individuals and their families. As the social network study elucidates, study participants reported using an intermediary in more than half of the trajectories captured,

with the proportion of intermediary usage increasing in the second and third destination countries. However, the role of the intermediary may change significantly as their journey progresses. As realities on the ground change, Haitians on the move may strategically decide that documented migration is not the best (or most timely) option, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will need to secure the services of an intermediary for their trip.

### **The Gendered Nature of Migration**

Consistent with prior studies, the MIDEQ-Haiti results show that, for the most part, Haitian women migrate as part of family reunification. They often rely on their partners at destination to plan and organize their trips, significantly reducing their reliance upon intermediaries. Haitian women's documented status, in many ways, serves as a protective factor in Brazil; however, in Chile, where Haitian migration was often undertaken under the guise of a tourist visa, Haitian women face instability. In both contexts, women's migration is sanctioned and facilitated by a male counterpart. Women are discouraged from migrating on their own, especially if there is no existing support awaiting them at destination.

### **Migrant Aspirations and Migrant Realities**

As migration is a survival strategy many Haitian households employ, their principal preoccupation is the migrating individual's integration into the labor market at destination. The successful migration of one family member, it is hoped, will lead to the successful migration of other family members. While preparations are made to help other family members migrate, the household receives support to help them meet their basic needs, and, in more fortunate cases, other investments are made, from education to the purchase of land and the construction of homes. Although Haitians have had success in labor market integration in Brazil, many distinct challenges arise, including difficulty in securing employment, poor working conditions, and vulnerability to dismissal, given the instability of the labor market. For example, the construction sector, where most Haitian men are employed, has a turnover rate of 87% in Brazil, and the agro-industrial sector, with the second-highest turnover rate, is where most Haitian women are employed (Virginio et al., 2022). Although our data has indicated that Haitians are more educated than the average Haitian non-migrant, less than 2% of Haitians living in Brazil were classified as skilled workers, and just 0.01% were classified as highly skilled, according to official government data in Brazil (OBMigra, 2020). Therefore, their education and skills have not been transferable in Brazil. The results of the primary data from the study also indicate the unique challenges women face in labor market integration. The proportion of unemployment among Haitian women is more than twice that of men. These results shed light on the relatively poor labor outcomes of Haitian men, and especially women, in Brazil.

Although since 2017, Haitians have ranked among the top three migrant populations in the Chilean workforce (Sehnbruch et al., 2022), studies of Haitian labor market integration in Chile remain sparse. Further, most research conducted on migrant labor market integration in Chile more broadly has been based on case studies, with few exceptions (Carrasco, 2020; Sehnbruch et al., 2022). Carrasco (2020) finds that Haitians, Bolivians, and Peruvians have lower chances of accessing higher-skilled positions than other immigrant and native workers. However, they sometimes can reach skilled manual labor occupations and exhibit relatively high levels of self-employment (ibid). It is important to highlight that Carrasco's (2020) analysis excludes any data after 2017, and we speculate that the situation has largely deteriorated since then, with the new visa requirements for Haitians adopted in 2018. Chile's National Migration Survey, representative of the migrant population (aged 18 or higher), shows that Haitians have by far the lowest educational attainment of any migrant population in the country, which is likely to contribute to their vulnerable status (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones, 2022). Perhaps even more indicative of the problem of Haitian labor market integration in Chile is that only 21% of Haitians in Chile are working in a field related to their



education, the lowest of any migrant population by far (ibid). According to a study using nationally representative survey data from Chile, migrant workers with higher education are generally much more likely than Chileans with the same educational attainment levels to be deprived of high-quality employment (Sehnbruch et al., 2022).

Ugarte (2022) elucidates how Haitian women in Chile are economically marginalized and exploited due to their migration status and racial hierarchies interpreted through “white mestizo privilege.” They are often subject to volatile employment contracts and informal employment arrangements. In another qualitative study of Colombian women of African descent in Chile, Segovia and Ravanal (2021) found that experiences of xenophobia, labor exploitation, and discrimination were common in the workplace. In an econometric study using Chilean Household Survey data from 2013, 2015, and 2017, Carrasco (2020) found that levels of unemployment for migrant populations are lower than those of Chileans except for Haitians, who exhibit higher levels of unemployment than native-born Chileans and, like Bolivians, are more likely to work in the informal sector than native Chileans.

These findings illustrate the vulnerable status of Haitians in the Chilean labor market, relative to other migrant populations and native Chileans. Some of these studies (Ugarte, 2022; Segovia & Ravanal, 2021) posit that the self-perception of Chileans as a modern, white, and “European-like” nation influences their reception of Afro-descendant migrants, including Haitians. This is likely an important factor in the widely criticized repatriations of Haitians from Chile in 2018, in which they were obligated to agree not to return to Chile for 9 years (INURED, 2020a; Laing & Ramos Miranda, 2018).

The reality for Haitians on the move in the LAC region is that the sacrifices they (and their families) make to escape political, economic and environmental crises at home come at a significant cost as they must contend with vulnerability and marginalization in new, foreign lands. Despite these challenges and the associated risks, migration offers the best possibility for a hopeful future in a world filled with uncertainty.



Haitians in Necoclí, Colombia, waiting for boats to cross the Gulf of Urabá. Photo © INURED

## CONCLUSION

While migration is a potentially beneficial strategy at the individual or family level, it does not address the fundamental inequalities in Haiti that have given rise to this phenomenon, nor has it yielded substantial development of any kind for Haiti (OECD & INURED, 2017). Haitian migration is a high-risk, high-reward endeavor. It is a (relatively) costly investment with risks to physical health and potential exposure to predation, labor market exploitation, and discrimination. Successful migration may result in better employment opportunities, increased access to higher and specialized education, the ability to support one's family, and increased social mobility in Haiti. The minimal gains enjoyed at the household level suggest that migration is due more to the level of social exclusion and vulnerability Haitians face at home than to expected rewards at their destination. For many families, the success of one household pioneer is expected to make possible the migratory aspirations of other family members. As more family members migrate, the burden of supporting households in Haiti is reduced. Migration is thus a strategy that helps communities across Haiti survive, particularly during the country's numerous crises. For many, the risks and challenges encountered abroad pale in comparison to a lifetime characterized by the vulnerability, violence, and unending crises they would face in Haiti. The reward may simply be the ability to work, feed one's family, and return home each night. Perhaps our inability to appreciate the security of the mundane makes us indifferent to the desperation of those who sacrifice all they own to spend months trekking over land and through a jungle in search of a place to merely exist.

The phenomenon of emigration has existed for a long time in Haiti due to historic and recent sociopolitical, economic, and environmental crises that have given rise to various waves of migration. Recognizing out-migration as a fact of life that will not change in the near future, the challenge for Haiti is to leverage migration as part of national rebuilding and development efforts. With South-South migration increasing in prominence in the Haitian migratory landscape, more knowledge is required to understand the implications of this relatively new pattern of migration, its potential contributions to host societies and Haiti as well as the opportunities it presents to reduce inequalities and build new solidarities within the region.

It can be argued that migration is the most important crisis confronting Haiti today. When the most educated and ambitious youth leave the country, they take with them the critical human resources needed to achieve social progress. Although migration cannot and should not be curtailed in the immediate future, effective policy options must leverage migration to contribute to the development of Haiti itself. An effective policy 1) protects the rights and access to justice for Haitians living outside of the homeland, 2) incentivizes the engagement and return of leaders, professionals, and technicians of Haitian descent, 3) develops a favourable climate for investment, 4) channels the economic resources offered by those living abroad to develop and improve social programs and services and 5) meaningfully engages those living abroad in homeland politics. Haitians on the move must be viewed as a resource to contribute to homeland reconstruction and development. Until that time, migration will occur at the expense of Haiti's own development.

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