

Profile of Illegal Border Crossers

The following description of “would-be illegal border crossers” was developed from research conducted by San Diego Dialogue in the San Ysidro Port of Entry (SYPOE), along the fence (FENCE) and in the Casa del migrante (CASA) in Tijuana. Supplemental information is included from the Cañon Zapata Survey (COLEF) conducted by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. The demographic characteristics of would-be illegal border crossers can vary depending on the place chosen for the attempted crossing.

Sex

In the port of entry, women are a major share of would-be illegal crossers and greater than their share elsewhere. Historically, men have been a greater share of the crossers. To the extent that illegal crossers use the fence more than the port of entry, men are still a greater share of all would-be illegal crossers. (The fence population appears to be about 5 times as great as the population in the port based on 1994 monthly data for the apprehensions by the Border Patrol.)

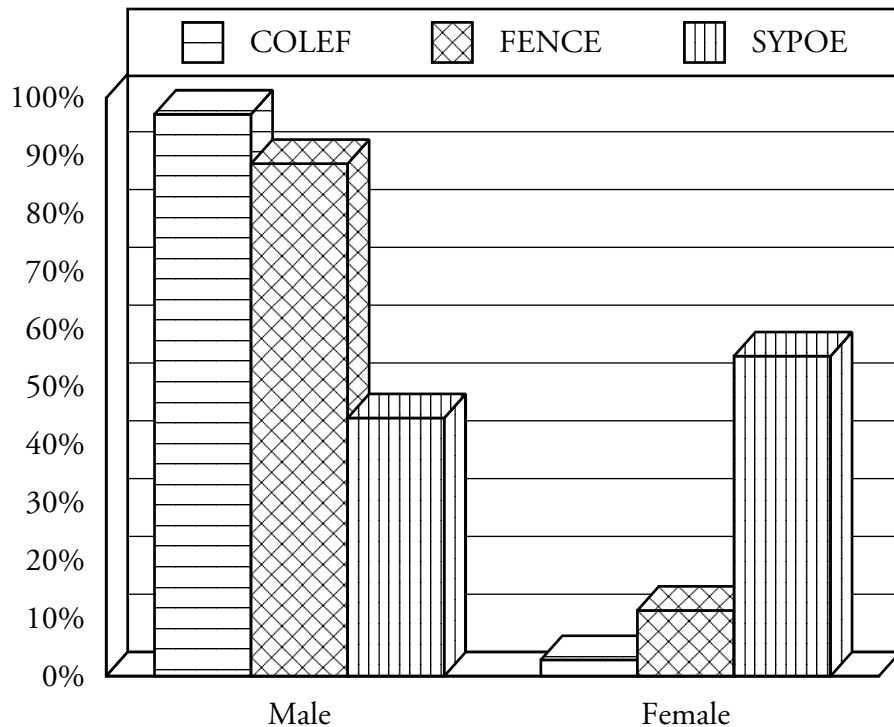


Figure 1: Sex of Would-be Illegal Border Crossers

Excerpted from
Profiles of Illegal Border Crossers
by Alejandra Mier y Terán Jordán
San Diego Dialogue
January 1996

Family Home for Would-be Illegal Border Crossers

Michoacán is a Mexican state known for sending migrants to the U.S. In all four sources of information about where the would-be border crossers were from, Michoacán was given as the state of the family home or the place from which the would-be crosser came from by at least 10% of the would-be crossers. Except for COLEF's results, the Distrito Federal (Mexico City) was also mentioned by at least 10% of those included in the study. Mexico City has not been a traditional family home of migrants to the U.S.

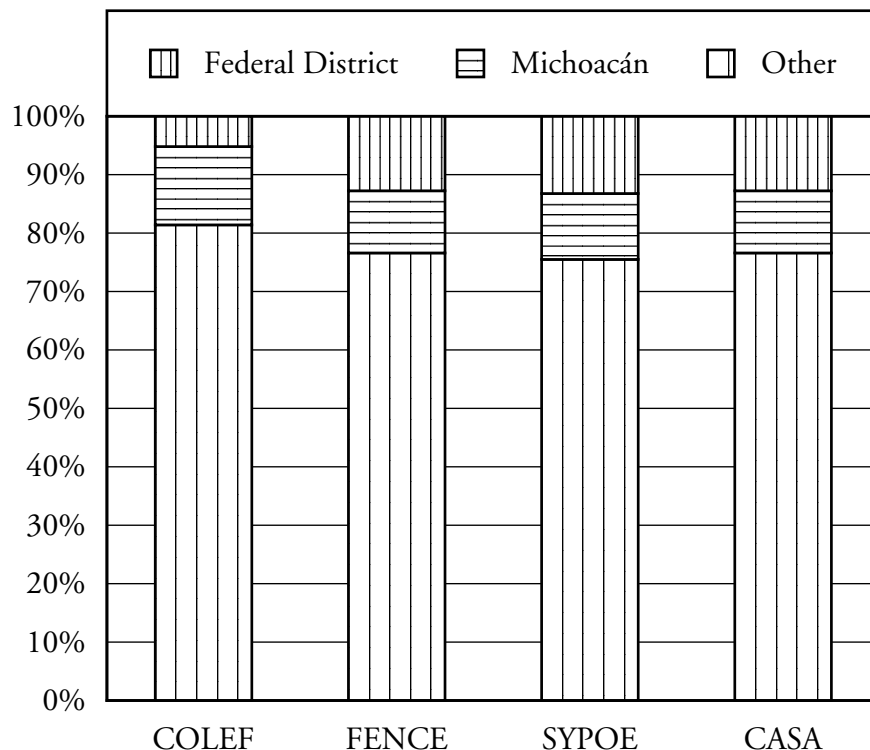


Figure 2: State of Family Home or Place from (COLEF) for Would-be Illegal Border Crossers in Tijuana

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Age

Most would-be illegal border crossers are between 26 and 45 years. Only 1% are over 45. These ages are consistent with the fact that most illegal border crossers are going to the U.S. to work. Almost everyone in the Casa (96%) and on the fence is planning to work. In the San Ysidro Port of Entry, around 30% of illegal border crossers are returning residents and 30% are planning to seek work.

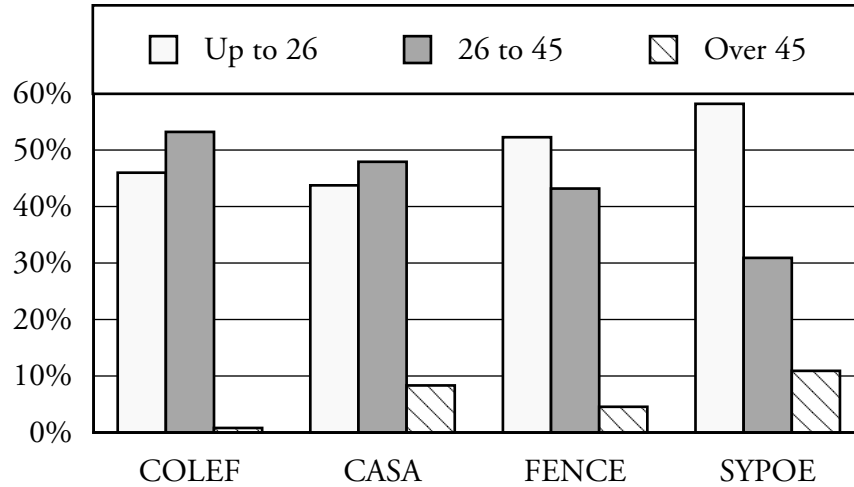


Figure 4: Age of Would-be Illegal Crossers

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Marital Status

Would-be illegal border crossers on the fence (in the research findings of both San Diego Dialogue and COLEF) are likely to be single. In the port of entry, possibly reflecting the proportion of women, the share of married persons is higher.

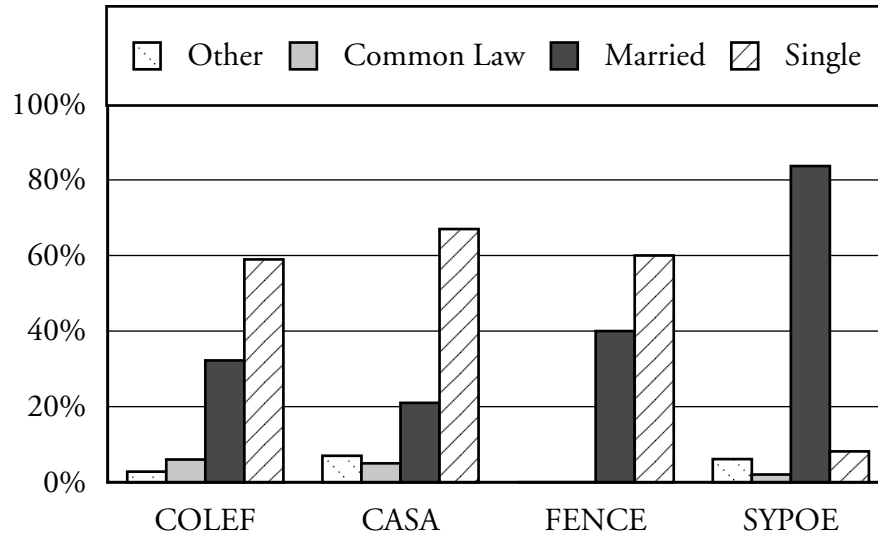


Figure 5: Marital Status of Would-be Illegal Crossers

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Previous Occupation

Most illegal border crossers worked as operators, fabricators and laborers or in service occupations. Farming occupations¹ rank third. This suggests that migrants come both from the urban and rural areas. State level data cannot accurately separate urban and rural backgrounds. However, 99% of the cities named were large enough to be found easily on a map of México in the World Atlas. Considering that rural areas are the poorest in México, migrants coming to the U.S. are not necessarily the very poorest people from México.

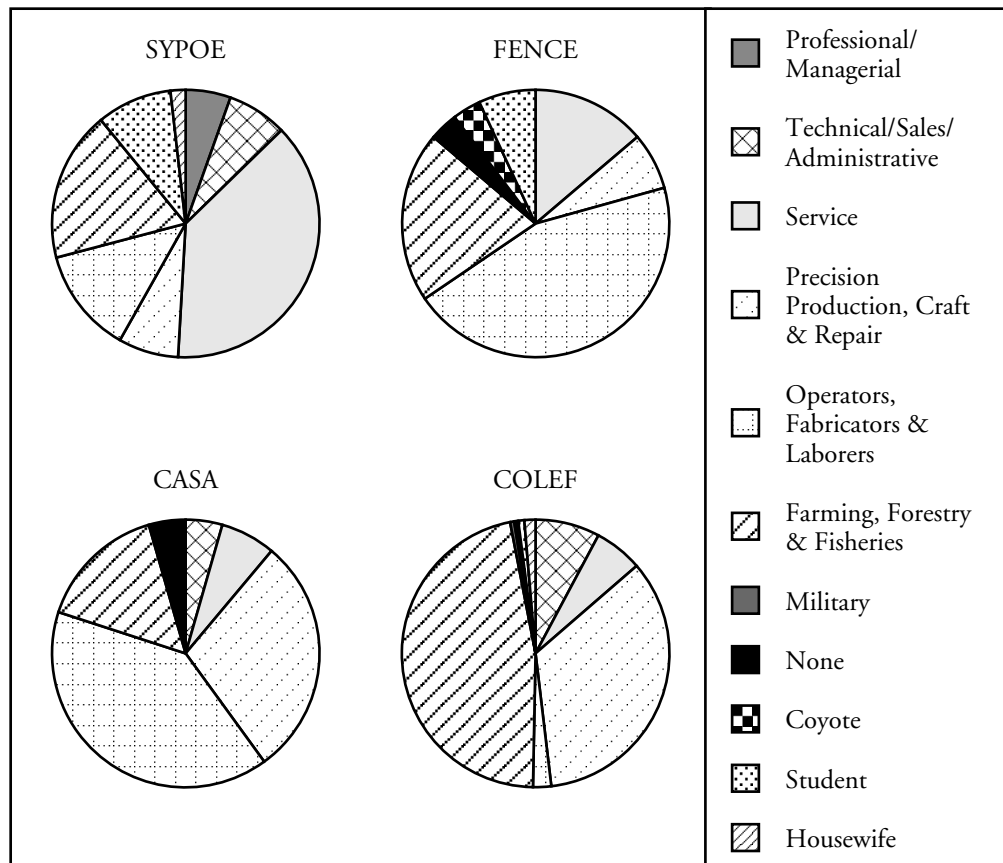


Figure 6: Previous Occupation of Would-be Illegal Border Crossers

¹ Almost everyone included in the category “Farming, Fisheries and Forestries” in San Diego Dialogue’s research on would-be illegal border crossers worked in “agriculture” or in the fields.

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