

3. Mapping Latin American Traffic

Latin America has a long history of migration flows within and outside the region. However, the rate of migration has accelerated in recent years due to a wide spread deterioration in the quality of life. This phenomenon is especially evident in MERCOSUR, where borders are particularly permeable for migrants.

The large number of Latin American and Caribbean women working as prostitutes in Europe, Japan and the United States is evidence of the existence of trafficking (Phinney, 2000). An estimated 50,000 women from the Dominican Republic and 75,000 women from Brazil are currently working in the sex industry abroad, mainly in Europe. However, the proportion of those prostitutes that are victims of trafficking is unclear.

Nevertheless, the IMO recognizes that despite the prevalence of trafficking in Latin America, the data on trafficking for that region is lacking¹⁵. In the case of Colombia alone, there are indicators that 500,000 women and children are currently being exploited through forced prostitution and other forms of forced labor abroad. The problem is worsening daily because of the large number of displaced persons victimized by Colombia's internal war, many of whom are willing to emigrate in whatever way possible. Interpol, which currently assists victims of traffic in both South Korea and Honduras, calculates that each year 35,000 women are "exported" for sex work from Colombia.

In general, according to the IMO, the principal countries of origin for victims of trafficking in Latin America are Brazil, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Peru and Colombia; the principal receiving countries are Argentina, Ecuador, Panama, as well as European and North American countries (principally Spain, USA and Canada).

While the majority of Latin American migrants have traditionally been male, recent years have shown a general feminization of migration throughout the region.

¹⁵ Interview with M. Assorati.

Percentage of Female Migration		
Area	1970	2000
Global poccentage	47,2	48,6
Development countries	49	51
Undevelop countries (without ex URSS)	49	50,6
Undevelopment countries	45,7	44,6
Africa	42,7	46,7
Asia	46,6	43,3
Latin America and Carribbean Region	46,8	50,2
Northamerica	51,1	50,3
Oceania	46,5	50,5
Europe	48	51
Ex. URSS	48	52,1

Source: United Nations Organization: Trends in Total. Migrant stock: The 2003 Revision.

3.1 The Central America Region

Central America is unique in that the countries of the region share numerous economic, historic, social and political characteristics. The region also has a number of intergovernmental organs and forums, which have been negotiating economic and commercial integration since the beginning of the 1990's. Within the hemisphere, Central America is one of the poorest regions, with over 70% of the population living under the poverty line¹⁶. Natural disasters have exacerbated these deeply routed economic problems, as in the case of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Nicaragua and Honduras in 1998, and a series of earthquakes in El Salvador in 2001.

Economic conditions are intimately related to migratory flows. As discussed earlier, impoverishment and unemployment, deepened by neoliberal structural adjustment and accompanied by militarization led by the US government, are driving forces for migration, and therefore increase vulnerability to traffic. "Exporting" countries (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) have relatively low GDP's compared to receiving countries (Costa Rica, Panama, and Belize). Furthermore, countries of origin have the highest rates of illiteracy among young people and the lowest rates of attendance for girls in primary school in the region¹⁷. Here again, structural adjustment policies, which force cuts in budgets for social services all over Latin America and prioritize the payment of debt services, are culpable in creating populations of women vulnerable (through lacking education) to traffic. In Central America, where structural adjustment is often implemented in parallel

¹⁶ Luis Solís y Patricia Solano, Central America: The Difficult Road Towards Integration and the Role of Canada, Focal Policy Paper (May 2001) http://www.focal.ca/summary/summary_central.htm.

¹⁷ Interamerican Women's Commission, Organization of American States: "Trafico de Mujeres y Ninos – Conclusiones de la Investigación y Seguimiento" (Punto IV c. del Diálogo de Jefas de Delegación), XXXI Assembly of Delegates, August 17, 2002.

with militar actions, there may be an added incentive for migration, the need for refuge.¹⁸

The police force of Guatemala City reports that in that city alone, there are 2,000 girls prostituted in over 600 brothels and that many of these girls are Honduran and Salvadoran children orphaned by Hurricane Mitch. The NGO Casa Alianza estimates that in San Jose, Costa Rica there are 2,000 female child prostitutes. Other sources estimate that 25,000 girls in the Dominican Republic and an additional 500,000 in Brazil, are forced to prostitute. Most of these victims have been trafficked internally.

One study from the ILO in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama (ILO, 2003) points to sexual tourism as a driving force in the trafficking of women in these countries. As such, it is necessary to combat the internal demand for prostitution and therefore the promotion of such places as receiving countries for victims of traffic.

In the region, Costa Rica has a relatively high prevalence of sexual tourism. Because it is quite easy to obtain falsified documents in Nicaragua, that country has become important as a provider of prostitutes for Central America. Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico operate as passageways for those prostitutes destined for the USA and Canada. A major provider country for both Europe and the USA is Jamaica.

The most important characteristic of trafficking routes is that they are always directed from undeveloped countries into comparatively rich countries. One report out of the International Human Rights Law Institute (2002) notes that Central American routes of traffic can be divided generally into those that flow North and those that flow South, with Nicaragua as a joint point of origin. A hypothetical victim could be transported initially from Nicaragua and later pass through Honduras or El Salvador to eventually remain in Guatemala, Belize or the south of Mexico. On the other hand, from Nicaragua to the north of Mexico, there are various land routes used by traffickers. The North is made a more desirable destination point due to the free transit agreements currently in effect between Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, which have lead to lax border control. Because of greater economic development in the North, as well as the common perception of opportunity in that region, the traffickers can make feasible job offers, that are quite attractive to victims.

An important strategy of the traffickers is to constantly change the routes of traffic in order to evade discovery. Also, the victims are moved approximately every 21 days within a country or province in order to avoid the possibility of victims establishing affectionate relationships with clients or fellow victims, which may facilitate escape.

¹⁸ The current Bush administration's willingness to employ militarism has aroused fear throughout Latin America. The administration has recently secured new bases in Paraguay and Ecuador, where mercenary armies are being trained (Hallinan, 2005).



This map was taken from the work of **Elías Carranza, Ronald Woodbridge** “Trata de seres humanos especialmente, mujeres, niñas y niños.” **ILANUD, Presentación en la XII Sesión de la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas sobre Prevención del Delito y Justicia Penal, Viena, 2003.**

3.2 The Caribbean Region

More than any other country in the region, the Dominican Republic has a strong history of feminized migration. Studies identify three distinct periods of feminine migration in the Dominican Republic since the 1960’s¹⁹:

- ?? Between 1961 and 1973, women’s emigration to the United States was principally motivated by internal political turmoil.
- ?? From 1974 to 1984, women migrants began to move to other destinations.
- ?? From 1985, women’s migration has been oriented toward Europe because of economic crisis, as well as diminishing opportunity to emigrate to the US due to changes in immigration legislation. Spain has been the most common destination, while Argentina has become more and more prevalent.

According to diverse studies, women make up about 60% of the migratory flow out of the Dominican Republic. The IMO did a case study on Dominican migrants in Argentina (IMO, 2003). This case is particularly interesting because of the important migratory flow of Dominicans to Argentina, which was a result of the establishment of the rule of convertibility in the 1990’s in Argentina²⁰. The fixed one to one exchange of pesos to dollars facilitated the remittance of dollars to the Dominican Republic. As such, the Dominicans were visible as a community around 1995, particularly in Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, the migrants had no precise information about the characteristics of the society to which they would travel, nor about the state of the job market at the time of their emigration. The community was unable to consolidate a visible Dominican network, which might have facilitated insertion into the labor market, or to create migrant associations that were integrated with other organized communities; both

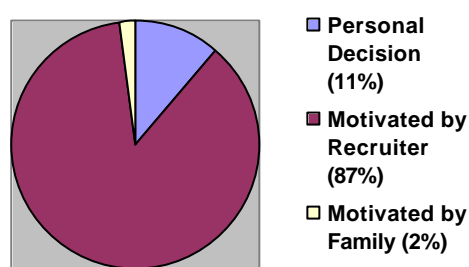
¹⁹ Gina Gallardo, Tráfico de mujeres y explotación sexual en la agenda de República Dominicana, 1999.

²⁰ The convertibility law fixed the equivalence of peso and dólar : 1=1.

are important elements in relating to civil society and in creating government accountability in relation to migrant communities. These factors together increased the vulnerability of the Dominican community in Argentina.

For traffickers, a common strategy is to identify a potential victim, not because of her possibilities for insertion into the labor market, but rather because of the possession of property which could be held as collateral against the loan required to finance her trip. In this way, the recruiter becomes essential in the identification of women who are able to take out a loan, and to convince her of the advantages of migration and of resorting to his or her own services. The recruiters have a fundamental weight in a woman's decision to migrate (IMO, 2003).

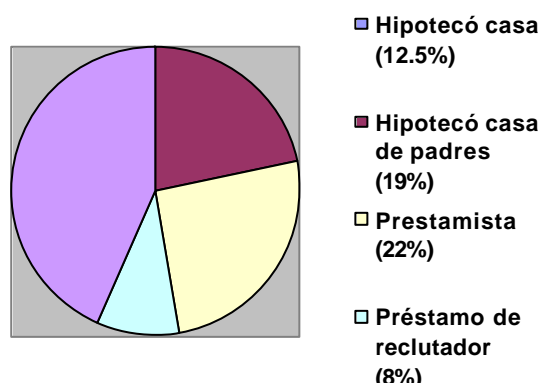
Decision to Migrate



Source: Interviews OIM

The recruiter could be one or more than one person working in conjunction: one might establish initial contact with the victim, convincing her of the benefits of migration, while another is entrusted with the task of obtaining documents and loans. One of the principal characteristics of these recruiters is their mobility, as much in the Dominican Republic as in Argentina.

Financing of Migration



Source: interviews OIM

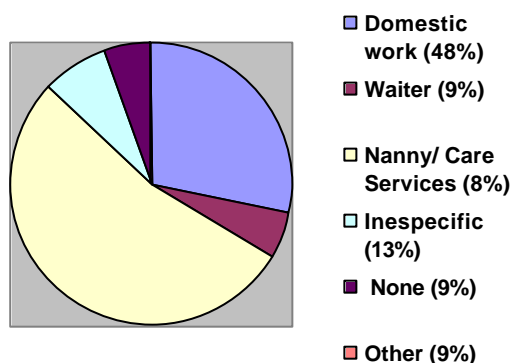
The recruiters take advantage of many factors that work in their favor: the low level of female literacy, women's distrust and misunderstanding of institutional and administrative organs and their lack of information from reliable networks (familial or

friendship) about obtaining documentation, the characteristics of the labor market, the cost of living in the country of destination, etc.

The migrants make the decision to travel under the premise of a job in Argentina; in the majority of cases, the women are convinced that the work offered is related to domestic service or in their own professions (for example, nursing). It is important to consider that the women being sexually exploited abroad hide the reality of their situations from their families, so that new migrants do not realize that the work they are destined for in Argentina is prostitution. The dispersion of migrants in both their countries of origin (as perpetrators travel to different locales to recruit them) and in their places of residence in Argentina, becomes an obstacle for the creation of networks and connections between them.

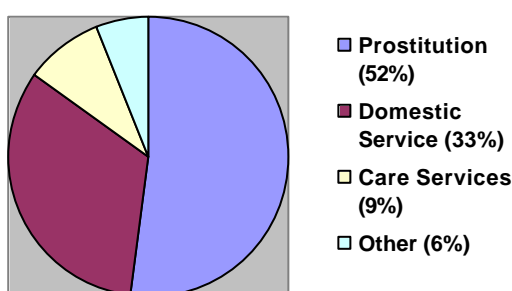
The jobs promised have no relation to the actual work done in destination countries. In general, migrants remain undocumented and in illegal situations, which increase their vulnerability.

Work Promised in Argentina



Source: Interviews OIM

Actual work in Argentina



Source: Interviews OIM.

3.3 The MERCOSUR Region

Historically, the MERCOSUR region had a migration system with its epicentre in Argentina. In the 1990's, with the opening and structural transformation of these economies, migration acquired new features: migration in general became more feminized while the absorption of migrated workers in the service sector increased, although in very precarious and overexploitative conditions. Argentina kept its role as a receptor country of populations from neighbouring countries, with a preponderance of migrant women²¹, especially from Bolivia and Paraguay, but also from other Latin-American countries.

During those years, thousands of women entered in the country. While Argentina was recovering from the 2001 crisis, it became again a frequent destination, because of the low level of state control, active trafficking networks, public agents, judges and police corruption chains. The U.S. Department of State 2004 report on trafficking in people²², highlights the LA countries with higher rates of recruitment of women and children aimed for the sex trade or forced work. While Argentina was positioned in the middle in terms of recruiting, it was one of the most important destinations of trafficked women (in particular from Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil) not only to be settled within the country, but also as a temporary place in route to Europe, especially to Spain. In that report, it is also recognized that the Argentina's internal traffic is very important, particularly that of women who are moved from rural to urban areas.

The National Office of Migration of the Republic of Argentina estimates that between 1995 and 2002, between 12,000 and 15,000 Dominicans entered the country through Ezeiza International Airport. It is important to consider that only 16 % of those included in these statistics are male. Therefore, a majority of the migrant population is female. In this country there are more or less 850,000 migrants from neighboring countries (Bolivians, Chileans, Paraguayans and Uruguayan) registered in the National Census.

The Dominican population in Argentina was not necessarily an unemployed population in their country of origin. Generally, males would work in occupations requiring middle levels of qualification, while women did work requiring middle to low levels of qualification (IMO). The type of work done or the terms of contracts coincide with the gendered segregation of the labor market. Women without specific qualifications tend to work in the lowest skilled and most precarious jobs. Additionally, save some exceptional cases, these jobs neither comprise the first step in career advancement, nor serve to improve the worker's initial level of qualification (domestic service and independently contracted work are the most clear examples).

²¹ Among immigrants, 56% are women and 44% are men, what is equal to a migrated women rate of 1,28. In the case of Peru's immigrants, that rate is still more stressed, even though, it is shown a reversion since the 2001 crisis.

²² After a CIA report calculated that 50,000 women had been illegally trafficked into the United States for the purpose of sexual exploitation, Congreso reacted with new legislation aimed at penalizing traffickers, protecting victims and preventing future criminal activity of this type. The Law for the Protection of Victims of Traffic that resulted from this action was instated in 2000. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of State has established a new office which employs experts in the control of this activity and creates mechanisms to combat it. (XXXI)

It is necessary to clarify that in the case of women, many were not unemployed but rather dissatisfied with their incomes and with the low expectations of Dominican society for women. Most of these women are between 20 and 40 years old.

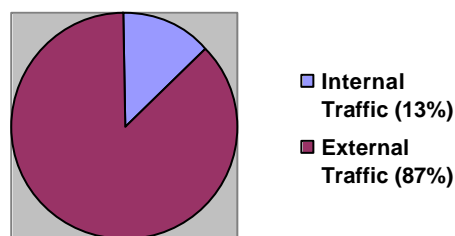
Paraguay: A Case Study

Within the MERCOSUR region, the IMO sponsored an important study on the traffic of women in Paraguay, carried out by the New Moon Group in Spain (IMO, 2005). It is critical to note that in this country, gender and age oppression are accompanied by a class oppression suffered by a large percentage of the population living under the poverty line. This oppression must be understood broadly, not only as an economic disadvantage, but also as a deprivation of rights. “The difficulty in accessing the health care system, or in accessing information about sexual and reproductive rights, the absence of public policy, and a social budget that does not cover a third of the countries in the zone, serves to only deepen the poverty that generates economic deprivation” (IMO, 2005).

“All is because of the misery the country suffers. There is no solution nor will there be a solution if we continue with this government policy, a policy of hunger. The people have no other choice, (...) the people migrate because of necessity, there is no other thing.” (Informant from Pacu Cua, Encarnación, IMO, 2005).

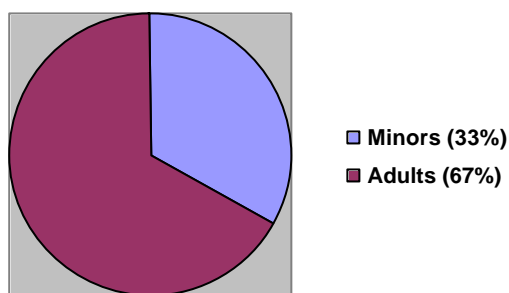
In many cases, the victims are affected by various processes of traffic. In general, the external traffic is preceded by internal traffic. It is important to note the proportion of internal traffic with respect to external traffic, because generally the first is made invisible through the media, government institutions, and also the communities affected. The internal traffic for the purpose of sexual exploitation exists and happens frequently and invisibly. This type of traffic is naturalized and also does not exist as a legal category in the Paraguayan penal code. Meanwhile, the public institutions, the media and society in general place the blame for traffic on the victims. “The fact that they are “voluntary” prostitutes is used to minimize the human rights violations and forget that, because of their age and their consent, the State and society are not excused from their role in protecting and reinstating rights.” (IMO, 2005)

Proportion of Internal and External Traffic in Paraguay



Source: IMO, 2005

Proportion of Victims of Traffic that are Adults and Minors in Paraguay



Source: IMO, 2005

This table shows the incidence of cases per year, and also the number of women and adolescents affected by the processes of traffic in Paraguay.

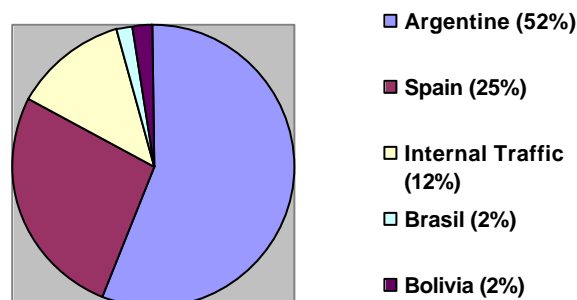
Number of Cases, Women and Minors by Age per Year. 2000-2004

Year	Nº of Cases	Nº of Women	Minors victims	More than 18 years old	% of minors victims
2000	11	70	47	23	32
2001	6	16	0	16	100
2002	8	42	30	12	28,5
2003	29	109	72	37	50
2004	61	236	180	56	24
Total	115	473	329	144	38

Source: IMO, 2005

The following graphic shows the principal destinations. The small number of cases destined for Brazil indicates an important discrepancy between official counts and the actual incidence of traffic in border regions, in that people from that zone note a “constant flow of children and adolescents working in prostitution in Foz de Iguazu and other nearby zones. Likewise, the Triple Border is identified by the ILO as a large nucleus of sexual exploitation.” (IMO, 2005)

Proportion of Women per Destination Country



Source: IMO, 2005

Although there is a heterogeneity in the destinations of traffic victims that includes distinct countries in Europe, Asia and South America as destinations in the traffic circuit, Argentina and Spain are the principals.

In Argentina, the principal destinations are the Capital City and Buenos Aires Province (58%). Within this province, one of the principal destinations is the city of La Plata, with 30 % of the cases. Other destinations which are also significant from a quantitative perspective are Santa Fe and Cordoba followed by Rio Negro and Catamarca. Those women that travel to Spain are principally concentrated in Castilla, La Mancha, and the Canary Islands, making up 34% of the cases and 65% of the women affected. (IMO, 2005).

Number of Cases, Women and Age per Country of Destination.

Country	Nº cases	Nº women	< 18 years old	> 18 years old	% of < 18 years
Argentine	62	259	90	62	40
Spain	32	169	6	4	55
Brazil	3	4	3	2	1
Bolivia	3	5	1	1	1
Internal	15	48	40	28	3
Others	3	10	5	3	1
Total	118	495	145	100	101

Source: IMO, 2005

Routes and Destinations:

Traffic networks select their victims based on certain characteristics, such as age, socio-economic status and physical appearance. However, Europe presents obstacles for the transit of minors so that the traffic of children and adolescents is principally directed toward neighboring countries because it is easier to avoid border controls. On the other hand, because physical appearance and socio-cultural factors are important for prostitution in Europe, there are instances where Argentina acts as a temporary training ground for those women who initially do not have the characteristics necessary to be trafficked to Europe.

“I heard that many of the girls that work in Argentina are offered the chance to travel to Spain where they can earn much more money, but they were not eager to go, first because of the distance and second because from Argentina, they can visit periodically their families, for these reasons they prefer to remain in Argentina.” (Informant Ita Paso, Encarnacion) (IMO, 2005).

On the other hand, the selection of the destinations is related to the characteristics of these countries: the similarity in the language and culture are important. Another advantage of Spain is that it is the world center for the sex industry, in terms of consumption and distribution, and there is no visa requirement for Paraguayans, so they can easily enter as tourists.

Some other principal destinations are Greece, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, Canada and Japon.

It is necessary to clarify that particular routes of traffic are usually used to take women and adolescents to their final destinations. In an international context, where migratory restrictions for developed countries are each time more stringent and where migratory flows are also increasing, routes are dynamic and are designed with the objective of evading border controls. With respect to Paraguay, the routes for entry into neighboring countries are Route 2, which links Paraguay with Brazil, Route 1, which links Paraguay with Argentina, and Route Transchaco, that links Paraguay with Bolivia. The following table gives the principal international routes:

International Trafficking Routes (by plain)			
Origin	Transit	Temporary destination	Final destination
Asunción	San Pablo	Madrid	Palmas de G. Canarias
Asunción	San Pablo/ Paris	Madrid	
Asunción	San Pablo/ Paris	Bilbao	Arabian Countries
Asunción	San Pablo/ Lisboa	Madrid	
Asunción	San Pablo/ Milan	Milan	
Asunción	Buenos Aires	Madrid	
Asunción	San Pablo/ London	Madrid	
Asunción	Buenos Aires	Madrid	
Asunción	San Pablo	Madrid	

Source: IMO, 2005

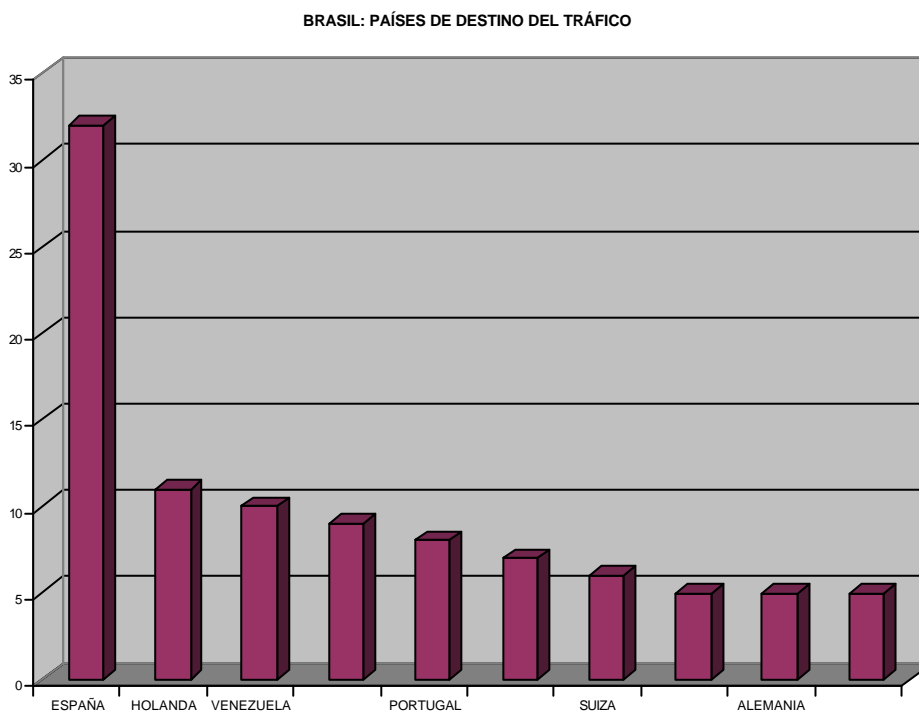
Paraguayan International Trafficking Routes (land ways)		
Origin	Temporary destination	Final Destination
Ciudad del este		Foz de Iguazú
Asunción		Sta. Cruz
Asunción		Perú
Ciudad del este		San Pablo
Asunción		Curitiva
Ciudad del este	Foz de Iguazú	Cascabel
Asunción		Porto Alegre
Asunción		La Paz
Pedro Juan Caballero	Bonito/ Campo Grande	San Pablo

Source: IMO, 2005

International Trafficking Routes Paraguay- Argentine (land ways)		
Origin	Temporary	Destination
Asunción		Buenos Aires
Asunción	Posadas-Buenos Aires	La Plata
Encarnación	Posadas-Buenos Aires	Córdoba
Encarnación	Posadas-Buenos Aires	Mar del Plata
Encarnación	Posadas-Buenos Aires	Bahía Blanca
Encarnación	Posadas-Buenos Aires	Dolores
Encarnación	Posadas	Mendoza
Encarnación	Posadas	Corrientes
Encarnación	Posadas	Sta. Fe
Encarnación	Posadas	Rosario
Asunción	Formosa	Bahía Blanca
Pedro Juan Caballero	Buenos Aires	San Martín
Santani	Buenos Aires	Punta Alta

Source: IMO, 2005

In the case of Brazil, with thirty-two identified routes, Spain is the most frequent destination, followed by Holland, Belgium (with ten routes) and Venezuela (eleven routes).



Source: Elías Carranza, Ronald Woodbridge²³

In this point, it is important to consider the diversity in the destinations of Latin American victims is determined by the victims' profiles. Those that are destined for Europe usually have high levels of formal education, certain physical characteristics, are of a particular age and are from urban backgrounds, while those destined for Latin America usually have low levels of formal education and are from rural backgrounds.

²³ Elías Carranza, Ronald Woodbridge: "Trata de seres humanos especialmente, mujeres, niñas y niños." ILANUD, Presentación en la XII Sesión de la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas sobre Prevención del Delito y Justicia Penal, Viena, 2003

The migrants' professional qualifications are diverse, spanning from those with no education to those with university education.