

CENTRO DE INVESTIGACION Y PROMOCION DEL CAMPESINADO  
UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

RETURN MIGRATION IN THE ALTO PIURA REGION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## **INTRODUCING CIPCA**

The Centre for Peasant Research and Promotion (Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado, CIPCA) has an important tradition of developing research about socioeconomic and cultural processes on the Piura region, particularly in rural spaces. As part of this, CIPCA has contributed to the production of knowledge and the visibility of key aspects of this reality. On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic's manifestation has revealed latent structural problems in our society and has also generated new phenomena. One of the principal ones has been return migration, not only given its abrupt start, but also given the consequences it has had on people's lives and on the destination territories.

This context gave way to the study "Return migration in the Alto Piura in the context of Covid-19". This study marks a small milestone for the CIPCA, as it allows us to restart research activities and constitutes an opportunity to enhance this line of work as a key input for the development of public policy proposals, for them to consider the reality of rural spaces.

The following research analyses the dynamics of return migration to Alto Piura in the context of the pandemic and promotes the discussion of a set of aspects of vulnerable populations and which, except for the initial displacement caught on media, was not adequately addressed by the State, in spite of it being a phenomenon which has impacted the lives of at least 165 thousand Peruvians (in the case of Piura, approximately 22 thousand people). Thus, up to now, the phenomenon of return migrants has not been approached as topic of public policy and there is no existing State agenda about the situation of these return migrants and the territories which have received them. It is therefore necessary to deepen the knowledge of return migration as a result of the pandemic, for the development and implementation of policies oriented to giving a state response which accounts for the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. This response should be inter-sectoral and demanding the coordination of different levels of government.

CIPCA's efforts towards this have been possible thanks to the priceless support of the University of St Andrews, Scotland, United Kingdom, with whom CIPCA has an institutional relation since 2017, generated from the interest of their researchers in consulting information about the El Niño Phenomenon collected in our Information Centre. From this was born the research project "Phenomenon of opportunities", which the University runs in alliance with a range of institutions from our country. From this connection, as well as the analysis of the realities of the Piura regions and the problems unveiled by the Covid-19 pandemic, was born the idea of the following research project titled "Going back to my rural roots: Covid-19 and return migration in northern Peru". We express our appreciation to the University team made up of the Drs. Nina Laurie, Ana Gutiérrez, and the assistant Oliver Calle.

Finally, we thank the anthropologists María Luisa Burneo and Abdul Trelles, the main researches of this study, for taking on the double change of contributing to the restarting of research activities in our institutions and of realising research which includes fieldwork in the midst of pandemic restrictions. We are also thankful to the CIPCA professionals who contributed to the conception and implementation of the study, as well as the reflection, analysis, and revision of the document. Particularly, Christian Flores, Henry García, Mario Rufino, Rocío Farfán, and Magaly Maza.

In these Covid-19 pandemic times. Which have unveiled the inefficiencies of the State, social debt, as well as territorial and gender gaps, we hope this research will contribute to the reflection about migratory processes and their effects in rural spaces. In addition to this, we hope it brings attention to the situation of vulnerability of migrant people, particularly women; to the urgent need to address family agriculture, the main economic activity of said spaces; to the important role of organisations, particularly rondas campesinas (autonomous peasant patrols); and to the responsibility of the State to confront this problem.

Rosa Prieto Mendoza  
Executive Director  
CIPCA

### **PRESENTING THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS**

Since its foundation at the start of the 1970s, CIPCA has played an important role in the comprehension of multiple and changing challenges which farmers in Piura and in broader Peru face. This publication, based in the first rigorous empirical study realised and published about the experience of return migration in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Peru, adheres to the long and valued history of CIPCA critical interventions for development. It is based in a collaboration with the University of St Andrews, Scotland, United Kingdom, which started in 2017 as part of the research project “Digital fingerprints of coastal El Niño” led by the University of Newcastle and financed by the UK Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). This initial collaboration then became a formal association with the University of St Andrews to explore El Niño food systems in the Sechura desert<sup>1</sup>.

When Covid-19 hit Peru, the challenges faced by those who sought to return to their rural roots turned into a serious collective preoccupation. Our SFC GRCF grant for “Rapid Response” was awarded in June 2020 to conduct the research presented here, just as Peru and the United Kingdom were easing out of mandatory social isolation. We are very thankful to the SFC GRCF for financing this original work as the first of its kind, carried out by our colleagues at CIPCA in challenging circumstances, and also to the AHRC “Fishing and Agriculture in the Desert” for facilitating the translation of the findings into English.

The history of the return migrant Rever, one of those shared in the following pages, demonstrates clearly how histories of return migration are intimately linked to larger life trajectories from before the pandemic which simultaneously give way to potential future imaginaries. Rever, who had acquired fishing knowledge at the Piura coast, was then able to put to practice his skills in Pucusana to finance his return journey from Lima. We are yet to see how the present moment will chance us, any of us, in terms of how we will be able to imagine livelihoods and future lives. What is clear from this study, however, is that the knowledge and comprehension acquired “in place” are mobilised throughout our lives and experiences.

Nina Laurie,  
University of St Andrews  
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<sup>1</sup> This work was financed by the Scottish Funding Council Global Challenge Research Fund (SFC GRCF) and the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. Other collaborators in this research include the University of Piura, the Nacional Agrarian University, La Molina, and the NGO PRISMA.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the president Martín Vizcarra decreed a state of sanitary emergency and the “compulsory social isolation”<sup>2</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, thus restricting mobility in the national territory. Although necessary, one of the effects of the lockdown was the loss of income for millions of Peruvians. Six months after its implementation, it has been calculated that around 6 million 740 thousand Peruvians have lost their jobs.<sup>3</sup> This is largely explained by the fact that Peru is a country with a labour market characterised by a high percentage of informal jobs – between 65% and 70% - and precarious; in fact, it is one of the region’s countries with the largest index of informal labour.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Peru is characterised by having a significant history of migration from the countryside to the city (Dobyns and Vázquez, 1963; Martínez, 1961, 1980, 1984; Brougère 1986, 1992; Celestino, 1972; Degregori and Golte, 1973; Fuenzalida et al., 1982; Cotlear, 1984. Cited in Golte, 2012: 253), those of which have been carried out in different periods of the 20th Century. This history explains that a significant percentage of inhabitants of the main cities, such as the capital, Lima, are migrants from diverse parts of the country. Therefore, when the decree for compulsory social immobility was established, hundreds of thousands of citizens who had lost their jobs in cities, were migrants who had settled down in said places beforehand. A group of them, after having noticed that the lockdown would be longer than initially presumed, decided to undertake the journey to return to their places of origin, many of them situated in rural areas of the different regions.

Given the necessity and the lack of a clear government strategy to guarantee them a minimum income, a part of this population opted to undertake the return by foot, as an survival strategy. The media that covered the news during the month of April called this group of citizens “los caminantes” (the walkers) and referred to the return as “el éxodo del hambre” (the exodus of hunger). However, this study reveals that the return migrants had different migratory trajectories when the pandemic started: not all returned in the same conditions. In some cases, we see that the returnees had very precarious jobs; in other cases, they had achieved relative labour stability, but had seen themselves affected by measures such as the suspension of employment at just one month of the start of the lockdown. Furthermore, there were those who had saving of between 2 thousand and 3 thousand soles, who, having evaluated their situation as a scenario of high uncertainty, chose to invest in paying for their journeys to return to their places of origin.<sup>5</sup>

As has been studied, migratory processes do not respond to only one type of life strategy (Zoommers, 1998; De Janvry y Sadoulet, 2000). In this sense, to assume that, in a general way, those who decide to return do so in a definitive way or that those who took up the return journey had settled permanently in their chosen cities, does not reflect the reality. Therefore, to adequately analyse the process of return to rural areas generated by the pandemic, we must first recognise the distinction between permanent and temporal migrations. In the latter, there is a variety of types

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<sup>2</sup> Decreto Supremo 044-2020-PCM, 15th of March, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) (2020). Informe técnico *Perú: Comportamiento de los Indicadores del Mercado Laboral*: trimestre abril, mayo, junio 2020, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum. It's time to tackle the informal economy problem in Latin America. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/it-s-time-to-tackle-informal-economy-problem-latin-america/> (visited 6.8.2020).

<sup>5</sup> The government approved the suspension of employment on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2020 with the Decreto Supremo 011-2020-TR.

of migration, such as the so-called pendular migrations, which generally respond to mobilisation in the territory to access temporal employment in recurring seasons. For example, the harvest of certain agro-exporting products at the coast, which attracts migrants from Andean areas; or the 'altoandinas' (high Andes) area migrations, after the harvest, towards the 'ceja de selva' (forest area at the foot of the Andes) to work in cocoa, coffee, and coca leaf harvest and then return to the community of origin for the harvest period.

These territorial flows are important to understand the dynamic of returnees. In the context of the pandemic (Burneo and Castro, 2020; Mesclier, 2020; Salas 2020). Importantly, the lockdown started in the month of March, when many seasonal migrants were outside of their places of origin, while the other group resided in cities permanently. Therefore, as is discussed throughout the study, not all returns are conceived as a definitive project. One important group, particularly of youth, considers the return to their areas as a temporal measure – of a few months or a year -, until the pandemic is controlled.

This diversity of situations was not recognised by the government nor portrayed in national media communications. Generally, reports and news outlets showed only one face of migrants: that of the "caminantes" who, supposedly, returned in a type of reversed exodus from the city to the countryside. Six months after the mass returns, the reality shows different nuances of the experiences of return migrants. It is fundamental to understand the dynamics of return, as well as their future projects and expectations differentiated between men and women, so that government actions incorporate the theme to their public agenda considering this complex scenario. Beyond the specific measures – such as the supreme decrees – to manage the return (transfers, shelters, and quarantines) up to the moment, the phenomenon of return migration has not been addressed as a topic of public policy. In addition to this, there is no State agenda on the situation of returnees and the regions that receive them based on first-hand information.

It is therefore urgent to know about the process of return migration for the elaboration of policy oriented to the planning of a set of themes which arise from these displacements and that local governments – according to what authorities interviewed in the study pointed out – are not capacitated to resolve without an efficient coordination of their respective regional governments and with the central government. An adequate multi-sectorial and multi-level policy to address the situation of return migrants and their communities demands multiple questions to be answered such as, for example: who are the return migrants?, what are their migratory trajectories?, how have local governments responded to this phenomenon?, what strategies have organisations, such as the 'rondas campesinas', and rural communities carried out?, what adaptation strategies have returnees unfolded? Additionally, we must ask: how was the process of reinsertion to rural places carried out?, what is the situation and what are the vulnerabilities of returnee women?, what are the plans and projects of returnees of short, medium, and long term?, and what tensions or problems are being generated as a result of this phenomenon in areas of reception?

With the aim of contributing to this discussion, this study analyses the dynamics of return migrations to Alto Piura in the context of the pandemic. The study was carried out between the months of July and August of the current year, with fieldwork of two weeks in different districts and rural areas of the provinces of Morropón,

Huancabamba, and Ayabaca.<sup>6</sup> During the study, 71 interviews were held with returnee men and women, as well as with 13 local authorities and organisation representatives.<sup>7</sup> This has been a particular and difficult fieldwork, which imposed many challenges on the team and which obliged us to implement a strict biosecurity protocol for the care of our interviewees, and that of our own team (see Annex). The document is organised in six chapters. The first chapter consists of a brief historical revision and a contextualisation of migrations in Peru and, in particular, of the flows of return migration to Alto Piura in the context of the pandemic. The second chapter studies the migratory dynamics of the provinces of Morropón, Ayabaca, and Huancabamba, from the testimonials collected during the fieldwork. The third chapter, a descriptive section, presents a characterisation of the people who returned, with data about the places from which they started the return process and their socioeconomic conditions prior to the lockdown. The fourth chapter analyses the return process, including the criteria which defined the decision to return, the different moments of the lockdown and the routes travelled to get to their places of origin. The fifth chapter analyses the process of reinsertion in their localities and communities, and includes the initial actions of institutions and local and communal organisations in facing their return; additionally, it examines the current socioeconomic condition of the returnees. Finally, the sixth chapter picks up on the perceptions of return migration of local authorities and leaders, as well as the expectations and projects of return migrants in the short and medium term, and the perceptions they have about the situation they are going through.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the economist Christian Flores, member of the CIPCA, who accompanied us throughout the fieldwork; without his important work this study would have presented a much larger challenge. We also thank Víctor Velásquez Vílchez, “Vitucho”, for ensuring we would arrive safely to the planned location and for, through his anecdotes, making us laugh even in the difficult moments of fieldwork. Finally, our sincere gratitude to the local authorities and leaders who facilitated the compilation of information and, especially, to the returnees who received us in the porches of their homes.

## Methodology

### a. General approach

This study aimed to understand the phenomenon of return migration and to gather its nuances and particularities, from the voices of the very actors. The study proposes to describe the situation of returnees, identify trajectory types and explore types of reception – and its potential tensions – as well as understand the reasons of return and its future expectations.

For the characteristics particular to the contexts which we face, this is, also, and exploratory study. Not only given the newness of the phenomenon, which continues to develop, but also given the complexity of carrying out fieldwork during the pandemic. This demanded the implementation of a series of extraordinary measures

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<sup>6</sup> The fieldwork was carried out between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July and the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2020. The scope of data collection is detailed in the methodology section.

<sup>7</sup> The details from the interviews carried out and their distribution by type of actor and gender can be seen found Table 2.

and a strict biosecurity protocol, but only allowed the application of a few research techniques. For example, it was impossible to carry out focus groups of participative workshops. Interviews in closed spaces of over 60 minutes were also prohibited; these were always carried out with necessary distance, with biosecurity protocols, and in open air. And, if these conditions prevented the deployment of techniques which we would have wished to use in an ideal context, it also demanded us to be more systematic in the elaboration and application of instruments – adjusting guidelines and practicing them beforehand – and more attentive to the recording of information – because each interview was worth a particular effort -.

This has thus been a huge professional and emotional challenge for the fieldwork team, who was also in quarantine for the two weeks prior to going to the field and was subjected to tests before starting the trip and having concluded the fieldwork. This team included Víctor Velásquez Vélchez, the team chauffer, member of the CIPCA since many years, which allowed the team to adhere to all the conditions previously established which guaranteed security to the team and the interviewees.



*Image 1: Interview with the mayor of Centro Poblado El Higuero. Photo by Christian Flores.*

The institutional presence and the years of work of CIPCA in diverse rural areas in the provinces of Morropón, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca were fundamental for the adequate development of fieldwork. The confidence authorities and leaders had in the institution allowed them to open their doors to our work, previously coordinated. Given the nature of the study as qualitative, we did not seek statistical representation by province, but rather the depth of testimonies and diversity of cases and histories of return migrants which would allow us to describe their trajectories and identify potential trends. The localities and homesteads where the fieldwork was carried out were selected based on three criteria: i) the previous conversations with authority who confirmed the arrival of hundreds of returnees to their localities; ii) the reading of registers of returnees registered by health centres in the districts and populated centres, who kindly shared these with the CIPCA team weeks before going out for fieldwork, which facilitated the identification of homesteads and districts with a significant presence of returnees of different ages; and iii) the contact and prior agreement with authorities and/or social leaders for an adequate entry into the areas.

Province	District	Locality/Populated Centre
Morropón	San Juan de Bigote	San Juan de Bigote
	Santa Catalina de Mossa	El algodónal
	Salitral	Malacasí
Huancabamba	San Miguel de El Faique	District Capital La Capilla El Higuerón
	Canchaque	Maraypampa Coyona
Ayabaca	Ayabaca	District Capital Olleros
	Paimas	El Algodonal

Table 1: Areas of data collection. Own creation.

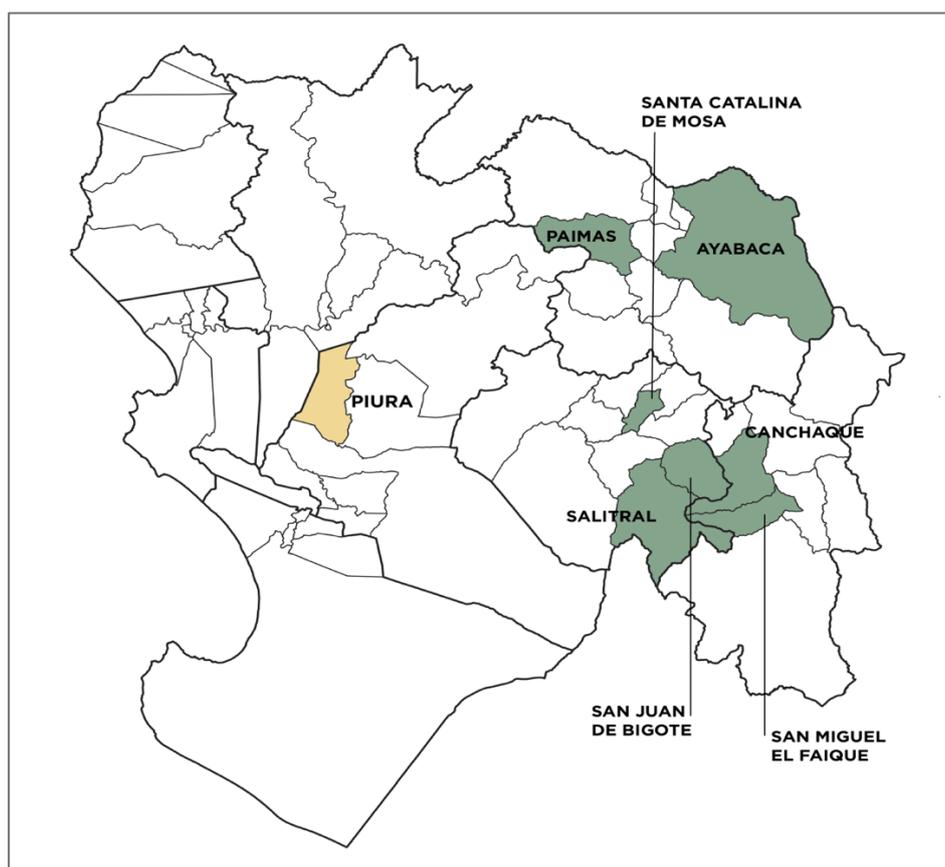


Figure 1: Areas of data collection. Departmental Map. Own creation.

#### b. Aims

The primary aim of the study is to describe and analyse the dynamics around the return migrations in the Alto Piura. The interest in this field responds to a long history of prior CIPCA work, which implies a commitment with the population and with the social

organisations. In order to achieve the proposed objective, four specific objectives have been established.

**O1: Describe and create a characterisation of the return migrants in the context of Alto Piura, in the provinces of Morropón, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca.**

From this objective, the following questions are asked: Who are the return migrants (age, gender, productive activities, incomes)? What are their migratory trajectories? What is their place of origin and what routes have they used to return? In what economic and social conditions are these migrants returning in? What factors motivate their decision?

**O2: Analyse the response of local institutions and organisation in facing return migration and migrants.**

To develop this objective, the following questions are asked: What has been the response of local governments in facing return migration? What strategies have rural organisations – such as the rondas campesinas, etc. – and communities carried out? Have there been reception strategies differentiated by gender and age? What type of problems start to arise from return migration in the locality?

**O3: Analyse reinsertion and readaptation strategies of return migrants in their local territories, with an emphasis on the situation of returning women.**

The third objective seeks to respond to the following questions: What adaptive strategies have the returnees deployed? What has been their reinsertion process into rural places? What social dynamics have emerged from this process? What particular situations did women face in returning and what is their current situation? What do returnees currently do in their places of reception?

**O4: Analyse the perceptions of/from the return migrants and the narratives that emerge about the return process, differentiating the perceptions by gender.**

The fourth specific objective points to the following questions: What narratives, perceptions, and tensions have emerged from returnees towards communities of reception, and those of communities of reception towards the returnees? What expectations do returnees have about their return to their places of origin? How do they feel about returning to “their land”? What are the returnees’ plans and projects in the short, medium, and long term? What future possibilities do women returnees see?

### **The actors**

Data collection was centred around three types of actors:

**Return migrants.** Men and women who have returned to their places of origin in the provinces of Ayabaca, Morropón, and Huancabamba.

**Local authorities:** Mayors of district municipalities, mayors of populated centres, political authorities (governor or other position of power) or presidents of farmer communities of the districts that have received return migrants.

**Leaders of social organisations.** Members of social organisation directives present in the territories, like rondas campesinas, neighbourhood federations, or others, involved in the management of return migrant reception.

In addition to this, the study has a particular interest in addressing the situation of female return migrants and identifying points of vulnerability. For this, we seek equality in the application of data collection techniques: we were able to interview a total of 37 women and 36 men returnees (see Table 2). In the case of local authorities and leaders, 8 men and 5 women were interviewed.

Place / Detail	Semi-structured interviews			Trajectories		Closed interviews		Total
	Migrants		Authorities	Migrants		Migrants		
	Men	Women	M/W	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Huancabamba	4	3	5	2	1	8	9	32
Morropón	2	4	5	1	0	6	6	24
Ayabaca	2	4	3	1	3	8	7	28
<b>Total</b>	8	11	13	4	4	21	23	<b>84</b>
					<b>40</b>		<b>44</b>	

Table 2: Sample distribution by data collection technique, type of actor, gender, and scope of study. Own creation.

### c. Data collection techniques

The study design used a combination of mixed methods for data collection which allowed for in-depth collection of information, as well as having a broader idea of the general characteristics of return migrants and their territories. These techniques were: i) semi-structured interviews, ii) migratory life trajectories, and iii) closed interviews.

**Closed interviews.** Carried out with return migrants, they aimed to acquire precise information about their profiles, their socioeconomic characteristics prior to the lockdown and current, and the trajectories used throughout their return journey. This technique used a closed question guide about specific topics. For this, a questionnaire for data collection was elaborated in a survey format.

**Semi-structured interviews.** These were applied to the three types of actors identified – returnee men and women, local authorities and leaders –, given their knowledge and/or experience on the topic, the local contexts and surroundings. This technique allowed us to obtain in-depth and detailed information about the territorial dynamics, the return process itself, and the experiences and perceptions of returnees.

**Life trajectories (with an emphasis on migration).** This technique aimed to recognise the dynamics of migration throughout the lives of the returnees and their narratives with respect to their migratory experiences. Although this kind of technique tends to centre itself on the timeline of the actors' lives, for this particular study its application was centred around what has been named *migratory trajectories*. Through this technique, life stories of returnees were collected, whose transversal axis is that of migratory experiences, including that of return migration in the context of the pandemic.

## CHAPTER 1

### MIGRATIONS IN PERU AND THE CONTEXT OF RETURNS TO RURAL AREAS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

#### 1. Migrations: a long story of territorial mobility

Peru has a long history of migrations and mobilities in the territory. There is extensive literature on the theme since the 1950s, from different approaches. The migratory process which has received the most attention in social sciences is that of Andean migrants towards the coast, particularly to the city of Lima. And, as Jurgèn Golte points out in his rigorous balance about migrations in Peru, “si bien existía igualmente una migración masiva hacia la vertiente oriental de los Andes, ésta no suscitó el mismo interés que alcanzaba la conversión de las ciudades por los migrantes”: “although there was also a mass migration

towards the Eastern slopes of the Andes, it did not arouse the same interest as did the conversión of cities by migrants” (2012: 253). By the start of the 1980s and with the Agrarian Reform underway, the anthropologist Matos Mar wrote *Desborde Popular y Crisis del Estado. El nuevo rostro del Perú en la década de 1980: Popular Overflow and State Crisis. The new face of Peru in the decade of the 1980s* (1984), classic book in which he portrays the new face of the Lima city and society, transformed by migrants, particularly Andean. Peru in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is composed of a highly mobile society (Golte and Adams 1987, Golte 1999, cited in Golte 2012: 254). The motives for migratory movements are varied, but they share the common element of the search for a better personal or family situation, which has been conceived as such in notions or ideas of development – this understood as “progress” or “modernity” – (2012: 254). As such, Matos Mar’s *Popular Overflow and State Crisis* (1984), referred to the search for a modernity constructed from below and for the people, from a set of strategies – social capital, parental networks, informality -, which configure the current Lima and who mobilise themselves in demographic and social terms. This migratory movements stem from personal and family life decisions and strategies, which in many cases imply the change of permanent residence. This does not mean, however, that family or community ties are broken, but rather that they are extended over territories. On the other hand, in Peruvian history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there have also been migratory processes triggered by internal violence, mainly in the 1980s. These last ones respond to critical situations which generate forced displacement in many cases (Degregori, 1996).

However, although the emphasis of migratory studies in Peru has been put on movements from the countryside to the city, these are not the only ones to exist in the country. In fact, internal migration – generally pendular or seasonal – are fundamental to understand the current dynamics of rural families, as demonstrated by the National Censuses of 2012 and 2017. These migrations imply a set of displacements between different points in the national territory, for example, between the southern area of Ayacucho and Huancavelica and the coast of Ica, during the harvest months for exportation; or in the case of the northern area, thousands of people circulate from the mountain ranges of Cajamarca and Lambayeque towards the coast during the peak seasons for recruiting labour. However, the spatial flows are not related only to agricultural employment, but they can also be related to fishing – mainly artisanal fishing -, and diverse services, such as construction.

The previously explored is inscribed in a rural space which has undergone significant changes in the last three decades. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Peru, but it also occurs in different Latin American countries (Giarraca, 2001). To address these changes analytically, a set of authors proposed the focus on the *new rurality*, which modified the comprehension of rural territories as not only agricultural, but as multifunctional (De Grammont and Martínez, 2009). Similarly, a more dynamic perspective was introduced as necessary to understand the diverse strategies of rural families, which are articulated in the urban dynamics and spaces. In the article *Cambios en la ruralidad y en las estrategias de vida en el mundo rural: Changes in rurality and in life strategies in the rural world* for SEPIA XV (2014), Alejandro Diez points out that the focus of the new rurality implies analysing “la interrelación múltiple entre espacios urbanos y rurales que supone y explica una serie de transformaciones del espacio rural y modifica con ello nuestras perspectivas de análisis”: “the multiple interrelations between urban and rural spaces which supposes and explains a series of transformations of the rural space and modifies with it our perspectives of the analysis” (2014: 5). One of the important factors in this interrelation is the circulation of

people between both spaces and between multiple intermediate points (farmers, miners, fishers, craftsmen, agricultural entrepreneurs, and people employed in services).

The most recent data, from the years 2000 and since, highlight that internal migration is characterised by the mobilisation of citizens from rural Andean spaces towards coastal cities, from which Lima, in the south Ica, Arequipa, Moquegua, and Tacna, and in the north Chimbote, Trujillo, Chiclayo, and Piura stand out. As such, between the years 2012 and 2017, approximately 3 million people were mobilised, while for the year 2015 there were 7 million internal migrants throughout all of Peru. The 2017 National Census informs that over a period of 5 years, 11.4% of the national population migrated, with the coastal districts as those whose population increased the most, while the 88.7% of mountainous districts have lost population due to migration.

Entering in the context of the study, Piura stands out as the third region in the country with the greatest number of people who migrate towards other regions, after Cajamarca and Puno. At a departmental level, its rate of internal migration is of 2.5% which is manifested in two ways: i) temporal, when it starts, for example, the harvest period in agro-export countries and large farms; and ii) permanent, when the migrants stay in a city to live there definitively. Of the eight provinces, Talara, Paita, Sechura, Sullana, and Piura are those who attract a larger quantity of migrants, while Ayabaca, Morropón, and Huancabamba are the provinces from which most migrants leave; thus, internal migration in Piura is characterised by the mobility from mountain to coast. In Piura, rural women (51.9%) tend to emigrate more than men (48.1%). On the other hand, migrants tend to dedicate themselves to different productive activities, those who stand out include fishing and aquaculture, and work in services such as accommodation and restaurants, commerce, transport and construction, among others (International Organization for Migration, 2015).

The recent studies on migratory processes have been centred around the relation between rural spaces and rural youth. These conclude that a large quantity of young people who decide to migrate from rural contexts to urban ones do so more from necessity than because of a desire to leave their places of origin. They decide to migrate in the search for better educational conditions (C. Urrutia and Trivelli 2019) and young rural women are those who migrate most (Boyd 2019). Migration becomes a strategy to improve economic and educational levels, and to acquire territorial capital<sup>8</sup> which allows rural youth to elaborate a long-term life project (A. Urrutia and Trivelli 2018). In this sense, migration continues to play a central role in the lives of rural youth. In these processes, intermediate cities that have better transport infrastructure, greater economic dynamics and more varied educational offers, have taken on a fundamental role because, by not being forced to migrate to Lima, they have allowed young people not to fully separate from their places of origin. In addition, intermediate cities are considered less hostile spaces, in which less discrimination is suffered and in which experience is gained that allows them to value their places of origin (H. Asensio 2019, A. Urrutia and Trivelli 2018). Thus, recent rural migration is a process marked by the mobilization of young people, unlike the migratory processes of previous decades.

The trends described above, however, respond to a scenario prior to the Covid-19 pandemic unleashed in Peru in March 2020. The lockdown measures adopted by the government led

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<sup>8</sup> The authors understand territorial capital as the “set of elements at the disposal of the territory, both material and immaterial, which may constitute, in a certain way, assets, and otherwise, difficulties” (The concept of 'territorial capital' is taken from the European Leader Observatory 1999: 16, cited in A. Urrutia and Trivelli 2018).

to thousands of migrants settled in various cities of the country to seek to return to their places of origin. Towards the end of April 2020, the government registered 167 thousand requests from Peruvians seeking to return to their places of origin, Piura being the destination with the highest number of registered (22 thousand). In the following months, return migrations continued and not all were registered in official registers. Some authors raised preliminary ideas, highlighting that this "return" should not be understood as unidirectional and definitive in all cases (Burneo, M. and Castro, A. 2020), but rather be seen as a process of mobility rather than migration (Salas 2020). This is because not all the returnees were permanently settled in the cities; although some were former migrants who were helpless when they lost their jobs during the "compulsory social isolation" imposed by the Peruvian government, others were people who were there for study reasons (two or three years) or temporarily for seasonal employment reasons. Next, the scenario in which the returnees decided to return and the context of the migrations in the provinces of Morropón, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca is presented.

## **2. The context of return migrations and returnees to Alto Piura (Morropón, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca)**

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, President Vizcarra's government decreed a lockdown at the national level. This measure of "compulsory social isolation" was announced together with a State of Emergency that imposed the total closure of borders and transportation. The lockdown imposed the stop of productive activities and the closure of all commercial establishments. In this sense, the rights to freedom of assembly and mobility and free movement in the national territory were restricted. In this context, hundreds of thousands of Peruvians were left without jobs and without income.<sup>9</sup> Compared to the same trimester of 2019, during the second trimester of 2020 the population with employment has fallen by 39.6%. As Jaramillo points out, the bulk of this fall is concentrated in urban areas, where employment fell by 49%, and in the case of the self-employed, it had fallen by 42% by the end of July (in mid-June this fall reached 64%). In the informal sector, employment fell 65% at the end of June and 45% at the end of July. The most vulnerable were young people under 25 years of age, since 53% of them lost their jobs from the beginning of the lockdown until the end of July. In the country's cities, employment fell by 42% in the second trimester of the year (Ñopo and Pajita, 2020). The situation is even worse for women, who have been the most affected: in the second trimester of 2020, there was a 45% drop in the female EAP compared to the first trimester of the year, compared to 35% in the male's. Given the situation, Trivelli concludes that "(...) la caída en el empleo (comparando el año móvil 2019/2020 con similar período 2018/2019) es 1,5 veces mayor para las mujeres (9,2% vs 6,1%). Y estas cifras aún seguirán empeorando": "(...) the drop in employment (comparing the mobile year 2019/2020 with the similar period 2018/2019) is 1.5 times higher for women (9.2% vs 6.1%). And these figures will continue to worsen".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Miguel Jaramillo (2020) in: <https://elcomercio.pe/economia/peru/anatomia-de-una-debacle-economica-el-mercado-laboral-peruano-en-el-2020-por-miguel-jaramillo-opinion-noticia/?ref=ecr> (visited 01.09.2020)

<sup>10</sup> Carolina Trivelli (2020) brings to light the vulnerability of women and employment loss, in: <https://iep.org.pe/noticias/columna-una-respuesta-desproporcionada-por-carolina-trivelli/> (visited 11.09.2020)

This situation, especially for the informal sector, implied that thousands of migrant families - permanent or temporary - lost their income. Faced with the difficult socioeconomic situation, added to other factors that we present throughout the report, they decided to start the process of returning to their places of origin.

When the return process escalated, the central government implemented a series of emergency measures and decrees, but these were insufficient to tackle such a broad and complex problem. Additionally, the current government focused on those called "the walkers" and on migrations from Lima and other departmental capitals on the country's coast. However, the exit points were diverse, as are the situations and realities of the returnees. The field work has made it possible to account for a series of different trajectories: on the one hand, only a small group benefited from the measure ordered by the central government and executed by the regional governments; and on the other hand, the majority returned to their places of origin in clandestine transport – trucks warehouses, *custers*, vans and private cars -, which they organized using their own economic resources and social capital, such as the networks of relatives or acquaintances "of the people" that provided transportation by sections until reaching the destination. Likewise, many returned from peri-urban provinces and areas, from different parts of the country.

#### Rules approved by the Peruvian State referring to returnees<sup>11</sup>

Decreto de Urgencia 043-2020, which dictates extraordinary measures with the aim of acquiring goods and services necessary for the quarantine accommodation and food for people who have to displace themselves in the country as a result of the declaration of a State of Emergency given Covid-19.

Resolución Ministerial 204-2020-MINSA, which approves the Technical Guide for the exceptional transfer of people who are outside their ordinary residence as a result of the application of the social immobilisation provisions, modified by the Resolución Ministerial 337-2020-MINSA.

Resolución Ministerial 097-2020-PCM, which approves the Guidelines for the transfer and quarantine of people who are outside their habitual residence, as a result of the measures of social isolation due to the National Emergency for COVID-19.

Resolución de Secretaría de Descentralización 008-2020-PCM/SD, which updates the Guidelines for the transfer and quarantine of people who are away from their habitual residence, as a result of the social isolation measures for the National Emergency given COVID-19 approved by Resolución Ministerial 097-2020-PCM.

The map presented below (Image 2) is based on the closed interviews applied to 44 returnees. In it, the diversity of places from which the returnees returned to Alto Piura is displayed. The map also shows that many were found in coastal provinces of the same

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<sup>11</sup> Los especialistas de Instituto de Defensa propusieron que se reconozca a los retornantes como desplazados internos. Recomiendan que se aplique la Ley N.º 28223, Ley sobre los Desplazamientos Internos, y cuestionan los lineamientos emitidos por la Presidencia del Consejo de Ministro (Resolución Ministerial N.º 097-2020-PCM) al ser insuficientes para garantizar un retorno seguro para los migrantes internos durante el confinamiento. Visto 5-09-2020 : <https://www.idl.org.pe/ley-de-desplazados-debe-aplicarse-a-los-retornantes/>

department of Piura or in peri-urban areas of the coast, such as the Virú district in La Libertad. From the semi-structured interviews carried out in the field, it was found that a group of the returnees was found as seasonal or temporary migrants.<sup>12</sup>

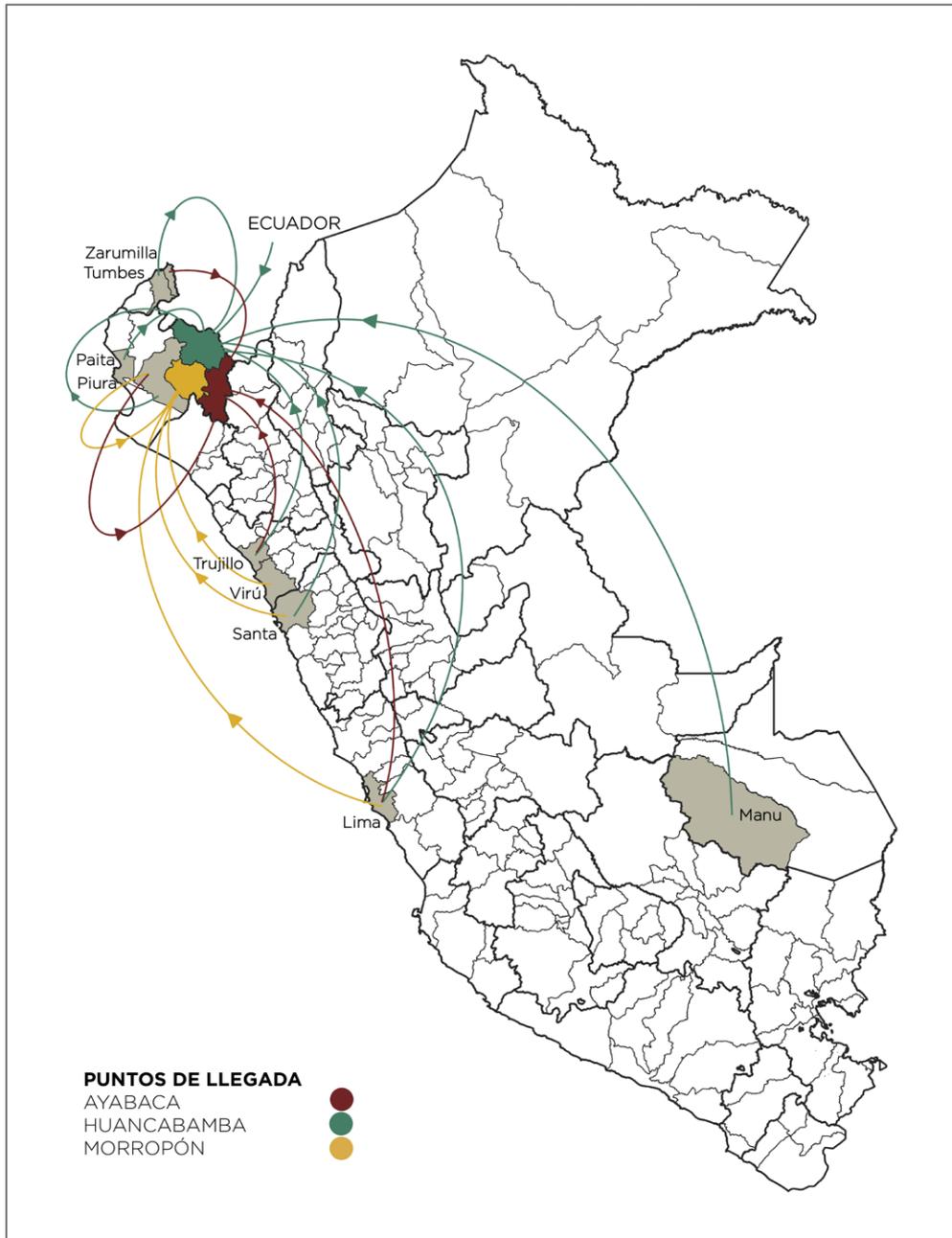


Image 2: Points of exit and arrival of returnees to Alto Piura. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

The flow map (Image 3) shows the intensity of the returns from the places identified in the closed interviews. It shows the places of origin and points of arrival in Alto Piura (Morropón, Huancabamba and Ayabaca). It is observed that the majority of return flows come from the city of Lima and from the department of Piura itself, particularly from the coastal provinces: Sechura, Talara, Paita, and Piura itself.

<sup>12</sup> This topic is described in-depth in Chapter 3 of this report.

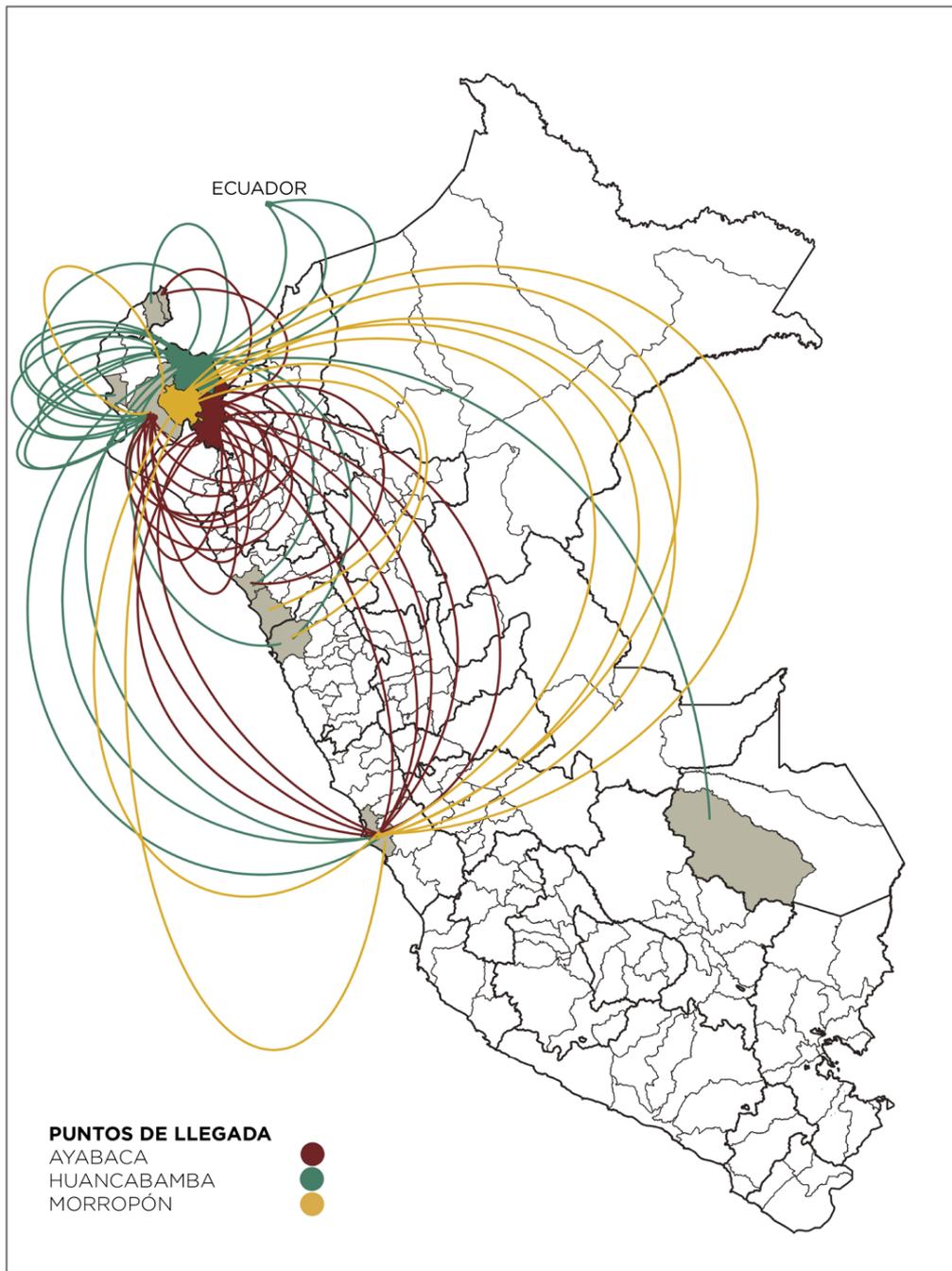


Image 3: Flows and areas of departure and arrival of returnees going to Alto Piura. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

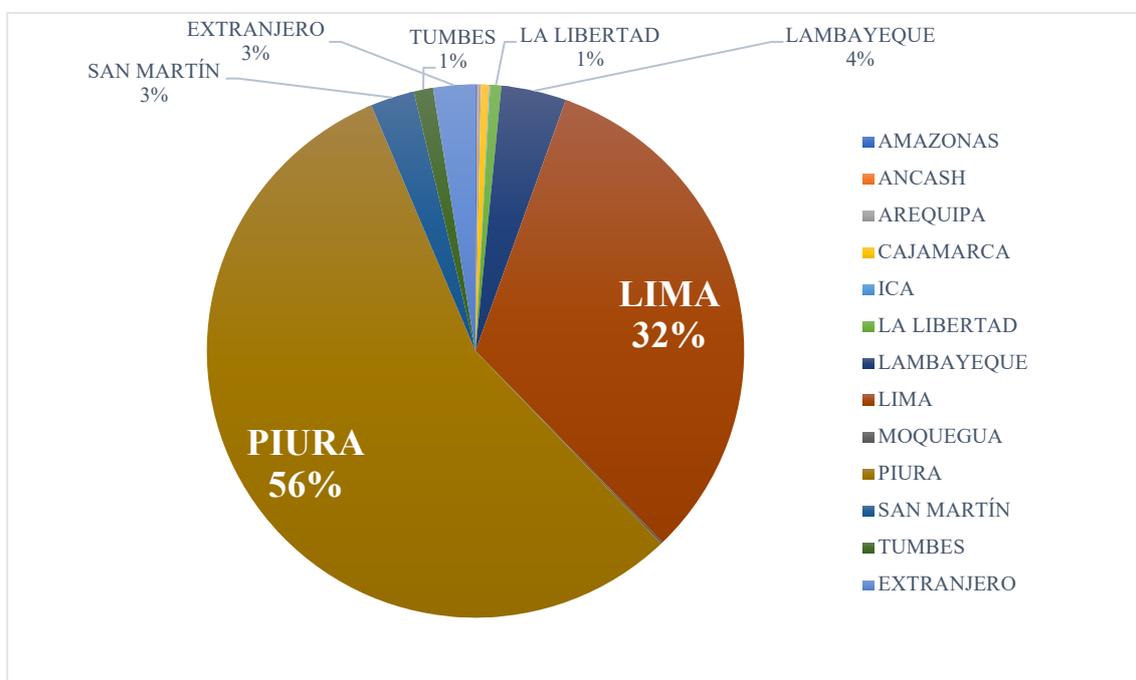
### 3. An overview of the returns to Alto Piura from the registers of health centres

The health centres of the different districts of Alto Piura did an important job in registering the returnees.<sup>13</sup> The local governments, and, particularly, the peasant ‘rondas’ and communities and health centres, managed the accounting of the returnees, who had to

<sup>13</sup> El registro de los retornantes en padrones fue una iniciativa local con el objetivo de llevar un registro y control de las personas que regresaron. La información fue recogida por los miembros de los centros de salud y, en muchos casos, llenada a mano o en fichas dispersas. Hoy, son de suma importancia y relevancia para fines de políticas públicas y académicos, debido a que no se cuenta con registros oficiales ni información sobre aquellos que retornaron fueran del traslado organizado por el gobierno.

register in the "gates"<sup>14</sup> placed at the access and exit points of each district and in the health centres of their respective localities. Although complete information is not available for all cases, we were able to access information on the place of departure, the date of departure, the sex and the age of those who returned to some districts of Alto Piura.<sup>15</sup> In total, the registers contain information on 2,066 returnees (1,240 men and 826 women). The general overview that we present below uses the information from these registers, but not the information collected during our field work; however, we consider that its reading is of utmost importance to contextualize the research.

A first important issue, which coincides with the field findings (see flow maps: Images 2 and 3), is that the vast majority of returnees undertook the trip from various cities of Piura, at 56%, and another important group travelled from Lima, at 32% (see Graph 1). They have also returned from other cities in the country, particularly from the coast, and from some border areas such as Frías or Loja, in Ecuador.

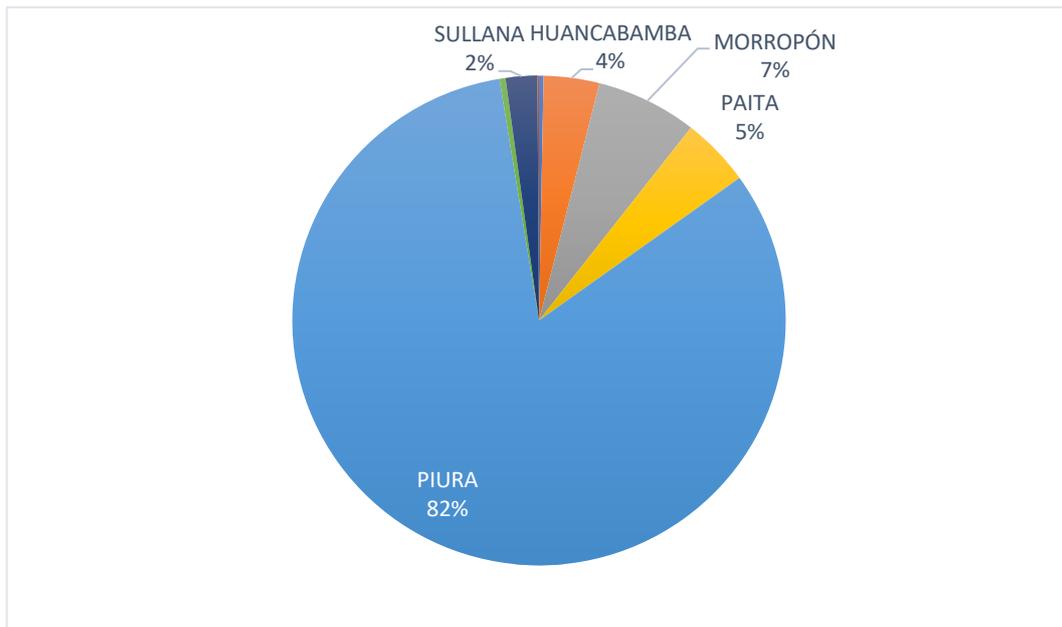


Graph 1: Returnees to Alto Piura by place of departure. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

In the case of those who have returned to Alto Piura from other parts of the department (Graph 2), the province of Piura stands out, and particularly the city, with 82%. We cannot fail to point out that 11% return from the departmental capitals of the same high Piura provinces of Morropón and Huancabamba.

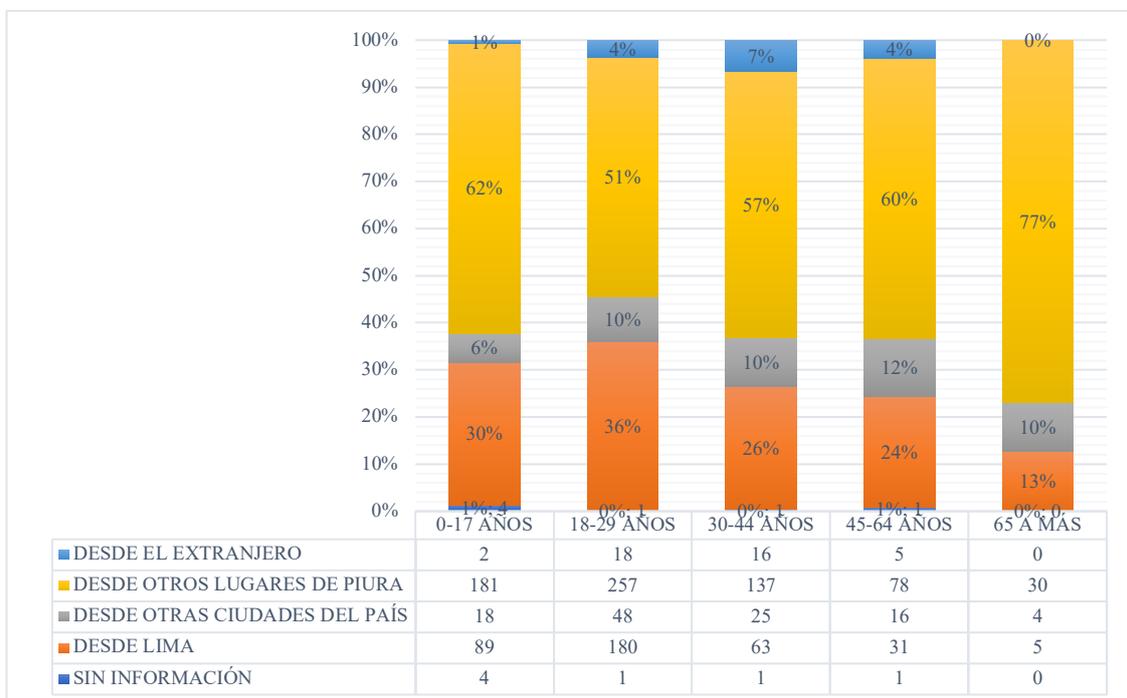
<sup>14</sup> Term which refers to the stop and control points in the territory to prevent the passing of passers-by.

<sup>15</sup> The registry data collections information of a total of 2,066 men and women returnees (Lacking departure information: 251 cases. Lacking arrival dates: 846 cases).



Graph 2: Returnees to Alto Piura from other provinces of Piura. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

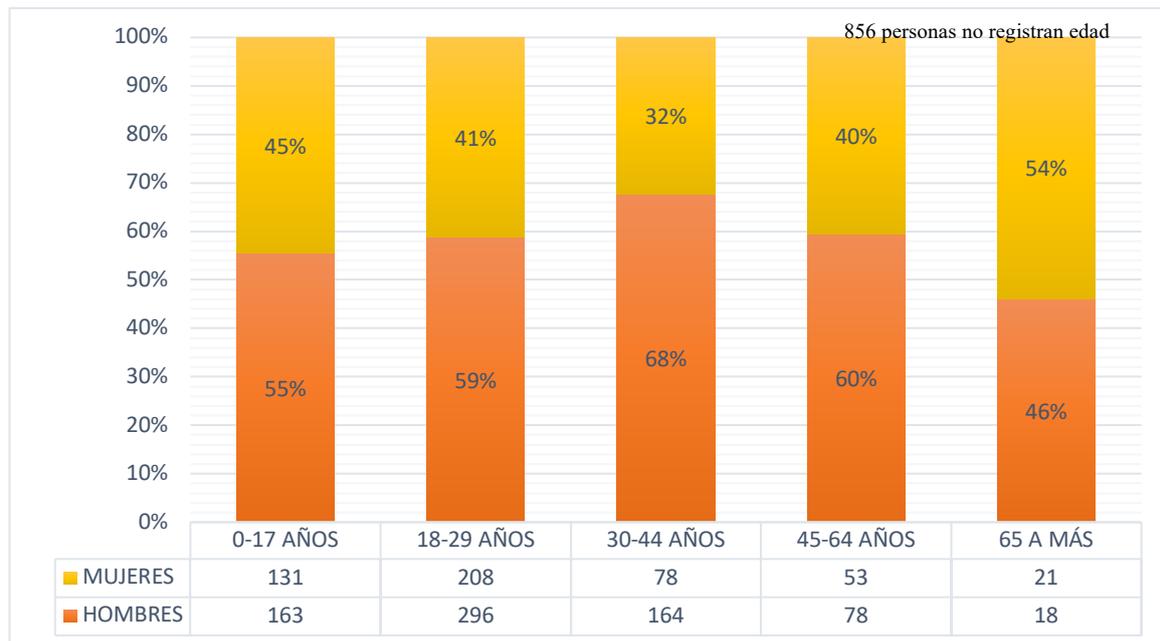
When crossing the variables of place of origin and age groups, it becomes notable that older adults, over 65 years of age, returned in greater numbers from Piura (77%) and, to a lesser extent, from Lima (13%). This varies in the case of young people between 18 and 29 years of age, who returned in greater numbers from Piura (51%) and, in second place, from Lima (36%).



Graph 3: Returnees to Alto Piura by age group and place of departure. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

Regarding the sex and age of the returnees to Alto Piura, on average, 60% of these are men; women make up the remaining 40%. Most of these are young people between 18 and 29 years old (25%). Furthermore, in the age group of between 18 and 29 years, more men (59%) than women (41%) have returned, and the greatest difference in sex by age group is

found among those between 30 and 44 years old, in which the percentage of male returnees is double that of women (see Graph 3).



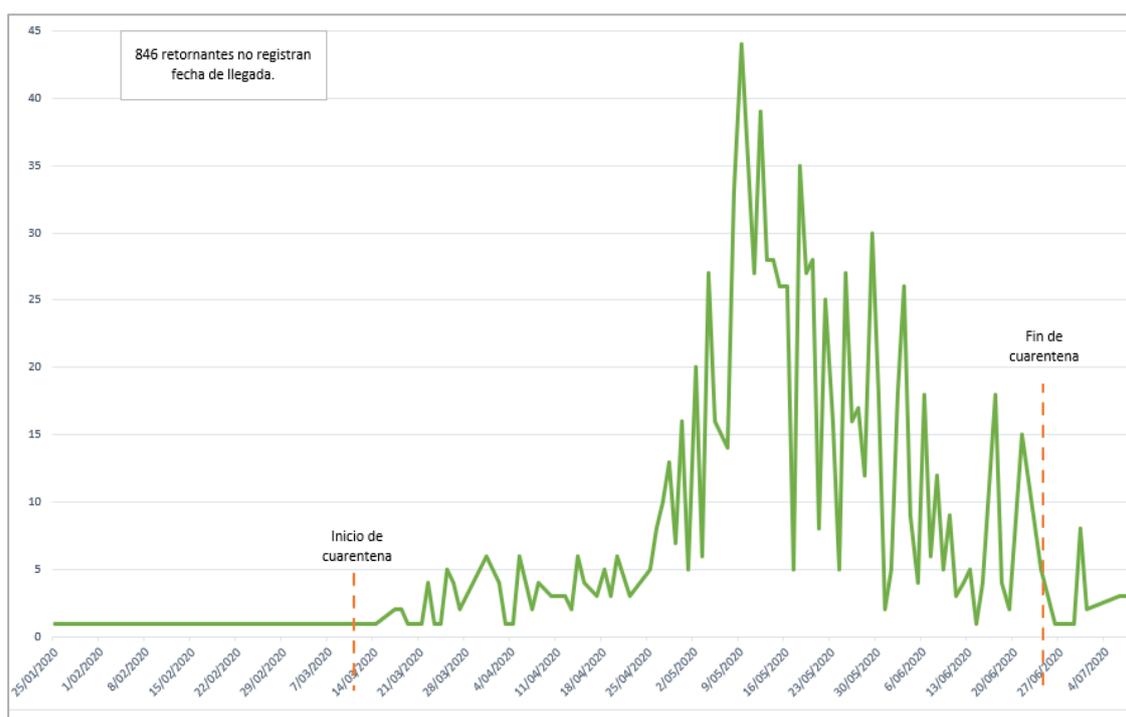
Graph 4: Return migrants by age group and sex. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

This information coincides with the fieldwork findings: it was found that the majority of returnees are made up of young couples with small children. On the other hand, those over 45 years old represent, on average, 6% of the total registered. This data is relevant since future projects and the expectations of returnees vary depending on the life course stage at which they encountered the pandemic. As we will see in the sixth chapter, intergenerational differences are a point to take into account for local planning and public policies that are developed to address the issue of returns.

Finally, we have considered it relevant to collect the temporary dynamics of the returns to Alto Piura. The analysis of the information shows that the majority of returns were undertaken after the first lockdown period (see Graphs 3 and 4). The returnees waited and respected the government's measures; in the interviews, many indicate that they expected to return to their activities after 15 days. However, after several weeks, and coinciding with the delay in the approval of the "universal bond", these people were without income and without state aid. It is only when the lockdown was extended for the fourth time, around week eight of the pandemic, that the vast majority of returnees to Alto Piura embarked on the return journey. This coincides with what was collected in the interviews we conducted during the fieldwork, which allow us to delve into the reasons for the return (chapters four and five).

Most of our interviewees point out that they did not make the decision just after the pandemic began, but that it was made weeks later, as a result of the evaluation of a set of factors: absence of government aid, savings, household situation, possibility to recover employment, travel risks, travel expenses, among others. As can be seen in Graphs 5 and 6, the majority of returns occur between weeks eight and twelve of the lockdown (and their respective extensions), with a peak in week ten. These figures, based on a total of 1,220

returnees,<sup>16</sup> could be indicating that most of them were waiting - or evaluating - a possible scenario in which they could have stayed in the cities of residence. Our interviews in the field, carried out with a total of 71 returnees men and women, and 13 authorities and leaders, account for this period of uncertainty in which some thought that the pandemic would last less or that they would receive greater support from the central or regional governments. Six months later, very few of those interviewed reported receiving any of the vouchers.<sup>17</sup> Only 5 of the 63 returnees participating in our closed interviews (44) and semi-structured interviews (19) indicated that they had been beneficiaries of a bond granted by the government before deciding to return; in one of the cases, cashing the bonus had not been possible.



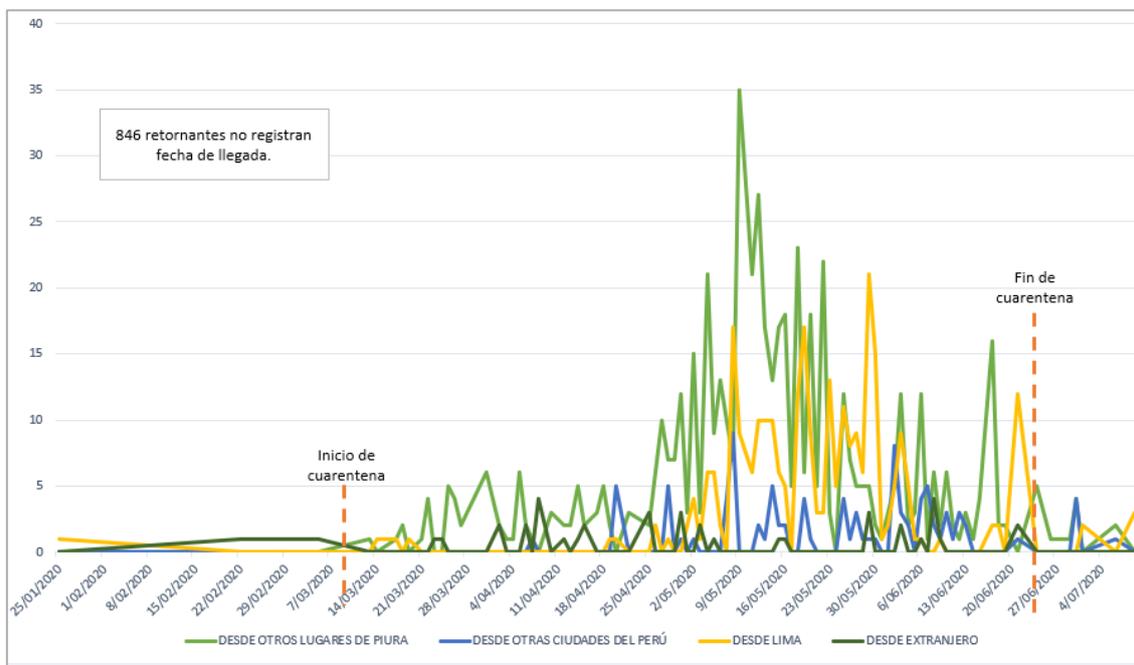
Graph 5: Returnees to Alto Piura by their given arrival date. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

<sup>16</sup> Of 2,066 returnees that appear in the registers, 846 people did not complete the information for this variable (date of arrival in the town). For this reason, this graph is based on information from 1,120 male and female returnees.

<sup>17</sup> Government bonds: **'I stay at home' bonus**. This first bond was delivered for a value of S / 380, it was directed to around 2.5 million families in situations of poverty, extreme poverty or at risk of falling into it. With the extension of the lockdown, it was extended to a second payment of S / 380 each (the distribution began on March 23 - first payment - and the beginning of May - second payment -). **Independent Bonus**. Aimed at 800,000 self-employed households in high-risk situations given the pandemic. According to the latest information provided by the State, there would be a total of 773,288 beneficiary households (it was distributed from April 8 - first payment - and from April 28 - second payment -). **Rural bond**. Aimed at 837,000 households living in poverty and extreme poverty in rural areas, it is S / 760 and was delivered in a single payment since May 13. **Universal Family Bonus**. This S / 760 bonus is aimed at those households whose members did not receive an income greater than S / 3,000 per month during the state of emergency. Initially, the Government announced that this measure would benefit 75% of the country's households, that is, around 6.8 million families (its distribution began on May 20; however, due to distribution problems, delivery times were lengthened, and this lasted until August). **Second Universal Family Bond**. On July 28, President Martín Vizcarra announced the creation of a second S / 760 bond that would benefit some 8.5 million Peruvian households, but this was officially approved on August 20.

Graph 5 shows that the return curve begins to rise from week seven of the lockdown (the week of April 25<sup>th</sup>), which coincides with the announcement made by President Vizcarra on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, to extend the lockdown for the third time, until May 10. But the highest peak of returns occurs around weeks nine and ten of the quarantine (between May 9<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>), that is, just after the announcement of the fourth extension of the lockdown - made on May 8<sup>th</sup> - until the last week of May. This allows us to draw attention to the situation of constant uncertainty in which people find themselves during lockdown; even more so for those who had lost their jobs. The constant extensions of compulsory lockdown and the absence of a universal bond (until the end of May), seemingly played a definitive role in the critical decision of many returnees.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, a new announcement on May 22 dictated a fifth extension of the lockdown, this time for a month. This announcement coincided with new return peaks between weeks twelve and thirteen. Graph 6 shows the return dates according to the weeks of lockdown and places of origin. The green line follows the returns that occurred from cities in the department of Piura, and the yellow line, from Lima. Returns from Piura intensify towards week eight, peaking at week ten, while the returns from Lima intensify in week ten and twelve. It is interesting to note that arrivals from Lima are one or two weeks apart from those from the department of Piura itself. This could be explained both by the complexity of making the decision and by the greater planning that the return from Lima required: organising long journeys, including vehicle changes, and the transfer of all their belongings. Despite this, a significant increase in returns from Lima to Alto Piura was finally observed in the week of May 30, just a few days after the announcement of the fifth lockdown extension, this time for a month.



Graph 6: Frequency of returns by date and place of departure. Source: Health centres. Own creation.

<sup>18</sup> Lockdown began March 15 (ended March 30); March 26 - 1<sup>st</sup> extension (ended April 12); April 8 - 2<sup>nd</sup> extension (ended April 26); April 23 - 3<sup>rd</sup> extension (ended May 10); May 8 - 4<sup>th</sup> extension (ended May 24); May 22 - 5<sup>th</sup> extension (to end on June 30). One month of lockdown is celebrated. June 26 - it is announced that quarantine will be lifted from July 1, but then the state of emergency is extended until July 31.

To summarise, the information presented allows us to point out that the returnees to Alto Piura were scattered in different cities, especially on the country's coast, with a significant weight in the capital, Lima. However, most of the returnees were established - permanently or temporarily - in other cities of the department of Piura itself. In addition to this, it is important to collect not only the variety of return points, but also the fluctuations in arrival times to Alto Piura. Graphs 5 and 6 show that the returns did not occur *en masse* as soon as the pandemic began, but rather after more than a month and a half. During this time, the returnees saw their situation deteriorate, to finally decide to undertake the return trip, assuming, in many cases, the risks of contagion and dangerous situations. This is confirmed by the interviews, in which the returnees indicate that they could have "held out" a little longer in Lima or other cities if they had a clearer picture or had a government bond in the first few two months. Faced with the uncertainty, many decided to return. On the other hand, had the government managed internal transfers differently, perhaps those who were going to return due to the loss of their jobs would have been able to return to Alto Piura with a small amount of capital. Instead, with everything they spent on the way - including payments to the police at different points on the road - they arrived at their places of origin in a precarious situation, with just a few soles in their pockets.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MIGRATORY PROCESSES IN THE ALTO PIURA**

Alto Piura is recognised by its authorities as an area with a high migratory mobility. Migration processes tend to be both temporary and permanent, and are characterised by the mass migration of young people, men and women, of school age or of legal age, who travel to the coastal areas to seek better opportunities for personal and family development, given the limited educational and job offer in their places of origin. The provinces of Alto Piura have different migratory dynamics, consolidated over the last 20 years, in which the places to which the migrants travel, the activities to which they are engaged, and their life expectancies are differentiated. This section will show the types of migration and migratory dynamics of Alto Piura, especially of returnees who have returned to the provinces of Ayabaca, Huancabamba and Morropón.

#### **1. Types of migration**

Authorities and migrants recognise that agriculture in Alto Piura is an unattractive and limited activity. One of the reasons is that water is a scarce resource and the water infrastructure is precarious, hence why some of the plots cannot be cultivated. In addition to this, in all three provinces, job and educational opportunities for young people are scarce, as there are no colleges with attractive careers and job offers are poorly paid.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, migrating is considered an alternative in order to access better job opportunities and a greater range of educational offers.

This situation has given rise to the consolidation of two different, but not exclusive, types of migratory processes in Alto Piura in the last 20 years: i) temporary; and ii) permanent ones. Temporary migration occurs among young people and adults who travel during the dry season to other provinces of the region, other nearby regions - such as Tumbes,

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<sup>19</sup> In the interviews carried out, the interviewees pointed out that the pay for one day of working between 10 and 12 hours in private agricultural land fluctuates between S/ 30 and S/ 40, depending on whether it is sowing or harvest season. The daily pay for construction work fluctuates between S/ 40 and S/ 60, depending on the task and the specialisation of the worker.

Lambayeque, La Libertad, Cajamarca - or to Lima, in search of temporary jobs that allow them to supplement their income with those of agricultural activity. In these cases, migrants usually work for agro-industrial companies (Piura, La Libertad), as laborers for owners of medium and small farms, as fishermen (Tumbes, Piura), or as employees in companies of various different sectors (textile, plastic in Lima). The places to which they migrate depend on the network of contacts - family or friend -, the distance and the experiences of their compatriots. In addition to this, transversally to the three provinces, the trips are usually made between the months of December and March, although they can extend until June. There are also cases of young people of school age, between 14 and 16 years old, who take advantage of the school vacations months to travel to nearby provinces or to Lima to visit members of their nuclear or extended family who live in coastal cities. On these trips, which are usually made with other members of their family between the months of December and March, young people take the opportunity to work as laborers or helpers in businesses, restaurants and shops, which allows them to save some money for their school expenses of the coming year. These cases become more frequent in those young people whose parents, brothers or uncles reside permanently in the cities, which allows the visit to last for weeks or months without them representing great economic expenses.

Some cases that reflect this type of migration are those of Eddie and Jhonny, who have returned to Alto Piura as a result of the pandemic. Eddie, from the town of Coyona in the district of Canchaque (Huancabamba), of 40 years of age, travelled for the first time to Jaén –in the neighbouring department of Cajamarca– after finishing his fourth year of high school at the age of 16. He travelled with the idea of looking for work, to "have a way to support myself", given that he was unable to find work in Coyona. In Jaén, where his uncles lived, he worked as a labourer for a few months during the coffee harvest season. At the end of that first experience, he returned to Coyona with the idea of leaving his studies and dedicating himself to work. Since then, and for over 20 years, he has constantly travelled during the dry season to the cities of Piura, Trujillo and Jaén to work as a labourer in construction works or any other type of job he finds. On the other hand, Jhonny, from the El Higuérón village in the district of San Miguel de El Faique (Huancabamba), aged 22, travelled to Lima for the first time in December 2014, after finishing his fourth year of secondary education. He did so with the idea of getting to know the city, visit his mother and get a job to save money for his school supplies. His trip lasted three months, and, although he could not find a job, he thought of returning to Lima after finishing his fifth year of high school, a plan that he fulfilled the following year.

Permanent migration is most widespread among young people who perceive limited work and educational opportunities in their places of origin. As the president of the round of El Algodonal in Ayabaca argues, young people migrate because "they seek to excel, achieve their goals and improve their personal and family economies". Those who migrate permanently are usually young people who have just finished high school, have relatives who live in cities and know, from the experiences of their family or friends, that the chances of finding work are higher and better paid.

Permanent migration processes are not always associated with fixed life plans; on the contrary, they tend to be processes whose consolidation depends on various factors, among which are job stability, the educational project, and personal and family progress.

Throughout this process, the option to return is always present. Indeed, *"young people leave for a long time, as far as I remember very few have returned, usually it is almost definitive,"* says an authority. There are two main ways in which permanent migratory

processes are consolidated: i) those who, without having prior migratory experience, leave their places of origin and do not return; ii) those who, after some experiences of temporary migration, perceive of better job opportunities outside their place of origin and little by little decide to settle permanently. A special situation is that of young women, who tend to migrate permanently at the end of their secondary studies when they see that the opportunities and job offers are primarily aimed at men in their places of origin.

Although the motivations to migrate tend to focus on two reasons - better job opportunities and greater access to education - the interviewees maintain that only a minority group of young people migrate to study, but that the vast majority, who come from rural areas, aim to work as their first option. However, these motivations are not exclusive: the majority of young returnees interviewed commented that, although they migrated mainly to look for work, studying was part of their life expectancy. Similar to what happens with temporary migrations, in these cases the places where people migrate are also usually cities where they have close friends or family.

The case of Blanca, who has returned to Alto Piura from the city of Chimbote –on the coast of the department of Áncash–, exemplifies this type of permanent migration and illustrates the situation of young women. Originally from the province of Morropón and 38 years old, she left the Salitral district for the first time at the age of 16, having just finished her secondary studies. She travelled to Chimbote, where her sisters lived, with the idea of working, settling down and, if possible, studying a technical career. She remembers that she decided to travel because her family's economic condition was precarious and because the job opportunities for a young woman were minimal in her place of origin; thus, she points out that the expectations of personal progress for women, “beyond being a housewife”, were null. She has lived in Chimbote for more than 20 years, has worked intermittently as a seller in markets or clothing stores, was unable to study, and throughout that time period she returned to Salitral to visit her parents once every one or two years. Today, Blanca finds herself in a situation of uncertainty, without a job, without money, and has to find a way to support her father and her young son.

## **2. Local migratory dynamics**

The types of migration and the places from which they migrate allow us to account for the migratory dynamics of each of the provinces. The places that host migrants are intermediate or large coastal cities, or in the high jungle (of the neighbouring departments), which have been consolidated in local narratives as those areas where "the opportunities for work or study are better." Thus, a long local migratory trajectory has been established and particular expectations are generated in each of these places that are part of the migrants' life strategies.

In Ayabaca, migrants mainly opt for Piura (city), Sullana, Paita, Tumbes, Lima, and some border points with Ecuador. People tend to travel to Piura to work in restaurants or agro-industrial companies, and to a lesser extent to study. Men tend to migrate to Paita and Tumbes to engage in fishing activities, while women choose to work in small businesses or restaurants. Men who live in the border districts usually travel to Ecuador to engage in artisanal mining and agriculture; not many women travel to these areas.

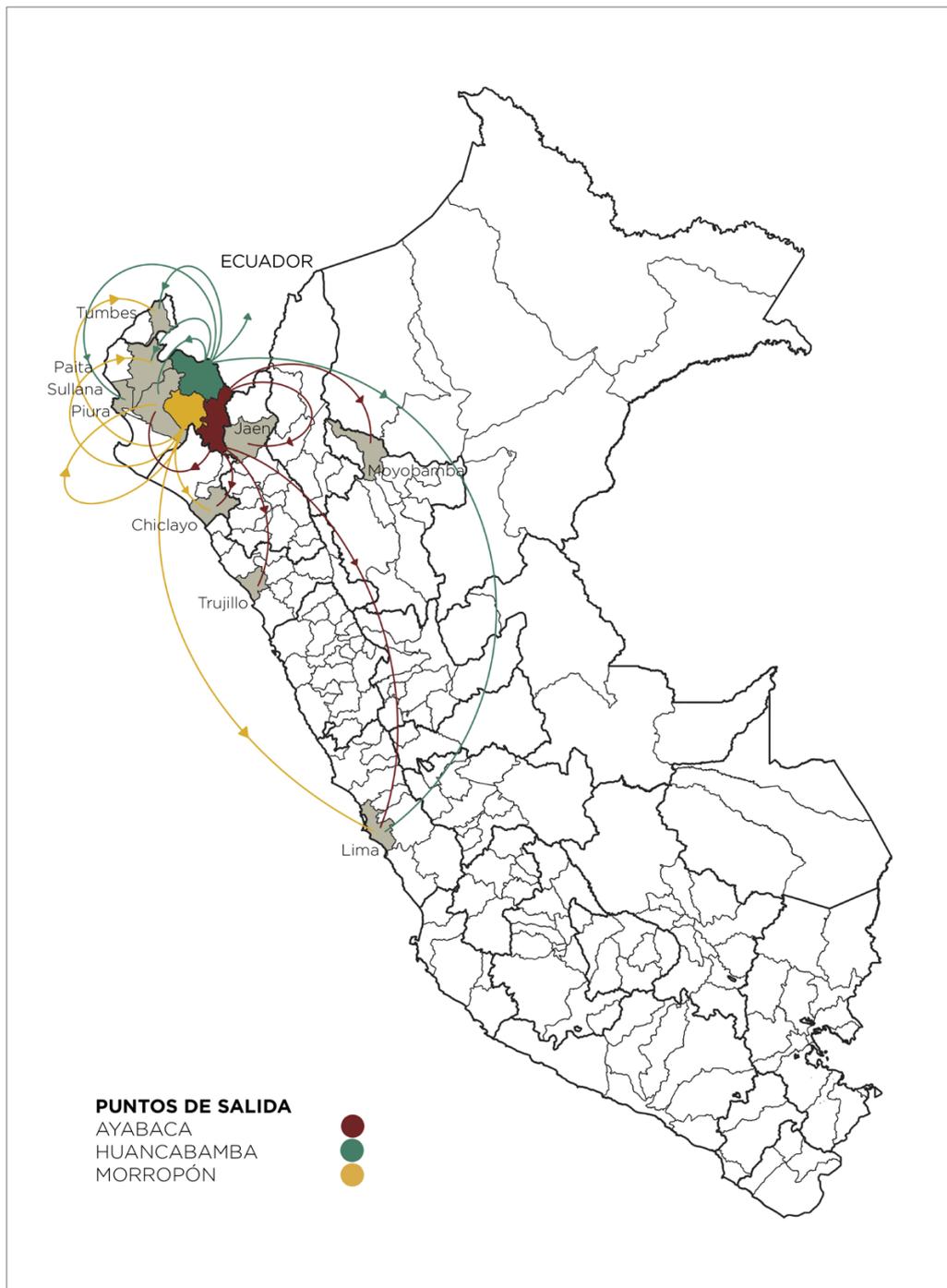


Image 4: Places of emigration in Ayabaca, Huancabamba, and Morropón. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

In Huancabamba, on the other hand, the recurring places of migration are Jaén (in Cajamarca), Moyobamba (in San Martín), Piura (city), and the coastal cities of Trujillo and Chiclayo. Men often migrate to Jaén and Moyobamba to work as labourers in coffee and cocoa crops. Men and women usually travel to Piura to work in agro-industrial companies, particularly those dedicated to the export of grapes. Likewise, the men who travel to the city of Piura work in construction and the women in markets, restaurants or small shops. To a lesser extent, there are also young people who travel to Piura to study. Trujillo and Chiclayo are destinations to which people mainly travel to work in construction or other indeterminate temporary jobs. Finally, in the case of the province of Morropón, closer to Piura, the places to which people usually migrate are more diverse, but they are mainly

concentrated in Piura (city), Lima and Chiclayo, and to a lesser extent Sullana and Tumbes. In Piura and Chiclayo, migrants engage in commercial activities, some set up their own businesses, others sell food as street vendors, work in markets, restaurants or shops. In Tumbes or Sullana the activities are diverse: fishing, construction, transportation, agriculture.

The city of Lima deserves special attention. The capital of the country is perceived as the ideal place to migrate and as the city that offers greater job opportunities and personal advancement: "many people go to Lima because they say there is a lot of work generation," says a local leader. Lima is also perceived as the city where the possibilities of independence and of "being my own boss", as another interviewee affirms, are higher than in the rest of the cities around the country. This discourse has been consolidated through the shared experiences of countrymen or relatives who have established themselves in the city with relative success. In this sense, these expectations and associated narratives encourage many migrants to travel to the city of Lima without being clear about what they will do and what they will work on, "they are going to look for it", but with the objective of being in a better condition than they would be in their places of origin.

From the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and migratory trajectories, it has been made clear that those who migrate to any of the indicated places, intermittently move between formal jobs –but with short contracts– and informal ones. In fact, the interviewees affirm that, regardless of where they arrive, the jobs are usually temporary and these vary between working for agribusinesses or as labourers in farms, fishermen on an artisanal boat or, in urban areas, working as street vendors, guards, kitchen assistants, salespeople in businesses, among others. In some cases, they have contracts, but these are usually monthly or by trimester. Although these activities are replicated in all cities, it is in Lima where there are higher expectations of finding some job stability, through work in formal plastics companies, textile workshops or other items.

The migration of young people is something that parents promote or support, because there is a general idea among them that migrating is equivalent to being better off and opens a window of opportunities for their children's progress. As one interviewee pointed out, *"a father sees the way the children leave, how to look for them, they are not happy here, because they have nothing to gain from it"*. This perception ends up pushing young people to start their migratory trajectories. Regardless of whether they end up being successful or whether they can be consolidated, it is clear to them that a part of their life strategies will be marked by the accumulated experiences of migration.

What has been stated up to this point serves to account for the different migration trajectories of the returnees who participated in this study. Next, two trajectories – those of adult men and young women - that outline local migratory dynamics will be evaluated in detail. Edar, from the town of Coyona (Huancabamba), 36, migrated to Piura for the first time after finishing his secondary education. He did so to enlist in the army so that he could gain new experience, see new places. At the end of his military service, he returned to Coyona and dedicated himself to working on the family farm, on his father's land. He was there for three years, when he decided to travel to Lima with the intention of looking for a better job and saving money to build his house. Already in Lima, he worked as a watchman. Remember that the salary was very low, so he decided to return to Coyona after a year. At the age of 30, he returned with the idea of dedicating himself to agriculture, but the situation was not the best. Soon after, he decided to travel to the city of Sullana to work whatever he could in order to save money and build his house. He was in Sullana for five

years, where he had various jobs, although he emphasises that they were very exhausting. His work day lasted 12 hours in a company that processed wool. Last year his boss told him that in addition to working during the day, he had to take care of the premises, so he started working 24 hours, without a break. In the processor during the day and taking care of the premises at night. It is in this context that this year, due to the pandemic, he returns to Coyona. In the future, Edar has the idea of travelling again to save as much as possible and be able to finish building his house and stay and live in his place of origin.

On the other hand, Daxina, from the urban center of Ayabaca and 21 years old, travelled to Trujillo for the first time at the age of 12 for a few months to visit her grandparents who live there. Four years later, when she finished her secondary education, she returned to Trujillo, this time to start her university studies, since the higher institutions in her place of origin did not have the careers that she wanted to study. She decided to go out *because "outside there are more opportunities than here, I thought so"*, since in Ayabaca the possibilities of improvement for women are limited: *"they dedicate themselves to being at home, there are few opportunities, if you go abroad there are more"* – she points out –, unlike the men who are dedicated to agriculture. She has returned to Ayabaca due to the pandemic but plans to return to Trujillo to continue her studies, graduate, and stay there or travel to another region where she can develop professionally. In the long term, she aims to get out of the country.

The previous cases show us how migration is understood as part of the very life strategies of many of the returnees from the three provinces of Alto Piura. In these, spatial mobility is understood as part of personal and family projects that aim to expand their future life possibilities. That being said, temporary or permanent migration should not be seen as an exceptional phenomenon, but rather as part of the very social dynamics that have taken hold in the last 20 years in these provinces. In fact, 25 of the 27 migrants interviewed in depth (19 in semi-structured interviews and 8 in migratory trajectories) had gone through more than one migration process.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHARACTERISING THE RETURN MIGRANTS IN THE ALTO PIURA**

This descriptive chapter aims to characterise the men and women who have returned to their places of origin in the provinces of Morropón, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca. The main source for this is the 44 closed interviews conducted with the returnees from Alto Piura.<sup>20</sup> Two aspects to be highlighted in this chapter are the following: the first is that, although an important group of returnees has been in cities for many years, another significant group of returnees is made up of seasonal migrants. The second aspect is that, despite the fact that many had lived in the city for more than a decade, they had not managed to consolidate their life projects and were in a situation of considerable socioeconomic precariousness. These trends are described in a general way in the following sections; the details of the cases will be seen from the migratory trajectories analysed in the fourth chapter.

#### **1. General characteristics**

The men and women who have returned to Alto Piura are mostly young. Among our interviewees, we found a majority concentration in the age group of 18 to 30 years (27 of

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<sup>20</sup> A total of 71 tools were applied to returnees for this study (19 semi-structured interviews, 8 life trajectories, and 44 closed interviews), in addition to semi-structured interviews to 13 local authorities and leaders. The frames and analysis presented in the section are based only on the 44 closed interviews.

the total) followed by people between 31 and 50 years, who add up to 14. Only three people interviewed are older than 50 years (see Table 3). These figures show that it is the youth and young adults, those who are among the working-age population (PET), who have been the main protagonists in the return migration process.

Age	Men	Women	Total
18 to 30	13	14	27
31 to 50	7	7	14
Older than 50 years	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	21	23	44

Table 3: Age groups of return migrants. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

According to our closed interviews, almost half of the returnees have completed high school, men and women alike. Likewise, we find that almost a third of the returnees have accessed higher education: nine of them have completed higher education - technical or university - and another four have incomplete university studies. When disaggregating the information by sex, we see that it is the returnee women who have achieved the highest educational attainment: a total of ten women compared to three men. On the other hand, in the group of returnees who did not manage to complete their regular basic studies (EBR) - incomplete secondary school -, 8 male returnees stand out compared to 3 women. Only one woman stated that she had not studied EBR. These returnees with unfinished or uneducated EBR represent a quarter of all interviewees.

Educational Level	Men	Women	Total
Complete primary	2	1	3
Incomplete primary	0	1	1
Completed secondary	10	9	19
Incomplete secondary	6	1	7
University complete	1	3	4
University incomplete	0	4	4
Superior Technical	2	3	5
Without education	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	21	23	44

Table 4: Education level of returnees. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Regarding the family situation, more than half of the returnees indicated that they were single, 19 indicated that they were married or cohabiting, and 2 were separated. On the other hand, more than half of those interviewed said they had children - 13 women and 11 men - (see Table 5). In addition, of the total of those interviewed, ten people have only one child, nine have between two and three, and the rest have four or five children. This means that a significant group of returnees were young men and women who were beginning their migratory trajectories in the cities. As we will see in Chapter 5, based on the personal stories collected, many of them have interrupted their plans due to the pandemic, but plan to

resume them in the medium term. Those who have small children are in a situation of greater uncertainty and with greater apprehension about the family burden.

Number of children	Total
01	10
02	07
03	02
04	03
05	02
Don't have any	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 5: Number of children returnees have. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Knowing the family burden of returnees is important to understand the current needs they have in their places of origin. We found that 26 of the 44 interviewees reported having relatives who depend on them. This group is made up of all returnees with children and two people who claimed to be responsible for their parents and nephews. The problem that emerges from this is that they have practically no income and depend entirely on the help of their families. This implies, in turn, that receiving families must modify the distribution of income and food in the family basket, in order to feed more people.

## 2. Migrant situation before the return process

Before the pandemic, returnees were settled in cities, they had jobs, but they were not consolidated migrants nor were they in a process of accumulation (Zoomers, 1998).<sup>21</sup> Thus, for example, we did not find among our returning interviewees that they owned their homes in the cities where they were. Among our interviewees, a quarter lived with their partner and their children, while ten of them lived with their siblings. Few people lived with other relatives such as uncles (as), grandparents (as), among others. On this point, it is important to note that the vast majority of returnees with children lived in independent but rented houses. This situation has changed with their return, since most of them currently live with relatives who host them, that is, with more people.

Who did you live with before returning?	Total	Number of people in the household
Spouse/ cohabitor and children	18	3 ó 4

<sup>21</sup> Zoomers (1998) proposes "typical" *life strategies* for rural families, in which he identifies strategies of subsistence, consolidation, assistance, and accumulation. In the case of migrants, those whose migratory trajectories have reached a moment of economic stability and who have at least one of their life projects completed, whether it be having given their children a career, having a home, or their own business, could be considered as consolidated. Those in the process of accumulation could be consolidated migrants who have managed to accumulate some economic capital and have bought a property or who have a prosperous business, and are increasing their capital.

Siblings	10	2
Other family members	8	3
Children	3	4
Alone	4	1
Parents	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	

Table 6: People with whom the returnees lived before returning. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

It is interesting to note that 10 of the returnees lived with their brothers or sisters before the start of the lockdown. In most cases, these households were made up of them, their relative and the latter's nuclear family - partner and child. This can be explained either because they are single young people or because temporary migrants who travel during the first months of the year tend to stay with their relatives. Even so, it has been found that the returnees lived in households composed of no more than 5 people. Beyond the composition of the household, this shows us that the migrants had an important support network in their close relatives that allowed them to migrate and have a place of reception, from which to undertake their personal projects.

The situation regarding the composition of their households and the number of members in the household has changed with the displacement towards their places of origin (see Table 7). Currently, only 8 of the 44 returnees interviewed indicated that they are living in a private home, the rest are living with a relative, especially their parents. This has had the effect that, in addition to living with their nuclear family and their parents, the returnees share their homes with the families of their siblings who have also returned; we found that 32 of the 44 interviewees are in this situation. This has led to the recomposing of homes and cases of overcrowding. The cases of Kely and Edar, from the El Algodonal village, Paimas (Ayabaca), illustrate this situation. These cousins lived with their nuclear family in Paita and Piura, respectively. With the pandemic, they have returned to their grandmother's house in El Algodonal. Currently, three families live in her grandmother's house, 12 people in total.

Where do you currently live?	Men	Women	Total
Private home	4	4	8
Family home	17	19	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 7: Type of current housing in the place of return. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

On the other hand, the data collected regarding the returnees' places of departure to Alto Piura shows that most of them, about half, were in Lima, 10 men and 11 women (see table 8). A second group of returnees was living in other provinces of the Piura department itself. Finally, Trujillo (La Libertad), Tumbes (Tumbes) are in third place.

Place of departure	Men	Women	Total
Ecuador	1	0	1

Lima	10	11	21
Madre de Dios	1	0	1
Piura	4	10	14
Sullana	1	0	1
Trujillo	2	0	2
Tumbes	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	21	23	44

Table 8: Place of departure of returnees. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Regarding the length of residence in the returnees' places of departure, the field data suggest that both medium and long-term migratory projects have been reversed as a result of the health and economic crisis generated by the pandemic. As can be seen in Table 9, the length of residence in the places of departure of the returnees interviewed varies between relatively short stays of less than one year and long stays of more than 20 years. The cases of migratory trajectories that we have collected and will present in the next chapter allow us to illustrate this range of situations; it can be deduced from this analysis that the consolidation of these trajectories is not a linear process, but rather involves a set of aspirations and decisions that are taken (and shaped) over time. For example, there are temporary migration projects, which little by little take the form of permanent ones. Or, on the contrary, permanent migration projects are interrupted or that show several comings and goings over the years, even varying from cities and regions.

Length of residence	Total
Less than 1 year	16
Between 1 and 10 years	8
Between 11 and 20 years	8
Over 20 years	12
<b>Total</b>	44

Table 9: Length of residence in cities, before the pandemic. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, migration out of Alto Piura is strongly associated with the expectation of access to better job opportunities. Indeed, we found that 33 of the 44 interviewees were working before the pandemic (20 men and 13 women), while only 5 people were there for health, vacation or education reasons (See Table 10). Additionally, two women said they were simultaneously working and studying, and four women were there for family work reasons (their husbands' work).<sup>22</sup>

Why are you out of your place of origin?	Total
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<sup>22</sup> It is important to clarify that the answers on which Table 10 is based were asked "Why are you out of your place of origin?" The objective was to identify the main reason for the migration. However, this does not mean that, in some cases, those who responded that they were there for health, education, vacation, trade or other reasons, have not been working simultaneously. That is why the amounts vary with respect to the total number of people who indicated having had monthly income before returning.

Work	33
Health	1
Education	2
Holidays	2
Commerce	1
Others	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 10: Motives for migrating from their place of origin. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Regarding the type of work performed by migrants before returning, a high degree of informality is found in their jobs, even among dependent workers: 20 of the 44 interviewees indicated that they had been working for a company or institution, but their contracts were, in many cases, under “spoken agreements” and with piece-rate payments. On the other hand, 16 people stated that they were independent workers and engaged in commercial activities or as street vendors. Likewise, when examining the average monthly income of returnees before the pandemic (see Table 11), we see that 21 generated income below the minimum living wage.<sup>23</sup> Only two of them generated income between S/ 2000 and S/ 3000. This job insecurity is reflected in the fact that 31 of the 39 interviewees who worked said they had lost their jobs in the first weeks of lockdown.

<b>Average monthly income before the pandemic</b>	<b>Total</b>
Less than S/ 950	21
S/ 950 - S/ 2000	16
S/ 2000 - S/ 3000	2
Did not have an income	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 11: Average monthly income prior to the lockdown. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

It is clear that compulsory lockdown has severely impacted the economy of migrants who have returned to their places of origin. This is reflected in the fact that 31 of the 44 interviewees indicated that the lack of economic resources and the inability to generate income was the main reason that determined the decision to return (see Table 12), although, as we will see in the following chapters, this was not the only criterion.

<b>Main reason for return</b>	<b>Total</b>
Being with family	2
Lack of economic resources	31
Death of a parent	1
Had not planned on staying	1

<sup>23</sup> In Peru, the minimum living wage is S/ 930, which equates to US\$ 265 (at the exchange rate of September 2020).

To support agricultural labour	1
Family problem	1
Family health	3
Fear of illness	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Family health reason for return. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

The results allow us to

presented thus far confirm that the

migrants and their families returned mainly because they found themselves in a situation of economic precariousness and social vulnerability, despite the fact that the majority had been living permanently in the city for several years. One issue worth drawing attention to is that migrants with between 10 and 20 years of residence in another city have had to return to Alto Piura. This can give us an idea of the social and economic conditions in which the returnees found themselves: what was conceived as a “better situation” or the desired progress, hid what was actually a situation of vulnerability, with a high rate of informality, precarious jobs and without social protection that would guarantee a minimum of security to be able to face the pandemic.

## CHAPTER 4

### RETURN PROCESSES TO ALTO PIURA

News of the pandemic and the onset of the nationwide lockdown on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, caused hundreds of thousands of people to stop working and lose their jobs as government-issued regulations tightened. The mandatory lockdown that was initially ordered for 15 days lasted for more than 100 days and placed migrants, temporary and permanent, in a vulnerable situation, who were in a precarious and unstable economic and labour situation around the different regions of the country. This led to the beginning of a mass phenomenon of citizens seeking to return to their places of origin in mid-April, due to lack of money, the assurance that lost work would not be recovered, the collapse of the public health system, fear of contagion, and the uncertainty of not knowing what would happen to them and their families in the coming months.

The phenomenon of return migration gained prominence in the national media. These showed thousands of citizens who were stationed on roads waiting for the authorities to transfer them. An important group of them, faced with the seriousness of the situation in which they found themselves, began the return trip by walking long stretches and using informal transport. However, although the press showed this phenomenon on the front pages, little is known about the returnees, their life trajectories, and the factors that determined their decision to undertake the trip. This section analyses the return processes of migrants: their situation before the pandemic, their life projects, the decision to return and the return itself, with the routes they took, the experiences and fears they had to go through.

#### 1. Circumstances prior to the lockdown: returnees’ activities and expectations

At the beginning of the year 2020, thousands of citizens of Alto Piura were in different regions of the country as migrants. Those who were permanently residing in various cities of the country worked in activities, formal and informal, with which they had found a certain economic balance that allowed them to pay their rents, services and to be able to support their family, although with limited savings options. Many of them lived in rented mini-apartments with their partners and children, and in some cases with nephews, parents,

brothers or brothers-in-law who were temporarily looking for work. Other permanent migrants lived in small rooms that they rented, in which they lived alone or with their partners and children.

The case of Estalin is an example of permanent migration. A 26-year-old native of San Juan de Bigote, Morropón province, he had lived in Lima since he was 17 years old. For 6 years he had been working as an assistant and coordinator in a small catering company, in which he had found some economic stability that allowed him to pay the rent of a mini-apartment in the Los Olivos district and to support his family. He did not have a formal contract; the place where he worked was a family business, his payment was made in cash every 15 days, he did not have health insurance or employment benefits. Another case is that of Luis, also from San Juan de Bigote and 30 years old, who worked as an operator in a textile company for almost 10 years. His job allowed him to rent an apartment where he lived with his partner, his daughter and his brother, and to support his family. He remembers that he thought he had a stable job and that he had managed to “progress in Lima”. However, his employment contract was renewed every 3 or every 6 months and it was not renewed after the start of the state of emergency in March 2020.

On the other hand, other citizens had migrated temporarily, taking advantage of the end of the 2019 year to look for work or visit their relatives - parents, children, uncles, mostly -, to stay and live with them during the first three months of the 2020 year and simultaneously look for temporary jobs to save money and return to their places of origin with a small capital.

This is the case of Aida, a 41-year-old returnee from the district of Olleros, Ayabaca. She travelled with her husband and three children to Paita in December 2019 to visit her older children who have resided there for several years. In Paita, her husband would seek seasonal work as a fisherman. She had planned to return to Olleros with her three youngest children in March 2020 and her husband would remain working until the end of the fishing season. The beginning of the lockdown made her plans and those of her family change. Similar is the case of Eddie, from Coyona, Huancabamba, 40 years old. Eddie usually travels for the first months of the year and during the dry season to Piura to look for temporary jobs. In March 2020, he was working in the construction industry, a job he had gotten thanks to a friend of his who worked on the same site. He hoped to work until July and return to Coyona to continue working on her farm.

The cases presented, along with those that have been analysed, show that the returnees, before the start of the compulsory lockdown, were working in various areas (kitchen assistants, occasional construction jobs, street vendors, store vendors, among others). However, something transversal to all of them is that they were engaged in informal activities: the contracts with their employers were “verbal”, they received daily or piece-rate payments, weekly or biweekly (in cash), and they did not have any type of social or health security. In these cases, the possibilities for savings were minimal.

The few returnees who had a formal job worked in sectors that have special labour regimes - such as agro-industrial, textile, micro and small enterprises or SMEs, among others - or as subcontractors, which placed them in a situation of vulnerability in the face of extraordinary situations such as the pandemic. Their employment contracts were renewed every three or six months, their labour rights were curtailed and when they were fired, they had no social benefits and lost their health insurance. In these cases, although the income was constant, the possibilities of saving were few, since their salaries were close to the minimum stipulated by law. On average, a young couple with children, with this type of work, had a

monthly income that ranged between S/ 1500 and S/ 2000. Of this amount, between S/ 800 and S/ 1000 were used to pay for their housing (usually small rented apartments), and the rest was divided between the payment of services, food, and their children's.

On the other hand, we found similarities between the projects that migrants had in the short and medium term before the lockdown. Those who were permanently established had plans and projects linked to the consolidation of their life projects. In general, they sought economic independence –through starting their own businesses–, as well as improving their living conditions, which is often linked to finding their own home. That is the case of Kely, from Paimas, Ayabaca, 30 years old, who was in Tumbes working as a private therapist. For 2020, she had planned to continue working independently to help her parents financially and save for her professional degree so that she could start her own office and "*be my own boss*". However, "*the pandemic has made us go back in time*" - she tells us - referring to the fact that her projects have been truncated and she had to return to her place of origin without savings.

The case of Sebastián, from Coyona, 43 years old, is similar. He had been in Lima since 2012 and worked in the San Fernando poultry company since 2017 with contracts that were renewed every three months; he wasn't on the payroll, but he thought he had stability. Among his plans was to work in Lima until 2022, and then return to Coyona to finish building his house and start a business with his savings. The pandemic cut off his projects. Or the case of Edar, from Paimas and 23 years old, who, after having been in working occasionally in different places, arrived in the city of Piura in 2019 to settle with his partner and two children. At the beginning of this year, he was working as an agricultural worker for an agro-industrial company and had aimed to buy a motorcycle with his savings to work independently and, in the medium term, build his house on land that he had invaded years ago in a district peri-urban in the city of Piura. The lockdown put him out of work, and he had to spend all his savings over the first two months.

Those who were on a temporary basis sought to save as much money as possible in order to maintain themselves over the dry season months in their places of origin, finance the agricultural campaign, finish truncated projects, or start small businesses. For example, Rever, from Olleros, Ayabaca, 33 years old, travelled to Lima with the intention of working until the month of August 2020. With his work in construction, he sought to save money to be able to finish building his house in Olleros, a project he had been truncated on for years that he hoped to have completed in 2020. Eddie, on the other hand, was in Piura with the plan to work until July, return to Coyona and buy a piece of land near his parents' house with the money saved, in which he would build his home at a medium term. Today, this project, like those of Rever, Kely and Sebastián, has been paralysed. All of them perceive that the future is uncertain for their families.

## **2. The lockdown context and reasons for return**

Like everyone else, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic caught the Alto Piura migrants settled in different cities by surprise. Although many of them were aware of the measures being taken in other countries, they assumed that Peru would not reach those levels. The interviewees indicate that because of this they did not take concrete actions from the beginning of the pandemic or in the face of the first announcement of the state of emergency on March 15, 2020. It was thought that the spread of the virus would be something controlled and focused, that it would not scale to the levels it reached. It is with

the first extensions of lockdown that they assumed the seriousness of their situation and began to seriously evaluate the possibility of return.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the more than 100 days of national lockdown - between March 16 and July 1, 2020 - placed thousands of migrants in a vulnerable economic and social situation. All the returnees interviewed indicated having lost their sources of income during this period. Several of those who worked informally, through contracts or oral agreements, were fired on March 16. And although their bosses told them it would only be for the first fifteen days; they did not call them again. Those who worked independently, as street vendors or in their own businesses, had to stop their activities. Those who had formal contracts (3-6 months) were left without work or compensation for their time of service.

That being said, the lockdown period and its effects on return migrants can be divided into three stages. The first, during the first fifteen days of lockdown determined by the government. The second, during the first extension, which took place in early April; and, the third stage, when the lockdown was extended for the second time (and this was repeated up to a fifth extension) and it became clear that it would continue for several more weeks. During the first stage, the general idea among the interviewees was that the lockdown would only last 15 days. They acknowledge having complied with the initial measure in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19: they left their jobs, stocked up with basic foods, and spent the lockdown days in their homes. Aida, from Olleros, remembers that *"we were happy that they said it was only going to be fifteen days"*. Hence, those first fifteen days, there was a general feeling of tranquillity and the measures that had been dictated were complied with. Some even point out that they took these days as holidays, in which they took the opportunity to enjoy time at home and with their family after having worked for several years without pause.

However, during this first stage, the interviewees indicated that they had lost their jobs. Despite this, which meant an almost total cut in their regular economic income, the widespread idea that the lockdown would not extend beyond the fifteen days arranged made many assume that finding a new job or returning to the previous one would not be complicated and their economy and that of their families would not be so affected: *"it will pass, to continue working"*, Edar thought at the time. This initial security caused many to spend the savings they had during those days to pay for their homes and food. Most comment that they did not consider returning at all, except in a small group of returnees who found themselves in a more precarious situation due to being visiting or out of work. For the second stage, the feeling of relative tranquillity of the first fifteen days of lockdown diminished when the first extension was decreed. By this time, the first 15 days had passed and most of those interviewed had already lost their jobs and used up most of their savings. Others, who still had savings, calculated that these would only be enough for one more month. It is in this second moment that the potential of another lockdown extension could occur was realised. This, in addition to the daily news about the exponential increase in contagion figures, the collapse of the health system, and the increasingly clear idea that it would not be so easy to go back to work, made many of the migrants begin to consider the possibility of returning to their places of origin. At least there they would have a house for which they would not pay, their relatives would be there, and they would find food that they could harvest from the farms of family members or close relatives.

Aida recalls that at that time *"there was more concern because my husband, my whole family couldn't go out to work"*. A similar feeling was that of Kely, who began to worry about

the lack of work for herself, her parents and her siblings. They were all living in the same house and the money they had managed to collect together decreased every day. Kely was especially concerned about how, without work and now with savings, she was going to feed her young son. Both worked independently and were held up by the money they earned during the day and the support they received from their partners or relatives. Estalin, who worked in a small family business, recalls that it was during the lockdown extensions given in April that *"we [her partner and she] went in to evaluate the possibility of returning"*, as her savings were running out. At some point, she even thought about going out to work as a street vendor to sell alcohol or masks, but decided not to do it to take care of the health of her partner and her little son. By that time, the fear of contracting the coronavirus, the ignorance of its effects, and the knowledge that if they got sick they would not have where to take care of themselves or how to pay the expenses, became even more important than generating economic income.

It is in this second stage that those who no longer had money began to contact their families and the authorities of their places of origin to request help to return or receive some type of financial support. Due to this, citizens and authorities of the districts of origin, such as El Higuerón and Coyona, in Huancabamba, or San Juan de Bigote, in Morropón, organized to help their countrymen. Thus, the first shipments of food began from the families of the migrants who were, above all, in Piura and Lima. Food was shipped once a week through hired trucks or the municipality that provided the service. In El Higuerón, for example, the district municipality made a truck available to the families of the migrants that would bring free food and parcels once or twice a week to the city of Piura.

Despite the efforts made, the third stage - which corresponds to the second, third, fourth and fifth extension of the quarantine - placed migrants in a situation of greater vulnerability. It was at this time that the migrants decided that returning to their places of origin was the best option; this triggered the mass urban-rural displacements that occurred from the second week of April onwards. The analysis of the testimonies of the returnees shows that this stage has two moments; the first, during the second and third week of April, where returns were few, controlled, and the phenomenon was concentrated to those migrants who were in a more precarious economic situation (this corresponds, to a certain extent, to the image projected by the media). The second moment occurred from the fourth week of April to the end of May, when the number of returns increases exponentially due to the fact that the lockdown continued to last and that, by that time, the majority of migrants had exhausted almost all of their savings, did not have a close support network, and most had not been beneficiaries of the bonds granted by the government.

Eddie, who had lost his job and exhausted his savings during the first 15 days, began to receive help from his relatives who sent him food via parcels from Coyona to the city of Piura. When the third and fourth extension of the quarantine occurred, he decided to return to his place of origin, but did not dare to do so for fear of getting on a bus and getting infected on the return journey. Because of that, he decided to stay longer and wait for the situation to calm down; however, when the extension of the quarantine was announced for the fifth time, he began to look for any means to return to Coyona. The situation of Carmen, from Salitral and 43 years old, is similar: she remembers that as the quarantine continued to extend and she was unemployed for over a month, she began to feel anguish and despair because she did not have money to feed her children. In this context, she received food baskets from the local church and from the municipality of the Lima district in which she lived, although these were only enough for a few days. Upon learning that a social

organisation was giving free food every day, she decided to eat there. Carmen remembers that the help she received at that time allowed her to sustain herself during those weeks when she did not know if the lockdown would last longer.

It is during this third stage that many of the migrants decided to seek work to save money and to return, call their relatives to ask for financial help or, those few who had had a formal job, use the money from their pension fund or their compensation for time of service (CTS) to undertake the trip. A case that reflects this situation is that of Rever, originally from Olleros (Ayabaca) who migrated for the first time to the city of Piura at the age of 17. He returned to his place of origin after a month when he could not find a job. Later, he travelled to Lima following the advice of his relatives, where he worked for two years in a bakery and in a textile company. Given his low salary, he decided to migrate again, this time to the city of Paita, department of Piura, where he dedicated himself to squid and mahi-mahi fishing. He lived there for several years. When the fishing activity declined, he decided to return to Olleros and from there he began to migrate sporadically with his family to Lima. He had been in Lima since October 2019, just six months before the pandemic. After spending his savings during the first weeks of confinement and, pressured by a lack of money, with a son and a partner to support, he had to find a way out. Thus, the third week of May, he decided to move clandestinely to Pucusana, a fishing district 58 km south of Lima. He stayed in Pucusana for 2 weeks working as a fisherman on informal boats, which allowed him to save enough to pay for the trip back to his place of origin.

It is important to note that, although the lack of financial resources was the main reason for return, other factors that had an important weight also stand out, such as not having health insurance, fear of contagion, anguish and the impossibility to mobilise later if things got worse. For Edar, the lack of work was the trigger: *"we have to return to Paimas because nothing happens here, there is no work, there is nothing and she [his wife] said now, now, let's go,"* he recalls what he told his wife when they decided to return. Eddie decided to return to his family for the same reason, his financial situation was critical, and he had nowhere to get more money. Sabina reflects on the issue and affirms that *"on the coast, if you don't work, you don't eat"*, and at that time there was no work on the coast, so returning to the mountains was the best solution. For Estalin *"mainly the houses' rent, it was an apartment and it was two months' rent,"* she says was the main reason. And although the lessor gave her payment facilities, she did not want to accumulate debts that in the short and medium term it was clear that she would not be able to pay.

Another important reason was the fear of catching Covid-19. Aida recalls that when the quarantine was extended throughout April, another of her concerns was the health of her children. By that time, the infection rate was high and some of her neighbours had died or become ill. In that circumstance, the possibility of them being infected and not being able to do anything other than wait to pass the disease at home was what prompted her to return. The fear of not knowing how to face the disease was strong: without health insurance and money, the migrants were unprotected.

On the other hand, another factor mentioned by the interviewees was the possibility of having greater freedom of movement in their places of origin. In fact, in general, in cities, migrants and their families lived in mini-apartments or small rooms, and after spending a month without being able to leave, the stress and little space to move became a problem for them. On the other hand, the level of contagion was lower in their places of origin and the space is wider to move around without worrying about getting infected. Finally, another reason was to be closer to their support networks, the countrymen and their families, who

would support them in any eventuality: *"we will be better there, with our family. One has lived in poverty and knows how poverty is and you cannot have money, but food will not be lacking, there will always be something to put in your mouth"*, concluded another returnee. This being said, it can be affirmed that the decision to return was strategic and the result of the returnees' analysis of their vulnerability: without work, without health insurance, without money to support their families, without the possibility of resuming their jobs in the short term, with fear of contracting Covid-19 and infecting their relatives and minor children - and not having money to undertake the treatment -, and living for several weeks in small spaces without the possibility of mobilizing. Those who had some money decided to use what was left of their savings to undertake the return.

### **3. The return journeys**

Once the decision was made, the migrants and their families began to organise their return trips and evaluate the costs and the means they could use. At that time, interprovincial land travel and domestic flights were prohibited, transfers organized by the government were insufficient, so the only option was to hire informal cars or buses. This, added to the uncertainty about what the trip would be like in hiding, what it would cost and the money they had, made the return journeys a dramatic experience. In this section, the return trips will be analysed through the testimonies and experiences that the returnees narrated.

At first, the migrants turned to the authorities in their home districts to see if they could help them with transportation. The initial response from the authorities was positive. The municipal manager of the district of San Juan de Bigote (Morropón) confirmed that, at that time, the district mayor received calls from migrants who were in Lima and Piura, in which they asked the municipality to help them return. Upon receiving so many calls, the mayor created a group in the application WhatsApp, where he communicated to the migrants the progress of coordination with the provincial and regional government. As a young returnee recalls, at the beginning the district mayor had all the disposition and trust that he would help them with mobility, they decided to stay at home to wait for the coordination between authorities to prosper. However, as the days went by, they noticed that the coordination had stalled and they began to look for other ways to travel.

By the second week of April, news about return migrants increased. The reports, focused on those returning from Lima, showed thousands of people stationed on the roads outside the city, who had been prevented by the armed forces or police from continuing their journey on foot. In this context, the government published the Resolución Ministerial No. 097-2020-PCM that gave "guidelines for the transfer and quarantine of people who are away from their habitual residence, as a result of the measures of social isolation due to the National Emergency". The resolution was intended to register the returnees, to be tested for Covid-19, to be transferred to their places of origin, and to remain in quarantine for two weeks upon arrival in their region of origin. More than 167 thousand people registered nationwide. In the case of Piura, more than 22 thousand Piurans who were in different parts of the country registered and remained expectant about the day they would finally return. However, regional governments, to whom the national government delegated responsibility for the relocation, were overwhelmed by demand and did not have the ability to manage returns. This generated a longer delay in the transfer, which caused the migrants to decide to undertake the return on their own.

The analysis of the means of transport used, costs and total time of the trips made by the returnees allows us to assess that the way in which the return trip was made and the time it

took depended on several factors: i) the support networks - family, friends or countrymen - which they had in their place of residence and in their place of origin; ii) the economic resources they had; and iii) the distance between the places of departure and arrival.

With regards to expenses, returnees affirm that mobility prices rose exponentially given the demand and police control during the route. Thus, there are people who hired private cars to make a direct trip from Lima to Piura and paid between S/ 300 and S/ 500 per person.<sup>24</sup> Similar amounts, although smaller, were spent by people who returned from Lima in trucks, or those who travelled alternating between foot, buses and trucks, whose total expenses fluctuated between S/ 300 and S/ 400 per person. In the latter cases, the travel time was up to five days. The returnees who travelled from departments closer to Piura such as Tumbes, La Libertad, Ancash or even from the city of Piura, ended up spending, on average, S/ 200, and in the most extreme cases S/ 400 per person. For these cases, the costs depended on whether they hired a car to transfer them directly or if they made various stops.

The analysis of costs and means of travel allows us to affirm that those who spent more did not always travel more safely and quickly. In order to plan a trip in better conditions, the support, social and family networks, which the returnees had in their places of origin and origin, were essential. The cases that we have collected for Huancabamba, Morropón and Ayabaca, allow us to outline this.

Sebastián, from Coyona (Huancabamba) and 43 years old, was in Lima with his two children when the lockdown was declared. After the lockdown's fourth extension, he decided to leave with his children. He communicated with different countrymen who lived in Lima via Whatsapp to see if there was any way to return. They told him that a group was going to travel by foot on May 11, because there was no other way. That day he left his home to the Ancón district where his countrymen were to meet. Upon arrival, the group had already left and decided to walk with their children. They evaded a police checkpoint, walked along the Pasamayo serpentine and after a few kilometres a truck stopped and took them to Chancay (Huaral province, 78 km from the city of Lima). In Chancay he found a fruit truck that was going to Chiclayo, a city in the department of Lambayeque, which is located 2.5 hours south of the city of Piura (see Image 5). He spoke with the driver and he agreed to take them at the cost of S/ 120 per person. They travelled all night and, when they reached Chiclayo, the driver told him that he could take them to a highway that would bring them closer to their final destination if they paid S/ 50 more each. The truck left them four kilometres from the agreed place and they had to walk for several hours until they found a hamlet where they could eat: *"we travelled without water, we had nothing, we were thirsty"*, he recalls. From that, village they hired a car that ended up charging them different amounts of money for each section travelled. Close to their destination, in Loma Alta, Canchaque, the police and military detained them, searched them and transferred them to the health post. From there a police vehicle took him to his village in Alto Piura. The trip ended up costing him a total of approximately S/ 1000, between transportation and food.

Sebastián affirms that he did not tell his family in Coyona that he was returning, he only informed them when he arrived in Canchaque (Huancabamba). His departure was not planned as in other cases that we have collected, but rather driven by anguish when he saw that the lockdown was going to be extended and that his savings were running out. During the trip, he remembers that he was afraid of catching the virus, especially when he travelled

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<sup>24</sup> For reference, the usual average cost with a formal transport company from Lima to Piura is around S/ 80 and S/ 130.

in the truck with other returnees. In addition, he comments that seeing so many people walking on the road was something that shocked him.

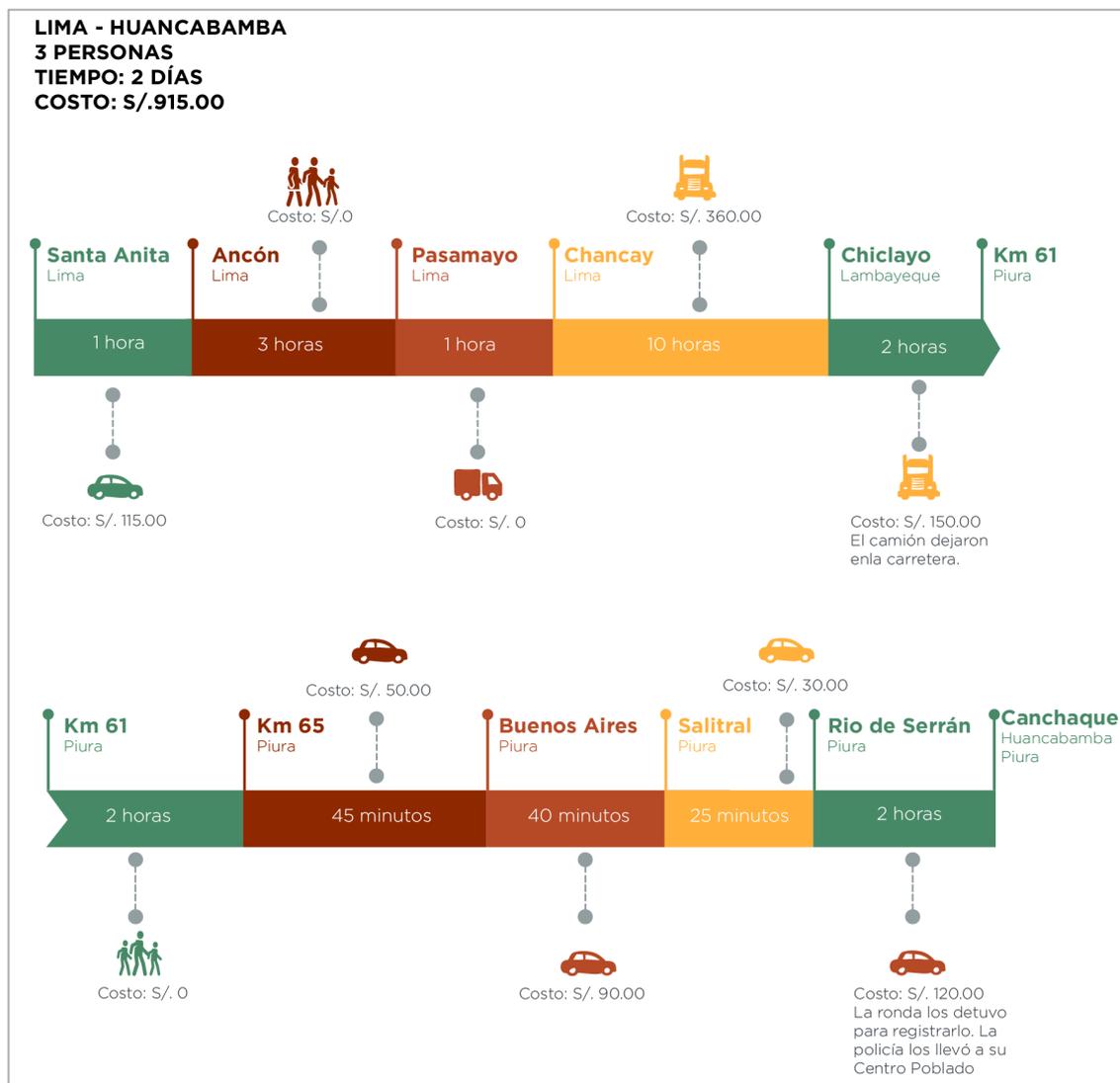


Image 5: Representation of the trip from Lima to Huancabamba with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

A different case is that of Jhonny, from El Higuerón (Huancabamba) and 22 years old, who was with his family - wife and a daughter - in Lima before the lockdown. He states that the decision to return was taken as the lockdown was extended. The concern for the health of his family, his wife, who was pregnant, and his little daughter was growing. In addition to this, the restaurant where he worked stopped paying him a month after the lockdown began, so he started to live on his savings. Thus, he began to look for a way to return and contacted his relatives in his place of origin and also friends who lived in Lima. They informed him that there were countrymen who were doing the direct taxi service in informal cars and charged S/ 1800 for the transfer - S/ 450 for each seat -. The only way was that or walking back, which for them was not an option due to his wife's pregnancy. When the government extended the lockdown for the fifth time, this time for a month, he decided to return, spend all the money he had, and borrow to reach the full amount. When notifying his relatives that he was going back, one of his uncles contacted him and told him that he could take him and charged him the same: S/ 450 for each one, but that they had to

contact another person to complete the fourth seat. Jhonny and his wife decided to travel with their uncle and bear the cost of the fourth seat to avoid exposure to the virus that was represented by travelling with an unknown passenger. He indicates that he decided to travel by this means because it was the safest. Although, he mentions that he was afraid of having an accident during the trip, it took 24 hours; the car never stopped and the driver, his uncle, never rested. In addition, they were afraid that the police would arrest them and return them to Lima, where they no longer had any more money to live.

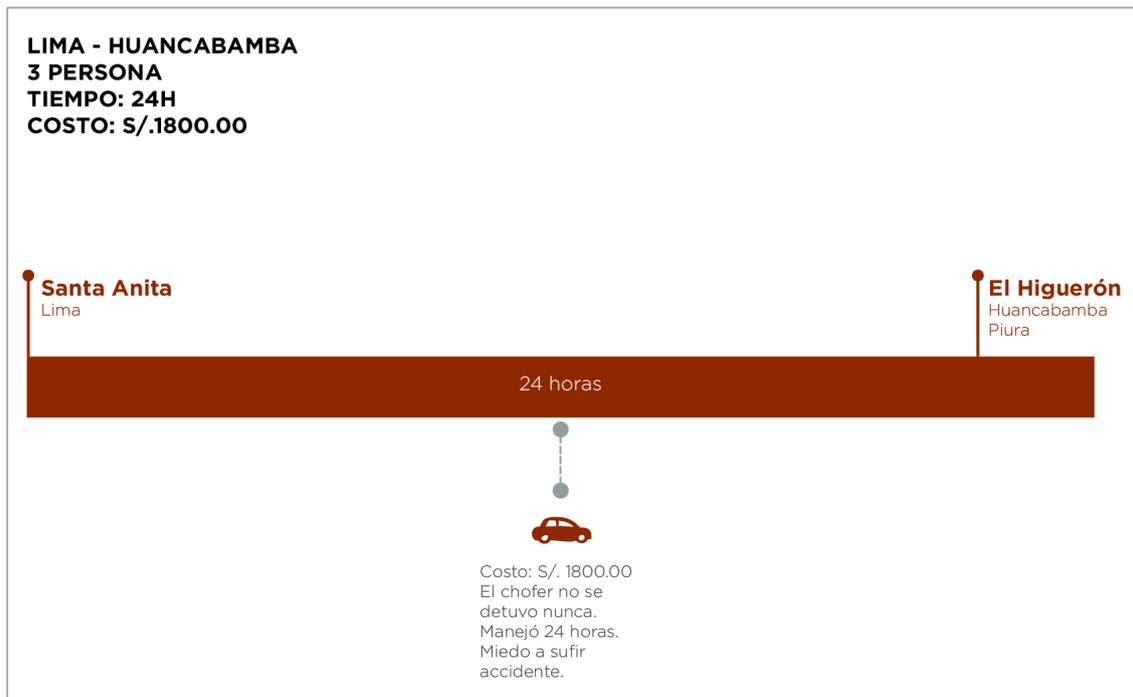


Image 6: Representation of the trip from Lima to Huancabamba (Piura) with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

On the other hand, in the case of Morropón, most of the returnees interviewed who returned from Lima and other places outside of Piura made the trip in trucks. In the San Juan de Bigote district, a local moving and cargo company ended up picking up the majority of returnees. This was made possible due to local organisation, especially the families of the returnees, who communicated through WhatsApp and reported the departure dates and pick-up places. An example is the case of Estalin, 26 years old. He and his wife decided to return to San Juan de Bigote at the end of April. They were registered in the registers that the central government had set up for people who wanted to return to their places of origin. After a few days, with no answer, they decided to search on their own and turn to family and friends. After two weeks they were notified by WhatsApp that a moving truck could take their things to San Juan de Bigote. They had to take their belongings because they could no longer afford to rent the apartment where they lived. During the following days, and seeing that they could not find any other type of mobility, they decided to convince the truck driver to take them along with their things. After insisting, he accepted. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, they arrived at the agreed place. There, they saw that more people were going to travel in the truck and, furthermore, that it was a closed chamber, without ventilation. The driver told them that they were going to go inside, locked up to avoid the police checkpoints. Estalin and his wife agreed. Before starting the trip, the men managed to

convince the driver to allow their partners and minor children to travel ahead, along with him.

*"At that moment, we entered given the despair, but there came a moment when we panicked, seeing that everything was closed, 'suddenly we are going to drown here', the women. Supposedly we were nine people, that's what we had agreed with the man, but he arrived with the car and in the end there were fifteen in our group and there were about five who stayed behind, who did not get in because they did not fit."*

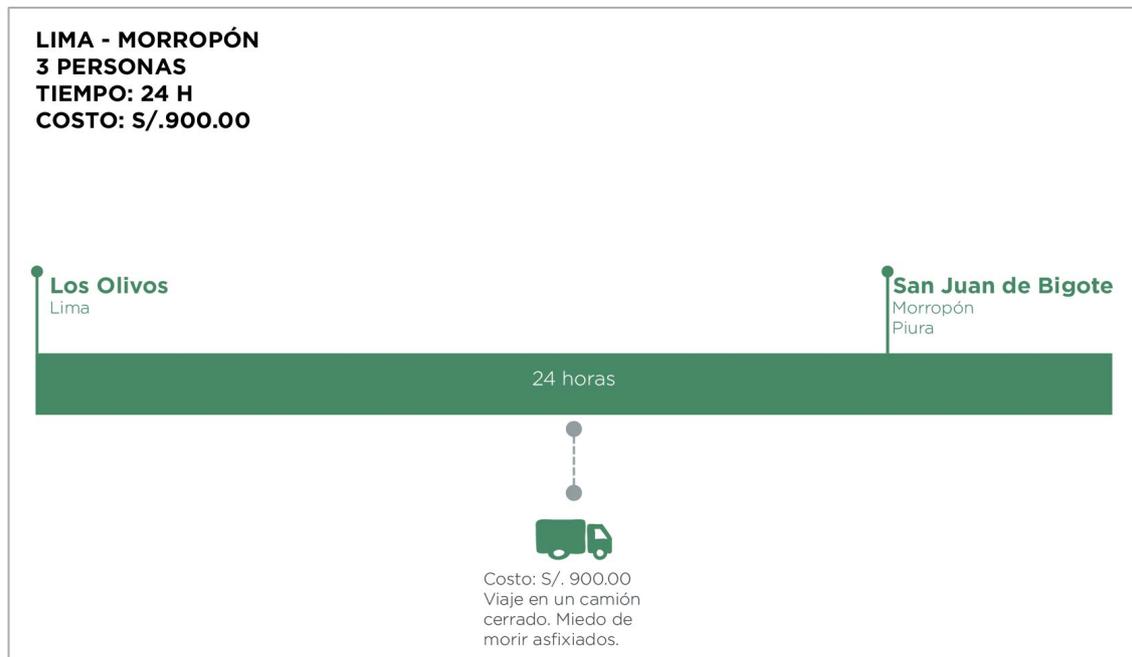


Image 7: Representation of the journey from Lima to Morropón (Piura) with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

They made a 12-hour journey fully locked in. The driver later opened the chamber hatch a little to let air in. Finally, they reached their destination after 24 hours. The trip was marked by the fear of suffocation and the fear that the police would arrest them and return to Lima: *"the experience was ugly and maddening and also worrying. Because we were worried that the police would see us, they even saw us and took us to a police station and we stayed there for 3 hours. It wasn't allowed, but he was from the area and in the end he felt sorry and let the car pass"*. The couple also recalls that, in addition to this, the fear of catching Covid-19 was always present. Luis, Pascuala, Carmen and most of the returnees who came to San Juan de Bigote from Lima also travelled in the same way.

Aida's case shows a very different journey, but it also meant moments of great anguish. When the lockdown was decreed, she was in La Tortuga fishermen's cove, Paita (Piura), visiting with her husband - who had travelled there to seek temporary work as a fisherman - and their three children. He affirms that at the beginning they were happy to know that the lockdown would only last 15 days, but with the first and second extension, the economic situation of his family declined: *"on the coast you have to have your money to buy, if not, what is thrown into the pot?"*, Aida comments, remembering that by that time they no longer had any more money. Even so, they decided to stay as her husband insisted that the lockdown would be lifted and she could go to work. However, on April 29<sup>th</sup>, a week after the third extension and when analysing her financial situation, Aida decided to return: *"if you want to go, let's go, if you want to stay, stay, I'm going with my children,"* she remembers

she told her husband, as her stress about being locked up and her concern about the possibility of getting sick and not having resources to treat herself or family support in the area increased.

Faced with this situation, along with her husband, they began the return on May 4. They left at 7 in the morning. They went to a car stop to get transport that would transfer them to the city of Paita. In Paita, they took a truck that charged them S/ 250 to take them to the city of Sullana. In Sullana they looked for cars that would bring them closer to Ayabaca and they found some cars that were taxiing to Las Lomas (see Image 8). On the way, the military detained them and did not want to let them pass because they were carrying a baby; after talking to them, they finally let them pass. From there, the trip to Paimas alternated between motorcycle taxis, taxis, and long hours of travel on foot that Aida does not remember exactly, but she was charged between S/ 10 and S/ 50 for short sections. From Paimas, they took a motorcycle taxi that charged S/ 150 to the Tondopa Bridge, although her husband had to make that trip on foot, since he did not fit into the vehicle.

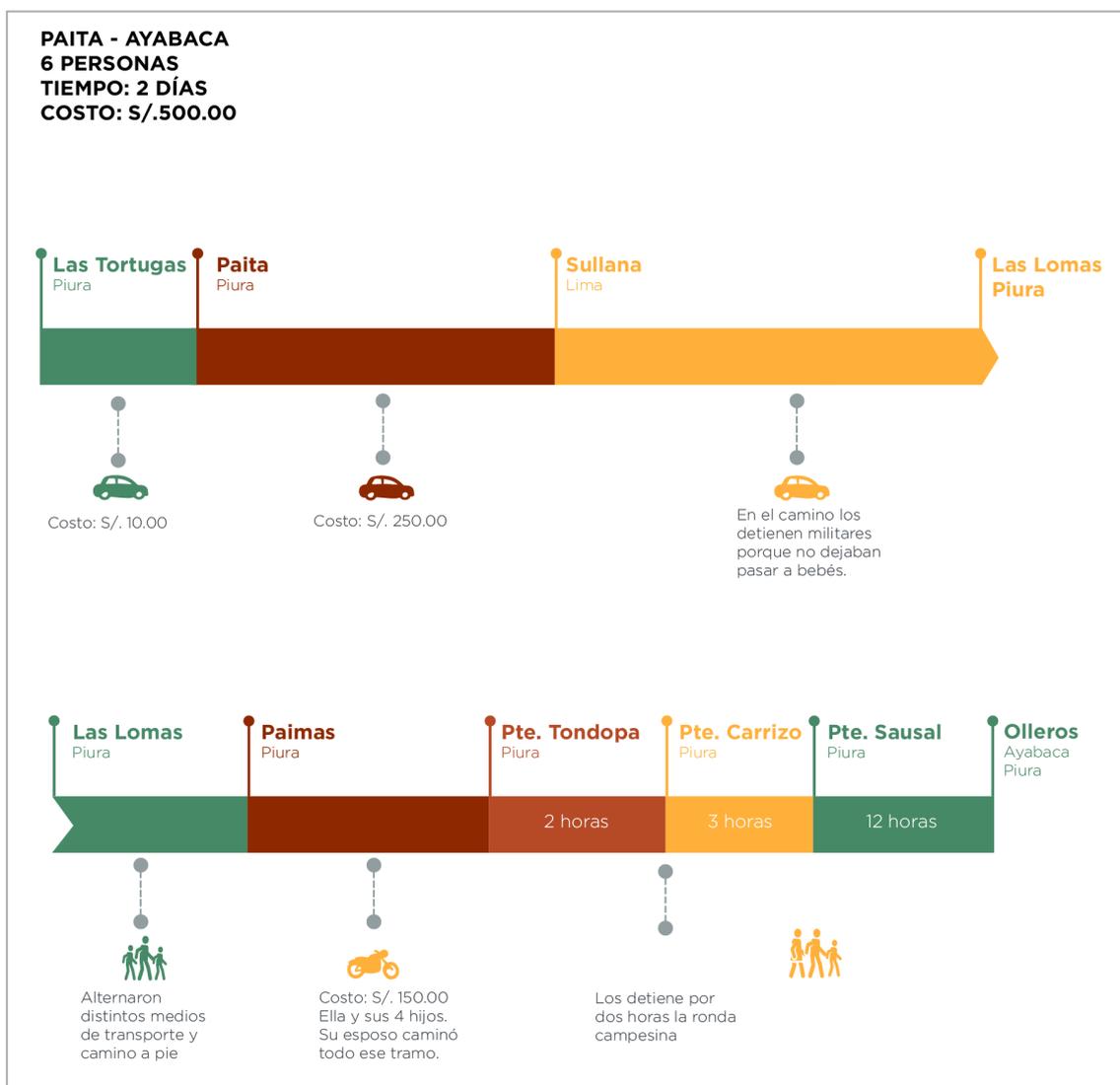


Image 8: Representation of the trip to Paita (Piura coast) to Ayabaca (Alto Piura) with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Aida remembers that they reached the bridge in the middle of the afternoon and it started to rain. The *ronda campesina* stopped them for two hours at a checkpoint and they then

continued walking in the middle of a heavy rain. They had to sleep behind a house, in the open, without a coat and in the rain, "my clothes were all wet, I cried, all day without eating, but God gave us strength". The next day they walked all morning and arrived in Olleros, Ayabaca, at 6pm. The return trip is a difficult experience to assimilate: "Shame, it had given me a heart ache, like a tightening of the chest, a shame, when we came here we went to bathe, remedies and I didn't even want to cook, nothing, I couldn't even stand up, I was walking on all fours, because it hurt". Aida comments that it is something that to this day she has trouble remembering. The trip for her and her family lasted 37 hours and generated a total expense of between S/ 400 and S/ 500.

In addition to the cases described, which we have collected by applying semi-structured interviews and migratory trajectories, the closed interviews provided us with information on other travel modalities used by the returnees, although not with the previous detail. Even so, we believe it is important to mention them as they show the various ways in which many other returnees travelled, especially those who were returning from coastal cities other than Lima. For example, a person travelled alone from Virú (La Libertad) to Ayabaca (Alto Piura) in a single day, but with different stops and in different informal cars that raised their prices depending on the demand of the moment and the desperation of the returnees. In this specific case, the returnee spent a total of S/ 390 for the entire journey, which lasted approximately 8 hours for a journey of about 600 kilometres.

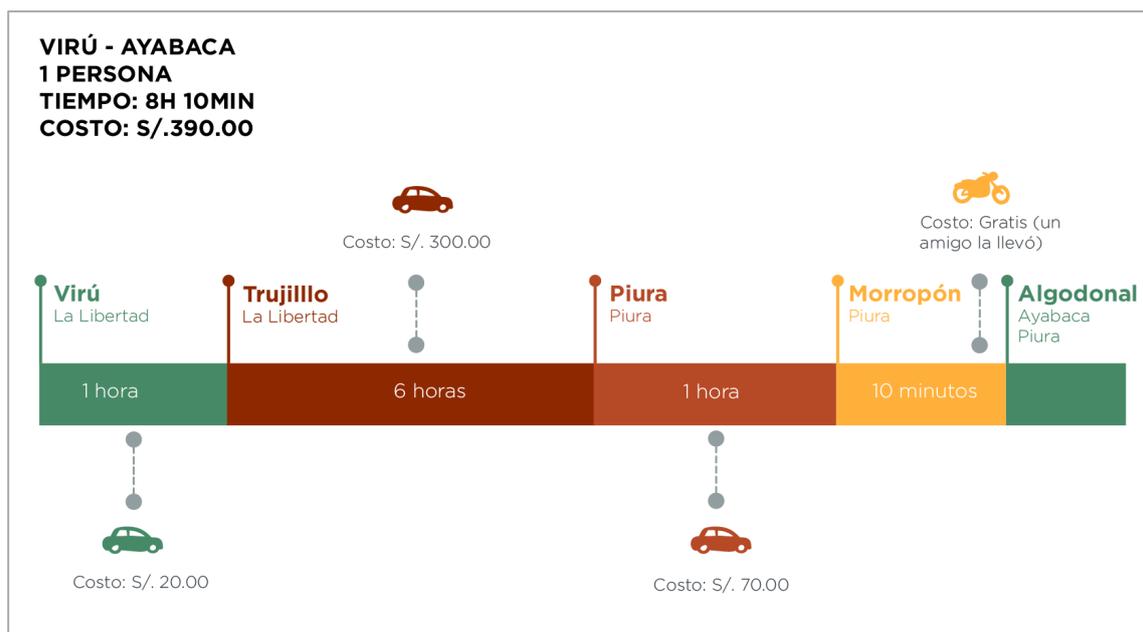


Image 9: Representation of the journey from Virú (La Libertad) to Ayabaca (Piura) with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

In another case, a family consisting of three people travelled from Chimbote (Ancash) to Paimas (Ayabaca) also in a staggered manner in *custers* and informal cars. On the way, they had to give money to the police on two occasions so that they would let them continue with their trip and not be detained. In this case, the family made the trip in a single day over 9 hours and spent a total of S/ 885, approximately S/ 300 per person. It should be noted that many of the interviewees reported having been detained by the police or military at different points in their trip. In some cases, those interviewed acknowledge that the drivers of the cars they hired had to pay the police to let them pass. Some returnees even stated

that when they made a deal with the driver who was going to take them, this amount already included the expenses "for the police" (see Image 10).

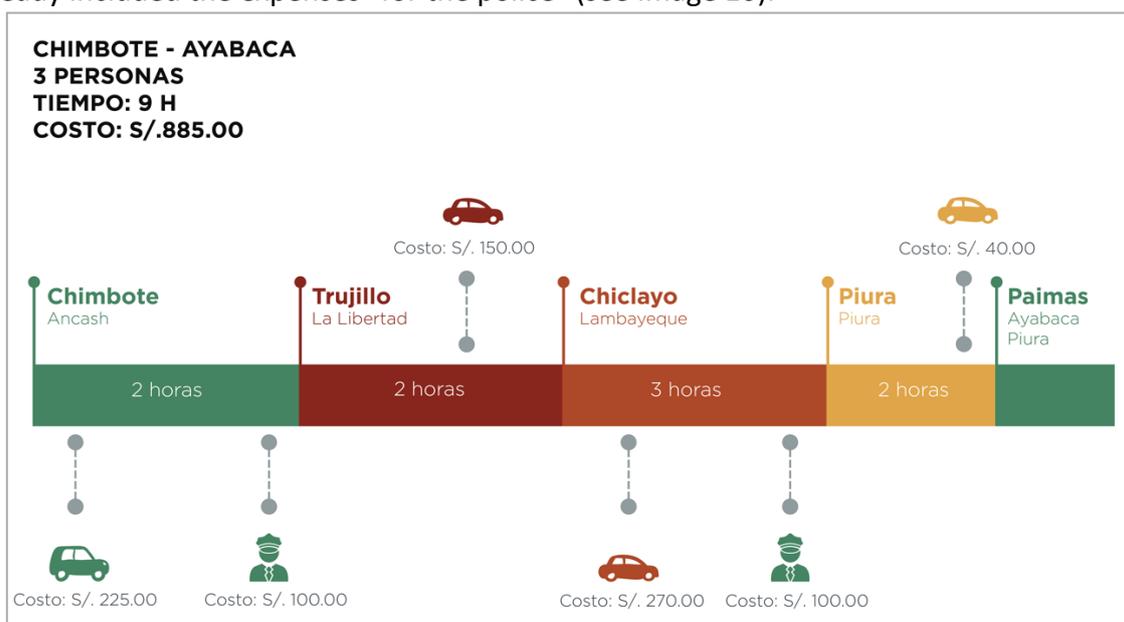


Image 10: Representation of the journey from Chimbote (Ancash) to Ayabaca (Piura) with stopping points, expenses, and means used. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

Finally, in closed interviews, 35 of the 44 male and female returnees claimed to have travelled accompanied by their mother, children, brothers or sisters, or other relatives. This data is important because it shows that the process of return migration as a result of the pandemic has displaced entire families.

Who did you travel with? (multiple answers)	Number	Percentage (%)
Mother	1	2,0
Sons/daughters	16	31,4
Siblings	7	13,7
Other family members	19	37,3
Friends	8	15,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 13: People who accompanied the returnees throughout the trip. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.

In turn, 30 of the 44 people interviewed stated that they did not receive any type of support during their return trip. The remaining 14 did receive support from friends, family, or strangers who helped them on the journey by providing them with food and transportation. It is striking that only one person reported having received help from the municipality, which accounts for the limited response capacity that both local and regional governments had.

What support did you receive?	Number	Percentage (%)
Did not receive support	30	68,1

Food	1	2,3
Drinks and water	1	2,3
Food and transport	1	2,3
Money	1	2,3
Transport	9	20,5
Quarantine accommodation	1	2,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100,0</b>

*Table 14: Types of help received on the return journey. Source: Fieldwork. Own creation.*

As we have described in this chapter, returnees found various ways to return to their places of origin, in some cases subjecting themselves to high-risk situations and trips that lasted days. What is common among these various routes is that they all tried to manage their return through formal channels, but due to the delay or absence of response from the national or regional governments, they finally chose to return on their own, even if that meant breaking the law, hiring informal transport, and exposing themselves to situations of possible contagion or risk of accidents. They made expenses that accounted for all the savings they had left on these trips; in addition to this, in the different testimonies, the fact that the only support they had on their return journeys was that provided by their family or countryman networks stands out, which in many cases defined the way in which they travelled, in the face of a slow response from the state that, at least in the cases collected, never came.