

## Geographical mobility among retired US migrants living in the Northwestern region of Mexico bordering California, US

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### How to cite:

Lardiés-Bosque, R., 2016: Geographical mobility among retired US migrants living in the Northwestern region of Mexico bordering California, US. In: Szymańska, D. and Chodkowska-Miszczuk, J. editors, *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, No. 32, Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University, pp. 105–116. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/bog-2016-0018>

**Abstract.** Mexico has become a regular destination for retirees coming from the USA. To date certain aspects of this group of migrants have been analysed, but little is known about those who have changed their place of residence to the Mexico-US border. In this article, the geographical mobility among retired US migrants living in the coastal area of northern Baja California, Mexico, is analysed. Firstly, reasons for retirees moving from the USA to this area are considered, and secondly, the contacts and relationships maintained with the country of origin, measured by the mobility which takes place between both countries; attention will be given to the reasons for these frequent trips, their periodicity, the means of transport used and the impacts. The main source of analysis will be 29 in-depth interviews conducted in 2009 with pensioners living in coastal municipalities of this northern area of Mexico.

### Article details:

Received: 1 December 2015

Revised: 22 February 2016

Accepted: 02 March 2016

### Key words:

retirees,  
migration,  
geographical mobility,  
border,  
Mexico,  
USA.

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## 1. Introduction

The ageing of the population is generating significant challenges in today's societies due to its diverse implications. On the one hand, several governments are implementing policies to address the consequences of increasing life expectancy; on the other hand, older people tend to develop individual strategies to address this stage of life from a quality and health-based perspective. In this context, the (international) migration of retirees has become an important phenomenon in which more people are involved (MPI, 2006).

Southern European countries, mostly represented by Spain and Portugal, have become regular destinations for retirees coming from central and northern European countries in search of a better life (Williams et al., 2000). However, this type of (lifestyle) migration is increasing in other regions of the world. America is a good example for this, and particularly Mexico, which is becoming an important destination for retirees moving from the USA (Hunt, 2008). US retirees are concentrated in various states in the country's interior, but many reside in coastal regions, especially in northern states such as Baja California, near the border with the USA (Lizárraga, 2008). These are international lifestyle mobility people, as they want to live quietly, improve their quality-of-life and get the most out of their pensions (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009).

Some aspects about retirees coming from the USA who live in Latin American countries are already known (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2015), but especially as regards those living in Mexico. Studies focused on immigrants living in Mexico have helped to know aspects related to health care (Kiy and McEnany, 2010b), housing and real estate trends (Kiy and McEnany, 2010c) and civic engagement, volunteerism and charity (Kiy and McEnany, 2010d). However, little research is devoted to the growing community of retirees residing near the border between both countries, as for example in the Ensenada-Tijuana tourist corridor (Lardiés-Bosque et al., 2016).

This contribution aims to analyse the geographic mobility among retired US migrants living in coastal areas of northern Baja California, in Mexico. Firstly, we want to consider the socioeconomic, environ-

mental and cultural factors involved in the mobility of these retirees, and how these factors influence their way of life. The analysis will also focus on the contacts and relationships maintained with the USA, measured by the mobility which takes place between both countries; attention will be given to the reasons for these frequent trips, their periodicity, the means of transport used, and the potential impacts on their integration in the local community. In order to identify the 'connection' and the contacts maintained between both countries, this paper will also analyse the places of origin (or previous residence) of these immigrants.

## 2. Study area, Source and Methodology

The study area is located in the Northwestern part of the Mexican State of Baja California (Northwest of Mexico) comprising part of the Tijuana metropolitan area. It lies just south of the city of Tijuana (Fig. 1).

The main source of analysis is 29 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with American retirees age 55 or older, between June and July 2009. The fact that the interviews were conducted in 2009 makes it interesting in that this phenomenon can be analysed before the peak of the economic crisis that started in 2008-09 and previously to the slight decline in the arrivals of American retirees to live in this area; but despite the fact that the interviews were conducted in 2009, this does not influence the phenomenon analysed here.

Interviews were conducted in 'Rosarito' (county seat of the municipality 'Playas de Rosarito') and in 'San Antonio del Mar' (municipality of 'Tijuana'), located approximately 34 km and 28 km, respectively, south of the US border (Fig. 1). According to the INEGI (2010), the municipality of 'Playas de Rosarito' had a population of 90,668 inhabitants in 2010, and Rosarito concentrated 65,278, being one of the towns of Mexico with the highest population growth. 'San Antonio del Mar' is also located on the coast, only separated by a distance of 12 km from Rosarito, but it is a small village with 357 inhabitants.

The selection of these places for the fieldwork responds to the large number of retirees living along

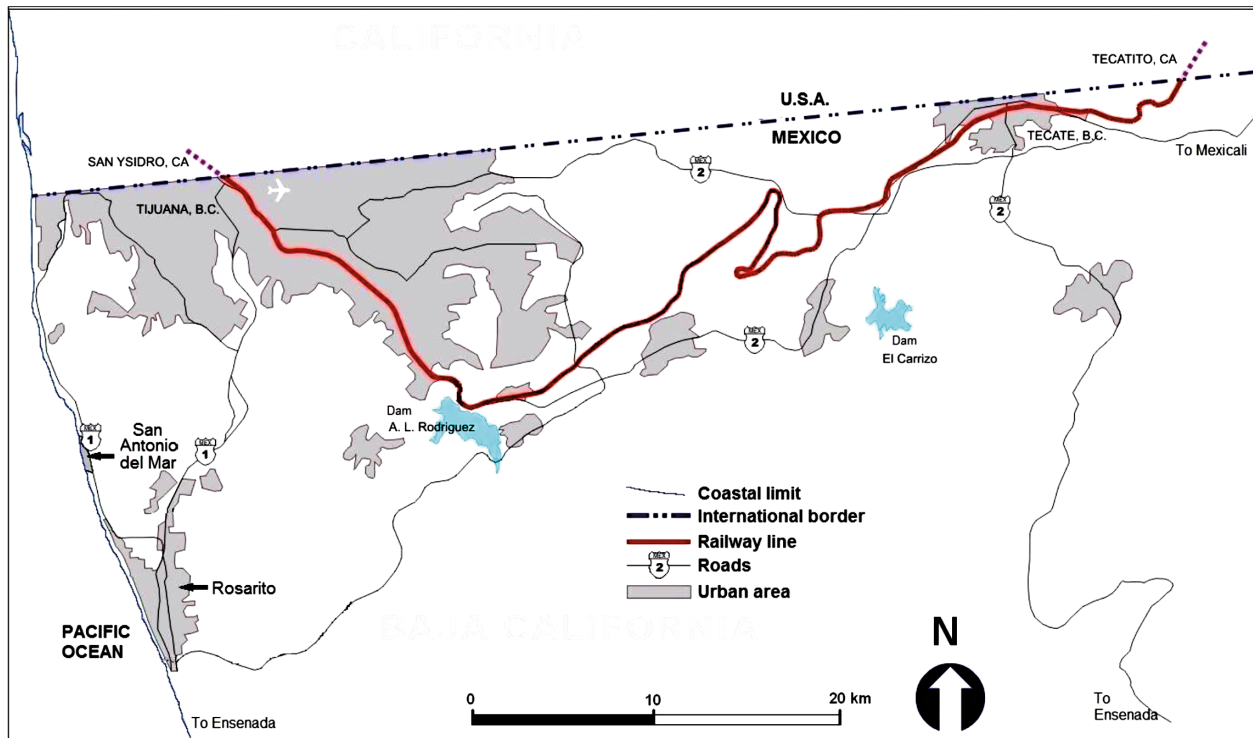


Fig. 1. Border area between Mexico and the USA

Source: Government of the State of Baja California.

this coastal area, due to the fact that both places are part of the tourist corridor which extends from the US border to the city of Ensenada (about 150 km south of Tijuana). Rosarito has a largely tourist-based economy, and it has been a major tourist area for several decades (Hiernaux, 2006), offering more than 900 hotel rooms in 25 resorts, golf and other tourist amenities. Within a few years, scarcely a piece of oceanfront property was left unsold to developers. Since the 1950s, the real estate market has been driven by North American *Baby Boomers* looking for a second home; from that time, urbanization marked the beginning of Rosarito's contemporary-era development as planning and construction of streets and city blocks took place.

This area has a semi-arid climate with Mediterranean-like precipitation patterns; temperatures are mild throughout the year with average temperatures ranging between 14.3°C and 20.9°C, having warm summers with an average of 22°C; annual precipitation is very low (261 millimetres) and mostly concentrated in the winter months (SMN, 2013).

The focus of the research is on white, non-Hispanic Americans, born in the US, who have resid-

ed and worked in the US throughout their lives, and who have decided to retire permanently in this border area in the Northwest of Mexico near San Diego, California (US). Therefore, interviewed migrants include retired people living permanently in this area but not 'snowbird' migrants, who only reside part of the year in the destination – usually during the winter – and whose mobility is closely linked to a secondary residence (Coates et al., 2002).

The research considers migrants who have retired from any economic activities in the US, including those who actively chose early retirement in anticipation of their departure from work, as well as a few migrants who are still engaged in economic activities in the US. The length of residence among interviewees ranges from several years to decades. The majority engage in volunteer activities in Mexico without participating in formal or regulated employment.

Participants were recruited with the assistance of the Foreign Resident Attention Office (FRAO), an office located in Playas de Rosarito and created by the local government to serve the foreign commu-

nity, which poses a recruitment limitation in our sample. FRAO provided us with a list of associations and clubs for retirees, given that it is common among the foreign retirees living in Mexico to belong to retirement associations (Kiy and McEnany, 2010b; Lizárraga, 2008).

Interviews consisted of blocks dedicated to investigating the socio-demographic characteristics of interviewees, place of birth, current household characteristics and issues of migration and residential mobility (previous and current), leisure and social relationships, activities developed, and contacts maintained with the country of origin. Table 1 shows basic socio-demographic characteristics.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic profile of American retirees residing in Baja California

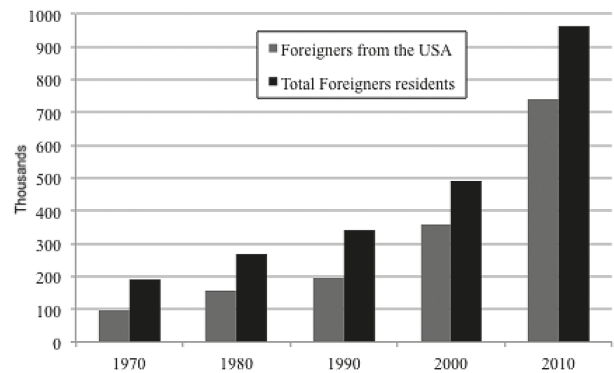
Variables	n = 29
Gender	
Male	15
Female	14
Age	
55-64 years	13
65-74 years	12
75 or older	4
Marital status and living arrangement	
Married/in couple/with other people	17
Single/Widow/Live alone	12
Previous State of residence in US	
California	20
Other State	9

Source: Author's interviews.

### 3. North-American retirees moving to Mexico: evolution and geographical distribution

The arrival of foreign retirees in Mexico has been progressive in recent decades and has occurred in parallel to an increase in the foreign population, which grew significantly between 1970 and 2010 (Fig. 2); according to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI, 2006), the significant growth in the US population in the country began between 1970 and 1980, increased between 1980 and 1990, and rose subsequently, with the number doubling between 2000 and 2010. In these four decades, the percentage of native residents coming from the USA among all

the foreign residents living in Mexico rose from 50.9% in 1970 to 76.8% in 2010.



**Fig. 2.** Foreign (born outside) residents in Mexico, 1970-2010

Source: INEGI, 2010.

Accordingly, the importance of retirees migrating from that country to Mexico has hugely increased in recent decades (Lizárraga, 2008). A growing number of Americans aged 50+ are now actively considering relocating outside the county to retire, including Panama, Costa Rica, Belize, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic as popular destinations (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2015). Yet, because of its close proximity to the USA and its affordability, Mexico remains the first destination for Americans retiring internationally (Kiy and McEnany, 2010a; MPI, 2006; Shelley, 1996), and the country accounted for 7.5% of total retired US workers eligible for retirement living abroad in 2010 (BBVA, 2012).

In 1999, Mexico was already the Central and South American country with the highest number of resident US citizens (1,036,300 and 80.4% of emigrants) (MPI 2006). For this, and for many years, Mexico has been the favourite country for retirement among American people. According to the Annual Global Retirement Index elaborated by International Living Magazine (2016), this country was the second best in the world for retirement during 2009, 2010 and 2012, although falling to the fourth position in 2013, and to the seventh in 2014. In 2016, Mexico is considered the world's no. 1 retirement destination, followed by Panama and Ecuador. This ranking is based on the consideration of factors such as cost of living, buying and renting houses, entertainment and amenities, health care, infrastructure and climate, among others (International Living Magazine, 2016).

Secondary national sources come up against significant limitations when taking note of the remarkable dynamism of migration, and the result is the confirmation that there are many more people living in retirement locations than those recorded in the sources (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2015). Thus, official bodies disagree over their number (BBVA, 2012); on the one hand, and according to the 2000 Mexico population census, US born citizens numbered 358,614, of whom 7.9% (28,247) were over 55 years old; on the other hand, the US consulate (*Bureau of Consular Affairs*) estimated, for the same years, that 400,000 US citizens were resident in Mexico (Hunt, 2008); a 2004 survey estimated that the number of Americans residing in-country was between 500,000 and 600,000 (Kiy and McEnany, 2010a). Other specific estimates indicate that between 200,000 and 300,000 US citizens, age 50 years and older, rent or own homes in coastal communities located in Baja California Sur, Sonora, Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Quintana Roo (Kiy and McEnany, 2010d). According to the Census of Population and Housing, 738,103 people born in the US resided in Mexico in 2010, and approximately 5.3% of them were aged 50 and over, being at retirement age or nearing retirement (INEGI, 2010).

Geographically, the Mexican government has identified at least 12 destinations for US retirees including colonial towns, metropolitan areas, coastal cities along the Pacific and Gulf of Mexico, as well as semitropical locations in the Southern part of the country (Rojas et al., 2014). Official figures (INEGI, 2010) show a concentration of these immigrants in certain states in the country's interior (Jalisco and Guanajuato) and along other coasts (Yucatán, Quintana Roo and Sinaloa); current research has studied the behaviour and lifestyles of foreign retirees residing in interior regions (Sunil et al., 2007), but in contrast little is known about those who have settled in border and coastal areas.

#### 4. Motivation and tourism experiences for residential mobility

The number of US retirees living in Mexico has rapidly increased, due to multiple factors related to different types of people that move/migrate, to the

flexible conditions where movement occurs, and to the form of transnational, global lifestyle that migrants develop (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2015).

Among the retirees interviewed, the proximity to their places of origin has been an important factor in the election of this area for retirement; this proximity had enabled practically all of them to visit the area previously on holidays. Moreover, the standard of living and the cheaper prices compared with the USA have been very important motivations, which have allowed them to fulfil their dreams of owning a home in front of the ocean. Other important factors are language, as most Mexicans speak English in this area, together with the existence of a numerous group of American retirees to socialize with, and the friendliness of the Mexican people. Many respondents have also highlighted cultural factors as the attraction of Mexican culture and the relaxed social atmosphere.

Mexico, and in particular its coastal area close to San Diego, possesses enclaves that have traditionally received large volumes of North American tourists (Hiernaux, 2006; Michael, 1997); in the 1960s, the San Diego press (*The San Diego Union*, 1968) reported that around 10 million US citizens had visited this area for tourist reasons, and praised the advantages of acquiring properties there. The faith that North Americans have shown in this area as a holiday destination has helped create a huge property and second homes market, as in other parts of the country (Sunil et al., 2007; Truly, 2002). Thanks to that mechanism, practically all of the retirees living in the Rosarito area, and also 28 out of 29 of the retirees interviewed for this study, have stated that they already knew the area before establishing their residence here, either because they had passed through it on the way to the rest of Mexico, or because they had visited it on holiday occasionally since childhood and as a family (Lardiés-Bosque, 2011); that prior knowledge of the area meant that they had some acquaintances/friends here:

My parents would come down here for weekends in the 70s; so my parents and I have been coming down to Rosarito since the 70s, early 70s [...]. Just about every year; my mom likes the beach. So they would pack us up and bring us all down here, there's three of us, bring us down here and we have friends down here. [...] Just for the weekend and then we would go back up. We would come down



on Friday and we would go back on Sunday. (Cathy, 50 years old, previous residence in California.)

We knew some friends that already lived here and we knew that Mexico was hospitable to Americans. (Ed, 71 years old, previous residence in California.)

During those tourist visits, the most popular type of accommodation was either hotels, the house of friends or family members, a caravan (very common among North Americans in this area) or even a second home; consequently, something that began as temporary and repeated journeys is often the basis for subsequently developing different types of residential mobility, temporary or permanent migration (Kuentzel and Ramaswamy, 2005).

Apart from these general factors, when retirees are asked about their changes of residence, the 29 interviewed state that they are mainly motivated by the economic advantages and opportunities that Mexico offers comparatively, and the fact that they want to get the most out of their pensions:

It was a nice, quiet, safe, community, we are able to live here with a higher standard of living for less or the same cost as it would cost in the States. For example, now we live two blocks from the ocean... (Barbara, 67 years old, previous residence in Nebraska).

They also tend to highlight the advantages they expect to gain in terms of improving their quality-of-life and well-being, and the desire to live quietly:

In other parts of Mexico, Ensenada for example, there is big American population but too big. It's another city and we were leaving a city. We wanted to get away from the traffic, the commotion, and all the problems and the hassles that you run into with 3 or 4 million people in a very small area. (Dean, 60 years old, previous residence in California).

These are people who are often drawn to mild and warm climates with amenities and leisure opportunities. The climate-environmental motivating factor is closely related to the economic one, as the idea of living in a single family home by the ocean is costly and out of reach to most middle-class North Americans; however, this is possible in Mexico, where prices and the standard of living are significantly lower than in the USA (Kiy and McEnany, 2010a).

I really enjoy Baja, the ocean. There's nowhere in California where I can afford to live on the ocean

unless I had 3 million dollars to have a nice home on the ocean. (Patrick, 69 years old, previous residence in California).

I never had a servant and here I can get someone for..., far cheaper. I've never had the money to live by the sea. It seems as if I'm a millionaire, and I'm not a millionaire. (Edeline, 78 years old, previous residence in Washington State).

There is a notable climate advantage, particularly among retirees from northern US states (only 5 out of the 29 of the interviewed), although not so much for those from California or other nearby areas (20 out of 29), where the differences are not so pronounced. The ocean influence gives this coastal area mild temperatures all-year round, which is especially pleasant for those accustomed to long cold winters.

Cultural and political factors also play a part in choosing Mexico as a retirement destination. For example, the culture and how people interact with one another in this country are normally considered advantages, and even though there are aspects that new residents dislike, viewing them as negative, the warmth and friendliness of Mexicans are highly considered aspects. What's more, most inhabitants in this area speak English, making life easier for retirees and improving their possibilities of meeting other people and maintaining contacts between both countries.

I always liked the culture, of course there are things I don't like here, there are things I don't like about the American culture, that's true of any culture [...]. There are exceptions, but overall people are very friendly here, I like that. [...] and here most people are friendly. (Marsh, 73 years old, previous residence in California).

To a lesser extent, only 3 out of the 29 interviewees stressed political reasons for having left the USA, as a result of their disagreement with the politicians running their country.

The above factors are considered important individually and collectively, although the small physical distance between the places of origin and destination would seem to be the most important decision-making factor for the move. Compared to the north to south retirement migration in Europe, US retirement migration to Mexico presents a unique case of geographical proximity in that the sending and receiving countries are connected by one of the

longest borders in the world (Rojas et al., 2014). In this case, being only a few dozen kilometres from their country of origin has encouraged these people to retire ‘to another country’ (20 out of 29 lived previously in California, which is the most populous US state with 39 million people in 2015), and this proximity gives them the feeling of living between two worlds and the assurance that if anything happens to them they can return to ‘their own country’ quickly:

I like the proximity and having the best of both worlds. And if you need to..., I can go over there and do my shopping. I do what needs to be done, stay, whatever. (Kathy, 55 years old, previous residence in California).

Occasionally, this desire to be close to the USA has led them to choose a home as close as possible to the border, so that they can feel close to the family, friends and the services they normally use in the USA; in particular, proximity is considered an advantage when it means being close to the family:

We thought we needed to be closer to the border, [...] and with that thought in mind, you’re looking at an hour away from the border instead of 15 minutes. [...] I wanted to be close enough to her so that we could see each other each week when she moved down here full-time. (Carol, 66 years old, previous residence in California).

That’s part of the factor because it’s so close, if something should happen to one of our daughters, we could be there. It’s no different if they lived in Sacramento and we lived in Chula Vista, we could be there. It’s the same. Like I said, 2 ½ hours to my son’s house, 7 or 8 hours to my daughter’s house we can be there. (Patrick, 69 years old, previous residence in California).

## **5. Geographical mobility between previous and current places of residence: bridges between two worlds**

The short distance between the new places of residence of retirees and the USA determines much of the geographical mobility patterns of these people. Living close to the border enables contact and relations between both countries, so ‘the line’ is often

crossed for family reasons, but also to continue with social, cultural and leisure activities (going shopping, going to the cinema, seeing friends, etc.), or for medical and health reasons (going to the doctor). All these factors have a dual purpose because, firstly, they have helped establish the place of residence in this border area while, secondly, they have subsequently enabled retirees to remain in close contact and relationship with the USA.

It is convenient to explain that for these retirees it is very easy to cross the border in both ways, because as US citizens, they reside in Mexico with the FM-2 visa (permanent residence) or FM-3 visa (permit to live or work for more than 180 days in Mexico, that they renew every five years); nevertheless, more rigorous requirements regarding income and capital gains were outlined in 2012 (implemented in 2014) for those seeking FM-2 and FM-3 visas.

Health is one of the most important reasons for going back and forwards and crossing the border, as stated by approximately 90% of those interviewed; they say that after moving to Mexico they continue to have their Medicare in the USA, although occasionally they use very cheap medicines in Mexico. This proximity allows them to visit a doctor in Mexico for unimportant minor treatments; if the problem is more significant though they opt for a specialist in the USA, usually California, giving them great peace of mind and assurance at this stage of their lives.

Really, proximity to the United States. We... it still is a kind of a security factor, and we still have our doctors in the United States. We’re both covered by medical health care programs that require that we use United States doctors. (Dean, 60 years old, previous residence in California).

This behaviour has an enormous economic and social impact on places of destination, particularly the border areas of Mexico. According to Mexican government estimates, the cost of health treatments is approximately 70% lower than that in the USA (Oppenheimer, 2010); in addition, there are many pharmacies which attract thousands of North American citizens to the border each day. It has been estimated that half a million US citizens annually cross over into the State of Baja California to buy medicine or receive medical treatment (Dibble, 2010).

I choose Rosarito Beach [...] because as a retiree I get Medicare [...]. I get social security which

means I get Medicare in the U.S.A. So I want to be close to the border; [...] proximity to the border [...]. I came to Rosarito Beach because when I have a medical problem, in 20 minutes I'm in the U.S.A. Otherwise I would be living in Lake Chapala, nice place, or maybe Guadalajara. (Peter, 85 years old, previous residence in California).

Practically 90% of retirees interviewed benefit from retiree medical insurance in the USA, justifying a great deal of mobility on both sides of the border. Those who do not have this insurance are in the minority – 3 out of the 29 – (either because they are not old enough or have not contributed for the stipulated number of working years), in which case an alternative is sought in Mexico, because in general there is a very positive opinion of the health care sector and doctors in this country. In addition, it should be noted that the private health care service available for elderly people in Mexico, particularly Baja California, has increased a great deal over the past few years, which has changed the idea that retirees have about returning to the USA in the final stage of life to receive care; in the study area, the health care group SERENA is an example of this, as shown by the following interviewee:

I have to be 65 to get assistance from them. And then, you're also entitled to social security. I decided that it was best for me to have a physician here that knew me, so about a month ago I joined Serena which is one of the medical plans here. (Karen, 59 years old, previous residence in California).

It can be affirmed that medical and health matters are the motive for most geographical mobility (25 out of 29 interviewed), followed by trips to the USA for shopping and leisure purposes (23 out of 29). Most interviewees go to the San Diego area once or twice a week to buy food, clothes and other consumer products; some people openly state their preferences for products acquired in the USA, when it comes to buying pet food, drinks, cereals, etc. There is also greater trust in products sold there and in certain retail chains:

About every 10 days, we don't have to, we just tie in other errands, medical appointments and familiar stores that stock what we like. There's not anything that we buy up there that we could not buy down here, but we do have memberships in some stores that are more affordable up there. Because the same products down here are imported, so it's

only a few cents but we're on retirement budget and so we pay more for some things, but we're willing to pay less for others in order to be able to pay more. (Dean, 60 years old, previous residence in California).

As a result, going to the doctors and going shopping are the two main reasons for crossing the border regularly, followed by family visits. Family visits (normally visits to children or a father/mother) are not that frequent and only 10 people declare they visit family once or twice a year in the US, as many interviewees now consider that their life is in Mexico and would rather their families visit them. Given that 20 out of the 29 retirees interviewed come from the closest states in the USA (mostly California), many of their family members live there, from where they can make frequent short visits:

We got married about 5 years ago, and her mother lives in California, and her whole family is in California near San Francisco. She doesn't drive [...]. Her mother is old and she wants to be near her mother as long as possible. So we had to be near the San Diego airport. (Herb, 73 years old, previous residence in California).

Leisure and mainly visiting friends are other reasons for making frequent visits to the USA. Most of the 20 retirees who previously lived in California (out of the 29 interviewed), particularly in the southern part of the state (San Diego area), stay in contact with their old friends, so they see each other frequently at weekends and during the holidays, and relatively frequently when they belong to a club, association or religious/political group.

It would seem to be the case that the greater the distance between the places of residence of people, the lower the frequency of visits, and vice versa. These trips due to medical and leisure reasons, as well as tourism of family/friends, are normally made in a private vehicle when retirees drive up to 6-8 hours; however, they normally use the plane for longer distances thanks to the proximity to two international airports: Tijuana airport is used more for travelling within Mexico (used by many in their holidays), while San Diego airport is ideal for connecting to destinations in the USA; several interviewees have commented on both airports being an important factor in their choice of residential location:

Very seldom, I think basically visiting the children and that's it. I have family on the East coast,



so I only see them once a year. In fact, my brother is coming next week for a week's visit with his wife. So our life is here. Our traveling is vacations; we travel maybe three times a year. (Sylvia, 60 years old, previous residence in Las Vegas).

In addition, contact can be maintained thanks to new technologies (email, Skype, etc.); in particular, 93% of retirees have 'Vonage' in their homes. This is a system that allows them to divert calls received on their landline contracted in the USA and receive them (at no cost to the person making the call from the USA) on their landline in their home in Mexico; retirees recognise that thanks to these technological advances they can stay in touch easily with people the other side of the border.

What's more, various business that these people have to do in the USA results in them making trips 'to the other side', particularly when it comes to dealing with bank accounts, home maintenance or mail collection. All retirees continue to have savings in their traditional banks, although they normally have access to those funds and do business in the branches located in Mexico.

The combination of all these factors results in quite a high level of mobility and retirees continuing to maintain numerous contacts and 'demands' on the other side of 'the line', leading to a great deal of movement in both directions.

The final matter on mobility concerns a possible return to the USA, although almost all interviewees consider this unlikely, given their contentedness and satisfaction with life in Mexico; these people say that in the event of the death of their husband/wife or partner, they would continue to live in Baja California, because this is where they have their network of friends/acquaintances or even family. The main reason is that health care has improved greatly in Mexico, with plenty of cheaper care available compared to the USA; specifically, in the Tijuana and Playas de Rosarito area, private health care has been available for several years from groups/associations providing care either in centres or individually in people's homes.

I used to think if I became disabled then, you know, I needed care I would go back maybe find a retirement home or something, but now I'm realizing that these facilities exist here and it's much cheaper, so I do it here. (Karen, 59 years old, previous residence in California).

Although 24 out of 29 interviewed said they would not return, if it did happen it would be to the place of residence in the USA of any son/daughter or brother/sister, in order to be close to them.

## 6. Conclusions

The surveys have shown that a set of interrelated environmental, economic, cultural and, to a lesser extent, political factors – such as the disagreement in how politicians are running the country – are the triggers for changes of residence among retirees, although all of this is influenced and encouraged by proximity to the previous place of residence. The short distance between the place of origin and destination is an important factor that triggers the mobility process, insofar as a move to this part of Mexico can compensate for leaving their country, obtaining in return the benefits of living in a different environment, but one which is influenced by US society and culture; that proximity means they can continue to enjoy the advantages of being close to the USA without having 'left' it definitively, even though they are living in another country (living 'between two worlds').

Journeys to the USA (particularly to the State of California) are very frequent and motivated by a variety of health and personal reasons (shopping, visiting friends and family, leisure and cultural activities, etc.). Factors such as the distance between the current and previous place of residence, and living so close to the border greatly influence the life of these people and encourage a great deal of interregional mobility, not to mention continuing to maintain many ties between both 'worlds'. What's more, the significant number of US citizens that live in this part of Mexico affects their integration and decision whether to participate and become involved in the life of the country. These mobility patterns appear to be different from those found among other retirees who reside in other parts of Mexico (e.g. in Los Cabos or at Lake Chapala), as the greater distance to the US limits the physical contact and the number of visits (Lizárraga, 2008; Truly, 2002).

In addition, the closeness and proximity to the USA is having a major impact locally, particularly in

terms of health, due to the healthcare implications of retired residents living in this part of Mexico requiring care in the USA; as a result, the governments of both countries, and especially the nearby states involved, are looking for healthcare solutions for retired US citizens living in Mexico. This feature of the health sector, linked to the proximity to the USA, is particular to this border area and it has not been highlighted in other studies about retirees living in other areas of Mexico (Dibble, 2010; Kiy and McEnany, 2010b).

It is advisable to continue to look into whether the mobility patterns of these retired residents near the border are similar to those of people who live in other parts of Mexico, i.e. further from the USA. It appears evident that the geographical behaviour of this group who live in the border area is different, determining therefore the lifestyle and integration of these people locally.

Regarding the spatial behaviour of these immigrants, further analysis is required of aspects such as repeated mobility between the country of origin and destination, or even to third countries, or the possibility of returning, all of which in relation to geographical factors (distance between places of origin and destination, amenities and infrastructure in both places), and other types of factors: personal (training, marital status), family (having a family, its composition and places where family members live), economic (difference in standard of living) and residential (duration of stay).

## Acknowledgements

Part of this research was conducted at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF-Tijuana, Mexico) in 2009 and co-funded by the Mexican Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), the COLEF-Tijuana, and the University of Extremadura in Spain. The author would like to thank Dr. Roberto Ham (from the COLEF) and Marisa Molina (from the Foreign Resident Attention Office –FRAO– in Playas de Rosarito, Baja California) for the help during the fieldwork. I would also like to thank all the interviewees for their time and dedication to this project, and the two independent referees for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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