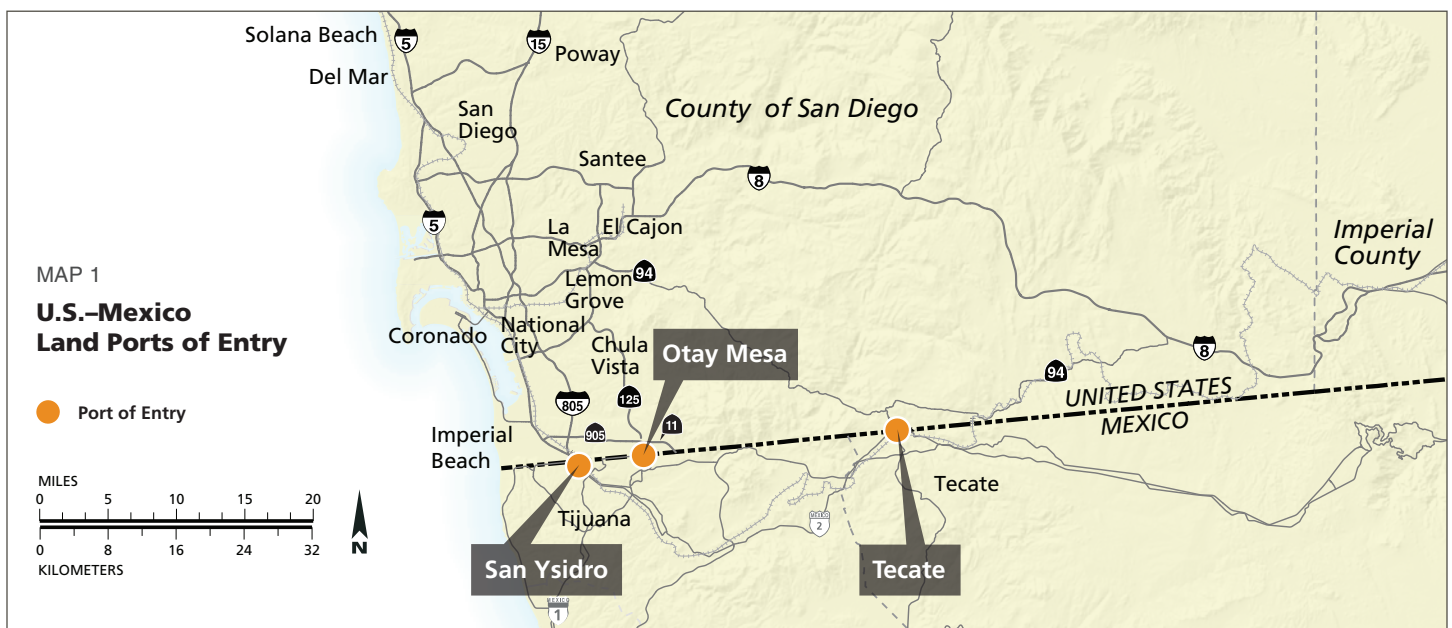


January 2021

In 2019, SANDAG contracted with True North Research to conduct a Crossborder Travel Behavior survey, which was last conducted in 2010. The intent of the study was to provide a statistically reliable profile of the travel behaviors of residents of Mexico who cross into San Diego County on weekdays¹ via one of three U.S. land ports of entry (Map 1) and gain a better understanding of the nature of the trips made by U.S. residents returning from Mexico. Information from this study is included in the SANDAG travel forecasting model used to develop the long-range regional transportation plan for the San Diego region. This InfoBits report highlights some of the study's key findings,² which underscore the importance of crossborder travel to the economy and life for individuals on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.³



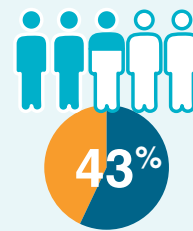
Did you know?



The primary reason (52%) Mexico residents gave for coming to the U.S. was to shop.



After entering the U.S., Mexico residents spent an average of six hours in San Diego County, made an average of three stops, and traveled almost 30 miles.



About two in five (43%) U.S. residents crossing from Mexico reported they lived outside San Diego County.

¹ Study subjects were recruited on weekdays prior to COVID-19 restrictions at the border between 5 a.m. and 6 p.m. While data on weekend travel were also going to be collected, the stay-home order issued in March 2020 prevented this. Additional data collection may occur in the future once travel behavior returns to more traditional patterns.

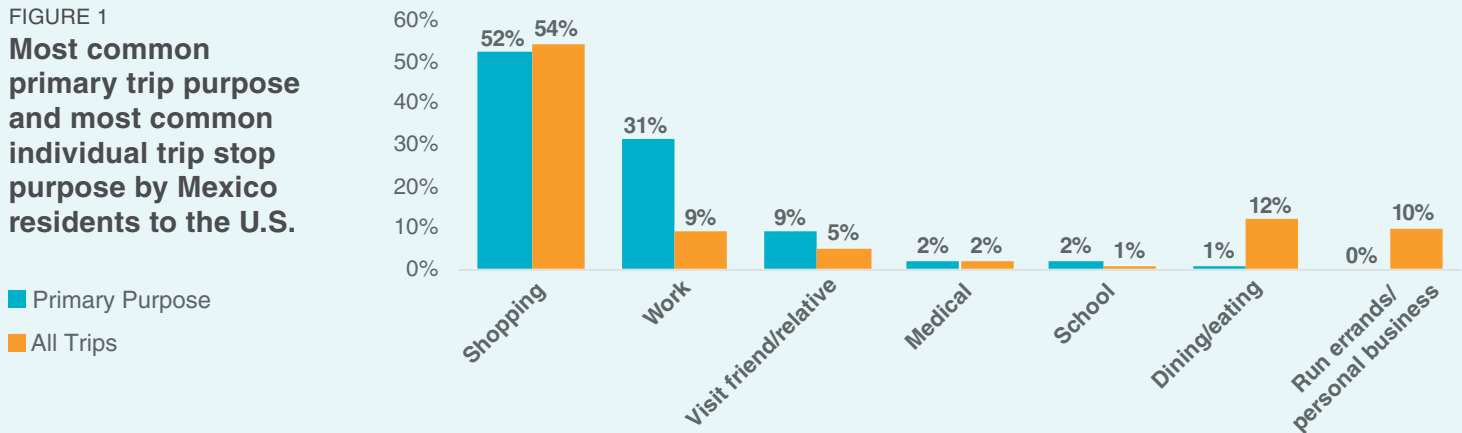
² The full study report can be found at: www.sandag.org/2019CrossBorderSurvey.

³ This InfoBits report provides summary statistics overall, with a few exceptions. Additional analyses related to differences across the ports of entry, respondent characteristics, and trip purpose, as well as the full research methodology, are available in the full report.

What are the reasons Mexico residents share for making a trip to the U.S.?

As Figure 1 shows, around half (52%) of Mexico residents surveyed reported that the primary purpose of their trip to the U.S. was shopping. Other common primary trip purposes included working and visiting a friend or relative. While people have a primary purpose for choosing to cross the border, they often make multiple stops (average of 3.1) every trip. For example, while those surveyed rarely said dining/eating was their primary trip purpose, 12% of all stops were for this purpose. These data show how Mexico residents contribute to the San Diego region's economy as workers and consumers.

FIGURE 1
Most common primary trip purpose and most common individual trip stop purpose by Mexico residents to the U.S.

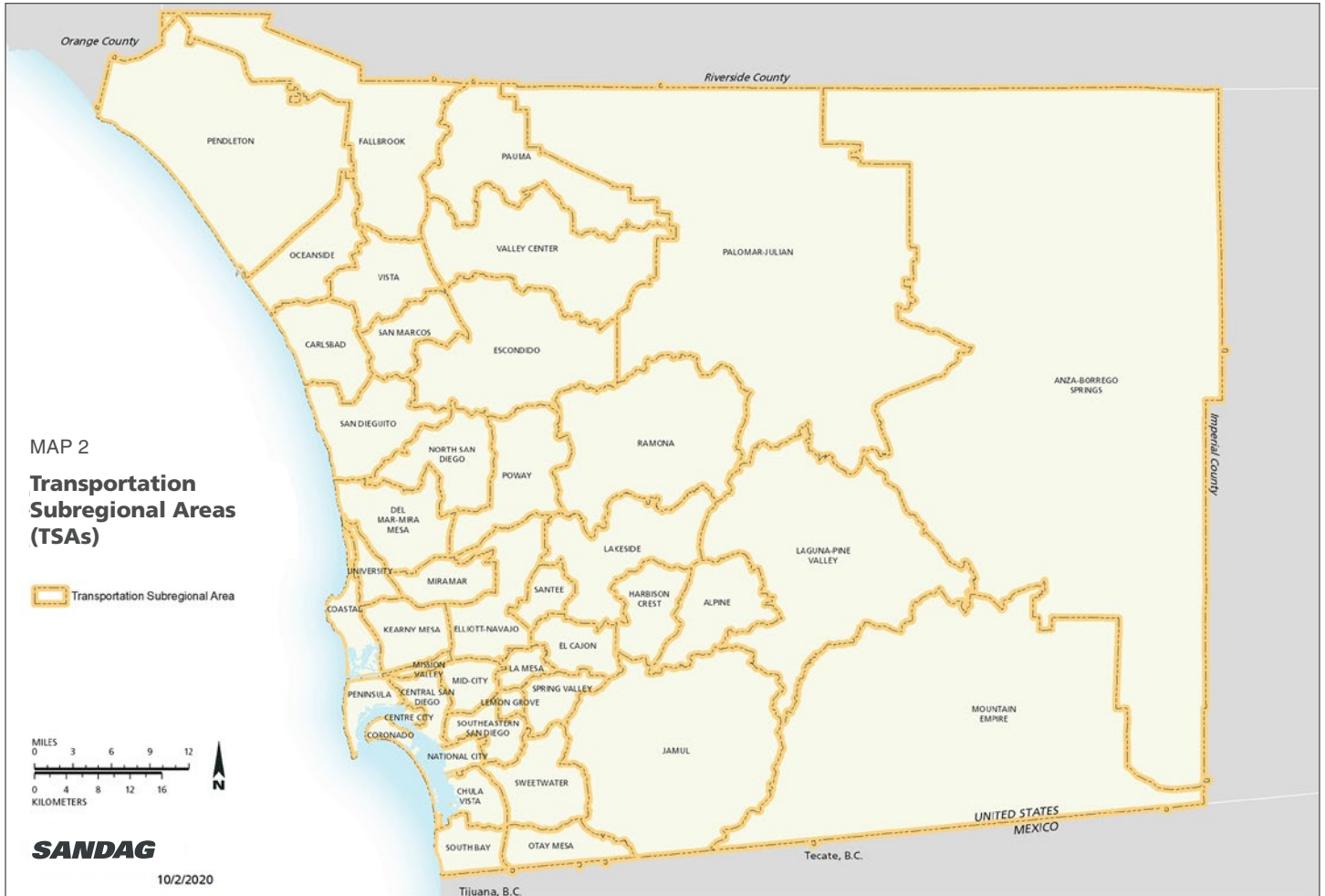


What does a typical trip to the U.S. look like for a resident of Mexico?

As Figure 2 shows, the Mexico residents surveyed reported they came to the U.S. an average of 2.7 times per week (on weekdays), but this varied based on the primary purpose of the trip, with those coming for work crossing the border more often (average of 4.3 times per week), compared to those who said they were primarily coming to shop (1.8 times per week) (not shown). A typical trip lasted an average of 6.3 hours and involved traveling almost 30 miles in the U.S., and most trip stops occurred in the afternoon. Almost three-quarters of trips involved travelers in single-occupancy vehicles (44%) or carpooling (30%), although those crossing at San Ysidro were also likely to bike and use the Trolley. More than three-quarters were destined for South County transportation subregional areas (TSAs) (Map 2).

FIGURE 2
Characteristics of typical trips and stops by Mexico residents visiting the U.S.

The average number of weekday trips per week was 2.7 , but varied based on primary purpose.	The average time spent in the U.S. was 6.3 hours .	The average number of miles traveled in the U.S. was 29.8 .	The most common time that most trip stops occurred was between 1 and 4 p.m.	Almost three in four trips occurred in a single-occupancy vehicle (44%) or in a carpool (30%). At San Ysidro, 14% involved someone biking and 7% involved the Trolley.	More than three-quarters (78%) of trip stops by Mexico residents occurred in South County TSAs , including South Bay (28%), Chula Vista (27%), and Otay Mesa (23%).
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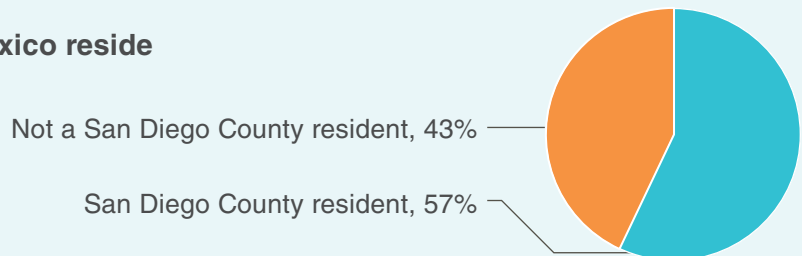


Why do U.S. residents go to Mexico?

As part of this study, U.S. residents were surveyed as they returned to the U.S., and information about where they lived, their primary travel purpose, and the length of their stay was collected. As Figure 3 shows, 57% of U.S. residents reported they lived in San Diego County, and the rest said they lived somewhere else, most often Los Angeles County (18%), Riverside County (7%), or Orange County (6%) (not shown).

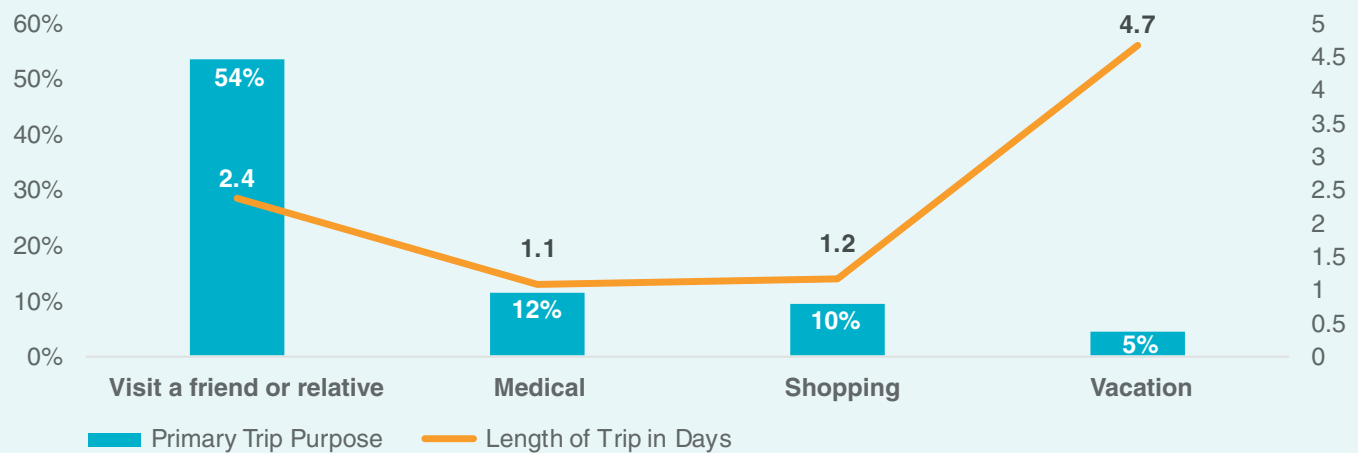
On average, these individuals reported crossing an average of 3.1 weekdays per month, which is less frequent than Mexico residents, who reported traveling to the U.S. an average of 2.7 times per week.

FIGURE 3
Where U.S. residents returning from Mexico reside



U.S. residents were also more likely to state the primary purpose of their trip was to visit a friend or relative, receive medical care, or go on vacation compared to Mexico residents. In addition, the average trip was longer, lasting days rather than hours (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Primary trip purpose and length of trip for U.S. residents traveling to Mexico



Compared to Mexico residents traveling to the U.S., U.S. residents traveling to Mexico:

- » Crossed less frequently (3 times per month on weekdays, rather than an average of 11)
- » Stayed longer (measured in days versus hours)
- » Were more likely to be visiting a friend or relative, or seeking medical care

Takeaways:

- » Crossborder traffic between the U.S. and Mexico is important for residents in both countries on a personal level, with visiting friends and relatives noted as a top three primary trip purpose for individuals on both sides of the border.
- » Given that the two most common reasons cited for Mexico residents to travel to the U.S. were shopping and work, the economic consequences of crossborder delays are important to consider in the development of regional transportation plans on both sides of the border.
- » With more than two in every five U.S. residents traveling to Mexico initiating their trips in other counties, interregional and international coordination is vitally important to all.
- » With most trip stops by Mexico residents clustering in South County, a focus on infrastructure and other planning efforts in this area is important for regional sustainability.

About infobits

SANDAG serves as the region’s clearinghouse for information and data. InfoBits publish timely, relevant information informing the public while providing context on complex issues facing the region.

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