

Monday, April 23, 2012

Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less

Jeffrey Passel, Senior Demographer

D’Vera Cohn, Senior Writer

Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, Research Associate

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-3600

Fax (202) 419-3608

info@pewhispanic.org

www.pewhispanic.org

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The staff of the Pew Hispanic Center is:

Paul Taylor, Director

Rakesh Kochhar, Associate Director for Research

Richard Fry, Senior Research Associate

Gretchen Livingston, Senior Researcher

Gabriel Velasco, Research Analyst

Eileen Patten, Research Assistant

Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director

Jeffrey S. Passel, Senior Demographer

Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, Research Associate

Seth Motel, Research Assistant

Mary Seaborn, Administrative Manager

About this Report

This report analyzes the magnitude and trend of migration flows between Mexico and the United States; the experiences and intentions of Mexican immigrants repatriated by U.S. immigration authorities; U.S. immigration enforcement patterns; conditions in Mexico and the U.S. that could affect immigration; and characteristics of Mexican-born immigrants in the U.S.

The report draws on numerous data sources from both Mexico and the U.S. The principal Mexican data sources are the Mexican decennial censuses (Censos de Población y Vivienda) of 1990, 2000 and 2010; the Mexican Population Count (II Conteo de Población y Vivienda) of 2005; the Survey of Migration in the Northern Border of Mexico (la Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México or EMIF-Norte); the Survey of Demographic Dynamics of 2006 and 2009 (Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica or ENADID); and the Survey of Occupation and Employment for 2005-2011 (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo or ENOE). The principal U.S. data sources are the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) monthly data for 1994 to 2012; the CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement conducted in March for 1994 to 2011; the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2005-2010; U.S. Censuses from 1850 to 2000; U.S. Border Patrol data on apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics on legal admissions to the U.S. and aliens removed or returned. The report also uses data from the World Bank and the United Nations Population Division.

This report was written by Senior Demographer Jeffrey Passel, Senior Writer D'Vera Cohn and Research Associate Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. Paul Taylor provided editorial guidance in the drafting of this report. Rakesh Kochhar and Mark Hugo Lopez provided comments on earlier drafts of the report. Seth Motel and Gabriel Velasco provided research assistance. Gabriel Velasco and Eileen Patten number-checked the report. Marcia Kramer copy edited the report text and Appendix A. Molly Rohal copy edited the report's methodology appendix.

A Note on Terminology

Because this report views migration between Mexico and the U.S. from both sides of the border, descriptions of “immigrants” and “emigrants” or “immigration,” “emigration,” “migration flows” specify the country of residence of the migrants or the direction of the flow.

United States:

“Foreign born” refers to persons born outside of the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories to parents neither of whom was a U.S. citizen. The terms “foreign born” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably in this report.

“U.S. born” refers to an individual who is a U.S. citizen at birth, including people born in the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories, as well as those born elsewhere to parents who are U.S. citizens. U.S.-born persons also are described as “U.S. natives.”

The “legal immigrant” population is defined as people granted legal permanent residence; those granted asylum; people admitted as refugees; and people admitted under a set of specific authorized temporary statuses for longer-term residence and work. Legal immigrants also include persons who have acquired U.S. citizenship through naturalization.

“Unauthorized immigrants” are all foreign-born non-citizens residing in the country who are not “legal immigrants.” These definitions reflect standard and customary usage by the Department of Homeland Security and academic researchers. The vast majority of unauthorized immigrants entered the country without valid documents or arrived with valid visas but stayed past their visa expiration date or otherwise violated the terms of their admission.

U.S. censuses and surveys include people whose usual residence is the United States. Consequently, migrants from Mexico who are in the U.S. for short periods to work, visit or shop are generally not included in measures of the U.S. population. “Immigration” to the United States includes only people who are intending to settle in the United States.

“Removals” are the compulsory and confirmed movement of inadmissible or deportable aliens out of the United States based on an order of removal. An alien who is removed has administrative or criminal consequences placed on subsequent re-entry.

“Returns” are the confirmed movement of inadmissible or deportable aliens out of the United States not based on an order of removal. These include aliens who agree to return home.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security uses the term “removal” rather than “deportation” to describe the actions of its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to expel foreign nationals from the U.S. “Deportations” are one type of removal and refer to the formal removal of a foreign citizen from the U.S. In addition, a foreign citizen may be expelled from the U.S. under an alternative action called an expedited removal. Deportations and expedited removals together comprise removals reported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Mexico:

In Mexican data, “U.S. born” refers only to persons born in the United States and not to the citizenship at birth.

“Return migration” is a concept based on a census or survey question about prior residence, specifically residence five years before the census or survey. A “return migrant” to Mexico is a person who lived outside of Mexico (usually in the U.S.) five years before the census or survey and is back in Mexico at the time of the survey.

“Recent migrants” are identified through a question in Mexican censuses and surveys that asks whether any members of the household have left to go to the U.S. in a prior period, usually the previous five years. The recent migrants may be back in the household or elsewhere in Mexico (in which case they have “returned” to Mexico) or they may still be in the U.S. or in another country.

“U.S.-born residents with Mexican parents” are people born in the United States with either a Mexican-born mother or father. The Mexican data sources do not have a direct question about the country of birth of a person’s mother and father. Consequently, parentage must be inferred from relationships to other members of the household. About 89-91% of U.S.-born children in the Mexican censuses can be linked with one or two Mexican-born parents, about 2% can be linked only with non-Mexican parents, and the remaining 7-9% are in households without either parent.

Both:

“Adults” are ages 18 and older. “Children,” unless otherwise specified, are people under age 18.

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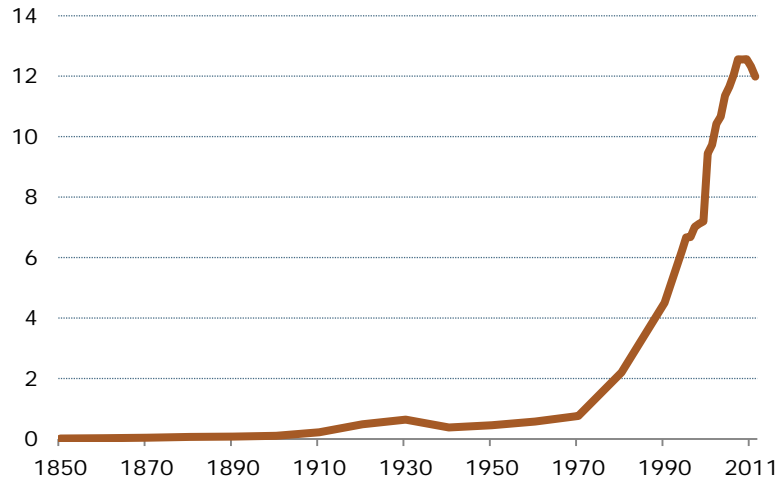
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1. Overview

The largest wave of immigration in history from a single country to the United States has come to a standstill. After four decades that brought 12 million current immigrants—most of whom came illegally—the net migration flow from Mexico to the United States has stopped and may have reversed, according to a new analysis of government data from both countries by the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center.

Figure 1.1

Mexican-Born Population in the U.S., 1850-2011 (in millions)



Source: 1850-1930, 1960-1980: Gibson and Jung (2006); 1940-1950, U.S. Census Bureau (1975), Series C228-295, white foreign-born; 1990-2011: Pew Hispanic Center estimates from augmented March Current Population Surveys and Decennial Censuses adjusted for undercount

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The standstill appears to be the result of many factors, including the weakened U.S. job and housing construction markets, heightened border enforcement, a rise in deportations, the growing dangers associated with illegal border crossings, the long-term decline in Mexico's birth rates and broader economic conditions in Mexico.

It is possible that the Mexican immigration wave will resume as the U.S. economy recovers. Even if it doesn't, it has already secured a place in the record books. The U.S. today has more immigrants from Mexico alone—12.0 million—than any other country in the world has from all countries of the world.¹ Some 30% of all current U.S. immigrants were born in Mexico. The next largest sending country—China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan)—accounts for just 5% of the nation's current stock of about 40 million immigrants.

¹ Russia has 12.3 million residents who are classified by the United Nations as immigrants, but the vast majority were born in countries that had been a part of the Soviet Union prior to its breakup in 1991.

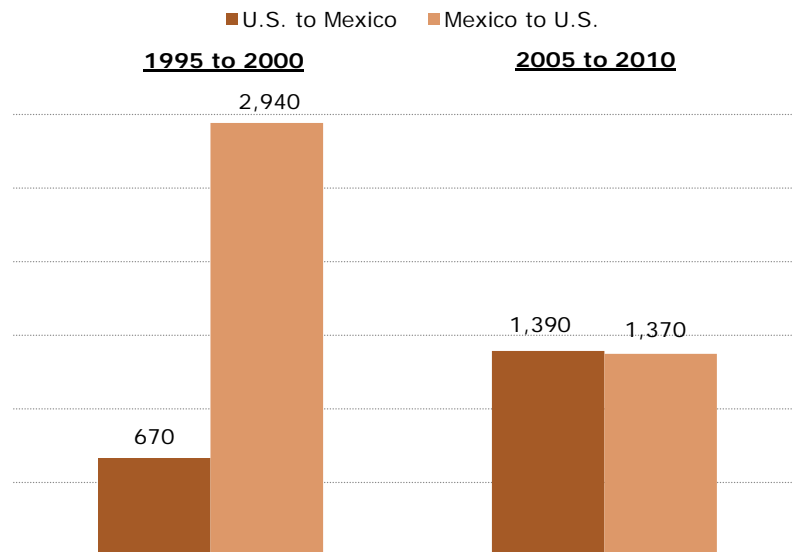
Looking back over the entire span of U.S. history, no country has ever seen as many of its people immigrate to this country as Mexico has in the past four decades. However, when measured not in absolute numbers but as a share of the immigrant population at the time, immigration waves from Germany and Ireland in the late 19th century equaled or exceeded the modern wave from Mexico.

Beyond its size, the most distinctive feature of the modern Mexican wave has been the unprecedented share of immigrants who have come to the U.S. illegally. Just over half (51%) of all current Mexican immigrants are unauthorized, and some 58% of the estimated 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are Mexican ([Passel and Cohn, 2011](#)).

The sharp downward trend in net migration from Mexico began about five years ago and has led to the first significant decrease in at least two decades in the unauthorized Mexican population. As of 2011, some 6.1 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants were living in the U.S., down from a peak of nearly 7 million in 2007, according to Pew Hispanic Center estimates based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Over the same period, the population of authorized immigrants from Mexico rose modestly, from 5.6 million in 2007 to 5.8 million in 2011.

The net standstill in Mexican-U.S. migration flows is the result of two opposite trend lines that have converged in recent years. During the five-year period from 2005 to 2010, a total of 1.4 million Mexicans immigrated to the United States, down by more than half from the 3 million who had done so in the five-year period of 1995 to 2000. Meantime, the number of

Figure 1.2
Five-Year Migration Flows Between the U.S. and Mexico, 1995-2000 and 2005-2010
(in thousands)



Note: Estimates are for February 1995 through February 2000 and June 2005 through June 2010. Migration from U.S. to Mexico includes persons born in Mexico, the U.S., and elsewhere; Mexico to U.S. includes Mexican-born persons only.

Source: U.S. to Mexico: Pew Hispanic Center estimates from population, household and migrant microdata samples of Mexican censuses of 2000 and 2010; Mexico to U.S.: Based on Pew Hispanic Center estimates in Figure 1.3 from various sources; see Methodology

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Mexicans and their children who moved from the U.S. to Mexico between 2005 and 2010 rose to 1.4 million, roughly double the number who had done so in the five-year period a decade before. While it is not possible to say so with certainty, the trend lines within this latest five-year period suggest that return flow to Mexico probably exceeded the inflow from Mexico during the past year or two.

Of the 1.4 million people who migrated from the U.S. to Mexico since 2005, including about 300,000 U.S.-born children, most did

so voluntarily, but a significant minority were deported and remained in Mexico. Firm data on this phenomenon are sketchy, but Pew Hispanic Center estimates based on government data from both countries suggest that 5% to 35% of these returnees may not have moved voluntarily.

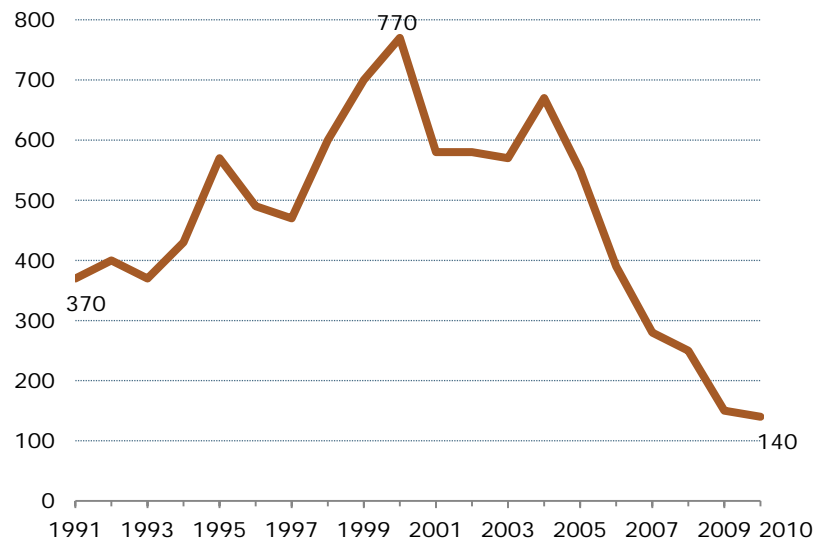
In contrast to the decrease of the Mexican born, the U.S. immigrant population from all countries has continued to grow and numbered 39.6 million in 2011, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

In addition, the number of Mexican-Americans in the U.S.—both immigrants and U.S.-born residents of Mexican ancestry—is continuing to rise. The Mexican-American population numbered 33 million in 2010.² As reported previously ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2011](#)), between 2000 and 2010 births surpassed immigration as the main reason for growth of the Mexican-American population.

Figure 1.3

Annual Immigration from Mexico to the U.S.: 1991-2010

(in thousands)



Source: Pew Hispanic Center estimates compiled from various sources; see Methodology

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² Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2010 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS).

The population of Mexican-born residents of the U.S. is larger than the population of most countries or states. Among Mexican-born people worldwide, one-in-ten lives in the United States.

This report has five additional sections. The next section analyzes statistics on migration between Mexico and the United States from data sources in both countries. The third uses mainly Mexican data to examine characteristics, experience and future intentions of Mexican migrants handed over to Mexican authorities by U.S. law enforcement agencies. The fourth, based on U.S. data, examines trends in border enforcement statistics. The fifth looks at changing conditions in Mexico that might affect migration trends. The report's last section looks at characteristics of Mexican-born immigrants in the U.S., using U.S. Census Bureau data. The appendix explains the report's methodology and data sources.

Among the report's other main findings from these sections:

Changing Patterns of Border Enforcement

- In spite of (and perhaps because of) increases in the number of U.S. Border Patrol agents, apprehensions of Mexicans trying to cross the border illegally have plummeted in recent years—from more than 1 million in 2005 to 286,000 in 2011—a likely indication that fewer unauthorized migrants are trying to cross. Border Patrol apprehensions of all unauthorized immigrants are now at their lowest level since 1971.
- As apprehensions at the border have declined, deportations of unauthorized Mexican immigrants—some of them picked up at work sites or after being arrested for other criminal violations—have risen to record levels. In 2010, 282,000 unauthorized Mexican immigrants were repatriated by U.S. authorities, via deportation or the expedited removal process.

Changing Characteristics of Return Migrants

- Although most unauthorized Mexican immigrants sent home by U.S. authorities say they plan to try to return, a growing share say they will not try to come back to the U.S. According to a survey by Mexican authorities of repatriated immigrants, 20% of labor migrants in 2010 said they would not return, compared with just 7% in 2005.
- A growing share of unauthorized Mexican immigrants sent home by U.S. authorities had been in the United States for a year or more—27% in 2010,

up from 6% in 2005. Also, 17% were apprehended at work or at home in 2010, compared with just 3% in 2005.

Demographic Trends Related to Mexican Migration

- In Mexico, among the wide array of trends with potential impact on the decision to emigrate, the most significant demographic change is falling fertility: As of 2009, a typical Mexican woman was projected to have an average 2.4 children in her lifetime, compared with 7.3 for her 1960 counterpart.
- Compared with other immigrants to the U.S., Mexican-born immigrants are younger, poorer, less-educated, less likely to be fluent in English and less likely to be naturalized citizens.

2. Migration Between the U.S. and Mexico

The number of Mexican-born immigrants who left the U.S. for Mexico rose sharply from 2005 to 2010, even as the flow of new immigrants to the U.S. from Mexico fell steeply, according to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of data from both countries.

As a result, net Mexican immigration to the U.S. is at a standstill, and the Mexican-born population in the U.S. leveled off and then declined in the last half of the most recent decade. The Mexican-born population grew 23% from 2000 to 2005, peaked in 2007 at 12.6 million and stabilized for two years before declining slightly in 2010. In 2011, the Mexican-born population in the U.S. decreased still further, to 12.0 million.

These developments represent a notable reversal of the historic pattern of Mexican immigration to the U.S., which has risen dramatically over the past four decades. Mexico is the leading country of origin of U.S. immigrants, and Mexicans in the U.S. are by far the largest population worldwide from any origin country.

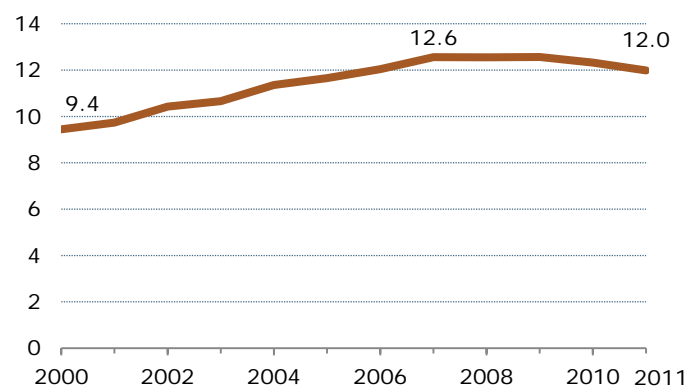
From 2005 to 2010, 1.4 million Mexicans and their families (including U.S.-born children) left the U.S. to move to Mexico, according to data from the 2010 Mexican census. That is about double the 670,000 who did so a decade earlier, from 1995 to 2000. While most of these immigrants returned voluntarily, an estimated 5% to 35% returned as a result of deportations between 2005 and 2010 (for more details, see Section 3).

U.S. data on Mexican inflows tell the rest of the migration story from this side of the border. Flows—the number of people added to the U.S. population each year—dropped markedly from 2005 to 2010, totaling 1.4 million for the five-year period, according to estimates based on U.S.

Figure 2.1

Mexican-Born Population in the U.S., 2000-2011

(in millions)



Source: Pew Hispanic Center estimates based on augmented March Current Population Surveys, adjusted for undercount

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Census Bureau data. This represents a marked break from previous years: Total inflows reached about 3 million in each of the two preceding five-year periods.

Mexican Census Data: Return Flows

It has been clear for several years that immigration flows to the U.S. from Mexico have been dwindling since 2006 ([Passel and Cohn, 2009](#)), but until recently there had been little hard evidence that flows back to Mexico had grown over the same period. That gap has been filled by new data from the 2010 Mexican census, which show that about twice as many Mexicans returned home in the five years previous to the 2010 census than had done so in the five years before the 2000 census.

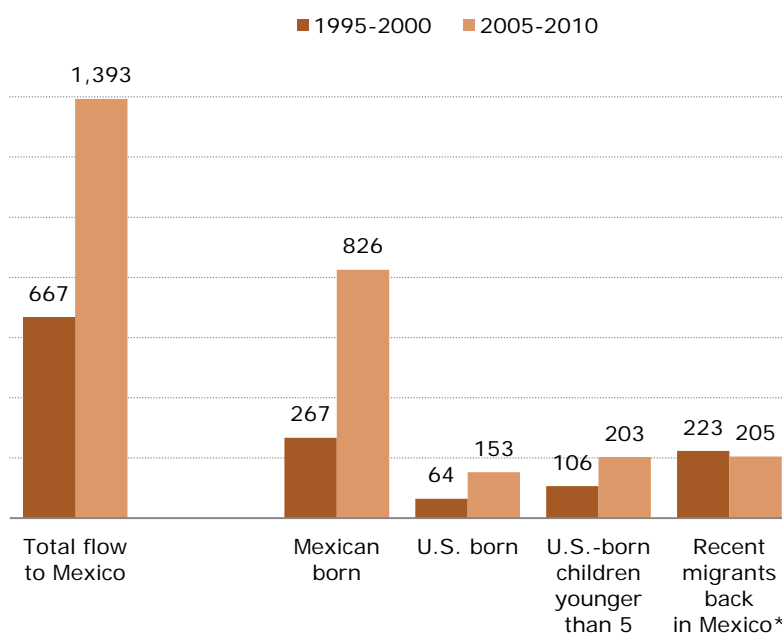
This analysis draws on two sets of questions in the Mexican census. One asks all respondents where they had been living five years before the census was taken; the

answers provide a count of people who moved from the U.S. to Mexico during that period. A separate question targets more recent emigrants: It asks a sample of all households whether anyone from the household had left for another country during the previous five years; if so, additional questions are asked about whether and when that person or persons came back.

The 2010 Mexican census tallied nearly 1.4 million people—the vast majority of them Mexican adults—who had moved from the U.S. to Mexico between 2005 and 2010. (This combines answers to both questions.) That is nearly double the 667,000 people who had moved to

Figure 2.2

Flows from U.S. to Mexico by Type of Migrant, 1995-2000 and 2005-2010 (in thousands)



Notes: "Others in U.S. five years ago" not shown separately (fewer than 10,000).
* "Recent migrants back to Mexico" are persons who left Mexico in the five years before the census and returned by the time of the census. Figures adjusted to exclude persons living in the U.S. five years ago and U.S.-born children younger than 5.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from population, household and migrant microdata samples of Mexican censuses of 2000 and 2010

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Mexico from the U.S. from 1995 to 2000, according to 2000 Mexican census numbers analyzed by the Pew Hispanic Center.

The total number of U.S.-to-Mexico migrants consists of four main groups. The largest is Mexican born, largely (90%) adults, who lived in the U.S. in five years before the census and in Mexico at the census date. These Mexican-born return migrants more than tripled to 826,000 in 2010 from 267,000 in 2000.

The second group is U.S. born, largely (75%) children, who were in the U.S. five years before the census. This group more than doubled to 153,000 in 2010 from 64,000 in 2000. The third consists of children under 5 who were born in the U.S. and brought to Mexico by the census date. Almost all of these are children of Mexican-born parents, and their number almost doubled to 203,000 from 106,000.

The final large group we designate as “recent migrants.” These people were in Mexico five years before the census but moved to the U.S. in the intervening period and returned to Mexico by the census date.³ There were slightly fewer of the recent migrants in 2010 (205,000) than in 2000 (223,000). Since this group is initially part of the flow of migrants to the U.S. in the period just before the census, the drop undoubtedly reflects the overall drop in Mexico-U.S. migration in recent years.⁴

The structure of the flow is similar in the two periods. Mexican-born adults are just under three-quarters of the total flow in both periods; Mexican-born children are about 5%. U.S.-born children of Mexican parents are the remaining 20%.

U.S.-Born Children

Those who had lived in the U.S. in 2005 but were living in Mexico in 2010 included more than 826,000 Mexican-born migrants ages 5 and older (more than 90% adults) and more than 100,000 U.S.-born children ages 5 and older with Mexican parents.⁵ In the 2000 Mexican census, the comparable numbers who had lived in the U.S. five years earlier (1995) were about 267,000 Mexican-born migrants ages 5 and older (again, mainly adults) and about 37,000 U.S.-born children ages 5 and older of Mexican parents.

³ The remaining migrants, persons born in countries other than Mexico or the U.S., represent less than 1% of the flow.

⁴ In the Mexican census data, there is some overlap between the recent migrants and those in the U.S. five years before the census. In our estimates of five-year flows, the overlapping counts are removed.

⁵ Children are defined as persons ages 17 and younger.

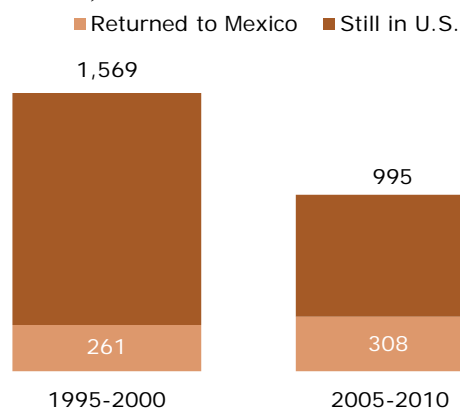
The 2010 Mexican census also counted more than 182,000 U.S.-born children under age 5 with Mexican parents living in Mexico, compared with about 99,000 counted in the 2000 census. These children are considered part of the five-year migration total but they are not captured by the “residence five years ago” question because they were not yet born. The U.S.-born children under 5 represent an estimated 5% to 10% of the roughly 2.5 million children born in the U.S. to Mexican-born parents during the 2006-2010 period.

The total number of U.S.-born children of Mexican parents counted in the 2010 Mexican census was about 500,000, compared with about 240,000 in 2000.⁶ (According to Pew Hispanic estimates, most of these 500,000 children would have moved to Mexico in the 2005-2010 period.)

It is possible that some U.S.-born children were accompanying parents who were sent back to Mexico by U.S. authorities. The Department of Homeland Security recently provided Congress with the first official data on the number of parents removed from the U.S. who say they have U.S.-born citizen children.

According to the report (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012), more than 46,000 immigrants removed from the U.S. during the first six months of 2011 said they had U.S.-citizen children. However, the report did not specify the countries of birth of the parents who were repatriated, the total number of U.S.-born children of these migrants or whether the U.S.-born children remained in the United States.⁷

Figure 2.3
Recent Migration from Mexico to the U.S. by Current Residence, 1995-2000 and 2005-2010 (in thousands)



Note: Includes persons reported in the Mexican census as having left Mexican households for the U.S. in the five years before the census (January 1995-February 2000 or June 2005-June 2010). Some people are back in the same households, some are elsewhere in Mexico and the rest are in the U.S.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 10 percent microdata samples from Mexican censuses of 2000 and 2010

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⁶ These are conservative estimates because the children who are included in this category are only those living in the same household with their parents. In addition, there were another 52,000 children ages 17 and younger in 2010 who could not be linked with a parent living in the same household. Most are probably U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants to the U.S.

⁷ The report (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012) was ordered by Congress in response to a 2009 estimate by the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security ([U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009](#)) that more than 100,000 parents of U.S.-born children had been deported during the nine-year period from 1998 to 2007. The inspector general report with that estimate stated that DHS did not consistently track U.S.-citizen children.

Children born to immigrant parents in the U.S. have automatic right of citizenship at birth. U.S.-born children of Mexican-born parents automatically acquire dual nationality and thus become citizens of both the U.S. and Mexico. Although each country has its own citizenship laws and policies, both countries allow the automatic acquisition or retention of a foreign nationality, acquired by birth in a foreign country, or through a parent who is a national of another country.⁸

More Recent Migrants

The same trends shown above for migrants to Mexico who had been living in the U.S. in 2005 apply to Mexicans who had not been in the U.S. in 2005 but moved to the U.S. after that—more recent migrants. The 2010 Mexican census counted a smaller number of recent emigrants than the 2000 census, but a higher number (and share) of returnees from this group.

The 2010 Mexican census counted 995,000 Mexicans who had left for the U.S. since June 2005 and about 310,000 who returned by June 2010. The 2000 Mexican census counted 1.6 million Mexicans who had left since February 1995 and 261,000 who returned by February 2000.

Analyzed by share, the 2010 census showed that nearly one-in-three (31%) of those who had left for the U.S. within the previous five years had returned. That compares with about one-in-six (17%) for those who had left for the U.S. within the five years previous to the 2000 Mexican census.⁹

When Did Return Flows Rise?

When did return flows to Mexico begin to rise? Evidence from various sources points to sometime late in the decade. A 2005 sample survey by Mexico's chief statistical agency (INEGI) counted a lower number of returnees who had lived in the U.S. five years earlier (246,000) than either the 2000 Mexican census or the 2010 Mexican census. (The survey,

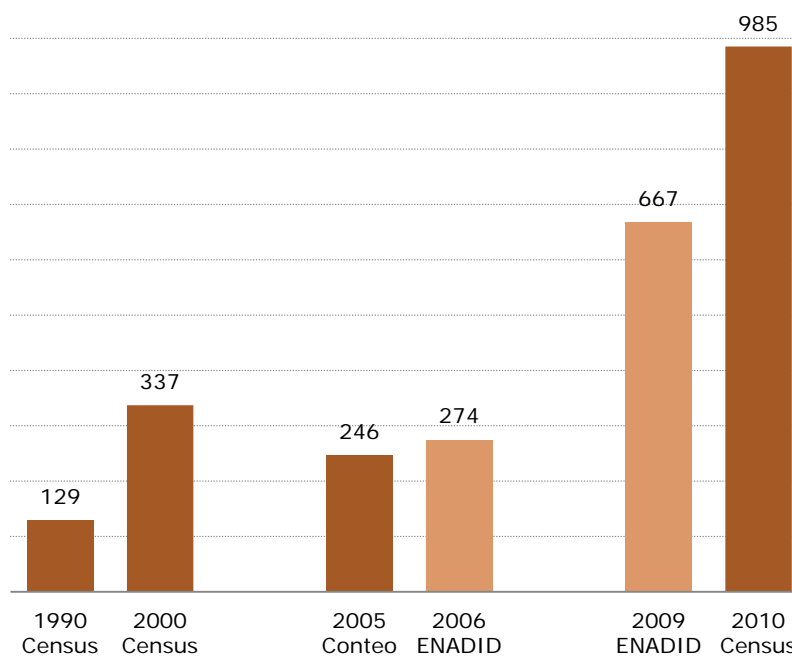
⁸ In the case of Mexico, citizenship may also be acquired through a parent who is a naturalized Mexican citizen. Mexico started allowing its citizens to hold dual nationality in 1998. Foreign nationals, who had previously lost their Mexican nationality prior to 1998, may regain their Mexican nationality through an administrative process at a Mexican embassy or consulate.

⁹ Not all of the recent migrants who returned to Mexico by the time of the census are included in the overall estimate U.S.-Mexico migration shown above. There is some overlap between the recent migrants (i.e., people who reported moving to the U.S. between 2005 and 2010) and people who reported living in the U.S. in 2005. We have removed the overlap—about 100,000 in 2010 and 40,000 in 2000—in the estimates of total flow but not in our discussion of recent migration patterns.

intended to update the 2000 Mexican census, asked fewer questions so more detailed breakdowns about U.S.-born children are not available.)

Another Mexican source that points to increased flows in the last half of the decade is the National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID). The 2006 demographic survey shows about 274,000 people who had lived outside of Mexico in 2001 and had returned to Mexico by 2006. The number was notably higher in the 2009 demographic survey—about 667,000 people who had lived in the U.S. in 2004 and had gone to Mexico in 2004-2009.

Figure 2.4
Return Migration to Mexico of Mexicans Living in the U.S. Five Years Before the Mexican Census or Survey: 1990-2010
(in thousands)



Note: Populations include persons born in Mexico, the U.S. and elsewhere who were counted in Mexico and reported living in the U.S. five years earlier.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from population, household and migrant microdata samples of 1990, 2000 and 2010 Mexican censuses, 2005 Conteo and 2006 and 2009 ENADID

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Mexican Census

Results Help Explain Earlier Contradictory Data

The Mexican census results help to explain findings from another Mexican household survey that did not show an increased return flow of Mexicans back to their homeland. Mexico's National Survey of Employment and Occupation (ENOE), which had been cited in a previous Pew Hispanic Center report ([Passel and Cohn, 2009](#)) and elsewhere (Rendall et al. 2011) on this issue, indicated that return flows appeared to be stable from 2006 through February 2009. Subsequent ENOE data show decreasing return flows.

However, the employment and occupation survey is designed to measure movement to and from existing households in Mexico that are part of the sample. It does not include moves by entire households, an important contributor to return migration flow. This design feature

causes ENOE to understate return migration flows. Furthermore, if patterns of return migration changed, ENOE might not capture the trend over time.

The 2010 Mexican census results indicate that a substantial share of return migrants come back to Mexico with their entire households. These households account for almost half of people counted as returnees in the 2000 and 2010 Mexican censuses, according to the Pew Hispanic analysis.

Recent Flows from U.S. and Mexican Data

Annual inflows of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. can be estimated using census data from the U.S. and Mexico. The U.S. figures are gross numbers that do not account for people who leave the U.S. Data from both countries point to inflows that peaked around 2000 and plunged beginning in 2007.

Looking at arrivals of Mexican immigrants since 1990, U.S. Census Bureau data analyzed by the Pew Hispanic Center indicate that more than 700,000 a year came to the U.S. in 1999-2000, during a time

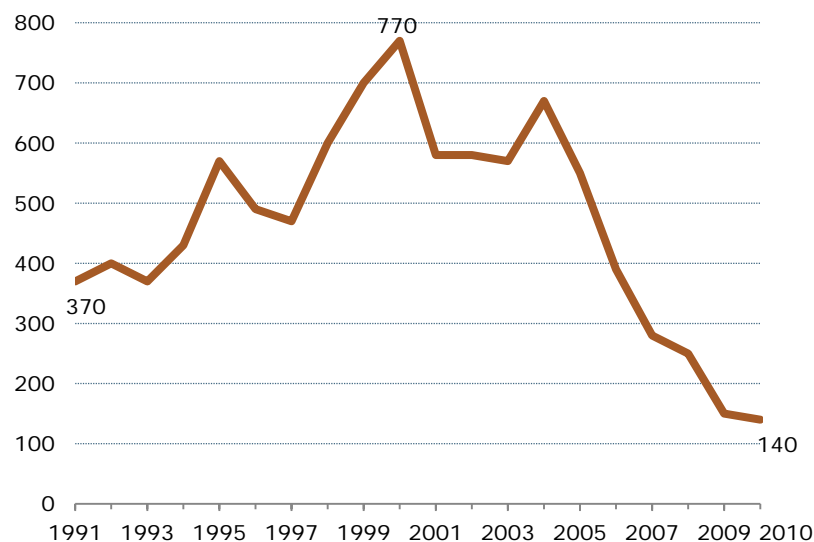
when the U.S. economy was thriving. Annual arrivals dropped to about 580,000 with the onset of the early-decade recession. Numbers began rising again; by 2004, annual arrivals exceeded 670,000 annually.

Immigration from Mexico dropped after the U.S. housing market (and construction employment) collapsed in 2006. By 2007, gross inflows from Mexico dipped to 280,000; they continued to fall to 150,000 in 2009 and were even lower in 2010.

Figure 2.5

Annual Immigration from Mexico to the U.S.: 1991-2010

(in thousands)



Source: Pew Hispanic Center estimates compiled from various sources; see Methodology

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The Mexican employment survey (ENOE) shows the same general trends in annual flows from Mexico as the U.S. data do. By 2010, according to ENOE, the flow was only 38% of the 2006 flow to the U.S. Both the U.S. and Mexican data suggest a further slight drop in 2011.

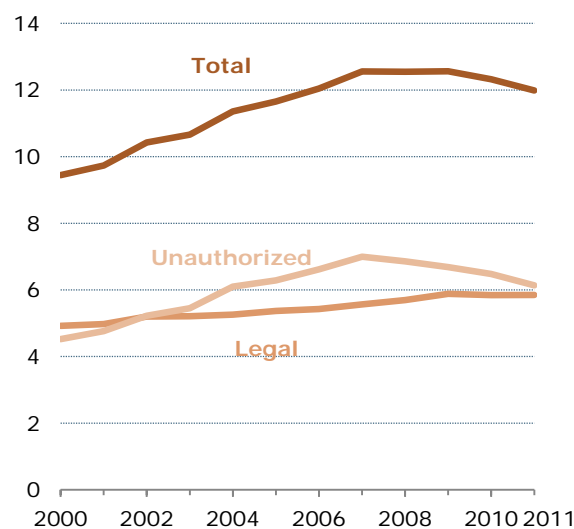
These estimates of immigration flows from Mexico represent new arrivals of both legal immigrants and unauthorized immigrants. For most of the period, the bulk of the flow was unauthorized but for the last several years, it appears that most of the new arrivals are likely to be legal residents. Legal admissions from Mexico averaged about 170,000 per year for 2000-2009 and 140,000 per year for 2010-2011. These legal admissions do not represent all newly arrived immigrants, as a significant share are people who are living in the U.S. but are “adjusting their status” from temporary to legal permanent resident.

Recent Population Trends

The Mexican-born population in the U.S. decreased to 12.0 million in 2011 from its peak of 12.6 million in 2007, and the change entirely reflects reduced unauthorized immigration, according to a Pew Hispanic analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. There were 6.1 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants in the U.S. in 2011, according to Pew Hispanic estimates based on Current Population Survey data, compared with a peak of 7 million in 2007.

By comparison, legal Mexican immigrants (including those with temporary status) numbered 5.8 million in 2011, which is a small increase from 5.6 million in 2007. The overall foreign-born population has continued a relatively steady growth, to 39.6 million in 2011, according to Current Population Survey data.¹⁰

Figure 2.6
Mexican-Born Population in the U.S.,
by Status, 2000-2011
(in millions)



Source: Pew Hispanic estimates based on augmented March Current Population Surveys, adjusted for undercount

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¹⁰ The numbers are augmented and adjusted for omissions, especially of unauthorized immigrants. It should be noted that the American Community Survey (ACS) shows a slightly different pattern, and somewhat lower numbers, for the Mexican-born population. (The ACS estimates have not been adjusted to reflect undercounts but have been reweighted to reflect the impact of the 2010 Census on estimates for earlier years.) According to the ACS, the Mexican-born population did not change from 2009 to 2010 (11.7 million in both years), in contrast to a small decline (from 12.6 million in 2009 to 12.3 million in 2010) shown in the Current Population Survey.

The decline in the Mexican-born population is a marked change of pattern for the massive wave of migration from Mexico that began in the late 1960s. It may become the first sustained loss since the 1930s, when the Mexican-born population shrank during the Great Depression. The contemporary decrease is due to the combination of reduced inflows and increased outflows; it cannot be explained by the relatively small number of deaths in the Mexican immigrant population.

Mexican Migration History: U.S. Perspective

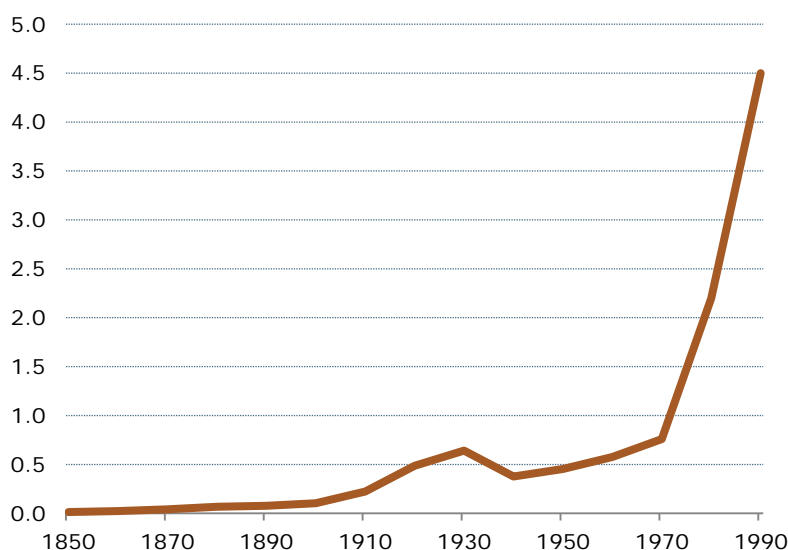
For the past century, a large share of Mexican migration has been temporary, so-called circular migration, in which Mexicans (mainly men) came to the U.S. for work, often in agriculture, and returned to their families in Mexico during the off-season. Until the 1970s, the size of the permanent Mexican-born population in the U.S. grew slowly, and there was little in the way of border enforcement ([Rosenblum and Brick, 2011](#)).

The Mexican-born population in the U.S., which numbered about 100,000 in 1900, reached about 640,000 in 1930 ([Gibson and Jung, 2006](#)). The population fell in the 1930s, as mass unemployment deterred would-be immigrants during the Great Depression and many Mexicans in the U.S. were forcibly deported to Mexico.

By 1970, Mexican-born numbers had risen to about 760,000, but Italy, Germany and Canada surpassed Mexico as leading countries of origin. Rapid growth began in the 1970s—by 1980 there were 2.2 million Mexican immigrants, and Mexico had become the top country of origin for U.S. immigrants. The Mexican-born population in the U.S. has more than quintupled since

Figure 2.7

Mexican-Born Population in the U.S., 1850-1990 (in millions)



Source: 1850-1930, 1960-1980: Gibson and Jung (2006); 1940-1950, U.S. Census Bureau (1975), Series C228-295, white foreign-born; 1990-2011: Pew Hispanic Center estimates from augmented March Current Population Surveys and Decennial Censuses adjusted for undercount

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then. The next largest sending country—China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan)—accounts for just 5% of the nation’s current stock of about 40 million immigrants.

The share of all immigrants who are Mexican born nearly doubled from 1980 (15.6%) to 2010 (30%). At its peak in 2004-2009, the Mexican-born population constituted nearly one-third (32%) of the nation’s foreign-born population.

Over the years, an increasing share of Mexican migrants to the U.S. became permanent residents with year-round jobs in a broader range of sectors than agriculture. Most immigrants from Mexico (51% in 2011) are unauthorized, according to Pew Hispanic estimates based on Current Population Survey data. Mexicans make up the majority of the nation’s unauthorized immigrant population. (See Section 6 of the report for more detail about the characteristics of Mexican-born residents of the U.S.)

Analysts generally agree that the sharp, four-decade rise in Mexican immigration after 1970, especially of unauthorized migrants, was driven by a combination of factors. The U.S. and Mexico had formally agreed in 1942 to establish the “bracero” temporary-worker program, but when it expired in 1964, the demand in the U.S. for low-skilled labor remained strong. Major changes to U.S. immigration law in 1965 favored immigrants who wanted to rejoin their families in the U.S., not those who came to work. Economic troubles and other problems in Mexico also encouraged people to migrate north.¹¹

Although much of the cross-border movement was unauthorized, few of the migrants settled in the U.S. before the 1970s. The tripling of the Mexican-born population between 1970 and 1980 was driven in part by the large-scale settlement of unauthorized immigrants. By 1980, about half of Mexican immigrants living in the United States were unauthorized (Warren and Passel, 1987).

Once the new migration pattern was established, flows to the U.S. waxed and waned in conjunction with changes in U.S. border policy and immigration law, trends in the U.S. economy and conditions in Mexico. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 had several provisions that allowed unauthorized immigrants to acquire legal permanent resident status. About 2 million formerly unauthorized Mexican immigrants became legal U.S. residents by the early 1990s. These new immigrants, along with changes in U.S. immigration law, reinforced the existing migration patterns and spurred continued legal immigration and

¹¹ For example, see National Research Council (2011) and Rosenblum and Brick (2011).

increasing unauthorized immigration. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. more than doubled, and between 1990 and 2000 the numbers doubled again.

The Mexican-born population continued to grow until 2007. At that point, the combined effects of the failing U.S. economy, increased border enforcement, more expensive and dangerous crossings, violence at the border, and changes with the Mexican population and economy brought this population growth to a halt.

In recent years, there appears to be less short-term seasonal migration between Mexico and the U.S., perhaps because of the increased costs and risks of crossing the border ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2011](#)). The new results from the 2010 Mexican census also show a decline in the shortest migration trips. In 2000, answering the question of when they had last left for the U.S., nearly half (49%) of the “recent” migrants to the U.S. had departed in the previous 12 months.¹² In 2010, only a quarter of the much-reduced migrant population (27%) had left for the U.S. in the previous 12 months.

Emigration to the U.S.: Mexican Perspective

Mexican emigrants living in the U.S. now represent a substantial share of the Mexican-born population. No other nation in the world has as many of its citizens living abroad as does Mexico, and 97% of them live in the U.S. ([Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2012](#)).

In 1970, when Mexico’s population was 48 million, only 1.6% of the combined Mexican population of the two nations lived in the U.S. In 2010, with Mexico’s population at 112.3 million, the Mexican-born population in the U.S. had risen to 10% of the combined totals in both countries. The shares are even higher among those in the prime working ages, 30 to 44 ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2011](#)).

¹² This is the group in Figure 2.3 as departing between 1995 and 2000 and still living in the U.S. as of 2000.

3. Mexicans Sent Back to Mexico by U.S. Authorities

A Pew Hispanic Center analysis of a long-running survey of Mexican migrants who have been handed over to Mexican authorities by U.S. law enforcement agents finds changes over the past decade in migrants' experiences and future intentions.

Migrants sent home in 2010 were more likely to have lived in the U.S. for at least a year than those apprehended five years earlier or 10 years earlier. Those removed in 2010 also were more likely to have been apprehended at home or work rather than while crossing the border. And the more recently repatriated migrants were less likely to say they would try to cross again shortly after apprehension or to say they plan to return to the U.S. someday.

The changes found in migrants' experiences and intentions appear to be linked to the changing dynamics of U.S. border flows and enforcement, as well as U.S. economic conditions. The number of Mexicans trying to cross the southwest border illegally has declined in recent years. One result of this decline is that there has been a decrease in apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol.

Most Mexican migrants expelled by U.S. authorities are returned to their home country—usually within days of crossing the border—by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, acting without an order of removal. As fewer Mexicans attempt to cross the border, this

How many of the “immigrants” to Mexico were sent back by U.S. authorities?

Of the 1.4 million Mexican immigrants and their children who returned to Mexico from the U.S. between 2005 and 2010, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that anywhere from 5% to 35% were sent back by U.S. authorities at some point during that five-year period and remained in Mexico as of 2010. The other 65% to 95% returned to Mexico voluntarily.

The estimate range is so wide because data on who is sent back and what happens to them are sketchy; neither the U.S. nor Mexican government has any way of knowing where the returnees end up in later years.

Pew Hispanic's estimates start with the 4.4 million Mexican citizens deported, removed or returned to Mexico by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security between 2005 to 2010. Based on reviews of data from both countries, the Pew Hispanic analysis estimates that only about 15-25% of these returnees would have been living in the U.S. long enough to appear in U.S. data sources as immigrants. The remainder were apprehended at or near the border shortly after they entered.

Furthermore, Pew Hispanic's analysis of the EMIF-Norte survey, a Mexican government survey of persons returned by the U.S. government, finds that only about 16% of those who resided in the U.S. in 2005 and spent at least a year in the country said they would not try to go back to the U.S. About six-in-ten said they would try to re-enter the U.S. within a week, and an additional quarter said they would go back “some day.”

While it is impossible to know how many succeed, scholars who have studied Mexico-U.S. migration have concluded that almost everyone who is determined to get into the U.S. illegally eventually does so (Rosenblum, 2012).

number has been dropping. Of those sent home, there has been an increase in the number of immigrants sent back based on an order of removal.

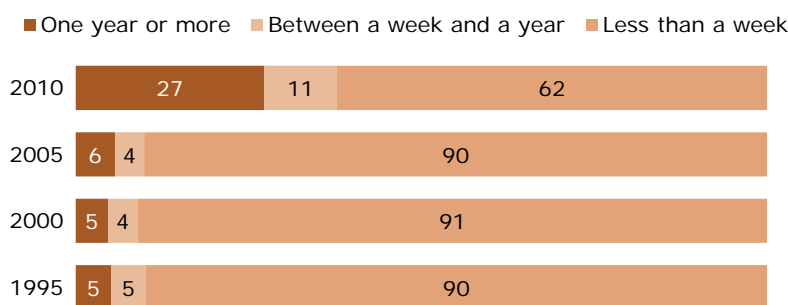
The data in this section come from a survey of Mexican migrants who were handed over to Mexican authorities by U.S. law enforcement agents, both migrants who agree to be returned without a formal order and those sent home with an order of removal. The migrants are handed over at transfer points along the U.S. border and at several Mexican airports included in an agreement between the two countries. This survey, called Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF-Norte), has been conducted regularly since 1993 (see the appendix for methodological details).

How Long in U.S.?

A growing share of repatriated Mexican immigrants has spent at least a year in the United States before being sent back to Mexico. In 2010, more than a quarter (27%) reported they had lived in the U.S. for at least a year, compared with 6% in 2005 and 5% in 2000 and in 1995. Most of these (26% of the total) had been in the U.S. for two years or more.

The longer stays in the U.S. of these Mexican migrants may in part reflect the growing number of immigrants who spend time in detention before being sent back to their home countries. This is likely true for those who spent less than two years in the U.S. However, the share of Mexican migrants sent back to Mexico who spent five years or more in the U.S. also rose dramatically between 2005 and 2010, from 2% to 17%.

Figure 3.1
Time Spent in the U.S. Before Repatriation
(%)



Notes: Responses of "Don't know," "Refused" and "Unspecified" are not shown. Question wording: "This last time, how long did you stay in the United States?" Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF-Norte)

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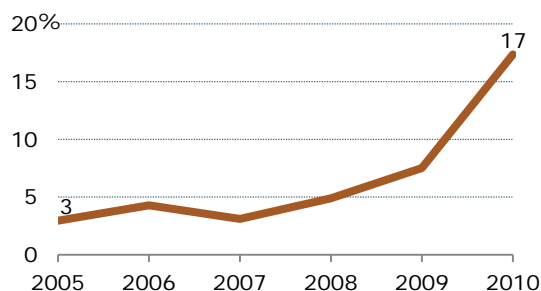
Where Apprehended?

About one-in-six migrants sent back to Mexico (17%) were apprehended at work or at home in 2010. This share represents a notable increase from previous years—in 2005, only 3% were apprehended at home or at work.

By contrast, a declining share of Mexican migrants report being apprehended at the border—25% in 2010, compared with 33% in 2005 and nearly half (49%) in 1995.

Due to backlogs in processing of removal cases in U.S. immigration courts, people apprehended at work or home and handed over to Mexican authorities in 2010 might have been captured during enforcement actions in prior years. According to [some sources](#), in recent years immigration courts spent about a year to complete cases involving Mexican nationals. In addition, the increased share of migrants apprehended at home or work might reflect reduced arrivals of Mexican immigrants and the lower number of apprehensions at the border.

Figure 3.2
Share Caught at Work or Home



Notes: Question wording: “This last time you crossed, in what location were you detained by the U.S. migration authorities (la migra)?”

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF-Norte)

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Will Go Back to the U.S. After Repatriation?

A large majority of migrants handed over to Mexican authorities said they had come to the U.S. for work or to look for a job (83% in 2010). Among these labor migrants, a majority say they will try to return to the U.S. Those handed over in recent years to Mexican authorities, however, are less likely than their counterparts of a decade earlier to say they will try to re-enter the U.S. within a week of repatriation. They are also more likely to say they would never go back to the U.S. to look for work.

Intention to Re-enter Within a Week

In 2010, six-in-ten (60%) Mexican labor migrants who were sent back said they would try to re-enter within seven days—a significant decrease from an average 81% who said so in 2005-2008.

This trend change is partly a reflection of a generalized decrease in the intention to re-enter the U.S. In 2010, the share saying they will try to go back to the U.S.—either within seven days or someday—dropped by 13 percentage points from 92% in 2005. According to the survey, the sharpest change in the intention to re-enter the U.S. shortly after repatriation was among those who spent a year or more in the U.S.

In 2010, 71% of those who had come to the U.S. for

work and had stayed for less than a week before being apprehended declared they would attempt entry again within seven days. This share is down from a high of 85% of labor migrants in 2007.

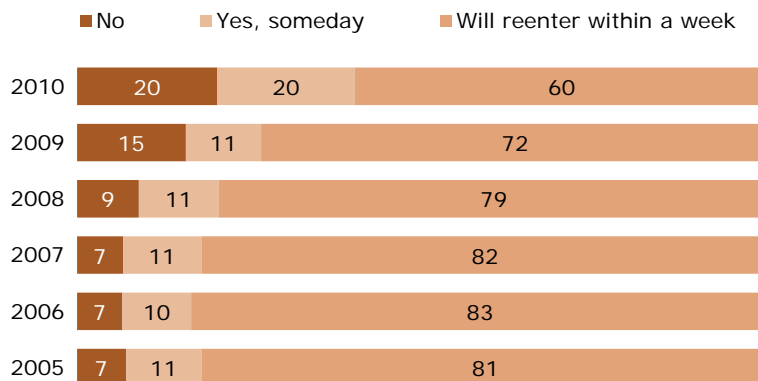
Among those who had spent at least a year in the U.S., fewer than half said they plan to try to re-enter within a week. Intention to come back to the U.S. within a week for this group declined to 43% in 2010 from a recent high of 69% in 2006.

More Likely to Never Go Back to the U.S.

Among repatriated Mexican migrants who had originally come to the U.S. for work, a rising share say they will not try to return to the U.S. again—20% in 2010, compared with 7% in 2005.

When analyzed by time spent in the U.S., those who spent less than a week in the U.S. prior to being removed show a similar trend. The share who reported they had no intention of ever coming back to the U.S. rose to 18% in 2010 from 6% in 2005.

Figure 3.3
Intention to Re-enter the U.S. After Repatriation
(% of labor migrants)



Notes: Responses of “Don’t know,” “Refused” and “Unspecified” are not shown. Question wording: “Do you plan to cross again to the United States in the next 7 days?” and “Do you plan to go back to work or look for work in the United States someday?” Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF-Norte)

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The trend was not as clear among longer-term residents of the U.S.—those who had spent a year or more before being sent home. Among this group of labor migrants, 21% in 2010 said they had no intention of returning to the U.S. This was slightly lower than the share who said so in 2009 (26%) but higher than the share who said so in 2005 (11%). Furthermore, from 2009 to 2010, a rising share said they would return someday to look for work—36%, compared with 22%—even as the share of those intending to try to re-enter immediately dropped in these years.

Demographic Characteristics of Repatriated Migrants

In 2010, fully 87% of those sent back to Mexico were male, which is much higher than the share of men in the overall Mexican immigrant population (54%). Just under half (46%) were single, 34% were married and 14% were living with an unmarried partner. About half (53%) were head of their household, 6% were spouses of the household head and a third (34%) were the child of the household head.

There was little change in the basic demographics of those handed over to Mexican authorities from 2005 to 2010, except that a somewhat higher share now (14%) report they live with an unmarried partner, compared with past years. Also, in 2010, three-quarters (74%) said they do not speak English, but that proportion declined from 2005, when it was 93%.

4. U.S. Immigration Enforcement

In recent years, the U.S. government has ramped up spending and staffing on immigration enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border and in the nation's interior. Some of its enforcement actions have a particular impact on Mexican immigrants, who constitute a majority (58%) of nation's unauthorized immigrants ([Passel and Cohn, 2011](#)). In addition, a growing number of states have enacted their own immigration enforcement programs.

Appropriations for the U.S. Border Patrol within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—only a subset of all enforcement spending, but one especially relevant to Mexican immigrants—more than tripled from 2000 to 2011, and more than doubled from 2005 to 2011 (Rosenblum, 2012). The federal government doubled staffing along the southwest border from 2002 to 2011, expanded its use of surveillance technology such as ground sensors and unmanned flying vehicles, and built hundreds of miles of border fencing.

Federal authorities also changed their tactics in recent years, and some changes have been aimed particularly at Mexican border crossers. Many Mexicans caught at the border who in earlier years would have been just sent home instead are repatriated under the “expedited removal” process, which carries a minimum penalty of not being allowed to seek a visa for at least five years.

That change is part of the “enforcement with consequences” strategy begun in 2005, under which the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice also have increased the share of unauthorized border crossers charged with criminal offenses related to immigration laws. The number of Mexicans removed for criminal offenses rose 65% from 2008 (77,531) to 2010 (127,728), at a time when non-criminal removals declined (169,732 in 2008 to 154,275 in 2010).

As part of the same strategy, the Border Patrol has taken new steps to try to disrupt immigrant smuggling operations. These include sending apprehended border crossers home at locations far from their entry points, to make it more difficult for them to contact smugglers who previously helped them (Rosenblum, 2012).

At the state level, omnibus immigration legislation modeled after an Arizona law that included provisions intended to reduce unauthorized immigration was passed in 2010 by Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Utah, according to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#). These laws include provisions requiring law enforcement officials to verify the

immigration status of those stopped for other reasons and prohibiting the harbor or transport of unauthorized immigrants. All have been challenged in court, and the U.S. Supreme Court is to hear arguments about the Arizona law (known as SB 1070) on April 25, 2012.

Enforcement Statistics

Government enforcement statistics indicate that the number of Mexicans who agree to be sent home without a formal removal order has declined markedly, a possible sign of lower flows.

According to data from the Department of Homeland Security, the number of apprehensions of unauthorized Mexican immigrants by the U.S. Border Patrol—more than 1 million in 2005—fell to just 286,000 in 2011. (Note that some people are apprehended more than once.) Border Patrol apprehensions of all unauthorized migrants most recently peaked in 2000, and now are at their lowest level since 1971.

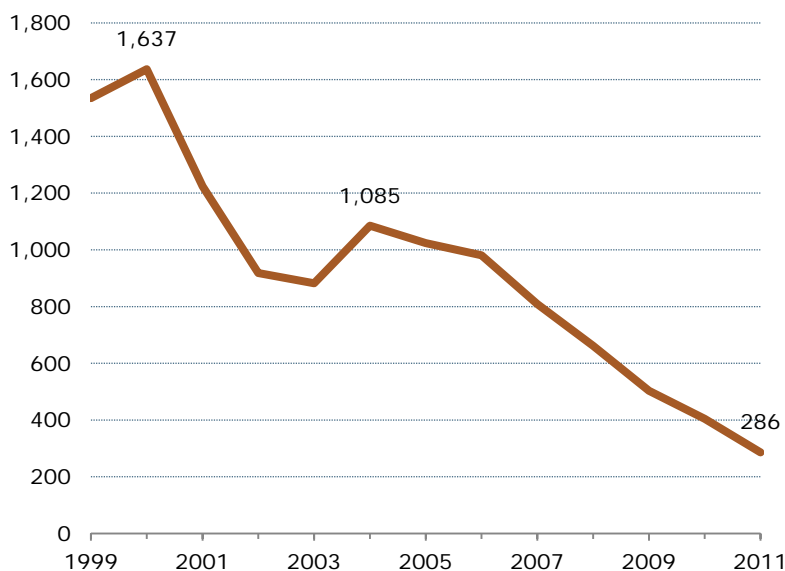
Another U.S. government measure that shows similar trends is the number of unauthorized immigrants

who agree to return to their home countries after apprehension without a removal order. The vast majority of these “returns,” in government parlance, are from Mexico. As with apprehensions, this number peaked in 2000, at nearly 1.7 million, declined from 2001 to 2003, rose to about 1 million a year from 2004 to 2006, and has declined since then. In 2010, of 476,405 immigrants repatriated this way, 354,982 (75%) were Mexican, according to Department of Homeland Security statistics.

Figure 4.1

Border Patrol Apprehensions of Unauthorized Immigrants from Mexico, 1999-2011

(in thousands)



Notes: Data are for fiscal years, Oct. 1-Sept. 30. Includes apprehensions between ports of entry.

Source: U.S. Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security

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However, there has been a notable rise in migrants sent home with an order of removal. The number of Mexicans sent home by U.S. authorities via deportation or the expedited removal process rose by two-thirds from 2005 (169,000) to 2010 (282,000). Total removals showed no clear trend earlier in the decade.

On another measure tracked by DHS, trends indicate that fewer migrants may be making multiple attempts to cross the border without authorization.

This measure is based on a database of fingerprints that, according to a recent Congressional Research Service

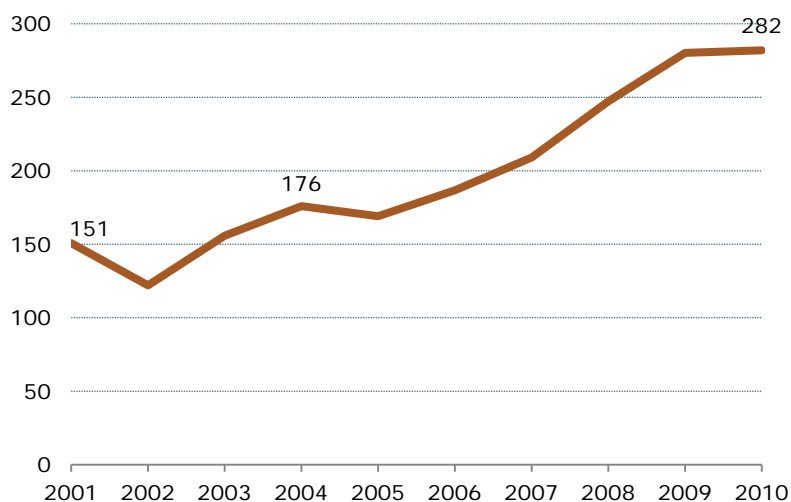
report, has been in full use by the Border Patrol since 2005. According to Border Patrol data compiled in the report, there has been a decline in the percentage of apprehended unauthorized migrants who had been caught once before in the same fiscal year. The percentage peaked in 2007 and fell to its lowest level (20%) in the 2011 fiscal year, the report said (Rosenblum, 2012).

A somewhat similar trend is seen in a Mexican government survey of migrants who were apprehended and sent home by U.S. authorities (Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte). According to data analyzed by the Pew Hispanic Center, 90% of Mexican immigrants sent home by U.S. authorities in 2010 after being in the U.S. for less than a week say they had never been apprehended before. The share of those immigrants apprehended for the first time went up sharply from 1995 (70%) to 2000 (81%), then generally rose through the subsequent decade.

Figure 4.2

**Removals of Mexicans by U.S. Authorities:
2001 to 2010**

(in thousands)



Notes: Years are fiscal years. Removals include expedited removals.

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2010*, Table 38, [Department of Homeland Security](http://www.dhs.gov)

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5. Mexico, by the Numbers

During the decades-long emigration wave of Mexicans to the United States, Mexico has experienced a wide array of economic, demographic and social changes, some of which undoubtedly have had an impact on Mexican migration trends. This section offers a brief overview of the major changes.

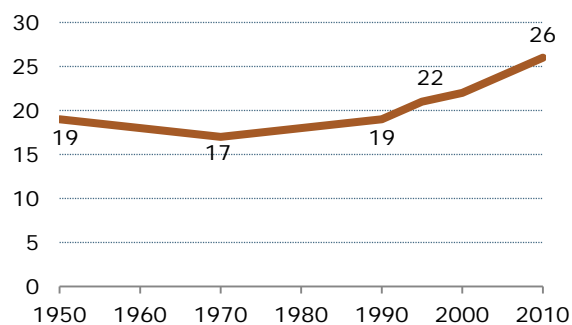
Mexico today is the world’s 11th-largest country by population with 115 million people¹³ and the world’s 11th-largest economy as measured by gross domestic product (World Bank, 2011).¹⁴ The World Bank characterizes Mexico as an “upper-middle income economy,” placing it in the same category as Brazil, Turkey, Russia, South Africa and China. Mexico is also the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world.

Demographics

The most significant demographic change in Mexico in recent decades has been the sharp and ongoing decline in birth rates. In 1960, the Mexican fertility rate was 7.3 children per woman.¹⁵ By 2009, that figure had dropped to 2.4—still a bit higher than the U.S. rate of 2.0 among all women ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2011](#)).

The declining birth rate in Mexico has led to a rise in the median age of its population. In 2010, the median age in Mexico was 26—still well below the figure for the U.S. that year (37), but well above the median age in Mexico in 1970, when it was just 17.

Figure 5.1
Median Age of the Mexican Population, 1950-2010



Source: INEGI, Mexican government statistical and geographical agency

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¹³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011
http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2010_Volume-I_Comprehensive-Tables.pdf

¹⁴ According to the World Bank, Mexico’s GDP in 2010 was \$1.41 trillion, in constant 2005 international dollars adjusted to purchasing power parity. PPP is the currency exchange rate adjusted for differences in price level between countries. It shows how much money would be needed to purchase the same goods and services in different countries.

¹⁵ Total Fertility Rate is the estimated average number of children that a woman would have in her lifetime, based upon present-day age-specific birth rates and assuming no mortality during the childbearing years.

The rising median age in Mexico has meant that its 15- to 39-year-old age group—people in peak years for emigration—has declined as a share of the overall population. In 2010, 15- to 39-year-olds made up 65% of Mexico’s working-age population (defined as all adults between ages 15 and 64). In 1990, this age group comprised 73% of the working-age population.¹⁶

Economics

In the three decades from 1980 to 2010, Mexico’s per capita GDP rose by 22%—from \$10,238 in 1980 to about \$12,400 in 2010.¹⁷

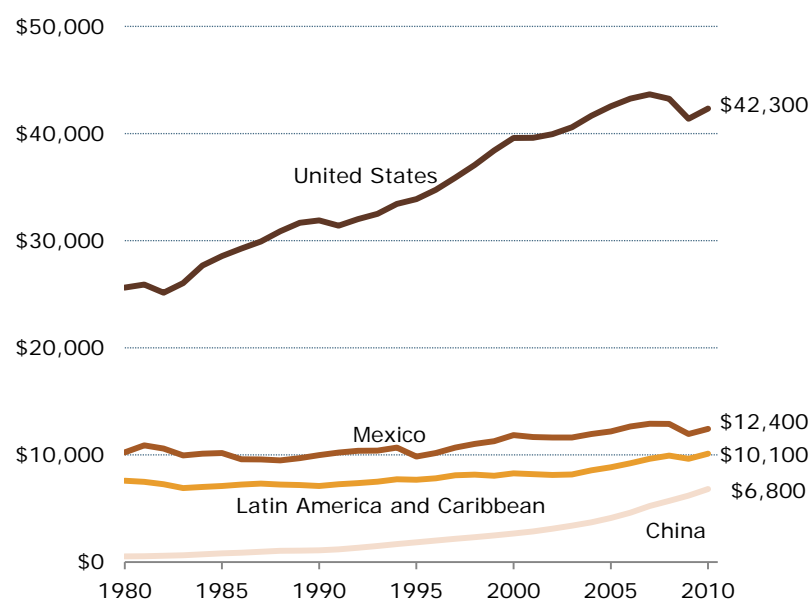
This increase is somewhat less than the average for all Latin American/Caribbean countries during the same period (33%) and significantly less than the increase in per capita GDP in the United States during this period (66%). Meantime, during this same period, the per capita GDP in China shot up thirteenfold—from \$524 in 1980 to \$6,816 in 2010.

In more recent years, Mexico’s economy, like that of the United States and other countries, fell into a

deep recession in 2007-2009. But since 2010 it has experienced a stronger recovery than has its neighbor to the north; according to INEGI, the Mexican GDP grew by 5.5% in 2010 and 3.9% in 2011, well above the rates in the U.S. for those two years.

Figure 5.2

Gross Domestic Product per capita, 1980-2010 (in 2005 international dollars)



Note: Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of a nation’s total output of goods and services. The GDP for each country is converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity. PPP is the currency exchange rate adjusted for differences in price level between countries. It shows how much money would be needed to purchase the same goods and services in different countries.

Source: World Bank, International Comparison Program database

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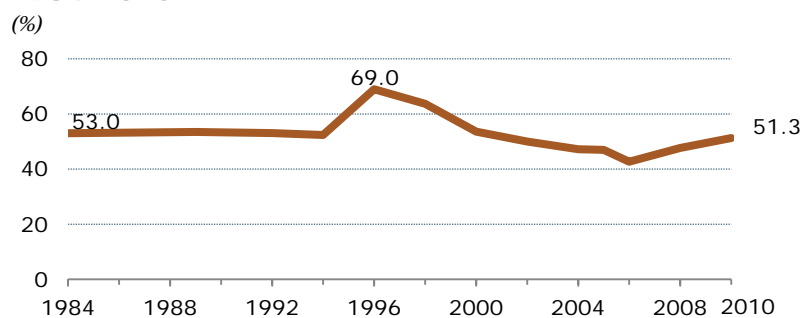
¹⁶ INEGI Interactive Data Analysis, Mexican Decennial Censuses.

¹⁷ All figures are expressed in constant 2005 international dollars and adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP).

Despite a moderate long-term rise in per capita GDP, the share of Mexicans who live below the poverty line has not changed significantly in recent decades. It was 51% in 2010, down slightly from 53% in 1984. However, that overall stability was interrupted by a major economic crisis and recession in Mexico during the mid-1990s that sent the poverty rate soaring to a peak of 69% in 1996.

Another measure of economic well-being that still has not fully recovered from the economic crisis that hit Mexico at the end of 1994 is mean household income. In 2006, the average household income was close to \$7,000 MXN per quarter,¹⁸ still a slightly lower amount than in 1994. During the recent economic crisis, average household income in Mexico dropped 14% from 2006 to 2010.

Figure 5.3
Percent Living Below Official Poverty Line in Mexico, 1984-2010

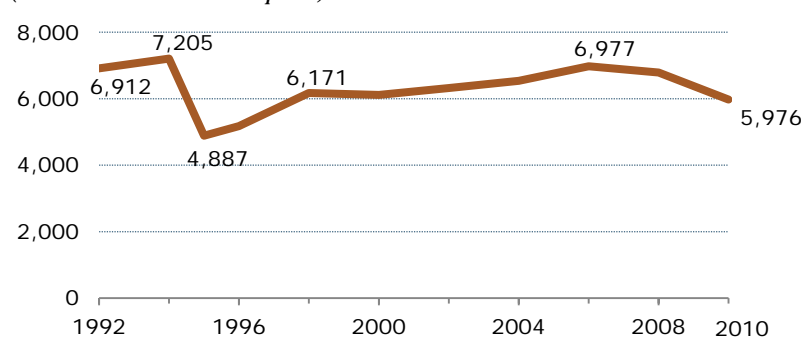


Note: The official poverty line refers to the “asset poverty line.” The Mexican government recognizes three different poverty lines based on income: food poverty, capabilities poverty and asset poverty. Asset poverty is used by the World Bank to assess economic development.

Source: World Bank, International Comparison Program database for 1984-1988; Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL) *Medición de la pobreza 2010*, for 1992-2010

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Figure 5.4
Average Mexican Quarterly Household Income
(in constant 1992 Mexican pesos)



Source: INEGI, Encuesta Nacional de Ingreso y Gasto en los Hogares (ENIGH), 1992-2010

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¹⁸ Amounts are in constant 1992 Mexican pesos. The 2006 figure converts to \$2,262 in U.S. dollars, using the 1992 exchange rate of one U.S. dollar to 3.095 Mexican pesos.

Social Development

Even though economic performance in Mexico has been sluggish in recent decades and insufficient to generate enough jobs for young adults coming of age, other indicators of development have improved. For example, 92.4% of all Mexicans ages 15 and older were literate in 2010, up from 83% in 1980.¹⁹ In 2010, the average number of years of education of Mexicans ages 15 and older was 8.6, compared with 7.3 years in 2000.²⁰

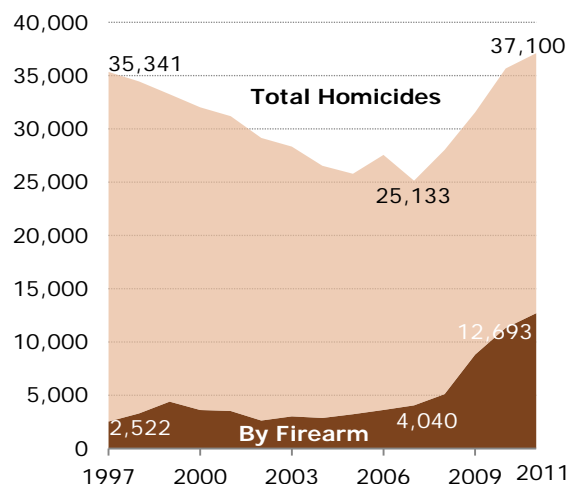
In terms of health care, almost three-in-five (59%) Mexicans in 2000 lacked health care coverage ([CONEVAL, 2010](#)). In 2003, the Mexican federal government created a health care program, Seguro Popular, that provides basic coverage to the uninsured and is free for those living under the poverty line (Comisión Nacional de Protección Social en Salud, 2012). The share of the Mexican population with access to health care had increased from less than half (41%) in 2000 to slightly more than two-thirds (67%) in 2010, an increase of 26 percentage points ([CONEVAL, 2010](#)).

Drugs, Guns and Crime

Mexico has also had its share of problems in recent years—none greater than the spike in violence tied to criminal drug cartels. There were 37,100 homicides in Mexico in 2011, an increase of 44% since 2005. In addition, a rising share of homicides involves firearms—12,693 in 2011, up from 3,209 in 2005—which have been one of the signatures of killings linked to drug cartels.²¹

But crime in general, and homicide in particular, is by no means a new problem in

Figure 5.5
Number of Homicides in Mexico



Source: Executive Secretariat of the Mexican National System of Public Security ([Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, SESNSP](#))

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¹⁹ INEGI Interactive Data Analysis, Mexican Decennial Censuses, <http://www.inegi.org.mx/Sistemas/temasV2/contenido/sociedad/epobla06.asp?s=est&c=26360>

²⁰ INEGI Interactive Data Analysis, Mexican Decennial Censuses <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/sisept/Default.aspx?t=medu14&s=est&c=26366>

²¹ Executive Secretariat of the Mexican National System of Public Security (SESNSP) <http://www.estadisticadelictiva.secretariadoejecutivo.gob.mx/mondrian/testpage.jsp>, accessed on April 17, 2012.

Mexico. The number of homicides in 2011 is only slightly higher than the number back in 1997—35,341. Homicide rates fell steadily from the late 1990s through 2005, just as they had around the world, but then, sparked mainly by the drug wars, reversed and began climbing up again.

Mexico’s public is very concerned about crime; in surveys taken during the past decade by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the issue of crime is consistently identified by Mexicans as a top national problem. In a 2011 survey, 80% of respondents said crime was a very big problem, and 77% said the same about drug-related violence ([Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2011](#)). The next most serious problems, in the view of the Mexican public, were rising prices (74% said this was a very big problem); illegal drugs (71%); lack of jobs (70%); and the economic situation (69%). In the United States, by contrast, concerns about jobs and the economy far outstrip all other issues in similar surveys about national conditions ([Pew People & the Press, 2012](#)).

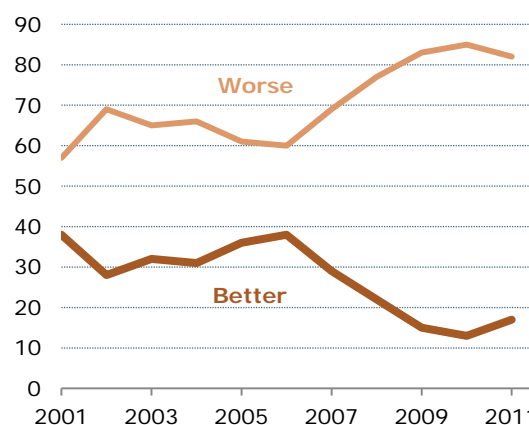
Attitudes About the Economy, Immigration

Looking at measures such as employment and GDP growth, Mexico has not been as hard hit by the recent economic downturn as the U.S. Even so, Mexicans have a very pessimistic view of their national economy. According to Consulta Mitofsky, a Mexican survey research group, in 2011, 82% of Mexicans said the economic situation in their country was getting worse, up from 60% who said the same in 2006 and 57% who said so in 2001 ([Consulta Mitofsky, 2011](#)).

In [2009](#) and again in [2011](#), the Pew Global Attitudes survey asked Mexican adults if they would emigrate to the United States if they had the means and opportunity to do so. The results were similar in both surveys. In 2011, 38% of survey respondents said yes, they would migrate to the U.S., while 61% said no,

Figure 5.6
Mexicans’ Views of Current Economic Conditions

(% of adults in Mexico saying current economic conditions are “better” or “worse” than previous year)



Notes: Average from monthly surveys. 2011 data through September.

Source: Consulta Mitofsky, Mitofsky Monitor published on Oct. 19, 2011

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they would not. In 2009, 33% said yes, they would migrate if they could, while 62% said no. Among those who said yes in 2011, a majority (53%) said that they would go to work or live in the U.S. even without legal authorization.

6. Characteristics of Mexican-Born Immigrants Living in the U.S.

Mexico is the largest country of origin for immigrants in the United States, accounting for 29% of the foreign-born population in 2010.²² Most immigrants who leave Mexico come to the United States, and one-in-ten Mexican-born people currently lives in the U.S.

There is great variation in the patterns of immigration among the nation's 12 million Mexican-born immigrants. Many immigrants settle permanently and have children born in the United States. But a substantial number also travel back and forth across the border through the year, a pattern known as circular migration. There has long been a seasonal pattern to Mexican-U.S. migration, with larger numbers of people heading north in the spring and summer and larger numbers of people headed south in the fall and winter. This has abated somewhat, according to data from Mexico that indicate movement spread more evenly through the year ([Pew Hispanic Center, 2011](#)).

Table 6.1
States with the Largest Mexican-Born Populations, 2010
(in thousands)

California	4,325
Texas	2,488
Illinois	711
Arizona	524
Georgia	293

Source: 2010 American Community Survey

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Compared with other foreign-born residents of the U.S., Mexican-born immigrants are younger, less educated and less likely to speak English very well, according to tabulations from the 2010 American Community Survey. Only about a quarter (23%) are U.S. citizens, in large part because most Mexican immigrants are unauthorized and not eligible for citizenship; by comparison, a slight majority of immigrants from all other countries (52%) are citizens. Notwithstanding the presence of unauthorized immigrants, legal Mexican immigrants have lower rates of naturalization than other immigrants ([Passel 2007](#)).

About a third of Mexican immigrants (34%) arrived in the U.S. since 2000, similar to the share of all immigrants (35%). The share of Mexican immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for two decades or more (35%) is somewhat lower than the share of other immigrants of similar duration (40%).

²² The data in this section on Mexican immigrants in the United States are drawn from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS). As such, they may differ slightly from similar estimates based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) in this and other Pew Hispanic Center reports. The CPS-based estimates have been augmented with estimates of immigrants' legal status and are adjusted for undercount. The ACS estimates are not adjusted and do not differentiate respondents by legal status.

Demographic Differences

There are notable demographic differences between Mexican immigrants and those from other countries. Most immigrants from Mexico (54%) are men; most other immigrants (53%) are women. Mexican immigrants are younger than others: the median age of Mexican-born residents of the U.S. is 37, compared with 43 for other immigrants.

Mexican-born immigrants on average are less educated than other immigrants. Among Mexican-born immigrants ages 25 and older, 60% have less than a high school education, compared with a fifth (21%) of other immigrants. Only 5% of the Mexican born hold a college degree, compared with more than a third (36%) of other immigrants.

Economically, Mexican-born immigrants are not as well off as others. The median annual household income for Mexican-born immigrants is \$35,000, compared with \$51,500 for other immigrants. These lower incomes are a reflection of the group's employment profile. Mexican-born immigrants are more likely than other immigrants to work in the construction, agriculture or mining industries (23% vs. 6%). Looking at occupation, only 10% of Mexican-born immigrants work in management, professional and related jobs, compared with 41% of immigrants from other countries.

Mexican-born immigrants are somewhat less likely than other immigrants to be homeowners (46% of households, vs. 55%). They are also less likely than other immigrants to speak only English at home and more likely to say they do not speak English very well. Among Mexican immigrants ages 5 and older, 72% say they do not speak English very well. Among other immigrants, 43% say so.

Most Mexican immigrants ages 15 and older (58%) are married, a share similar to that of other immigrants (59%).

Mexican Populations by Geography

As might be expected, Mexican-born immigrants are concentrated in Western and Southern states. Half (51%) live in the West, and an additional third (33%) live in the South. A notably low share (4%) lives in the Northeast. By contrast, about equal numbers of other immigrants live in the West, South and Northeast.

By state, well over half (58%) live in California (4.3 million) and Texas (2.5 million). That share has declined since 2000, when it was 63%, an indication of how Mexican-born immigrants

have dispersed to other states. No other state has more than a million Mexican-born residents, however.

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Appendix A: Additional Tables and Chart

Appendix Table A1

Mexican-Born Population in the U.S., 1850-2011

(in thousands)

2011	11,987
2010	12,323
2009	12,565
2008	12,551
2007	12,558
2006	12,043
2005	11,653
2004	11,356
2003	10,661
2002	10,426
2001	9,734
2000	9,444
1990	4,500
1980	2,199
1970	760
1960	576
1950	451
1940	377
1930	641
1920	486
1910	222
1900	103
1890	78
1880	68
1870	42
1860	27
1850	13

Source: 1850-1930, 1960-1980: Gibson and Jung (2006); 1940-1950, U.S. Census Bureau (1975), Series C228-295, white foreign-born; 1990-2011: Pew Hispanic Center estimates from augmented March Current Population Surveys and Decennial Censuses adjusted for undercount

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Appendix Table A2
**Annual Immigration
 from Mexico to the
 U.S.: 1991-2010**

(in thousands)

2010	140
2009	150
2008	250
2007	280
2006	390
2005	550
2004	670
2003	570
2002	580
2001	580
2000	770
1999	700
1998	600
1997	470
1996	490
1995	570
1994	430
1993	370
1992	400
1991	370

Source: Pew Hispanic Center
 estimates compiled from various
 sources; see Methodology

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Net Migration From Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less

Appendix Table A3

**Mexican-Born Population in the U.S.,
by Status, 2000-2011***(in millions)*

Year	Total	Legal	Unauthorized
2011	12.0	5.8	6.1
2010	12.3	5.8	6.5
2009	12.6	5.9	6.7
2008	12.6	5.7	6.9
2007	12.6	5.6	7.0
2006	12.0	5.4	6.6
2005	11.7	5.4	6.3
2004	11.4	5.3	6.1
2003	10.7	5.2	5.5
2002	10.4	5.2	5.2
2001	9.7	5.0	4.8
2000	9.4	4.9	4.5

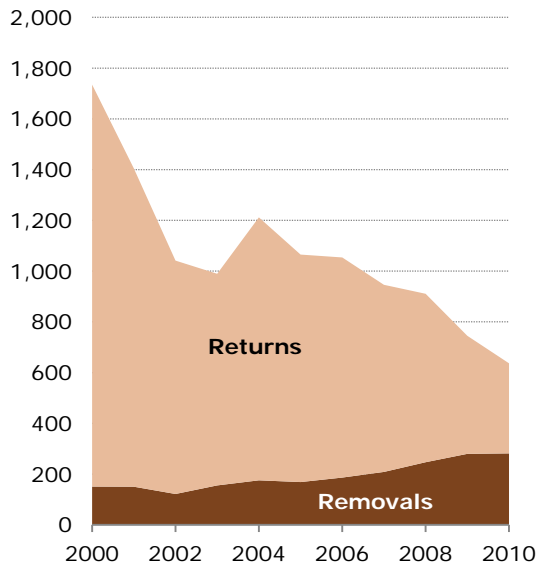
Note: Numbers may not sum to total because of rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic estimates based on augmented March Current Population Surveys, adjusted for undercount

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Net Migration From Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less

Appendix Figure A1
**Number of Mexican Returns and
 Removals, 2000-2010**
(in thousands)



Notes: DHS data refer to fiscal years. INM data refers to calendar years. Total number of repatriated include all returned and removed Mexican nationals. For 2000-2008 the total number of Mexican returnees reported by DHS was estimated using the share of all apprehended who were Mexican.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2000-2010; Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), Series Históricas de Estadísticas Migratorias, 1995-2010

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Appendix B: A Statistical Profile of Mexican Immigrants in the U.S.

Appendix Table B1

Demographics of the Foreign Born Mexican Population in the U.S.

	All Foreign Born	Non-Mexican Foreign Born	Mexican Foreign Born
Total			
	39,917	28,170	11,747
Gender			
Male	19,562	13,273	6,288
Female	20,355	14,897	5,458
Age			
Median (in years)	41	43	37
Age Groups			
Younger than 5	262	203	59
5-17	2,566	1,687	879
18-29	7,121	4,461	2,660
30-39	8,725	5,582	3,143
40-49	8,105	5,639	2,465
50-64	8,185	6,381	1,805
65 and older	4,952	4,216	735
Marital Status (ages 15 and older)			
Married	22,243	15,804	6,439
Never married	9,741	6,466	3,275
Divorced/separated/widowed	5,957	4,550	1,408
Fertility (women ages 15 to 44)			
Total number of women	10,228	6,855	3,373
Women who had a birth in the past 12 months	868	531	337
Unmarried women ¹ who had a birth in the past 12 months	230	108	122
School Enrollment (ages 5 to 18)			
K-12	2,552	1,687	865
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older)			
Less than high school diploma	10,658	4,953	5,705
High school diploma or equivalent	7,553	5,360	2,193
Some college	6,309	5,204	1,104
Bachelor's degree or more	9,094	8,588	506

Notes: Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding. ¹Unmarried women includes those who were never married, divorced or widowed. ²For detailed information on how poverty status is determined, see http://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/POVERTY#description_tab. Due to the way in which the IPUMS assigns poverty values, these data will differ from those that might be provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. ³The household population excludes persons living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2010 ACS (1% IPUMS sample). More information on the source data and sampling error is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/design.shtml> and http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf

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Appendix Table B1 *continued...***Demographics of the Foreign Born Mexican Population in the U.S.**

	All Foreign Born	Non-Mexican Foreign Born	Mexican Foreign Born
Median Annual Personal Earnings (in dollars)			
All (ages 16 and older with earnings)	\$24,000	\$29,000	\$18,000
Full-time, year-round workers	\$33,000	\$40,000	\$24,000
Persons in Poverty²			
Younger than 18	865	436	429
18-64	5,712	3,071	2,641
65 and older	768	603	165
Health Insurance			
Uninsured, all ages	13,700	6,910	6,790
Uninsured, younger than 18	881	370	511
Persons in Households by Type of Household³			
In family households	34,203	23,556	10,648
In married-couple households	25,152	17,799	7,353
In non-family households	5,109	4,175	934
Citizenship			
Citizen	17,456	14,753	2,704
Non-citizen	22,461	13,418	9,043
Language (ages 5 and older)			
Speaks only English at home	6,045	5,664	381
Does not speak only English at home	33,610	22,303	11,307
Speaks English very well	13,152	10,259	2,893
Speaks English less than very well	20,458	12,044	8,414
Year of Entry (foreign-born only)			
Before 1990	15,233	11,144	4,088
1990-1999	10,827	7,218	3,608
2000 or later	13,857	9,807	4,050
Regional Dispersion			
Northeast	8,599	8,106	494
Midwest	4,449	3,111	1,338
South	12,741	8,831	3,910
West	14,128	8,123	6,005

Notes: Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding. ¹Unmarried women includes those who were never married, divorced or widowed. ²For detailed information on how poverty status is determined, see http://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/POVERTY#description_tab. Due to the way in which the IPUMS assigns poverty values, these data will differ from those that might be provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. ³The household population excludes persons living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2010 ACS (1% IPUMS sample). More information on the source data and sampling error is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/design.shtml> and http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf

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Net Migration From Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less

Appendix Table B2

Household Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Mexican Population in the U.S.

	All Foreign Born	Non-Mexican Foreign Born	Mexican Foreign Born
Total (in thousands)			
	15,796	11,602	4,193
Homeownership (household heads)			
In owner-occupied homes (in thousands)	8,307	6,374	1,933
In renter-occupied homes (in thousands)	7,489	5,229	2,260
Homeownership rate (%)	52.6	54.9	46.1
Household Annual Income (in dollars)			
Median	\$45,700	\$51,500	\$35,000
Household Size			
Average number of persons	3.4	3.1	4.4

Note: The household population excludes persons living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters. Households are classified by the ethnicity of the household head. Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2010 ACS (1% IPUMS sample). More information on the source data and sampling error is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/design.shtml> and http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf.

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Appendix Table B3

Employment Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Mexican Population in the U.S.

	All Foreign Born	Non-Mexican Foreign Born	Mexican Foreign Born
Employment Status (civilians ages 16 and older)			
Employed	22,851	16,002	6,849
Unemployed	2,610	1,758	852
Not in labor force	12,162	8,849	3,313
Unemployment rate (%)	10.3	9.9	11.1
Industries¹			
Construction, agriculture and mining	2,615	1,034	1,582
Manufacturing	2,736	1,752	984
Trade and transportation	3,887	2,878	1,008
Information, finance and other services	13,613	10,338	3,275
Occupations¹			
Management, professional and related occupations	7,210	6,530	681
Services	5,090	3,033	2,057
Sales and office support	4,072	3,210	862
Construction, extraction and farming	2,309	831	1,478
Maintenance, production, transportation and material moving	4,170	2,398	1,772

Notes: Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding. ¹Currently employed civilians ages 16 and older.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2010 ACS (1% IPUMS sample). More information on the source data and sampling error is available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/design.shtml> and http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf.

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Appendix C: Methodology

The measures of migration developed for this report draw on numerous data sources from both Mexico and the U.S. The principal Mexican data sources are:

- Mexican censuses (Censos de Población y Vivienda) of 1990, 2000 and 2010 (10% sample of each);
- The Mexican Population Count (II Conteo de Población y Vivienda) of 2005 (10% sample);
- The Survey of Migration in the Northern Border of Mexico (la Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México or EMIF-Norte);
- The Survey of Demographic Dynamics of 2006 and 2009 (Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica or ENADID); and
- Survey of Occupation and Employment for 2005-2011 (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo or ENOE).

The principal U.S. data sources are:

- U.S. censuses from 1850 to 2000;
- The U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) monthly data for 1994 to 2012;
- The March CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) for 1994 to 2011; and
- The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) for 2005-2010.

This appendix describes the specific items used from these various sources and the development of some of the migration measures used in the report. Data from the Mexican censuses, the Mexican Population Count, the American Community Survey, the U.S. censuses of 1990 and 2000, and the Current Population Survey are based on Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from public-use microdata sets, some of which have been modified or adjusted. As such, the figures reported may differ from published data from the same sources.

Mexican Data Sources

Mexican Censuses: 1990, 2000 and 2010

This report employs Mexican Census (Censo de Población y Vivienda) data from the decennial censuses of 1990, 2000 and 2010. In addition to the basic census form, each census also included a detailed questionnaire administered to 10% of households that collected a variety of demographic, social and economic characteristics. In addition, the 2000 and 2010 censuses included a questionnaire focused on migration. It was administered to households within the 10% sample with recent migrants (anyone who had migrated in the five years prior to the census).

Immigrants to Mexico and Mexicans returning from abroad are identified through a number of different questions. The full census asks respondents their state or country of birth, which is used to measure lifetime migration (identifying people born outside of Mexico). The full census also includes two questions on residence five years before the census. For example, in the case of the 2010 census, respondents are asked about their place of residence in June 2005—the state or country of residence and the municipio or delegación of residence if respondents were in Mexico. This is asked of people ages 5 or older. These two questions can be used to measure return migration of Mexicans during the five-year period before the census or immigration to Mexico during the period by persons not born in Mexico. They also provide data on migration patterns within Mexico. Since the question on residence five years ago pertains only to persons ages 5 and older, the number of immigrants into Mexico by persons younger than 5 years old is determined from the place of birth question, i.e., the number under age 5 born outside of Mexico.

The supplemental sample questionnaire, asked of a 10% sample of households in 2000 and 2010, is focused on international migration. The first question asks whether anyone who “lives or lived with you (in this house) went to live in another country” in the previous five years. Persons identified as leaving the country with this question are designated as “recent migrants” in this report. The census asks how many recent migrants left from the household and then follows with a battery of questions about each migrant: gender, age at most recent migration, month and year of most recent departure from Mexico, state of residence at departure, destination country and place of current residence (for example: U.S., other country, Mexico). For those migrants who are identified as currently living in Mexico, there are further questions: month and year of return and, in 2010, whether the returned recent migrant is in the respondent’s household.

Total migration into Mexico from the United States during the five years before the 2010 and 2000 censuses is estimated from the full census migration questions and the migrant sample of returned recent migrants. The components of migration into Mexico are:

- Persons living in the U.S. five years earlier and in Mexico at the census, subdivided as:
 - Persons born in Mexico (ages 5 and older)
 - Persons born in the U.S. (ages 5 and older)
 - Persons born in other countries (ages 5 and older)
- Persons under age 5 in the census who were born in the U.S.
- Recent migrants who left Mexico after 2005 for the U.S. and returned by the census (excluding those living in the U.S. in 2005 and children under age 5 born in the U.S.)

With these questions, it is possible to identify all persons who migrated into Mexico during the previous five years who were still alive at the date of the census (and were still in Mexico). For out-migrants from Mexico who left in the last five years, only those who departed from existing households that still have members in Mexico can be identified; the Mexican census does not provide direct information on outmigration of entire households.

The migrant sample includes only a limited amount of socio-demographic data on the migrants. However, most of the recent migrants who have returned to Mexico (i.e., those who returned to the same household) can be linked to their own record in the full census sample. For 2010, we were able to match about two-thirds of the returned recent migrants (26,700 unweighted cases out of 38,750 returnees in the full migrant sample); for 2000, we were able to match about three-quarters of returned recent migrants (24,915 out of 32,672 returnees). Because some migrants make multiple trips to the U.S., some of the returned recent migrants (i.e., those who made a trip out of Mexico after June 2005 in 2010 or after January 1995 in 2000) were living in the U.S. five years before the census. In measuring total migration into Mexico, it is necessary to remove this group from the estimate to avoid double counting. Using the matched samples, we found that 33% of the returned recent migrants in the 2010 census had been in the U.S. five years earlier; among returned recent migrants in 2000, 14% had been in the U.S. in 1995. Applying these shares to the full count of returned migrants reduced the estimate of recent returns by 102,000 in 2010 and by 37,000 in 2000. Very few of the returned

recent migrants were children under age 5 born in the U.S.; reductions from this overlapping group amounted to 728 persons in 2010 and 773 in 2000.

The data from Mexican censuses shown in the report were developed from tabulations of microdata samples. The microdata come from a 10% sample of the full census; all cases in the 10% recent migrant sample are included in the microdata. For 2010 and 2000, microdata samples were downloaded from the INEGI website (entered at <http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/espanol/soc/sis/microdatos/default.aspx>). The sample sizes for the microdata are:

2010 Census	
Persons	11,938,402
Recent migrants	156,440
2000 Census	
Persons	10,099,182
Recent migrants	195,701

For 1990, the microdata sample was downloaded from the Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series-International (IPUMS-I) website (<https://international.ipums.org/international/>). The IPUMS-I sample was generated from the original INEGI microdata sample, but also includes some additional IPUMS-generated variables, notably variables for linking respondents with their mothers and fathers (if present in the household) developed from the relationship variable. The sample size for the 1990 IPUMS-I person sample is 8,118,242 cases.²³

Our estimates attempt to differentiate U.S.-born immigrants to Mexico who are children of Mexican migrants who were in the U.S. from other U.S.-born immigrants to Mexico. This requires that we ascertain the country of birth of a respondent's parents in the microdata. Unfortunately, none of the Mexican censuses include a direct question on country of birth of the respondents' mother or father. However, for 2010, the INEGI microdata sample provides a pointer to each respondent's mother and father if they were present in the household. For 1990 and 2000, the IPUMS-I microdata samples include similar pointers developed from the information collected on relationship. With these pointers, we were able to classify most U.S.-born individuals as the child of a Mexican-born mother or father (75% in 2010, 73% in 2000, and 66% in 1990). Only a small percentage of U.S.-born individuals could be linked to a parent or parents not born in Mexico (less than 2% of the U.S.-born in each census). The remaining 25-34% were not in households with their parents so they could not be identified definitively as having Mexican parents.

²³ The IPUMS-I microdata sample for the 2000 Mexican census was also used for some estimates.

Mexican Conteo of 2005

The 2005 *II Conteo de Población y Vivienda* is a mid-decade census conducted by INEGI to identify changes in the Mexican population and update various population projections for the country and constituent geographic areas. The Conteo collected less information than the full censuses of 2000 and 2010. The Conteo included information on residence five years earlier but did not ask for place of birth, nor did it include the special migrant questionnaire that was used in the 2000 and 2010 censuses. The Conteo provides information on movement into Mexico by persons ages 5 and older but not the more detailed information on other components of movement between Mexico and the U.S.

For 2005, we used 10% microdata samples from both INEGI and from IPUMS-I. Each sample included 10,282,760 people.

Survey of Migration in the Northern Border of Mexico or Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF-Norte)

The EMIF-Norte was first designed and conducted in 1993 by the Mexican Population Council (CONAPO), the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS), and the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF). In later years, the Mexican Migration Institute (INM), the Ministry of Foreign Relations (SRE) and the Ministry of Health (SS) joined the survey's technical committee. The estimates shown in this report were obtained from the EMIF-Norte surveys of 1995, and 2000-2010 calendar-year datasets published by [COLEF](#).²⁴

Survey Design

EMIF-Norte applies probabilistic sampling techniques for populations moving to and across the U.S.-Mexico border. The survey uses a multi-stage stratified design to collect information from migrants and potential migrants of different types across the length of the border and throughout the year.

The sampling framework of the EMIF-Norte characterizes four distinct flows:

1. Flow from the South into the U.S.;
2. Flow from the northern Mexican border areas into the U.S.;

²⁴ Datasets were downloaded from COLEF's EMIF website: <http://www.colef.net/emif/>, accessed in November 2011.

3. Individuals handed over to Mexican authorities by U.S. authorities (including so-called “voluntary returns” and removals);
4. Other flows from the U.S.

In this report, we analyze data from the third flow exclusively—a randomized sample of Mexican nationals ages 15 years and older, who had been either returned or removed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and handed over to Mexican authorities at specified points along the Mexico-U.S. border.

Sample Selection for EMIF-Norte

The EMIF sample is selected at various points along the U.S.-Mexico border (which are estimated to include about 94% of the migration flow). Within geographic units or sampling points, data are collected within sampled time intervals (“sample hour” or “*jornada*”). Migrants are identified within each time-space sampling unit with a short set of four to five screening questions that distinguish them from other subjects within the flow, such as tourists, people born in the U.S. or residents of the border cities who are cross the border regularly. Once a migrant is identified, a longer questionnaire is administered to collect a range of information specific to each type of migration.

Sample Size

The module of the survey we analyzed—persons handed over to Mexican authorities by DHS—has a sample size of about 6,000 to 10,000 Mexican migrants ages 15 years and older for each calendar year.

Possible Sampling Issues

The sample for this flow is representative of about 95% of all Mexicans ages 15 years and older who were received by Mexican migration authorities at eight specific points along the U.S.-Mexico border and a few international airports. The remaining 5%, not captured in the survey, may have been handed over at less transited points along the border where the survey is not conducted.

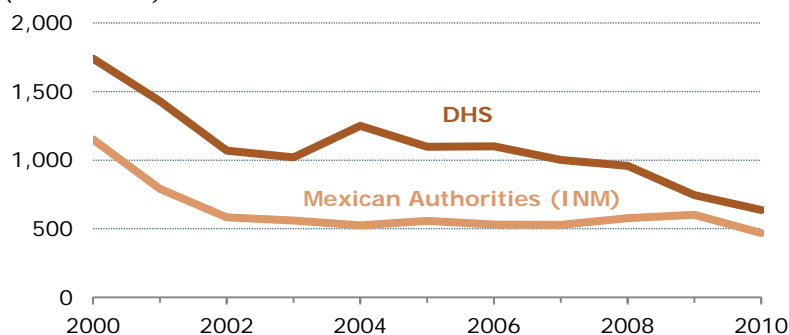
However, this module of the EMIF appears to have some issues related to either coverage or weighting. The weighted number of Mexican nationals received and documented by the Mexican authorities and reported by the Mexican Migration Institute (INM)—which form the

basis for the EMIF weights—is considerably smaller than that reported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In some years, the estimated number of Mexican nationals received and registered by Mexican authorities is 58% below the number reported by DHS, though in recent years the gap has narrowed to less than 30%. (See appendix figure C1.)

Appendix Figure C1

Number of Mexicans Repatriated Reported by U.S. and Mexican Authorities

(In thousands)



Note: DHS data are for fiscal years; INM data for calendar years. Total number of repatriated include all returned and removed Mexican nationals. For 2000-2008 the total number of Mexican returnees reported by DHS was estimated using the share of all apprehended who were Mexican.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2000-2010*; Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), *Serie Históricas de Estadísticas Migratorias, 1995-2010*.

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National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica—ENADID): 2006 and 2009

The National Survey of Demographic Dynamics or ENADID is a national household survey conducted by the Mexican government to collect a wide range of information about population change in Mexico. In addition to a module of questions related to international migration, the survey covers fertility and pregnancy history of women in detail, births and deaths, contraceptive usage and preferences, and marriage. The survey was conducted in 1992, 1997, and 2009 by the Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and by the National Population Council (CONAPO) in 2006.

The international migration questions are similar in concept and design to those included in the census and its migration module. The ENADID provides detailed migration information but on a much smaller sample of the population. The survey collects information from current household residents as well as data on persons who used to live in the household but had migrated to the United States in the previous five years. Items collected from current household members include: residence one year ago (asked in 2009), residence five years ago, and place of birth. For the “recent migrants” (i.e., persons who had left the household in the last five years to make a trip to the U.S.), ENADID collects the same information as the 2010

census: age at migration, state of origin for the migrant, month and year of departure, current residence, and, if the migrant is back in Mexico, month and year of return to Mexico. In addition, ENADID provides information not collected in the census: destination within the U.S., documentation on migration and reason for migrating (asked in 2006). The data from the 2006 and 2009 ENADID were used in this report mainly to provide indications of trends in migration based on the question regarding residence five years earlier.

In terms of coverage of migration, ENADID has the same limitations as the census. All migrants into Mexico in the period before the survey (who are still alive and still in Mexico) can be identified. For recent out-migrants, only those migrants from households where some members remained in Mexico can be identified. ENADID is not able to measure outmigration of whole households.

The 2006 ENADID is a sample of 41,926 households. The resulting sample and microdata contain information on 142,951 residents and 5,632 recent migrants. For 2009, the basic ENADID sample is much larger—89,266 households. The microdata sample we analyzed included 343,887 residents. The migrant sample had 4,872 recent migrants.

National Survey of Occupation and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo or ENOE): 2005-2011

The National Survey of Occupation and Employment is conducted by INEGI to measure Mexico's labor force and its employment characteristics. The survey has a complex design with a national sample of approximately 120,000 households. Each sample household is interviewed five times at three-month intervals. The sample is divided into five roughly equal rotation groups, and each quarter a new rotation group enters the sample and the group that has completed five interviews rotates out of the sample.

With the reinterview and overlapping rotation group structure, changes in household composition can be monitored after the initial interview. ENOE can thus provide information on births (added to the household), deaths (subtracted from the household), and migration into and out of the household. When a migrant is identified in interviews two through five, either because the person is no longer in the household or a new household member arrives, there are a number of questions concerning destination of the out-migrant or origin of the in-migrant (i.e., somewhere else in Mexico or outside the country) and reasons for migration.

ENOE is more limited in measuring in- and out-migration than the census or ENADID. ENOE does not collect information on previous residence, so it measures only movement into and out

of existing households. Movement of entire households out of Mexico is not measured (as is the case with the census and ENADID). Unlike these other data sources, ENOE does not measure migration of whole households into Mexico. Although whole households who return to Mexico can fall into the ENOE, there is no mechanism for identifying these migrants because ENOE does not include questions on previous residence.

Microdata samples from ENOE are available from INEGI (<http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/Proyectos/encuestas/hogares/regulares/enoe/Default.aspx>). Information in this report was obtained from publications of [migration rates](#) and numbers rather than tabulations of microdata.

United States Data Sources

Current Population Survey (CPS): 2000-2012

Monthly CPS

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly survey conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPS is a stratified probability sample of about 60,000 households designed to give state-specific information on employment and unemployment (<http://www.census.gov/cps/methodology/>). Generally, about 50,000-55,000 households are interviewed. The sample has overlapping rotation groups in which each household is interviewed in four consecutive months, is out of the sample for eight months, and then returns to the sample for four more consecutive months.

The monthly CPS has a range of questions focused on labor force participation, but also collects information on demographic characteristics, education and immigration through questions on country of birth, parents' country of birth and citizenship (since 1994). The citizenship information identifies respondents as U.S. natives, U.S. citizens through naturalization and non-citizens (but with no further information on legal status). The latter two groups comprise the foreign-born population. For persons born outside the United States, the CPS asks when the individuals "came to live in the United States." All CPS cases are included in public-use microdata files, available from a variety of sources.

March Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC)

Each March, the basic CPS sample and questionnaire are expanded for the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC). The sample is augmented to about 80,000 households with a double sample of Hispanic households and oversampling of households with children and households headed by persons who are not white. The questionnaire is expanded to include questions about health insurance, detailed sources of income, program participation and residence the previous March. This makes the March ASEC supplement the main source of information on poverty and lack of health insurance. The question on residence one year prior to the survey date provides information on current migration into the United States. In this report, the March CPS is the principal data source on the size and characteristics of the unauthorized population (see below for estimation methodology).

The published information from the CPS and the CPS microdata use survey weights based on the most current information available to the Census Bureau at the time the survey is conducted. Because additional data on population change can become available and because of changes in the methods used to measure population change, the weights for the monthly CPS and the March supplements are not necessarily consistent across time. Consequently, comparisons of population numbers across different releases of the CPS can conflate actual population change with methodological changes. To minimize the impact of methodological change on comparisons across time, the Pew Hispanic Center has developed alternative weights for the March CPS supplements of 2000-2007 and monthly CPS for 2000-2008 that use a consistent set of population estimates and permit more accurate comparisons over time. The methodology for developing the alternative weights is described in Appendix C of Passel and Cohn (2010).

American Community Survey (ACS): 2005-2010

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a continuous survey that collects detailed information from a sample of the U.S. population on a wide range of social and demographic topics. Each month the ACS samples about 250,000 households. Interviews are conducted by mail and in person; follow-up is conducted on a sample of initially non-responding households. The nominal sample size is about 3.1 million households per year; about 2.1 million households are included in the final sample.²⁵ The monthly samples do not overlap

²⁵ For more information on ACS sample sizes and methods, see http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample_size_data/index.php

within five-year periods so that detailed information can be obtained for various geographic levels by combining samples across months.

Data from the ACS are released on an annual basis covering interviews conducted during calendar years. Information from a single year of ACS interviews is published for the nation, states, and “recognized legal, administrative, or statistical areas” with populations of 65,000 or more. Data for three consecutive calendar years are combined to provide tabulations for areas with populations of less than 20,000; data for five consecutive years provide information for all areas down to census tracts and block groups. The ACS began in 2005 with a sample of the household population and was expanded to full operational status in 2006 when the household and group quarters population were included.

The ACS includes questions on place of birth (state or country), citizenship and residence one year before the interview. For people born outside the U.S., the ACS asks when the person came to live in the United States. These data items provide information on the foreign-born population and movement to the United States. To the extent that ACS data are used in this report, the information comes from tabulations of microdata obtained from the Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series ([IPUMS](#)). For each year, the microdata set represents a 1% sample of the U.S. population or about 3 million individual cases per year.

Each year’s ACS is weighted to the Census Bureau’s population estimates for that year. The 2010 ACS is the first to be weighted to results from the 2010 census. The use of annual population estimates for weighting can create discontinuities in making comparisons across years when the estimation methods change or when the results of a new census are introduced (as in 2010). To help minimize comparison issues related to changes in population estimates, the Pew Hispanic Center has produced alternative ACS weights for 2005-2009 that are consistent with results from the 2010 census and the 2000 census ([Passel and Cohn, 2012](#)). These alternative weights are used in ACS results for 2005-2009.²⁶ Note that estimates of the size of the foreign-born population from the ACS differ from those based on the CPS for a number of reasons. The surveys differ in weighting and coverage; the CPS universe is of the civilian, noninstitutional population while the ACS universe is of the total resident population. Additionally, our estimates from the March CPS are adjusted for survey undercoverage.

²⁶ The alternative dataset for 2005 not only includes the alternative weights, but also incorporates cases to represent the group quarters population for 2005.

Decennial Censuses: through 2000

U.S. decennial censuses from 1850 through 2000 have provided information on the foreign-born population via a question on place of birth. Through 1970, these censuses also asked mother’s country of birth and father’s country of birth, which permit identification of the second generation. Data on the Mexican-born population from 1850 through 1990 are from these census results presented by Gibson and Jung (2006) and in the *Historical Statistics of the United States* (U.S. Census Bureau, 1975).

For 1980 through 2000, we used a 5% public-use sample of census records from IPUMS to generate information on the foreign-born population. These sources also collect information on citizenship and year of entry to the U.S.

Estimation Methods

Two principal sets of new estimates presented in this report were generated by the Pew Hispanic Center using U.S. data sources described above and demographic estimation methods—estimates of the size and characteristics of the unauthorized immigrant population in the U.S. and estimates of the annual inflow of Mexican immigrants into the U.S. for 1991-2010. Previous versions of these estimates and the methods used to derive them have been published elsewhere; see, for example, Passel and Cohn (2011) and Passel (2011). This section includes a brief description of the estimation methods used in this report.

Residual Method for Estimating Unauthorized Immigrant Population

The data presented in this report on unauthorized and legal immigrants from Mexico were developed with essentially the same methods used in previous Pew Hispanic Center reports (Passel and Cohn 2010; Passel and Cohn, 2009). The national and state estimates use a multistage estimation process, principally using March Supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS).

The first stage in the estimation process uses CPS data as a basis for estimating the number of legal and unauthorized immigrants included in the survey and the total number in the country using a residual estimation methodology. This method compares an estimate of the number of immigrants residing legally in the country with the total number in the CPS; the difference is assumed to be the number of unauthorized immigrants in the CPS. The legal resident

immigrant population is estimated by applying demographic methods to counts of legal admissions covering the period from 1980 to the present obtained from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics and its predecessor at the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The initial estimates here are calculated separately for age-gender groups in six states (California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois and New Jersey) and the balance of the country; within these areas the estimates are further subdivided into immigrant populations from 35 countries or groups of countries by period of arrival in the United States. Variants of the residual method have been widely used and are generally accepted as the best current estimates. See also Passel and Cohn ([2011](#), [2010](#), [2008](#)) and Passel ([2007](#)) for more details.

Then, having estimated the number of legal and unauthorized immigrants in the March CPS Supplements, we assign individual foreign-born respondents in the survey a specific status (one option being unauthorized immigrant) based on the individual’s demographic, social, economic, geographic and family characteristics. The data and methods for the overall process were developed initially at the Urban Institute by Passel and Clark ([1998](#)) and were extended by work of Passel, Van Hook and Bean ([2004](#)) and by subsequent work at the Pew Hispanic Center.

The final step adjusts the estimates of legal and unauthorized immigrants counted in the survey for omissions. The basic information on coverage is drawn principally from comparisons with Mexican data, U.S. mortality data and specialized surveys conducted at the time of the 2000 census (Bean et al. 1998; [Capps et al. 2002](#); Marcelli and Ong 2002). These adjustments increase the estimate of the legal foreign-born population, generally by 1% to 3%, and the unauthorized immigrant population by 10% to 15%. The individual survey weights are adjusted to account for immigrants missing from the survey

The estimates for 2000-2008 use specially developed survey weights for the CPS to ensure consistency across the years in the underlying population figures. (See [Passel and Cohn 2010](#) for a detailed discussion of the need for these weights and their development.)

Annual In-Flows of Immigrants from Mexico

Detailed, accurate estimates of flows back and forth across the U.S.-Mexico border have been difficult to develop, particularly since the flow has been largely unauthorized. Census and survey data from the United States provide measures of the Mexican-born population in the United States and of flows of Mexicans who are living in the U.S. on a more or less permanent basis. The volume of temporary, seasonal or circular migration is harder to assess accurately.

Total immigration during any interval can be estimated from a demographic identity—change in the foreign-born population equals immigration less foreign-born emigration and deaths:

$$\mathbf{FB}^{t+n} - \mathbf{FB}^t = \mathbf{I}^{t,t+n} - \mathbf{D}^{t,t+n} - \mathbf{E}^{t,t+n}$$

or, immigration equals foreign-born population change plus deaths and emigration:

$$\mathbf{I}^{t,t+n} = (\mathbf{FB}^{t+n} - \mathbf{FB}^t) + \mathbf{D}^{t,t+n} + \mathbf{E}^{t,t+n}$$

These boundary conditions provide the framework for measuring flows into the U.S. from Mexico. Survey-based estimates of all elements are subject to various measurement issues, including undercount, definitional inconsistencies, sampling and other errors. Developing consistent measures of annual immigration involves coping with these problems.

Estimates were developed for three periods—1990-1999, 2000-2004, and 2005-2009—using a combination of data sources, assumptions and measurement techniques, depending on the nature of the available information.

Estimated Flows, 1990–1999

Based on the boundary conditions specified above, the total implied migration of Mexicans to the U.S. for 1990 through 1999 is about 5 million:

Component	Number (in thousands)	Source
1990 population	5,000	(Passel and Clark, 1998) ²⁷
- Deaths	-220	(Life table death rates)
- Emigration	-300	(Rates based on Ahmed and Robinson, 1994)
Survivors from 1990	4,500	(by subtraction)
2000 population	9,500	(Passel, Van Hook and Bean, 2004)
Implied total immigration	5,000	(by subtraction)

²⁷ Some 3.575 million legal immigrants, 1.490 million unauthorized, 0.035 million nonimmigrants with 4.5 million counted in the 1990 census.

The initial distribution of annual immigration flows for 1990 through 1999 is estimated as the average annual arrivals from the year of arrival data of the 2000 census and the 2001 and 2002 ACS (unadjusted for undercount). The annual totals are adjusted for undercoverage using information from the March 2000 CPS ([Passel and Cohn, 2011](#)) and then inflated further by 0.5% for each year before 2000 to account for mortality and emigration between arrival and 2000. The resulting distribution, which sums to 4.6 million, is then adjusted upward by roughly 9% to agree with the total implied by the boundary conditions.

Estimated Flows, 2000–2004

Total immigration for this five-year period is based on arrivals observed in the March 2005 CPS for the 2000-2005 period, or 3.175 million new arrivals. The distribution of these arrivals across the period is based on a complex average involving distributions from several measures: CPS arrivals from the annual March supplements where the relevant years are fully observed (i.e., March 2002–2008), the same data from monthly CPS averages, residence one year ago estimates from the March 2001-2004 CPS, estimates based on annual change in arrival cohorts from monthly CPS data for 2000-2006 ([Passel and Cohn, 2009](#)), and averages across three ACS samples where the cohorts are fully observed (2002–2008).

Estimated Flows, 2005–2010

The total number of arrivals for 2005–2009 is estimated from two measures which give almost identical results of 1.65 million arrivals for 2005–2009: (a) arrivals for 2006–2009 from the 2010 March CPS plus 2005 arrivals estimated as the difference of the most recent arrival cohorts observed in the March 2006 and 2005 CPS supplements; (b) a survival calculation for 2005–2010 similar to the 1990-2000 calculation shown above but allowing for the large number of returned migrants observed in the Mexican Census of 2010. The distribution of this total to individual years for 2005–2009 uses an index based on the same measures as for the 2000–2004 period noted above. For 2006–2010, the distributions of apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border and departures for Mexico as measured by ENOE are incorporated into the index. The estimate for 2010 uses the index value based on the three available measures (apprehension, ENOE and March 2011 CPS residence one year ago) in comparison with the index values for 2005-2009.