

TBI Fact Sheet: U.S. Immigration from Mexico  
Compiled by David Shirk

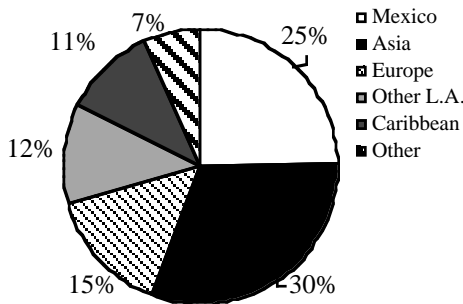
**Demographic and Employment Trends in Immigration:**

- Mexico is the largest single country source of both authorized and unauthorized immigrants.
- The U.S. Border Patrol estimated that the number of unauthorized immigrants entering the U.S. rose from 250,000 to 375,000 per year from 1998 to 2002.
- Contrary to popular belief, migrants contribute more to the U.S. economy than they consume in services (e.g., 66% of Mexican adult migrants pay into Social Security funds from which they are unable to collect, only 9.8 percent of the same migrants living in the United States 10 years or less visited an emergency room in 2004)

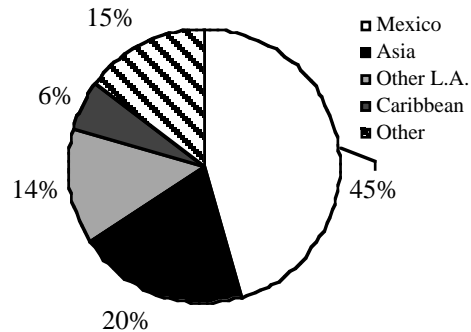
**U.S. Population Data (2000):**

- 281 million U.S. citizens
- 9.1 million authorized immigrants
- 7-11 million unauthorized immigrants
- 5-6 million unauthorized Mexicans

**Origins of Naturalized Immigrants in United States, 1991-2000**



**Origins of Undocumented Immigrants in United States, 1991-2000**

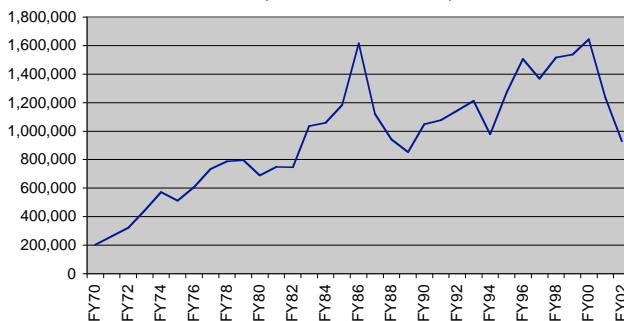


Source: Douglas Massey, "Five Myths About Immigration," *Immigration Policy in Focus*, vol. 4, issue 6, p. 2-3.

**Evolution of U.S. Immigration Policy:**

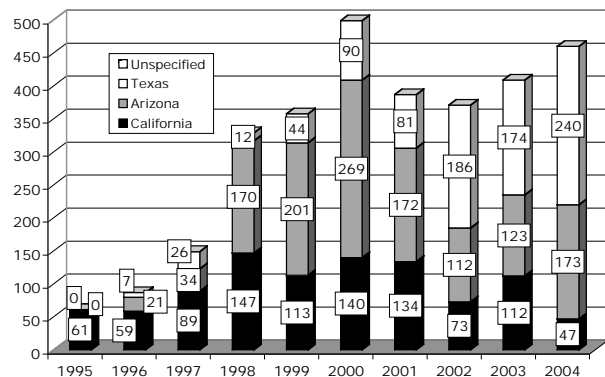
In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) authorized legal amnesty for approximately 3 million unauthorized immigrants; mandated greater security along the U.S.-Mexican border; and required greater regulation of U.S. employers. Concentrated border enforcement programs were initiated in the 1990s: e.g., Operation Hold the Line (Texas), Operation Gatekeeper (San Diego). Workplace enforcement declined from 14,311 employer fines in 1990 to less 178 in 2000. Meanwhile, rising apprehensions in the 1990s provided a sign of the large volume of continued crossings, and were accompanied by the deaths of over 3,500 migrants crossing under much more dangerous conditions in less enforced desert and mountain areas.

**Southwest Border Apprehensions (Fiscal Years 1970-2002)**



Source: Wayne Cornelius, Evaluating U.S. Immigration Control Strategy, 1993-2003, Presentation at Trans-Border Institute, October 24, 2003.

**Migrant Deaths at the Border, 1995-2004**



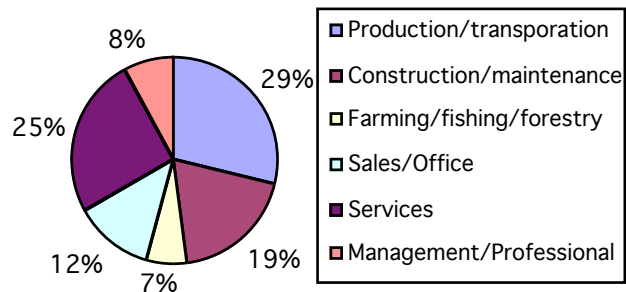
Source: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores data collected by California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. 2005 data from Rich Morosi, "Border Crossing Deaths Set a 12-Month Record," Los Angeles Times, October 1, 2005.

**Pull Factors: Migrants find U.S. Employment in Large-Growth and Low-Skilled Occupations**

Mexican migrants comprise:

- Over 25% of foreign born workers
- 30% of agricultural, fishing & forestry workers
- 20% of manufacturing workers and groundskeepers
- 14% of food preparation workers
- 11% of janitors
- 10% of heavy and 5% of light truck drivers
- 8% of waitress and waiter aides
- 5% of general repairers
- 4% of teacher aides

**Mexican-Born Population in the United States by Type of Occupation, 2000**



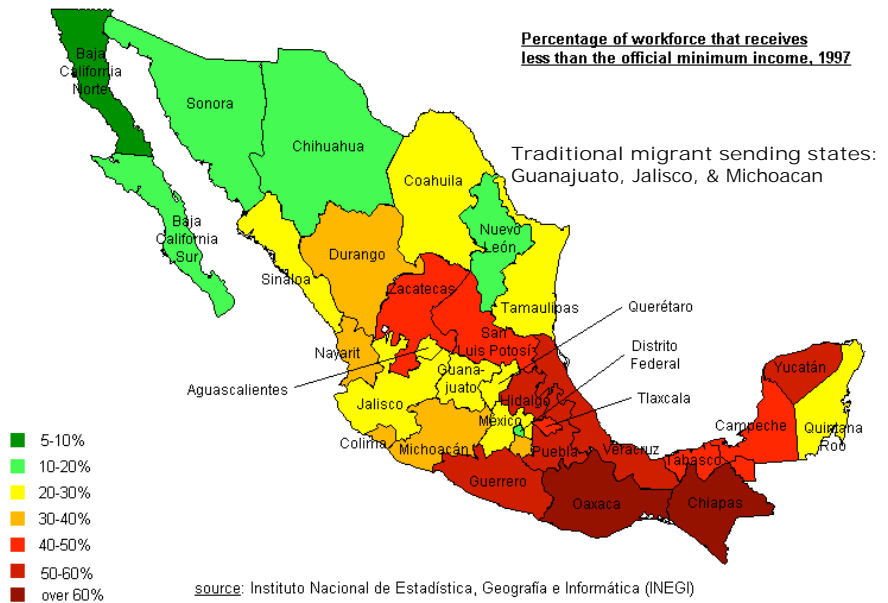
**Push Factors: Migration in Response to Destabilizing Conditions**

- Migration is caused less by poverty than by economic volatility; for example, immigration increased significantly after the 1994 peso devaluation.
- When Mexico’s real wages decrease by 10%, border patrol apprehensions increase by over 7.5%.

**Development Options: What Can Be Done to Create Opportunities in Mexico?**

- **Declining wages:** Since 1982, debt crises and monetary instability have reduced real wages in Mexico by approximately 40%, while real minimum wages have declined nearly 60%.
- **NAFTA trade:** From 1993-2001, international trade between all three NAFTA countries more than doubled, from nearly 300 to 622 billion U.S. dollars.
- **Destabilization:** Yet Mexico’s economic opening also brought political instability in Chiapas, economic volatility in 1994-95 (and a corresponding surge in crime and violence), and slower growth (less than 3%, compared to 3.7-6.7% GDP growth in the 1970s and 1980s).

**Percent Incidence of Poverty in Mexico**



**Sources:**

Wayne Cornelius, “Evaluating U.S. Immigration Control Policy,” Presentation at the Trans-Border Institute, October 24, 2003.

Elizabeth Grieco and Brian Ray, (2004) “Mexican Immigrants in the US Labor Force,” *Migration Policy Institute*, March 1, 2004, [www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=206](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=206)

Gordon H. Hanson and Antonio Spilimbergo, (1996) “Illegal Immigration, Border Enforcement, and Relative Wages: Evidence from Apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” *Working Paper Series 328*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C.

Douglas Massey, “Five Myths About Immigration,” *Immigration Policy in Focus*, vol. 4, issue 6, p. 2-3.

Elliot Spagat, “Survey: Mexicans Less Likely to Visit Emergency Rooms,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, October 13, 2005.

U.S. Border Patrol, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990 to 2000*, Office of Policy and Planning U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2003.