



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MEXICAN-BORN LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

JUDITH GANS



IMMIGRATION POLICY REPORTS
August 2009

Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, The University of Arizona



Notes and Acknowledgement

Unless otherwise noted, data for this report is from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2005 to 2007 average database. The three-year average database was used for reasons of its larger sample size and greater accuracy. The source of these data is the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).¹

The author wishes to thank Jason Jurjevich for his tireless and thorough data-gathering efforts and for his promptness and patience in responding to on-going data requests as this analytic effort evolved.

¹ Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0* (Machine-readable database), Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2009. Available at: <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>

Table of Contents

Section	Page
Executive Summary	3
Migration Pattern	4
Decade of Arrival	4
U.S. Citizenship Acquisition	4
Region of Residence	5
Age Profile and Share of Total Population	6
Educational Attainment	9
Share of Educational Attainment Cohort	11
Mexican-born in the Workforce	12
Participation Rates	12
Regional Distribution of Workforce	14
Occupational Distribution	16
Share of Occupational Workforce	17
Incomes	20
Household Income	20
Personal Income	21
Concluding Observations	24
Appendix A	25

Executive Summary

As of the middle of the current decade, approximately eleven percent of Mexican-born were living in the United States. This migration derives from the two countries historical ties, the long land border that they share, and the Bracero temporary worker program in effect from the late 1940s until the late 1960s. What follows is a profile of the characteristics of this population including its age, educational attainment, U.S. region of residence, workforce participation, and income levels. The report's findings include the following information about Mexican-born living in the United States.

- The majority of this population arrived in the United States after 1980;
- They acquire U.S. citizenship at much lower rates than do other foreign-born;
- The majority of this population lives in the southwestern and western regions of the United States;
- They are, on average, somewhat younger than other immigrants and significantly younger than the native U.S. born population;
- Their educational attainment levels are somewhat lower than those of other immigrants and substantially lower than those of native U.S. born citizens;
- Total workforce participation rates are higher than for other foreign-born but this is due to higher participation rates among the youngest Mexican-born workers. Participation rates for the older workforce age cohorts are slightly lower than for other foreign-born;
- Mexican-born workers are concentrated in few occupational sectors, namely construction, production, building and grounds service and maintenance, and food preparation and serving. They are a key source of workers for agriculture. Other foreign-born and native-born workers are more diffused throughout the economy;
- Income levels are lower for Mexican-born workers than for other foreign-born or for native U.S. born citizens. This results from their lower education levels and from the specific areas of employment.

Mexican-born in the United States are key sources of workers in fairly narrow segments of the workforce and for specific industries. They provide a large share of young, low-skilled workers for industries such as agriculture, construction, production, building and grounds service and maintenance, and food preparation, and appear to be filling gaps in the labor-force not being filled either by other foreign-born or native U.S. born workers. The following sections of this report elaborate these findings more fully.

Migration Patterns

The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that, between 2005 and 2007, the average number of people born in Mexico and living in the United States was about 11,437,000 people. According to the World Bank, the average population of Mexico during that same period was about 104,200,000 people.² Thus roughly one in nine, or eleven percent, of Mexican-born people was living in the United States during that period. This report will provide a demographic profile of this population and describe their participation in the economy of the United States.

Decade of Arrival

Mexican migration to the United States has occurred throughout the two countries’ histories but it has increased during the last half of the 20th Century. The origins of today’s migratory patterns and levels date back to the Bracero Program, instituted by the United States in response to labor shortages during World War II. This program fostered a phenomenon of circular migration characterized by Mexicans traveling to “el Norte” in search of seasonal work and periodically returning to Mexico. Some people did not return to Mexico, contributing to the growth of the Mexican-born population living in the United States. Circularity has been inhibited by increased enforcement by the U.S. at the U.S.-Mexico border against illegal immigration. This reduced circularity has combined with other large global demographic and economic forces to significantly increase the size of the Mexican-born population in the United States during the past 20 to 30 years. Table 1 looks at when U.S. based Mexican-born arrived by decade of arrival and illustrates the relatively recent nature of much of this migration.

Table 1

Decade of Arrival Mexican-born Living in the U.S.		
	Number	Share of Total
Since 2000	3,224,496	28%
1990s	3,838,026	34%
1980s	2,383,369	21%
1970 and Before	1,990,884	17%
	11,436,775	100%

Sixty two percent of Mexicans living in the U.S. arrived after 1990. Only seventeen percent arrived prior to 1970. Some circular migration persists, but the number of Mexicans in the U.S. has grown significantly.

United States Citizenship Acquisition

Table 2 shows that twenty two percent of the 11,437,775 Mexican-born in the United States have become naturalized U.S. citizens and seventy eight percent are not U.S. citizens. Fifty one percent of other foreign born have become U.S. citizens

² Available at:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20535285~menuPK:1192694~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>

The reasons for these differences in U.S. citizenship between Mexican-born and other foreign-born are complex. They include Mexican-born patterns of circular migration, the fact that many Mexican-born are recently arrived in the U.S., and the reality that a significant portion of Mexican-born in the U.S. are undocumented and therefore excluded from traditional paths to U.S. citizenship.

Table 2

Number and Share of Foreign Born With U.S. Citizenship						
	Mexican Born		Non Mexican Foreign Born		Total Foreign Born	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Naturalized Citizens	2,485,264	22%	13,133,336	51%	15,618,600	42%
Non Citizens	8,951,511	78%	12,655,522	49%	21,607,033	58%
Total	11,436,775	100%	25,788,858	100%	37,225,633	100%

Regions of Residence

Mexicans living in the United States are not evenly distributed throughout the country. Rather, they are clustered within particular geographic regions. The reasons for this are a combination of social networks rooted in historical migration and patterns of economic activity in the United States.

Figure 1 depicts the number of Mexican-born living in the nine U.S. Census Regions. The percent of the Mexican-born population in each of these regions is shown in parentheses. See Appendix A for a list of the States within each region.

Figure 1

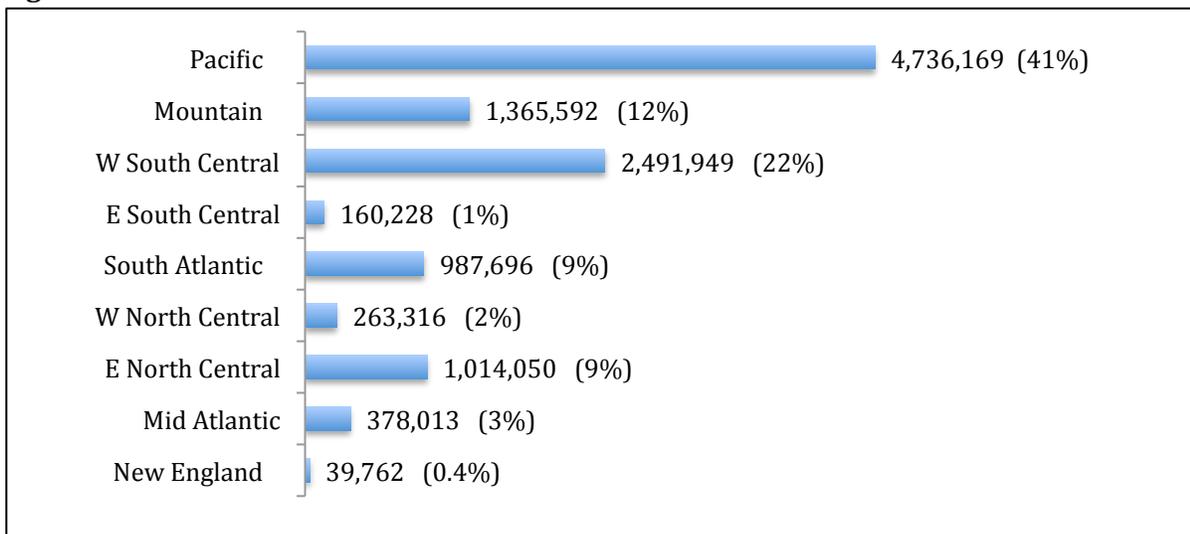


Figure 1: Number and percent of Mexican-born living in the nine U.S. Census Regions.

Seventy five percent of Mexican-born live in the regions that encompass the American southwest and west. Forty one percent live in the Pacific region, which includes the state of California. The second-largest group at twenty two percent is in the West South Central region, which includes the state of Texas. The smallest share lives in New England.

Age Profile and Share of Total Population

Table 3 shows the number and percentage by five-year age group of Mexican-born and other foreign born living in the U.S., and native U.S. born. We see that Mexican-born are four percent of the total population, other foreign-born are nine percent, and native U.S. born are eighty eight percent of the total population. Both Mexican-born and non-Mexican foreign-born are disproportionately of working age. The age-profile of both categories of foreign-born differs dramatically from that of the native U.S.-born population and reflects the reality that the motivation to migrate in a global economy is employment.

Table 3

Population by Age Cohort and Nativity						
Age	Mexican Born		Non Mexican Foreign Born		Native US Born	
	Number	% Of Mexican Born	Number	% Of Non Mexican Foreign Born	Number	% Of Native Born
0-4	103,182	1%	203,956	1%	20,178,158	8%
5-9	294,453	3%	446,511	2%	18,952,072	7%
10-14	434,335	4%	658,050	3%	19,498,810	7%
15-19	653,310	6%	1,014,101	4%	19,801,852	8%
20-24	1,148,318	10%	1,552,477	6%	18,127,612	7%
25-29	1,565,406	14%	2,105,836	8%	16,616,373	6%
30-34	1,654,748	14%	2,613,074	10%	15,271,393	6%
35-39	1,512,132	13%	2,775,816	11%	16,889,052	6%
40-44	1,210,908	11%	2,751,825	11%	18,574,796	7%
45-49	887,821	8%	2,489,764	10%	19,314,291	7%
50-54	643,918	6%	2,129,647	8%	17,725,777	7%
55-59	450,521	4%	1,793,384	7%	15,567,031	6%
60-64	304,766	3%	1,387,041	5%	12,058,575	5%
65-69	210,009	2%	1,117,866	4%	9,058,859	3%
70-74	147,124	1%	911,129	4%	7,480,012	3%
75-79	102,510	1%	716,828	3%	6,667,967	3%
80+	113,314	1%	958,975	4%	9,749,047	4%
Total	11,436,775	100%	25,626,280	100%	261,531,677	100%
Share Of Total Population		4%		9%		88%

Figure 2 provides a graphic depiction of the age-group profile of Mexicans in the United States and underscores the extent to which they are of working age.

Figure 2

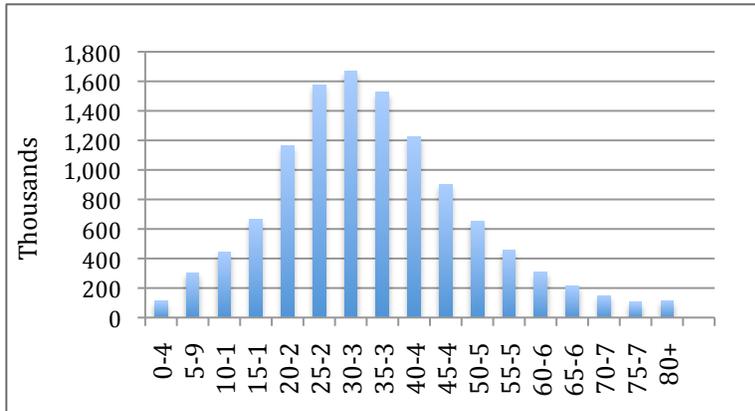


Figure 2: Number of Mexican-born in the United States by five-year age group. (Data in thousands.)

Mexican-born living in the U.S. are concentrated in young adult age groups. Sixty two percent of all Mexican-born living in the United States are between 20 and 45 years of age.

Relatively few Mexicans in the U.S. are under the age of fifteen or over the age of fifty.

Because much of the motivation to migrate, it is not surprising that most Mexican-born living in the U.S. are of working age. But, as we shall see later in this report, the contrast between the age and education profiles of Mexican immigrants and those of native US born citizens underscore the complexities of the demographic and economic forces driving migration from Mexico to the United States which significantly shape *who* migrates from Mexico to the United States. Figure 3 illustrates differences in the age profile of Mexican-born from that of other foreign-born.

Figure 3

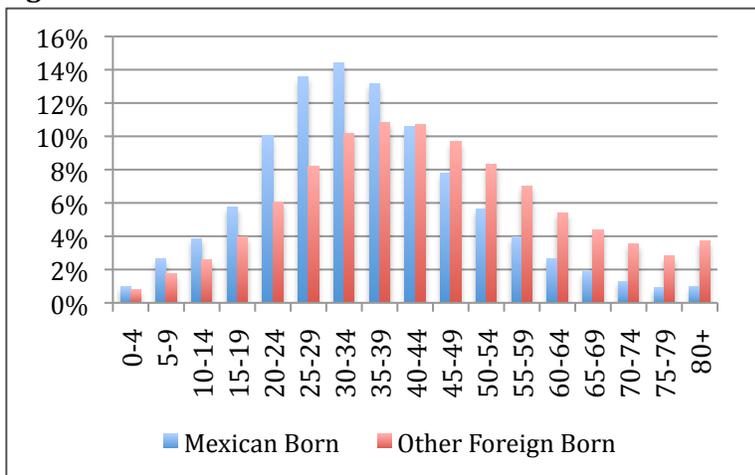


Figure 3: Five-year age cohorts' share of Mexican-born in the U.S. compared to other foreign born in the U.S.

There are relatively *more* Mexican-born under age 40 than other foreign born and *fewer* Mexican-born over age 45 than other foreign born. While most other foreign born are also of working age, the population of other foreign born is older, on average, than Mexican-born in the U.S.

Figure 4, below, shows the age distribution of Mexican-born compared to that of U.S. born citizens.

Figure 4

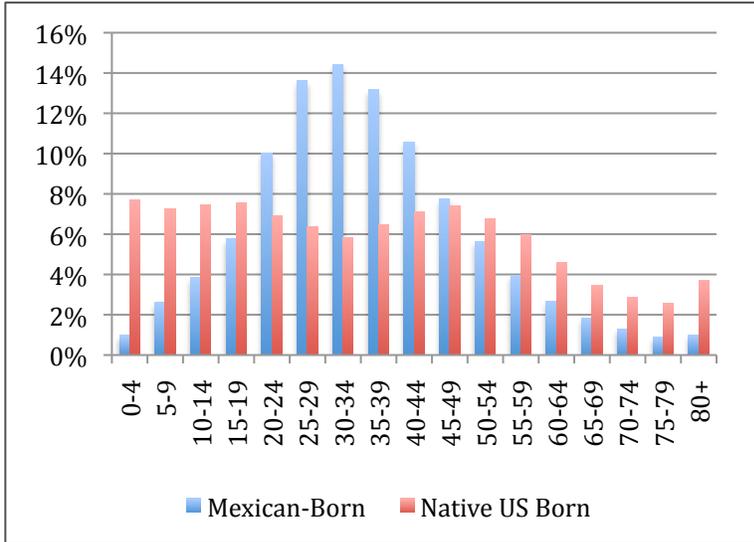


Figure 4: Five-year age cohorts' share of Mexican-born in the U.S. compared to native U.S. born citizens.

The age profile of Mexicans in the U.S. differs significantly from native U.S. born citizens. Mexican-born are largely of working age while native U.S. born are more evenly distributed across all age groups.

The largest concentrations of U.S.-based Mexican born and other foreign born are in age groups with the lowest share of native U.S. born. This reflects a demographic reality driving migration to the US: the native-born population has relatively fewer working-age people.

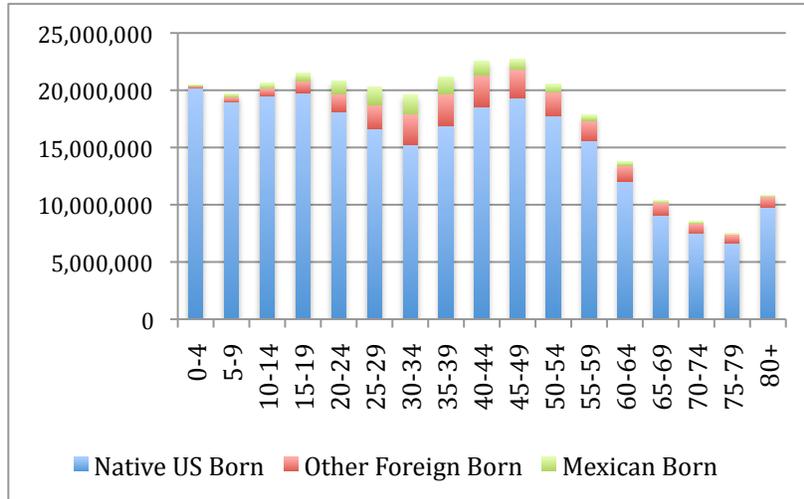
Table 4 shows the share of each age group that is Mexican-born, the share that is foreign born from other countries, and the share that is native U.S. born.

Table 4

Age Group Share of Total Population				
Age Group	Mexican Born	Non Mexican Foreign Born	Native US Born	Total
0-4	1%	1%	98%	100%
5-9	1%	2%	96%	100%
10-14	2%	3%	95%	100%
15-19	3%	5%	92%	100%
20-24	6%	8%	87%	100%
25-29	8%	10%	82%	100%
30-34	8%	13%	78%	100%
35-39	7%	13%	80%	100%
40-44	5%	12%	82%	100%
45-49	4%	11%	85%	100%
50-54	3%	10%	86%	100%
55-59	3%	10%	87%	100%
60-64	2%	10%	88%	100%
65-69	2%	11%	87%	100%
70-74	2%	11%	88%	100%
75-79	1%	10%	89%	100%
80+	1%	9%	90%	100%
Total	4%	9%	88%	100%

As we see in Table 4, the age group with the largest share of Mexican-born is young adults between the ages of 25 and 34. Mexican-born in the U.S. are eight percent of this age group. Not surprisingly, this is also the age group with the smallest share of native U.S. born people. The next largest share of Mexican-born is people between the ages of 35 and 39 at seven percent. This is also the second-smallest share age group of Native U.S. born people.

Figure 5



These complementary age-group patterns are visible in Figure 5 and indicate the extent to which immigration is smoothing the age-group distribution of the population in the United States.

Note that of 78,431,000 native born children under 20 about 14,669,000 or almost nineteen percent had at least one foreign-born parent.

Thus we see that Mexican-born and other immigrants in the United States are adding *numbers of people* in age groups where there are relatively fewer native U.S. born people. Immigrants are also contributing significantly to the growth of the U.S. population.

Educational Attainment

Education is generally used as a proxy for occupational skill, and an adult's educational attainment significantly shapes his or her options for employment and role in the work force. Further, analysis of the education profile of sub-groups or of a whole population provides insights to the productive capacities of those groups or of the entire labor force. Growth of sectors such as bioscience that employ highly skilled workers requires the availability of workers with appropriate scientific education. Growth in sectors such as construction or leisure and hospitality that employ large numbers of low skilled workers requires an available workforce with minimal education.

Analysis of the educational attainment of Mexican-born in the United States sheds light on their role in the U.S. economy. Such analysis also sheds light on differences in earning potential for a given level of education in each of the two countries because decisions to migrate are significantly shaped by the employment and earnings options that accrue to a given level of education in immigrant-sending and immigrant-receiving countries.

Figure 6 depicts the educational attainment for Mexican-born adults age 25 and older living in the United States. Most Mexican born in the U.S. have had limited education. Forty two percent have eight or few years of schooling. Another forty three percent have attended or graduated from high school. The remaining fifteen percent have education beyond high school, but fewer than two percent have education beyond college.

Figure 6

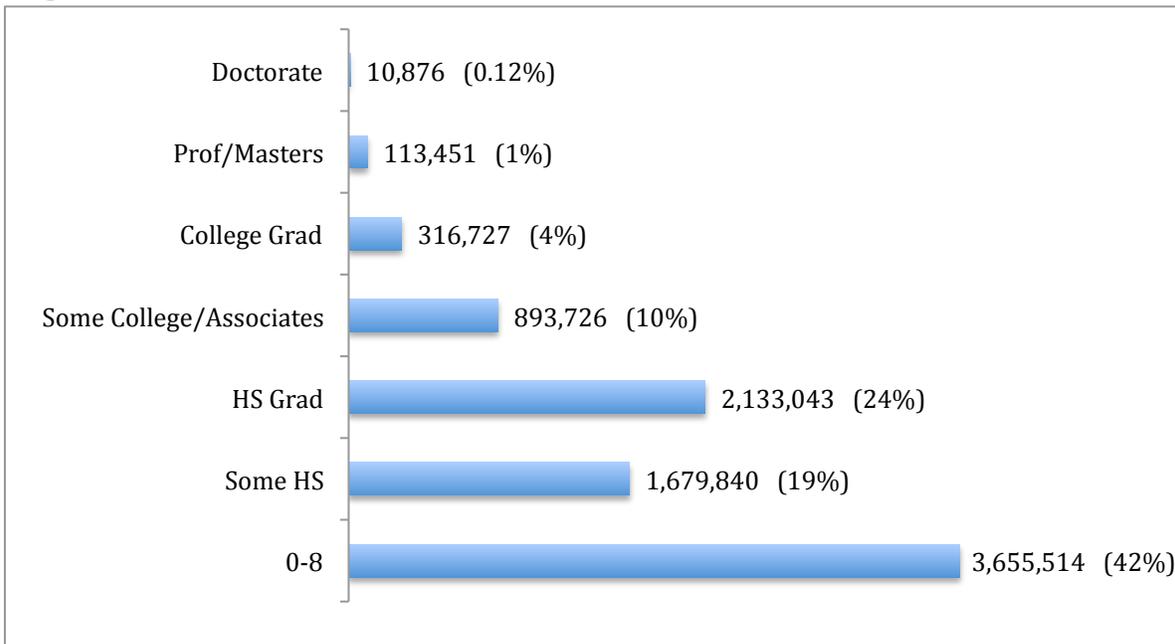


Figure 6: Educational attainment of Mexican-born in the United States, age 25 and older.

The educational attainment profile of U.S. based Mexican born differs in important ways from that of other foreign born and of native U.S. born citizens. Table 5, below, details the educational attainment data for these three nativity groups. The educational attainment share of each group is also shown, and significant differences in educational attainment profile are evident.

The proportion of native U.S. born citizens and other foreign born immigrants with eight or fewer years of schooling is significantly smaller than that of Mexican-born in the U.S. The proportion of native-born citizens and other foreign-born immigrants with more than a high school education is significantly greater than that of Mexican-born in the U.S. Other foreign born have thirty percent more people with professional or masters degrees and three times as many people with doctorate degrees than do native born people. Thus, as measured by educational attainment, we see that Mexican-born in the U.S. are generally lower skilled than native U.S. born citizens or other immigrants. We also see that other foreign-born are an important source of higher-skilled workers in the U.S. economy.

Table 5

Educational Attainment by Nativity (People Age 25 and Older)						
Schooling	Mexican Born		Non Mexican Foreign Born		Native U.S. Born	
	Number	Share of Total	Number	Share of Total	Number	Share of Total
0-8 Years	3,655,514	42%	2,632,307	12%	6,386,174	4%
Some High School	1,679,840	19%	1,918,819	9%	14,924,210	9%
High School Grad	2,133,043	24%	5,111,801	23%	51,542,409	31%
Some College or Associates Degree	893,726	10%	4,468,303	20%	47,400,897	29%
College Graduate	316,727	4%	4,520,131	21%	28,628,763	17%
Professional or Masters Degree	113,451	1%	2,655,390	12%	14,499,184	9%
Doctorate	10,876	0.12%	548,825	3%	1,591,536	0.96%
Total	8,803,177	100%	21,855,576	100%	164,973,173	100%

Share of Educational Cohort

Further insights to the role of Mexicans, other foreign born, and native U.S. born in the workforce can be gained by examine the share that each nativity group contributes to a given educational cohort. The following graph illustrates this data.

Figure 7

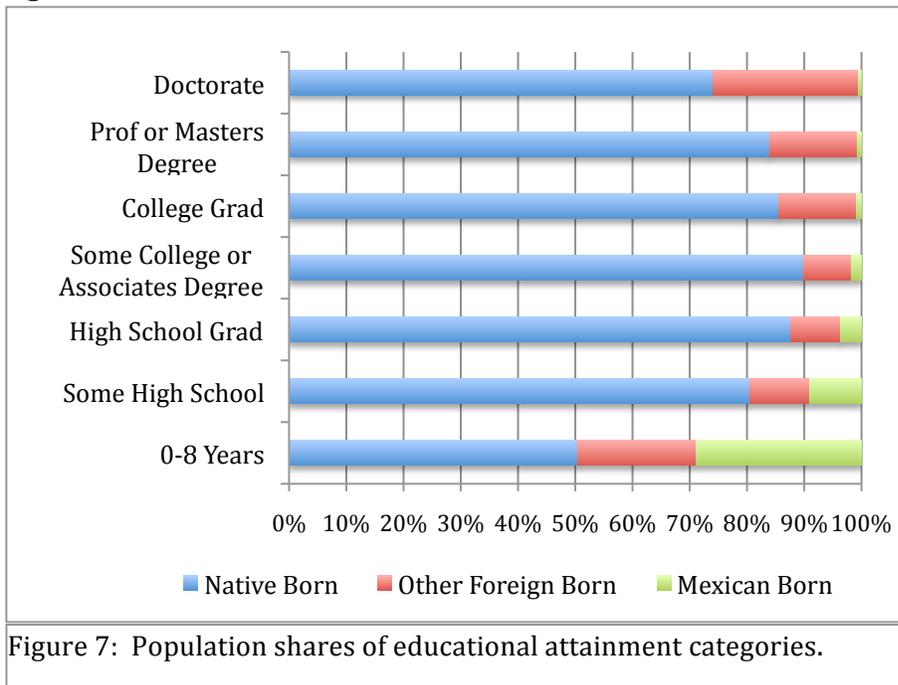


Figure 7: Population shares of educational attainment categories.

US based Mexican-born are 4% of the overall population but are 29% of those with eight or fewer years of school while native US born are 50% of this group. At the other end of the spectrum, US born are 74% of those with doctorate degrees and Mexican born are 1% of this education group.

These data are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Share of Educational Cohort by Nativity (People Age 25 and Older)				
	Mexican Born	Non Mexican Foreign Born	Native Born	Total
0-8 Years	29%	21%	50%	100%
Some High School	9%	10%	81%	100%
High School Grad	4%	9%	88%	100%
Some College or Associates Degree	2%	8%	90%	100%
College Grad	1%	14%	86%	100%
Professional or Masters Degree	1%	15%	84%	100%
Doctorate	1%	26%	74%	100%

Examining the educational attainment profile of Mexican born in the U.S. sheds light on the type of person from Mexico that decides to migrate to the U.S. and provides insight to the differences in employment opportunity between the two countries. In a real sense, this profile is the sum of a set of individual decisions to migrate. Table 5 shows that sixty one percent of Mexicans in the U.S. have less than a high school education and indicates that employment opportunities for low skilled workers are better in the U.S. than in Mexico.

Examining the Mexican-born share of each educational attainment cohort provides a different kind of insight. This analysis sheds light on the role of Mexican-born in the U.S. economy. Table 6 shows that Mexican-born are only four percent of the total population yet provide thirty eight percent of those with less than a high school. This indicates that Mexican-born are an important source of low-skilled workers in the U.S. economy. The following section examines the role of Mexican-born in the U.S. workforce.

Mexican-born in the U.S. Workforce

Participation Rates

Approximately 7,330,000 Mexican-born in the age 16 and older participate in the U.S. labor force. The total population in this age group is 10,504,000, which translates to a labor-force participation rate of seventy percent. By contrast, the total native U.S. born population age 16 and older is 199,000,000, with a labor-force participation rate of sixty four percent or 127,861,000 people. Non-Mexican foreign-born age 16 and older have a workforce participation rate of sixty five percent, or 15,860,000 workers out of a total population of 24,285,000 people. Table 7 depicts the workforce participation rates by age of Mexican-born and other foreign-born in the United States age 16 and older. These participation rates are shown graphically in Figure 8.

Table 7

Workforce Participation
(People Age 16 and Older)

Age	Mexican-Born in the U.S.			Non-Mexican Foreign Born		
	Total Population	In Workforce	Participation Rate	Total Population	In workforce	Participation Rate
16-19	552,731	259,343	47%	862,907	311,142	36%
20-24	1,148,318	859,587	75%	1,566,719	1,051,175	67%
25-29	1,565,406	1,178,277	75%	2,118,102	1,618,167	76%
30-34	1,654,748	1,250,873	76%	2,629,863	2,071,899	79%
35-39	1,512,132	1,158,760	77%	2,789,869	2,232,107	80%
40-44	1,210,908	950,280	78%	2,766,212	2,260,074	82%
45-49	887,821	686,259	77%	2,503,316	2,044,285	82%
50-54	643,918	473,114	73%	2,138,919	1,691,660	79%
55-59	450,521	289,337	64%	1,801,350	1,278,495	71%
60-64	304,766	142,128	47%	1,392,461	766,350	55%
65-69	210,009	53,795	26%	1,122,478	325,805	29%
70-74	147,124	18,287	12%	913,586	133,702	15%
75-79	102,510	6,360	6%	718,013	49,640	7%
80+	113,314	3,230	3%	961,407	25,311	3%
Total	10,504,226	7,329,630	70%	24,285,202	15,859,812	65%

Figure 8

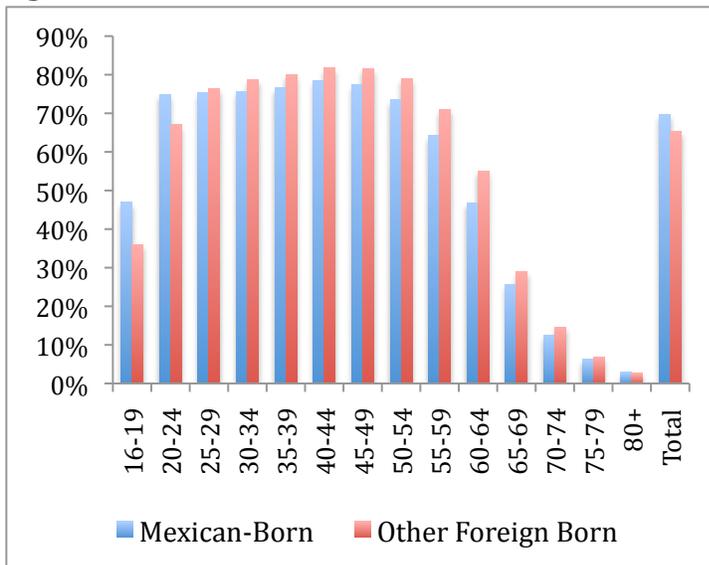


Figure 9: Workforce participation rates for Mexican-born and other foreign-born.

Each group’s total labor force participation rate is influenced by the age-profile of each workforce. While the participation rates for Mexican-born are lower in many age groups than the rate for other foreign born, the overall participation rate for “Total Mexican-born” is higher than the rate for “Total Other Foreign Born”. This is because the rates are higher for Mexican-born in the youngest age categories and the Mexican-born population is, on average, younger than the other foreign born population.

Regional Distribution

Not surprisingly, the regional distribution of the Mexican born in the workforce mirrors that of the total Mexican-born population in the United States. Table 8 shows the U.S.-based Mexican-born workforce age 16 and older by region.

Table 8

Region	Mexican-born Population	Regional Share
New England	28,040	0.38%
Middle Atlantic	267,007	4%
East North Central	677,183	9%
West North Central	176,205	2%
South Atlantic	684,490	9%
East South Central	106,922	1%
West South Central	1,507,204	21%
Mountain	852,669	12%
Pacific	3,029,910	41%
Total Workforce	7,329,630	100%

The fact that the regional distribution of the Mexican-born workforce mirrors that of the whole population means that workforce participation rates do not differ significantly across regions.

While Table 8 looks at the distribution of the Mexican-born workforce, Table 9, below, examines the distribution of each region's workforce by nativity.

Table 9 shows that there is notable variation in the foreign-born share of the workforce in each of the nine U.S. census regions, with some regions relying more heavily on foreign-born workers than others. While Mexican-born are five percent of the workforce nationally, they are less than one percent of the work force in New England and thirteen percent of the workforce in the Pacific Region. The Pacific region also has the largest total share of foreign-born workers at twenty nine percent and the highest share of Mexican-born workers of any region. The next highest regional share of Mexican-born workers is in the West South Central region at nine percent of the region's workforce. The Mid Atlantic region has the highest share of *non-Mexican* foreign born at nineteen percent however Mexican-born are only one percent of the Mid Atlantic workforce.

Table 9

Regional Workforce Size and Share by Nativity								
Region	Mexican Born		Non-Mexican FB		Native U.S. Born Citizens		Total Workforce	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
		0.						
New England	28,040	4	1,007,688	13	6,628,708	86	7,664,436	100
Middle Atlantic	267,007	1	3,783,388	19	16,269,723	80	20,320,118	100
E. North Central	677,183	3	1,335,403	6	21,714,432	92	23,727,018	100
W. North Central	176,205	2	417,420	4	10,093,997	94	10,687,622	100
S. Atlantic	684,490	2	3,508,248	12	24,562,794	85	28,755,532	100
E. South Central	106,922	1	228,381	3	8,194,261	96	8,529,564	100
W. South Central	1,507,204	9	1,032,355	6	14,077,044	85	16,616,603	100
Mountain	852,669	8	613,162	6	9,105,069	86	10,570,900	100
Pacific	3,029,910	13	3,933,767	16	17,214,723	71	24,178,400	100
National Totals	7,329,630	5	15,859,812	10	127,860,751	85	151,050,193	100

The reasons for these regional variations in the foreign-born share of the workforce, in part, reflect differing in the kinds of economic activity in each region. Because immigrants are fifty percent of those with 0 to 8 years of schooling, they are an important source of low-skilled workers to sectors such as leisure and hospitality, construction, and agriculture. Consequently, immigrants are an important share of the workforce in those regions with large construction, agriculture, and leisure and hospitality sectors. Table 10 shows the number of workers, by age group, in each of the nine Census regions.

Table 10

Number of Mexican-born Workers by Region and Age Group					
Age Group	New England	Middle Atlantic	East North Central	West North Central	South Atlantic
16-19	429	10,941	22,406	6,435	28,675
20-24	4,316	46,023	75,972	22,499	107,873
25-29	5,280	57,332	113,947	32,140	147,052
30-34	6,416	51,816	122,360	31,203	135,173
35-39	4,486	41,430	104,149	29,738	102,568
40-44	3,168	26,814	86,286	22,363	72,055
45-49	1,793	14,711	63,521	13,509	40,652
50-54	810	9,676	42,612	7,993	27,072
55-59	816	4,734	26,997	5,149	13,571
60-64	408	2,186	12,270	3,125	5,964
65-69	24	902	4,117	1,276	2,166
70-74	94	317	1,566	533	1,262
75-79	na*	na*	469	216	315
80+	na*	125	511	26	92
Total Number	28,040	267,007	677,183	176,205	684,490
Percent of Total	0.38%	3.6%	9.2%	2.4%	9.3%

Table 10 (Cont.)

Age Cohort	E South Central	W South Central	Mountain	Pacific	National Total
15-19	7,427	54,161	31,634	97,235	259,343
20-24	16,787	159,340	98,946	327,831	859,587
25-29	21,908	229,425	144,538	426,655	1,178,277
30-34	22,911	243,932	151,187	485,875	1,250,873
35-39	15,005	224,695	135,799	500,890	1,158,760
40-44	10,003	203,565	109,862	416,164	950,280
45-49	6,015	153,619	74,362	318,077	686,259
50-54	3,243	109,137	50,630	221,941	473,114
55-59	2,094	69,967	32,251	133,758	289,337
60-64	1,208	37,321	15,056	64,590	142,128
65-69	67	14,416	6,081	24,746	53,795
70-74	74	4,830	1,836	7,775	18,287
75-79	180	2,063	335	2,782	6,360
80+	-	733	152	1,591	3,230
Total Number	106,922	1,507,204	852,669	3,029,910	7,329,630
Percent of Total	1.5%	20.6%	11.6%	41.3%	100%

*na indicates that the number of people in this region's age group is small and that the American Community Survey sample did not include anyone in this cohort.

Occupation Distribution

The occupational distribution of the workforce by nativity provides insight to the segments of the labor force that are occupied by Mexican-born, other foreign-born, and U.S. born workers. This segmentation occurs for reasons that include differences in age, educational attainment, work experience, and other factors affecting labor market competition.

Table 11 shows the share of each sector's workforce in each nativity group. The sectors are ranked in descending order by the number and share of Mexican-born workers employed.

Table 11

Occupational Distribution Size and Share by Nativity								
Occupation	Mexican Born		Non-Mexican FB		NB Citizens		Total Workforce	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Construction	1,466,377	20	935,851	6	7,159,650	6	9,561,878	6
Production Building & Grounds	1,058,257	14	1,215,861	8	7,942,817	6	10,216,935	7
Cleaning & Maintenance Food Preparation & Serving	946,162	13	923,804	6	4,013,140	3	5,883,106	4
Transportation & Material Moving	776,049	11	948,238	6	6,542,869	5	8,267,156	5
Office & Admin Support	685,686	9	898,923	6	7,861,813	6	9,446,422	6
Farming, Fishing Forestry	434,764	6	1,698,118	11	19,303,836	15	21,436,718	14
Sales	422,500	6	53,274	0.34	630,574	0.49	1,106,348	1
Installation, Maint, Repair	401,493	5	1,663,450	10	15,148,812	12	17,213,755	11
Management Operations	254,729	3	421,170	3	4,567,454	4	5,243,353	3
Personal Care & Service Education, Training,	197,537	3	1,331,397	8	12,112,943	9	13,641,877	9
Library	173,128	2	705,589	4	3,969,610	3	4,848,327	3
Military	87,370	1	697,282	4	7,429,068	6	8,213,720	5
Healthcare Support Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	83,163	1	179,223	1	1,625,275	1	1,887,661	1
Arts, Design, Entertain., Sports, & Media	72,623	1	478,438	3	2,673,302	2	3,224,363	2
Protective Service	40,896	1	937,803	6	6,140,756	5	7,119,455	5
Business Ops Specialists	39,145	1	280,918	2	2,491,751	2	2,811,814	2
Community & Social Svc Architecture & Engineering Occupations	32,144	0.44	182,656	1	2,889,968	2	3,104,768	2
Financial Specialists	30,506	0.42	246,401	2	2,609,070	2	2,885,977	2
Computer & Math Occupations	28,055	0.38	180,274	1	2,086,739	2	2,295,068	2
Life, Physical, & Social Science	27,584	0.38	434,860	3	2,312,347	2	2,774,791	2
Legal Occupations	26,839	0.37	415,392	3	2,928,936	2	3,371,167	2
Extraction	17,585	0.24	693,375	4	2,640,840	2	3,351,800	2
Total	9,805	0.13	238,309	2	1,081,017	1	1,329,131	1
	8,681	0.12	96,221	1	1,527,026	1	1,631,928	1
	8,552	0.12	2,985	0.02	171,138	0.13	182,675	0.12
	7,329,630	100	15,859,812	100	127,860,751	100	151,050,193	100

Twenty percent of Mexican-born workers in the U.S. work in the construction industry. Another fourteen percent work in production (manufacturing), and thirteen percent work

in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance. The largest employment sector for both ‘Other Foreign Born’ and ‘Native U.S. Born’ workers is ‘Office and Administrative Support’ at eleven and fifteen percent respectively. The smallest percentage of Mexican-born work in legal occupations and extraction (mining) with less than one percent employed in either of these sectors.

Mexican-born are more concentrated in specific sectors of the economy than are other workers. Fifty one percent of the Mexican-born workforce employed in just four sectors while both ‘Other Foreign Born’ and ‘Native U.S. Born Citizens’ are more widely diffused throughout the economy.

Table 12
Occupational Sector’s Employment Rank

Occupation	Mexican-born	Other Foreign Born	Native US Born
Construction	1	7	7
Production	2	4	4
Building and Grounds	3	8	11
Cleaning and Maintenance	4	5	8
Food Preparation and Serving	5	9	5
Transportation and Material Moving	6	1	1
Office and Administrative Support	7	24	24
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	8	2	2
Sales	9	15	10
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	10	3	3
Cumulative Share of Top Five Sectors	67%	43%	49%
Cumulative Share of Top Ten Sectors	91%	71%	74%

Table 12 ranks sectors by the number and share of Mexican-born employed in that sector. The construction sector ranks first in employment of Mexican-born workers. Table 12 also shows the sectors’ employment ranking for other foreign born and native U.S. born workers.

Table 12 also indicates that sixty seven percent of Mexican-born workers in the U.S. are employed in just five sectors. The top ten sectors account for ninety one percent of Mexican-born employment.

We see that other foreign born and native-born are more diffuse throughout the economy.

Share of Occupational Workforce

Table 13 examines the share of each occupation’s workforce that is Mexican-born, the share that comes from countries other than Mexico, and the share that was born in the U.S. This data provides a picture of how important each category of worker is to a given occupational sector. (The above-discussed Table 11, on the other hand, provides a picture of how important a given sector of the economy is to each group of workers.)

Thirty eight percent of the workforce in ‘Farming, Fishing and Forestry’ is Mexican-born. Five percent of the workforce in this sector is non-Mexican foreign born and only fifty seven percent is native U.S. born. The next largest Mexican-born share of the workforce at sixteen percent is in ‘Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance’. The rows for sectors that disproportionately rely on Mexican-born workers are highlighted.

Table 13

Share of Occupational Workforce by Nativity								
Occupation	Mexican Born		Non-Mexican FB		NB Citizens		Total Workforce	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Construction	1,466,377	15	935,851	10	7,159,650	75	9,561,878	100
Production	1,058,257	10	1,215,861	12	7,942,817	78	10,216,935	100
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	946,162	16	923,804	16	4,013,140	68	5,883,106	100
Food Preparation and Serving	776,049	9	948,238	11	6,542,869	79	8,267,156	100
Transportation and Material Moving	685,686	7	898,923	10	7,861,813	83	9,446,422	100
Office and Administrative Support	434,764	2	1,698,118	8	19,303,836	90	21,436,718	100
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	422,500	38	53,274	5	630,574	57	1,106,348	100
Sales	401,493	2	1,663,450	10	15,148,812	88	17,213,755	100
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	254,729	5	421,170	8	4,567,454	87	5,243,353	100
Management Operations	197,537	1	1,331,397	10	12,112,943	89	13,641,877	100
Personal Care and Service Education, Training, and Library	173,128	4	705,589	15	3,969,610	82	4,848,327	100
Military	87,370	1	697,282	8	7,429,068	90	8,213,720	100
Healthcare Support Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	83,163	4	179,223	9	1,625,275	86	1,887,661	100
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	72,623	2	478,438	15	2,673,302	83	3,224,363	100
Protective Service Business Operations Specialists	40,896	1	937,803	13	6,140,756	86	7,119,455	100
Community and Social Services	39,145	1	280,918	10	2,491,751	89	2,811,814	100
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	32,144	1	182,656	6	2,889,968	93	3,104,768	100
Financial Specialists Computer and Mathematical Occupations	30,506	1	246,401	9	2,609,070	90	2,885,977	100
Life, Physical, and Social Science	28,055	1	180,274	8	2,086,739	91	2,295,068	100
Legal Occupations	27,584	1	434,860	16	2,312,347	83	2,774,791	100
Extraction	26,839	1	415,392	12	2,928,936	87	3,371,167	100
Total	7,329,630	5	15,859,812	10	127,860,751	85	151,050,193	100

Figures 9 and 10 provide a graphic depiction of the share of the workforce that is Mexican-born in each of the twenty-five occupational sectors examined. Sectors are ranked by their share-of-workforce that is Mexican-born. The corresponding share of the workforce that is Non-Mexican foreign born is also shown for each sector.

Figure 9

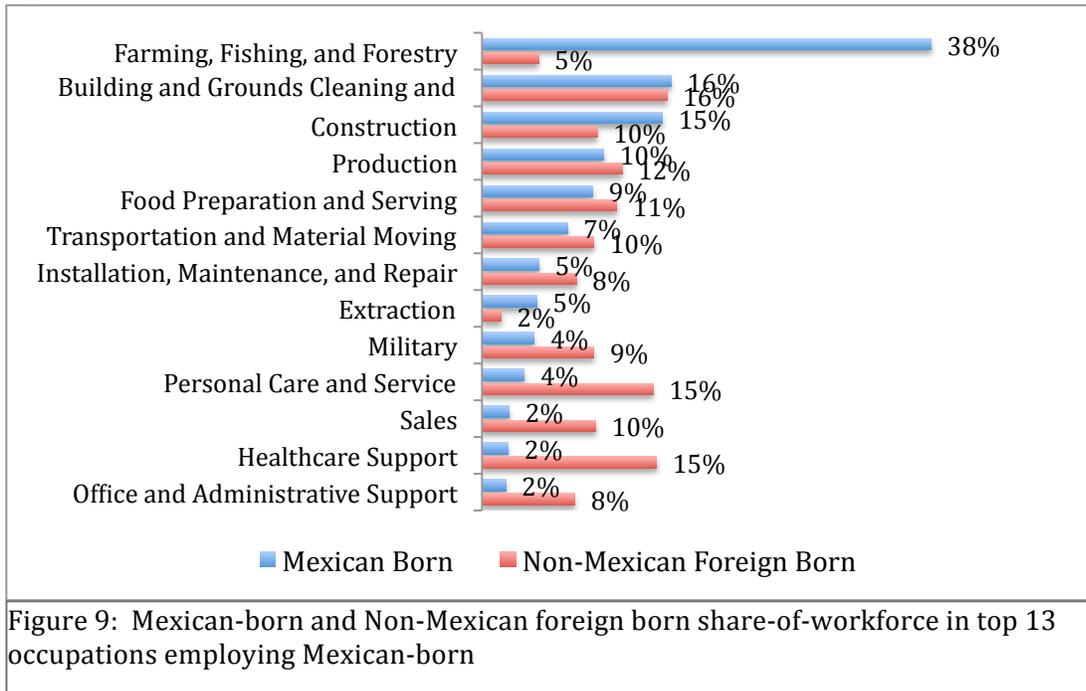


Figure 9: Mexican-born and Non-Mexican foreign born share-of-workforce in top 13 occupations employing Mexican-born

Figure 10



Figure 10: Mexican-born and Non-Mexican foreign-born share-of-workforce in bottom 12 occupations employing Mexican-born.

Incomes

Household Income

U.S.-based Mexican households have average incomes that are, on average, sixty five percent of those of native-born households. This contrasts with household incomes of non-Mexican foreign born which are, on average, one hundred and six percent of those of native-born households.

Table 14 shows average household income by region for the Mexican-born, non-Mexican foreign born, and for native U.S. born citizens. In addition, the table shows the ratio of Mexican-born incomes to those of native U.S. born citizens and the ratio of non-Mexican foreign-born incomes to those of native U.S. born citizens.

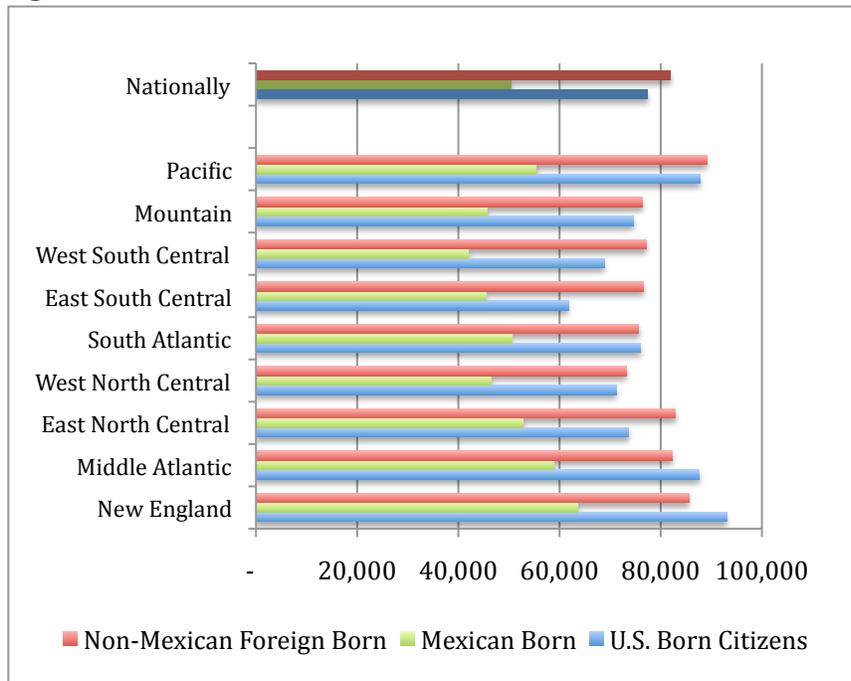
Table 14

Average Household Income					
	Mexican-Born		Non-Mexican Foreign Born		Native-Born
	<i>Average Income</i>	<i>% Of Native Income</i>	<i>Average Income</i>	<i>% Of Native Income</i>	<i>Average Income</i>
New England	63,661	68%	85,528	92%	93,005
Middle Atlantic	58,939	67%	82,370	94%	87,604
East North Central	52,832	72%	82,959	113%	73,695
West North Central	46,531	65%	73,166	103%	71,224
South Atlantic	50,524	67%	75,685	100%	75,954
East South Central	45,407	74%	76,594	124%	61,763
West South Central	41,980	61%	77,202	112%	68,833
Mountain	45,788	61%	76,344	102%	74,603
Pacific	55,378	63%	89,157	102%	87,779
National Average	50,431	65%	81,960	106%	77,380

There are dramatic differences in household income levels between Mexican-born and the other nativity categories examined. Mexican-born household incomes are between only sixty-one percent and seventy four percent of those of native U.S. born households. Non-Mexican foreign-born households, on the other hand, have incomes much closer to those of native U.S. born households. In fact, in all but two regions, non-Mexican foreign-born household incomes are *higher* than those of native U.S. born households. The reasons for this are, in part, because many non-Mexican-foreign-born work in the United States on H1-B visas for high skilled workers and include computer scientists, doctors, and other science specialties, specialties that typically command high wages.

Figure 11, below, depicts average household incomes for the three nativity groups by region and nationally. We see a consistency in the regional variation for all groups and for the differences in household incomes between each of the three groups.

Figure 11



Households headed by Mexican-born earn less across all regions than do those headed by US born citizens or other foreign born. And other foreign born households earn more than native US born households in a number of regions. These differences in earnings result from differing levels and types of education and different roles in the workforce.

Figure 11: Average income for households headed by Mexican-born, non-Mexican foreign born, and native U.S. born.

Personal Incomes

A number of possible explanations exist for these observed differences in household income. Because the extent to which households have multiple income sources such as more than one wage earner varies by nativity group, we turn, instead, to an examination of *personal* income for a better understanding of the reasons for earnings differences across nativity groups.

Differences in earnings result from differences in age (and therefore years of work experience), differences in education, and differences in employment sectors. In addition, immigration status impacts earnings. To the extent that some low skilled Mexican-born in the U.S. are undocumented, we would expect them to have fewer employment options and to earn lower wages.

Table 15 shows average personal income by age group for the three nativity groups along with the ratio of Mexican-born and non-Mexican foreign-born income to that of native U.S. born workers. We see that Mexican-born under the age of twenty four have average incomes higher than those of native U.S. born in the same age groups. Relative wages for Mexican-born fall in each subsequent age group, however. The relative wages of non-Mexican foreign-born fall as well but remain much closer to those of native U.S. born workers across each subsequent age group.

Table 15

Average Personal Income by Age Group					
Age Group	Mexican-Born		Non-Mexican Foreign Born		Native Born Income
	Income	% of Native Born Income	Income	% of Native Born Income	
15-19	9,344	189%	6,282	127%	4,949
20-24	15,761	103%	15,661	102%	15,311
25-29	20,336	68%	30,471	102%	30,019
30-34	22,997	58%	41,662	106%	39,436
35-39	26,230	56%	47,733	103%	46,429
40-44	27,121	55%	49,277	101%	48,875
45-49	27,327	54%	49,488	98%	50,718
50-54	26,068	51%	47,949	93%	51,352
55-59	24,494	48%	47,536	94%	50,547
60-64	21,321	48%	41,939	95%	44,056
65-69	16,238	46%	32,561	92%	35,579
70-74	13,839	46%	25,121	83%	30,400
75-79	11,846	43%	21,213	78%	27,306
80+	12,145	50%	19,950	81%	24,487

Figure 12 depicts this personal income data by age and nativity group graphically.

Figure 12

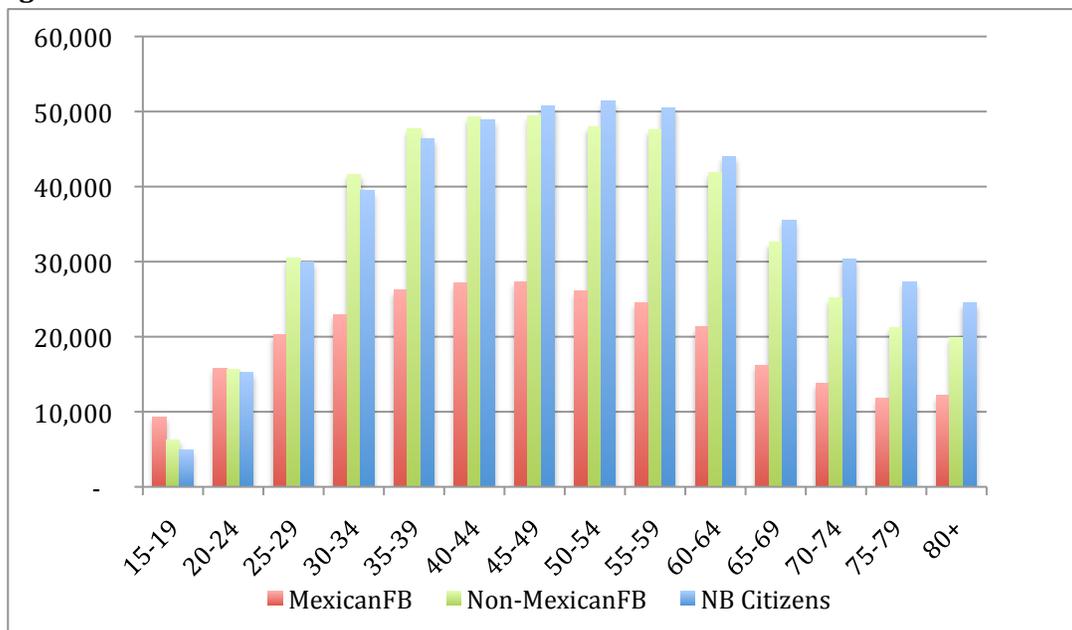


Figure 12: Average personal income for Mexican-born, non-Mexican foreign born, and native U.S. born citizens.

The fact that Mexican-born wages are persistently lower than those of the other two nativity groups raises questions about whether this result from differences in education, differences in occupation or from other factors such as legal status.

Table 16 shows average personal incomes for Mexican-born, non-Mexican foreign born and native U.S. born citizens by level of education. We see that immigrants with lower levels of education earn more than native-born with comparable levels of education. Surprisingly, non-Mexican foreign-born and native U.S. born with higher levels of education earn significantly *more* than do Mexican-born with comparable levels of education. These data are depicted graphically in Figure 13.

Table 16

Educational Attainment	Mexican Born		Non Mexican Foreign Born		Native Born Citizen Income
	Income	% of Native Income	Income	% of Native Income	
	0-8 Years	18,925	122%	18,043	
Some High School	20,414	130%	21,283	135%	15,750
High School Grad	23,002	84%	26,539	97%	27,233
Some College/Assoc.	28,653	84%	33,343	98%	33,964
College Grad	36,476	62%	50,983	87%	58,405
Professional/Masters	53,052	64%	79,144	96%	82,622
Doctorate	59,288	62%	90,689	95%	95,882

Figure 13

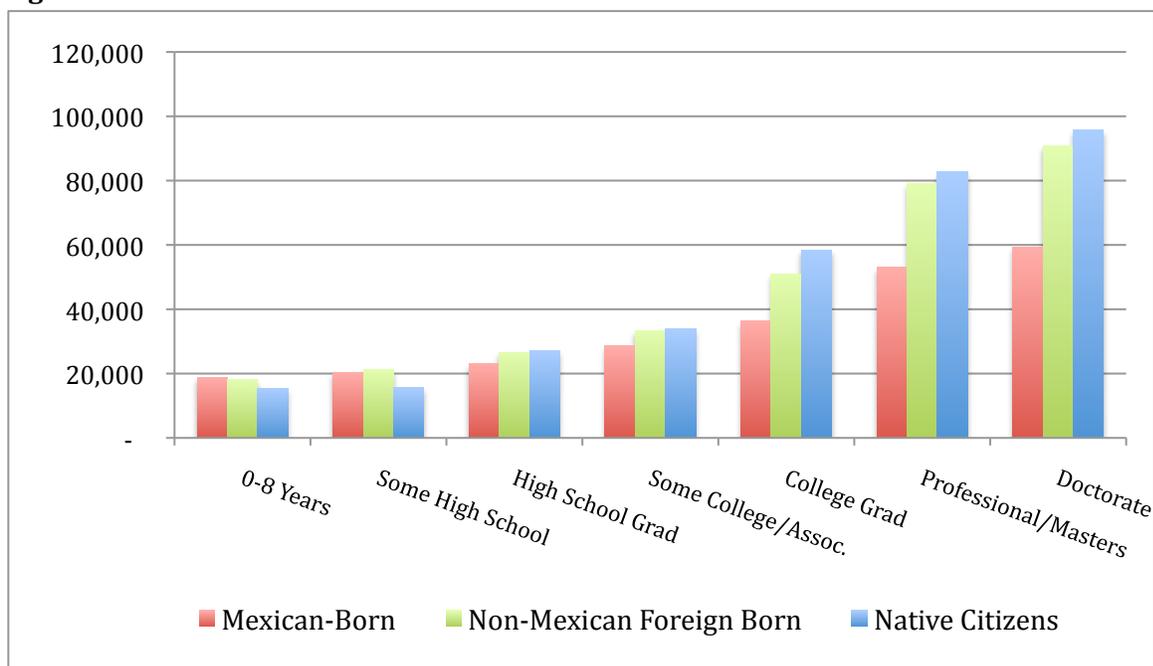


Figure 13: Average personal income by education for Mexican-born, non-Mexican foreign born, and native U.S. born citizens.

The reasons for these differences in income at higher education levels are not clear. One explanation may be differences in the sectors that employ Mexican-born and non-Mexican foreign-born workers. We return to information on employment by occupation discussed earlier in this report.

Table 13 on page 18 shows the share of each occupation's workforce that is Mexican-born, the share that is non-Mexican foreign born and the share that is native U.S. born. This table reveals that, while there are some similarities in the workforce participation of Mexican-born and other immigrants, there are also important differences. Both groups are an important share of the workforce in construction, production, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations. However, non-Mexican foreign-born are also a much bigger part of the workforce in higher-paying sectors such as sales, financial specialists, computer and mathematical operations, and life sciences. Thus these differences in occupation are a likely explanation of these differences in income in within similar educational attainment categories.

Concluding Observations

The strong historical, cultural, and social links between the southwestern and western United States and Mexico suggests that a large Mexican-born population will continue to live in the United States. The age and educational profile of this population will continue to be shaped by the cumulative effect of individual decisions to migrate to the United States. These individual decisions, in turn, are shaped by the economic opportunities available to Mexican-born in the United States compared to those available in Mexico.

We have seen that Mexican-born in the United States are a key source of workers in specific segments of the workforce and for specific industries. They provide a large share of young, low-skilled workers for industries such as agriculture, construction, production, building and grounds service and maintenance, and food preparation. The fact that Mexican-born are a twenty nine percent of workers with less than a high school education indicates that they are helping to fill gaps in the labor-force not being filled either by native U.S. born workers or other immigrants.

U.S. immigration policy aside, the extent to which there is migration pressure from Mexico to the United States will, as always, depend on the opportunities available to workers in Mexico compared to those available in the United States. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of Mexicans migrating to the United States have low levels of education. This suggests that returns to education in Mexico are high and that Mexicans with high levels of education have good employment opportunities in Mexico. Thus incentives for migration from Mexico to the United States will decline either as job opportunities for low skilled workers improve in Mexico or as educational attainment levels increase.

Appendix A

States in United States Census Regions

Northeast

New England

Maine
New Hampshire
Vermont
Massachusetts
Connecticut
Rhode Island

Mid Atlantic

New York
New Jersey
Pennsylvania

South

South Atlantic

Delaware
Maryland
District of Columbia
Virginia
West Virginia
North Carolina
South Carolina
Georgia
Florida

East South Central

Kentucky
Tennessee
Alabama
Mississippi

West South Central

Oklahoma
Louisiana
Arkansas
Texas

Midwest

East North Central

Wisconsin
Michigan
Illinois
Indiana
Ohio

West North Central

Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas

West

Mountain

Montana
Wyoming
Colorado
New Mexico
Idaho
Utah
Nevada
Arizona

Pacific

Washington
Oregon
California
Alaska
Hawaii

