

MEXICAN MIGRATION TO CANADA: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

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Introduction

Historically, Mexican migration to the north has mainly featured those with low skill levels, and most of the discussion has focused on them. Highly skilled Mexican migration remains relatively unexplored, but current trends suggest it is ripe for investigation (Tigau, 2013, 2020; Clemens, 2014; Peña Muñoz, 2016; Ruiz Soto and Selee, 2019). As educational levels in Mexico rise, as North American economic integration is promoted at all levels, and as globalization advances, highly skilled Mexican migration to both countries, while still only a trickle, has been increasing. What are the trends? Can we guess at future trends? And how do highly skilled Mexicans who seek employment abroad perceive the U.S. and Canada as potential destinations?

The U.S. has long been a destination of choice for immigrants from many countries. It is bigger than Canada, with a dynamic economy, a long immigration history, and an attractive climate. For prospective Mexican migrants, not only is it much closer, but powerful networks of chain migration favor it due to the long-standing history of migration between both countries. Mexican migration northward started right after the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 and continued throughout the twentieth century with the Bracero Program and, most recently, with the acceleration of flows over recent decades (Gutierrez, 2019).

These factors favoring the U.S. over Canada may apply at high skill levels for economic reasons spelled out by George Borjas (1993; Aydemir and

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Borjas, 2006). One of Borjas's hypotheses is that highly skilled migrants favor destinations with more inequality because they will have more opportunities there. Data across many nations support this hypothesis, including studies of migration comparing Canada and the U.S. In fact, Canada more often loses top talent to the U.S. than the opposite, except where the Canadian government steps in with counteracting incentives. So, we might expect highly skilled Mexicans to choose the U.S. over Canada as a destination.

Still, Canadian immigration policy is expansionist, so opportunity for permanent residency for skilled migrants is greater in Canada relative to population size. Canadian public discourse around skilled migration is also the most favorable compared to Mexico and the U.S., as shown by Camelia Tigau's 2015 analysis of the media in these three countries around skilled migration.

In this article, we proceed as follows. First, we describe trends in highly skilled Mexican migration and suggest some possible demographic and economic factors. We discuss changes in destinations for Mexicans within the U.S. to illustrate the variability of migration over time. Finally, we present a preliminary picture of some perspectives skilled Mexicans bring to the decision to migrate to Canada or the U.S., based on recent interviews we conducted in Mexico City.

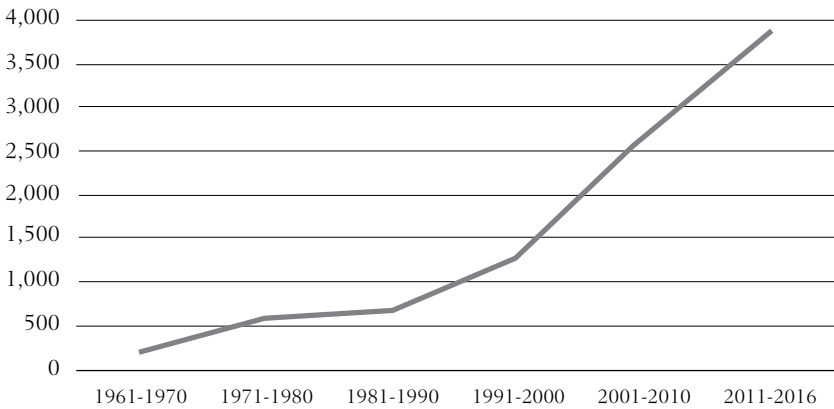
Mexico-Canada Migration Trends

The number of immigrants from Mexico to Canada has increased steadily since 1961, from 210 per year on average in the 1960s, to roughly 3,800 per year since 2011 (Reitz, 2014; IRRC, 2016) (see Figure 1). Mexicans represented 0.1 percent of total Canadian immigration in the 1960s, but now represent about 1.5 percent. That's a ten-fold increase, and the rate of increase seems to have accelerated since 2000. The Mexican-born population of Canada was about 95,410 in 2016, and the Mexican-*origin* population was 128,485, still only about 0.4 percent of the total, but up from 96,055 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011, 2016; Armory, 2018). Most live in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver; in 2001, these three cities accounted for 32 percent of all Mexican immigrants (Mueller, 2005: 41).

The Mexican footprint in Canada is tiny compared to the 35 million or so in the U.S. (11.1 percent of the population). A few reasons have been

suggested to explain why migration levels have remained generally low despite economic opportunity in Canada: mainly, that the Mexican flow to the U.S. has inhibited the establishment of a steady stream to Canada, as well as the lack of social networks and information about the country, and a general dread of the Canadian winter (Samuel, Gutiérrez, and Vázquez, 1995).

FIGURE 1
MEXICAN MIGRATION TO CANADA, ANNUAL AVERAGE



SOURCE: Reitz (2014); IRCC (2016).

Like immigrants to Canada in general, those from Mexico are highly skilled. For 2003-2013, 51 percent of permanent residents of Mexican origin had a bachelor’s degree, and 74 percent had at least some post-secondary education (Van Haren and Masferrer, 2019) (see Table 1).

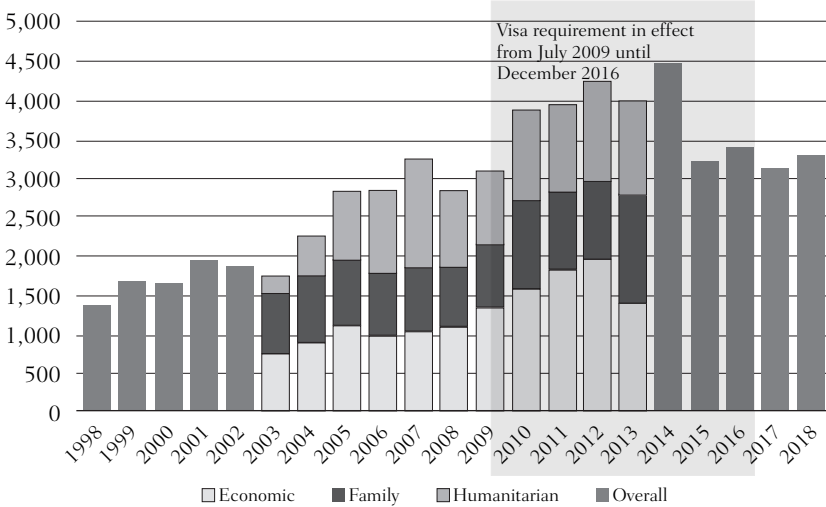
TABLE 1
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF MEXICAN NEW PERMANENT RESIDENTS
(2003-2013)

	<i>Immigrants from Mexico</i>	<i>Overall Immigrant Population</i>
Total number of those who received permanent residence	24 080	1 650 440
Educational Attainment (%)		
Secondary or less	26.2	26.8
Some post-secondary	22.5	21
Bachelor’s degree or more	51.2	52.2

SOURCE: Van Haren and Masferrer (2019); based on IRCC (2019).

When we look at the breakdown by category of admission, we find some of the recent rise is attributable to increased economic migration (Van Haren and Masferrer, 2019) (see Figure 2). The visa requirement for Mexican travelers brought in by the Harper government from July 2009 to December 2016 seemed to have the effect of reducing this. Although the numbers of permanent residents arriving dropped, the proportion of Mexican arrivals who were economic immigrants remained substantial. Van Haren and Masferrer show for the same period that 40.1 percent of all immigrants from Mexico were economic immigrants, compared to 59.5 percent for immigrants overall. The bottom line is that the educational profile of Mexican migrants has been similar to the general immigrant population in Canada.

FIGURE 2
NEW MEXICAN PERMANENT RESIDENTS IN CANADA
(1998-2018)



SOURCE: Van Haren and Masferrer, (2019), with information from IIRC (2017 and 2019). Van Haren and Masferrer also note that entry status (economic class, family class, or humanitarian), obtained through Permanent Resident Landing File (PRLF) data, is available only for the period 2003-2013.

Demographic Trends and Skilled Migration Flow from Mexico

One reason for higher Mexican migration to Canada may simply be the size of the skilled population of Mexico, which has risen substantially because

of higher educational levels accompanied by overall population growth. The proportion of the Mexican population with post-secondary schooling was less than 2 percent in 1970, but 13 percent in 2010 (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b) (see Table 2, right hand column). The trend toward internationalization of education (Altbach and Knight, 2007) and emphasis on international languages means the transferability of educational qualifications is increasing, as shown by the foreign credential assessment processes in Canada, as these are applied to Mexico. The broader economic integration represented by NAFTA—now USMCA—also facilitates migration, not only through the visas available under the treaty, but also by the formation of cross-national academic and professional social networks.

The Mexican population base has more than doubled (see Table 2), from 51 million in 1970 to 114 million in 2010. So, the growth of Mexican-Canadian migration actually may be less than what we might expect from the underlying education and population trends. In addition, while business cycles affect migration flows, relative incomes across countries have not changed greatly. Relative Mexican incomes have remained just under half those in the U.S. and Canada.¹ Consequently, economic incentives for mobility are more or less constant.

The number of skilled Mexicans in the U.S. may be approximately the same on a per capita basis as in Canada, though the data are not very good. Ruiz Soto and Selee (2019) showed that in the U.S., the number of Mexican immigrant adults with college degrees rose from 269,000 in 2000 to 678,000 in 2017. Of the 2017 cohort, two-thirds (roughly 450,000) were either naturalized citizens or permanent residents.² Compared to Canada, based on a Mexican immigrant population of 80,500 in 2016, with about half, or 40,000, having a bachelor's degree, the U.S. figure would be similar on a per capita basis.³

¹ In 1971, per capita GDP in the U.S. was US\$23,668, Canada was about 89 percent of that, and Mexico, about 38 percent (OECD Statistics, 2019), with 2010 purchasing power parity. In 2018, the U.S. number jumped to US\$54,400; Canada did not keep pace. Relative incomes in Canada dropped to 79 percent those of the U.S., and in Mexico, to 32 percent of those of the U.S. Mexican incomes dropped relative to Canadian incomes from 43 percent to 40 percent.

² As many as 30 percent were unauthorized, and a small group had temporary visas.

³ The U.S. receives far more Mexican professionals with NAFTA visas than Canada, even on a per capita basis (see Meyers and O'Neill, 2004: 7). The small numbers overall mean NAFTA has had little impact on skilled migration from Mexico to either Canada or the U.S.

TABLE 2
MEXICAN POPULATION AND PERCENT OF POPULATION
WITH TERTIARY SCHOOLING

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Population (millions)</i>	<i>Percentage Population Age 25 or More with Tertiary Schooling</i>
1970	51.493	1.80
1980	67.761	3.93
1990	83.943	5.59
2000	98.899	9.14
2010	114.092	13.08

SOURCES: World Bank (2020a and 2020b).

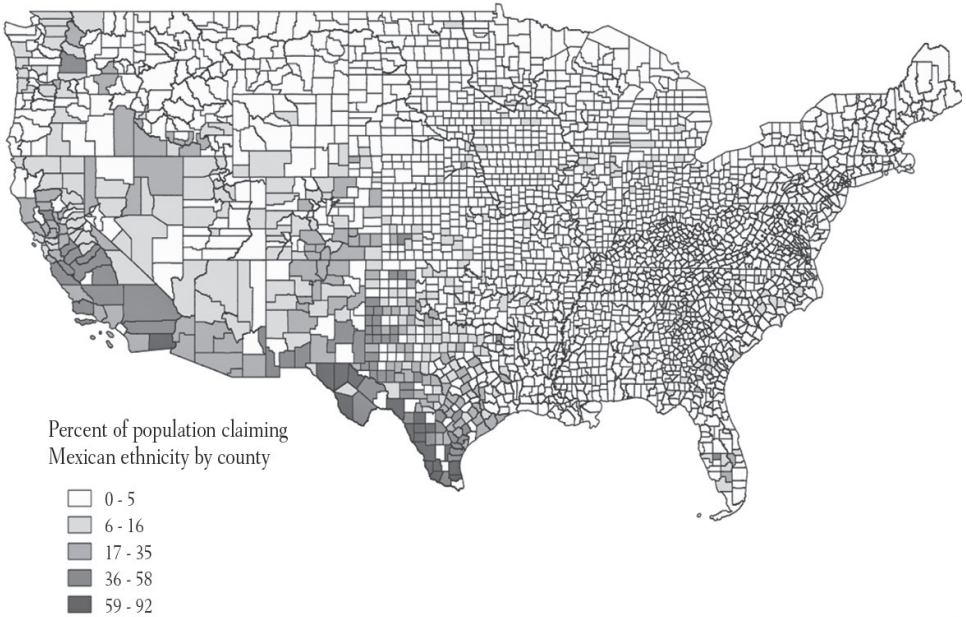
Do Mexican Migration Streams to the U.S. Determine the Future?

What does the history of low-skilled migration from Mexico to the U.S., much of it to border areas in the U.S. Southwest, tell us about the prospects for patterns of highly skilled migration? Less than we might think, for three reasons. First, highly skilled migrants tend to move where they can find a job, and, while family connections matter, the location of co-ethnic communities plays a less salient role. Co-ethnic communities matter more for the less skilled, providing a social support network for the precariously employed. Second, the patterns of Mexican settlement in the U.S. have changed considerably over time, and today large settlements of Mexicans exist throughout the country, including the chilly North. These trends have accelerated in recent years. Third, Mexicans' perceptions of Canada and Canadian cities as destinations for migration are positive in many respects, and these views are more influential in the current wave of anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S.

The impact of migration from Mexico to the U.S. has been heavily to the U.S. Southwest, with prominent Mexican-American communities now found in this region (see Figure 3). This distribution is the result of flows that began in the 1960s and 1970s as circular migration, as Douglas Massey and colleagues (1990) showed in *Return to Aztlan*.⁴

⁴ *Aztlan* is the mythical homeland of the Aztecs (or Mexica) peoples; some say it was in the north, but not necessarily a real place. In "Old Mexico Lives On," the *Economist* suggested this area

FIGURE 3
PERCENT OF POPULATION CLAIMING MEXICAN ETHNICITY BY COUNTY

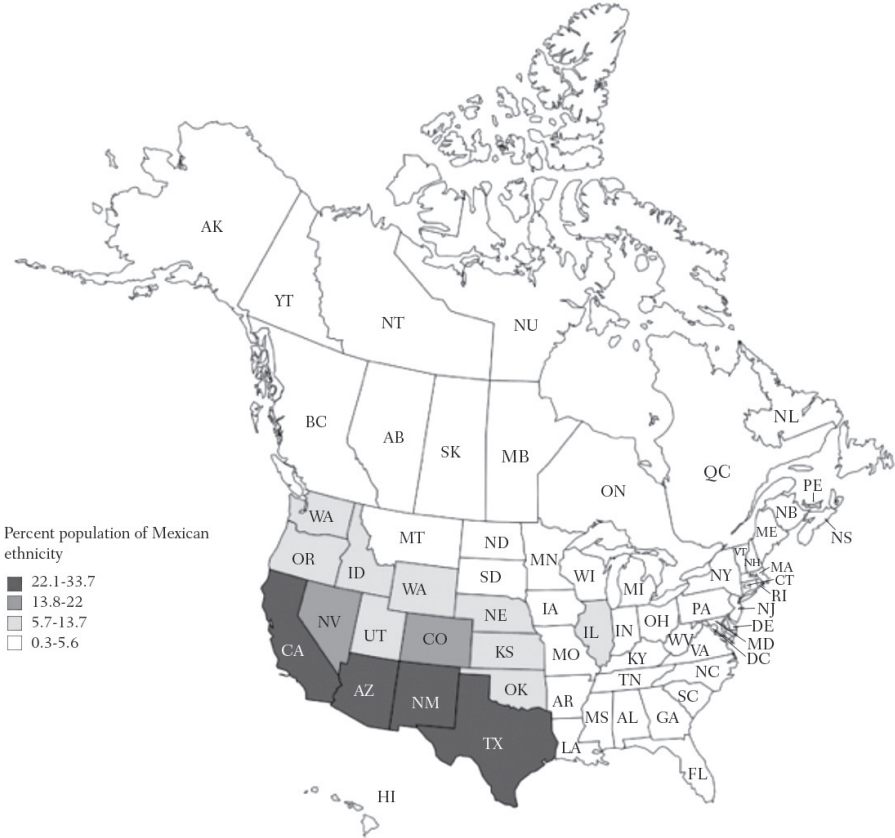


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2018) and Statistics Canada (2011).

Mexican presence in Canada in 2011 was negligible compared to Mexican representation in the United States in 2010. The 96,000 Canadian residents of Mexican ethnic origin represented only 0.29 percent of the entire Canadian population. Moreover, this figure was only slightly higher in the immigration-intensive provinces: 0.25 percent in Ontario (actually less than in Canada generally), 0.32 percent in Quebec, and 0.37 in British Columbia. Even so, a map of Canada and the U.S. together (Figure 4) shows all Canadian provinces have ethnic Mexican populations similar in size to those of almost all U.S. states outside of the Southwest.

coincides closely with the territory which was part of Mexico (previously New Spain) before the 1846-1848 U.S. invasion and annexation.

FIGURE 4
 PERCENT OF POPULATION OF MEXICAN ETHNICITY, U.S. STATES (2018)
 AND CANADIAN PROVINCES (2010)



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2018) and National Household Survey 2011.

Mexican migration to the U.S. has shown major shifts in both sources and destinations over time. As Massey and his colleagues showed, patterns have changed in response to economic conditions (Massey, Rugh, and Pren, 2010). Before the 1980s, around 70 percent of migrants came from the “historical” migrant region and settled in the four border states with Mexico (see Table 3). Although not near the border, Illinois also received an important number. However, regions of origin and destinations changed over the next decade:

During the 1990s Mexico's central region rose in prominence as a source for U.S. migrants and by 2006 accounted for roughly a third of all undocumented migrants. Although the majority of migrants from the central region went to traditional destinations in California, Texas, Illinois, and the Southwest, the flows also diversified to incorporate new destinations in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast, with significant streams into New York-New Jersey, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. (Massey, Rugh, and Pren, 2010: 150)

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS
FROM MEXICO BEFORE AND AFTER 1980

<i>Origins</i>	<i>Before 1980 (%)</i>	<i>By 2006 (%)</i>	<i>Destinations*</i>	<i>Before 1980 (%)</i>	<i>By 2006 (%)</i>
Historical Region Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacan, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Colima, Nayarit	70	45	Borderlands Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico	86	61
Central Region Mexico City, Guerrero, Hidalgo, State of Mexico, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Queretaro, Tlaxcala	10	37	Great Lakes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin	5**	12.5
Border Region Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas	20	11	Southeast D.C., Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia	NA	10
Southeastern Region Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, Yucatán		7	Northwest Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington	NA	8.5

*Other regions were not included in table. Numbers may vary due to rounding.

**Data correspond to the state of Illinois only.

SOURCE: Massey, Rugh, and Pren (2010).

The proportional increases in Mexican-born populations also show an evolving pattern. Between 1990 and 2010, a total of fifteen states showed an increase of 1,000 percent in Mexican immigrants (see Table 4), including in the North, East, and Southeast.

TABLE 4
U.S. STATES WITH MORE THAN 1,000-PERCENT INCREASE
IN MEXICO-BORN POPULATIONS (1990 TO 2010)

<i>Percentage of Mexico-born population</i>	<i>States</i>
Less than 1%	Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio, South Dakota
1 - 1.99%	Alabama, Delaware, Iowa, Minnesota, South Carolina, Tennessee
2 - 4.99%	Arkansas, Georgia, Nebraska, North Carolina, Utah
More than 4.99%	None

SOURCE: Rosenblum et al. (2012).

Based on percentages (see Table 5), Mexicans are most prevalent in Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado. But based on *numbers*, the top places include Illinois, which in 2010 was home to 1.6 million Mexican-Americans, and also Florida, Washington, Georgia, North Carolina, and New York. Illinois, Florida, and Washington all have more Mexicans than New Mexico or Nevada. Illinois has more than twice as many Mexican-Americans as Colorado and showed an important increase in that population from 2000 to 2010. Ethnographic studies, such as Smith's (2005) study of Mexicans in New York, emphasize the connection with particular source regions such as the city of Puebla.

Other studies have emphasized the variability of Mexican migration. For example, Light's *Deflecting Immigration* (2006) showed how local government in the Los Angeles area used housing policy to redirect Mexican migration. Garip (2017) differentiated Mexican migration to the U.S. in terms of several separate streams of migration, prominent at different points in time, and for different reasons. Massey suggested the increased salience of the immigration issue in the U.S. is partly attributable to the increase in the number of affected areas.

TABLE 5
U.S. STATES BY MEXICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION

<i>Ranked by Percentage Mexican-American</i>			<i>Ranked by Numbers of Mexican-Americans</i>		
<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Mexican-American Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Mexican-American Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Total U.S.	31,798,258	10.3	Total U.S.	31,798,258	10.3
Texas	7,951,193	31.6	California	11,423,146	30.7
California	11,423,146	30.7	Texas	7,951,193	31.6
New Mexico	590,890	28.7	Arizona	1,957,668	25.9
Arizona	1,957,668	25.9	Illinois	1,602,403	12.5
Nevada	540,978	20	Colorado	757,181	15.1
Colorado	757,181	15.1	Florida	629,718	3.3
Illinois	1,602,403	12.5	Washington	601,768	8.9
Oregon	369,817	9.7	New Mexico	590,890	28.7
Idaho	148,923	9.5	Nevada	540,978	20
Utah	258,905	9.4	Georgia	519,502	5.4
Washington	601,768	8.9	North Carolina	486,960	5.1
Kansas	247,297	8.7	New York	457,288	2.4

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2010).

This variability in destinations may apply even more to highly skilled Mexican migrants, though less information is available for them. A study by Ruiz Soto and Selee (2019) focused on a traditional area: Texas. Of the 678,000 university-educated Mexicans in the U.S. in 2017, more than one quarter lived in Texas and 75 percent of them were concentrated in the cities of Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, as well as in the main transnational areas: El Paso-Ciudad Juárez and McAllen-Reynosa. The study was unable to do more than speculate about the reasons: for example, that Mexicans may be attempting to escape rising levels of violence. The authors also noted a pattern found in Canada: underemployment of the highly skilled, with some immigrants working in construction and food services. In any case, we suspect that highly skilled migrants are distributed much more widely across the U.S.

University-Educated Mexicans' Perceptions of the U.S., Canada, and Their Cities

For a more grounded understanding of the openness of skilled Mexicans to migration to the U.S. or Canada, we conducted a small-scale pilot survey among young university-educated Mexicans. Since migration decisions involve considerations at both national and city levels, our interview questions probed both. On the one hand, respondents expressed a very positive opinion of Canada as a country, preferring it by a wide margin over the U.S. as a potential location. On the other hand, when we posed questions about specific cities to move to, preferences shifted significantly toward the U.S. The U.S. advantage was primarily the attractiveness of southern cities in California and Texas, where Mexicans have the strongest ties. Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver were competitive mainly in comparison to northern U.S. destinations, such as Chicago and New York. Understanding these trends and the thinking behind them are important keys to projecting the future of skilled Mexicans' northward migration.

Our sample consisted of forty respondents between the ages of nineteen and forty, most in their twenties or early thirties, and about equally divided by gender (twenty-one men and nineteen women). We conducted the interviews in face-to-face meetings in public places or on video calls. The volunteers, who responded to media posts, were, or had been, studying at one of seventeen different Mexican post-secondary institutions, both private and public. A wide variety of disciplines and professional fields were represented, including the social sciences and the humanities, architecture, applied sciences, law, and engineering, among others. The results are very preliminary, and statistical reliability cannot be assumed. The structured interviews take about twenty minutes and include items on future academic and professional goals, the possibility of emigration, and the attractiveness of the United States and Canada as possible destinations, emphasizing particular cities within each country.

Interestingly, migration was part of the personal history of many respondents. Seven had migrated to Mexico City from other Mexican states for study or work. Four had indigenous identity or background, and one quarter of the sample had an immigrant background, in that previous generations had migrated to Mexico from other countries, half from countries in Western

Europe and one from the U.S. Fourteen had migrated abroad before, most often to the U.S. or Canada, mostly for education such as exchange programs, internships, or master's studies, with a few taking high school or language courses. Four out of fourteen said they had migrated for other reasons, including agricultural work (in Canada) and visiting family for an extended period (in the U.S.). Four had lived outside North America.

Future migration was in the minds of most respondents, most often to complete their studies, and, while migration for employment was of less interest, many said they would not reject an offer if one materialized. Certain specific "push factors" were mentioned: unpleasant features of the current situation in Mexico, such as violence and the attendant political and economic uncertainty. An international business graduate said, "I would like to move somewhere else; it has been on my mind more and more often lately. Mostly because of the current situation in the country; the insecurity is excruciating, and now I have kids and I have to look after them." A woman in the field of nutrition agreed: "Insecurity would . . . be a key factor. The situation we see today is worrisome, and we would move in order to provide better conditions for our children." In these cases, having a job offer or an academic opportunity is sometimes important, and sometimes not. One woman said she would be willing to take any job as long as it was in a country she liked.

Networks linked respondents to both the U.S. and Canada. Family networks led most strongly to the U.S., an obvious consequence of a much greater Mexican presence. Of the respondents, 52.5 percent had family members in the U.S.; only 5 percent had family in Canada; and 17.5 percent had family ties in both countries. Friendship networks linked respondents to the U.S. and Canada more equally: 20 percent had friends in the U.S.; 27.5 percent had friends in Canada; and 40 percent had friends in both countries.

While most respondents said they would consider moving to either the U.S. or Canada, the general perceptions of Canada were far more favorable. Most had a favorable view of Canada "as a place to live, work, and study," whereas only a few had a similarly favorable view of the U.S. Specific characteristics of the two countries were perceived quite differently. Canada was rated more positively for personal security, social acceptance, public services, and the quality of work; the U.S. was rated more positively on universities (especially important for those considering study abroad), weather conditions, and cultural activities. The two were rated about equally on salaries and feeling at home.

Respondents were asked which country would be more receptive to them as immigrants. Specifically, the question was about where they would encounter more discrimination or have more difficulty getting a job fitting their qualifications. In this case, their perceptions were extremely different. Virtually all respondents thought they would suffer more discrimination based on nationality in the U.S., and the overwhelming majority thought they would experience more discrimination based on culture and skin color. The U.S. was also more often seen as the place where it is difficult to find a job fitting one's qualifications.

While many admired the U.S. as a large, cosmopolitan, powerful, and rich country, they were aware of drawbacks and challenges. This included the impact of anti-immigrant sentiment, intensifying under the Trump administration, and extended to a more general concern about the legacy of the history of U.S.-Mexico relations. One respondent with a philosophy and human rights background observed, "I'm a Mexican, so that really determines my opinion about the U.S....Our relationship with that country is of subordination, and not collaboration, which would be the ideal." Another respondent with a background in psychology cited current U.S. politics and said, "While I think ... it offers really good job opportunities, right now it's not the best place to be as a Mexican."

Concerns were expressed about broader social conditions: racism, violence, guns, and drugs. The psychologist cited above said, "Important issues, such as gun violence and racism, makes [the U.S.] a hard place to live." For another respondent, a graphics designer, polarization and conflict on these issues were defining features of the U.S. He said, "I think [the U.S.] is a very diverse country, very polarized. There are racist expressions but also people who are very vocal on inclusion and acceptance." Several more general cultural issues also surfaced in the interviews. Some respondents rejected the U.S. lifestyle, which they thought excessively superficial, egocentric, and materialistic. One said, "[U.S. Americans] are very nationalistic and all they care is about themselves. It's like they have a very narrow vision of the world, and they can only see what's happening inside their country. They have very talented people, very capable and educated, very intelligent, and at the same time, there's so much ignorance."

Positive views of the United States centered on job opportunities and the Mexican presence in certain locations. One respondent, a mechanical

engineer, said, “I feel very close to New Mexico and Texas. Just like many Mexicans, I see the influence of Mexico in those places, ... because of the population they have. I think in terms of food or traditions, we’re very much alike.” This point, while expressed in connection with overall perceptions of the U.S., showed the country’s attractions can be region-specific.

Commentaries on Canadian virtues emphasized diversity and multiculturalism. Twelve of the respondents referenced this aspect and spoke highly of Canadian openness to immigration. In their comments about Canada, we noticed they were often making a comparison with the U.S., explicitly or implicitly. One woman in international relations said diversity in Canada is on a “smaller scale,” but Canadians are “more tolerant” than U.S. Americans. A systems engineer made a similar U.S.-comparative comment related to violence: “To be honest, I tend to compare [Canada] with the United States, and that’s perhaps the reason why I have a much better opinion of Canada. I like it, I like it a lot! ... You don’t hear that much about violence [in Canada] like you do with the U.S.”

The extreme Canadian weather was a concern, although a few stalwarts regarded Canada’s winter weather as an asset, attractively framing the natural landscape. But comments on “coldness” in Canada went beyond weather and branched off into cultural matters. One woman in marketing said the Canadian Anglo-Saxon culture was more impersonal and serious than the Latino culture. Yet the systems engineer thought that in cultural terms, Canada would offer a warmer society than the U.S.; by that, she seemed to mean the social programs and public services. She said, “Even though it has colder weather than the United States, I would say Canada is a warmer country, although still not as warm as Mexico. I think as a family you’d have a better income in Canada, and there’s less inequality.”

While views of Canada were positive, they were relatively vague. At least nine respondents confessed to having limited information and were hesitant to express an opinion. As one put it, there is “not much information about Canada out there,” or, at least, “I don’t know much about it.” At the same time, there may be some growing awareness of Canada as a migration destination because of the increased flows documented above. An actuary said, “There are many good opportunities [in Canada]. Lately I’ve seen many people migrating to Canada, like friends or people I used to work with. It’s become more and more important, I think.”

While the general perception of each country matters to prospective migrants, in the end, they decide to move to a specific city, so perceptions of cities matter a great deal. In the United States, Los Angeles was the first choice of nearly one in three respondents. After L.A., the most often mentioned were San Antonio and San Francisco, each ranking in the top three by over two in five. It's clear that Mexicans expect to "feel at home" in U.S. cities with large Mexican-American populations, possibly because they have relatives or friends living there. They were also cities many participants had visited.

A few northern cities were mentioned, particularly New York and Chicago. New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles are the three U.S. metropolises; they have major migration histories, receiving large number of migrants from many places.

In Canada, Toronto occupied the top position, chosen as the place where prospective migrants would feel most "at home." Vancouver and Montreal also rated highly. Respondents mentioned these cities' qualities, having previously visited or lived there, and perceptions of job opportunities. Some were attracted by the French language and culture of Montreal or Quebec City.

When respondents chose cities without regard to the international border, Canada lost out to some extent. U.S. cities stayed in the top rankings, particularly Los Angeles, New York, San Antonio, and San Francisco. Canadian cities tended to be included as a second or third option. Despite the prevailing positive image of Canada as a country, and the many complaints respondents made about U.S. society and policies toward Mexico, U.S. cities still topped the list of destinations where respondents said they would "feel at home."

Still, Toronto, which remained the top Canadian option, was ranked about on the same level as San Francisco and Chicago, and quite close to New York. Toronto was among the top three possibilities across both countries for nearly half the respondents. Chicago lost competitiveness after Canadian options were introduced. To a lesser extent, San Francisco and San Antonio were similarly displaced. By contrast, New York lost very little.

In sum, while Canada as a country was viewed very positively by our respondents compared to the United States, the U.S. options dominated when attention shifted to choices of cities. California and Texas cities were very attractive for respondents in our admittedly small sample of university-

educated Mexicans, and Canadian cities were only competitive with northern U.S. cities such as New York and Chicago. Canadian cities competed most effectively with Chicago. All three top Canadian cities remained competitive as favored destinations relative to Chicago, and Toronto was about on a par with New York, San Antonio, and San Francisco as popular choices for migration.

Conclusions and Prospects

As educational levels rise in Mexico, the potential for skilled migration from Mexico to both the U.S. and Canada is increasing. While the history of migration from Mexico is mostly a story of low-skilled workers moving to the U.S. Southwest, migration has been shifting in terms of origins within Mexico and destinations within the U.S. Moreover, current data show Canada is often chosen as a destination by skilled Mexican migrants, at least in proportion to its size relative to the U.S. We suggest skilled migrants may represent a new and distinct stream in the flow northward, and settlement patterns may differ from those of the past.

Our exploration of the potential for skilled migration to Canada and the U.S., based on interviews with a small sample of university-educated Mexicans in Mexico City, show an openness to migration in general and a willingness to consider emigration to both countries. The enormous U.S. advantages of size, proximity, climate, familiarity, large Mexican communities, and established networks of migration from Mexico are all relevant for skilled immigration. At the same time, the U.S. social and political climate, including the persistent and increasing efforts to reduce immigration from Mexico, as well as broader issues related to crime and drugs and aspects of U.S. culture in general, clearly deter some. Canada seems to have a very positive national image, based on a reputation for fairness and openness to immigration and characteristics such as personal security, cultural diversity, and public services. These perceived assets, combined with the Canadian immigration system, appear to be a significant advantage. Both countries offer economic opportunity, which drives many or most migration decisions. Admittedly our respondents knew much less about Canada, and this may reduce consideration of Canada as an option. While network and family links to the U.S.

are stronger, however, they also exist in Canada. Moreover, people of Mexican origin now in Canada have a much higher average level of education than their counterparts in the U.S.; this is likely to enhance professional and academic networks and increase Canada's attractiveness.

Our analysis of urban destinations yielded important insights. Canadian cities emerged as most competitive in relation to northern U.S. cities. The greater general attractiveness of the U.S. for Mexicans is largely accounted for by the magnetism of California and Texas, as strong for university-educated Mexicans as for less-skilled migrants of the past. But there is also an important focus on U.S. cities of the North and East such as New York and Chicago, and the Canadian cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver were rated highly by those respondents who considered cities of the U.S. North. For those considering northern destinations, climate was less important, and for many, the prospects of low levels of crime and gun-related violence, openness to cultural diversity and the lack of stigmatization of Mexicans, lower levels of economic insecurity, and the robust public services available in Canada had substantial appeal. For some, Quebec's francophone culture represented an attractive additional option.

Our findings suggest prospective skilled migrants from Mexico view Canada positively but have much less information about Canada than about the U.S. One of Canada's opportunities in competing for prospective migrants, then, is to address this relative lack of information and strengthen public diplomacy at the urban level. In the end, each country's competitiveness in recruiting highly skilled migrants may depend on the development of specific recruitment efforts and, here, employers, educational institutions, and governments will play an important role. While the U.S. is looking for ways to reduce immigration, the Canadian government has set its sights on substantially increased numbers. Based on our findings, Mexico represents an important recruitment target.

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