



LABOR INSERTION OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS IN REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

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The participation of Mexican immigrants in U.S. labor markets remains a major issue in relation to this population's predominant demographic structure. Traditional studies have emphasized legality (i.e., the right to remain in the United States) and occupation by sector. During the past two decades, research has focused on the abilities acquired by immigrants (e.g., the English language and U.S. cultural values) and how these can lead to better jobs and salaries. It makes sense that these types of studies are based on concerns involving assimilation or social and cultural integration.

During the 1990s, migration studies in both countries examined continuity and changes in migration patterns, which has led to somewhat polar views in terms of empirical research. Nevertheless, there seem to be some chief general elements: the predominantly urban origin of migrants; the migration of complete families; extended stays in the United States; increased female presence; higher education levels; the growing

insertion of Mexican migrants into the U.S. service sector or what are essentially urban activities, and the increased diversity of destinations (Cornelius and Marcelli: 2000; Durand, Masey, Zenteno: 2001; Mendoza: 2003; Conapo: 2009).

Recent migration flows (at least until the 2005-2006 period) fostered by adverse conditions in Mexico have greatly contributed to the creation of «new» scenarios for migrants. In addition to the apparently neutral concepts of heterogeneity and diversification, we should also think of territorial scattering and vulnerability, which leads to poverty, low salaries, and numerous border deaths; the need to construct new spaces; the creation of new communities in regions where Mexican presence was scant or non-existent, and the configuration and reconfiguration of new sociopolitical, economic and cultural situations that demand quantitative and qualitative examination, along with better ways of giving account of the vulnerable Mexican diaspora in the United States.



Here we examine the labor and socio-demographic data for Mexican immigrants in the United States provided by the American Community Survey (ACS¹). Special emphasis is placed on the diversity of destinations; groupings by place of residence or permanence, and the links between occupation and income and education level, English-language fluency, and length of stay in the country, among other elements. Since this paper highlights the importance of the region in terms of occupation, we must draw a distinction between this and conventional approaches suggesting that the new destinations are the product of new job opportunities, better salaries, or market failures in the country of origin that are linked to deliberate risk-evasive strategies (Durand, Massey and Charvet 2000; Conapo: 2006; Donato and Bankston: 2008).

DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE: HOW MANY MEXICANS RESIDE IN THE UNITED STATES?

When it comes to estimating the volume and demographic structure of Mexicans residing in the United States, the Current Population Survey

(CPS²) takes precedence over the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing. Since 1994, the CPS asks the country of birth of the habitual residents in sampled households. After the Binational Study (1996-1997), these data became the reference for all estimates involving the volume and demographic structure of Mexican immigrants in the United States; little attention was paid to the fact that the CPS estimates were based on the results of the 1990 U.S. census.

The 2003 availability of the 2000 census results, as pointed in the CPS documents (BLS: 2002: D-6, §2), led to their becoming the basis for the latter survey. The 2000 census results also led to a revision and updating of U.S. population projections (US Bureau of the Census: 2009), which had previously been based on the population estimate of April 1, 1990 (Hollmann, F. W., Mulder Kallan: 2000).

Here we must point out that although the expanded 2000 census questionnaire included the country of birth query, there is not an updated survey regarding the number of Mexicans residing in the United States (there are limitations to gathering information from a population more than 60% of which

¹ The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing monthly statistical survey by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. It is tabulated yearly and, generally speaking, replicates the more extensive questionnaire of the census and its sampling design. In fact, it is intended to substitute the census questionnaire and become the main source of native and foreign population study in the United States.

² The Current Population Survey (CPS) has been taken for the past 50 years. It is a monthly survey of some 50,000 households done by the Bureau of the Census for the office of labor statistics. It is seen as the primary source of information regarding the U.S. workforce and represents the non-institutionalized civil population. One of its limitations is the level of geographical breakdown.



is undocumented³). Estimates are therefore based on the technical documents that accompany the census results and depend on adjustments to population projections.

There are also some differences when we compare the 1990 and 2000 censuses, since there is a substantial methodological change in the opening question. While in 1990 there are long instructions asking for the details of the people habitually living in the household, even those who do not have a stable residence, temporary residents were not included (see the 1990 basic questionnaire and the 2000 expanded basic questionnaire at <http://www.census.gov>). In 2000 the explanatory text is much shorter and explicit, asking for the people who live or currently reside at the household, including those who spend most of their time there even if they have another residence.

Toward the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, the ACS became a regular survey meant to substitute the larger census. This also considers actual and non-habitual residents of a household, including all people who are staying in it for more than two months (see ACS questionnaire at <http://www.census.gov>). These and other methodological differences in the surveys used to measure

immigrant numbers in the United States affect estimates in important ways: 1) they can incur double counting and include people who do not actually reside at the household or in the country; 2) potentially overestimate certain groups that are in the United States temporarily (Tuirán and Corona: 2008), and 3) potentially underestimate certain population groups such as undocumented migrants (Lowell, Perdezini and Passel: 2008).

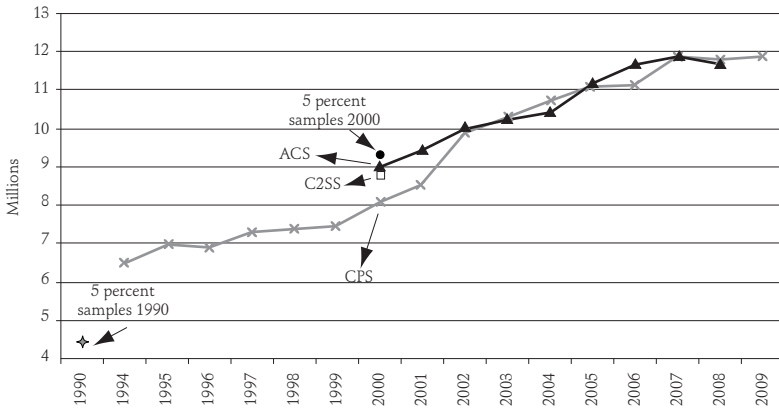
It should be noted that, even though by the 1990s studies reported certain selective changes in the migration patterns between Mexico and the United States (Cornelius: 1992 and Cornelius and Marcelli: 2000; Canales: 1999), most of the dialogue among researchers centered on the concept of migration as either permanent, temporary or circular, lacking proper inclusion of the kind of strictly demographic data utilized in many recent studies (López Vega: 2007). While estimates from three years ago showed an evident population growth, current sources show the population has stabilized around 12 million people, 4% of U.S. residents and 11% of the Mexican population (see Graph 1).

³ According to estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, over 55% of Mexican immigrants are undocumented; they amount to almost 60% of the total of undocumented immigrants in the United States, which are around 11.9 million (Mexican Immigrants in the United State, 2008).



GRAPH 1

Volume of Mexicans in the United States, several years



Source: SIMDE-UAZ, Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, 5-percent sample 2000. BLS, Current Population Survey (CPS), March Supplement 1994-2009, Supplementary Survey 2000 (C2SS), American Community Survey (ACS) 2000-2008

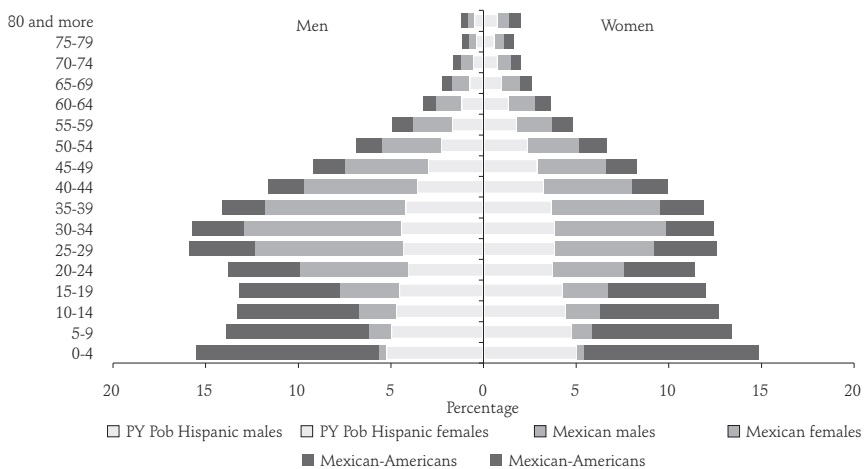
The analysis of the Mexican U.S. population would be incomplete if we did not include the 19 million-strong Mexican-American population, which is descended from Mexican immigrants and represents 6% of the total U.S. population. In addition to

12 million Mexican-born immigrants, the current total is 31 million, 10.4% of the U.S. population and 29% of the Mexican one.

Demographically speaking, while there is still a higher component of males (55%) and working age people,

GRAPH 2

Demographic structure of the Hispanic population (projections) 2000, Mexican-born population and Mexican-American population residing in the United States, 2007



Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's graph based on the US Bureau of the Census, Population Projections, 1995-2010; and author's estimates based on the American Community Survey (ACS), 2007.



the gap between the sexes is not very wide. There is also clear child and elderly adult participation. Mexican-Americans have a lesser proportion of working age adults (49%) while children encompass 47% of the total; that is, 6 out of every 10 Mexican-Americans are between 0 and 14 years of age and only 4% are elderly adults. There are no significant differences between males and females. Every one of these migration components needs to be analyzed, contextualized and delimited. For the time being, this study is limited to the exploration and analysis of Mexican U.S. residents in relation to their labor status across different national regions (see Graph 2).

TRACING TERRITORIES: NEW DESTINATIONS FOR MEXICAN MIGRANT LABORERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Recent studies describing the territorial distribution of Mexican immigrants in the cities, states and regions of the United States distinguish two criteria: traditional destinations and places of access into the United States, and new or «emerging» destinations. During most of the past century, the regional economy of certain U.S. states influenced the choices of Mexican immigrants (Cf. AILF: 2002). Job offer and the socio-demographic profile of migrants are two other factors that contribute to the choice of destination. Durand and Massey's

regionalization scheme (2003)⁴ aids in the temporary understanding of Mexican migrant settlements. The border states (California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona) are still quite important, and 2 out of every 5 Mexicans reside there. In the past 5 years, areas like the East Coast and the so-called Other region have had an increase in percentage in relation to the rest of the country (Map 1 and Table 1).

Historically speaking, the Great Lakes and, particularly Illinois, were an important center for Mexican workforce. Recently, other states in the so-called Southwest Expansion area have become important, offering jobs related to agribusiness and fruit picking. Washington state generates around 57% of apple production in the United States; this has defined a «new» territorial pattern in the economic geography of the U.S. West (Jarosz and Qazi: 1999; Morales: 2001; Durand, Massey and Capoferro, 2005).

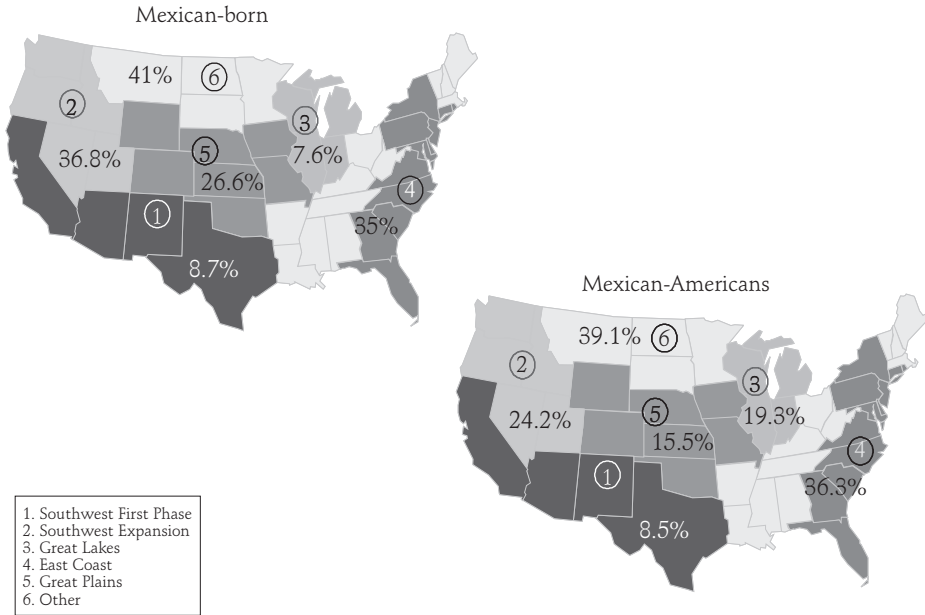
The configuration of migration territories is to an extent defined by

⁴ *Southwest First Phase*: Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. *Southwest Expansion*: Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Utah and Washington. *East Coast*: North Carolina, South Carolina, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Virginia. *Great Plains*: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Wyoming. *Other Region*: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Tennessee, Vermont and West Virginia. *Great Lakes*: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.



MAP 1

Percentage increase of Mexican-origin population by U.S. region, 2003-2007



	DISTRIBUTION OF MEXICAN-BORN POPULATION		2003-2007	
	2007	TOTAL	MEXICANS	MEXICAN-AMERICANS
Total	100.0	9.7	10.7	9.1
Southwest First phase	67.4	8.6	8.7	8.5
California	38.9	9.2	9.9	8.7
Texas	21.4	6.3	3.1	7.9
New Mexico	1.2	-3.6	2.4	-5.9
Arizona	5.8	19.4	25.1	16.1
Southwest Expansion	6.6	29.4	36.8	24.2
Washington	1.9	28.5	66.0	10.5
Rest of Southwest Expansion	4.7	29.7	27.9	31.2
Great Lakes	8.5	14.1	7.6	19.3
Illinois	6.2	11.7	3.4	19.8
Rest of Great Lakes	2.3	19.3	20.7	18.5
East Coast	12.6	35.6	35.0	36.3
Georgia	2.4	22.8	14.9	35.3
Florida	2.8	33.1	40.5	26.3
Rest of East Coast	7.5	41.3	40.9	41.7
Great Plains	4.8	19.3	26.6	15.5
Colorado	2.1	7.2	10.1	5.8
Rest of Great Plains	2.7	32.5	44.0	26.5
Other	3.3	39.8	41.0	39.1

Note: 2007 excludes population in collective households in order to be compared to 2003.

Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Authors' estimates based on US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS) 2003 and 2007.



TABLE 1

Population by place of birth and ethnic origin according to region and state of residence in the United States, 2007

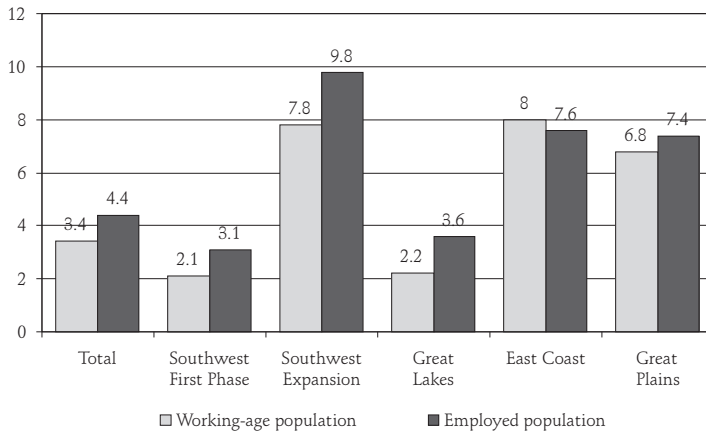
REGION AND STATE OF RESIDENCE	2007						2007			
	TOTAL	MEXICAN-BORN	MEXICAN-AMERICANS	REST OF NATIVES	REST OF IMMIGRANTS	TOTAL	MEXICAN	MEXICAN-AMERICANS	REST OF NATIVES	REST OF IMMIGRANTS
Total	301,621,159	11,895,675	18,598,963	242,838,813	28,287,708	100.0	3.9	6.2	80.5	9.4
<i>Southwest First Phase</i>	68,766,265	7,754,850	13,447,448	39,721,548	7,842,419	100.0	11.3	19.6	57.8	11.4
1 California	36,553,215	4,484,507	6,834,054	19,412,188	5,822,466	100.0	12.3	18.7	53.1	15.9
2 Texas	23,904,380	2,463,931	5,188,731	14,681,611	1,570,107	100.0	10.3	21.7	61.4	6.6
3 New Mexico	1,969,915	140,537	355,584	1,408,933	64,861	100.0	7.1	18.1	71.5	3.3
4 Arizona	6,338,755	665,875	1,069,079	4,218,816	384,985	100.0	10.5	16.9	66.6	6.1
<i>Southwest Expansion</i>	16,925,993	760,843	994,659	13,786,947	1,383,544	100.0	4.5	5.9	81.5	8.2
5 Washington	6,468,424	215,567	298,829	5,281,926	672,102	100.0	3.3	4.6	81.7	10.4
6 Rest of Southwest Expansion	10,457,569	545,276	695,830	8,505,021	711,442	100.0	5.2	6.7	81.3	6.8
<i>Great Lakes</i>	34,871,299	982,146	1,338,824	30,499,368	2,050,961	100.0	2.8	3.8	87.5	5.9
7 Illinois	12,852,548	710,237	848,588	10,183,484	1,110,259	100.0	5.5	6.6	79.2	8.6
8 Rest of Great Lakes	22,018,751	271,909	490,236	20,315,884	940,722	100.0	1.2	2.2	92.3	4.3
<i>East Coast</i>	101,024,807	1,459,029	1,221,715	85,106,497	13,237,566	100.0	1.4	1.2	84.2	13.1
9 Georgia	9,544,750	276,793	205,808	8,396,922	665,227	100.0	2.9	2.2	88.0	7.0
10 Florida	18,251,243	319,665	313,350	14,327,500	3,290,728	100.0	1.8	1.7	78.5	18.0
11 Rest of East Coast	73,228,814	862,571	702,557	62,382,075	9,281,611	100.0	1.2	1.0	85.2	12.7
<i>Great Plains</i>	22,418,691	550,142	994,492	19,979,781	894,276	100.0	2.5	4.4	89.1	4.0
12 Colorado	4,861,515	244,561	478,175	3,841,216	297,563	100.0	5.0	9.8	79.0	6.1
13 Rest of Great Plains	17,557,176	305,581	516,317	16,138,565	596,713	100.0	1.7	2.9	91.9	3.4
Other	57,614,104	388,665	601,825	53,744,672	2,878,942	100.0	0.7	1.0	93.3	5.0

Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.



GRAPH 3

Mean of annual percentage increase 2003-2007,
working-age population born in Mexico and residing in the United States



Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimations based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey*, (ACS), 2007.

workforce demand; for example, the kind of occupational opportunities emerging in the East Coast (even those in old industries that entail health risks) have led to temporary migration flows hailing from places not traditionally linked to migration or internal population movements (Benson: 1996; Griffith: 1997; Walker and Lawrence: 2004).

The recent importance of regions and states not traditionally linked to migration (which currently, encompasses practically the entirety of U.S. territory) shows relatively significant differences in regards to volume stability when we consider the working age Mexican-born population in relation to the employed population, especially in the Southwest Expansion and East Coast regions (see Graph 3).

This absolute and relative increase of the Mexican-born population among the working age and employed

groups leads us to wonder whether their access to said employment is still determined by characteristic factors such as lack of documentation, low educational levels, insufficient command of the English language and, consequently, low salaries. Or, is the job offer on par with their socio-demographic profile? In 2002 it was forecast that during the following years (until 2010), an estimated 2 out of every 5 new jobs in the U.S. economy would have minimum education requirements (AILE: 2002).

MEXICANS IN THE U.S. ECONOMY: TOWARD A LABOR PROFILE

Studies have recognized the important contributions made by Mexican migrants to the U.S. economy and established a correlation between the low educational and linguistic (i.e., command of English)



profile of migrants and the kinds of occupations in which they engage (Giorguli and Gaspar: 2008). And yet, while nearly half a million Mexican immigrants 25 years or older have professional and graduate education, only 75% of them are employed; out of these, less than half have jobs on par with their educational level (González: 2008; López and Villa: 2008; Conapo 2008). Regionally speaking, Mexican workers with college and graduate education are mostly found in the Southwest First Phase region (65%), followed by the East Coast (12%) and the Great Lakes (8%).

Even though it is often said that immigrants take the kind of jobs that natives or more educated workers are not willing to perform, it has been found that natives do compete in the same labor markets. If we compare Mexicans with natives⁵ who have not finished high school (5.9 million or 53% *vis-à-vis* 21.7 million or 13.6%, respectively) we will see that 66% of Mexicans and 38.5% of natives are employed. Unemployment rates for each group are 29% vs. 57%, and natives with that educational level have higher unemployment rates than Mexicans (6% vs. 17%).

In an attempt to touch on the profile differences among Mexicans employed in the different regions, Table 2 shows some useful data involving access to health services and other indicators like employment, income, and conditions of poverty in

a context where people must face adverse conditions on an individual basis—that is, with their own resources.

The regional breakdown of the selected socio-demographic indicators gives us a very clear picture of the particularities and differences in the profile of Mexicans employed in the U.S. economy. In the Great Lakes, Southwest First Phase and Southwest Expansion regions, one out of every four Mexicans is a U.S. citizen and only one in every ten entered in the past ten years. As far as the East Coast is concerned, one out of every four entered the United States recently and one out of every ten obtained the U.S. citizenship. However, in all regions, schooling is below 12 years; that is, the educational level is generally low.

Regarding command of the English language, those who only speak basic English are Mexican-born and tend to have less than 12 years of schooling. However, the fact that, except for the Great Plains and the Southwest Expansion regions, approximately one in every five employed Mexicans speak English well or very well shows the importance of the language, since it has been suggested that, in migrant labor markets, the workers' native tongue is as important as English (Carnevale, Fry and Lowell: 2001; Chiswick: 2009).

The ACS looks into received income during the past twelve months, valuable information that allows the US Bureau of the Census

⁵ Excluding Mexican-Americans.



TABLE 2

Selected socio-demographic indicators regarding employed Mexicans and Mexican-Americans by region of residence in the United States, 2007

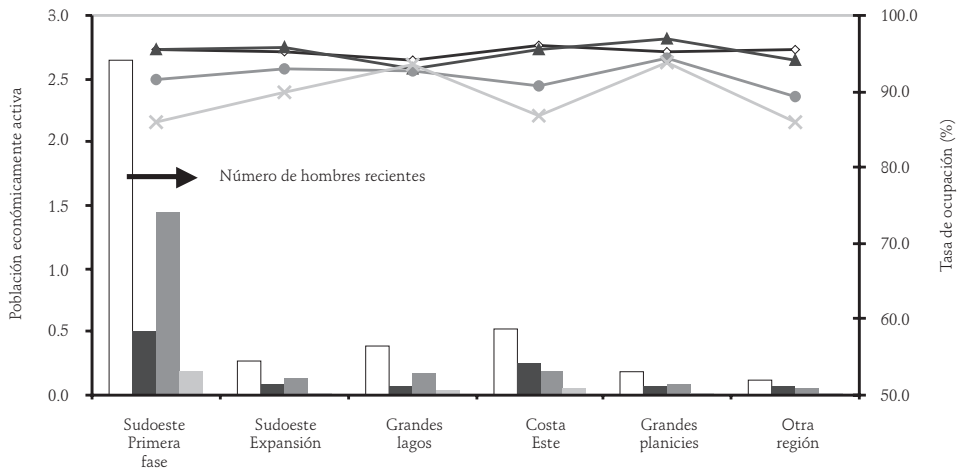
REGION OF RESIDENCE	TOTAL POPULATION	AVERAGE AGE	WOMEN (%)	LESS THAN 12 YEARS OF SCHOOLING (%)	CITIZENS (%)	RECENT ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES (%)	POOR (%)	SPEAK ENGLISH (%)	
								SPEAK BASIC ENGLISH	SPEAK ENGLISH WELL AND VERY WELL
Mexicans									
Total	7'148,604	35	30.5	54.7	23.4	14.6	15.0	2.2	17.3
Southwest First Phase	4'510,372	37	32.9	55.1	26.1	11.4	14.8	2.1	15.5
Southwest Expansion	482,098	34	30.3	57.0	22.0	16.1	13.7	1.1	21.7
Great Lakes	624,283	35	29.9	48.8	26.4	12.8	12.0	1.4	19.1
East Coast	955,355	32	22.3	55.1	12.8	25.0	15.7	2.5	16.8
Great Plains	332,453	34	29.4	53.6	19.9	18.6	19.3	3.8	25.5
Other	244,043	32	23.5	55.8	16.2	28.5	21.8	2.0	17.5
Mexican-Americans									
Total	5'499,574	32	47.0	17.7	n.a.	n.a.	8.5	42.5	55.0
Southwest First Phase	4'116,107	32	47.2	17.0	n.a.	n.a.	8.1	38.0	59.9
Southwest Expansion	259,828	32	47.3	18.2	n.a.	n.a.	10.0	56.3	41.3
Great Lakes	388,199	30	46.5	15.8	n.a.	n.a.	8.5	45.3	52.1
East Coast	247,143	32	45.3	23.1	n.a.	n.a.	8.2	50.7	42.9
Great Plains	317,452	33	45.3	21.1	n.a.	n.a.	11.2	65.8	31.5
Other	170,845	33	48.9	21.5	n.a.	n.a.	11.1	68.6	27.6

Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.



GRAPH 4

Mexican-born economically active population: employment rate by region of residence in the United States according to sex and migration status, 2007



Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.

to establish a poverty index (Bishaw and Semega: 2008). Encouragingly, Table 2 shows that, with the exception of the Great Plains region, less than 2 out of every 10 Mexicans residing in the United States are below the poverty line, and that the region with the lowest poverty rate (12%) is the Great Lakes.

Gender-based approaches to migration have addressed the increasing participation of women migrants in the U.S. economy. Until now, women have followed the male routes into the regions where they can find employment. More than two thirds of them are found in the Southwest First Phase region, although current female destinations are as scattered as in the case of males, with only slightly fewer numbers across all regions. It is possible that regional differences have been structured around traditional male

migration flows that involved women and children in the Southwest First Phase region. However, recent migration flows with younger men and women have targeted new regions and show different numbers and occupations. It is possible that, in these cases, being a recently arrived female migrant would affect access to employment (Graph 4).

MEXICANS IN THE U.S. ECONOMY: SECTORS OF ACTIVITY AND OCCUPATIONS.

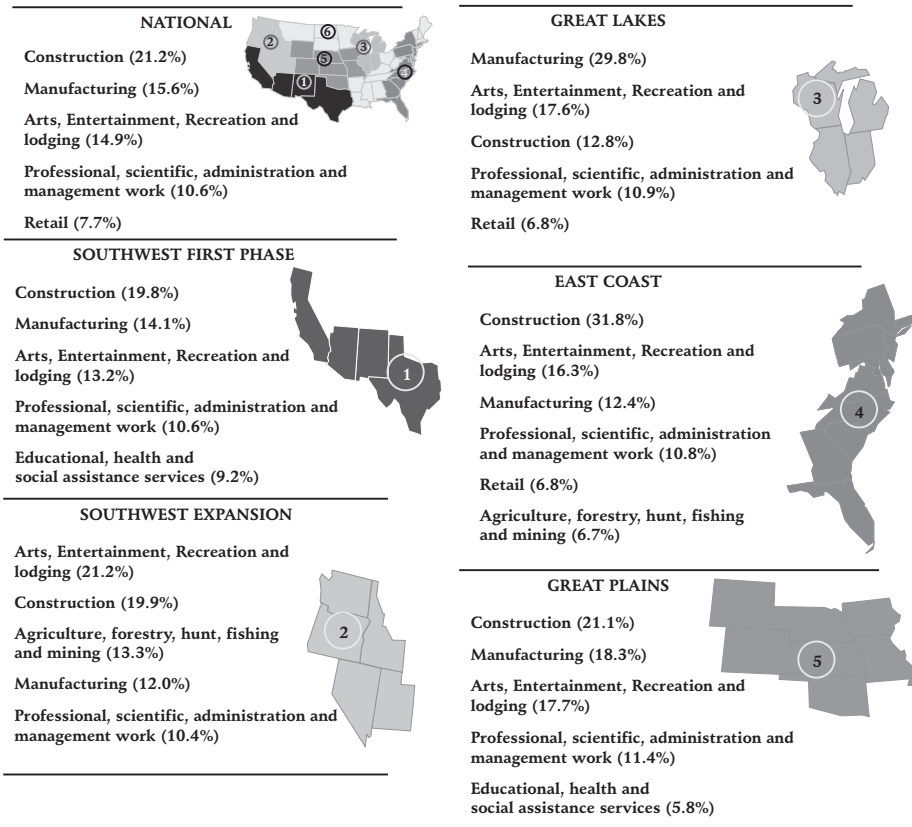
The labor markets that employ Mexican workforce largely respond to the structural circumstances that condition job and workforce offer. The Mexican laborer diaspora covers not only all of the U.S. territory but also all sectors of economic activity.

There is a belief that the U.S. economy mostly offers low



GRAPH 5

Main industrial sectors employing Mexicans



Fuente: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.

qualification jobs in sectors such as services, and that there are only some regional differences among employed Mexican immigrants. However, data from the CPS, the ACS, and the Pew Hispanic Center show there is a regional differentiation in terms of economic activities (Kochhar: 2005). Maybe the large numbers mask specific processes of workforce demand, such as insertion in long-standing economic activities in low qualification areas where experience makes a difference (e.g., construction in the East Coast, manufacture and commerce in the Great Lakes). This

type of insertion is of fundamental importance in the 21st century.

The activities performed by Mexican workers in the United States respond to extant job offers, the required labor profile (abilities, experience, education), their socio-demographic characteristics, and legal status. Distribution by occupation shows small variations across regions. Construction is slightly more common on the East Coast while the Great Lakes region has more factory workers and specialized laborers (see Graph 5, Table 4).



TABLE 4
Type of occupation of the Mexican-born population according to region of residence in the United States, 2007

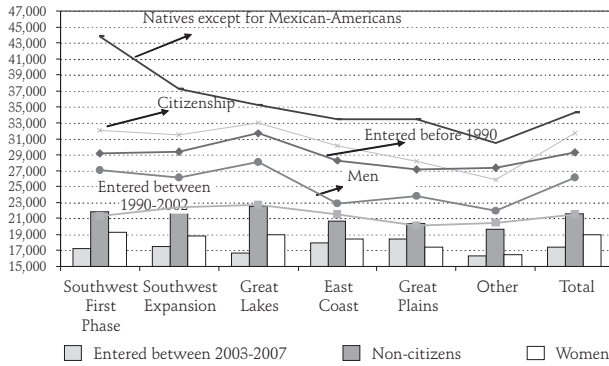
TYPE OF OCCUPATION	TOTAL	SOUTHWEST PHASE	SOUTHWEST EXPANSION	GREAT LAKES	EAST COAST	GREAT PLAINS	OTHER
<i>Distribution in regards to the total employed Mexican and Mexican-American population</i>	7'148,604	4'510,372	482,098	624,283	955,355	332,453	244,043
Executives, professionals and technicians	7.7	8.6	5.9	6.7	5.6	6.7	6.1
Semi-qualified service workers	1.6	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.4
Lowly-qualified service workers	26.7	26.1	29.9	25.8	27.3	30.6	26.0
Sales, office and administrative support	11.6	13.4	9.0	11.2	7.9	6.7	5.7
Agricultural workers	5.4	5.1	12.2	2.3	6.4	3.6	5.5
Construction workers	20.1	18.7	19.4	12.0	30.3	23.4	24.9
Specialized workers (e.g., construction work)	26.9	26.2	22.7	41.0	21.7	27.8	31.4
<i>% in regards to the total employed population by occupational group</i>	14.8	6.1	3.9	3.9	2.1	3.1	0.9
Executives, professionals and technicians	3.7	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.2
Semi-qualified service workers	7.3	1.6	0.9	0.9	0.4	1.0	0.1
Lowly-qualified service workers	29.5	13.4	8.4	8.4	4.7	7.7	2.0
Sales, office and administrative support	7.8	2.2	1.7	1.7	0.6	0.8	0.2
Agricultural workers	73.2	57.3	18.6	18.6	29.9	13.4	8.3
Construction workers	39.8	17.2	9.0	9.0	10.2	11.7	3.9
Specialized workers (e.g., construction work)	25.4	8.9	8.0	8.0	3.1	5.0	1.6

Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.



GRAPH 6

Average annual income (dollars) of Mexican workers residing in the United States according to selected characteristics, 2007



Source: SIMDE, UAZ. Author's estimates based on the US Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey (ACS)*, 2007.

Economic and sociological studies carried out in the past two decades regarding the income of Mexican migrants and their effect on local labor markets and incomes show that, according to Chiswick (2009), immigrants have little or no effect on the salaries of native workers. However, one can still find studies based on recent data that underline the negative effects of migration on local labor markets, especially in regards to jobs and salaries (Peri: 2007).

The social construction of knowledge around the importance and impact of immigrants on the U.S. economy and society is framed by social perceptions and valorizations. These take different shapes across the demographic and political U.S. landscape and, while authors tend to use the same methodology (natives vs. immigrants), results also depends on the type of models, variables, periods and data used (Borjas: 2003; Gianmarco and Peri: 2006; NCLR:

2008). Graph 5 shows the average annual income (in dollars) of employed Mexicans; citizenship, longer immigration time and male gender lead to higher income. On a regional scale, the Great Lakes show the highest overall rates, while the East Coast and the Great Plains show a less favorable situation.

FINAL REMARKS

The conceptualization and measurement of international migration is a challenge for demographic analysis and should be approached with precise, high-quality instruments. The concept of habitual residence can be used to reflect on the pertinence of continuing to study migration in accordance with traditional categories and under the premise that it is a demographic phenomenon, a dynamic and changing social process that affects individual and family daily life.



Mexican emigration questions the economic, social and political bases of the current lifestyle and welfare offer of Mexican State, as well as the potential uses of demographic growth and a strong youth contingent. For U. S. society and authorities, Mexican immigration represents a national and local economic, social, political and cultural challenge.

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