

# A REVOLVING DOOR NO MORE?

## A Statistical Profile of Mexican Adults Repatriated from the United States



By Ryan Schultheis and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto

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May 2017

# Acknowledgments

This report has been made possible through support from the Central America and Mexico Migration Alliance (CAMMINA).

The authors acknowledge Carlos Manuel Hernández Campos and Víctor M. Sánchez Ruiz, Technical Statisticians at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), for their methodological assistance on the sampling frame of the Mexican Northern Border Migration Survey (EMIF Norte). They also express their gratitude to Migration Policy Institute (MPI) colleagues Randy Capps, who is Director of Research for U.S. Programs; Doris Meissner, Director of the U.S. Immigration Policy Program; and former Policy Analyst Victoria Rietig, who improved this report through their thoughtful review and comments on earlier drafts. Finally, they are grateful to MPI Director of Communications Michelle Mittelstadt and Editor Fayre Makeig for their exemplary editing, and MPI Communications Coordinator Liz Heimann for layout.

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Design and Layout: Liz Heimann, MPI

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Suggested citation: Schultheis, Ryan and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto. 2017. *A Revolving Door No More? A Statistical Profile of Mexican Adults Repatriated from the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.



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## Executive Summary

The revolving door of return migration is slowing significantly for Mexican nationals deported or voluntarily returned by the U.S. government, with far fewer of them deciding to attempt return to the United States. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of Mexican adults intending to return to the United States after repatriation plunged 80 percent, decreasing from 471,000 in 2005 to 95,000 a decade later. Overall, the share of Mexican deportees saying they would seek to attempt re-entry to the United States fell from 95 percent of all returnees in 2010 to 49 percent in 2015, while the share intending to remain in Mexico rose from 5 percent to 47 percent. The fact that adults returned in 2015 said they were nearly as likely to remain in Mexico as to return to the United States signals a stark change in the decision-making patterns of Mexican deportees, and highlights one aspect of the changing dynamics of U.S.-Mexico migration.

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*Between 2005 and 2015, the number of Mexican adults intending to return to the United States after repatriation plunged 80 percent.*

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This report provides new insights into the experiences and intentions of migrants removed to Mexico by U.S. immigration authorities, drawing from a statistical profile of Mexican adults (ages 18 and older) repatriated from the United States in 2015. Using representative data collected in the Mexican Northern Border Survey and repatriation data from the Mexican Interior Ministry, it explores the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of deportees, their immigration histories, and information on their future migration plans and minor children left behind in the United States. Among the main findings:

- ***The number of Mexicans repatriated from the United States declined steadily after 2009, when net flows to the United States dipped significantly during and after the U.S. recession.*** In 2015, Mexico reported the repatriation of 207,000 migrants of all ages—about one-third the number in 2009 (601,000).
- ***The vast majority of repatriated Mexican adults in 2015 were recent border crossers, but more reported living in the United States for longer periods than had been the case in earlier years.*** Of the 196,000 repatriated adults in 2015, 72 percent spent less than a year in the United States, 12 percent had one to five years of U.S. residence, and 15 percent had been there more than five years. In 2005, 95 percent of those repatriated had less than one year of U.S. residence. The change likely reflects the greater enforcement focus by the Obama administration on deporting unauthorized immigrants with criminal records in addition to recent border crossers.
- ***The number of deported Mexicans indicating they would attempt to re-enter the United States has dropped 80 percent over a decade, from 471,000 in 2005 to 95,000 in 2015.*** The share intending to return decreased from 95 percent of all adult deportees to 49 percent over the same period.
- ***Compared to 2010, repatriated Mexicans in 2015 had crossed the border more times, and reported smuggling costs had more than doubled.*** In 2015, repatriated adults who spent less than one year in the United States (i.e., those who migrated most recently) had crossed the border on average 2.6 times over their lifetimes, compared to 1.6 times in 2010. Average smuggling costs increased from \$1,500 to \$4,100, likely reflecting the impact of strengthened U.S. border enforcement.



- **Those with longer U.S. residence also spent more time in U.S. detention.** Recent border crossers spent an average of 22 days in detention prior to deportation, while those who spent more than five years living in the United States were detained for one year on average. It is likely that this longer-term detention included stays in federal, state, or local prisons or jails for criminal offenses as a result of U.S. policies prioritizing the removal of criminals.
- **More than half of repatriated adults were informed of their right to contact the Mexican consulate before removal, but only a small minority did so.** Fifty-eight percent of Mexicans were informed of their consular rights before removal, but just 20 percent made contact, chiefly to get assistance connecting with relatives.
- **Almost half of returned adults with more than five years of U.S. residence left at least one minor child in the United States.** Overall, 13 percent (26,000) of adults repatriated in 2015 had at least one child in the United States. But 47 percent of those who spent more than five years in the United States had a child still there.
- **Most repatriated parents intended to leave their minor children in the United States.** Of the 18,000 repatriated Mexican parents who spent more than one year in the United States, 42 percent intended to leave their children in the United States, 23 percent reported plans to return to be with their children, and 15 percent planned to bring their children to Mexico.

The decision of repatriated adults to forgo repeat illegal migration and instead permanently remain in Mexico has profound implications for governments and communities on both sides of the border, and could to an extent reshape future U.S. and Mexican migration policies and binational agendas. For the United States, the slowing of Mexican repeat migration may reflect the efficacy of immigration enforcement and help explain the decline in apprehensions of Mexicans by the U.S. Border Patrol. For Mexico, migrants' intentions to remain in the country underscore the need to improve reception and reintegration services following repatriation.<sup>1</sup> Ensuring the successful social and economic reintegration of repatriated Mexican adults can contribute to future economic growth in Mexico, as well as determine whether the revolving door of migration continues to slow.

## I. Introduction

Repeat migration is slowing significantly for Mexicans removed from the United States.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, fully 95 percent of repatriated adults intended to return to the United States. That share had dropped to 49 percent a decade later, representing an 80 percent numerical decrease (from 471,000 to 95,000 adults). Conversely, the share intending to remain in Mexico increased from 5 percent in 2005 to 47 percent in 2015—a nearly 250 percent increase in the number of returnees wanting to stay (from 26,000 to 91,000). The fact that in 2015 repatriated adults said they were nearly as likely to remain in Mexico as to return to the United States signals a stark change in decision-making patterns.

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1 Through its consular network in the United States, the Mexican government intends to ease the reintegration process by matching returning citizens with a centralized network of government services (e.g., health, education, and labor, among others). See Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB), “Claudia Ruiz Massieu, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, en la Firma del Convenio ‘Somos Mexicanos Aquí Tienes las Puertas Abiertas,’” accessed July 5, 2016, [www.gob.mx/segob/prensa/claudia-ruiz-massieu-secretaria-de-relaciones-exteriores-en-la-firma-del-convenio-somos-mexicanos-aqui-tienes-las-puertas-abiertas](http://www.gob.mx/segob/prensa/claudia-ruiz-massieu-secretaria-de-relaciones-exteriores-en-la-firma-del-convenio-somos-mexicanos-aqui-tienes-las-puertas-abiertas).

2 “Repatriated” and “deported” are used interchangeably in this report to refer to Mexican migrants who have been formally removed from the United States by immigration authorities, as opposed to those who choose to return of their own volition.



Researchers have monitored trends in the flows of unauthorized Mexican migrants and their deportation from the United States.<sup>3</sup> But few reports investigate the experiences and intentions of migrants once they return to Mexico.<sup>4</sup> This report bridges that knowledge gap using representative data collected in the Mexican Northern Border Migration Survey (Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México, or EMIF Norte) and repatriation data from the Interior Ministry (Secretaría de Gobernación, or SEGOB) to draw a statistical profile of Mexican adults (ages 18 and older) repatriated from the United States in 2015.<sup>5</sup> It explores the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of deportees, their immigration experiences, their future migration plans, and whether they left minor children in the United States.

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*Few reports investigate the experiences and intentions of migrants once they return to Mexico.*

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The analysis of Mexican data sources is consistent with U.S.-based analyses and research on the following points: (1) Mexican flows to the United States have declined in recent years; and (2) an increasing share of repatriated Mexicans has significant U.S. experience. These findings may be especially relevant for the Mexican government as it attempts to strengthen consular attention and reception and reintegration services for returned citizens.

## II. An Overview of Adults Repatriated from the United States in 2005-15

This section provides a brief overview of adults deported or otherwise removed by the U.S. government over a decade, from 2005 through 2015. These data show a dramatic decline in total removals alongside an increase in time in the United States among those deported. The share of repatriated adults intending to attempt re-entry also declined over this period, though less so among those with substantial U.S. experience.

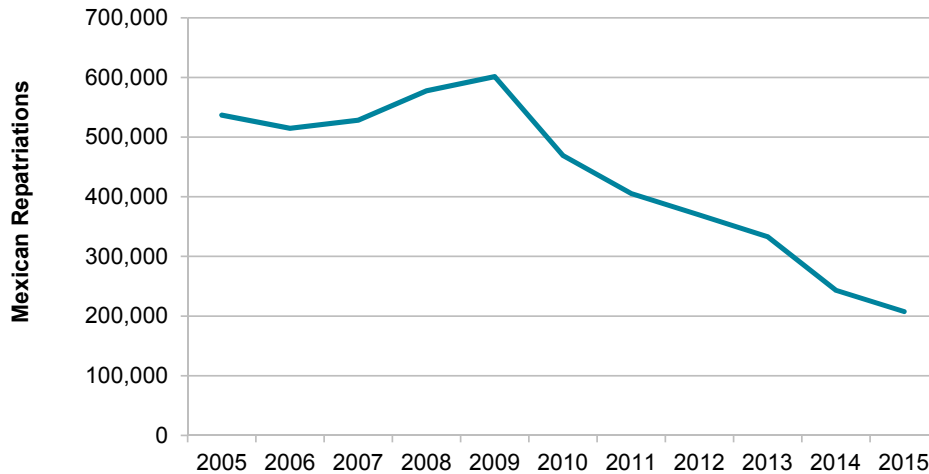
- 3 Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Overall the Number of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrants Holds Steady Since 2009* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2016), [www.pewhispanic.org/2016/09/20/overall-number-of-u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-holds-steady-since-2009/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/09/20/overall-number-of-u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-holds-steady-since-2009/); BBVA Bancomer, SEGOB, and Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO), *Anuario de Migración y Remesas: México 2016* (Mexico City: BBVA Bancomer, SEGOB, and CONAPO, 2015), [www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/109457/Anuario\\_Migracion\\_y\\_Remesas\\_2016.pdf](http://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/109457/Anuario_Migracion_y_Remesas_2016.pdf); Robert Warren, "US Undocumented Population Drops Below 11 Million in 2014, with Continued Declines in the Mexican Undocumented Population," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 4, no. 1 (2016): 1-15; Marc R. Rosenblum and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, *An Analysis of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States by Country and Region of Birth* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/analysis-unauthorized-immigrants-united-states-country-and-region-birth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/analysis-unauthorized-immigrants-united-states-country-and-region-birth).
- 4 El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), *Encuesta Sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México: Reporte Trimestral de Resultados (Octubre – Diciembre 2015)* (Tijuana, México: COLEF, 2015), [www.colef.mx/emif/boletines/ReporteTrimestral-NORTE%20T4-2015.pdf](http://www.colef.mx/emif/boletines/ReporteTrimestral-NORTE%20T4-2015.pdf); Mexicans and Americans Thinking Together (MATT), *The U.S.-Mexico Cycle: The End of An Era* (Mexico City: MATT, 2013), [www.matt.org/uploads/2/4/9/3/24932918/returnmigration\\_top\\_line\\_www.pdf](http://www.matt.org/uploads/2/4/9/3/24932918/returnmigration_top_line_www.pdf); Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, *Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2012), [www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/23/net-migration-from-mexico-falls-to-zero-and-perhaps-less/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/23/net-migration-from-mexico-falls-to-zero-and-perhaps-less/).
- 5 The Mexican Northern Border Survey (Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México, or EMIF Norte) is administered to repatriated Mexican nationals ages 15 and older at ten of the 11 official reception points along the U.S.-Mexico border. The survey employs a probabilistic sampling frame to obtain a representative sample of the Mexican population repatriated at each location. Repatriation data from SEGOB is based on administrative counts compiled by Mexico's National Institute of Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración, or INM), and is available at [www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es\\_mx/SEGOB/Boletines\\_Estadisticos](http://www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es_mx/SEGOB/Boletines_Estadisticos). The survey captures repatriation events, not unique individuals. For detailed information on survey methodology, see Appendix A.



## A. Numbers Repatriated

The number of Mexicans repatriated by the United States (as reported in the Mexican administrative data) declined steadily in recent years—from a peak of 601,000 in 2009 to 207,000 in 2015 (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> Apprehensions of Mexicans along the U.S.-Mexico border also decreased considerably, falling to near-record lows in U.S. fiscal year (FY) 2015 and FY 2016.<sup>7</sup> Both trends were accompanied by a significant decline in the population of unauthorized Mexicans in the United States—according to one estimate, it fell from 6.9 million in 2007 to 5.8 million in 2014.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 1. Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States, 2005-15**



*Note:* The Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB) reports repatriation events and not unique individuals. A repatriation event constitutes the official reception of a Mexican citizen by Mexican immigration officials at ports of entry after being removed by U.S. authorities.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2005-15, accessed September 2, 2016, [www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es\\_mx/SEGOB/Boletines\\_Estadisticos](http://www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es_mx/SEGOB/Boletines_Estadisticos).

There are several reasons for the decline: fewer incentives to migrate in the wake of the 2007-09 U.S. recession due to both a weaker U.S. labor market and rising economic growth in Mexico; lower Mexican fertility rates and aging of its working-age population; improving education and job prospects in Mexico; and stronger immigration enforcement, especially at the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>9</sup> Strengthened U.S. border enforcement has included policy changes that have led to a growing number of deported Mexicans being formally removed, as opposed to informally returned (i.e., voluntary return and departure).<sup>10</sup> In FY 2015,

6 A total of 207,000 Mexican nationals, including minor children, were deported or otherwise removed by U.S. immigration authorities in 2015. Calculations and analyses throughout the report focus on the 196,000 repatriated Mexican adults unless otherwise noted.

7 U.S. Border Patrol, “Illegal Alien Apprehensions from Mexico by Fiscal Year (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> through Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>),” accessed April 19, 2017, [www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Oct/BP%20Total%20Apps%2C%20Mexico%2C%20OTM%20FY2000-FY2016.pdf](http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Oct/BP%20Total%20Apps%2C%20Mexico%2C%20OTM%20FY2000-FY2016.pdf); U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), “United States Border Patrol Southwest Family Unit Subject and Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions Fiscal Year 2016,” accessed October 25, 2016, [www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016](http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016).

8 Passel and Cohn, *Overall Number of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrants Holds Steady since 2009*.

9 Aaron Terrazas, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, and Marc R. Rosenblum, *Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends in Mexico and Central America and Their Implications for Regional Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/RMSG-demographic-human-capital-trends-mexico-central-america](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/RMSG-demographic-human-capital-trends-mexico-central-america). Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Mexico averaged 4.4 percent between 2010 and 2012 (compared to 2.1 percent in the United States), but slowed after 2012 to match that of the United States. See World Bank, “Mexico,” accessed September 23, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mexico>.

10 Randy Capps, Faye Hipsman, and Doris Meissner, *Advances in U.S.-Mexico Border Enforcement: A Review of the Consequence Delivery System* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2017), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/advances-us-mexico-border-enforcement-review-consequence-delivery-system](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/advances-us-mexico-border-enforcement-review-consequence-delivery-system).





86 percent of repatriated Mexicans received a removal order, compared with 38 percent in FY 2009.<sup>11</sup> The consequences of formal removal are severe: individuals who receive a deportation order are ineligible to return to the United States for five to ten years and are subject to criminal charges if apprehended in the future.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that Mexican migration to the United States—both legal and unauthorized—has been decreasing, there has been a rapid rise in the number of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border without prior authorization, fueling a public perception that the border remains permeable. Indeed, in FY 2014 and again in FY 2016, the number of Central American migrants apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol exceeded the number of apprehensions of Mexicans.<sup>13</sup>

## B. Years of U.S. Residence

Of the 196,000 adults returned to Mexico in 2015, 72 percent (142,000) had spent less than one year in the United States since their last trip (see Table 1).<sup>14</sup> Fifteen percent (29,000) had six years or more of U.S. residence before being deported, likely forming stronger social and economic ties.

**Table 1. Years of U.S. Residence for Repatriated Mexican Adults, 2005, 2010, and 2015**

Year	Less than One Year of U.S. Residence		One to Five Years of U.S. Residence		Six or More Years of U.S. Residence	
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)
2005	472,000	95	15,000	3	5,000	1
2010	319,000	71	54,000	12	76,000	17
2015	142,000	72	24,000	13	29,000	15

*Note:* Shares may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), “Encuesta sobre migración en la frontera norte de México (EMIF Norte),” 2005, 2010, and 2015, accessed September 2, 2016, [www.colef.mx/emif/eng/bases.php](http://www.colef.mx/emif/eng/bases.php); SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2005, 2010, and 2015.

Between 2005 and 2015, the share of repatriated Mexicans who had spent more than a year in the United States rose from 4 percent to 28 percent. Most of the increase occurred before 2010, with very little change in the five years after.

Two factors could help explain the increase in the length of U.S. residence for most deportees. First, border apprehensions of Mexicans fell from 1 million in FY 2005 to 397,000 in FY 2010—a 61 percent reduction—resulting in a decrease in the pool of Mexican deportees who had lived in the United States

11 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) calculations based on removals and returns data for fiscal year (FY) 2009 and FY 2015 from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). See DHS, Office of Immigration Statistics, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics,” Table 40, Aliens Returned by Region and Country of Nationality; DHS, Office of Immigration Statistics, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics,” Table 41, Aliens Removed by Criminal Status and Region and Country of Nationality,” accessed April 22, 2017, [www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics](http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics).

12 Under the *Immigration and Nationality Act* (INA), immigrants removed from the United States are subject to a ten-year admissions bar, with the exception of those subjected to expedited removal, who receive a five-year bar on return. See INA section 212(a)(9)(A)(i), and INA section 212(a)(9)(A)(ii). See also Marc R. Rosenblum and Doris Meissner with Claire Bergeron and Faye Hipsman, *The Deportation Dilemma: Reconciling Tough and Humane Enforcement* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), 15, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-dilemma-reconciling-tough-humane-enforcement](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-dilemma-reconciling-tough-humane-enforcement).

13 DHS, “Statement by Secretary Johnson on Southwest Border Security,” October 17, 2016, [www.dhs.gov/news/2016/10/17/statement-secretary-johnson-southwest-border-security](http://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/10/17/statement-secretary-johnson-southwest-border-security).

14 The EMIF Norte survey asks respondents about the length of their U.S. residence in their most recent trip prior to being removed by U.S. immigration authorities. Comparisons to previous survey years are based on the same survey question.

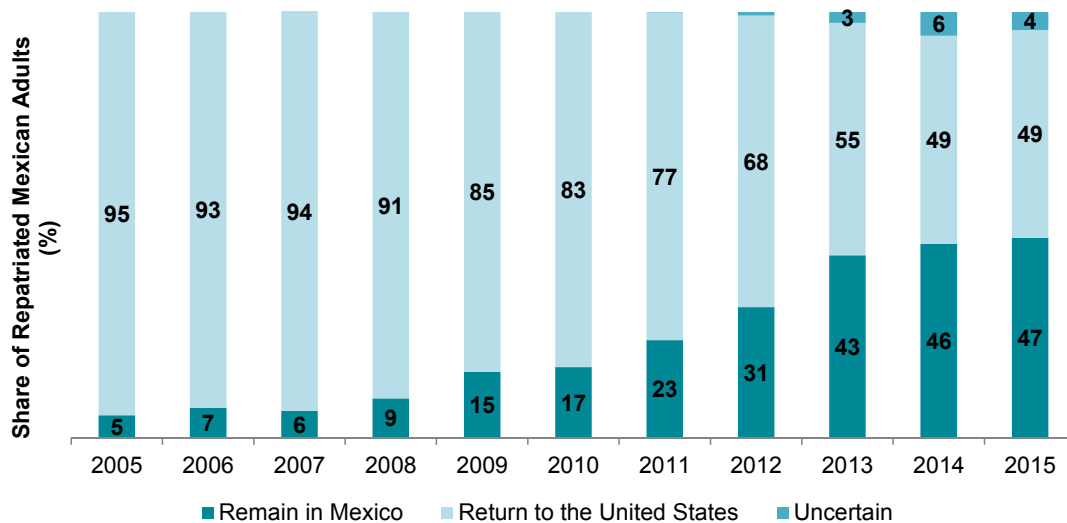


for less than a year.<sup>15</sup> Second, U.S. interior removals doubled between FY 2006 and FY 2008 and increased gradually until FY 2011, thereby contributing more noncitizens with longer U.S. stays to the repatriated population.<sup>16</sup> The priority for such deportations has increasingly focused on removing those with criminal convictions. For example, Secure Communities—an interior enforcement program that identifies noncitizens for removal when they are booked into jails or prisons—accounted for an average of about 60,000 removals annually during FY 2009-13.<sup>17</sup>

### C. Intentions to Return to the United States or Remain in Mexico

The number of repatriated adults intending to attempt U.S. re-entry plummeted 80 percent between 2005 and 2015: from 471,000 individuals to 95,000. The share intending to return to the United States fell from 95 percent to 49 percent over the same period, even as those expressing the intent to remain in Mexico rose from 5 percent to 47 percent. The number of Mexicans committed to remaining in Mexico rose by nearly 250 percent: from 26,000 in 2005 to 91,000 in 2015 (see Figure 2). The very sizeable drop in both the share and number of repatriated adults intending to return to the United States suggests that the revolving door is slowing. EMIF Norte does not examine whether this dramatic change in return-migration intentions was due to the risks involved in crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, substantial new penalties for repeat illegal re-entry, a weaker U.S. job market for unauthorized migrants, improving economic opportunities in Mexico, or other factors.

**Figure 2. Shares of Repatriated Adults Intending to Return to the United States or Remain in Mexico, (%), 2005-15**



Note: Shares may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: MPI analysis of data from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2005-15 surveys.

15 U.S. Border Patrol, “Illegal Alien Apprehensions from Mexico by Fiscal Year (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> through Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>).”

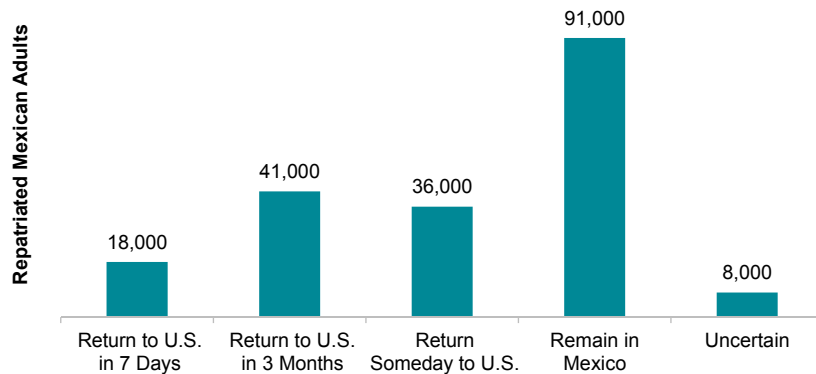
16 Marc R. Rosenblum and Kristen McCabe, *Deportation and Discretion: Reviewing the Record on Options for Change* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), 21–22, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change).

17 The Secure Communities program was administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from 2008 to 2015, when it was replaced by a more targeted Priority Enforcement Program, and then resumed in 2017. For data on Secure Communities–originated deportations through FY 2013, see ICE, *Secure Communities: Monthly Statistics through September 30, 2013*, IDENT/IAFIS Interoperability Report (Washington, DC: ICE, 2013), [www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/sc-stats/nationwide\\_interop\\_stats-fy2013-to-date.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/sc-stats/nationwide_interop_stats-fy2013-to-date.pdf).



In 2015, 95,000 repatriated adults planned to return to the United States and 91,000 planned to stay in Mexico (see Figure 3).<sup>18</sup> The majority (59,000) of those intending to return said they planned to do so within three months; the rest (36,000) planned to return at an unspecified time.

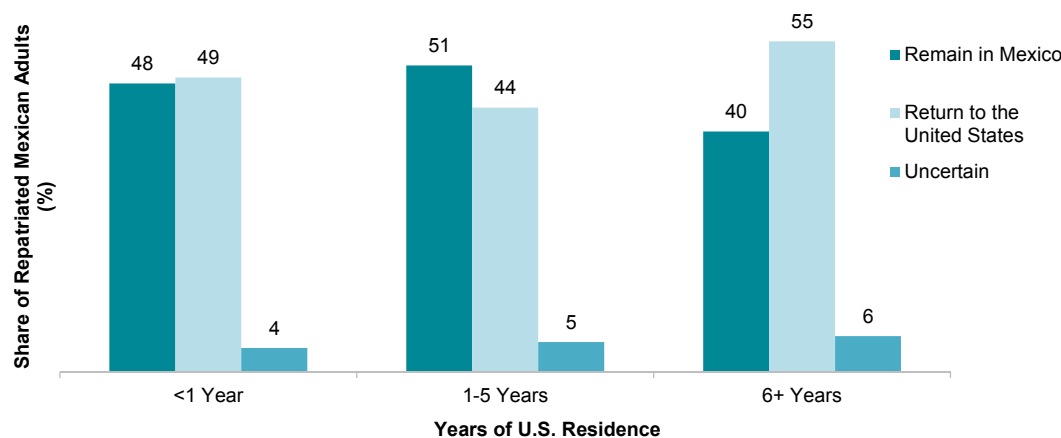
**Figure 3. Numbers of Repatriated Adults Intending to Return to the United States or Remain in Mexico, 2015**



*Note:* Calculations exclude missing cases (approximately 2,000 adults or 1 percent of the total sample).  
*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

Whether adults who had been removed from the United States planned to make a U.S. return or remain in Mexico depended on their family, social, and economic ties to the United States. Sixty-four percent of those with minor children in the United States said they intended to make a repeat entry, compared to 47 percent of those with no U.S.-resident children. In addition, repatriated adults who had spent six or more years in the United States were the most likely to report that they intended to return (55 percent), reflecting their stronger U.S. social and economic ties (see Figure 4). A smaller share, 44 percent, of those with one to five years of U.S. residence intended to return. Of those who had spent less than a year in the United States, roughly equal shares intended to return (49 percent) or not (48 percent).

**Figure 4. Shares of Repatriated Adults Intending to Return to the United States or Remain in Mexico, by Years of U.S. Residence, 2015**



*Note:* Shares may not add up to 100 due to rounding.  
*Source:* MPI analysis of data from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2005 survey.

<sup>18</sup> Data on this question were missing for 1 percent of the sample, representing approximately 2,000 repatriated adults.



### III. A Detailed Profile of Adults Repatriated in 2015

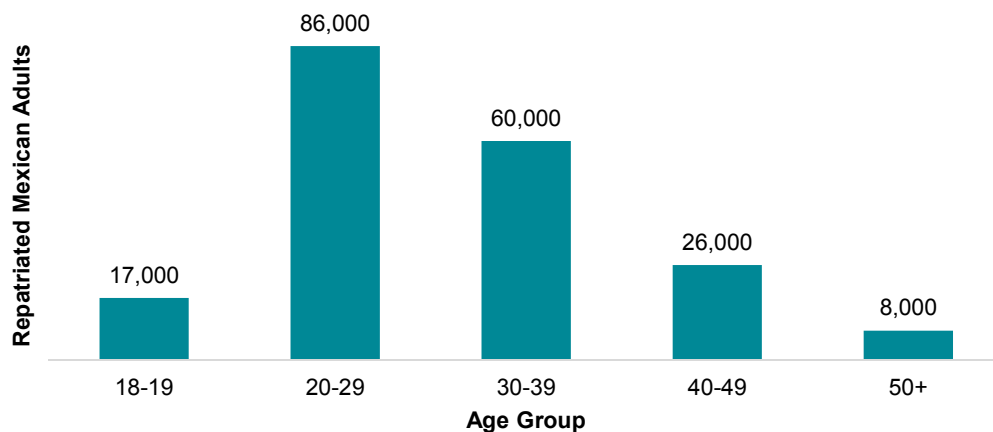
Using demographic data of Mexican adults removed by the U.S. government in 2015, this section presents a profile of deportees based on their age, educational attainment, and English language ability. This section also examines their immigration experiences, access to consular contact, and share with minor children left in the United States.

#### A. Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

The vast majority—90 percent—of Mexicans removed from the United States in 2015 were men.<sup>19</sup> This gender divide is stark when compared to that of the overall unauthorized population in the United States. In 2014, 54 percent of unauthorized immigrants were men. Taken together, these data indicate that Mexican men were disproportionately likely to be deported.<sup>20</sup>

Mexican adults removed from the United States in 2015 were largely of prime working age: 74 percent (146,000) were between the ages of 20 and 39 (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Repatriated Mexican Adults, by Age Group, 2015**



*Note:* Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

Nearly three-quarters (73 percent, or 143,000) of repatriated adults in 2015 had a primary-level education, and around one-quarter (46,000) had a secondary education or higher.<sup>21</sup> Just 26 percent

19 MPI analysis of data from SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2005-15. Previous MPI analysis of all formal removals carried out by ICE during FY 2003-13 found that men represented 91 percent of all deportees, and Mexicans represented 71 percent of all formal removals. See Rosenblum and McCabe, *Deportation and Discretion*, 10-11.

20 Note that the 54 percent does not account for unauthorized migrants apprehended by U.S. authorities while attempting to cross the border. There is no current estimate of the gender composition of the flow of unauthorized migrants attempting to enter the United States, and therefore the reported gender gap between the flow of repatriated migrants and the stock of unauthorized immigrants in the country may be smaller. See MPI, “Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States,” accessed January 5, 2017, [www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US).

21 Mexican school levels were coded as follows: (1) primary: *primaria, secundaria, escuela técnica con primaria, escuela técnica con secundaria*; secondary: *preparatoria*; and tertiary: *normal, profesional, maestría, doctorado*. MPI calculations from EMIF Norte 2015; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.



indicated that they could speak English, and 52 percent of these reported speaking at an average or “regular” level.<sup>22</sup>

Self-reported ability to speak English appears to be associated with time spent in the United States. While 14 percent of deportees with less than one year of U.S. residence reported speaking English, 71 percent of those with six or more years in the country did—potentially increasing their employment opportunities and earnings potential in Mexico.<sup>23</sup> Forty-nine percent of the repatriated reported being the primary breadwinner in their household, suggesting that their removal substantially decreased the earnings of any family remaining in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

## B. Immigration Experiences

Mexican adults who were deported in 2015 after spending less than one year in the United States had crossed the U.S.-Mexico border an average 2.6 times over their lifetime. By contrast, those repatriated in 2010 and 2005 had crossed 1.6 times and 1.5 times on average respectively.<sup>25</sup> The increase in the number of lifetime border crossings between 2010 and 2015 suggests that migrants repatriated in 2015 were more experienced than before. Some may have returned voluntarily to Mexico and re-entered the United States prior to being deported. At the same time, a smaller share of those repatriated in 2015 had no prior crossings, suggesting that stronger border enforcement efforts dissuaded more new migrants from attempting to illegally enter the United States than in the past.

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### *As smuggling costs have increased, fewer repatriated adults reported using a smuggler.*

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Adults returned after less than one year in the United States and who had hired a smuggler paid an average of \$4,100 in 2015—more than double the amount paid in 2010 and four times the amount paid in 2005 (see Table 2).<sup>26</sup> Such increases may reflect the impact of strengthened U.S. border enforcement since 2010—including strategies and policies prioritizing the return of recent border crossers—which has influenced smugglers to use more isolated and dangerous routes. Nonetheless, as smuggling costs have increased, fewer repatriated adults reported using a smuggler: 53 percent in 2015, down from 77 percent in 2010.

22 MPI analysis of data from EMIF Norte 2015.

23 A study of 200 Mexican migrants returning to the state of Guanajuato found that 11 percent used their newly acquired English skills to obtain at least one job in Mexico, primarily in business and tourism. See Jacqueline Maria Hagan, Rubén Hernández-León, and Jean-Luc Demonsant, *Skills of the “Unskilled”: Work and Mobility among Mexican Migrants* (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2015), 160.

24 MPI analysis of data from EMIF Norte 2015. A study of 85 unauthorized-immigrant families found that the deportation of breadwinners, mostly fathers, led to steep declines in income, ranging from 40 percent to 90 percent. See Ajay Chaudry et al., *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2010), 42, [www.urban.org/research/publication/facing-our-future/view/full-report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/facing-our-future/view/full-report). A more recent analysis of data on the population of unauthorized immigrants potentially eligible for the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Residents (DAPA) program that the Obama administration unsuccessfully sought to create suggested that deportation of unauthorized immigrant fathers would result in a mean income drop of 73 percent for their families. See Randy Capps et al., *Deferred Action for Unauthorized Immigrant Parents: Analysis of DAPA’s Potential Effects on Families and Children* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), 19, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deferred-action-unauthorized-immigrant-parents-analysis-dapas-potential-effects-families](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deferred-action-unauthorized-immigrant-parents-analysis-dapas-potential-effects-families).

25 MPI analysis of data from EMIF Norte 2015.

26 The EMIF Norte survey may underestimate smuggling costs, as these costs were higher in other survey data and in the Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE) used by DHS. See Bryan Roberts, Gordon Hanson, Derekh Cornwell, and Scott Borger, *An Analysis of Migrant Smuggling Costs along the Southwest Border* (Washington, DC: DHS, 2010), [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois-smuggling-wp.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois-smuggling-wp.pdf).

**Table 2. Share of Repatriated Mexican Adults with Less than One Year of U.S. Residence Who Used a Smuggler and Average Fee Paid, 2005, 2010, and 2015**

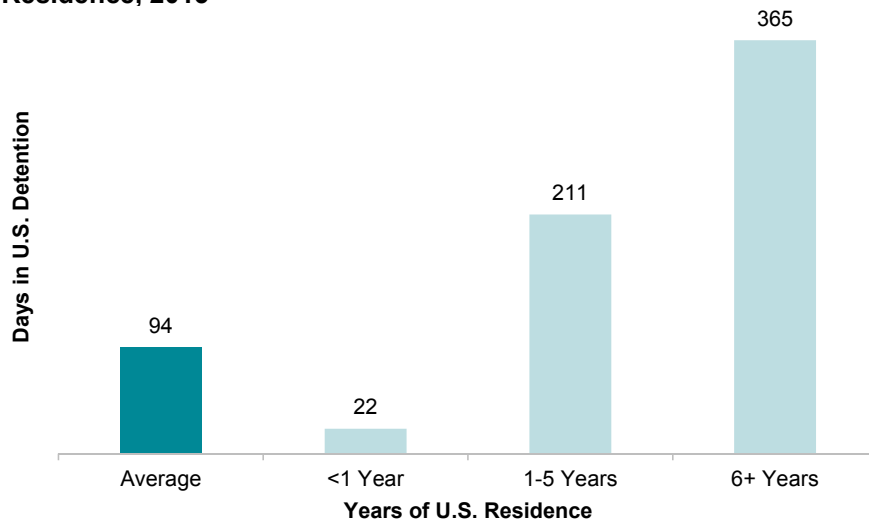
	2005	2010	2015
Share using a smuggler (%)	54	77	53
Average smuggling fee paid	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$4,100

*Notes:* Calculations of the amount paid to smugglers included only repatriated Mexican adults who reported paying at least \$1. The amount paid in each survey year was first converted from Mexican pesos to U.S. dollars based on 2005, 2010, and 2015 average annual exchange rates then adjusted for inflation using the U.S. Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U) based on 2015 dollars. Calculations were rounded to the nearest \$100.

*Source:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2005, 2010, and 2015 surveys.

## I. Time in U.S. Detention

Repatriated adults with six years or more of U.S. residence had been detained on average for one year before being deported. For deportees who had stayed in the country between one to five years, the average detention time was 211 days, and for those who stayed less than a year it was 22 days (see Figure 6). Lengthy detention meant that many, if not most, of these deportees with longer U.S. residence served time in federal, state, or local prisons or jails for felonies or substantial misdemeanors.<sup>27</sup> These long detention periods also suggest that the deportation of long-term migrants generally aligned with the Obama administration’s immigration enforcement priorities, announced in 2010-11 and revised in 2014, that focused on deporting noncitizens with criminal convictions.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 6. Average Number of Days Repatriated Mexicans Were in U.S. Detention, by Years of U.S. Residence, 2015**

*Source:* MPI analysis of data from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey.

<sup>27</sup> The EMIF Norte survey asks respondents: “How long were you detained by immigration authorities?” Authors interpret responses as time detained in federal, state, or local prisons or jails.

<sup>28</sup> After initial revisions to ICE prosecutorial discretion guidelines in 2010-11, the Obama administration in November 2014 further refined its enforcement guidelines, establishing three priority categories for removal: (1) immigrants convicted of a felony or aggravated felony, or those who are gang members; (2) immigrants who entered or re-entered the United States unlawfully after January 1, 2014, or those convicted of three or more misdemeanor offenses or one serious misdemeanor, or another offense resulting in a sentence of 90 days or more; and (3) those who have a final order of removal. See DHS, “Policies for the Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Undocumented Immigrants” (memorandum, DHS, Washington, DC, November 20, 2014), [www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14\\_1120\\_memo\\_prosecutorial\\_discretion.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_prosecutorial_discretion.pdf).

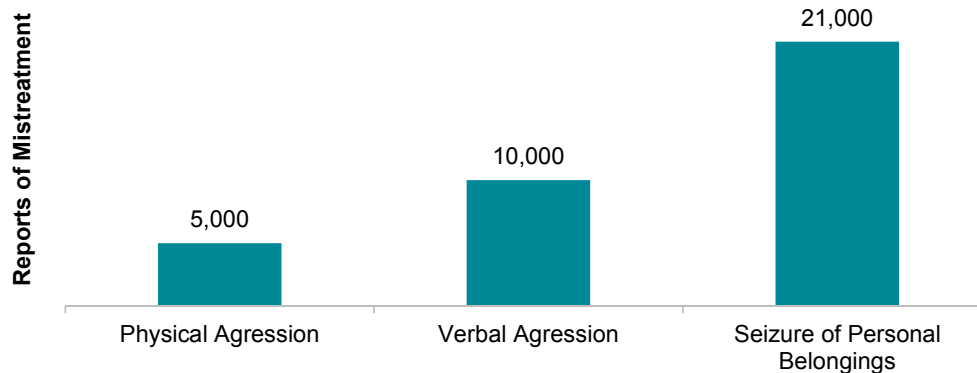


## 2. Treatment While in U.S. Detention

Deportees reported various forms of mistreatment by U.S. authorities while in detention (see Figure 7). Of the 196,000 repatriated adults, 5 percent (or 10,000) reported instances of verbal aggression (e.g., shouting or insulting) and 2 percent (5,000) cited instances of physical aggression (e.g., shoving or punching). Though these data suggest such mistreatment is uncommon, they may corroborate complaints about U.S. authorities in some media accounts and reports.<sup>29</sup> They may also reflect mistreatment in federal, state, or local prisons or jail—that is, not necessarily by federal immigration authorities.

Chief among the complaints was the seizure of personal belongings, reported by 11 percent of the 196,000 returned adults in 2015. A previous report on immigration detention conditions found that the personal belongings of about one-third of Mexicans repatriated between 2009 and 2012 were taken but not returned.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the Mexican identification card (a critical possession for those seeking to access government services or to purchase a bus ticket in Mexico) of one in four deportees was not returned by U.S. authorities. In February 2016, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signed repatriation agreements with the Mexican government that included language on the timely return of personal belongings.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 7. Mistreatment by U.S. Authorities Reported by Repatriated Mexican Adults, 2015**



*Note:* Individual survey respondents could indicate more than one form of mistreatment. Mistreatment might have occurred while in federal, state, or local jails or prisons—not necessarily by U.S. immigration authorities.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

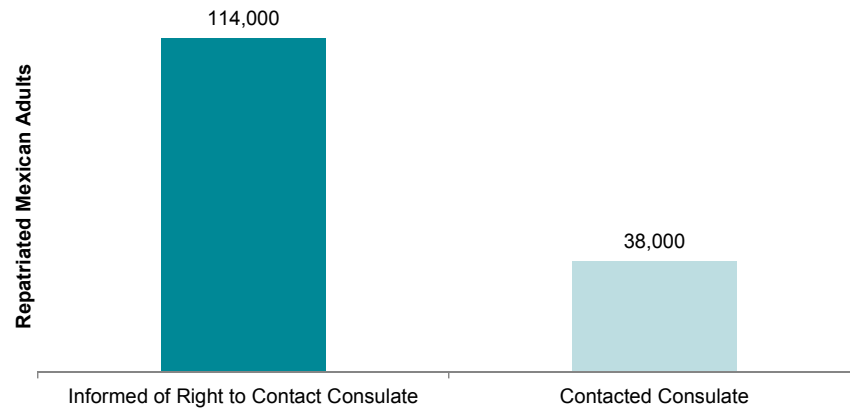
- <sup>29</sup> Daniel E. Martinez, Guillermo Cantor, and Walter A. Ewing, *No Action Taken: Lack of CBP Accountability in Responding to Complaints of Abuse* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, 2014), [www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/No%20Action%20Taken\\_Final.pdf](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/No%20Action%20Taken_Final.pdf).
- <sup>30</sup> Daniel Martinez and Jeremy Slack, *Bordering on Criminal: The Routine Abuse of Migrants in the Removal System* (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, 2013), 1, [www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/bordering-criminal-routine-abuse-migrants-removal-system](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/bordering-criminal-routine-abuse-migrants-removal-system).
- <sup>31</sup> Agreements state that “[...] signatory participants should take all feasible steps to ensure that property, valuables, and money retained, are available for return to the rightful owner at the time of initial release from DHS custody.” See DHS, “Updated U.S.-Mexico Local Repatriation Agreements,” updated February 26, 2016, [www.dhs.gov/publication/updated-us-mexico-local-repatriation-arrangements](http://www.dhs.gov/publication/updated-us-mexico-local-repatriation-arrangements).



### C. Mexican Consular Contact

Deportees reported differing experiences with Mexican consular contact in the United States. Of the 196,000 repatriated adults, 58 percent (114,000) were informed of their right to contact the Mexican consulate by U.S. authorities (see Figure 8), but just 20 percent actually did so. Repatriated adults who had been in the United States for more than one year were nearly twice as likely to have contacted a consulate (31 percent) as those who had been in the country for less time (16 percent).<sup>32</sup> These differences may reflect the expedited nature of repatriations or less need for consular services among those with a short U.S. stay.

**Figure 8. Repatriated Mexican Adults Who Reported Being Informed of Their Right to Contact a Consulate and Exercising This Right, 2015**



*Note:* Each column represents a unique survey question asked of all repatriated Mexican adults.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

There are various reasons why repatriated Mexican adults did not contact a consulate. Forty-five percent (85,000) reported they did not perceive consular services as useful; one-third (63,000) said they did not know they had a right to contact the consulate; and 10 percent (19,000) said U.S. authorities did not permit them to make contact (see Figure 9).<sup>33</sup>

Deportees who did make contact with a consular official were primarily assisted with contacting relatives (59 percent, or 22,000) or given information or help on migration issues (25 percent, 10,000). Eight percent (3,000) reported receiving no services after making contact.<sup>34</sup> Most who contacted consular offices rated their services as good (68 percent) or very good (14 percent).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> MPI calculations from EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015. A June 2016 class-action settlement with ICE loosened restrictions on phone usage in four northern California immigration detention centers, making it easier to contact a consulate. See American Civil Liberties Union, “Immigration Officials Agree to Give Immigrant Detainees Fighting Deportation Reliable Access to Phones,” updated June 14, 2016, [www.aclu.org/news/aclu-settlement-ice-will-allow-immigrants-held-detention-use-functional-telephones-contacting](http://www.aclu.org/news/aclu-settlement-ice-will-allow-immigrants-held-detention-use-functional-telephones-contacting).

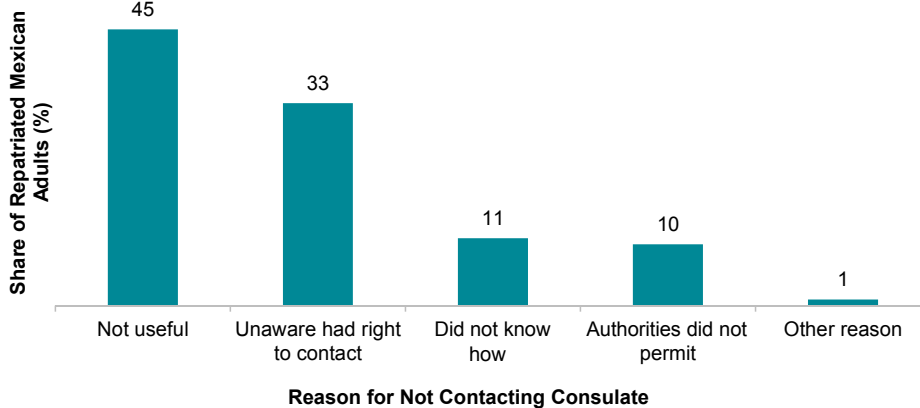
<sup>34</sup> MPI calculations from EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015. Five percent of the sample who did contact a consulate had missing data on this question, representing approximately 2,000 repatriated Mexican adults.

<sup>35</sup> MPI analysis of data from EMIF Norte 2015 survey. Five percent of the sample had missing data on this question.





**Figure 9. Principal Reasons Cited by Repatriated Mexican Adults for Not Contacting a Consulate, (%), 2015**



Note: Calculations exclude missing cases (approximately 5,000 adults or 2 percent of the total sample).

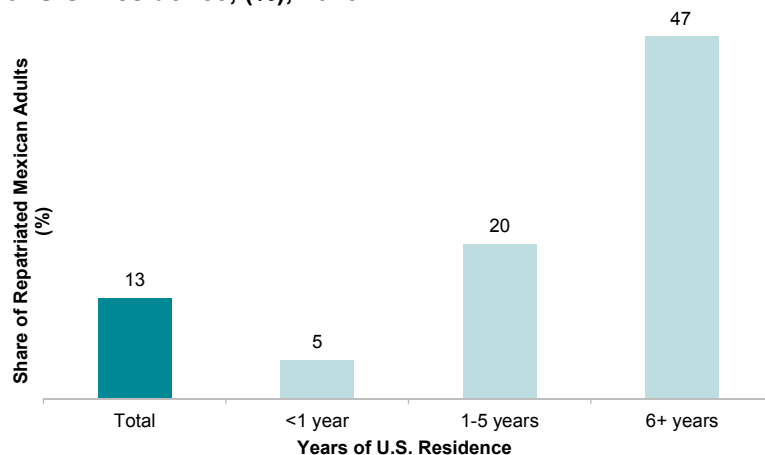
Source: MPI analysis of data from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey.

#### D. Minor Children Left in the United States

The share of repatriated Mexican adults who had left a child under age 18 behind aligned with the length of their time in the United States. Thirteen percent of adults (26,000) repatriated in 2015 left at least one child in the United States (see Figure 10). Forty-seven percent of those who spent six or more years in the United States left a child behind, compared with 20 percent of those who had been in the country for one to five years and 5 percent of those in the country for less than one year.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the children left in the United States are U.S. citizens. Approximately 17,000 adults who spent one or more years in the United States were separated through deportation from their U.S.-born children in 2015.<sup>37</sup> Previous reports have outlined the psychological and economic impacts parental deportation can have on children left behind in the United States.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 10. Repatriated Mexican Adults Leaving at Least One Minor Child in the United States, by Years of U.S. Residence, (%), 2015**



Source: MPI analysis of data from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey.

<sup>36</sup> MPI calculations from EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, "Boletines Estadísticos," 2015.

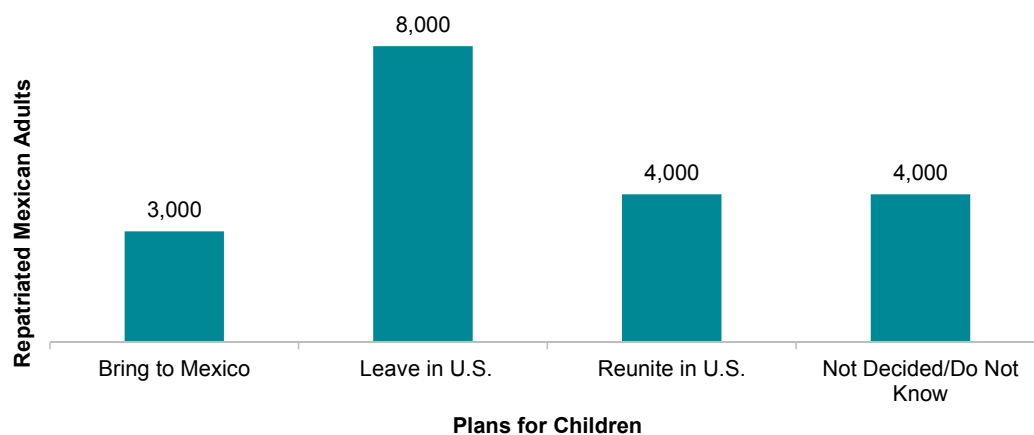
<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Heather Koball et al., *Health and Social Service Needs of U.S.-Citizen Children with Detained or Deported Immigrant Parents* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute and MPI, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/health-and-social-service-needs-us-citizen-children-detained-or-deported-immigrant-parents](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/health-and-social-service-needs-us-citizen-children-detained-or-deported-immigrant-parents); Capps et al., *Deferred Action for Unauthorized Immigrant Parents*.

## Plans for Minor Children in the United States

Of 18,000 repatriated parents with more than one year of U.S. residence, only a minority reported plans to return.<sup>39</sup> Forty-two percent (8,000) said they would leave their children in the United States, 23 percent (4,000) said they would return to reunite with their families, and 15 percent (3,000) said they would bring their children to Mexico (see Figure 11).<sup>40</sup>

**Figure 11. Repatriated Mexican Parents of Minor Children in the United States, by Plans for Children, 2015**



*Notes:* The survey question was asked only of repatriated parents who spent one or more years in the United States. Calculations exclude 28 percent (or approximately 7,000) of parents in the sample who were either not asked the question or did not respond. Figures do not add to 18,000 due to rounding.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

## E. Intended Return Destinations in Mexico

The top five states of destination for repatriated adults intending to stay in Mexico in 2015 were: Guanajuato, Guerrero, and Oaxaca, with 7,000 people apiece; and Michoacán and Sonora, with 6,000 each (see Figure 12). Together these five states accounted for 39 percent of all deportees intending to stay in Mexico. By comparison, 26 percent of Mexicans who reported migrating to the United States in 2014 were from these five states.<sup>41</sup> Remittances to these states amounted to \$7.7 billion in 2015, representing 31 percent of the \$24.8 billion sent to Mexico that year.<sup>42</sup> Under initiatives such as the “Tres por Uno” Migrant Program, migrant groups and associations from these states also provide collective remittances that are matched threefold by federal, state, and local governments in the form of grants for

<sup>39</sup> The survey question was asked only of repatriated Mexican parents who spent at least one year in the United States.

<sup>40</sup> Nine percent of parents in the sample had missing data on this question, representing approximately 3,000 out of 26,000 repatriated Mexican parents.

<sup>41</sup> MPI, “Origins of Mexican Migrants to the United States by Mexican State of Residence, Number, and Share, 2004-2014,” accessed September 7, 2016, [www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/origins-mexican-migrants-united-states-mexican-state-residence-number-and?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/origins-mexican-migrants-united-states-mexican-state-residence-number-and?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true).

<sup>42</sup> BBVA Bancomer, *Situación Migración México, Primer Semestre 2016* (Mexico City: BBVA Bancomer, 2016), 11, [www.fundacionbbvabancomer.org/imagenes/docs/SitMig-2016-1er-semester.pdf](http://www.fundacionbbvabancomer.org/imagenes/docs/SitMig-2016-1er-semester.pdf).



specific infrastructure and labor market investment projects.<sup>43</sup> These investments may be important in establishing and maintaining reintegration programs for repatriated Mexicans.

**Figure 12. Intended Return Destinations of Repatriated Mexican Adults, by State, 2015**



*Notes:* Of the 91,000 repatriated Mexican adults who reported intentions to stay in Mexico, 81,000 indicated a state of return, 6,000 indicated an unspecified area of the U.S.-Mexico border region, and 4,000 did not provide an answer or were excluded due to coding limitations. Disaggregated data on the number of repatriated adults returning to the top 15 states in Mexico can be found in Appendix B.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from COLEF, EMIF Norte 2015 survey; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.

At the same time, these unique data on return destinations may provide a guide for allocating government resources to migrant reintegration programs. To maximize the reach of its reintegration services in health, education, and labor, the Mexican government could prioritize states with the highest concentrations of repatriated adults (see Appendix B for expanded state list).

Following objectives set in its National Development Plan, Mexico has begun to strengthen its response to the overall rise in the number of returning migrants (both deportees and those returning voluntarily) by employing its vast consular network in the United States—one of the largest in the world—to streamline

<sup>43</sup> The most recent state-level data indicate that in 2004 migrant organizations from Guanajuato, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Oaxaca raised \$12.4 million (adjusted to 2015 dollars) to invest in 213 projects through the 3x1 Migrant Program. In 2015, the program’s total investment in all states amounted to approximately \$94 million. See Camara de Diputados, *El Impacto de las Remesas Familiares en Mexico y su Uso Productivo* (Mexico City: Center for Social Studies and Public Opinion, 2004), 48, [www3.diputados.gob.mx/camara/content/download/21150/104970/file/FATSM004%20EI%20impacto%20de%20las%20remesas%20familiares%20en%20Mexico%20y%20su.pdf](http://www3.diputados.gob.mx/camara/content/download/21150/104970/file/FATSM004%20EI%20impacto%20de%20las%20remesas%20familiares%20en%20Mexico%20y%20su.pdf); SEGOB, “El Programa 3x1 para Migrantes Impulsará en 2016 la Generación de Ingresos y Autoempleo,” accessed September 14, 2016, [www.gob.mx/sedesol/prensa/el-programa-3x1-para-migrantes-impulsara-en-2016-la-generacion-de-ingresos-y-autoempleo](http://www.gob.mx/sedesol/prensa/el-programa-3x1-para-migrantes-impulsara-en-2016-la-generacion-de-ingresos-y-autoempleo).



return, reception, and reintegration processes for its citizens.<sup>44</sup> Addressing the needs of repatriated migrants will require a clear understanding of who they are, how the deportation process facilitates or complicates their return, and where in Mexico they are settling.

## IV. Conclusion

Over the past decade the share and number of repatriated Mexican adults intending to return to the United States fell sharply, signaling that the revolving door of repeat migration is slowing. Ninety-five percent of Mexicans deported or voluntarily returned by the U.S. government in 2005 reported intending to return to the United States—a rate that dropped to 49 percent by 2015. This represents an 80 percent drop in the number of deportees seeking to return to the United States (from 471,000 to 95,000). Conversely, the share of repatriated adults intending to remain in Mexico surged from 5 percent to 47 percent between 2005 and 2015, nearly a 250 percent increase (from 26,000 to 91,000). Though the exact reasons for this shift are not fully evident from the Mexican survey data, the findings are consistent with other analyses that document the dangers and difficulties of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in recent years. U.S. policies that criminalize repeat unauthorized entries serve as a further deterrent. The relatively weak economy in the United States since the 2007-09 recession and demographic and economic changes in Mexico have also played important roles in this shift.

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*Over the past decade the share and number of repatriated Mexican adults intending to return to the United States fell sharply, signaling that ... repeat migration is slowing.*

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The stay-in-Mexico trend, which steadily developed over the past decade and accelerated after 2010, appears to signal a new chapter in migration dynamics at a pivotal time in U.S.-Mexico relations. Recent changes in U.S. immigration policy may lead to a further boost in border enforcement and a significant increase in removal of Mexican immigrants from the United States. In this context, the successful reception and reintegration of repatriated adults present both a challenge for the Mexican government and an important opportunity to maximize the benefits of return migration.

The social and economic outcomes of returned Mexicans and their children will ultimately be determined by continued economic growth in Mexico, success in the reintegration of those who have been deported along with government policies directed at them, and the support of civil society and other stakeholders. As returnees rebuild their lives in Mexico, their social and economic reintegration will play a critical role in determining whether the revolving door of repeat migration continues to slow.

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<sup>44</sup> In its National Development Plan 2013-18, the Mexican government committed to establishing reintegration mechanisms for returning Mexicans and strengthening repatriation programs. As an expansion of the “We Are Mexicans” (Somos Mexicanos) program established by the Interior Ministry in March 2014, the “We Are Mexicans: The Doors Are Open for You Here” program announced by Foreign Minister Claudia Ruiz Massieu in June 2016 seeks to strengthen the social reintegration of repatriated Mexicans to ensure that their return is dignified, productive, and beneficial, and that it bolsters family well-being and regional and national development. The program’s specific goals are to: (1) strengthen coordination efforts among government agencies; (2) strengthen the impact of assistance programs for repatriated Mexicans according to their needs in their place of reception or destination; (3) increase their access to support programs; (4) identify individual needs and implement education, work, and family programs; and (5) provide these services with a focus on human rights, the gender perspective, and the best interests of the child, with special attention to vulnerable groups. See *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, “Somos Mexicanos,” *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Ciudad de México, July 6, 2016, [http://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5443723&fecha=06/07/2016](http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5443723&fecha=06/07/2016).



## Appendices

### A. Methods

After examining the Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF Norte) sampling frame and establishing that it is representative of the repatriated Mexican adult population, Migration Policy Institute (MPI) researchers applied survey shares in the EMIF Norte survey to the total number of Mexican adults repatriated from the United States, as reported by the Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB). In this way, researchers sought to estimate the magnitude of return flows.

Since its inception in 1993, EMIF Norte has been administered by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), a Mexican public research institution, in collaboration with numerous Mexican government entities, including SEGOB, the National Population Council (CONAPO), and the Foreign Ministry (SRE).<sup>45</sup> To examine the sociodemographic characteristics and experiences of Mexicans removed by the United States, COLEF employs a probabilistic sampling frame to obtain a random sample of the population.<sup>46</sup> COLEF identifies returning migrants as they re-enter Mexico at official reception points along the U.S.-Mexico border, capturing both expedited removals at the border (i.e., those quickly apprehended and turned around) as well as deportees apprehended in the interior of the United States. In 2015, EMIF Norte was administered at ten of 11 official border reception points that processed 92 percent of all deportees, and in 2016 extended its reach to the Mexico City airport, where an increasing number of Mexicans are returned through the Procedure of Repatriation to the Interior of Mexico (Procedimiento de Repatriación al Interior de México, or PRIM).<sup>47</sup>

#### 1. Comparing Data Sources

To establish that EMIF Norte data are representative of the Mexican repatriated adult population and comparable to SEGOB repatriation data, researchers examined differences in both datasets and compared sample and population distributions.

The 2015 EMIF Norte surveyed nearly 5,000 repatriated Mexicans who were at least 15 years old, and 2015 SEGOB data recorded 207,000 repatriations of Mexican minors and adults (ages 18 and older). To establish parity across populations in both datasets, researchers excluded survey responses from minors in the EMIF Norte (38 cases) and the repatriations of minors from SEGOB data (12,000 cases).<sup>48</sup> Researchers then applied the EMIF survey shares to the total of 196,000 repatriated Mexican adults in SEGOB data to produce the estimates in this report, excluding additional cases where answers were missing on individual survey questions, where necessary and as described earlier. In addition, researchers compared the gender composition and shares of Mexican nationals deported across official reception points in both data sources, and verified that they were comparable.

#### 2. Data Limitations

Both the EMIF Norte survey and SEGOB data on Mexican repatriations are trusted and reliable data sources that have been widely used in analyses by government entities in Mexico and the United States,

45 COLEF, "Instituciones participantes en las EMIF," updated September 2016, [www.colef.mx/emif/instituciones.php](http://www.colef.mx/emif/instituciones.php).

46 In addition to surveying repatriated Mexican nationals at official reception points, EMIF Norte separately surveys two other migrant groups that are excluded from this analysis: Mexicans seeking to enter the United States or settle in cities along the U.S.-Mexico border, and Mexicans moving from the United States or the U.S.-Mexico border region to the interior of Mexico.

47 Instituto Nacional de Migración, "Programas de repatriación," updated June 29, 2016, [www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/programa-de-repatriacion-12469](http://www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/programa-de-repatriacion-12469).

48 In addition, researchers excluded 47 EMIF cases (1 percent of all cases) that had inconsistent answers to some of the questions and other data-quality problems.



as well as by research institutions in both countries.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, both data sources have limitations relevant to the analyses in this report.

The EMIF Norte survey measures responses according to counts, not unique individuals, and the questionnaire does not identify whether an individual has previously taken the survey. Therefore, it is possible that some participants responded to the survey multiple times if they were removed more than once in a given year. Similarly, SEGOB data measure repatriation events, not unique individuals, and therefore it is also possible that recorded events reflected multiple counts of the same individual.

Additionally, the implementation design of the EMIF Norte survey has two important limitations. It is unclear whether repatriated Mexicans participating in the survey were (1) apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border or in the U.S. interior, or (2) whether they were formally removed by immigration authorities under a court order or were returned under “voluntary return or departure” procedures. Noncitizens who are formally removed—with or without a court hearing—face longer readmission bars than those who leave voluntarily after apprehension. Therefore, data reported in this report cannot determine whether sociodemographic trends vary between repatriated Mexican adults who were formally removed and those who were granted voluntary return or departure. Because the practice of voluntary return and departure has decreased sharply, this limitation is not likely to affect a large share of the repatriated population in this report. Data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) indicate that the number of all apprehended migrants granted voluntary return or departure dropped from 1 million in fiscal year (FY) 2005 to 163,000 in FY 2014—a decrease of 85 percent. The number of Mexican immigrants granted voluntary return or departure also decreased by 85 percent between FY 2009 and FY 2014.<sup>50</sup> Here, voluntary returns and departures are a form of deportation, and do not include individuals who were not apprehended by DHS but left the United States on their own accord for other reasons.

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49 CONAPO and SEGOB, *20 Años de la Encuesta Sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México* (Mexico City: CONAPO and SEGOB, 2014), [www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/104362/20\\_a\\_os\\_EMIF\\_Norte.pdf](http://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/104362/20_a_os_EMIF_Norte.pdf); Roberts, Hanson, Cornwell, and Borger, *An Analysis of Migrant Smuggling Costs along the Southwest Border*; Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera, *Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less*.

50 DHS, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2014.”



## B. Top 15 State Destinations for Repatriated Mexican Adults

**Table A-1. Top 15 States Receiving Repatriated Mexican Adults, by Time Spent in the United States, (Thousands), 2015**

State	Years of U.S. Residence			Total
	Less than One Year	One to Five Years	Six or More Years	
Guanajuato	5.4	1.66	0.21	7.28
Guerrero	5.91	0.34	0.47	6.72
Oaxaca	5.74	0.6	0.21	6.55
Sonora	4.3	1.02	0.34	5.66
Michoacán	4.47	0.51	0.55	5.53
Sinaloa	4.04	0.72	0.43	5.19
Puebla	3.74	0.13	0.26	4.13
Chiapas	3.23	0.17	0.3	3.7
México	2.81	0.21	0.68	3.7
Durango	2.47	0.47	0.17	3.11
Jalisco	2.13	0.26	0.43	2.81
Chihuahua	1.91	0.34	0.51	2.77
Veracruz	2.34	0.17	0.21	2.72
Aguascalientes	1.83	0.47	0.34	2.64
Distrito Federal	1.91	0.04	0.34	2.3

*Note:* Of the 91,000 estimated individuals who reported an intent to stay in Mexico, 81,000 indicated a destination state, 6,000 mentioned an unspecified area of the U.S.-Mexico border region, and 4,000 did not answer the question or were excluded due to coding limitations.

*Sources:* MPI calculations from Colegio de la Frontera Norte, “Encuesta sobre migración en la frontera norte de México (EMIF Norte),” 2015; SEGOB, “Boletines Estadísticos,” 2015.



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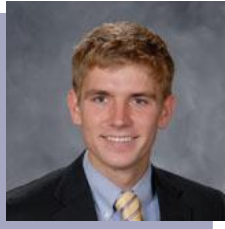
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## About the Authors



**Ryan Schultheis** is a former research intern at Migration Policy Institute (MPI), where he provided support for the Regional Migration Study Group on issues such as return migration to Mexico and mixed migration flows from Central America's Northern Triangle.

Mr. Schultheis is a Program Assistant at the Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) field office in Houston, where he supports efforts to secure pro bono legal representation for nondetained unaccompanied child migrants. Prior to his time at MPI, Mr. Schultheis completed a Fulbright fellowship in Oaxaca, Mexico where he taught English in a public high school and volunteered at an independent shelter for adolescent migrants from Central America.

He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame with distinction in political science and international economics.



**Ariel G. Ruiz Soto** is a Research Assistant at MPI where he provides quantitative research support across programs. His research focuses on the impact of U.S. immigration policies on immigrant experiences of socioeconomic integration across varying geographical and political contexts. More recently, Mr. Ruiz Soto has analyzed methodological approaches to estimate sociodemographic trends of the unauthorized immigrant population in the United States.

His research has been published in *Latino Studies* and *Crossing the United States-Mexico Border: Policies, Dynamics, and Consequences of Mexican Migration to the United States* (University of Texas Press).

Mr. Ruiz Soto holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration with an emphasis on immigration policy and service provision, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Whitman College.



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[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 001 202-266-1940  
Fax: 001 202-266-1900

