Migration Trends and Transnational Families in North America: Parenting Practice and Policies

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OVERVIEW

This presentation reviews recent trends of regional migration and changing demographics in North America. It also reviews the literature on the experiences of transnational families, parenting across distance, related mental health issues, and a preliminary comparison of the reunification policies of Canada and the United States, and Mexico.
REGIONAL MIGRATION TRENDS

Canada

• Currently, estimated population of 40 million people.
• Largest ethnic groups of people born outside of Canada migrated from India, China, and the Philippines.
• Non-permanent residents 20-34 years old accounted for 60.1% of the NPR population in 2021.
• About 1 and 4 residents are immigrants.
• Approximately 500,000 undocumented migrants.
CANADA MIGRATION TRENDS


Canada Population Change 2016-2021
CANADA MIGRATION TRENDS

Number and Percentage of Immigrants in Canada

Source: Statistics Canada. Available at https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/g-a001-eng.htm
REGIONAL MIGRATION TRENDS

United States

• 1 in 4 children are with at least one immigrant parent in the U.S.
• 13.9% of the population in the U.S. was foreign-born in 2022.
• On average, the U.S. resettles 73,300 refugees annually through its resettlement program.
• The annual number of new legal permanent residents (LPRs; including green card holders) has been fluctuating for decades.
• Regional economic status, financial opportunities, and other family-related reasons impacted within-country migration trend in the U.S.
U.S. MIGRATION TRENDS

Annual Number of U.S. Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs), Fiscal Years 1980-2022

U.S. MIGRATION TRENDS

REGIONAL MIGRATION TRENDS

Mexico

- As of July 1, 2022, the U.S. Hispanic population had reached 63.7 million, making it the largest racial or ethnic immigrant group.

- Nearly one in six people in the U.S. being born outside the country, and among these immigrants, Mexican-born individuals account for 25% of the total.

- The decline in Mexican immigrants in the U.S. has been due mostly to a decrease in the undocumented immigrant population from Mexico, in accordance with stricter enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

- Economic factors represent a significant driver of migration, with many people and families pursuing enhanced job opportunities and a higher quality of life. Equally important is the desire for family reunification.
## MEXICO MIGRATION TRENDS

### 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage 2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search for work or work</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with the family</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public insecurity or violence</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration regularization</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Another reason</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Available at [https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/migracion/](https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/migracion/)

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**Notes and Calls:**
- From August 2013 to October 5, 2018.
- Source:
  - National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID) (/programas/enadid/2018/)
ET MIGRATION FROM MEXICO TO U.S. RETURNED TO POSITIVE BETWEEN 2013-2018

**In thousands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>U.S. to Mexico</th>
<th>Mexico to U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 to 2000</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>2,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 to 2010</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 to 2014</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 to 2018</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

- Four major reasons for family separation and migration -- economic opportunity, sociopolitical crisis, personal crisis, and normative cultural practice in pursuing education (de Guzman et al, 2018).

- Refugee families face limited access to resources, cultural adaptation, financial difficulties, and emotional distress from family separation (Lim, 2009).

- Transnational couple relationship often experiences shifting power to women in a new sociocultural, economic context of gendered ideologies.
TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

- Recent transnational families with left behind children (LBC) experience:
  1. Reconfiguration of the family
  2. Parenting through digital technology
  3. Kinship care and care rearrangement for children
  4. Conflicts upon reunification between family members

LBC inevitably face increased developmental risks due to their parental absence; they have higher risks for depression and anxiety, feeling unwanted, and dropping out of school than children with accompanied parents (Delgado, 2020).
TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERHOOD, FAMILIES, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Transnational motherhood pertains to the efforts made by migrant mothers to meet their maternal responsibilities by providing their children with essential support (e.g., financial assistance, emotional care).
- Transnational mothers are involved in parenting whether they are physically present or not.
- Migrant mothers who are socialized into the gendered role may feel they abandoned their children and thus have a strong feeling of guilt.
• Mother-child separation during the migration process has various negative impacts and add stressors and negative effects on both mothers’ mental health and children’s development.

• The left-behind children (LBC) in their homelands due to mothers’ migration have been found to face multiple risks for poor well-being and having a hard time navigating new life when they were reunited with their mothers in the U.S.. These children continued to struggle in their adolescence.
Both Canada and the U.S. have adopted new immigration measures to reunite families who are currently separated by borders.

In the past 10 years, the United States has used Family Reunification Parole Process programs to bring separated family members in different countries to the U.S.

Canadian government reunites families with simple and quick procedures and use the reunification program to relieve the lack of workers in labor markets.
• Since January 2023, Mexico and U.S. have joined on migration initiatives via a set of additional measures to address the humanitarian context at the shared border and in the region.

• Both countries are willing to expand legal pathways while the U.S. intends to welcome as many as 100,000 individuals from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador under the family reunification parole processes.

• Mexico will keep accepting migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela on humanitarian grounds.
RECOMMENDATION #1

Take a **holistic approach** by establishing a standing interagency that integrates, coordinates, and synchronizes the reunification collaboration between and with federal agencies and NGOs.
RECOMMENDATION #2

Adopt policies that address both family reunification and labor shortage by uniting family members faster and providing a path for newcomers to support themselves upon their arrival.
RECOMMENDATION #3

Collaborate between governments in addressing the challenges in the reunification of transnational families.
SELECTED REFERENCES


