

Mexico USA Case Study

Migration from Mexico to the United States of America primarily involves the movement of Mexicans from Mexico to the southern states of America which border Mexico. In order to gain access to America, Mexicans must cross the "United States - Mexico Border", a border which spans four US states and six Mexican states. In America, it starts in California and ends in Texas (east to west). Due to their proximity to the border and the high availability of work in these states, the majority of Mexicans move to California followed by Texas. California currently houses 11,423,000 immigrants with Texas holding 7,951,000.

Many Mexicans from rural communities migrate to America, the majority being males who move to America and then send money back to their families in Mexico. Many of these immigrants enter the country illegally, which often requires them to cross a large desert that separates Mexico and America and the Rio Grande. These journeys are dangerous and many immigrants have died, or nearly died, trying to cross into America through these routes.

Reasons for migration:

Push factors:

- There are incredibly high crime rates in Mexico, especially in the capital. Homicide rates come in at around 10-14 per 100,000 people (world average 10.9 per 100,000) and drug related crimes are a major concern. It is thought that in the past five years, 47,500 people have been killed in crimes relating to drugs. Many Mexicans will move out of fear for their lives and hope that America is a more stable place to live, with lower crime rates.
- Unemployment and poverty is a major problem in Mexico and has risen exponentially in recent years. In 2000, unemployment rates in Mexico were at 2.2, however, in 2009, they rose by 34.43%, leaving them standing at 5.37 in 2010. A large portion of the Mexican population are farmers, living in rural areas where extreme temperatures and poor quality land make it difficult to actually farm. This is causing many Mexican families to struggle, with 47% of the population living under the poverty line. With these high unemployment and poverty rates, people are forced to move to America, where they have better prospects, in order to be able to support their families and maintain a reasonable standard of living.
- The climate and natural hazards in Mexico could force people to move to America. Mexico is a very arid area which suffers from water shortages even in the more developed areas of Mexico. The country also suffers from natural disasters including volcanoes, earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis. Recent natural disasters could force people to migrate if their homes have been destroyed or made uninhabitable. People who live in danger zones could also migrate out of fear for their lives.

Pull Factors:

- There is a noticeable difference in the quality of life between America and Mexico. Poverty, as mentioned above, is a major issue in Mexico, with 6% of the population lacking access to “improved” drinking water. Mexico’s infrastructure is severely undeveloped when compared to America’s. Despite being the 11th richest country in the World, Mexico also has the 10th highest poverty. With America offering significantly better living standards and services, such as health care, people are enticed to move to America for a better life.
- Existing migrant communities in states such as Texas and California help to pull people towards migration. Existing communities make it easier for people to settle once moved and family members and friends who have already moved can encourage others to move. People are also enticed to move in order to be with their families. Cousins and brothers will often move in with their relatives after they have lived in America for a while in order to be with their family.
- 86.1% of the Mexican population can read and write versus 99% of the population in America. In addition, the majority of students in Mexico finish school at the age of 14, versus 16 in America. These statistics show that there are significantly better academic opportunities in America than in Mexico, which can entice Mexicans to migrate for an improved education, either for themselves or, more likely, their future children, in order to give them more opportunities in the world and allow them to gain higher paying jobs.

Impacts

Social:

- Assimilation of Mexicans into American communities has been problematic. Many Mexicans can’t speak fluent English and studies show that their ability to speak English doesn’t improve drastically whilst they live in the US. This is largely due to them living in closed communities of other Mexican immigrants which reduces their need to assimilate with America. This can, in turn, create tension between migrants and locals which can, in extreme cases, lead to segregation, crime and violence.
- There are concerns that immigrants are increasing crime rates in areas that they migrate to. Low income and poor education are factors which can lead to crime. In addition, as Mexico is a country associated with drug trafficking, there are concerns that Mexican migrants could be smuggling drugs into America, creating the problem of drug related crimes.
- The introduction of Mexican cultural traditions to America, especially in states with large numbers of migrants, have helped to improve cultural aspects of those states. Mexican themed food has become incredibly popular in America with burrito and taco fast food shops opening up across the country. The new food and music has helped to improve the cultural diversity of America significantly.
- With such a large number of Mexican migrants not speaking English fluently, it is now common for Spanish to be taught in American schools, widening the skill set of the younger population and improving the potential career opportunities that students may have. This also (slightly)

helps ease social tensions caused by people speaking different languages which locals don't understand.

- With so many people leaving Mexico, it's developing an increasingly dependent population as the majority of people left are the elderly who can not work. Furthermore, the lack of young fertile couples is reducing the birth rate in Mexico, further increasing the dependency ratio as there is no workforce to pay taxes to support the elderly.
- The majority of migrants leaving Mexico are males leaving a population with a high number of females. This is problematic as they are unable to find partners, get married and, in a mostly catholic country, have children (out of wedlock). This is, as mentioned above, reducing the birth rate and increasing the dependency ratio.

Economic

- Mexican migrants often take low paying, menial jobs, which, while low paying, offer higher wages than what they'd earn in Mexico. This was, at first, advantageous, as many Americans did not want these low paying jobs but companies needed people to fill these jobs. Now, as unemployment rises in America, Americans want these menial jobs but many migrants already have taken the jobs. This can lead to increased social tension as the Americans believe that their jobs are being taken.
- Migrants work at incredible low wages. Americans who are desperate for work are now often expected to work at these incredibly low wages too, which they can't afford to do, leading to increased poverty in America. Many companies are now also replacing American labour with cheaper migrant labour, also increasing unemployment rates and people are forced out of their jobs.
- While legal Mexican migrants are working and paying taxes, they often send money they earn back to their families in Mexico, rather than spending it in America, which can affect the country's economy as there is less money being spent on products which are taxed in America. Conversely, the increased amount of money being sent back to Mexico is helping its economy greatly as people now have money to spend on goods and services.
- As people move out of Mexico, pressure on land, social services and jobs is being relieved. Unemployment will fall and health services will no longer be over capacity as the population is reduced. The problem, however, arises when the young and skilled workforce leaves, resulting in a shortage of potential workers to fill these newly freed jobs and to work in these social services. A shortage of medically trained people, for example, could counteract the relieved health system.
- Mexico's population is very dependent on food grown in Mexico. Unfortunately, the majority of migrants come from rural areas, leaving a shortage of farmers and therefore the potential for food shortages in Mexico as the economically active people from rural areas leave.