

The end of Mexican migration: A century of durable patterns and (mostly) failed policies

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Mexican migration to the United States has grown sharply over the past 100 years. Today Mexicans comprise the largest group of legal immigrants and about one-half of all undocumented immigrants. Mexicans in the U.S. comprise about 11.2 million people—about the same as the total population of Ohio.

Explaining why Mexicans have moved to the United States to work seems straightforward, given the differences in economic opportunities between Mexico and the United States. Harder to explain is that while Mexican migration declined during past economic downturns, then recovered with the return of economic growth, this has not been the case after the 2008 Great Recession. Indeed, there has been a continued net return of Mexican immigrants to Mexico during the 2010s. Has Mexican migration come to an end? This presentation identifies major themes and persistent patterns of Mexican migration, the gradual replacement of Mexicans by Central Americans in the 2010s, and the reasons for failure and success in U.S. immigration policies with respect to Mexicans. Special attention is dedicated to the initiatives of the current U.S. administration and the challenges for the immediate future.

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