Pew Hispanic Center

Survey of Mexican Migrants

Part Three

December 6, 2005

About the Survey

Fieldwork was conducted at Mexican consulates in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh and Fresno from July 12, 2004, to Jan. 28, 2005. A total of 4,836 individuals responded to a 12-page questionnaire in Spanish. All respondents were in the process of applying for a *matrícula consular*, an identity card issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. This was not a random survey but one designed to generate the maximum number of observations of Mexican migrants who were seeking further documentation of their identity in the United States. (For further details see the methodological appendix at the end of this report.)

The Pew Hispanic Center is an independent research organization, and it formulated the questionnaire and controlled all of the fieldwork and data preparation. The Center wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Mexico, the Institute for Mexicans Abroad and the Mexican consulates in the seven cities where the survey was conducted for permitting the fieldwork to take place on consular premises. The data and conclusions presented in this report are the exclusive responsibility of the Pew Hispanic Center and do not necessarily reflect the official views of either the foreign ministry or the government of Mexico.

The Economic Transition to America

by Rakesh Kochhar
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Executive Summary

The vast majority of undocumented migrants from Mexico were gainfully employed before they left for the United States. Thus, failure to find work at home does not seem to be the primary reason that the estimated 6.3 million undocumented migrants from Mexico have come to the U.S. Policies aimed at reducing migration pressures by improving economic conditions in Mexico may also need to address factors such as wages, job quality, long-term prospects and perceptions of opportunity.

Once they arrive and pass through a relatively brief period of transition and adjustment, migrants have little trouble finding work. Family and social networks play a significant role in this; large shares of migrants report talking to people they know in the U.S. about job opportunities and living with relatives after arrival. They easily make transitions into new jobs, even though most find themselves working in industries that are new to them. Also, many are paid at minimum-wage levels or below, and it is not uncommon for these workers to experience relatively long spells of unemployment.

The demand for labor appears to play a strong role in shaping the economic destiny of Mexican migrants. Regardless of their background and origin in Mexico or their year of arrival, migrants are concentrated in the same handful of industries in the U.S.—agriculture, hospitality, construction and manufacturing. However, there are also signs of change in the characteristics of migrants and the nature of the demand for them. The more recently arrived and younger migrants from Mexico are better educated than their predecessors (though their education levels remain low by U.S. standards). They are also increasingly coming from a greater variety of regions in Mexico and making homes in new Mexican-migrant settlement areas in the U.S., such as New York and Raleigh, N.C. The latest arrivals are less likely to be farm workers and more likely to have a background in other industries, such as commerce and sales. More and more, Mexican migrants are being hired in the construction and hospitality industries in the U.S.

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These findings emerge from the Pew Hispanic Center's Survey of Mexican Migrants. The survey provides detailed information on the demographic characteristics, living arrangements, work experiences and attitudes toward immigration of 4,836 Mexican migrants who completed a 12-page questionnaire as they were applying for a *matrícula consular*, an identity document issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. Fieldwork was conducted in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh and Fresno, Calif., from July 12, 2004, to Jan. 28, 2005. While respondents were not asked directly to specify their immigration status, most are believed to lack authorization to work in the U.S. Thus, the survey provides a unique opportunity to study the economic status of a population that is otherwise very difficult to measure.

About the Report

This report is the third in a series of reports on findings from the Survey of Mexican Migrants. The first examined attitudes toward immigration and major demographic characteristics (Suro, 2005a), and the second covered attitudes about voting in Mexican elections (Suro, 2005b). A fourth study on banking and remittances and an additional report on gender and family structure are forthcoming. The completed reports are available at the Pew Hispanic Center Web site (www.pewhispanic.org). The full dataset of survey responses may also be downloaded from the Center's Web site.

The major findings of this study are:

- Unemployment plays a minimal role in motivating workers from Mexico to migrate to the U.S. Only 5% of the survey respondents who have been in the U.S. for two years or less were unemployed while still in Mexico.
- Unemployment in the U.S. is above normal only for respondents who have been here for less than six months. Nearly 15% of the latest arrivals reported they were not currently working. But only about 5% of respondents who migrated more than six months ago reported they were unemployed in the U.S.
- Immigration status has little impact on the likelihood of unemployment in the U.S. Respondents who reported that they have a U.S. government-issued ID had the same employment experiences as those who do not have any documents making them eligible for legal employment.
- Family networks play a key role in locating jobs for migrants. More than 80% of respondents have a relative other than a spouse or child in the U.S., and talking with friends and relatives in the U.S. was the most commonly cited method—by 45% of respondents—for finding information about jobs in the U.S.
- There is a steady and strong demand for migrant workers from Mexico in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and hospitality. These four industries employ about two-thirds of the survey respondents, irrespective of their background in Mexico or their year of arrival.
- Migrants from Mexico are responsive to regional variations in demand for their services. Construction is the dominant industry for employing migrants in Atlanta, Dallas and Raleigh; hospitality is the major employer in New York City; manufacturing in Chicago; and agriculture in Fresno.
- A very high percentage (38%) of migrants reported experiencing a spell of unemployment lasting more than a month in the past year. This unusually widespread—compared to other U.S. workers—experience of temporary unemployment is evident among Mexican migrants regardless of their year of arrival, legal status, education and survey city.
- The median weekly earnings of survey respondents are only $300. Earnings are especially low among women, those who speak no English and those who do not have a U.S. government-issued ID.
- Migrant workers in the survey have a background that resembles the core of Mexico's labor force. Two-thirds of respondents who entered the U.S. in the past two years worked in agriculture, construction, manufacturing or retail trade in Mexico. That is also true for 57% of the labor force in Mexico.

- Migrant characteristics differ according to the length of time a respondent has been in the United States. Most respondents (72%) lack even a high school education, but the youngest and most recently arrived have higher levels of schooling than long-term migrants. The percentage of migrants coming from the agriculture sector in Mexico has dropped from 41% among those who arrived more than 15 years ago to 20% among recent arrivals. Higher proportions of migrants are now coming to the U.S. with a background in construction, manufacturing and sales.
- The percentage of survey respondents employed in agriculture in the U.S. has dropped from 17% of those in country more than 15 years to 9% of recent arrivals. At the same time, the percentage employed in construction and hospitality has increased from 23% to 42%.

Founded in 2001, the Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, a Philadelphia-based charity. The Pew Hispanic Center's mission is to improve understanding of the diverse Hispanic population and to chronicle Latinos' growing impact on the nation. It is a project of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" in Washington, DC that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not advocate for or take positions on policy issues.

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Kochhar has over 15 years of research experience in the areas of labor economics and price and wage measurement and analysis. Prior to joining the Pew Hispanic Center, he was Senior Economist at Joel Popkin and Company, where he served as a consultant to government agencies, private firms, international agencies, and labor unions.

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1. Introduction

This study presents new evidence on the economic status of unauthorized migrants from Mexico. It is estimated that there are 6.3 million unauthorized workers in the United States at the present time.[1] Approximately 3.5 million of those workers are from Mexico alone. Moreover, research has shown that 85 percent of the migrants from Mexico are currently entering the U.S. without authorization. One consequence is that the overall flow of undocumented migrants to the U.S. is now estimated to be greater than the flow of legal migrants (Passel, 2005a, b). However, while much is inferred about the unauthorized population, it is an especially difficult population to identify and analyze in detail. This study calls upon a unique new data source to report on the pre-migration and post-migration economic status of a population of Mexican workers who largely are believed to be in the U.S. without authorization.

Unauthorized workers from Mexico are important to the U.S. labor market in both absolute numbers and pace of growth. The 3.5 million unauthorized workers from Mexico account for nearly 20 percent of the Hispanic labor force in the U.S. Also, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that undocumented workers from Mexico entered the U.S. at a rate of about 300,000 workers per year between 2000 and 2004.[2] Not only is that a significant component of the growth in the Hispanic labor force, it looms large when compared with the growth in the entire U.S. labor force. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the U.S. labor force increased at an average of about 1.2 million workers per year between 2000 and 2004. This means that during that period unauthorized workers from Mexico accounted for approximately one out of every four new workers in the U.S. labor force.[3]

A Note on Terminology

The terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably in this report.

The terms "migrants" and "migrant workers" are typically used to refer to respondents to the Survey of Mexican Migrants and the population they most closely resemble, namely, undocumented migrants from Mexico working in the U.S. The terms are not intended as references to the overall population of Mexican migrants in the United States or to workers who migrate from job to job.

This study explores three major questions regarding the unauthorized work force from Mexico.

First, it examines the labor market background of migrants prior to their departure from Mexico. Is the inability to find a job at home a primary motivation for migrating to the U.S.? Are these migrants representative of the labor force in Mexico or are they drawn from the fringes of the labor force? Do the demographic and economic characteristics of the most recent migrant stream differ from those of older generations of migrants?

[1] The total unauthorized population in the U.S., including children and other persons not of working age, is estimated to be 10.3 million.
[2] These are unpublished estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center based on the methodology used in Passel (2005a, b).
[3] This estimate is approximate for two reasons. First, the estimate of the undocumented workforce is a model-based estimate and not a precise count of the population. Second, BLS estimates of the labor force from 2000 to 2004 are not strictly comparable over time due to three changes in methodology in the survey—the Current Population Survey (CPS)—that is used to derive the official statistics. This may affect the accuracy of estimated changes in the U.S. labor force during this five-year period.

Second, the study analyzes the transition of these migrants into the U.S. labor market. What is the most common method by which they find work? How long does it take for them to find employment? How much do family networks in the U.S. play a role in the transition? Which industries in the U.S. have the greatest demand for migrant labor?

Finally, the study reports on the economic status of migrants in their new jobs in the U.S. What are their experiences with employment and earnings and do these vary by their background in Mexico? Do Mexican migrants fill different needs in different regional labor markets?

The data for this study are derived from the Pew Hispanic Center's Survey of Mexican Migrants. A major goal of the survey, described in detail in Appendix 2, was to capture a large sample of recently arrived migrants. These tend to be young adults. The survey gathered responses from 4,836 Mexicans of whom about 1,500 were younger than 35 years old and had been in the U.S. for five years or less. The universe for the survey was Mexican adults applying for a *matrícula consular,* an identity document issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. The diplomatic missions chosen for the survey are located in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh and Fresno. Fieldwork was conducted from July 12, 2004, to Jan. 28, 2005. The survey featured a 12-page questionnaire designed to gather detailed information on the demographic characteristics, living arrangements, work experiences and attitudes toward immigration of adult Mexican migrants.

Respondents to the Survey of Mexican Migrants were not asked directly to specify their immigration status. However, slightly more than half of the respondents said they did not have any form of photo ID issued by a government agency in the U.S. The share of respondents saying they had no U.S.-issued identity documents was much higher among the more recently arrived—80% among those in the country for two years or less and 75% for those in the country for five years or less.

An applicant for a *matrícula consular* is not necessarily an unauthorized migrant. However, under normal circumstances, a legal immigrant should be in possession of a U.S.-issued document attesting to his or her immigration status, and that document can be used to acquire a Social Security card, a driver's license or other forms of photo ID issued by government agencies in the U.S. The survey data and other evidence suggest that a substantial share of the respondents, especially among those who are young and recently arrived, are in the U.S. without legal immigrant status. Thus, the Survey of Mexican Migrants presents a rare opportunity to analyze the economic status of a population that by its nature is exceptionally difficult to measure and study: Mexicans who live in the U.S. without proper documentation and in particular those who have been in the country for only a few years.

The analysis in this report is organized into three principal sections. Section 2 presents the economic background of Mexican workers before they migrated to the U.S. The transition of those workers into the U.S. labor market is analyzed in Section 3. Finally, Section 4 reports on the employment and earning experience of survey respondents after their arrival in the U.S. The report also has two appendices. The first highlights some key demographic characteristics of the respondents to the survey. Appendix 2 contains a detailed description of the Survey of Mexican Migrants.

A Note on Sample Size

The Survey of Mexican Migrants elicited a total of 4,836 responses. However, not all 4,836 respondents to the survey answered all questions. The statistics in this report are computed after omitting those with no responses to the questions at issue. Thus, the number of observations underlying the percentages reported in the paper varies depending on the topic. For example, 4,704 respondents out of the total sample of 4,836 reported their gender. The statistic that 59% of respondents are male is based on 4,704 responses. To take other examples, the cross-tabulation of U.S. ID and years in the U.S. is based on 4,351 valid responses to both questions and the cross-tabulation of survey city with state of origin in Mexico is derived from 4,818 responses. The implicit assumption is that non-responses are distributed in a random fashion and do not affect the computed proportions. This means, for example, that non-respondents to the gender question are not all male but, instead, males and females were similarly inclined to not answer the question on gender. Thus, if the gender of non-respondents somehow became known and was factored into the calculation, it would still be the case that 59% of the sample is male.

Another example arises from the analysis of the industry of employment in Mexico. There were 4,029 valid responses to the question on industry in Mexico. The respondents who failed to provide a valid answer to this question and other questions on industry and occupation generally resemble other respondents with respect to their gender, age and education. The non-respondents are slightly more male, a little older and somewhat better educated. These differences are small and it is likely that the (unknown) industry distribution of non-respondents resembles the industry distribution of those who gave a valid answer. In other words, it is unlikely that excluding the non-respondents from the tabulations unduly alters the result on the employment experiences of migrants.

2. Migrants' Experiences in Mexico: At Work in Farming and Production

Lack of work does not appear to be the main reason why migrants leave Mexico for the United States. Most migrants in the survey reported that they were gainfully employed before they left and, in fact, their employment experience reflects that of the overall labor force in Mexico. The data show that unemployment in Mexico played an even lesser role in the migration decision of more recently arrived respondents. To the extent that work experiences in Mexico are a motive for migration it is more likely that *under*employment, not *un*employment, is the main reason.

The work history of migrants in Mexico also reveals a strong concentration in a handful of industries. The primary background of these migrants is in agriculture. That is especially true of men, the elderly, those who did not attend or graduate from high school, and those who arrived in the U.S. more than 15 years ago. Newly arrived respondents are more likely to have worked in construction, manufacturing and commerce in Mexico. Despite the changing mix of industries, the overall background of respondents is in farming, production and other blue-collar work.

2.1 The employment experience in Mexico

The employment experience of respondents before migration was determined through questions on their principal industry and occupation of employment in Mexico. Those who answered that they "did not work" constituted the pool of migrants who were potentially unemployed before they left for the U.S. Of those migrants who provided valid answers to the question on industry of employment, 11% of men and

29% of women indicated they did not work in Mexico. For men and women combined, 18% reported not working in Mexico. The proportion who apparently did not work in Mexico appears high at first glance but it is necessary to rule out respondents who do not meet the normal criteria for unemployment as explained below. When that is done, no more than 11% of respondents, perhaps fewer, are estimated to have been unemployed in Mexico before migrating to the U.S.

To be counted as an unemployed worker a person must be actively looking for work. Otherwise, the worker is deemed to be outside the labor force. Examples of adults who might not be members of the labor force are students, housewives and retirees. Other criteria, such as, hours worked in the survey week, are also normally applied before a worker is counted among the unemployed in government-run surveys used to calculate unemployment rates. However, this is more difficult to do when exploring work experience in the past, sometimes years past, as was the case in this survey when Mexicans in the United States were asked about their pre-migration experiences. Among those who did not work in Mexico, it is possible to identify the respondents who are students, housewives and retirees. Excluding them from the labor force yields a more accurate estimate of potential unemployment among respondents to the survey.

The occupational status of workers who responded that they did not work to the question on industry in Mexico is shown in Table 1. As shown, 738 respondents indicated not working in Mexico. Nearly one-half of these workers—45%—said that they were housewives, students or retirees. Those workers can be excluded from the labor force as well as from the ranks of the unemployed. When that is done, the estimated unemployment rate among respondents, prior to the move to the U.S., drops from 18% to 11%.

Table 1
Occupation of Migrants who Reported they Did Not Work in an Industry in Mexico

	Did Not Work in Industry in Mexico	
	Number	Percent
Total	738	100
By Occupation		
Housewife, student or retired	333	45
Other occupation reported	77	10
Did not work, frequently unemployed or no occupation	108	15
Missing cases	220	30

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

It is also worth noting that 30% of workers failed to provide a valid response to the occupation question. The assumption made in the calculation above is that these workers were all unemployed in Mexico. But it is likely that at least some of them were housewives, students or retirees. If a share of these workers is assumed to have been out of the labor force, the estimate of unemployment among migrant workers would drop even further below 11%.

The estimated rate of unemployment among respondents before they left for the U.S. puts them in the middle of the range of official estimates of unemployment in Mexico. The Mexican government publishes not one but eleven estimates of rates of unemployment and underemployment. The low end of these estimates is based on narrow definitions of unemployment that exclude many workers in unstable,

marginal jobs, such as street vending. While these workers are not "openly" unemployed they are severely underemployed.[4] In 2004, official estimates of the unemployment and underemployment rates in Mexico ranged from a low of about 4% to over 20%.[5] Thus, unemployment among survey respondents while they were in Mexico is not unusually high for the labor market in that country.

But is the unemployment experience of newly arrived migrants while still in Mexico any different from that of long-term migrants? That question is worth asking because the flow of migrants from Mexico has been increasing. U.S. Census bureau data shows that the number of Mexicans residing in the U.S. has nearly doubled in the past decade, and the Pew Hispanic Center has estimated that in recent years the unauthorized flow from Mexico was significantly greater than the number coming through legal channels (Passel, 2005a, b). Many have been in the U.S. for less than five years and they differ from their predecessors with respect to gender, education, state of origin and other demographic characteristics. Thus, the unemployment experience in Mexico and the motivation to migrate to the U.S. for recent arrivals might be different from that of long-term migrants.

The evidence indicates that unemployment in Mexico played an even lesser role in the migration decision of the most recently arrived respondents than it did for those who have been in the United States longer. Table 2 shows the proportions of respondents who reported not working in Mexico arranged by the number of years they have been in the U.S. The table shows two unemployment rates, one before and one after adjustment for the respondents who were students, housewives or retirees in Mexico. In either event, it is the case that the role of unemployment as a potential motive for migration diminishes according to the amount of time a migrant has been here.

Table 2
Migrants who Reported they Did Not Work in an Industry in Mexico by Year of Arrival in the U.S.

	Percent that Did Not Work in Mexico	
	Gross	Net
Years Since Arrival		
2 years or less	12.3	5.3
3 to 5 years	15.6	8.3
6 to 10 years	16.7	9.7
11 to 15 years	24.6	15.2
More than 15 years	24.3	17.2

Note: The "gross" rate is respondents who reported "they did not work" as a percent of valid responses to industry in Mexico. The "net" rate excludes housewives, students and retirees from the calculation.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Unemployment in Mexico for respondents who have been in the U.S. for two years or less was quite low. Only slightly more than 5% of these migrants, almost all of whom lack a U.S. government-issued ID, were unemployed in Mexico (Table 2). In sharp contrast, more than 15% of respondents who

[4] Independent researchers have also argued that many of the underemployed might be compelled to take marginal jobs only because of the lack of an adequate social safety net in Mexico (see Fleck and Sorrentino, 1994).
[5] The official unemployment rates for Mexico are published by Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, Geografía e Informática (INEGI). Fleck and Sorrentino (1994) also estimate unemployment and labor underutilization rates in Mexico in the range of 4% to over 20%. Their estimates are for the 1987 to 1993 period.

migrated more than 10 years ago had been unemployed in Mexico. Those respondents would last have been in Mexico prior to 1995. Many would have been in Mexico during the 1980s, a decade that witnessed two economic recessions in that country. The turnaround in the Mexican economy since then, except for a sharp but brief downturn in 1995, appears to be reflected in the reduced incidence of unemployment among more recently arrived migrants.

Thus, data from the Survey of Mexican Migrants underscore the diminishing importance of open unemployment as an economic motive for migrating to the U.S.[6] This finding is relevant to discussions of policy proposals that would aim at reducing migration pressures by improving economic conditions in Mexico. Simply reducing overall unemployment might not have that effect. This survey suggests that in the realm of work additional factors such as the quality of jobs, wages, long-term prospects and perceptions of opportunity need to be considered in weighing the impact of economic development on migration.

2.2 Industries of employment for respondents in Mexico

The work history of respondents before they left for the U.S. reveals a strong concentration in farming and other blue-collar work. The principal industries of employment for respondents in Mexico were agriculture, construction, manufacturing and commerce (or sales). Male respondents, the elderly, those who did not attend or did not graduate from high school and respondents who arrived more than 15 years ago are especially likely to have a background in agriculture. The most recently arrived migrants show a more diverse background. Overall, the industrial experience of respondents is not unusual for Mexico as most of the labor force there is also employed in the same industries.

Among the migrants who worked in Mexico, 39% of men and 18% of women had been employed in agriculture (Table 3). Other major employers of employed male respondents were the construction (13%) and manufacturing (14%) industries. These two industries and agriculture were the source of employment in Mexico for two-thirds of the male migrants. Among employed women, two-thirds of migrants were in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce (or sales) and domestic service.

Table 3
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in Mexico before they Left for the U.S. (percent)

	Total	Males	Females
Migrants' Industry in Mexico			
Agriculture	32	39	18
Construction	9	13	1
Manufacturing	15	14	15
Commerce/sales	13	11	19
Hospitality	6	6	7
Cleaning/maintenance	4	2	8
Domestic service	6	1	15
All other industries	15	14	17
Total	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

[6] Other motives, such as family reunification, also play a role. A forthcoming report from the Center will partly address this issue based on further analysis of data from the Survey of Mexican Migrants.

The relatively narrow concentration of migrants in a few industries reflects the distribution of the labor force in Mexico (Table 4). Just three industries—agriculture, manufacturing and retail trade—account for one-half of the employment in Mexico.[7] Other industries of significance are construction for men and educational, health, recreation and other services for women. Over one-fifth (22%) of male workers in Mexico are employed in agriculture and nearly one in four (24%) women work in retail trade. Overall, blue-collar industries enjoy greater prominence within Mexico than in the U.S. which is more services oriented.

Table 4
Industry Distribution of Mexico's Labor Force, 2004
(percent)

	Total	Males	Females
Industry			
Agriculture	16	22	6
Construction	7	10	1
Manufacturing	17	17	18
Retail Trade	17	12	24
Educational, health & recreation services	9	6	15
Other services	11	10	14
All other industries	23	23	22
Total	100	100	100

Source: Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS) & Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI)

The most apparent difference between the industry distributions of survey respondents and the Mexican labor force is that the respondents are more likely to have a background in agriculture. That is due in part to the fact that the industry background of migrants in Table 3 reflects the state of the Mexican economy spanning a period of 15 years and more. On the other hand, the distribution of the labor force in Mexico as shown in Table 4 is a snapshot from 2004. If the data from the migrant survey are sorted by time spent in the U.S. it is evident that more recent arrivals are less likely to be drawn from agriculture than previous arrivals and are thus more reflective of the current Mexican labor force.

Table 5 presents the industry distribution of employed respondents in Mexico by years in the United States. Migrants who have been in the U.S. for two years or less are found to be only half as likely to have worked in agriculture in Mexico as migrants who arrived more than 15 years ago. In particular, only 20% of the latest arrivals were employed in agriculture in Mexico in contrast to 41% of the earliest arrivals. Not surprisingly, the industry distribution of the most recent migrants closely resembles the distribution of Mexico's labor force in 2004. These migrants are only slightly more likely than the overall labor force in Mexico—20% versus 16%—to have been in agriculture and equally likely to have worked in construction and manufacturing in comparison with the Mexican labor force. Thus, current arrivals from Mexico appear to have been drawn not from the edges but from near the core of Mexico's labor force.

The age and education of respondents are also related to their employment experiences in Mexico. The oldest Mexican migrants are most likely to have come from an agricultural background. Among those 55 and older, 40% had worked in agriculture prior to migration. The same is true of only 32% of those in

[7] In contrast, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the same three industries employ only 25% of workers in the U.S. economy.

Table 5
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in Mexico by Years in the U.S.
(percent)

	Years in the U.S.					
	2 or less	3 to 5	6 to 7	8 to 10	11 to 15	More than 15
Migrants' Industry in Mexico						
Agriculture	20	29	33	35	33	41
Construction	11	11	8	8	7	7
Manufacturing	19	13	12	17	16	12
Commerce/sales	17	13	14	10	12	13
Hospitality	7	7	7	3	7	4
Cleaning/maintenance	4	4	4	3	5	3
Domestic service	5	6	8	7	6	6
All other industries	17	16	15	16	14	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Table 6
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in Mexico by Age and Education
(percent)

	Age (years)				
	16-29	30-39	40-49	50-54	55+
Migrants' Industry in Mexico					
Agriculture	32	29	33	34	40
Construction	10	9	8	6	3
Manufacturing	14	15	15	12	14
Commerce/sales	14	14	12	8	12
Hospitality	7	6	3	8	5
Cleaning/maintenance	4	4	3	5	3
Domestic service	5	6	8	5	7
All other industries	13	17	18	21	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100

	Education Level				
	None	Primary	Lower secondary/ Vocational	High school	Some college or more
Migrants' Industry in Mexico					
Agriculture	59	45	29	16	9
Construction	8	11	10	6	2
Manufacturing	3	12	18	14	8
Commerce/sales	5	7	16	22	13
Hospitality	3	5	5	9	10
Cleaning/maintenance	5	5	4	2	3
Domestic service	13	9	6	2	1
Health & education	0	0	1	4	18
Professional services	2	1	1	6	15
Government	0	1	2	6	10
All other industries	3	4	8	12	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

the age group of 16 to 29 (Table 6). It is not a coincidence, therefore, that among the survey cities, Fresno, located in an agricultural area, had the highest proportions of migrants in the older age groups (Suro, 2005a). Moreover, nearly 60% of those surveyed in Fresno had left Mexico with a career in agriculture, compared to about one-third or less of the respondents in all other survey cities.

The younger migrants are more experienced than their older counterparts in construction and manufacturing work. For example, 24% of migrants age 29 or younger had jobs in construction and manufacturing before moving to the U.S. in comparison with only 17% of those 55 or older. The survey cities with especially high concentrations of young migrants are New York, Dallas, Raleigh and Atlanta. Of these, Raleigh and Atlanta were particularly attractive destinations for migrants seeking jobs in the construction and manufacturing industries (Kochhar, Suro and Tafoya, 2005).

The likelihood of having worked in agriculture diminishes sharply with a high school education. Only 16% of respondents with a high school degree and 9% of those with some college education were employed in agriculture before migration. In contrast, 59% of workers who did not attend or complete any school training had jobs in farming. High school graduates were most likely to have worked in commerce (or sales). College-educated workers were the most experienced in white-collar jobs; one-third of them had been employed in health and education services and professional services.

In sum, the respondents to the survey do not appear to have migrated to the U.S. because they were without work in Mexico. The vast majority of migrants were gainfully employed before they moved to the U.S. Their employment background reflects that of the labor force in Mexico—they worked principally in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and commerce (or sales). Male respondents, the elderly, those who did not attend or did not graduate from high school and respondents who arrived in the U.S. more than 15 years ago were more likely than average to have worked in farming in Mexico. The industry background of newly arrived respondents closely matches the current distribution of Mexico's labor force. To the extent that unemployment has played a role in motivating workers to migrate, its role has steadily diminished over time. Underemployment rather than open unemployment is probably the more important factor behind the decision to migrate. Other economic incentives to migrate are likely to include earnings, job quality, long-terms prospects and perceptions of opportunity.

3. The Transition to America: New Directions for Many but an Old Pattern Emerges

The respondents to the Survey of Mexican Migrants have been very successful in finding jobs in the U.S. The probability of unemployment is relatively high in the first six months in the U.S. but the situation improves dramatically thereafter. Overall, low education levels, weak English-language skills and lack of a U.S. government-issued ID do not seem to pose barriers to finding work in the U.S. The transition into the U.S. labor force is greatly eased by the presence of family and social networks. The majority of migrants have relatives in the U.S., many in the same town, and the most commonly cited means of finding a job is talking with friends and family in the U.S. While many respondents do not find jobs in their old industry of employment from Mexico, most are working in closely related industries. Thus, migrants who were principally employed in agriculture, construction and manufacturing in Mexico are largely employed in the same general type of work in the U.S. Given the low level of unemployment among respondents the demand for their services in these industries would appear to be high.

3.1 Unemployment after arrival in the U.S.

Unemployment among survey respondents is remarkably low. Only about 5% of migrants who have been in the U.S. for six months or more report not working in an industry in the U.S. (Table 7). The proportion of respondents who reported not working ranges from a low of 4.6% among those who entered the U.S. three to five years ago to 5.7% among those who arrived six to 24 months ago. Unemployment among migrants with longer tenure in the U.S. falls in between these proportions. The estimates in Table 7, derived in the manner discussed in the previous section and adjusted to account for the fact that some migrants in the U.S. are students, housewives or retirees, correspond closely with other estimates of unemployment among foreign-born Hispanic workers in the U.S. For example, using Current Population Survey data, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated an unemployment rate of less than 6% for foreign-born Hispanic workers in 2004 (Kochhar, 2005).[8]

Table 7
Migrants who Reported they Did Not Work in an Industry in the U.S by Year of Arrival

Years Since Arrival	Percent Not Working in the U.S.
Less than 6 months	14.8
6 to 24 months	5.7
3 to 5 years	4.6
6 to 10 years	5.1
11 to 15 years	5.0
More than 15 years	5.3

Note: The percent who reported they did not work in the U.S. is computed after excluding housewives, students and retirees from the calculation.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The likelihood of unemployment is elevated only for the first six months of a migrant worker's stay in the U.S. As shown in Table 7, 14.8% of survey respondents who have been in the U.S. for less than six months reported they were without work. That is nearly three times the level of unemployment for migrants who arrived more than two years ago. It is also about three times as high as the overall rate of unemployment in the U.S. But, as is clear from Table 7, unemployment among migrants is observed to plunge dramatically after the initial six months in the U.S.

The fact that unemployment among migrants falls to prevailing levels in the U.S. labor market within six months is suggestive of a high level of demand for their services. Low levels of education, poor English-speaking ability and the apparent lack of authorization to work do not seem to hinder the process. Table 8 shows the education levels of respondents after excluding students, housewives and retirees from among those who reported not working in an industry in the U.S. Relatively low levels of education plague all respondents regardless of their year of arrival. However, unemployment is equally low across groups of workers who have been in the U.S. for more than six months. In fact, the newest arrivals, those with less than six months in the U.S., are, relatively speaking, the best educated group. Thirty-eight percent of them have graduated from high school or have some college education, yet unemployment is highest within this

[8] Unpublished tabulations by the Center also indicate an unemployment rate of 6% among all foreign-born Mexican workers in the U.S. in 2004.

group. Clearly, the likelihood of unemployment is dependent not on the level of education but on time spent in the U.S.

Similarly, English ability and possession of a U.S. government-issued ID are unrelated to the level of unemployment. As shown in Table 8, 83% of respondents who arrived less than six months ago, excluding students, housewives and retirees, do not have a U.S. government-issued photo ID. This proportion is unchanged over the next 18 months but, nonetheless, the likelihood of unemployment falls rapidly. The ability to speak English also improves only slightly over the first two years. Overall, the dramatic turnaround in unemployment in six months' time is unrelated to any improvements in education, fluency in English or change in authorization status.

Table 8
Education, English Language Skills and U.S. Government ID for Migrants by Years in the U.S.

	Years in the U.S.					
	Less than 6 months	6 to 24 months	3 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years
Education Level (% dist.)						
None	2	1	1	2	2	3
Primary	21	21	30	31	31	44
Lower secondary/Vocational	38	45	43	39	35	27
High school	28	27	22	22	25	19
Some college or more	10	6	4	5	8	7
U.S. ID						
Without ID (%)	83	82	75	57	44	16
English Ability						
A little/No English (%)	82	75	65	50	42	41

Note: U.S. ID refers to a photo identity card issued by a U.S. government agency. Sample excludes students, housewives and retirees from those who reported they did not work in an industry in the U.S.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The employment experience of respondents to the survey would appear to be consistent with the view that there is robust demand for the services of these migrants. As indicated by their low rate of unemployment, finding work does not seem to be an issue for these workers despite their low levels of schooling, poor English-language skills and lack of authorization to work in the U.S. There are, however, two other aspects to this. At least some of the observed drop in unemployment after six months in the U.S. may be caused by the return migration of workers unable to find jobs. Further, the quality of jobs held by these workers is in doubt. As shown in a subsequent section, episodes of unemployment and low wages are not uncommon for the respondents to the survey.

3.2 Finding a job in the U.S.

The keys to finding a job in the U.S. for survey respondents were family and social networks and personal initiative. The vast majority of migrants have relatives other than a spouse or child in the U.S., many of whom live in the same town or in the same household. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that the most common method by which respondents acquire job information is talking with friends and family in

the U.S. Visiting job sites is the second most common method. As revealed by the employment experience of these workers, their job search methods translate into great success in finding jobs in the U.S.

Respondents to the Survey of Mexican Migrants have very strong familial connections to the U.S. More than 80% of respondents have a relative other than a spouse or child in the U.S. (Table 9). This is true even of 75% of respondents who have been in the U.S. for only two years or less. For most migrants (67%) their relatives live in the same town and a majority (54%) of respondents indicated they lived in the same household as the relative. The likelihood of having a relative increases with time in the U.S., presumably through marriage and the arrival of extended family members from Mexico in later years.

Table 9
Family Ties in the U.S.: Percent of Workers with a Relative other than Spouse or Child in the U.S.

		Years in the U.S.				
	All Respondents	< 2 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years
With relative in U.S.	82	75	80	86	84	90
With relative in same town	67	61	65	70	72	74
Living with relative	54	48	52	56	58	59

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The strong family ties, and the social network they comprise, are clearly important to the economic assimilation of respondents. The survey asked each respondent to report the two most important ways they received employment information in the U.S. The method cited most often—45% of the time—was talking with people you know in the United States ("*Hablando con conocidos en los EE.UU*") . (Table 10). Taking personal initiative and visiting job sites was cited 22% of the time and is the second most common method for finding job information (Table 10). Other significant sources of job information are acquaintances in Mexico, newspapers and radio or TV news. Visiting employment agencies or unemployment offices to find a job barely receives mention as a source of job information. That, of course, is not surprising for a sample of mostly unauthorized migrants. Instead, the success in finding jobs is built on the support of family and friends in place in the United States.

Table 10
Sources of Job Information for Mexican Migrants

Source of Job Information	**Percent Citing a Source**
Talking with people in U.S.	45
Visiting job sites	22
Talking with people in Mexico	14
U.S. newspapers	13
Radio or TV news	14
Internet	5
Mexican newspapers	4
Church	2
Community organization	1
Unemployment agency or other	2

Note: Respondents were allowed to cite up to two sources of information. Thus, column will not add to 100.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The importance of social networks is somewhat greater for the recently arrived, younger and less well educated respondents. As shown in Table 11, respondents who arrived in the U.S. in the past two years or were younger than 29 were the most likely to report the use of friends and family in the U.S. to gather job information. Nonetheless, talking to acquaintances in the U.S. is a method used by a high plurality of respondents of virtually all ages and lengths of residence in the U.S. The exceptions are respondents who arrived more than 15 years ago or are older than 50. Another exception is college-educated respondents. Only 32% of those with at least some college education reported talking with friends and family in the U.S. for job information. Other than visiting job sites, an alternative method cited with some frequency by the better educated migrants was using the internet. Almost 10% of high school graduates and 17% of college attendees visited the internet for job information.[9]

Table 11
Major Sources of Job Information for Mexican Migrants by Years in the U.S., Age and Education Level

	Percent Citing a Source by Years in the U.S.				
	< 2 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years
Source of Job Information					
Talking with people in U.S.	49	47	47	42	34
Visiting job sites	19	23	25	23	20
Talking with people in Mexico	18	15	12	10	13
U.S. newspapers	11	10	13	16	14
Radio or TV news	12	14	12	15	16
Internet	3	2	4	7	7

	Percent Citing a Source by Age					
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50+
Source of Job Information						
Talking with people in U.S.	47	49	43	40	39	30
Visiting job sites	22	24	22	21	22	12
Talking with people in Mexico	14	14	15	13	12	13
U.S. newspapers	12	13	12	15	16	7
Radio or TV news	14	12	13	14	15	15
Internet	6	3	4	4	4	4

	Percent Citing a Source by Education Level				
	None	Primary	Lower secondary/ Vocational	High school	Some college or more
Source of Job Information					
Talking with people in U.S.	40	46	47	43	32
Visiting job sites	11	19	23	25	27
Talking with people in Mexico	22	17	14	11	11
U.S. newspapers	8	10	13	16	19
Radio or TV news	17	15	14	14	12
Internet	1	1	3	9	17

Note: Respondents were allowed to cite up to two sources of information. Thus, columns will not add to 100.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

[9] According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 44% of adult internet users in the U.S. looked for job information online in January 2005. Since 67% of American adults reported being online, this meant that about 30% of all American adults used the internet for job information at the time of the survey.

3.3 The transition from industries in Mexico to industries in the U.S.

The Survey of Mexican Migrants shows that most workers from Mexico transition into new industries in the U.S.[10] But an old theme also emerges. While still in Mexico, respondents to the survey were principally employed in agriculture, construction and manufacturing. The same general pattern holds true for them in the U.S. If they do not find employment in their old industry from Mexico, respondents tend to gravitate to construction, hospitality, manufacturing or agriculture in the U.S. Thus, the demand for the services of migrants from Mexico would appear to be highest in these industries.

About three-quarters of newly arrived migrants, unless they worked in hospitality or construction in Mexico, are employed in new industries in the U.S. This situation is typified by the experience of respondents who arrived in the past two years. Migrants who have been in the U.S. longer are more settled into local labor markets and their current employment experience is less indicative of a transition from Mexico. Table 12 shows the old and new industries of employment for respondents to the survey. Looking at the group that entered the U.S. two years or less ago, only 22% of migrants who worked in agriculture in Mexico also work in agriculture in the U.S. Low rates of reemployment in the same industry are also observed for recently arrived migrants who worked in manufacturing (27%), cleaning and maintenance (27%), domestic service (23%) or commerce (12%) in Mexico.

Two Mexican industries—hospitality and construction—appear to provide smooth transitions to the U.S. More than 60% of recently arrived construction workers from Mexico are doing the same work in the U.S. Similarly, 45% of newly arrived hospitality workers from Mexico are in the same industry. In part, this may reflect local demand in the U.S. Many new arrivals are moving into new areas of settlement where either construction is booming (e.g. Atlanta) or hospitality services are widespread (e.g. New York).

In addition to the respondents' old industries of employment from Mexico, the new avenues of employment in the U.S. are the hospitality, construction and manufacturing industries. For example, as shown in Table 12, while only 22% of recently arrived agricultural workers from Mexico work in the same industry in the U.S., another 50% of those workers found jobs in hospitality, construction and manufacturing. These industries also served as valuable sources of employment for migrants from other sectors in Mexico. Thus, even as Mexican workers disperse across new industries in the U.S. they do not stray far from the economic roots they left behind.

Making the move into new industries of employment appears to have been less common among the long-term migrants. Table 12 also shows the pattern of industry transition for respondents who have been in the U.S. for more than 15 years and for all respondents combined. Respondents who have been in the U.S. for more than 15 years show a relatively high rate of reemployment (33%), even in agriculture. Their success in staying within hospitality (55%), construction (53%), manufacturing (50%) and cleaning/maintenance (61%) is also generally above average. All respondents combined also have higher rates of employment in the same industries in comparison with recently arrived migrants. For example, the average rates of reemployment in manufacturing (37%), hospitality (49%) and cleaning and maintenance

[10] A more complete analysis would also consider the occupational transition of workers. It would be desirable to know, for example, whether those with clerical or assembly-line production jobs in Mexico find similar employment in the U.S. Unfortunately, the survey does not contain the necessary level of detail on occupations.

Table 12
Principal Industries of Employment in the U.S. for Migrant Workers from Selected Industries in Mexico

Migrants' Industry in Mexico	Industry in the U.S. (percent)				
	Same as in Mexico	Hospitality	Construction	Manufacturing	Total
2 years or less in U.S.					
Agriculture	22	15	25	10	72
Hospitality	45	---	13	8	65
Construction	62	11	---	11	83
Manufacturing	27	20	17	---	63
Cleaning/maintenance	27	9	5	14	55
Domestic service	23	13	3	10	50
Commerce/sales	12	19	11	17	59
More than 15 years in U.S.					
Agriculture	33	8	12	14	68
Hospitality	55	---	9	0	64
Construction	53	11	---	8	71
Manufacturing	50	8	12	---	70
Cleaning/maintenance	61	6	11	6	83
Domestic service	21	3	0	18	42
Commerce/sales	21	14	8	13	56
All respondents					
Agriculture	23	14	21	14	72
Hospitality	49	---	9	11	69
Construction	60	9	---	10	78
Manufacturing	37	16	14	---	68
Cleaning/maintenance	42	8	5	11	66
Domestic service	23	10	1	14	47
Commerce/sales	19	16	10	15	61

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

(42%) are higher than those attained by the recent arrivals. Of course, respondents with longer stays in the U.S. have had more time to assimilate in the labor market. It is possible that after initial dispersion into new industries they have circled back into their old industries of employment from Mexico.

In conclusion, it is important to note that, regardless of the year of arrival, migrants from Mexico remain concentrated in the agriculture, construction, hospitality and manufacturing industries in the U.S. In other words, the locus of demand for the services of these workers has not shifted over time.

4. Migrants' Experiences in the U.S.: A Narrow Range of Familiar Industries and Low Wages

The industries into which migrants are hired in the U.S. are mostly familiar ones to them, but local demand plays a role as well in determining where they find work. Two-thirds of employed respondents can be found in only four industries—agriculture, construction, manufacturing and hospitality. This degree of concentration does not vary much by the respondents' background and origin in Mexico or their year of arrival. Thus, there appears to be a steady, and strong, level of demand for these workers in certain segments of the U.S. economy. However, there are some notable regional variations. For example, demand

for construction workers is high in Atlanta, Dallas and Raleigh. Meanwhile, hospitality jobs appear plentiful in New York City, and manufacturing stands out in Chicago. All of these cities, except Chicago, are relatively new destinations for migrants from Mexico and the fact that these are new migrations shows in the employment patterns of the latest arrivals. Thus, Mexican migrants appear responsive to specific needs in different regional labor markets.

Although survey respondents had great success in finding jobs in the U.S. that did not translate into job stability or high wages for them. Relatively long spells of unemployment—one month or more—are not uncommon for these workers, and earnings for many appear to fall below federal poverty guidelines. Women are especially vulnerable to both unemployment and low earnings. Recently arrived migrants, who tend to be young, lacking in English ability and without a U.S. government-issued ID, also lag the rest in earnings.

4.1 Industries of employment display familiar patterns

The industry distribution of survey respondents in the U.S. resembles the one they left in Mexico. Most of them work in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and hospitality. This concentration has endured over time, suggesting that there is a persistent and high level of demand for the services of these workers in those sectors. Nonetheless, there are some variations over time in the way migrants are distributed among these industries as the latest arrivals are more likely to work in hospitality and construction. At least to some degree that is a consequence of the dispersal of Mexican migrants to new destinations and regional variations in demand. Migrants are moving into new areas of settlement, such as Atlanta, Raleigh and New York, where the demand for construction and hospitality workers is higher than in the older destinations such as Los Angeles.

Table 13 shows the distribution of employed respondents across industries in the U.S. The agriculture, hospitality, construction and manufacturing industries account for two-thirds of the employment for survey respondents. Using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Pew Hispanic Center also finds the same degree of concentration in these four industries among all foreign-born Mexican workers who have been in the U.S. for five years or less. Looking at all foreign-born Mexican workers in the U.S., the Center estimates that 57% of them were employed in these four industries in 2004. Thus, the industry distribution of migrant workers in the survey closely corresponds to the distribution of their counterparts in the U.S. labor force.[11] The construction industry is especially important to male migrant workers as 28% of them work in that industry alone. In contrast, migrant women are more likely to work in cleaning and maintenance, domestic service and commerce (or sales).

[11] It should be noted that the presence of Fresno in the set of cities where the survey was conducted does elevate the role of agriculture in the industry distribution of respondents. In the aggregate, 11% of respondents have jobs in agriculture. This is twice as high as the proportion of all foreign-born Mexicans (5.4%) who are estimated to work in agriculture in the U.S. The over representation of migrants in agriculture is in part due to the fact that more than 50% of respondents in Fresno are employed in agriculture. Since Fresno accounts for 8% of the total sample, this means that 4% of the total sample consists of agricultural workers from Fresno alone. But even if the role of Fresno were discounted, the Mexican migrants in the survey would still be more concentrated in agriculture than their counterparts in the U.S. economy.

Table 13
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in the U.S.
(percent)

	Total	Males	Females
Migrants' Industry in U.S.			
Agriculture	11	11	11
Hospitality	17	18	16
Construction	19	28	2
Manufacturing	19	18	21
Cleaning/maintenance	9	7	13
Domestic service	4	1	10
Commerce/sales	7	6	11
All other industries	14	12	17
Total	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The nature of demand for the services of migrants has been relatively steady over time. It is clear from the data in Table 14 that both recently arrived and long-term migrants from Mexico have followed the same general pathway into the U.S. labor market. Approximately 70% of respondents who entered the U.S. at various times within the past 10 years are employed in agriculture, hospitality, construction and hospitality. About 40% of these workers, whether they came two years or eight years ago, work in hospitality and construction alone. The main variation over time is that agriculture was more important to respondents who arrived more than 15 years ago. Many of these earlier arrivals reside in the agricultural area around Fresno. However, the overall nature of demand for migrant services appears largely unchanged over time.

Table 14
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in the U.S. by Year of Arrival
(percent)

	Year of Arrival					
	<=24 months	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years
Migrants' Industry in U.S.						
Agriculture	9	9	9	10	10	17
Hospitality	20	21	20	18	14	11
Construction	22	19	23	22	16	12
Manufacturing	17	19	19	17	21	20
Cleaning/maintenance	10	9	8	8	9	9
Domestic service	4	5	4	3	4	4
Commerce/sales	7	8	8	8	7	8
All other industries	10	10	9	13	19	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Even if the demand for migrant workers appears to emanate from a small number of industries, the assimilation of migrants into the U.S. economy is shaped considerably by variations in local demand. Table 15 shows the industry distribution of respondents by survey city. The data are presented for all respondents and for those who arrived in the past two years. It is evident that construction dominates in Atlanta, Dallas and Raleigh. About 30% to 40% of respondents, regardless of when they arrived, work in construction

alone in these cities. Similarly, hospitality is the key employer in New York. These four cities represent relatively new areas of settlement for migrants from Mexico. As more and more migrants from Mexico have moved into these cities, the importance of hospitality and construction work has increased over time.

In contrast, older settlement areas around Chicago, Los Angeles and Fresno continue to offer different opportunities to migrant workers. Agriculture dominates in Fresno. Even among migrants who entered the U.S. in the past two years, 60% of those who went to Fresno are found to work in agriculture alone. Similarly, manufacturing is important in Chicago to both recent and other arrivals. Los Angeles offers the most diverse set of opportunities. Thus, local economic conditions have an important influence on the employment opportunities available to migrant workers.

Table 15
Industry Distributions of Employed Migrants in the U.S. by Year of Arrival and Survey City
(percent)

	Year of Arrival: 2 years or less						
	Atlanta	Chicago	Dallas	Fresno	Los Angeles	New York City	Raleigh
Migrants' Industry in U.S.							
Agriculture	4	4	9	60	3	10	14
Hospitality	25	23	18	10	20	24	16
Construction	30	19	32	3	16	18	30
Manufacturing	12	28	12	7	22	13	9
Cleaning/maintenance	11	5	14	10	11	6	14
Domestic service	4	3	5	0	6	6	1
Commerce/sales	7	8	1	7	10	12	4
All other industries	9	10	10	3	12	10	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	All Years of Arrival						
	Atlanta	Chicago	Dallas	Fresno	Los Angeles	New York City	Raleigh
Migrants' Industry in U.S.							
Agriculture	6	6	7	64	4	6	10
Hospitality	16	20	19	5	15	31	11
Construction	30	14	31	5	10	16	38
Manufacturing	23	26	16	6	22	12	18
Cleaning/maintenance	9	8	11	3	9	9	10
Domestic service	3	3	3	3	6	9	2
Commerce/sales	5	8	3	6	13	9	2
All other industries	8	15	11	7	22	9	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Whether or not migrants are in possession of a U.S. government-issued ID also has some influence on their employment pattern. Respondents with a U.S. ID are more likely to be employed in agriculture (Table 16). This is not just because those with a U.S. ID have, on average, been in the U.S. for a longer period of time. Even respondents who entered the U.S. less than two years ago are more likely to be employed in agriculture if they have a U.S. ID. This is most likely a reflection of the temporary labor certification program (H-2A visa) for agricultural workers. Not coincidentally, the Mexican industry of origin for respondents with a U.S. ID, regardless of year of entry, is also more likely to be agriculture. Respondents who do not have a U.S. ID, and, therefore, are almost certainly in the U.S. without work

Table 16
Industry Distributions of Employed Migrants in the U.S. by U.S. ID and Year of Arrival (percent)

	Without U.S. ID					
	<=24 months	3 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years	Total
Migrants' Industry in U.S.						
Agriculture	8	8	7	6	14	8
Hospitality	20	24	23	19	16	21
Construction	24	19	19	15	15	20
Manufacturing	18	19	19	21	15	18
Cleaning/maintenance	11	10	8	13	12	11
Domestic service	3	5	7	5	6	5
Commerce/sales	6	7	9	8	10	8
All other industries	10	9	8	13	12	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	With U.S. ID					
	<=24 months	3 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years	Total
Migrants' Industry in U.S.						
Agriculture	13	12	11	13	17	14
Hospitality	19	14	15	11	10	13
Construction	17	20	27	17	11	17
Manufacturing	15	19	17	20	21	20
Cleaning/maintenance	8	7	8	6	8	7
Domestic service	7	5	2	3	4	4
Commerce/sales	10	9	6	7	8	7
All other industries	11	14	15	24	21	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: U.S. ID refers to a photo identity card issued by a U.S. government agency.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Table 17
Industry Distribution of Employed Migrants in the U.S. by Education Level (percent)

	Education Level				
	None	Primary	Lower secondary/ Vocational	High school	Some college or more
Migrants' Industry in U.S.					
Agriculture	37	19	7	4	3
Hospitality	12	13	18	22	17
Construction	6	20	21	15	11
Manufacturing	18	17	21	18	19
Cleaning/maintenance	7	11	9	7	5
Domestic service	3	6	4	3	1
Commerce/sales	1	4	7	12	12
Health & education	1	1	1	3	7
Professional services	1	4	3	4	12
All other industries	12	6	8	11	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

authorization, are more likely to be found in the hospitality industry.[12] Another difference between workers with or without a U.S. ID is that the former, while still concentrated in agriculture, hospitality, construction and manufacturing, are somewhat more likely to be dispersed across other industries. Thus, there are some differences in the employment opportunities available to respondents who are in the U.S. without apparent authorization.

Finally, education also shapes the industrial destiny for Mexican migrants in the U.S. The least educated workers are the most likely to be employed in agriculture (Table 17). More than one-third of working respondents who have no schooling whatsoever are employed in this field. In contrast, this is true for only 3% of college-educated respondents. A college education opens the door to white-collar work. About 25% of migrants who attended college are located in professional services and commerce (or sales). Nonetheless, a substantial share—47%—of college-educated migrants work in hospitality, construction and manufacturing. And since there are very few college educated respondents, the overwhelming destination for these migrants remains blue-collar industries.

4.2 Spells of unemployment among migrants are not uncommon

It is not uncommon for respondents to experience spells of unemployment lasting one month or more. That is despite the fact that they have had great success in locating jobs in the U.S. There is evidence, however, that Mexican migrants may be more likely than average to be in temporary or contingent work arrangements. That is beneficial for the economy to the extent that contingent work arrangements provide flexibility and lower costs for employers. But for migrant workers it means that the stability or permanence of their jobs is in some doubt.

A very high percentage of respondents—38%—reported they had a spell of unemployment in the previous year that lasted more than one month (Table 18).[13] The instability in employment is very high among women (48%). Lacking a high school education increases the likelihood of going jobless for long spells as over 40% of migrants with only a primary school education or less reported having the experience. It is notable that even a college degree did not insulate migrants from the unemployment rolls since 35% of them went without work for a month or more. Similarly, the likelihood of unemployment spells is high regardless of year of arrival, possession of a U.S. government-issued ID, survey city or other attributes of respondents. Reflecting the seasonal nature of agricultural employment, 54% of Fresno residents reported they had experienced lengthy spells of unemployment.

The high probability of experiencing some unemployment most likely results from the nature of jobs held by the respondents. While most respondents work full time (76%) and at only one job (89%) they do so at rates below the norm for the labor force. Looking at foreign-born Hispanic workers in the U.S., the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that 88% of them usually worked full time and 97% held a single job in

[12] Respondents from new states of origin in Mexico are also more likely to work in hospitality. That is a reflection of their greater concentration in areas such as New York City.

[13] A comparable statistic for the U.S. labor force is not available. What is known is that 19.4 million Hispanics (native and foreign born) worked or looked for work in 2003. Of this total, 2.5 million, or 12.9%, experienced some unemployment during the year. The median number of weeks of unemployment was 17.6 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).

2004.[14] Another reason might be that migrants are more likely than average to be in contingent work arrangements. Contingent workers may be full-time or part-time, but the key characteristic is that either their job is temporary or they do not expect it to last. The contingent workforce is currently estimated to be approximately 4% of the U.S. labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Hispanics, who are 13% of the overall labor force, make up over 20% of the contingent workforce.[15] The elevated probability of contingent employment would contribute to a higher likelihood of experiencing spells of unemployment.

Table 18
Percent of Migrants Reporting they were Unemployed More than One Month Last Year by Selected Characteristics

	Percent
Total	38
Gender	
Males	32
Females	48
Education	
None	45
Primary	42
Lower secondary/Vocational	37
High school	32
Some college or more	35
U.S. ID	
No U.S. ID	40
With U.S. ID	36
Year of Arrival	
<6 months	39
6 to 24 months	43
3 to 5 years	39
6 to 7 years	39
8 to 10 years	38
11 to 15 years	35
More than 15 years	34
Survey City	
Atlanta	35
Chicago	38
Dallas	35
Fresno	54
Los Angeles	37
New York City	34
Raleigh	40

Note: Students, housewives and retirees are omitted from the calculations. U.S. ID refers to a photo identity card issued by a U.S. government agency.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

[14] These are unpublished estimates made by the Pew Hispanic Center from CPS data. Similar conclusions emerge if the survey respondents are compared with foreign-born Mexican workers in the U.S. or with all Hispanic workers in the U.S. For example, 89% of all foreign-born Mexican workers in the U.S. usually worked full time and 98% held a single job in 2004

[15] In part, that is due to the higher concentration of Hispanic workers in construction and business services (e.g. landscaping). Both industries make use of contingent arrangements at much higher rates than average.

4.3 The earnings of Mexican migrants are among the lowest in the U.S.

The weekly earnings of Mexican migrants are among the lowest in the U.S. Earnings for women migrants are especially low and respondents who are recently arrived also earn less than average. As shown in Table 19, the midpoint or median of the earnings distribution for migrants is $300 per week—one-half of migrants earned less than $300 per week while the other half reported higher earnings. That is well below the median wage of $360 per week for all foreign-born Mexican workers and $384 per week for all foreign-born Hispanic workers in the U.S. in 2004 based on the government-collected Current Population Survey. The Pew Hispanic Center also estimates a median wage of $320 per week for foreign-born Hispanic workers who entered the U.S. in 2000 or later years based on government-collected data (Kochhar, 2005). Thus, the survey respondents' median earnings closely reflect what the CPS shows to be the earnings for recently-arrived foreign-born Latino workers.

Table 19
Weekly Earnings of Mexican Migrants
(percent distributions)

Weekly Earnings	All Migrants	Males	Females
$1-$100	5	2	10
$101-$199	13	7	24
$200-$299	33	29	39
$300-$399	26	31	16
$400-$499	13	16	7
$500 or more	11	15	4
Less than $300	50	38	74
$300 or more	50	62	26

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The wages earned by survey respondents potentially place many of them at or below the federal poverty level. If a migrant worker is assumed to work 50 weeks in a year, the median weekly wage translates to $15,000 per year. The 2005 federal poverty guideline for a family of three is $16,090.[16] The poverty guideline for a family of four is $19,350. Given the low median wage reported by the survey respondents, it is possible that a fair proportion of migrant families, especially those with two or more children, are living at, or below, the poverty level. However, the Survey of Mexican Migrants also shows that many respondents live in households with multiple earners, not all of whom are members of a nuclear family. Living arrangements such as these may help keep many migrant households above the poverty level.

Not surprisingly, low wages are characteristic of workers with the least stable jobs. Thus, the lowest wage earners were the most likely to report they had experienced lengthy spells of unemployment. Two-thirds of workers earning less than $100 per week had been unemployed for a month or more in the

[16] Poverty guidelines are published in the *Federal Register* each year by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The 2005 poverty guidelines appeared in *Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 33, February 18, 2005, pp 8373-8375. They are also available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/05fedreg.htm. The poverty guidelines are similar to, but not the same as, the poverty thresholds published by the Census Bureau.

Table 20
Percent of Migrants Reporting they were Unemployed More than One Month Last Year by Weekly Earnings

Weekly Earnings	Percent
$1-$100	67
$101-$199	57
$200-$299	43
$300-$399	31
$400-$499	21
$500 or more	19

Note: Students, housewives and retirees are omitted from the calculations.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

past year (Table 20). The same was true for only 19% of respondents earning over $500 per week. In the middle, 31% of workers making $300 to $399 per week had unemployment spells lasting over a month.

Wages for women are well below those earned by men. Whereas only 38% of men earned less than $300 per week the same was true for 74% of female respondents (Table 19). Contributing to this trend is the industry distribution of these workers. The construction industry is the primary source of jobs for male migrants and also the key source of decent earnings for them. More than 70% of migrant workers in the construction industry received a wage in excess of the overall median of $300 per week (Table 21). In contrast, much more so than men, women are employed in the commerce, cleaning and maintenance, and domestic service industries where the majority of workers earn less than the median wage.

Table 21
Weekly Earnings of Mexican Migrants in Selected Industries in the U.S. (percent distributions)

	Industry in U.S.						
Weekly Earnings	Agriculture	Hospitality	Construction	Manufacturing	Cleaning/ maintenance	Domestic service	Commerce/ sales
$1-$100	7	5	2	3	7	18	5
$101-$199	12	17	4	14	21	28	10
$200-$299	41	33	23	40	34	36	32
$300-$399	24	26	34	24	24	13	26
$400-$499	10	12	20	10	10	3	14
$500 or more	5	8	17	8	5	2	13
Less than $300	60	54	29	57	62	82	48
$300 or more	40	46	71	43	38	18	52

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Time spent in the U.S. is a key indicator of wages. More than 60% of respondents who arrived in the less than two years ago earn less than $300 per week (Table 22). At the other end of the spectrum, more than 60% of migrants who have been in the U.S. for at least 15 years earned a weekly wage higher than that amount. Thus, earning potential climbs steadily with time spent in the U.S. labor market.

Table 22
Weekly Earnings of Mexican Migrants by Years in the U.S.
(percent distributions)

	Years in the U.S.						
Weekly Earnings	< 6 months	6 to 24 months	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years
$1-$100	10	5	5	5	5	3	4
$101-$199	18	17	14	12	11	13	8
$200-$299	36	39	37	32	29	30	26
$300-$399	26	27	24	27	26	28	24
$400-$499	10	7	11	13	17	14	17
$500 or more	1	5	9	10	12	12	21
Less than $300	64	61	56	49	45	46	39
$300 or more	36	39	44	51	55	54	61

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Speaking English well or possessing a U.S. government-issued ID, attributes related to time spent in the U.S., adds significantly to the earning potential of migrant workers. Nearly two-thirds of those who speak a lot of English earn more than the median wage (Table 23). On the other hand, 68% of respondents who speak no English made less than $300 per week. Similarly, earnings of 57% of respondents without a U.S. government-issued ID are below $300 per week. The same is true for only 42% of migrants in the survey who have a U.S. government issued ID.

Table 23
Weekly Earnings of Mexican Migrants by Proficiency in English and U.S. ID
(percent distributions)

	How Much English Do You Speak?					
Weekly Earnings	A Lot	Some	A Little	None	**No U.S. ID**	**With U.S. ID**
$1-$100	5	4	5	9	6	4
$101-$199	9	11	13	17	16	9
$200-$299	21	27	37	42	35	29
$300-$399	21	27	28	24	26	25
$400-$499	18	17	10	5	11	15
$500 or more	26	15	6	3	6	18
Less than $300	35	41	56	68	57	42
$300 or more	65	59	44	32	43	58

Note: U.S. ID refers to a photo identity card issued by a U.S. government agency.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The survey also revealed a predictably strong relationship between earnings and education. More than two-thirds of respondents who did not attend school make less than the median wage while the opposite is true for two-thirds of workers who had at least some college education. However, there was little variation in earnings across age groups. It is likely that the greater concentration of elderly workers in agriculture negates their advantage in age and U.S. labor market experience. Conversely, as noted above,

younger workers are more likely to be found in the relatively high paying construction industry and that helps negate their lack of experience in local labor markets.

The earnings distribution of Mexican migrants is fairly alike in the survey cities. The principal exception is Fresno where more than 50% of the survey respondents work in agriculture. A solid majority of respondents in Fresno—60%—live on less than the median wage of $300 per week. Migrants settled in Atlanta and Dallas are the best off, with 56% in each city receiving a weekly wage higher than the median.

5. Conclusions

This study has reported on the transition of migrant workers from Mexico into the U.S. labor market. The data for the study were obtained through interviews of migrants applying for the *matrícula consular*, an identity document issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. Many of the respondents have been in the U.S. for less than five years and most of these new arrivals lack a U.S. government-issued ID. Thus, the survey data provide a unique look at the economic background and status of migrants from Mexico who are believed to be in the U.S. without authorization.

Open unemployment does not appear to be the primary reason why large numbers of migrants are leaving Mexico for the U.S. with or without authorization. To the extent that lack of work is a factor in the decision to migrate, it is more likely that underemployment, not unemployment, is the main reason. Only five percent of the survey respondents who had entered the U.S. within the past two years were unemployed before they left Mexico. The migrant workers also share the education and industry characteristics of the labor force in Mexico. Overall, the economic background of these migrants indicates they are drawn not from the fringes but from the heart of Mexico's labor force.

Extensive family and social networks help migrants find employment in the U.S. Unemployment among survey respondents is found to plunge rapidly within six months of arrival in the U.S. The fact that most of these workers lack a U.S. government-issued ID does not appear to be a hindrance in finding work. Many also successfully make transitions into new jobs in new industries for them. The low level of unemployment among migrant workers from Mexico points to a high level of demand for their services, and the strongest demand appears to be in agriculture, hospitality, construction and manufacturing. These four industries are the destination for about two-thirds of migrants responding to the survey regardless of their background in Mexico or year of arrival.

The characteristics of Mexican migrants are found to vary over time. The new arrivals are better educated than their predecessors, less likely to have a background in farming, and more likely to have come from different states within Mexico, such as Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla and Veracruz. Moreover, Mexican migrants are increasingly finding new areas of settlement in the U.S., such as New York, Atlanta and Raleigh. As a consequence, and in response to local demand, migrant workers are increasingly likely to be hired in the construction and hospitality industries in the U.S.

While survey respondents have been very successful in finding jobs in the U.S., the stability and quality of these jobs is in doubt. Unemployment spells lasting more than a month are not uncommon amongst these migrants and earnings for many are at or below the minimum wage. Workers with especially low wages include those who speak no English and those who do not have a U.S. government issued ID.

The importance of these factors diminishes over time and in combination with the influence of other factors wages of migrant workers increase steadily with years spent in the U.S. However, the possibility of a lengthy unemployment spell barely drops over time with little difference observed between migrants who have been in the U.S. for less than six months and those who entered the U.S. more than 10 years ago.

Appendix 1
Selected Demographic Characteristics of Mexican Migrants

The younger and more recently arrived respondents to the survey are better educated than their predecessors. They are also more likely to come from Mexican states that have become sources of migration in recent years and are gravitating to parts of the United States that have only recently become settlement areas for Mexican migrants, such as New York City and Raleigh.[17] The vast majority of Mexican migrants applying for the *matrícula consular* arrived in the U.S. within the past 10 years and a high plurality migrated just in the past five years. These migrants are mostly male, young, relatively unskilled in English and do not possess a U.S. government-issued photo ID.

This appendix discusses only a few demographic characteristics of the sample of Mexican migrants. The economic relevance of these traits is developed in the main body of the report. The sample in the Survey of Mexican Migrants consists of 4,836 persons. The majority—59%—were male. Not all respondents reported working in Mexico or in the U.S., principally because the sample includes students, housewives and retirees. Of those who reported working, 65% were male. In that respect the sample matches the gender distribution of the labor force in Mexico. A small majority—55%—of the sample reported speaking little or no English. Not surprisingly, fluency in English varies with factors such as years in the U.S. and education level. Details on these and other attributes are available in the first report on the Survey of Mexican Migrants issued by the Pew Hispanic Center (Suro, 2005a).

The education level of Mexican migrants: poor but improving

Most Mexican migrants applying for the *matrícula consular* have not completed high school. Only 22% reported having a high school degree or its equivalent and just another 6% said they had attended at least some college (Table A1).[18] This means that 72% of respondents either did not attend or graduate from high school. The largest single group of workers (37%) is that with lower secondary or vocational training. There is virtually no difference in the educational credentials of male and female respondents.

Even though the education level of Mexican migrants responding to the survey is relatively low, it is similar to that attained by the Mexican population (ages 15 and older), according to the 2000 census in that country. When their level of education is compared with the education distribution of the population in Mexico, survey respondents are less likely to have attended college—6% versus 11%—but also more likely to have a high school degree—22% versus 17%. Similarly, more respondents (37%) acquired secondary or vocational training than the overall population in Mexico (24%).[19] In other words, Mexican migrants in the survey are drawn from neither the low nor the high end but the middle of the education distribution in Mexico.

The education level of respondents shows distinct signs of improvement among the younger and more recently arrived migrants. Among the older respondents—ages 45 and older—two-thirds or more either had either no education or only a primary school level of education and fewer than 20% graduated from high school or went to college (Table A1). In contrast, at least 30% of the younger migrants—ages 16 to 29—are high school graduates or possess some college education. Much higher proportions of the younger migrants are also likely to have acquired a lower secondary education or vocational training in comparison with the older migrants in the survey.

[17] New York City is a traditional entry point for immigrants but it is a relatively new destination for migrants from Mexico.
[18] Mexican migrants in the survey are less educated than all foreign-born Mexican workers in the U.S. Using Current Population Survey data, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that 40% of foreign-born Mexicans in the U.S. labor force had completed high school or attended college in 2004. Conversely, 60% of foreign-born Mexicans in the U.S. labor force have either not attended or not graduated from high school.
[19] Data on the education of Mexico's population are from its general census of 2000—XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda, 2000—as reported by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI).

Table A1
The Education Level of Mexican Migrants by Age and Years in the U.S.
(percent distributions)

	Education Level					
	None	Primary	Lower secondary/ Vocational	High school	Some college or more	Total
All Migrants	2	33	37	22	6	100
Males	2	31	39	22	6	100
Females	3	33	34	23	7	100
Age						
16-19	0	20	39	36	5	100
20-24	0	25	45	25	5	100
25-29	1	26	41	25	7	100
30-34	2	32	37	21	8	100
35-39	1	32	40	20	7	100
40-44	3	43	26	21	7	100
45-49	4	59	20	8	10	100
50+	12	59	16	10	2	100
Years in U.S.						
2 years or less	2	22	43	27	7	100
3 to 5 years	1	30	43	22	4	100
6 to 7 years	2	31	41	21	5	100
8 to 10 years	2	32	36	23	6	100
11 to 15 years	2	30	35	26	8	100
More than 15 years	3	42	28	20	7	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Improvements in education level are also noticeable among the more recently arrived respondents. The proportions of high school graduates do not vary much by year of arrival, but the more recent arrivals are much more likely to have acquired lower secondary or vocational training.[20] For instance, 43% of migrants who arrived within the past five years had that level of education compared with only 28% of those who came to the U.S. more than 15 years ago.[21] As shown in the main body of the report, the differences in education level also translate into differences in employment patterns as younger, more recently arrived migrants in the survey are less likely to be engaged in agriculture and more likely to work in construction, manufacturing and hospitality.

[20] Just as the younger migrants are better educated, they are also more likely to have arrived recently. Among those of ages 16 to 29, 63% arrived within the past five years. In contrast, 67% of those of age 55 and older have been in the U.S. for more than 15 years. Nonetheless, significant portions of the relatively older migrants, for example, 26% of those between the ages of 50 and 54, have been in the U.S. for five years or less. Because the elderly are less well educated, their presence among the recent arrivals masks an underlying improvement in the educational profile of young migrants from Mexico.

[21] It should be noted that the Survey of Mexican Migrants captures the current education level of the respondents. It is possible, albeit unlikely, that at least some of the respondents acquired a few years of education after entering the U.S.

New states of origin from Mexico and new areas of settlement in the U.S.

A new aspect of migration from Mexico is that migrants are increasingly coming from states further south in the country and less from the central regions of the country. As shown in Table A2, more than one-half (52%) of the respondents who have been in the U.S. for more than 15 years left from the "old" states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas. The geographic source of the migration stream has diversified considerably since then. Nearly an equal proportion of respondents—30%—who have been in the U.S. for five years or less came from the old states and the four new origin states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla and Veracruz.

Table A2
State of Origin in Mexico for Migrants by Years in U.S.
(percent distributions)

	State of Origin in Mexico			
	New states	Old states	All other states	Total
All Migrants	24	37	39	100
Years in U.S.				
2 years or less	28	30	42	100
3 to 5 years	30	29	41	100
6 to 7 years	29	34	36	100
8 to 10 years	25	35	40	100
11 to 15 years	22	39	39	100
More than 15 years	13	52	35	100

Note: The new states of origin in Mexico are Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla and Veracruz. The old states of origin are Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The survey respondents from the new sending regions are more likely to head for new settlements in the U.S. Among the seven sites for the survey, New York City and Raleigh combined attracted 40% of the migrants from the new states but only 5% from the old states [Table A3]. In contrast, respondents from the old states of origin in Mexico are concentrated in Los Angeles, Fresno, Chicago and Dallas. There are no notable differences in the education of migrants from old and new states. However, respondents from the new states are overwhelmingly (65%) male and most (62%) speak little or no English. These are common characteristics of an early stream of migration and places such as New York City and Raleigh are likely to witness an inflow of women and children from Mexico in the near future.

Migrant characteristics by their year of arrival

Most Mexican migrants responding to the survey arrived in the U.S. within the past decade and, in turn, many of them entered the U.S. just in the past five years. The most recently arrived migrants are prominent within new settlement areas in the U.S., such as Raleigh and New York. New arrivals from Mexico are also overwhelmingly young, poorly versed in English, and very unlikely to have a U.S. government-issued photo ID. Moreover, there are proportionally more men among the recent arrivals than among the earlier arrivals, reinforcing the view that women follow men to establish families in the U.S.

The applicants for the *matrícula consular* tend to be recent arrivals. Nearly two-thirds—62%—arrived in the U.S. within the past 10 years (Table A4).[22] More than half of these migrants, or 39% of all migrants, have been in the U.S. for five years or less. The tilt towards recent arrivals among the migrants is not surprising as those who arrived in earlier times are more likely to possess some form of U.S.-issued identity document and, therefore, less likely to apply for a *matrícula consular*.[23]

Table A3
Survey of Mexican Migrants: Sample Characteristics by State of Origin in Mexico
(percent distributions)

	State in Mexico		
	New state of origin	Old state of origin	All other states
Survey City			
Atlanta	8	6	9
Chicago	16	21	20
Dallas	8	22	26
Fresno	5	14	5
Los Angeles	23	32	26
New York City	30	1	7
Raleigh	10	4	6
Gender			
Male	65	56	57
Female	35	44	43
Age			
16-19	8	9	9
20-24	26	19	22
25-29	24	17	20
30-34	19	17	18
35-39	11	12	13
40-44	7	10	7
45-49	3	6	5
50+	3	10	6
Education			
Did not attend school	2	3	1
Primary school	34	40	24
Lower secondary/Vocational school	37	33	40
High school	21	18	28
College or other postsecondary	5	6	8
English Ability			
A lot/Some	38	47	48
A little/No English	62	53	52

Note: The new states of origin in Mexico are Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla and Veracruz. The old states of origin are Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

[22] In contrast, only 42% of all foreign-born Mexicans in the U.S. labor force entered the country in the preceding 10 years.
[23] At least in part that would be due to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 which accorded legal status to nearly 3 million unauthorized migrants.

New settlement areas for Mexican migrants, such as Raleigh and New York, contain proportionally more new arrivals than other areas. In particular, 56% of respondents in Raleigh and 49% of respondents in New York have been in the U.S. for five years or less. Atlanta (47%) and Dallas (46%) also have very high proportions of new arrivals from Mexico. In comparison, over one-half of the respondents in Los Angeles and Fresno have been in the U.S. for more than 10 years.

Table A4
The Distribution of Mexican Migrants in Survey Cities by Years in the U.S.
(percent distributions)

	Years in the U.S.						
	2 years or less	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years	Total
All Migrants	19	20	12	11	17	21	100
Survey City							
Atlanta	21	26	18	14	11	10	100
Chicago	22	17	11	12	17	20	100
Dallas	22	24	14	12	14	15	100
Fresno	11	10	9	10	19	42	100
Los Angeles	15	14	8	10	21	32	100
New York City	18	31	15	14	15	7	100
Raleigh	26	30	14	11	11	8	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

The new arrivals from Mexico who are increasingly populating new destinations in the U.S. are mostly male and very young, speak English poorly and lack a U.S. government-issued ID. These traits are hallmarks of the unauthorized migrant population. About one-half of the Mexican migrants who have been in the U.S. for 11 years or more are men. But, as shown in Table A5, 62% of the arrivals in the past two years were male. The same is true among respondents who arrived three to five years ago. Thus, while unauthorized migration from Mexico features many women, it remains mostly a male phenomenon.

The youth of the Mexican migrants in the survey is striking. Few arrivals in the past 10 years have been 35 or older. For example, 78% of migrants who entered the U.S. 8 to 10 years ago are now age 34 or younger (Table A5). Among those who have been in the U.S. for two years or less, 83% are less than 35 years old. That makes the migrants in the survey much younger than the population in Mexico. The Mexican government census for 2000 shows that among those of ages 15 and older, only 53% are between the ages of 15 and 34. The fact that migrants come from the younger segments of the Mexican population is consistent with the findings from other surveys the Center has conducted in Mexico. When asked whether they would migrate to the U.S. if given the means and opportunity, the young are more likely than the old to respond yes (Suro, 2005c).

The lack of U.S. government-issued documentation and poor English ability are no barriers to migration. More than three-quarters of respondents who left Mexico within the last five years lack a U.S. ID and more than two-thirds report speaking little or no English (Table A5). As shown in the report, these very migrants also appear to find jobs in the U.S. with relative ease, although the quality and stability of those jobs is in doubt.

Table A5
Selected Characteristics of Mexican Migrants by Years in the U.S.
(percent distributions)

	Years in the U.S.						
	2 years or less	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	More than 15 years	All Migrants
Gender							
Male	62	62	58	59	50	52	59
Female	38	38	42	41	50	48	41
Age							
16-19	18	11	5	4	6	3	8
20-24	32	35	28	19	12	5	22
25-29	20	25	28	35	22	3	20
30-34	13	16	19	20	29	14	18
35-39	7	7	9	12	17	20	12
40-44	4	3	7	5	7	20	8
45-49	3	2	2	2	4	14	5
50+	4	2	2	2	3	19	6
U.S. ID							
Without ID	82	75	62	52	43	17	55
With ID	18	25	38	48	57	83	45
English Ability							
A lot/Some	23	35	46	56	59	59	45
A little/No English	77	65	54	44	41	41	55

Note: U.S. ID refers to a photo identity card issued by a U.S. government agency
Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Survey of Mexican Migrants, July 2004 - January 2005

Appendix 2
The Survey of Mexican Migrants

The Pew Hispanic Center's Survey of Mexican Migrants provides detailed information on the demographic characteristics, living arrangements, work experiences and attitudes toward immigration of 4,836 Mexican adults who completed a 12-page questionnaire as they were applying for a *matrícula consular*, an identity document issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. Fieldwork was conducted in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh, NC, and Fresno, CA, from July 12, 2004, to Jan. 28, 2005.

The sampling strategy for the survey was designed to generate the maximum number of observations of Mexicans living in the United States and seeking documentation of their identity at a Mexican consulate. Respondents were not asked directly to specify their immigration status. However, slightly more than half of the respondents (N=2,566) said that they did not have any form of photo ID issued by any government agency in the United States. The share of respondents saying they had no U.S.-issued identity documents was much higher among the more recently arrived—80 percent among those in the country for two years or less and 75 percent for those in the country for five years or less.

The Survey of Mexican Migrants was a purposive sample, in which any individual seeking an identity document on the days the survey was in progress could choose to participate. It was not a probability sample, in which researchers randomly select participants in a survey to avoid any self-selection bias. Moreover, the results have not been weighted to match the estimated parameters of a target population as is often the case with public opinion surveys. Instead the data are presented as raw counts. Conducting a survey of *matrícula* applicants on the premises of Mexican consulates while they waited for paperwork to be processed permitted the execution of a lengthy questionnaire among a large number of individuals in the target population. No other survey on this scale has been attempted with Mexican migrants living in the United States.

The survey allows an extraordinary view of a population that by its very nature is exceptionally difficult to measure and study: Mexicans who live in the country without proper documentation and in particular those who have been in the country for only a few years. The survey data and other evidence suggest that a substantial share of the respondents, especially among those that are young and recently arrived, are not in the United States with legal immigrant status.

The *matrícula consular* is a laminated identity card that bears an individual's photograph, name and home address in the United States and that attests that he or she is a citizen of Mexico. The card is issued by Mexican officials without inquiring as to the individual's immigration status in the United States. As such, it cannot be used as proof of permission to reside or work in the country, and U.S. immigration authorities will not accept it as proof that the holder has the right to enter the country. However, the *matrícula* is accepted as an identity document that establishes the holder's local address by many law enforcement agencies and local governments. The U.S. Treasury Department ruled in 2003 that the *matrícula* can be used to open bank accounts. Two-thirds of the respondents in this survey—3,265 individuals—said one of the reasons they were applying for the *matrícula* was to use as an ID card in the United States.

For individuals returning to Mexico, the *matrícula* can be used in place of a Mexican passport to enter Mexico at those points of entry, primarily airports, where Mexican authorities conduct immigration checks. And, 43 percent of the respondents said one of their intended uses of the *matrícula* was for travel to Mexico. However, an individual who plans to return to the United States legally will need a valid Mexican passport and some kind of U.S.-issued visa to reenter the country except for short visits near the border.

The act of applying for a *matrícula consular* is not evidence that an individual is an unauthorized migrant. However, a permanent legal immigrant who has established a domicile in the United States and has been in the country for an extended period of time has access to other kinds of identity documents. Under normal circumstances, such an individual should be in possession of a U.S.-issued document

attesting to his or her immigration status, and that document can be used to acquire a Social Security card, a driver's license or other forms of photo ID issued by government agencies in the United States.

Most tourists and business travelers are allowed to remain in the United States legally for no more than a year, and 90 percent of the survey respondents said they had been in the United States for a year or more. Temporary workers and others who are allowed to reside in the country for longer than a year on non-immigrant visas make up a very small share of the migrant flow from Mexico.

Over the past decade 80 percent or more of the Mexican migrants who have come to live in the United States on a long-term basis have added to the stock of the unauthorized population, according to estimates based on data collected by Mexican and U.S. government agencies. As a result of the substantial illegal flow in recent years, those estimates indicate that about half of the 10 million Mexican nationals living in the United States reside in the country without authorization.

The Survey of Mexican Migrants was conducted on the premises of the Mexican consulates in Los Angeles, New York, Dallas, Chicago, Fresno, Raleigh and Atlanta, but respondents were advised that this was not an official survey and that it would have no bearing on their business at the consulate. Mexican authorities cooperated with the fieldwork by allowing it to take place at the consulates. However, the design, development and execution of the survey, the compilation and analysis of the resulting data and the writing and editing of this report were under the full and exclusive control of the Pew Hispanic Center. Consulate personnel did not take part in any of the fieldwork, and all of the costs of conducting the survey were borne by the Pew Hispanic Center. Fieldwork was conducted by International Communications Research of Media, PA, and Einat Temkin, of the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communications, who served as fieldwork coordinator. Respondents could complete the questionnaire themselves, seek the assistance of an interviewer for any part of it or have the entire questionnaire read to them by an interviewer. All of the fieldwork was conducted in Spanish.

The sites for the survey fieldwork were chosen with several objectives in mind. One was to cover the major concentrations of the Mexican migrant population; hence the choices of California, Illinois and Texas. There was also a desire to produce a mix of locations with well-established immigrant populations, such as Los Angeles, and relatively new immigrant populations, such as Raleigh. And the survey sought a mix of major metropolitan areas, smaller cities and at least one site where a sizeable share of the Mexican population works in agriculture (Fresno). Thus there are some significant variations in demographic characteristics among the samples generated in the various cities.

No researcher has attempted to conduct a survey of a nationally representative sample of the undocumented population that was drawn with the level of statistical certainty that is routine for large-scale public opinion polls, and this survey does not purport to present that kind of sample. Within limits inherent to the nature of the target population, however, the Survey of Mexican Migrants offers an opportunity to examine this population at a level of detail and with a level of confidence not available heretofore.

Neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor any other U.S. government agency conducts a count of unauthorized migrants or defines their demographic characteristics based on specific enumeration. There is, however, a widely accepted methodology for estimating the size and certain characteristics of the undocumented population based on census data. The survey respondents resemble the undocumented population of Mexican origins in recent estimates in their age and gender and the amount of time they have been in the United States.

Methodology

Data collection was conducted at Mexican consulates in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh, and Fresno from July 12, 2004, to Jan. 28, 2005. In each location, data collection was conducted for five or 10 business days, depending on the estimated size of the target population in each city. In most cases, applicants for a *matrícula consular* are guided through a series of stations, where documents are examined, applications are submitted, photos are taken, etc. Depending on the number of

applicants, the efficiency of the work flow and conditions at the consulate, the applicants could spend anywhere from 20 minutes to four hours at the consulate during their visit. In some locations, the *matrícula* applicants were concentrated in one room or area, while in other locations applicants for all types of documents were in one line or area. Therefore, recruiting only those who were applying for the *matrícula consular* was a primary concern. This was usually achieved by asking potential participants to identify themselves as *matrícula* applicants. Only respondents who replied affirmatively to the first question on the survey, asking if they were applying for a *matrícula consular* that day, were included in the survey data. Respondents were not asked for their names or any other identifying information at any point in the process.

Potential respondents were informed that they were eligible to participate in the survey using public announcements (with or without microphone, depending on the facilities) and individual recruitment. They were asked to fill out the survey while waiting in line to conduct their transaction or while waiting to pick up their newly obtained identity card. The participants received a verbal explanation regarding the survey, its content, the nature of the questions and the length of time needed to fill out the survey, as well as a detailed explanation of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. In addition, they were verbally informed that upon completion of the survey, they would receive a phone card which could be used to telephone Mexico as a token of gratitude for their time and patience. Potential participants were also given a detailed information sheet that explained more fully the purpose and implications of the survey. Both during the recruitment process and on the information sheet potential participants were advised that their dealings with the consulate would not be affected in any way by their decision whether to take the survey or not or by their responses.

Those who expressed an interest in participating in the survey and were of age had the choice of self administering the survey independently or having an interviewer read out the questions and fill in the questionnaire for them. Because the targeted sample is characterized by a high rate of illiteracy, special attention was paid to the potentially illiterate or semi-literate people in the sample by emphasizing that reading and writing was not a prerequisite to participation and that interviewers were available to provide assistance and to conduct as much of the survey as necessary.

Participants were then given a copy of the survey, a pencil and a clipboard. They were told to take as long as needed and to come back to any of the interviewers if they had any doubts or questions. Those participants who opted to have an interview conducted were usually interviewed in line or by the interviewers' table. When completed, the survey was returned to an interviewer. It was then checked to assess whether the participant had completed the survey. While participants could skip questions if they so desired, there were some cases in which the participant had stopped marking responses entirely. In these cases, an effort was made to have the participant complete, as much as possible, the remainder of the survey. Interviewers offered to conduct the rest of the survey in an interview by reading questions and marking the answers. If the participant refused to complete the survey, either independently or through an interview, their survey was marked incomplete.

The survey was conducted under the auspices of the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and was subject to the university's regulations on human subject research. Respondents were advised of their rights under these regulations and were given phone numbers where they could call to register complaints or note any concerns about the conduct of the survey. Completed survey forms were marked as such and numbered per day. In addition, all completed surveys were checked in the field for any open-ended comments. Responses and all other handwritten text were translated into English for future coding and data entry. The translations were written underneath or in proximity to the original handwritten comment and placed in parentheses to distinguish the translation from the subject's comments.

Each day's completed survey forms were then sent to the offices of International Communications Research (ICR) in Media, PA, where data entry was conducted and a database established. The completed surveys are stored at ICR using procedures that accord with university regulations for maintaining the confidentiality and security of the data.

Sample comparisons

Neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor any other U.S. government agency conducts a count of unauthorized migrants or defines their demographic characteristics based on specific enumeration. There is, however, a widely accepted methodology for estimating the size and certain characteristics, such as age and gender, of the undocumented population based on census and survey data. This methodology essentially subtracts the estimated legal-immigrant population from the total foreign-born population and treats the residual as a source of data on the unauthorized migrant population (Passel et al., 2004; Lowell and Suro, 2002; Bean et al., 2001).

Using this methodology, Jeffrey S. Passel, a veteran demographer and a senior research associate at the Pew Hispanic Center, has developed estimates based on the March supplement of Current Population Survey (CPS) in 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau's annual effort to measure the foreign-born population and provide detailed information on its characteristics. Comparing the sample from the Survey of Mexican Migrants with these estimates demonstrates significant similarities with the estimated characteristics of the undocumented population.

Overall the survey sample has the same preponderance of males as the full Mexican-born population from the CPS. However, a greater share of the sample respondents are concentrated in the younger age ranges than in the Mexican-born population as a whole; and in this respect, the survey sample resembles the estimated characteristics of the undocumented population, with the share under 40 being identical. A greater share of the survey respondents are recently arrived in the country (five years or less) than in the full Mexican population, and again this resembles the undocumented population. In terms of education, the share of survey respondents that went as far as high schools is the same as that in the estimates of the undocumented population and the Mexican-born population as a whole. Differences emerge at the high and low ends of the educational profile.

Comparison of Survey of Mexican Migrants with Mexican-Born Population by Legal Status from the March 2003 Current Population Survey

Variable & Category	Survey of Mexican Migrants*	Undocumented**		Mexican-Born**	
		Percent	Difference	Percent	Difference
Sex					
Male	57%	57%	0%	56%	1%
Female	40%	43%	-3%	44%	-4%
Age Group					
18-29	48%	44%	4%	34%	14%
30-39	29%	35%	-6%	33%	-4%
40-49	13%	15%	-2%	19%	-6%
50-54	3%	3%	0%	6%	-3%
55+	5%	3%	2%	7%	-2%
Years in U.S.					
5 or less	43%	36%	7%	24%	19%
6-10 yrs	18%	26%	-8%	20%	-2%
11-15 yrs	12%	18%	-6%	15%	-3%
>15 yrs	19%	20%	-1%	41%	-22%
Education					
Primary or less	34%	41%	-6%	40%	-6%
Lower sec./voc. ed	36%	25%	11%	23%	13%
High school	23%	23%	-1%	23%	0%
College+	7%	11%	-4%	14%	-7%

* Composite estimate for sample from all seven sites. "No answer" responses omitted in computing distributions.
** CPS universe for comparison is the Mexican-born population classified by legal status using assignment methods developed by Passel and Clark (1998) at Urban Institute. For undocumented migrants, all ages 18 and over are used; for the entire Mexican-born population, only ages 18-64 are used from the CPS. Undocumented migrants are included in Mexican-born groups.

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