

Back Home: Household composition and economic resources of returnees from the US in Mexico

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Abstract

Return migration to Mexico increased dramatically from 280,051 in 2000 to 985,383 migrants in 2010. 3.7 million Mexicans lived in a household exposed to return migration in 2010. At the same time, mainly driven by minors born in US from Mexican parents, the number of individuals born in the U.S. who were living there five years before the Census more than doubled from 2000 to 2010. Youngsters below 18 born in the US explain most of this increase. Immigration from the U.S. is highly related to return migration to Mexico. In this paper, using the Mexican Census of 2010, we explore the relationship between the demographic composition and welfare situation of households exposed to return migration. In a time when the returnee population is increasingly comprised of deportees, voluntary returnees and their US-born children, understanding family return is of first importance.

Extended Abstract

Introduction

During the period 2005-2010 border enforcement and deportations from the interior increased substantially while economic and financial conditions after 2008 were particularly adverse. Deportees and voluntary returnees face similar challenges upon return to Mexico although their processes of reincorporation might differ; putting deportees in an extra strain (Wheatley, 2012). Mexican families in the US have become more complex and there has been an increase in 'mixed families' comprised of undocumented and documented migrants, as well as their US-born children. This context has had the effect of changing the demographic composition of returnees, while increasing the involuntary and unprepared character of return (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012). Thus, in 2010 the returnee population in Mexico includes a larger proportion of returnees that have spent more time in the United States than before, as well as their children born in the northern country. Whether this translates into a change in the economic resources that returnees bring back to Mexico upon return is still an open question.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the composition and welfare of Mexican households with returned migrants. Specifically, we are interested in exploring the relationship between the household demographic composition, its exposure to return migration and four indicators of well-being and deprivation. Our statistical models estimate the relationship of return migration with the indicators that are part of Mexico's multidimensional measurement of poverty that can be measured using the 2010 Census: educational gap, access to health services, quality and spaces of the dwelling, and access to basic services in the dwelling (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2010). In the next pages we discuss briefly the background and motivation for this work along with the data and methods that will be used in this analysis.

Background

The old model of target, circular or life stage return has changed in recent years with sustained enforcement in the United States to include more unprepared or unplanned return. That is, while returnees used to move back to Mexico after saving enough money for a specific goal, within a seasonal pattern, or for retirement, today a larger share returns after deportation or in face of economic hardship (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012). Even if the return is ‘involuntary’, returnees may go back to the households where they had been sending remittances to and so they may be received by the safety net they had thread over the years. On the other hand, returnees who have spent longer periods in the U.S. and had formed families in their new home may face harder conditions upon moving back to Mexico, especially if they move with children born in the U.S. who have not lived in Mexico before. Therefore, in this paper we explore the differences in well-being between households with different exposures to return migration.

Social deprivation and well-being: the Multidimensional Poverty Measurement in Mexico

In this paper we will consider well-being following the official framework used in Mexico for poverty measurement. In 2004 the Ley General de Desarrollo Social (General Social Development Law, LGDS for its name in Spanish), which was unanimously approved, created the Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL) to regulate and coordinate the evaluation of social development policies and to establish the guidelines and criteria for the definition, identification and measurement of poverty. The LGDS established the criteria that had to be used in measuring poverty and stipulated that the following eight indicators must be incorporated: current per capita income, average educational gap in the household, access to health services, access to social security, quality and spaces of the dwelling, access to basic services in the dwelling, access to food, and degree of social cohesion.

After consultation with academic researchers and experts in the field, CONEVAL published the methodology for multidimensional poverty (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2010). Within a framework of social rights and economic well-being, this methodology combines economic well-being and social deprivation indicators along with social cohesion and the territorial context. Given the specific requirement for this measurement, a special data source which gathers the information needed was designed and as a result, the 2008 Socioeconomic Conditions Module (MCS-ENIGH 2008) was added to the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditures (ENIGH).

Recent return migration patterns

Using the definition of residence five years ago, we find that return to Mexico increased dramatically from 280,051 in 2000 and 238,331 in 2005 to 985,383 returnees in 2010 (see Table 1). At the same time, emigration during the same period declined in absolute numbers from 1,471,485 between 1995 and 2000 to 990,447 in the period 2005-2010. Although emigration declined considerably (see Table 1), the percentage of migrants who left and returned within the five year period is much larger (31%) between 2005 and 2010 than ten years before (17.7%).

Another interesting feature of return during the period arises when we consider place of birth: the number of individuals born in the U.S. who were living there five years before the Census increased

almost threefold from 2000 to 2010. This increase is mainly driven by minors born in the United States from Mexican parents. Youngsters below 18 born in the US explain most of the increase in the number of people born in the United States who were living there five years before the Census which went up from 58 thousand in 2000 to 152 thousand in 2010. The increase in the number of U.S.-born children from Mexican parents shows that return migrants have spent longer periods in the US. Are households with returnees and their U.S.-born children better off than non-migrant households?

The increase in US born individuals who returned in the last five years is an indicator of the increase of return of long-term settlers of Mexicans that had developed strong ties, networks and resources in the US. In this paper we will compare the resources, both economic and social, of households with and without US-born minors to explore this issue. We can expect that the longer the migrants have spent in the US, the larger their economic resources are upon returning, assuming they have a longer period for saving and remitting back home. However, we could expect these returnees who were earlier migrants to have more difficulties in reintegrating into the formal labor market. Plus, their social and family ties may have weakened after the long periods of absence.

Understanding the characteristics of returnees that opted to bring their US-born children will also shed light to the discussions of family separation after deportation or “family return”. At the same time that temporary custody applications have risen in the US and increasing accounts of deportees leaving family behind in the US, a large number of returnees is opting to go back to Mexico with their minor children born in the United States, individuals who might opt later to return to their homeland, once they are old enough.

According to Mexican legislation, all individuals born abroad from a Mexican parent are entitled to Mexican citizenship. In order to get it Mexican parents need to register their newborn children at Mexican consulates or at the Civil Registry once in Mexico. It has already been noted that a considerable proportion of immigration to Mexico from the United States is related to return migration since a large share of immigrants are young and tend to live in households with members that have lived in the U.S. before. Despite the fact that due to the increase in violence and insecurity in Mexico during the last few years , the number of American Expatriates who decide to retire in Mexico did not increase, in the period 2000-2010, the number of individuals born in the U.S. who live in Mexico doubled from 342,875 to 739,634 (see Table 2).

The proportion of individuals born in the U.S. whose residence five years ago was the U.S. increased in the period as well, from 18 to 21 percent. In 2000, 60 thousand U.S. born (aged 5 and above) were living in the U.S. five years before while in 2010, this increased to 152 thousand. Again, this is driven by a concentration in younger ages (68 percent aged less than 18 in 2000, and 74 percent in 2010). Table 2 also shows the condition of residence five years before for the population born in the United States in 2000 and 2010 and includes as well the condition of co-residence with a Mexican parent in Mexico in 2010. In the 2010 Mexican census it is possible to identify each individual with their father and/or mother if they are living in the same dwelling and so allows U.S. to know the place of birth of the parents of those born in the United States residing in

Mexico¹. Note that the number of U.S. born individuals gives U.S. an indicator of U.S. born nationals who are also Mexicans. This number will be underestimated since Americans born from Mexican parents may not live with their parents, especially if their parents are still in the United States, or if they have left the parental home to create a new household after entering a union or to work or study, for example.

In 2010, 71 percent of those born in the U.S. were actually living in Mexico with at least one Mexican parent, i.e. more than half a million were entitled to Mexican citizenship and a considerable part should have already gone through the process to have dual citizenship. Note that a similar percentage of those Americans who were living in the U.S. in 2005 are actually living with at least a Mexican parent. Seven out of ten of those U.S. born who had arrived in the last five years are actually living with a Mexican parent. This confirms the idea that much of the immigration from the U.S. is related to return migration to Mexico.

There are 182 thousand minors aged less than five years old born in the U.S. but living in Mexico with at least one Mexican parent and there are 100 thousand of minors aged five to seventeen who were in the U.S. in 2005 but who were in 2010 in Mexico living with at least one Mexican parent. If we see the states where the U.S. born minors aged younger than 5 years old and the U.S. born minors who were living in the U.S. in 2005 with at least one Mexican parent (283 thousand) we see a large presence of these US-Mexican children in border states (11.6 percent in Baja California, 10.4 percent in Chihuahua, 7.1 percent in Tamaulipas and 5.4 in Sonora) and in traditional migration sending areas (9.3 percent in Jalisco and 7.3 percent in Michoacán). If we only consider the younger minors aged less than five, we see a larger concentration in these states along the U.S. border. This pattern could be an indicator that population from border areas may opt to cross the border to provide their children the U.S. citizenship or that they are living in the border with their U.S. children after deportation, for example, while trying to cross back to the United States. On the other hand, for the older minors, we see a larger relative presence in states like Jalisco and Michoacán, although still a large share is living in states along the U.S. border.

About 6 thousand U.S. born aged more than 30 years old are living with at least a Mexican parent. Due to their age groups, they are likely to be sons and daughters of early migrants, possibly former Braceros. On the other hand, almost half a million are minors and thus are sons and daughters of more recent migrants who were in the U.S. after IRCA (signed in 1986). A quarter of million are sons of Mexicans who were in the U.S. after IIRAIRA (signed in 1996). The ages of the U.S. born Mexicans who were in the U.S. five years before, show that more than 100 thousand minors have for sure had experience in the U.S. educational system.

In 2010 we have that 22 percent of the minors born in the U.S. were grandchildren of the person identified as the head of the household, whereas only 16 percent of the Mexican nationals were grandchildren of the head. Parents' identification is important since given that the minors could live in the home of the grandparents with their parents away, especially if their parents are migrants. It has been shown by transnational scholars that children born in the U.S. are sometimes sent to Mexico to live with grandparents. Thirteen thousand minors born in the United States are not living

¹ This was impossible to calculate in previous censuses and population counts where it was only possible to know the relationship with the individual characterized as the head of the household.

with any of their parents and 44 percent of them are actually the grandchildren of the head of the household.

Hypotheses

Our main hypothesis is that different types of return will be associated to different outcomes of well-being. We assume that from 2008 to 2010, a larger percentage of returned migrants experienced a non planned return, generating a negative effect on household wellbeing.

In terms of the educational gap, we expect larger differences of incidence of deprivation for U.S.-born children who arrived in the last five years. Although they were very likely to be attending school in the U.S., we expect U.S. born children to experience problems of incorporation into the Mexican educational system. However, for the overall returnee population the incidence of deprivation by education is uncertain since the returnee population includes older lower skilled undocumented migrants who had spent years in the U.S. working without access to school, as well as higher skilled professionals who return to Mexico after having been in the U.S. with a study or work permit.

In terms of access to health services, we expect this to depend on who the non-returnees are in the household since returnees may receive indirect access to health services as dependents. For example, Masferrer and Roberts (2012) found that returnees are less likely to access public health services than non-returnees which probably reflects that returnees are less likely to integrate into the formal labor market, but the question here is whether or not they are deprived of this access and how the incidence of this deprivation varies by type of returnee population.

Finally, in terms of the characteristics of the dwelling, we look at its quality and spaces and access to basic services. Overall, we expect dwellings with returnees to be in better conditions than dwellings with non-returnees as an effect of monetary remittances that were sent before return. However, when we compare households receiving remittances from abroad with households with no presence of migration at all, we expect that households receiving remittances may be better than households with returnees because the dwellings are less crowded and are still receiving support.

Data and Methods

In this paper we use the 10 percent sample of the 2010 Mexican Census, which is the most updated data source that can be used to study return migration. However, it is not free of limitations. For our research problem, it is impossible to calculate all of the eight indicators from the multidimensional measurement of poverty using the Mexican Census. Specifically, it is not possible to calculate the index of access to food, and degree of social cohesion that are possible to calculate with the special module MCS-ENIGH 2008. Therefore, we focus only on the following indicators of social deprivation defined following the criteria used by CONEVAL (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2010, pp. 91-102 (Annex B)): Educational gap, access to health services, quality and spaces of the dwelling and access to basic services in the dwelling In this paper we estimate four multivariate models where the four wellbeing indicators will function as alternative dependent variables.

The main explanatory variable which we focus in is the presence of return migration within the household. We consider a broad definition of returnees that include Mexicans who were living in the United States in 2005 but moved to Mexico by 2010, Mexican individuals who were living in Mexico in 2005 but emigrated to the U.S. and returned within the 2005-2010 period, as well as the U.S.-born minors living in a household with their Mexican parent or who have a kin relationship with the head of the household. We compare households with no presence of return migration with households with different types of return: all returnees, with returnees but not the whole household, and with returnees and members abroad. Our unit of analysis is the household although we also calculate the indicators of education gap and access to health services at the individual level.

We also look at the effect of having a member of the household abroad and having a member abroad who sends remittances and at income of alternative sources as main explanatory variables. We consider dummy variables to indicate whether the household is the beneficiary of any cash transfer program, whether the household receives internal remittances and whether the household receives international remittances or not.

We control for the following characteristics of the head of the household: Sex, age, schooling, marital status and occupation. In terms of household composition, we look at size, type of household (nuclear or extended) and dependency index, (separating young from elderly dependency). We also include control variables for the level of urbanization of the locality, considering five types of localities in terms of their size, and we control for the state where the household is located.

Cited References

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Table 1

Selected characteristics for the population aged 5 years and older who resided in the United States 5 years before

| Characteristic | 2000 | | 2005 | | 2010 | |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Total ^a | 280,051 | | 238,331 | | 985,383 | |
| Total by gender ^a | 167,497 | 109,715 | 156,058 | 82,273 | 648,655 | 286,914 |
| | 60.5 | 39.5 | 65.5 | 34.5 | 68.7 | 31.3 |
| Age ^b | | | | | | |
| Mean age | 29.5 | 26.4 | 32.5 | 29.4 | 32.1 | 28.1 |
| Age group | | | | | | |
| 5-14 | 18.7 | 28.4 | 12.4 | 23 | 11.6 | 24.7 |
| 15-24 | 16.3 | 19.1 | 14.4 | 17.6 | 13.8 | 16.7 |
| 25-49 | 55.2 | 43.1 | 61 | 46.1 | 64.2 | 48.8 |
| 50 and more | 9.8 | 9.4 | 12.5 | 13.3 | 10.4 | 9.8 |
| Place of birth | | | | | | |
| Mexico | 136,946 | 80,611 | NA | | 593,677 | 230,737 |
| United States | 30,161 | 28,168 | NA | | 78,318 | 74,275 |

Source: Complete set of individual records of the 2000 Mexican Census and 2005 Count, and ten percent sample of the 2010 Census

Notes:

Includes non-institutionalized individuals only.

^a The subtotals may not add up to the total due to missing values in the variables of interest.

^b The percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding effects.

Table 2.

Population born in the United States living in the US five years before and and coresidence with Mexican parent, 2000 and 2010

| Age group | 2000 | | 2010 | | 2010 | | | | | |
|------------------|---|-------|---|------|--------------------|------|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| | Born in the US and living in the US in 1995 | | Born in the US and living in the US in 2005 | | All born in the US | | | | Born in the US and living in the US in 2005 | |
| | | | | | Total | | Living in 2010 with at least one Mexican parent ^a | | Living in 2010 with at least one Mexican parent | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % (of Total US born, 2010) | N | % (of Total US born living in US in 2005) |
| Total | 58,329 | 100 | 152,541 | 100 | 739,634 | 100 | 525,549 | 71.1 | 106,823 | 70.0 |
| 0-4 ^b | NA | NA | NA | NA | 203,003 | 27.4 | 182,306 | 24.6 | NA | NA |
| 5-9 | 29,095 | 50 | 78,899 | 51.7 | 209,415 | 28.3 | 188,377 | 25.5 | 70,873 | 46.5 |
| 10-17 | 11,029 | 18.95 | 34,735 | 22.8 | 157,725 | 21.3 | 105,137 | 14.2 | 29,958 | 19.6 |
| 18 - 29 | 8,327 | 14.3 | 19,639 | 12.9 | 83,080 | 11.2 | 43,060 | 5.8 | 5,282 | 3.5 |
| 30-49 | 5,357 | 9.21 | 11,622 | 7.6 | 45,242 | 6.1 | 6,508 | 1 | 689 | 0 |
| 50 + | 4,383 | 7.53 | 7,646 | 5.0 | 41,169 | 5.6 | 161 | 0 | 21 | 0 |

Source: Ten percent sample of the 2010 Mexican Population Census

Notes:

^a This information is not available in the 2000 Census^b The place of residence 5 years ago is only asked to the population 5 years and older

Table 3.
Type of household of returnees and who is returning, household level (2009 and 2010)

| Who returned ^a | Type of household | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | 2010 Census ^a | | 2009 ENADID | |
| Non-unipersonal households | Nuclear ^b | Non-nuclear ^c | Nuclear ^b | Non-nuclear ^c |
| Total | 449,600 | 244,782 | 424,970 | 282,032 |
| Head or spouse | 284,724 | 69,183 | 271,178 | 80,395 |
| Head and spouse | 52,322 | 8,039 | 35,499 | 6,296 |
| Head or spouse and son(s) or daughter(s) of head | 15,646 | 7,866 | 16,821 | 6,054 |
| Head, spouse and at least a son or daughter | 24,495 | 4,498 | 22,379 | 2,315 |
| Only son(s) or daughter(s) of head | 72,154 | 89,925 | 79,093 | 89,378 |
| Only members with other relationship with the head | NA | 63,489 | NA | 63,742 |
| Return of complete households | | | | |
| All the members of the household are returnees | 26,020 | 3,306 | 20,737 | 2,034 |
| % of households with all members returnees | 5.79 | 1.35 | 4.88 | 0.72 |
| Unipersonal Household | 49,534 | | 33,852 | |

Source: Ten percent sample of the 2010 Census and 2009 Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID)

Notes:

^a By returnee here we refer to the population born in Mexico who resided in the United States five years before as well as the population who left and came back during the five previous years. ENADID returnees include also those individuals who lived in the United States one year before the survey but were living in Mexico at the time of the survey.

^b Refers to dwellings, not households since the 2010 Census changed the definition of household previously used by INEGI.

^c Refers to households formed by head and/or a spouse with or without a son or daughter of the head.

^d Refers to households with members with other relationship to head than spouse or son or daughter.