



MIGRATION AND THE BORDER REGION

Analysis to inform funders, policymakers, and stakeholders on how migration between U.S. and Mexico has shaped existing dynamics in the Border region.

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*The U.S.-Mexico Border
Philanthropy Partnership serves as
the leading binational organization
focused on building prosperity
along the U.S.-Mexico Border region
through leadership, collaboration,
and philanthropy.*

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SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION

We believe that the challenges and opportunities across the Border region demand informed civic participation, strong leadership and cross-border understanding, and collaboration.

For generations, the Border region between Mexico and the United States has been transformed from a lightly populated geographic area to a dynamic enterprise zone with a booming economy and population. Today, substantial numbers of residents on both sides of the Border interact on a daily basis, producing a society and geographic territory that is different from the rest of the United States and Mexico.

However, the Border contrasts a highly-developed, wealthy nation with a developing country and the issues are well known but persistent. Research indicates that if the region comprising the Border across the 10 states – Mexican and American – were America's 51st state, it would rank at or near the bottom in nearly all measures of prosperity, community health, educational opportunity, and quality of life. Further, negative stereotypes about the Border region are widely held throughout the United States and Mexico, and they frustrate possible solutions for many Border issues and justify imposition of federal and state Border policies and programs, often without adequate input from local stakeholders and often accompanied by unintended consequences.

This Border Brief, which is one in a series, highlights issues and offers critical insight to drive new solutions. It is our desire that this information will help foster greater philanthropic and corporate support, as well as our nonprofit partners to carry them out to address the need for coordinated philanthropic leadership, cross-cultural understanding, and public policy advocacy. The Border Briefs provide current and accurate information about health, environment, education, migration, philanthropy, and general Border dynamics.

SECTION TWO

BORDER MIGRATION

The contemporary U.S.-Mexican Border region has been shaped by waves of domestic and international migration for more than a century and a half. Most migrants to the Border in the 19th and 20th centuries were from the United States and Mexico. The 21st century saw new migrant groups arriving from Central America and the Caribbean, from South America, and from other regions around the world. These migratory flows typically responded to economic cycles in the Border and the United States, although in recent decades economic and political crises in sending areas have become important motivations for migration. Although the Border is associated in the public mind with migration, much of migration is a long-distance movement from throughout Latin America to the interior of the United States, with people simply passing through the Border.

Immigration and colonization from the U.S. Midwest, Southeast, and Eastern Seaboard reached the present-day Border area by the 1830s and accelerated the end of the war between Mexico and the United States and the California Gold Rush from 1848. U.S. migrants sought wealth in the Mexican mining zones of Sonora and Chihuahua and through livestock raising and farming in the Mexican province of Coahuila and Texas and in the new U.S. lands of New Mexico and California. The United States established wagon roads and subsidized stagecoach lines in support of westward expansion. The U.S. government quickly turned public lands over to private holders throughout the areas of west that it occupied. Mexico actively encouraged U.S. migration to the frontier after 1821, as in the case of Texas, hoping that an increased population would serve as a buffer between Mexico and the territorial interests of the United States and to defend lands against attacks by Apache and Comanche.

By the 1880s, railroad networks connected Mexico and the United States, facilitating transport of ranching, agriculture, and mining products of the Border to eastern U.S. markets. The rail lines also brought Mexican workers to the Border. In the mid-1880s the boom of south Texas cotton acreage and sheep ranches relied on the annual importation by rail of thousands of Mexican migrant workers. At the turn of the century, development of Arizona open-pit copper mines in Clifton, Douglas, and Bisbee rested on a mostly Mexican and Mexican American labor force. The growth of agriculture in the California's San

Joaquin Valley in the 1880s drew upon a multinational migrant labor force of Asians, European Americans, and Mexicans. Migration in the late nineteenth century transformed the Border's small village communities into thriving U.S. and Mexican towns that were connected to the distant economic and political centers in Mexico and the United States.

The Mexican Revolution's violent phase from 1910 to 1920 saw nearly a million Mexicans flee to the safety of U.S. Border towns and elsewhere in the United States. Many were skilled workers, professionals, entrepreneurs with capital, and merchants. U.S. Border towns boomed with the new skilled migrants and their economic power. The end of WW I and the Prohibition era of the 1920s attracted migrants from both the United States and Mexico to the Border region. Mexicans dominated the workforce on the railroads and during the 1920s Mexican migrants worked in steel, meatpacking, and mining industries in the West and Midwest.

Opposition to unrestricted immigration into the United States grew in the 1920s and 1930s, and due to growing visibility in the labor markets of the Southwest, Mexicans became a principal of target of anti-foreign nativists. Despite the concerted efforts by labor unions and "restrictionists," the U.S. Congress excluded Mexicans and other Latin Americans from the strict quotas imposed by the landmark immigration acts of 1921 and 1924. The great need for inexpensive labor in the U.S. Border region and elsewhere overcame economic, cultural, social, and ethnic concerns of U.S. anti-immigrant groups. These themes have been replayed in U.S. politics ever since and still shape debate on migration issues.

Depressed economic conditions in the 1930s, along with an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment, motivated U.S. officials to impose severe restrictions on the entry of migrants and to pressure Mexicans already in the United States to repatriate. Some U.S. local officials forced numerous Mexicans to leave, even when they and their family members were U.S. citizens. Many repatriados settled in Mexican Border towns, sometimes together in new neighborhoods such as Colonia Libertad in Tijuana. The Mexican government implemented programs to incorporate the returning Mexicans, recognizing the skills the returnees brought.



▲ Mexican agricultural laborer topping sugar beets. Stockton (vicinity), California (1943). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Marjory Collins, photographer.

SECTION THREE

BRACERO PROGRAM

World War II mobilized millions of young men into the U.S. armed services, creating an enormous need for workers for farms, factories, and urban occupations. The labor shortage was met by movement of women into jobs in industry ('Rosie the Riveter'), the Great Migration of Blacks from the rural South to the cities of the North and West, and importation of temporary workers from Mexico under the Bracero Program that was a joint effort of the two federal governments. Between 1942 and 1947, the Bracero Program brought 219,000 agricultural workers into the United States from Mexico; one-half labored in California agriculture. The Bracero Program endured until 1964 and some 5 million Mexican temporary workers had participated.

Braceros established migrant networks that connected Mexican sending areas to jobs and social support in the Mexico's northern Border, in the U.S. Border area, and throughout the country. These contacts and support networks helped maintain the northward migrant flow regardless of U.S. economic cycles and immigration law changes.

Once established, the flow of migrants is very difficult to shut off. Microscopic but vast spread of interpersonal networks now supported by social media facilitate migration. Diffuse society support in the United States including large and small employers, landlords, U.S. ethnic and cultural groups, community institutions like churches is important. Many elected officials likewise support migration and integration of migrants into American society. Rigid Border enforcement has generated a counterpart effective smuggling business (not trafficking) that facilitates migration.

1942 - 1947

The wartime flow of labor north to the U.S. Border states and beyond marked the beginning of the massive influx of Mexicans to both the Mexican and U.S. Border states.

SECTION FOUR

THE MIGRATION DEBATE

Migration has been one of the most enduring and sensitive Border issues for Mexico and the United States. Concerns raised about unauthorized immigration to the United States from Mexico and the status and treatment of legal and unauthorized Mexican residents of the Border region and elsewhere have often been at the center of conflict between the two countries. As Mexican migrants settled in large numbers throughout the United States, migration became a national issue as well as a Border issue. The migration debate has pitted citizens of Mexico against citizens of the United States and citizens of the United States against one another. Migration has been a favorite wedge issue in U.S. politics, often adopted by politicians to appeal to a nativist and anti-foreign base of voters. Mexican political figures have also exploited the issue to advance their own agendas.

Mexico's policies toward outward migration have shifted over the years. Mexican Border states have occasionally tried to restrict migration, fearing labor shortages, as was the case with Tamaulipas, Sonora, and Chihuahua in the 1920s.¹ The Mexican federal government in the 1930s supported return migration during the Great Depression. Then, the same government encouraged northward migration during the Bracero Program and after its conclusion continued to support migration of workers to the United States, emphasizing that migration was a basic human right. The importance of money sent by Mexican workers home to Mexico, or remittances, was significant. By 2006 remittances were \$26.5 billion

and nearly doubled to \$51.6 billion dollars in 2021, when 94.5% of remittances came from the United States.² The U.S. remittances were from California (33.2%), Texas (15.9%), Minnesota (7%), and other states. Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato were the main recipients of remittances, which along with the State of Mexico, Mexico City, Guerrero, and Oaxaca totaled nearly half of the remittances. Mexican Border cities also received remittances; in 2022, remittances in Tijuana totaled \$754 million and the figure for Juárez was \$505 million.³ The value of migration as an economic and social safety valve was not lost on Mexican policy makers.

In the 1990s, the Mexican government its consulates in the United States started paying more attention to emigrant communities in the United States and elsewhere. The administration of Vicente Fox (2000-2006) tried to enhance Border security, protect immigrant rights, and develop a new immigration accord with the United States that was unfortunately derailed by the terrorist attacks of 2001. Mexico created in 2003 the Institute of Mexicans Abroad to reach out to Mexican nationals in the United States and elsewhere to improve their well-being



and that of their communities of origin in Mexico. This also signaled more engaged consular efforts in Border communities throughout the United States. Migration from Mexico as a U.S. “problem” is a creation of the twentieth century. From 1848 until the end of the nineteenth century, the Border was not patrolled, and migration across it attracted little interest. U.S. immigration legislation in 1917 and 1924 generally made exceptions for Mexican migrants; only in 1929 did it become a violation of the law to enter the United States from Mexico without documentation. Changes in U.S. immigration law caused an increasing number of Mexican migrants to fall into a different legal status than those who had preceded them. The debate in the United States over migrant labor switched from a traditional focus on quotas for legal immigrants to concerns about illegal, or unauthorized, immigrants. Despite the rhetoric, some part of American society and political life remains resolutely opposed to immigration of all types.

The flow of workers from Mexico to the United States has been accompanied by acrimonious debate over short-term and long-term economic and social effects. In the United States, many agribusiness, manufacturing, construction, and service employers of migrants—legal and unauthorized—argued for easy access to inexpensive Mexican labor. Organized labor, in contrast, held that low wage rates put U.S. workers out of jobs and increased poverty, although by the twenty-first century this is changing as increasing numbers of migrants are part of organized labor in many economic sectors. Some felt that by encouraging Mexican migration, the United States was losing control of its Borders and thus its sovereignty. Nonetheless, the millions of Mexican workers who migrated to the United States provided essential labor that supported the prosperity of the northern neighbor. Many migrants became permanent residents and citizens who are a growing component of the Border and national population.

U.S. Border states and communities along the Border have sometimes expressed concerns about the fiscal impact of providing services to unauthorized migrants, including education, health care, and other benefits. Some U.S. Border communities noted that migration and control of the Border was a federal responsibility, but the national government did not reimburse for local costs incurred for education, health care, law enforcement, emergency services, and other services. However, studies suggest that unauthorized workers paid more in total U.S. federal, state, and local taxes than they used in government services and that their overall impact on the national economy was positive.⁴ Nonetheless, unreimbursed immigration-related costs continue to be an issue in some local U.S. Border communities and the theme surfaces in political debates.

U.S.-MEXICO BORDER PHILANTHROPY PARTNERSHIP

The U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership is made up of more than 400 members from academia, business and corporate entities, government, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations spanning all regions of the U.S. and Mexico. Together, we share a common vision and commitment for a thriving border region.



SECTION FIVE

MANAGING MIGRATION

U.S. attempts to control unauthorized migration include periodic policy tightening and order-crossing enforcement as well as inconsistent work place compliance efforts. Such policies were usually short-term reactions driven by political debates often based on outdated understandings of the phenomenon. Much of the enforcement took place at the international boundary and in the U.S. Border region. These measures were only partly effective and had negative impacts for life in the Border region including immigration checkpoints within 100 miles of the Border, significantly longer wait times to cross the Border, and an increase in injuries and deaths when migrants attempted to cross between ports of entry.

Efforts to control and manage complex migrant flows across the Border have varied. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 imposed sanctions on employers who hired employees without proper documents, but the measures did not effectively control access to jobs for unauthorized workers. IRCA also created a framework for the legalization of the status of millions of unauthorized Mexicans who had been living in the United States; by the fall of 1988, some 3.1 million had applied for amnesty. After a modest decline in apprehensions⁵ of undocumented people at the Border, within several years numbers continued to grow, suggesting the failure of one aspect of IRCA.

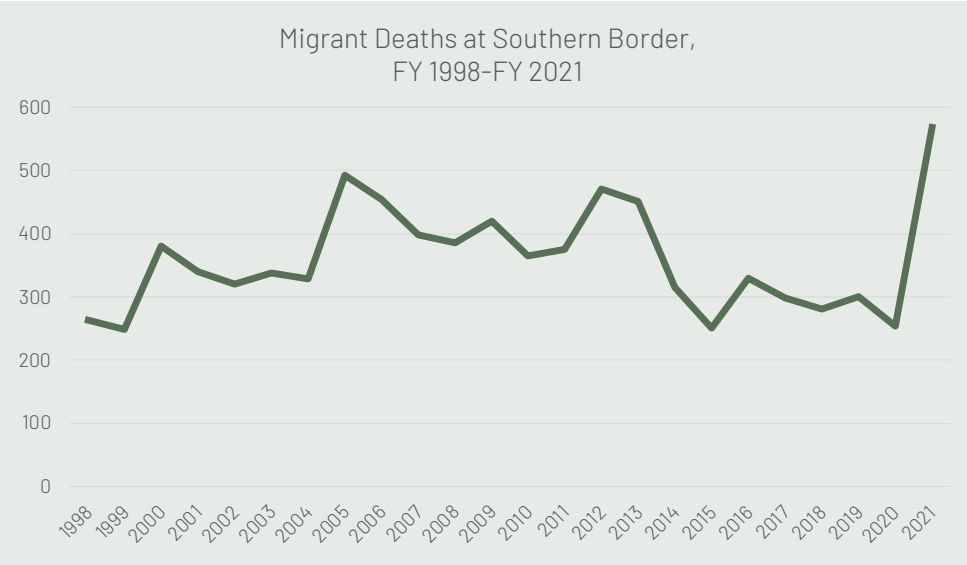
Proposition 187 in California in 1994 attempted to slow unauthorized migration by prohibiting undocumented immigrants from using non-emergency health care, public education, and other social services. Although passed by a state-wide voter referendum, it was later overturned by the courts. Proposition 187 produced a negative reaction in Mexico and in parts of the United States and motivated U.S. immigrant communities to fully engage in politics. Other Border states have seen high profile anti-migrant actions, including bussing migrants out of state, mobilizing the national guard or state law enforcement to apprehend unauthorized migrants, erecting makeshift barriers of shipping containers along unfenced sections of the Border, and placing lines of buoys in the middle of the Rio Grande to deter crossers. These stunts are testimony to the politization of the migration discussion in the United States.

SECTION SIX

HARDENING THE BORDER

From the 1990s, members of the U.S. Congress supported hardening the southern Border with Mexico by building Border infrastructure and increasing enforcement personnel as well as increasing inspections at the ports of entry. With each attempt to crack down on migrants—for example, the mid-1990s initiatives known as Operation Hold the Line in El Paso and Operation Gatekeeper in the San Diego region—U.S.-Mexican relations suffered. Mexico charged that its citizens were physically mistreated, deprived of food and water, kept in crowded jail cells, and denied first aid after apprehension by the Border Patrol. Border Patrol stepped up enforcement and new infrastructure efforts forced migrants to scale the new fences and walls, resulting in many injuries. Migrants also went to other areas to cross, often in remote mountain or desert areas with danger from hypothermia, dehydration, or heatstroke or across the Rio Grande with danger of drowning. These enforcement changes led to a growing number of tragic deaths of migrants, officially totaling 8,616 for the period FY1998-FY 2021 (likely an underestimate). Local Border communities were responsible for identifying the victims, notifying relatives if possible, and burying the remains.

For many decades migration of workers from Mexico to the United States for employment had been circular migration or repeat migration. After a season's work in agriculture the United States, the unauthorized workers returned home to Mexico, to repeat the following year. Hardening the Border disrupted this pattern and the result was that more unauthorized workers remained in the United States permanently and they brought their families from Mexico to join them. Many also sought year-round employment in the service sector, in construction, and elsewhere. Thus, expanded enforcement had the unintended consequence of increasing the number of unauthorized residents of the United States.



▲Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection



SECTION SEVEN

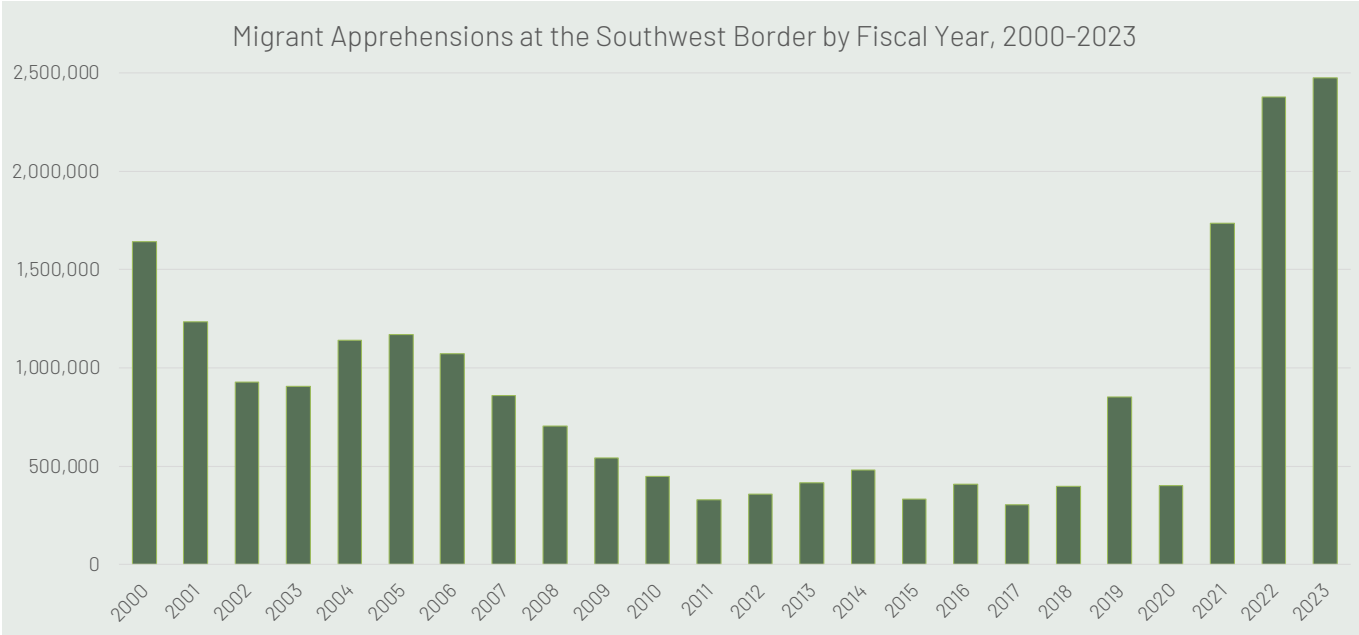
21ST CENTURY CHANGING MIGRANT FLOWS AT THE BORDER

By 2000, there were 8.6 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States who lived in communities throughout the country. As these numbers increased to 12.2 million in 2007, the level of acrimonious political debate increased. The perception prevailed that these undocumented people were mainly from Mexico and had entered across the southern Border; however, in 2017, when the unauthorized population was 10.5 million, only 47 percent were from Mexico and most unauthorized migrants had arrived in the country with legal status, but remained after their visas expired.⁶

Numbers of migrants apprehended at the Border and the composition of that migrant flow have fluctuated significantly in the 21st century. From 1,643,679 apprehensions in 2000, the number dropped to 306,916 in 2017 and then skyrocketed to 1,734,686 in 2021 and then to 2,378,944 in 2022. For comparison, some 166 million authorized northbound crossings occurred through the ports of entry at the Border in that same year. The last two decades have seen changes in percentages of Mexicans

apprehended at the Border. From 2000 to about 2013, Mexicans accounted for most apprehensions; after those Mexicans were usually less than half of the total.⁷ Single adults were the largest number of apprehensions during some years and in other years, apprehensions of family units increased. Since the summer of 2021, there has been a dramatic increase in migrants from Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Colombia, and a relative decrease in arrivals from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.⁸

The number of migrants seeking asylum at the Border has increased greatly in recent years. These migrants express a fear of persecution in their home country although many were economic migrants. At the end of 2022, there were some 1.6 million asylum hearings pending in the United States, up from about 100,000 in 2012.⁹ A significant portion of these were for persons who crossed the southern Border. Wait times for asylum hearings varied, but were often 3 years or more. By the end of 2019, the administration had fully established a new policy of ‘metering’, or turning away, asylum seekers.

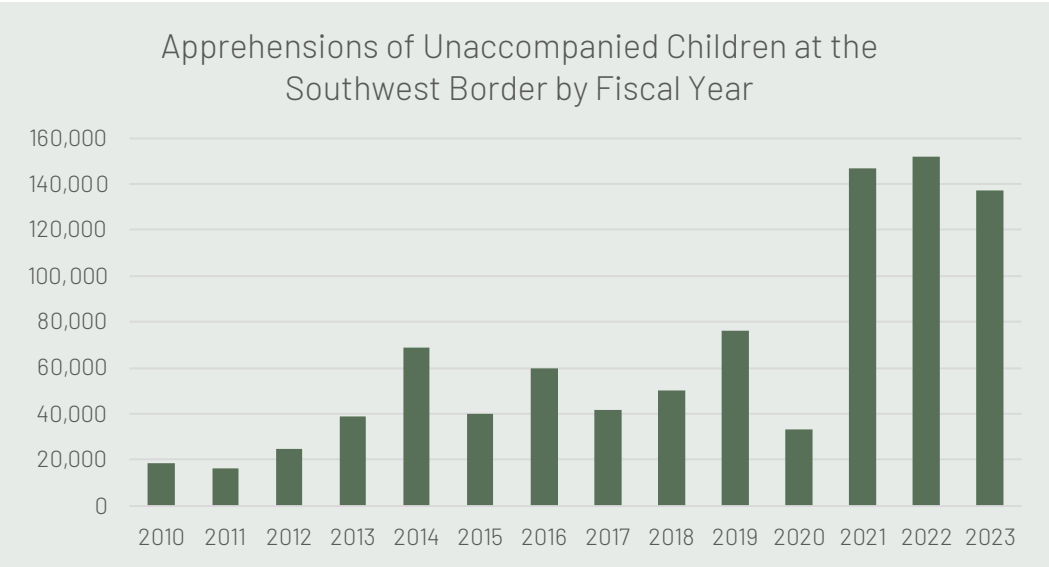


▲ Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection



It also implemented the Migrant Protection Protocols, which effectively forced asylum seekers to remain on the Mexican side of the Border before having their hearing in a U.S. court later. There is now a new regulatory regime (probably inconsistent with actual U.S. law), in which asylum-seekers from four countries (Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Haiti) can apply within a limited cap for temporary parole into the United States. Asylum-seekers at the Mexican side of the Border can apply on-line, though numbers of appointments are limited. People crossing at the Border without preapproved appointments, many individuals, are being deported to their home countries or sent back into Mexico, where they are particularly vulnerable to criminal predation. Significant numbers continue to attempt crossing the Border, seeking to enter covertly, without asylum, and due to this, deaths have risen. Asylum seekers usually present themselves on the U.S. side in visible places, involving less (but not zero) danger in crossing. As U.S. policy continues to limit flows at a much lower level than demand, and as the United States has greatly strengthened enforcement, the price of smuggling has risen, debt has worsened, organized criminals have entered the sector, but arguably flows have not abated. In summary, current policies allow for some asylum-seeking flow but also reject large portions of the arriving people.

Unaccompanied children (17 years and younger) are part of the migrant flow at the Border. These children often are sent by family members to live with a relative or parent in the United States. Some children simply decide on their own to migrate. From 2012 through 2019, unaccompanied minor apprehensions averaged about 43,000 per year. In 2020 with the pandemic, the number dropped to about 31,000. The following year, 2021, saw a spike to nearly 147,000 that reflected desperate conditions in Central America and hopes that the new U.S. presidential administration would prove to be less restrictive. The flood of children continued in 2022 with 152,000 apprehensions. In 2012, 73 percent of the children were from Mexico, but by 2021, Mexicans were only 20 percent and most of the rest were from Central America.¹⁰ Apprehended unaccompanied children were turned over to a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for housing and placement with a parent or relative if possible.



▲ Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

SECTION EIGHT

POLICY RESPONSES

When Vicente Fox (2000) and George W. Bush (2001) assumed office there were hopes that bilateral migration problems could be addressed. However, U.S. political support for reform evaporated with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and national attention shifted to homeland security and hardening the southern Border. President Barack Obama (2009-2017) faced a divided Congress and began to alter immigration policy through executive action. In 2012 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program enabled some 800,000 unauthorized children brought to the United States by their parents to work and study legally. The Obama administration soon increased formal deportation proceedings rather than simple return to the country of origin of unauthorized migrants. Criminals and recent arrivals were targeted and some 3 million were deported.

Donald Trump's presidency (2017-2021) had very strong anti-immigrant components. In addition to efforts to build a wall along the entire Border, increasingly harsh actions by executive fiat were meant to discourage and deter unauthorized migration to the United States. His short-lived "zero tolerance" program in the spring of 2018, separated children from parents who were arrested as criminals for unauthorized entry and the infants and minors were held in substandard facilities. By early 2023, there were still about 1,000 children who had not been reunited with their parents. The Trump administration also pressured Mexico to reduce the arrival of migrants to the northern Border by increasing enforcement at its southern Border to interrupt the flow of migrants from Central America and Latin America. Mexico shifted its policy of being a migration corridor to effectively becoming an asylum host. Asylum seekers were also discouraged by the Trump administration and were

required to wait in Mexico for appointments to consider their applications.¹¹ This meant that tens of thousands of refugees seeking asylum piled up in Mexican Border cities waiting for interviews. Given the high cost of long waits and security concerns, many returned to their places of origin or found work in Mexico. In March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic raged, unauthorized Border crossers and asylum seekers began to be expelled to Mexico under Title 42 of the United States Code, ostensibly to prevent spread of communicable diseases.

President Biden (2021-) reversed many Trump migration actions. He ended the emergency declaration that the previous administration had used to build the wall, although in 2023 construction was resumed for a 20-mile segment in south Texas that was required by an existing law.¹² Biden also pushed for continued DACA protection programs, reunification of children and families separated under Trump, and boosted refugee admissions. However, Title 42 was used by the Biden administration in the face of a surge of migration at the southern Border. Title 42 expulsions continued until May 2023 when COVID-19 Border restrictions ended.

In the face of a divided congress and polarization of politics in the United States, it has been impossible to achieve political consensus for a reform of the U.S. national immigration policy. Policies have vacillated according rapidly changing conditions at the Border and presidential administrations have had to react to one Border migration crisis after another. With a divided congress and frequent law suits before federal courts, recent presidential administrations have responded to migration issues with executive orders and other administrative tools.

“*Vacillating U.S. immigration policy and measures often have negative impacts on U.S. and Mexican Border communities, which confront needs to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants.*”

Paul Ganster, Ph.D.

SECTION NINE

BORDER COMMUNITY IMPACTS AND RESPONSES

Vacillating U.S. federal migration policy has been implemented with insufficient consideration of impacts on migrants and on U.S.-Mexican Border communities. U.S. policy to control the flow of unauthorized migrants by building more Border infrastructure and increasing enforcement personnel has not been successful. Instead, attempts to control migration at the Border have placed a huge burden on both Mexican and U.S. Border communities as well as creating a human rights crisis for many migrants. Services for released asylum-seekers passing through the Border recently has strained Border and receiving community resources.

Attempts to control migration at the Border have placed a huge **burden on both Mexican and U.S. Border communities** as well as creating a human rights crisis for many migrants.

Stepped-up expulsions of undocumented immigrants meant that Mexican Border cities were flooded with people deported from the United States. This included Mexican citizens who could not speak Spanish fluently since they had grown up north of the Border, veterans of U.S. military service, gang members and criminals, and tens of thousands of asylum seekers. This wave of deportations overwhelmed social and education services available in Mexican Border communities, and nongovernmental organizations from both sides of the Border stepped up to try to meet the needs of these displaced people.

U.S. Border cities also responded to the flood of migrants. The City of San Diego and the County of San Diego each established an office of immigrant and refugee affairs to advance integration of immigrants and refugees in the community. The City of El Paso organized to provide food and water, connectivity, transportation assistance, and temporary shelter for migrants. The flow of migrants was about 1,000 per day from April 2021 and the city's mayor declared a state of emergency in December 2022 designed to bring more resources for El Paso's migrant efforts. Though changing week by week, these issues remain an ongoing challenge for El Paso and other U.S. Border cities.

Philanthropies on both sides of the Border have organized to address aspects of the migrant crisis in the face of the inability of federal agencies to manage the large flow of people. For example, the San Diego Rapid Response Network is a coalition of organizations and individuals to assist immigrants. Their activities include maintaining a hotline and assisting migrants awaiting asylum hearings who were released on the streets of San Diego by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The network coordinates with Jewish Family Service of San Diego and volunteers to develop and manage a shelter that has helped some 120,000 migrants since 2018. Similar NGO responses are to be found all along the Border and on both sides of the boundary. Collectively, these organizations have devoted considerable resources to providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and have tried to fill the void left by the federal governments.



SECTION EIGHT

FAILED U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICIES

The reactive and problematic immigration system of the United States has impacted Border communities in many ways. As indicated earlier, hardening the Border in one location pushed migrants to cross elsewhere, often in dangerous deserts, mountains, or rivers and in areas where criminal gangs are common. Increasing the difficulties in crossing the Border stimulated human smuggling by organized criminals that included narcotrafficking groups. This elevated dangers for migrants and increased the burden on local U.S. and Mexican governments for law enforcement, search and rescue, health care, and other services.

U.S. state governments entered the fray through actions designed to show that state elected officials were addressing immigration problems at the Border, although that is a federal responsibility. Arizona installed a section of Border wall made from stacked shipping containers late in 2022 that was built without permission on federal land. Texas established truck checkpoints and then installed a line of buoys in the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass without required consultations with U.S. federal authorities and Mexico. California and New Mexico sent national guard troops to assist the U.S. Custom and Border Protection to control migrants. These actions did little to slow the flow of migrants at the Border and address the core issues; some were merely stunts for domestic political consumption.

The unpredictable surges of migrants at different locations along the Border has added to the challenges in managing the Border with Mexico. For example, a surge in asylum seekers in the Ciudad Juárez–El Paso region in 2023 exceeded the ability of local CBP personnel to manage the flow. CBP personnel were then moved to other duties locally and from other regions to help in El Paso, leaving other areas along the Border short staffed.¹³ Despite significant budget increases in recent years, CPB has not been able to efficiently manage the ports for legitimate crossers and cargo. Excessive wait times at the ports of entry have come at an enormous cost to local economies and have negatively impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of Border residents who cross the Border.¹⁴

Available data clearly suggest that the United States will be unable to stop the movement of people northward if North American economic integration continues and there is a large demand for low-cost labor that attracts migrants, there are migrant networks to direct the flow, and migrant-sending communities need remittances for investments and family maintenance. Clearly, the immigration system of the United States is broken. Bipartisan immigration reform is badly needed to create an equitable system, one that includes perspectives of Border communities and of Mexico and other sending nations.

SECTION NINE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Paul Ganster is director of the Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias at San Diego State University. In 2022, he was honored with the Ohtli award, the highest recognition granted by the Government of Mexico to individuals who have opened pathways to Mexicans abroad, particularly in the United States of America.

Dr. Ganster is the author of numerous articles, chapters of books, and edited works related to Border regions. Recent publications include *The U.S.–Mexican Border Today: Conflict and Cooperation in Historical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016) and with Kimberly Collins, “Binational Cooperation and Twinning: A View from the US–Mexican Border, San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Baja California” (*Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 32:4, 2017). His ongoing research is on management of the binational Tijuana River Watershed, air quality at Border crossings, crossborder collaboration, the binational problem of used tires, and sustainable tourism in the peninsula of Baja California. He has been a Fulbright professor in Costa Rica and a visiting professor at the Autonomous University of Baja California in Tijuana. He received his bachelor’s degree from Yale University and his doctorate from the University of California, Los Angeles. Ganster is chair of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board, a federal panel that advises the president and congress on the Border environment. He is also chair of the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). In 2016, he was recognized with the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS) Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2017, the Autonomous University of Baja California awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor Honoris Causa for his scholarly work in the binational region and for his work linking UABC and SDSU. Also in 2017, Tijuana Innovadora recognized him in the induction ceremony to the Paseo de la Fama / Walk of Fame at the Palacio Municipal of Tijuana for his binational leadership.

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SECTION TEN

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U.S.-MEXICO BORDER PHILANTHROPY PARTNERSHIP

The U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership is made up of more than 400 members from academia, business and corporate entities, government, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations spanning all regions of the U.S. and Mexico. Together, we share a common vision and commitment for a thriving border region.



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