

Demographic Trends in Mexico: The Implications for Skilled Migration

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About the Transatlantic Council on Migration

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I. Executive Summary

Mexico experienced several decades of high population growth toward the end of the 20th century. This growth, coupled with increased female labor force participation, coincided with substantial emigration to the United States between 1970 and 2000. Overall population growth, however, is now slowing; by about 2030, it is expected that the size of the working-age population will begin to decrease. The slowing population growth, coupled with economic developments and changes in US immigration policy (including stricter border control), has resulted in a slight slowdown in Mexican immigration to the United States relative to the 1995 to 2000 period.

Although Mexico is best known in the United States as a source of low-skilled immigrants, it also provides a rapidly growing flow of professionals. In fact, the skill level of Mexican immigrants is gradually rising, with an increasing proportion of US-bound immigrants educated to the equivalent of high-school level and beyond.

This change is driven in part by educational developments in Mexico itself. Mexico's supply of educated individuals is growing almost five times faster than overall population growth despite the fact that domestic opportunities for professionals are not expanding as quickly. This creates an incentive for skilled Mexicans to migrate to the United States. Projections suggest that the domestic supply of professionals will exceed demand until about 2025, after which demand will outstrip supply and a shortfall of highly skilled individuals is likely to emerge. Until that point, however, any increase in international demand for highly skilled workers could find a swift response from Mexican professionals.

Ultimately these trends have more consequence for Mexico than for the United States. Although highly skilled Mexican immigrants make up only a small proportion of professionals in the United States, their numbers are equivalent to 8 percent of all professionals living in Mexico. Emigration has reduced pressure on the Mexican labor market, but the Mexican economy's inability to create sufficient opportunities to retain its most educated individuals may have a detrimental effect on long-term growth.

II. Introduction

Every year Mexico loses an estimated 500,000 people to labor-related migration. Most are low-educated workers taking up jobs in the lower echelons of the US labor market. Although Mexico is best known in the United States for these low-skilled immigrants, it also provides a rapidly growing flow of professionals.¹ Given the growing disparities between the quality of life in the two countries, particularly in employment stability, crime, and most importantly the relatively new phenomenon of large numbers of unemployed professionals, highly skilled workers are expected to account for an increasingly larger share of overall migration flows from Mexico.

This paper reviews trends in the *highly skilled* Mexican population within the framework of Mexico's demographic changes. It discusses scenarios that could alter the trends of skilled-worker migration through 2030 and anticipates the likely consequences for the Mexican labor market.

¹ "Highly skilled," "highly qualified," "professional," "bachelor's-degree," and "college-degree" individuals will be used interchangeably throughout the text.

Previous projections² suggested that overall migration flows could reverse during the late 2030s, making the scenario of ever-larger flows of highly skilled migrants from Mexico unrealistic. In the shorter term, however, a relative scarcity of professionals within Mexico may develop, both because the Mexican economy will create more professional jobs and because of the US economy's growing demands. This paper explores some of the Mexican aspects of these trends.

Compared to the proportion of Mexican professionals who remain in the country, the number of departing educated workers is large. As with many other middle-income countries, this makes the "brain drain" an ever-relevant issue for Mexico.

III. Demographic Change and the New Era of Mexican Migration

Mexico began an accelerated process of demographic transition³ in the 1930s (see Figure 1). During that decade, mortality rates began to decrease due to improvements in living conditions, particularly in health services, nutrition levels, and sanitation. Life expectancy grew from 35.5 years for men and 37 for women in 1930 to 60.9 and 65.3 respectively in the 1970-1975 period,⁴ and to a little more than 75 years overall in 2008, based on the Mexican government's most recent demographic projections.⁵

After more than 30 years of strong growth, fertility rates began to decrease in the 1960s. The total fertility rate registered a historic peak of more than seven children per woman average in the 1960-1965 period,⁶ and the natural population growth rate⁷ increased 3.3 percent. At that point, the continuous decline in fertility began. Currently, Mexico's fertility level is estimated at close to the intergenerational replacement level of 2.1 children per woman.⁸

The time gap between the two phases of demographic transition resulted in accelerated population growth. According to official estimates, Mexico's original population doubled several times during the past century. It increased from 13 million to 26 million between 1900 and 1950; in 1970 it surpassed 50 million; and doubled again by the early years of the 21st century, when it crossed the threshold of 100 million. Annual population growth rate remained above 1.9 percent until 2000.

² Miguel Molina, "Estimación de la población Mexicana económicamente activa potencialmente emigrante hacia Estados Unidos, proyecciones 2006-2050," CFI Consultores SC., 2005.

³ Demographic transition is defined as the shift from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates. This shift is usually associated with a period of high population growth.

⁴ For 1930 to 1975, see José Gómez de León and Virgilio Partida, "Niveles, tendencias y diferenciales de la mortalidad," in *La Población de México: Tendencias y perspectivas sociodemográficas hacia el Siglo XXI*, José Gomez de León and Cecilia Rabell, eds. (Mexico City: FCE-CONAPO, 2001).

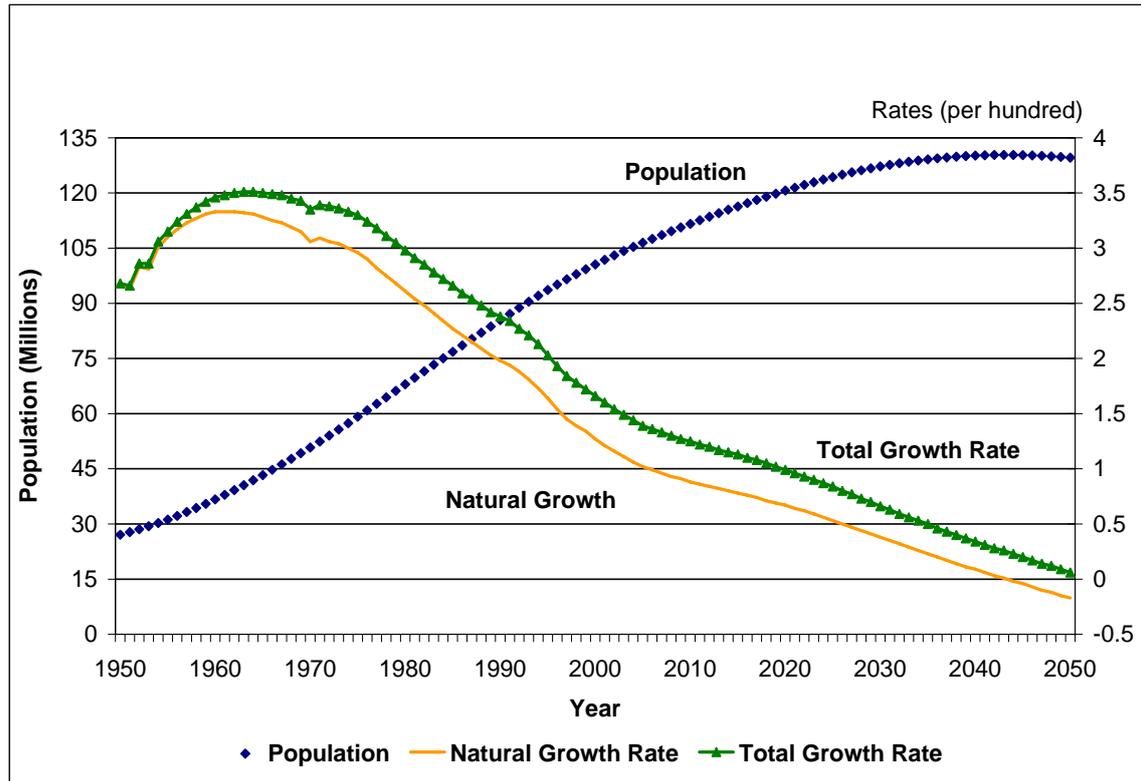
⁵ CONAPO, *Proyecciones de la población de México, de las entidades federativas, de los municipios y de las localidades 2005-2050* (Mexico City: CONAPO, 2007).

⁶ Martha Mier y Terán and Virgilio Partida, "Niveles, tendencias y diferenciales de la fecundidad en México," in *La Población de México: Tendencias y perspectivas sociodemográficas hacia el Siglo XXI*, José Gómez de León Cruces and C. Rabell, eds. (Mexico City: FCE-CONAPO, 2001).

⁷ The natural population growth rate is the difference between birth and death rates.

⁸ CONAPO, *Proyecciones de la población de México*.

Figure 1. Mexican Population and Total and Natural Growth Rate, 1950 to 2050



Source: Consejo Nacional de Población. Proyecciones de la población de México, 2007.

The turn of the century marked a new demographic stage: one of low population growth and imminent population aging. Current estimates suggest that the total population will increase by 23 percent between 2000 and 2030. Natural demographic growth (without migration) is estimated at 1.35 percent in 2008; including the high net losses due to migration, total demographic growth is estimated at 0.82 percent. By about 2040 the total growth rate is expected to be negative.

Fertility, mortality, and migration behavior have had a profound impact on the age and gender structures of the Mexican population, which has lost its predominantly youthful character and is aging rapidly. In a few years, the old-age dependency ratio⁹ will increase from the current eight elderly (age 65 and older) per 100 working-age persons (ages 15 to 64) to 12 per 100 in 2020 and 18 per 100 in 2030.¹⁰

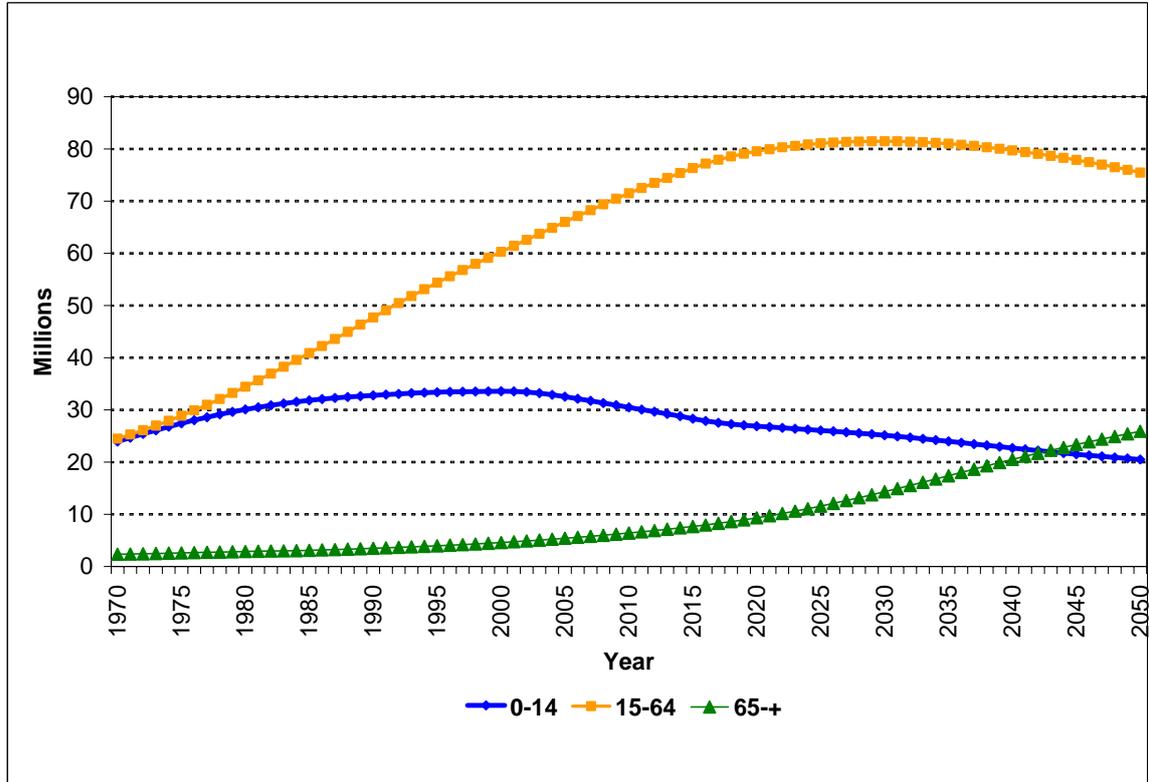
The working-age population is expected to approach its peak in about 2020, when it crosses the 80 million threshold (see Figure 2). It is likely to remain slightly above this level until 2030, when it will begin to decrease (see Figure 3). According to these projections,¹¹ annual increases in this group will remain above 1 million inhabitants until 2010.

⁹ The old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of old who depend on young adults.

¹⁰ CONAPO, *Proyecciones de la población de México*.

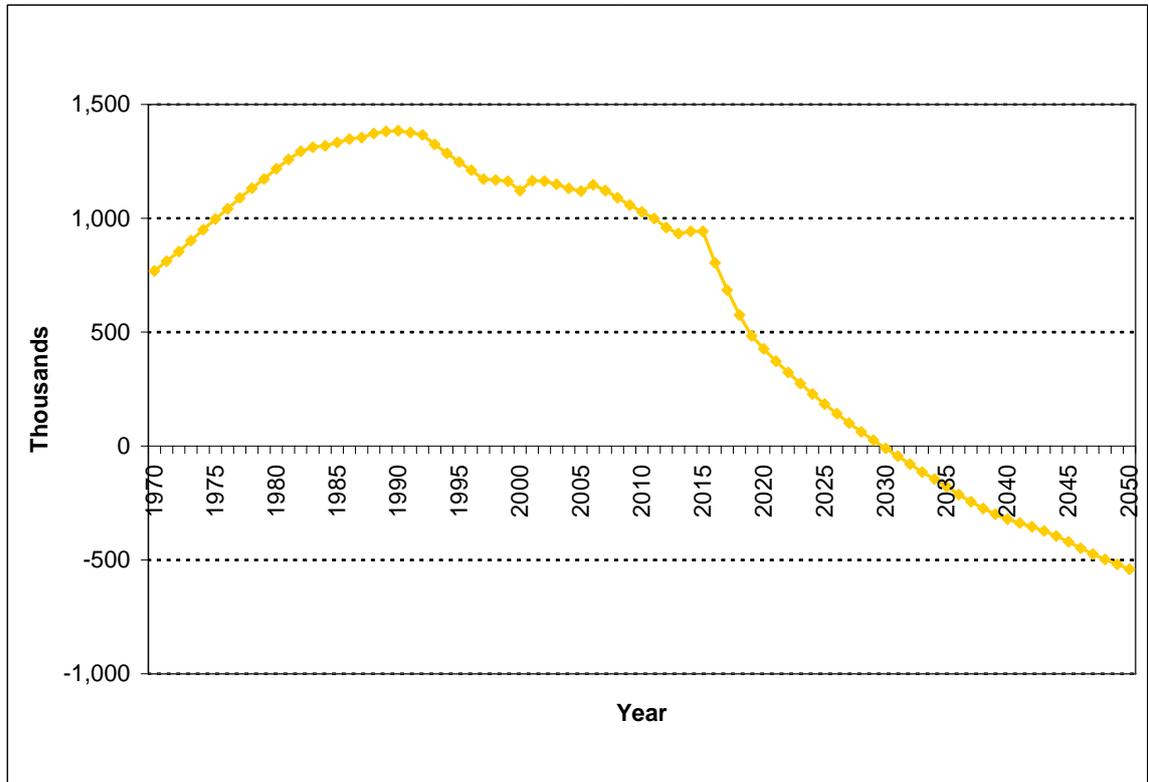
¹¹ *Ibid.*

Figure 2. Population by Age Groups, 1970 to 2050



Source: Consejo Nacional de Población. Proyecciones de la población de México, 2007

Figure 3. Annual Increases of 15-to-64 Age Group, 1970 to 2050



Source: Consejo Nacional de Población. Proyecciones de la población de México, 2007

Demographic Change and Migration

The enormous demographic growth of the second half of the 20th century, combined with a significant increase in female labor-market participation, created a large economically active population (EAP). The female share of EAP increased from 21.9 percent in 1970 to 36.8 percent in 2000. Overall labor-force participation rates increased from 49.3 in 1970 to 52.4 percent in 1988 and to 57.3 percent in 2000. As a result, the total working-age population rose from 15 million in 1970 to more than 42 million in 2000.¹²

This is the demographic context for a new migratory trend that appeared during the same period: the “new Mexican migratory era.” Migrant flows grew at unprecedented rates, creating a growing Mexican-born population in the United States. Illegal migration was particularly significant. Originating as a temporary worker flow in which migrants worked and lived in both countries, the illegal flow gradually acquired a more permanent character, in part because increased border enforcement reduced circularity. The migrants’ origin also evolved. Once concentrated in a few Mexican states, such as Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Michoacán, migrants now come from all over the Mexican Republic, from rural as well as urban localities. Similarly, the types of jobs that Mexican immigrant workers perform in the United States have diversified as demand for their labor has extended more widely across the US territory.

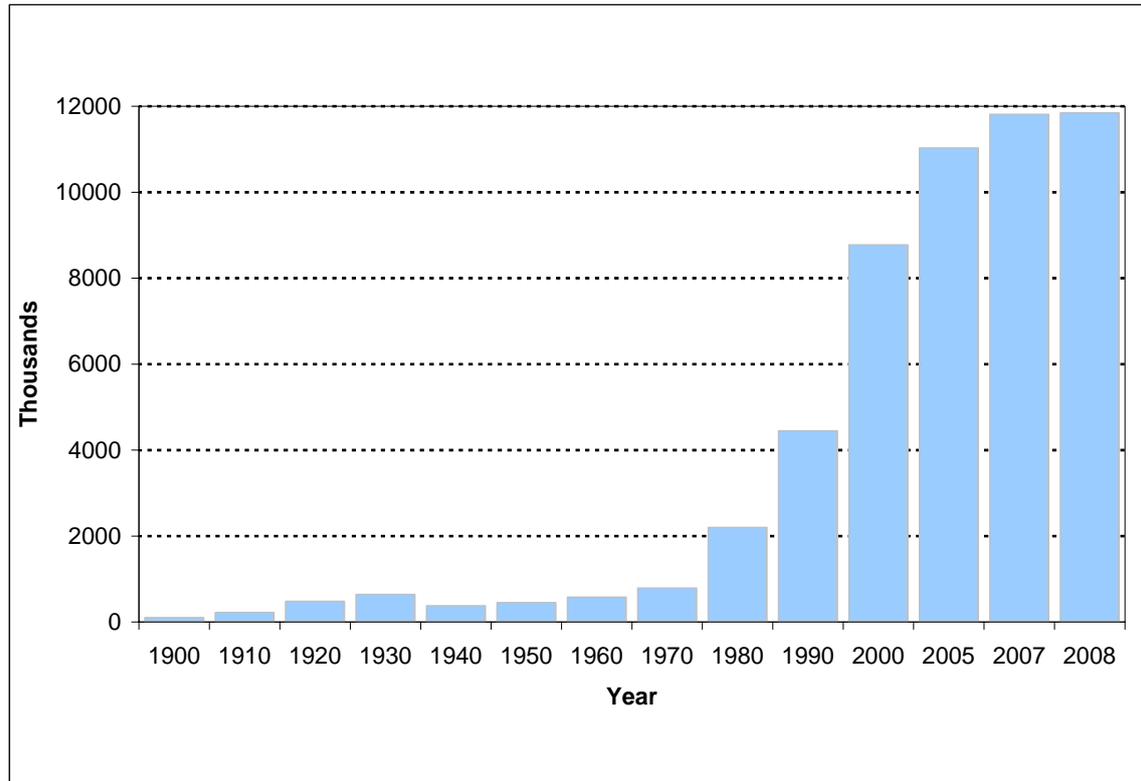
The explosion of the Mexican-born, US-resident population coincided with the period of high demographic growth experienced between 1970 and 2000 (see Figure 4). The Mexican migrant community in the United States doubled in size practically every decade, increasing from 800,000 in 1970 to 2.2 million in 1980, 4.4 million in 1990, and 8.8 million in 2000.¹³ From this point onward, however, the growth slowed. By 2007, the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey¹⁴ (ACS) recorded 11.8 million immigrants from Mexico compared with 11.5 million in 2006.

¹² Enrique Hernández Laos, *Desarrollo demográfico y económico de México* (México City: CONAPO, 2004).

¹³ Elena Zúñiga, Paula Leite, and Luis Acevedo, *Mexico-United States Migration: Regional and state overview* (Mexico City: CONAPO, 2006).

¹⁴ The American Community Survey (ACS) is a sampling of 3 million households by the US Census Bureau, released annually, that collects demographic, housing, social, and economic information.

Figure 4. The Mexican-Born Population Resident in the United States, 1900-2008



Source: 1900 to 2000: Corona Vázquez Rodolfo, *Estimación de la población de origen mexicano que reside en Estados Unidos*, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1992. 2005, 2007 and 2008: Estimates based on US Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS), March, 2000, 2005, and 2007.

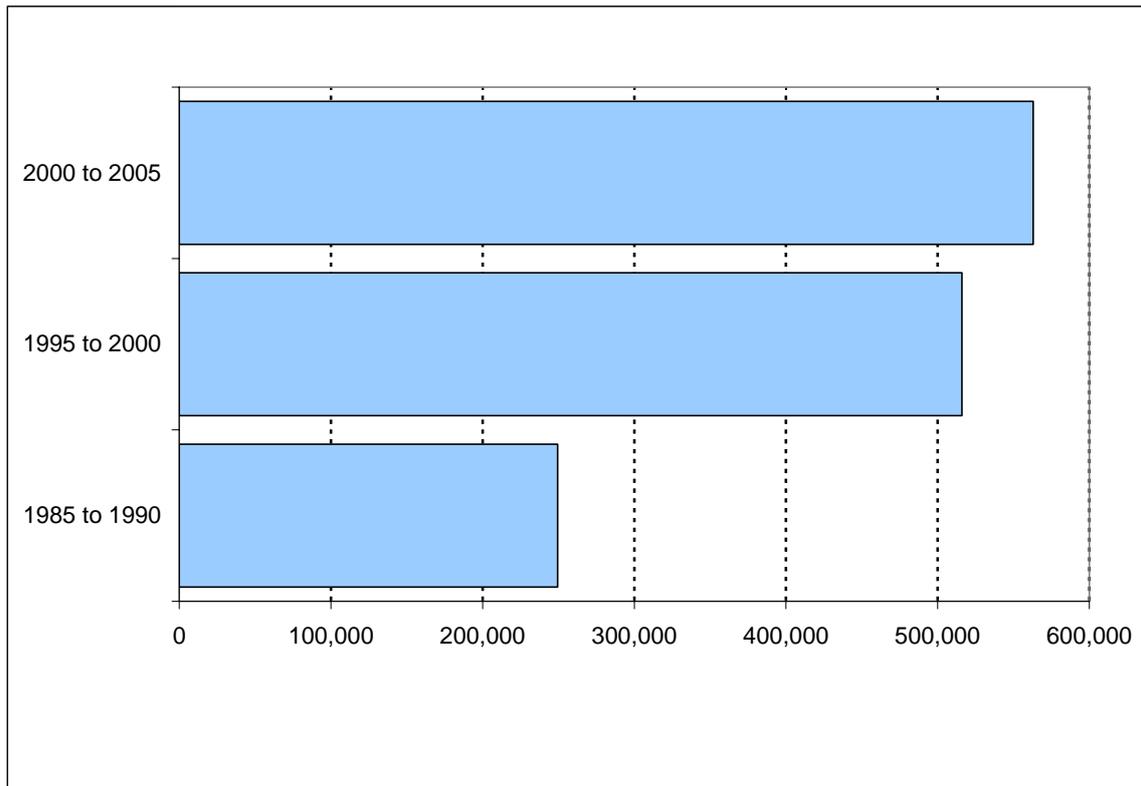
Similarly, the Mexican migrant flow to the United States grew rapidly during the last three decades of the 20th century, but this growth also has been slowing since 2000. The 1990 US Census registered an annual average increase of 249,400 Mexican migrants between 1985 and 1990; that figure had doubled by the 1995-2000 period to 516,000 new entries per year (see Figure 5).

The flow of Mexican immigrants continued to grow from 2000 to 2005 but at a much slower pace, increasing by only 9 percent in relation to the previous five-year period, to 560,000 per year. In the following years, according to the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey¹⁵ (CPS), the annual migration-flow size may have decreased, even in absolute numbers, supporting the possible trend toward deceleration.

The causes of decreased flow are likely to include increased border enforcement to prevent illegal immigration, as well as a reduction in US labor market opportunities for Mexican workers, reinforced by the onset of the US economic crisis.

¹⁵ The Current Population Survey, a monthly survey conducted by the US Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, collects information on the labor force characteristics of the population, both native- and foreign born. The questionnaire collects labor force and demographic information, including place of birth, parental nativity, citizenship status, and year of entry into the United States. The March supplement solicits additional information, including questions about poverty status, and geographic mobility in the previous 12 months, including moves from abroad.

Figure 5. Annual Average Size of Mexican Immigrant Flows to the United States by Five-Year Periods, 1985 to 2005



Source: Estimates based on US Census Bureau, 5-percent samples 1990 and 5-percent samples 2000, American Community Survey (ACS), 2005.

IV. Skilled Migration

The data on aggregate flows mask another highly relevant change in the nature of Mexican migration to the United States: it is becoming increasingly skilled. In the 1985-1990 period, just over three-quarters of new migrants had not completed high school or its equivalent. By the 2000-2005 period, this proportion had dropped to just over two-thirds. Conversely, the share of new migrants with intermediate levels of education¹⁶ increased from 21 percent to 34 percent over the same period. The proportion with higher education¹⁷ increased from 3.2 to 4.4 percent. In other words, the group with intermediate education levels grew by 25 percent, and the group with higher education by 21 percent. Both values are much higher than the increase in the *total* Mexican immigrant flow of 16 percent. In absolute numbers, this translates into average annual flows in the 2000-2005 period of slightly over 20,000 university-educated individuals, 156,000 with an intermediate education level, and 286,000 without high school diplomas.

These flows have led to a growing *population* of Mexican-born professionals in the United States over the past 15 years. According to CPS, the Mexican-born professional population rose from 209,000 in 1995 to 552,000 in 2007 — an average annual rate of 22 percent per

¹⁶ “Intermediate levels” includes high school graduates, those with some college but no degree, and those with an associate degree in an occupation/vocational program or an associate degree in a college academic program.

¹⁷ “Higher education” includes those with bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, professional degrees (eg, law, medicine, etc.), and doctoral degrees.

year. Although very small compared to the US professional population of 33 million, it is growing considerably.¹⁸

The Mexican professional population in the United States is substantial compared to the equivalent group at home. As of December 2007, almost 7 million Mexicans in Mexico had a bachelor's degree or higher, with the number of Mexican-born professionals¹⁹ in the United States equal to 8 percent of those living in Mexico. The pool of university-educated Mexicans in the United States is growing faster than the pool of equivalent individuals in Mexico (see Figure 6).

Mexican migrants' higher educational levels are linked to the overall educational improvements achieved in Mexico as a whole during the period. Between 1997 and 2007, the number of Mexicans with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 4.4 million to 7 million. This achievement is the result of the priority that Mexicans generally, and the federal government in particular, have placed on education.

As can be observed also in Figure 6, the number of Mexican-born professionals living in the United States almost doubled during the same period from 259,000 to 552,000, an average annual growth rate of 11 percent, compared to only 6 percent in Mexico. This occurred against a backdrop of economic growth in Mexico that was nonetheless unable to absorb the increasing supply of professionals.

A recent study on the labor market for professionals in Mexico established that while the number of Mexicans graduating from college grew by 6.7 percent per year between 1990 and 2000, the Mexican economy grew by only 3.5 percent²⁰, creating a labor market that was not big enough relative to supply. The study's author estimated that 45 percent of university graduates during this 10-year period were unable to find employment appropriate to their education level. Essentially, Mexico has been losing its capacity to generate social mobility²¹ through education, and to provide appropriate opportunities for educated people.

However, migration has not been an effective mechanism to counterbalance the lack of opportunities for professionals in Mexico. Mexican-born professionals face the same constraints in the United States. In fact, the majority of Mexican migrants with a bachelor's degree or higher who work in the United States perform jobs that do not require their level of education. In 2007, this was the case for 55 percent of Mexican workers with at least a bachelor's degree.²² Thirty-three percent of all Mexicans in the United States with a bachelor's degree or higher worked in the three job sectors —transport/production, construction/maintenance, and cleaning/food preparation — that provide employment for 75 percent of less-educated Mexican immigrants.²³ By comparison, only 6 percent of native-

¹⁸ Although Mexican-born migrants with professional degrees represent just 1.7 percent of all Mexicans living in the United States, the number is still quite significant when compared with other nationalities. Mexicans with higher degrees are the fifth largest population of foreign-born professionals in the United States, behind India, the Philippines, China, and Korea; while Canada and Germany trail behind. (CONAPO, 2007.)

¹⁹ Throughout this paper, "Mexican professionals" refers to Mexicans living in Mexico and does not include emigrants.

²⁰ Hernández Laos, *Desarrollo demográfico y económico de México*.

²¹ José Manuel Valenzuela Arce, "El futuro ya fue: Juventud, educación y cultura," in *Anales de la educación común. Tercer siglo* (Buenos Aires) 1, no. 1-2 (2005).

²² Estimates based on US Census Bureau data and American Community Survey (ACS), 2007.

²³ *Ibid.*

born Americans with a bachelor's degree and 38 percent of those without a college degree work in these job sectors.

Mexican professionals' migration is probably motivated more by expectations of higher income than by professional attainment possibilities. Notwithstanding the limited opportunities to perform work at their educational level, degree-educated individuals in Mexico have an average monthly income that is six to seven times lower than that of Mexican-born professionals residing in the United States (\$475 and \$2,813 dollars, respectively).²⁴

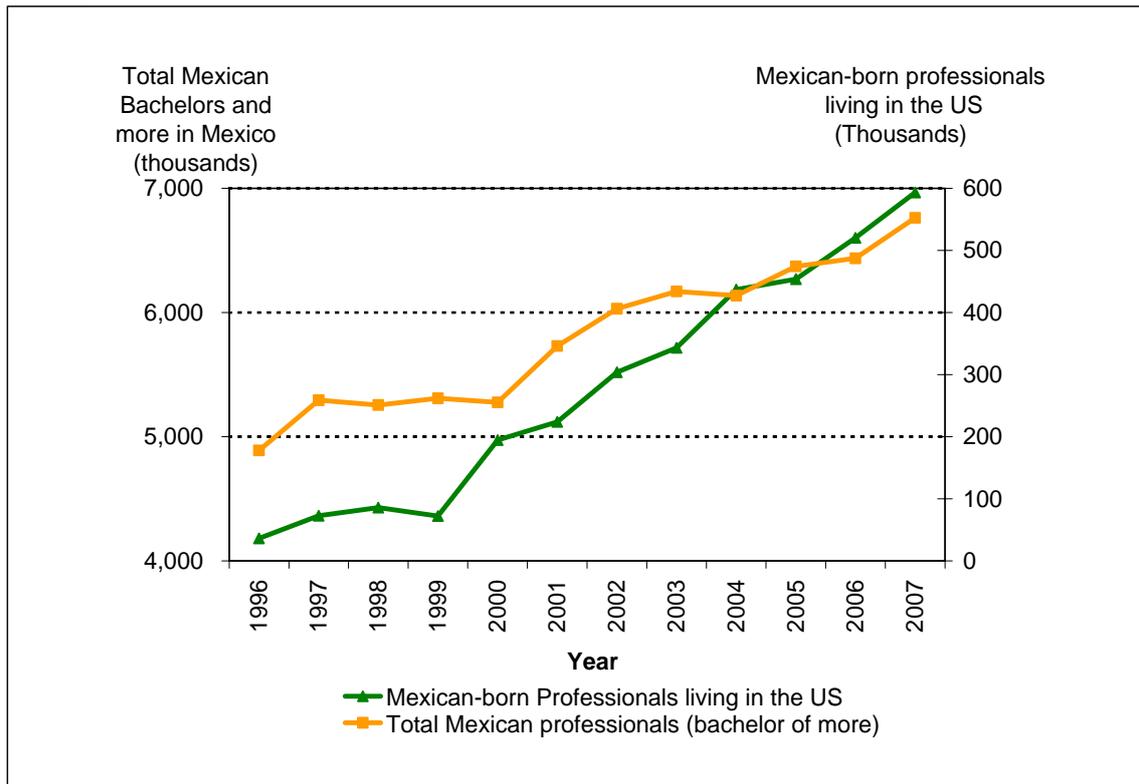
The implications for Mexico of ever-larger numbers of professionals migrating to the United States are varied and significant. For a time — as described below — migrating professionals will most likely diffuse the potentially explosive consequences of more than 1 million unemployed professionals seeking jobs that the Mexican economy will be unable to provide, at least until the mid-2020s. According to our quantitative analysis, these migration flows will most likely dry up by then, and could possibly reverse from that date onward.

As described earlier, overall migration flows will probably reverse sometime in the late 2030s. Here we argue that as the Mexican economy evolves and gradually demands more high-skilled workers, professional Mexicans will become relatively scarcer *within Mexico and within the pool of those available for migration*. This scenario will most likely occur by the mid-2020s, some 15 years before the projected reversal in overall Mexican migration flows.

In the next section we develop this hypothesis, estimating possible trends in the supply of university-educated, Mexican-born individuals; the demand for their labor in Mexico; and the migration of highly skilled workers to the United States.

²⁴ Average monthly income of workers with a professional degree, employed in non-agricultural jobs, as estimated by ENIGH 2006 and CPS 2006.

Figure 6. Professionals in Mexico and Mexican-Born Professionals Living in the United States, 1996-2007



Source: Mexican Professionals: Mexican Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI), Occupation and employment national survey (ENOE). Mexican-Born Professionals: Own estimation with data from US Census Bureau: 1995 to 1999 and 2001 to 2004, Current Population Survey; 2000, Census 2000; 2005 to 2007, American Community Survey.

V. Potential Migration of Skilled Mexicans

In order to project potential migration of skilled Mexicans, we conduct from the Mexican perspective a traditional appraisal of the supply and demand for professionals. Although we hold that migration is caused by pull and push factors, our overall analysis focuses on the push factors behind highly educated emigration — the number of professionals Mexico produces relative to the number of jobs available for them in Mexico.²⁵

Our analysis is based on statistical regression, both simple and multiple, as well as some key economic assumptions on Mexican GDP growth, professional labor demand elasticity, and population growth. The analysis uses professional formation and professional employment statistics that refer to the 15-to-64 age group; this particular age range was chosen because it represents the effective working-age segment of the overall population, and also because the overwhelming majority of migrants are within the same age range.

²⁵ Pull factors are also of great importance and will most likely become even more so in the coming years; we will address such factors in forthcoming analyses.

The Supply of Professionals in Mexico

Over the last decade, the number of professionals graduating from programs with a bachelor's degree or more has grown at an average rate of 4.8 percent. This rate is well above the rate of economic growth, and is almost five times greater than overall population growth. Even with such rapid growth, professionals in Mexico still account for less than 6 percent of the total population (6.9 million people), compared to more than 10 percent in the United States.

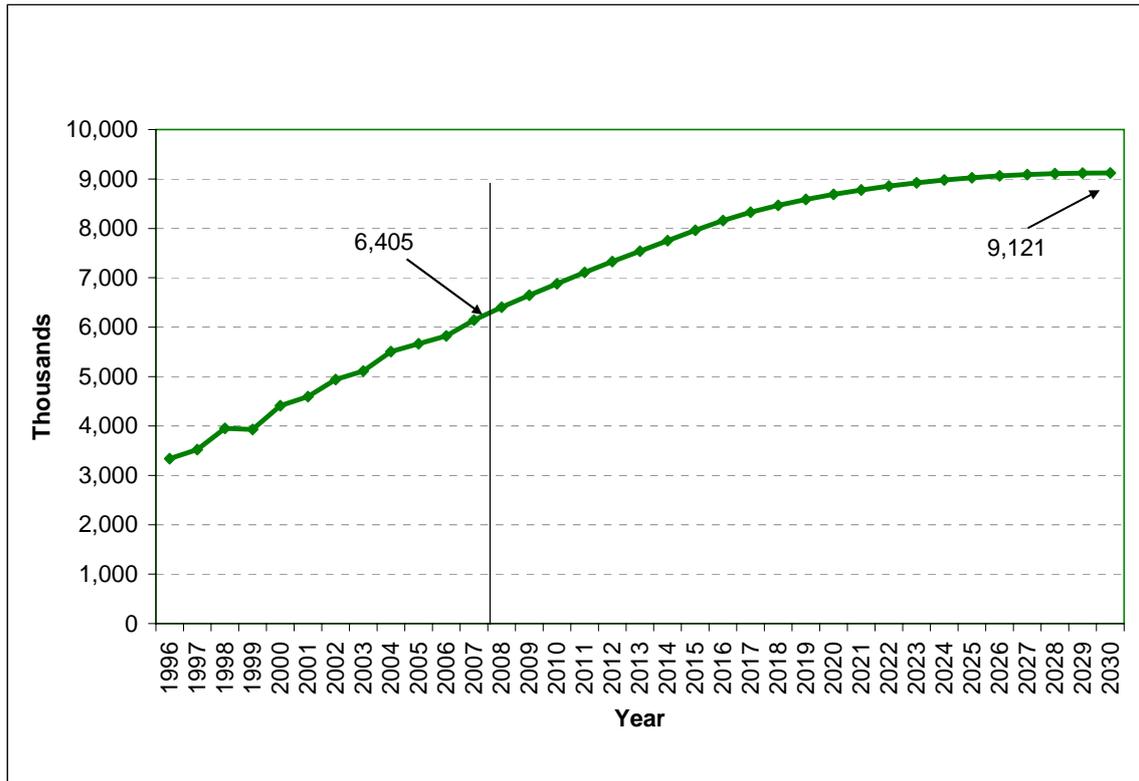
Methodology

We forecasted the trends in the number of Mexicans obtaining a bachelor's degree using simple statistical regressions to extrapolate from historical trends. The variable that showed the strongest correlation with the number of Mexicans graduating from college was national population growth; economic growth was a much less powerful predictor. The qualitative explanation for this finding is that Mexico has reached a plateau at which noneconomic factors are possibly as important, if not more important, in explaining university graduation trends than pure economic factors. Among these noneconomic factors is the value Mexican society has traditionally placed on a college education. Mexican society at large, as well as governments and even parents, have been willing to forego other expenditures even in harsh economic times in order to send more children to college. This might explain the fact that growth in the number of professionals is much more closely associated with population growth than with GDP growth.²⁶

Using historical trends, we forecasted the future number of professionals available in Mexico as a simple function of the projected Mexican population. In 2007, just over 6.4 million professionals were available in Mexico. Our forecast suggests that by 2030, this number should reach 9.1 million people (see Figure 7). This group will represent approximately 7.5 percent of total population.

²⁶ The correlation between Mexican GDP growth and the annual growth in the number of professionals in Mexico was 27 percent, compared to a 62 percent correlation between total population growth and the growth in the number of professionals.

Figure 7. Mexican Population (between ages 15-64) with Bachelor’s Degree or Higher



Source: 1996 to 2007, Mexican Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI), Occupation and employment national survey (ENOE); Projection based on Mexican Population Council (CONAPO), 2005 to 2050 people projection.

The Demand for Professionals in Mexico

The demand for professionals (that is, the number of jobs available for them) is critically important to migration patterns. High domestic demand would prompt a gradual reduction of Mexican professionals emigrating to the United States, whereas weak demand would create a strong incentive to emigrate. For analytical purposes, in this paper we consider demand from the Mexican point of view: that is, migration is assumed to respond mainly to this push factor. According to our model, professionals migrate to the United States when Mexico doesn't have enough jobs for them that match their qualifications.²⁷

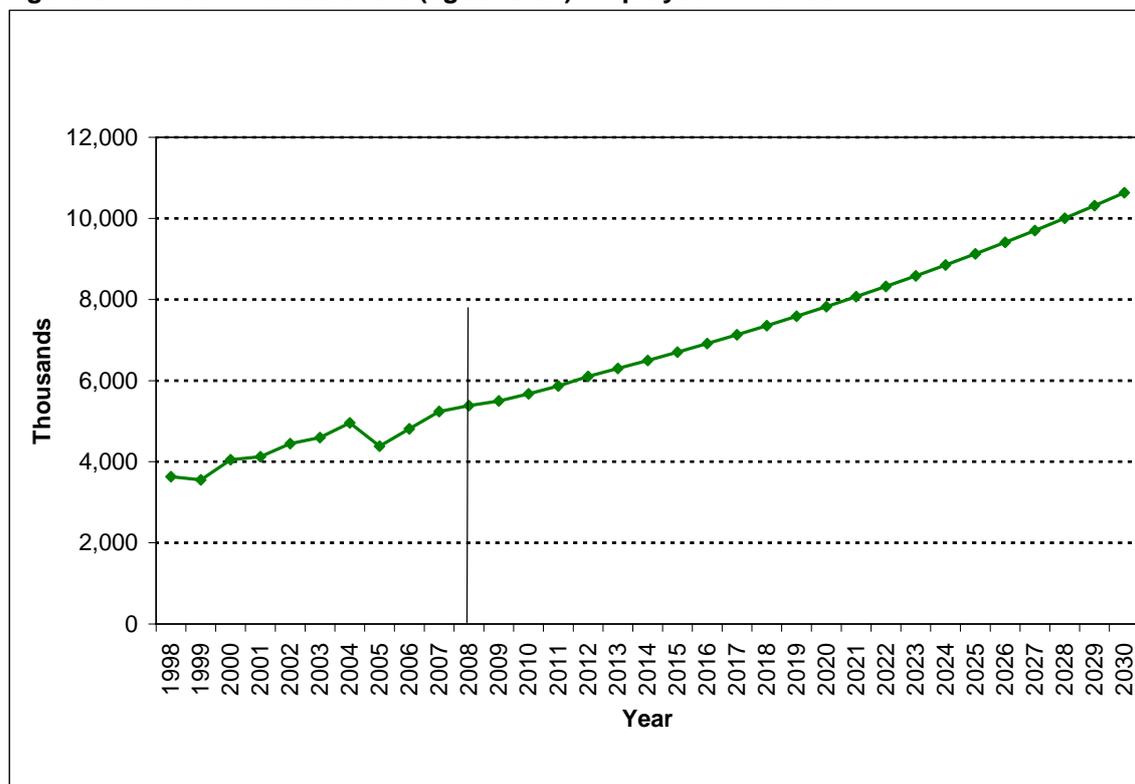
In the last decade, growth in the number of employed professionals in Mexico has been very closely related to the evolution of the overall Mexican economy, and particularly with the evolution of the services sector. For this reason we use projected services-sector growth to forecast the future employment of professionals. The projected figures essentially follow the same trend rate as observed in the past ten years (see Figure 8).²⁸

²⁷ Other traditionally used explanatory factors in the theory of migration, such as wage differentials, migrant networks, and job security, were set aside in this analysis because of the objectives defined for the trend-analysis of this paper. Further analysis, particularly of demand of supply functions, should be addressed in future work. We found significant, and sometimes even high, correlation coefficients between the number of employed professionals and the variables mentioned when considering only two variables at a time. The most robust correlation with employed professionals was with the services sector and Mexican GDP, so that was the explanatory variable selected.

²⁸ We were unable to figure out a reasonable explanation of the discreet reduction observed in 2006 from 2005 and concluded it might have been a statistical adjustment from estimated to actually observed figures.

Professional employment is expected to double in 18 years, growing at an average annual rate of 3.1 percent (in other words, slightly above the service sector GDP, which is projected to grow at a 3.0 percent average during the same period). This growth rate is quite conservative considering that service sector GDP grew by an average of 3.9 percent per year between 1997 and 2007. Using a 3.9 percent growth rate in the forecast would mean employment levels in the 15-to-64 age group of around 11 million people by 2030.

Figure 8. Mexican Professionals (ages 15-64) Employed in Mexico



Source: Mexican Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI), Occupation and employment national survey (ENOE); Own Projections.

Supply and Demand for Professionals in Mexico: Surplus or Deficit?

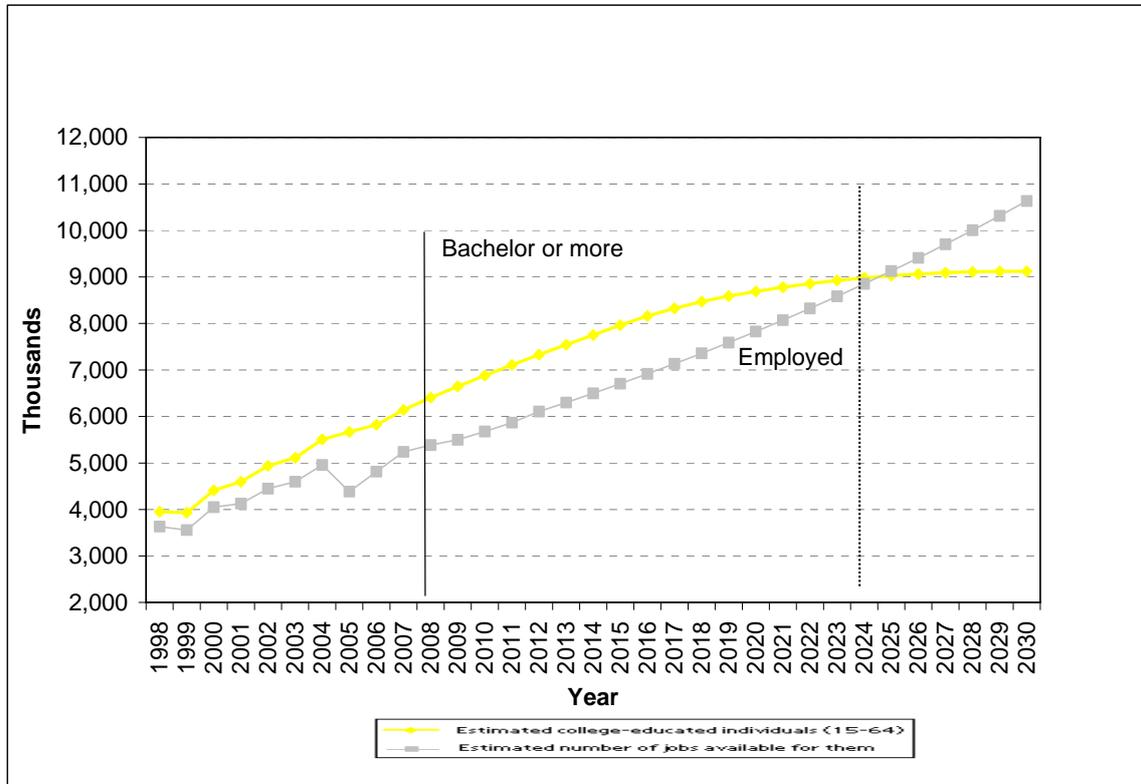
The number of unemployed professionals in Mexico (that is, the number of bachelor-degree holders in Mexico minus the number of jobs available for them) is expected to reach its peak in 2015 (at over 1.2 million people), before falling gradually until 2025, when the surplus disappears and a net requirement of professionals emerges (see Figure 9).

The most notable implication, from the migration point of view, is that from 2025 onward, demand for professionals in the Mexican labor market is expected to exceed supply, thus reducing the pressure to emigrate to another country. It must be noted that using less restrictive assumptions about the speed of local demand-growth for Mexican professionals, excess demand for professionals in Mexico could produce a domestic deficit sooner, perhaps in the early 2020s.

To summarize, our projections suggest that from mid-2017 -or perhaps even earlier, Mexico will face a decreasing trend whereby from a maximum peak of over 1.2 million professionals

available without employment at their education level, gradually the Mexican economy will absorb the excess supply and eventually dry up and reverse after 2025.

Figure 9. Mexican Population (15-64) with Bachelor’s Degree or Higher, and Employed Mexican Professionals in the Same Age Range, 1998-2030



Source: Estimates based on INEGI, *Encuesta Nacional de Empleo*. (ENE) 1996 to 2004, and *Encuesta Nacional de Empleo y Ocupacion*. (ENO) 2006 to 2007.

Note, however, that this trend does not account for probable changes in the global market for high-degree professionals. To the extent that Mexican and other nationalities’ immigrant professionals gradually become scarcer because of growing demand for their services in their home countries, immigrant-receiving countries such as the United States will be prepared to pay higher salaries in order to attract foreigners. An intense competition is foreseeable in the early 2020s.

VI. Summary of Findings

Demographic change plays an important role in migration from Mexico, as it does in nearly all nations that are nearing or have reached the end of their demographic transition. But demographic factors have not operated alone. Demographic growth in the second half of the 20th century coincided with a period of recurrent crises, a loss of purchasing power among key population groups, and low growth in formal employment, all of which led to a growing excess of workers.

International migration has also been fueled by strong demand for Mexican labor in the United States, the consolidation of broad social networks, and greater economic and social

integration between the two countries. This migration from Mexico has played a role in reducing the pressure of high demographic growth on domestic labor markets.

As this paper has described, while skilled migration is not the dominant migratory flow from Mexico to the United States, it has recently expanded at a faster rate than any other group. This results from several coincident trends in Mexico:

- Efforts to expand Mexicans' educational levels have led to an increasing pool of professionals that is not matched by employment opportunities;
- As these newly qualified individuals have faced a growing scarcity of employment opportunities at home, they have migrated in ever-larger numbers to the United States.
- Based on this paper's projections, the excess of educated workers in Mexico reached about 1 million in 2005 and will continue to expand until 2017 or 2018, when the surplus is expected to reach 1.2 million people.
- Until 2017 or 2018, increases in international demand for educated workers could find a swift response from Mexican professionals.
- From around 2017 onward, the Mexican economy will gradually employ the surplus.
- By 2025, the surplus is expected to disappear (giving way to a deficit).

In the analysis presented we have tried to identify possible general trends in the evolution of Mexican professional migration to the United States. The results are alarming. Mexico's increasing loss of high-skilled labor creates a vicious circle between development and migration. From a development perspective, skilled-worker emigration means the country is losing bright minds that might otherwise have provided innovation and accelerated technological progress in Mexico. Will Mexico be able to participate competitively in a knowledge-driven global economy if, year after year, it loses the equivalent of about 6 percent of its university graduates to migration?

It has not been our purpose to make exact forecasts. We believe that such trends could, and possibly will, change significantly as a response to changes in government policies or to drastic (also called structural) events in both the US and/or Mexican economies and societies. Our purpose is to induce changes in government policies that are based on trend analysis and perhaps enlarge the discussion in our societies as to which policies should be modified for the benefit and welfare of both countries.

VII. About the Authors

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