

# The Migration of Central American Women & Children

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# Research Questions

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- ❖ 1. How does an increasing women-led immigration from Latin America contribute to new patterns of family formation as well as the integration of Latino Families in New York?
- ❖ 2. How does the unprecedented immigration of women and children from North and Central America correspond with the growing deportation of family males?
- ❖ 3. What has been the response of the International community and that of the US and Latin American Governments to this contemporary phenomenon? What support systems need to emerge?

# Methods

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- Survey study of 86 women, 44 Mexicans and 42 Dominicans (2003 and revisited in 2009-2010).
- US Decennial Censuses for 2000, 2010 and reports from the NYC Department of Planning for 2013
- Reports from secondary sources, including United Nations and Inter-American System Reports and those prepared by officials in sending nations, such as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador & Nicaragua.
- Findings and feedback gathered at an international Immigration Conference on Forced and Return Migration held at UCA\_Nicaragua, July 13-14, 2016.

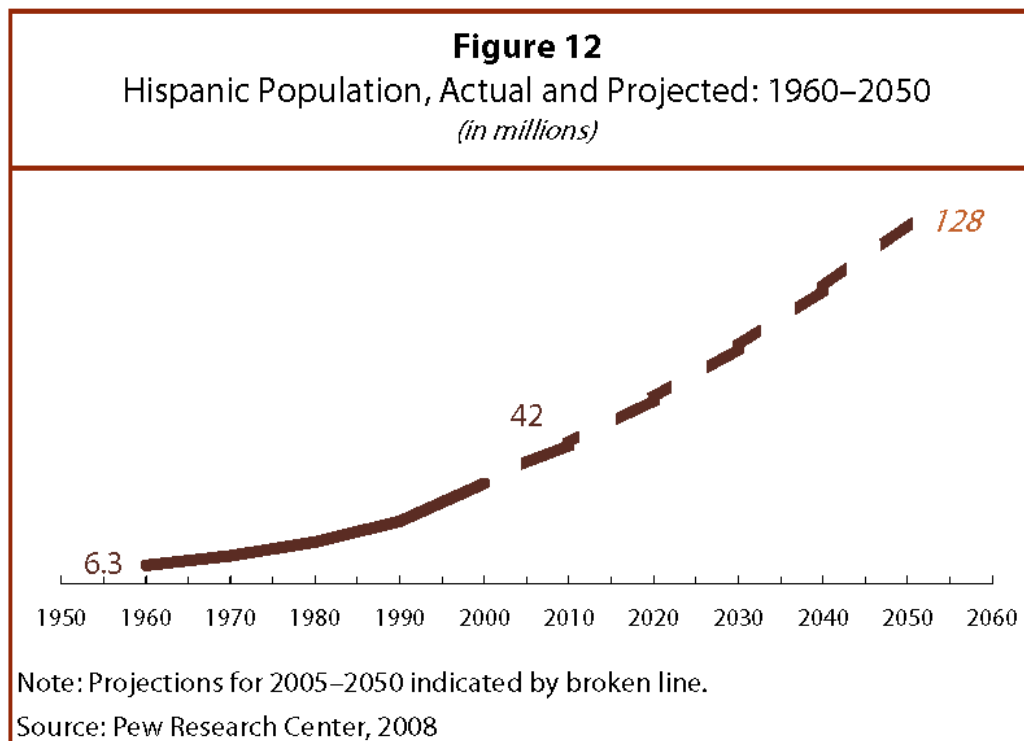


# The Immigration and Adjustment Challenges of Latin Americans in the US

# The Latino Population in the United States

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In 1970 less than 5% of U.S. Population was Hispanic (Bean & Tienda 1987); By 2017 there were 59M Hispanics 18.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, et al. 2011; Frey 2012). Nearly 2/3 of Latin Americans or the Spanish-speaking population in the US has Mexican-American ancestry. Today many are concerned with the growing Hispanic population, its spatial distribution and contributions to the US society (Ennis et al 2011; Tienda and Fuentes 2014).



# Migrant Women's Contributions to a changing, global economy

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© Reuters

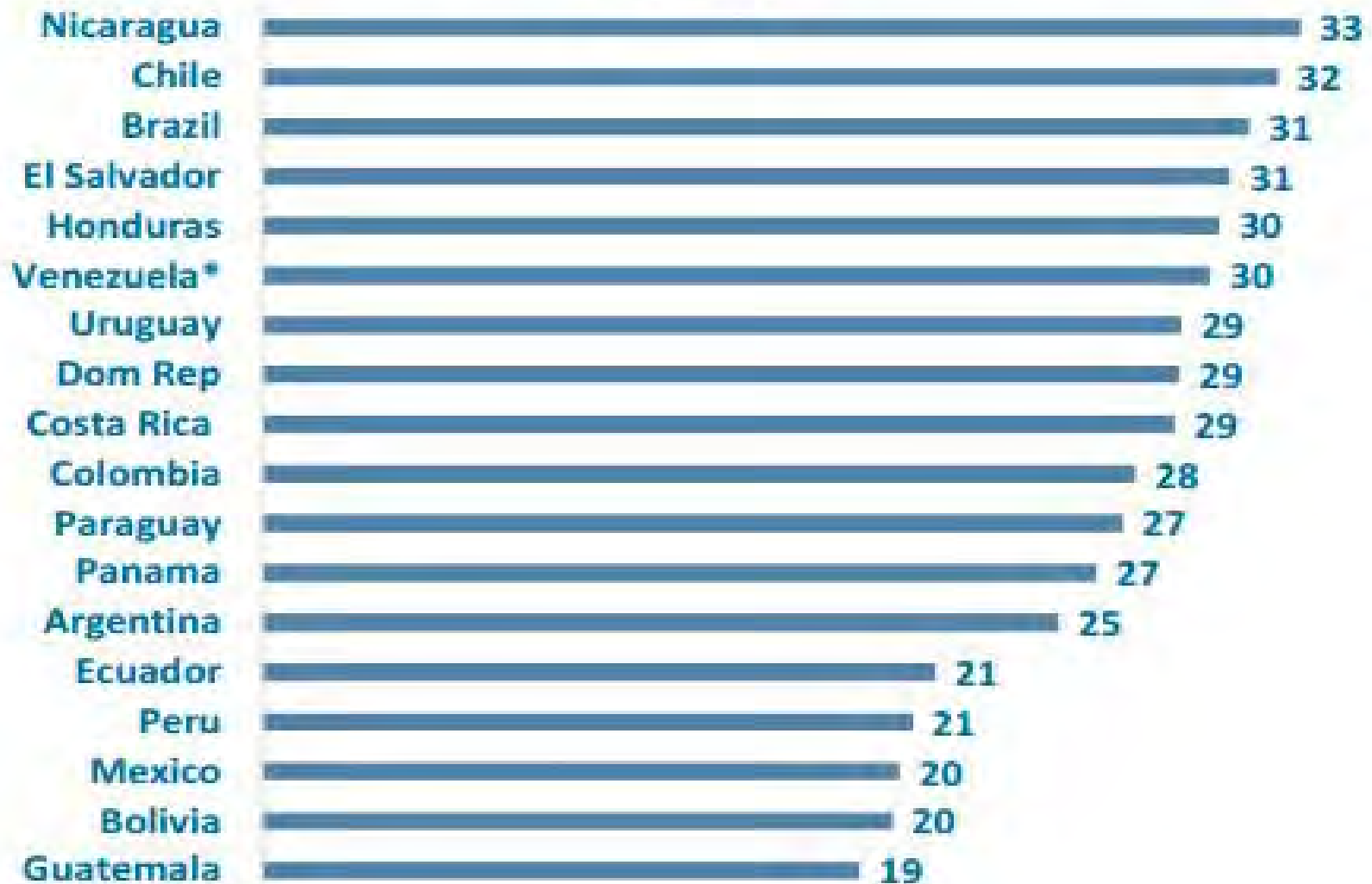
Representing: Women own 29 per cent of immigrant-owned businesses compared to the 26 per cent owned by U.S. born women, a study has found

# Globalization and Women-led Immigration

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- ❖ Why women migrate? A response to globalization and feminization of service economy (Sassen 1991; Fernandez-Kelly 1987; 2003; Benaria, Deere & Kabeer 2012).
- ❖ Growing role as main senders and recipients of remittances (Garcia and Paienoswky 2006).
- ❖ until the late 1990s, Dominican and Mexican women came from low SES origins and middle class women dependent on spouses' occupation (Fuentes, forthcoming).
- ❖ Today, LA Women increasingly assume roles as main providers in local and transnational homes.
- ❖ Feminized Remittances reduces poverty in the community of origin (Petrozelli 2011); increases the education of children left behind (Cuecuecha and Pederzini 2012; especially daughters (Fuentes, on-going) but also transforms family structures (Zontini cf in King, 2001; 2010).

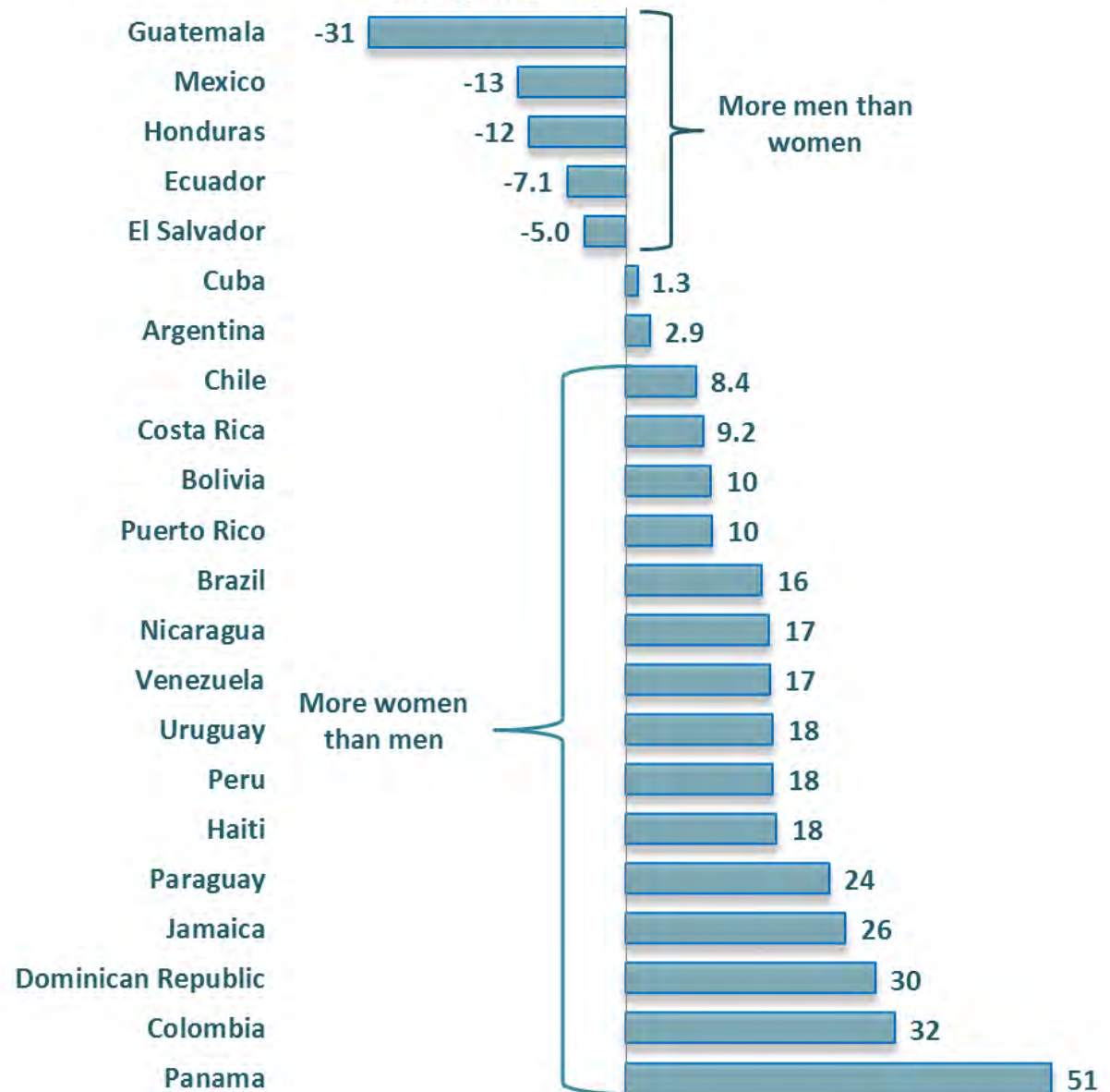
**Figure F-5 Share of Female Headed Household Single Parent circa 2011** Source: SEDLAC/CEDLAS World Bank \*Venezuela ends in 2006





# Latin America

Figure 1.2: Gender Balance by Latin American immigrant group, residing in U.S. 2010 (ratio of female to male immigrants - 1)



Sources: Ruggles et al. 2010, 2009-2011 Combined ACS



# The Case of Dominican and Mexican Families in NYC: Migration, Integration & Deportation

# The Migration of Dominican and Mexican Women into New York

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- ❖ Why these two LA groups?
- ❖ Both are the largest and fastest-growing, LA Immigrant groups in New York.
- ❖ The immigration of women accelerates since the mid 1990s.
- ❖ New York City, a new destination for Mexicans but a traditional one for Dominicans (Fuentes 2007; Tienda and Fuentes 2014).
- ❖ Despite similarities in culture, family structures before the migration, the life chances of Dominicans and Mexicans reversed in New York, with Dominicans overrepresented among SHHs than Mexicans.

# In a Service Economy, Single Mothers & Undocumented Migrant Workers are Preferred

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1. Fuentes (2007, 2011) finds Low-wage, service jobs favor the most vulnerable immigrants, the undocumented and/or single mothers.
2. These workers receive lowest pay, occupy functions in 'backstage,' hidden, cut from networks and invisibility in the larger society.
3. **A caveat: solo migrant mothers** work longer hours, have greater freedom to and wider reach of networks; are more preferred by employers than married women or those living with male partners/spouses.
4. **\*\*Yet they suffer greater work and sexual exploits; tend to be more isolated at work than married women.**

# Household Income and Poverty Status

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	Dominicans	Mexicans
❖ Median Hshld Income	\$25,456	\$34,518
❖ Average worker per Hshld	1.4	2.1
❖ Percent poor persons	32.8	29.8
❖ Percent in Public Assistance	7.6	3.6

# Poverty Rates by Family Structures

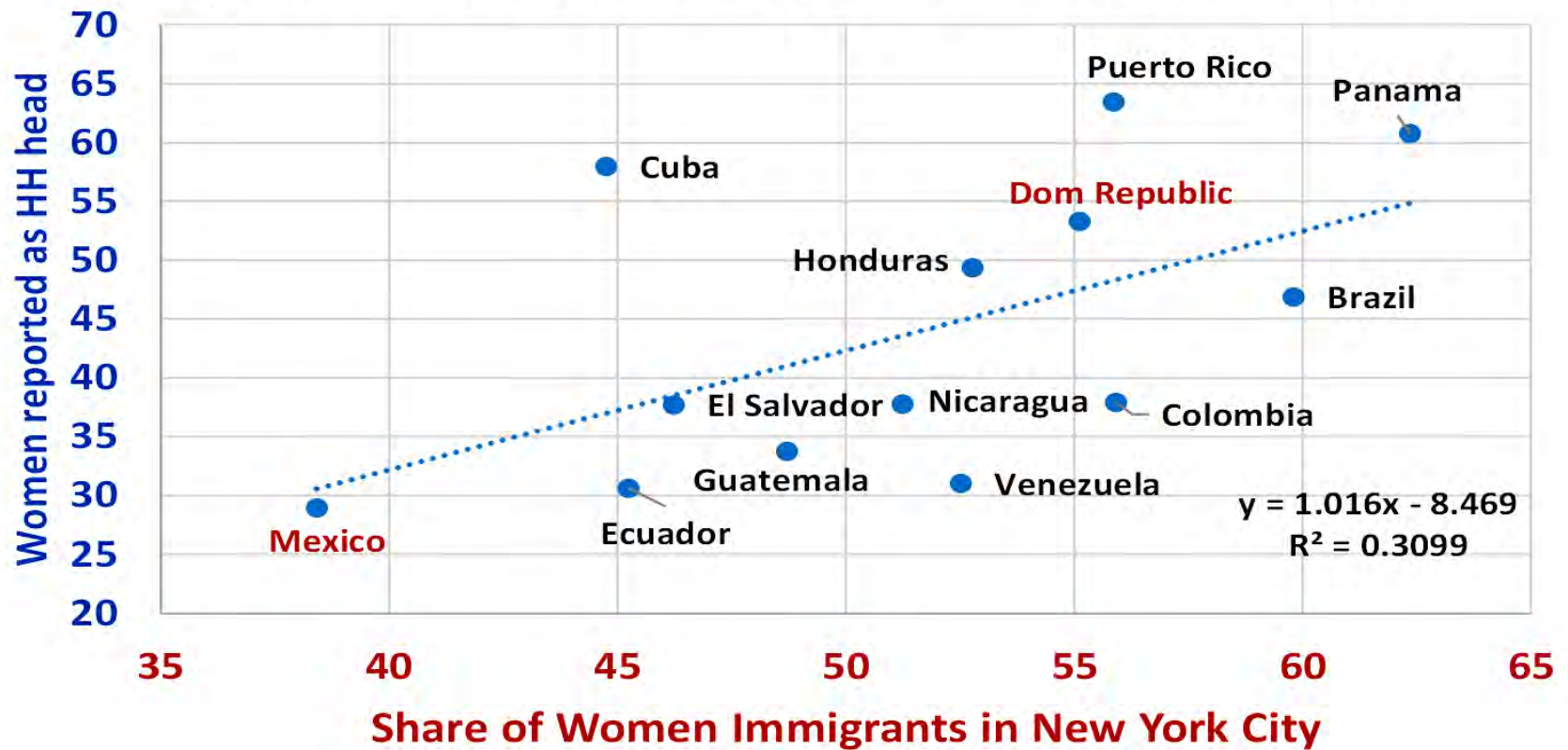
**Table 2-1 Poverty Rates for FB Latina women, 18-59**

<b>Single household heads</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Change</b>
Dominican Republic	44	39	-4.5
Mexico	43	45	2.4
Puerto Rico	50	44	-5.5
Colombia	27	21	-6.3
Honduras	43	36	-6.2
Ecuador	30	28	-2.3
NYC Latinas <sup>1/</sup>	42	37	-5.3
<b>Married w/spouse present</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Change</b>
Dominican Republic	17	14	-3.2
Mexico	30	29	-0.3
Puerto Rico	14	7.3	-6.2
Honduras	17	15	-1.9
Ecuador	17	17	-0.6
NYC Latinas <sup>1/</sup>	17	16	-0.9

1/ Includes NYC residents born in PR, Mexico, DR, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Cuba, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador & Venezuela Source: Ruggles 2010, 2000 5% and ACS 2009-11 3% sample IPUMS-USA

In the US, 43% of homes are headed by single mothers or women who are main breadwinners, of these over 60% Latinas and AAs (Pew 2014)

Table HH 7: Share of immigrant women predict female share of reported as Household Heads, age 18-59 2009-11 combined ACS



# Dominican women in general, more isolated by class and race at work than Mexicans (Fuentes 2005, 2007)

**Table 6-7 - Race and Ethnicity of the Workplace**

	Dominicans n=45	Mexicans n=41	Sample N = 86
<b>Current Employer</b>	%	%	%
White	40	41	40
Asian	7	27	16
Latino	51	27	40
Other	2.3	5.9	3.9
<b>Husband/Partner Employer</b>			
White	25	53	41
Asian	5	31	20
Latino	60	17	35
Other	10	0	4.1

Source. N. Fuentes' Survey, New York 2000-2003



# Work and Housing Isolation, the broader picture...(Fuentes 2011)

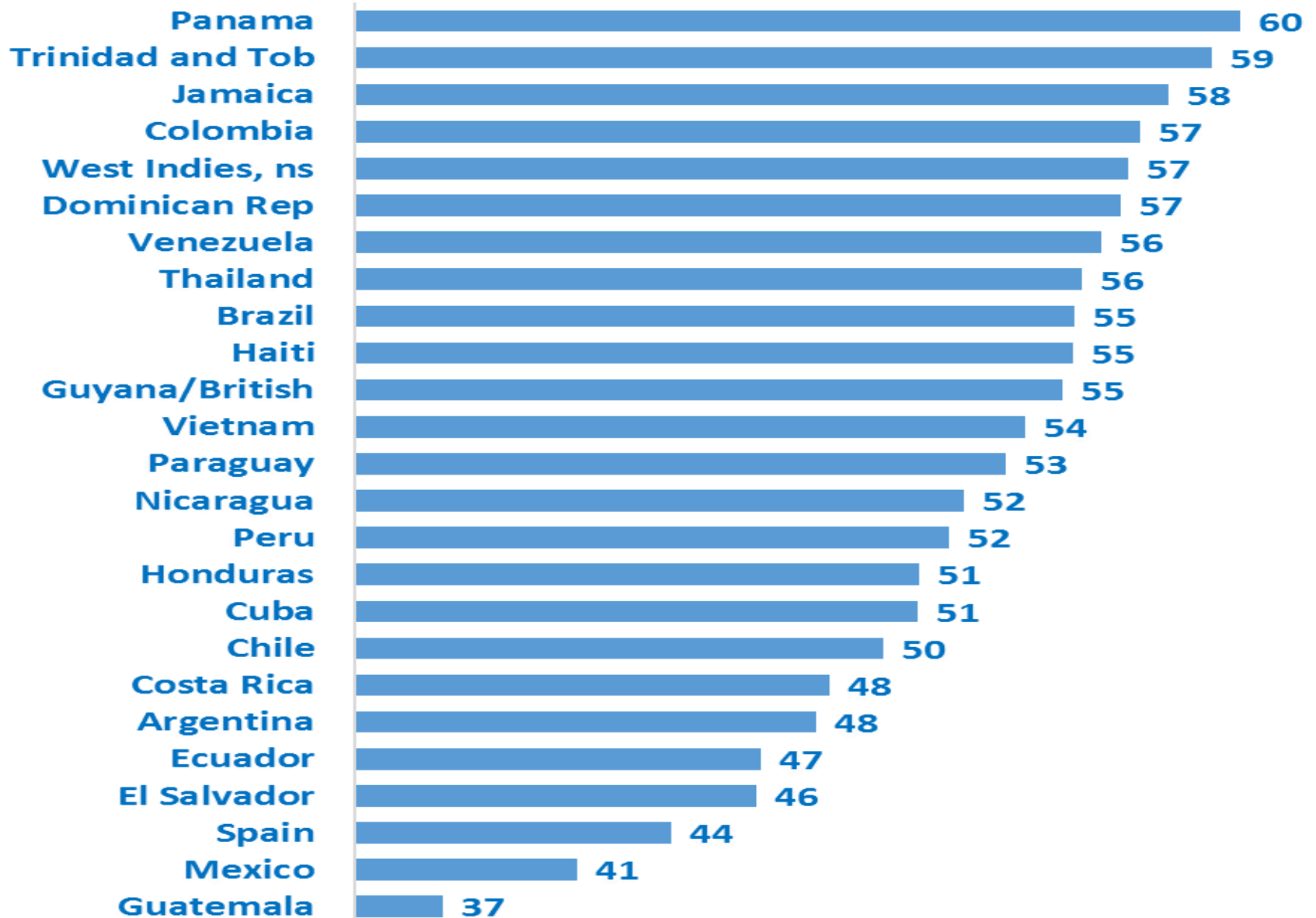
*Table 1: Residential and Employment Distribution of Dominican and Mexican Immigrants in White, Black and Mixed Race Neighborhoods*

	Majority White N=20	Majority Black N=11	Racially Mixed N=21	Total N=52
Share of NYC immigrant group by neighborhood type:				
Born in Mexico	10	17	73	28
Born in DR	24	10	66	27
Immigrant group employment rate <sup>1/</sup>				
Born in Mexico	71	66	68	69
Born in DR	54	69	57	57

Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey, author's tabulation for New York PUMAS (community districts) from Ruggles et al. 2010. IPUMS USA, [usa.ipums.org/usa/](http://usa.ipums.org/usa/).

<sup>1/</sup> Share of population over 15 with a job working or not.

**Figure 6A: Female Share of FB Immigrants NY Labor Market, 2009 to 2015 5% ACS**



# Repatriation and the Case of “Runaway” Women and Unaccompanied Minors

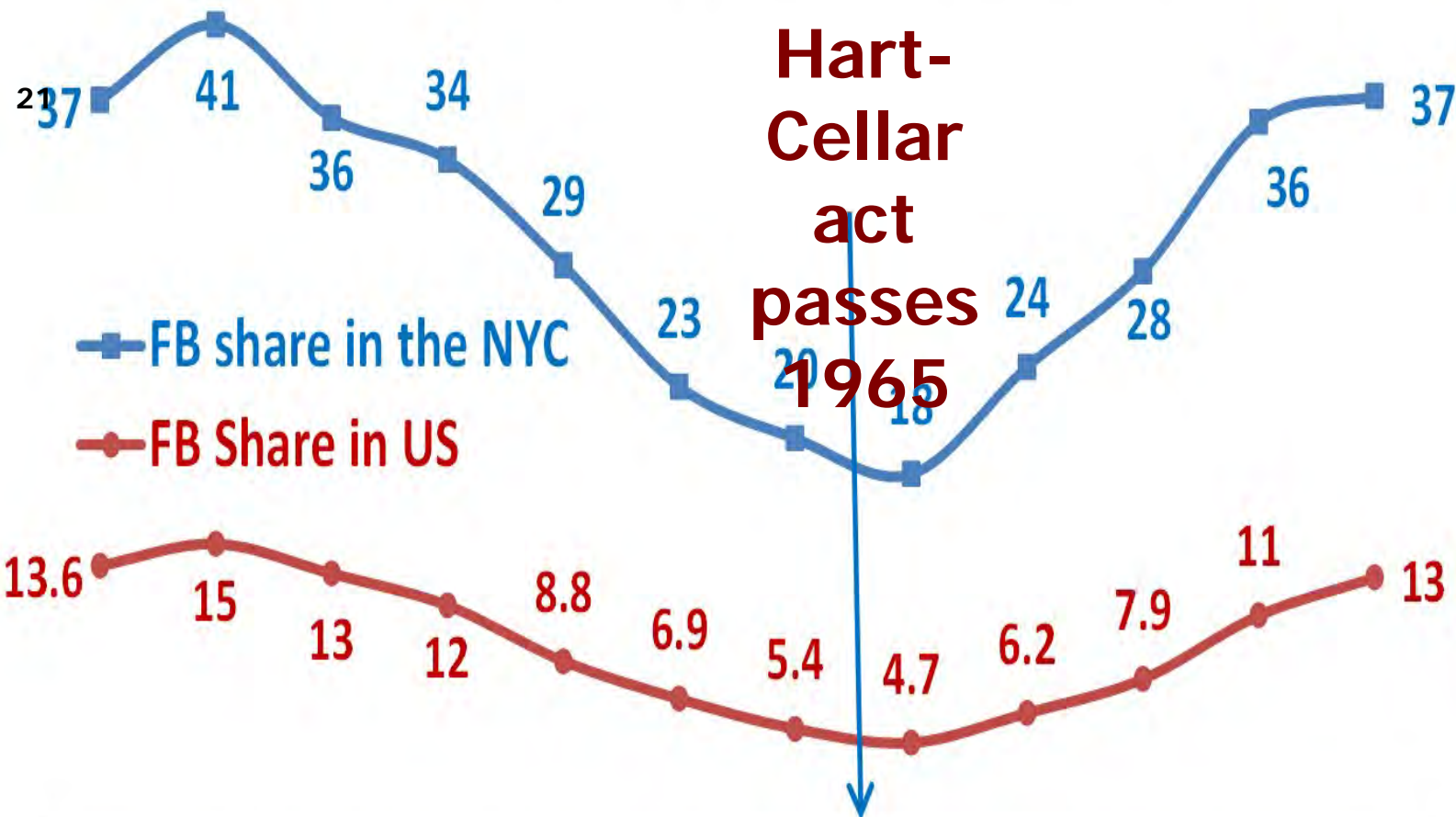
Add picture here from UNHCR (2018)

# Push and Pull Factors: The Case of “Run Away” Women and Children Migrants from Central America and Mexico

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- Stats from UNCHR report on “women on the run”

# Figure FB-1 NYC Foreign born back to 1900 share



1965  
Hart-Cellar Act family reunification reshapes New York and Nation

1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2011

Source: page 10 Table 2.2 New York Dept of City Planning (2013) *The Newest New Yorkers, 2013 Edition*, NYC DCP-13-10, December NY. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/nny2013/nny\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/nny2013/nny_2013.pdf)

# Massive Deportation: a Gendered Process

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- ❑ Vast Majority 90+% of those deported **are prime age males**
- ❑ Of 410,000 deported in 2012 384,000 or 94%
- ❑ 91% of those deported age 20-49, majority breadwinners
- ❑ Due to more women and children crossing from El Salvador GTM and Honduras number of women rose slightly by about 25,000, raising the share of female deportees from 6% to 7%
- ❑ **source:** <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/350/>

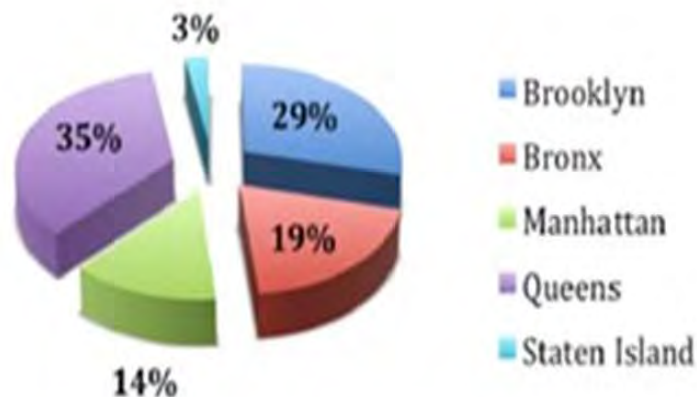
Figure 6A Deportations peak in 2012, return to 2005 level in 2015 (thousands)



2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

Source: ICE Removal Statistics: Fiscal Year 2015 <https://www.ice.gov/removal>

### Percentage of Apprehensions, by Borough



The ICE data also shows the nationality of everyone apprehended from October 2005 through December 2010. The top fifteen nationalities, listed below, account for 25,797, or 75%, of the 34,329 total individuals.

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#### Top Fifteen Nationalities

1. Mexico- <i>6,795 total</i>	19.8%	9. China- <i>940 total</i>	2.7%
2. El Salvador- <i>3,375 total</i>	9.8%	10. Guyana- <i>715 total</i>	2%
3. Dominican Republic- <i>3,038 total</i>	8.8%	11. Cuba- <i>707 total</i>	2%
4. Ecuador- <i>2,590 total</i>	7.5%	12. Trinidad & Tobago- <i>697 total</i>	2%
5. Guatemala- <i>2,229 total</i>	6.5%	13. Haiti- <i>490 total</i>	1.4%
6. Honduras- <i>2,219 total</i>	6.5%	14. Peru- <i>428 total</i>	1.2%
7. Jamaica- <i>1,900 total</i>	5.5%	15. Pakistan- <i>389 total</i>	1.1%
8. Colombia- <i>1,028 total</i>	3%		

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# Context and Trends in Central American Migration

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- Central America's population of 48.8 million, 50.6% women (CEPAL 2015).
- According to the BID (2016), over 30+ of households are headed by women, exception of Guatemala where the share is lower or 20.70%
- There are reports of very high levels of socio-economic and political insecurity and violence leading to massive and unprecedented outmigration to other nations, such as Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico and the US.
- Diversity of Origin, Transit, Destinies and Return Migration.

# Central America Migration Patterns and Remittances (OMI, Honduras, 2016)

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- CA experiences convergences of different migration flows, international, trans-regional, transnational
- In the 1970s, mostly internal migration;
- In the 1980s, the result of forced displacement, following civil war and internal, armed conflict
- In the 1990s a globalized migration, of recent feminized.
- Contemporary migration a flux of global, social, economic and forced migration.
- **Remittances:**
- 12.5% for Guatemala's PIB
- 17.3 % of Honduras'
- 16.7% of El Salvador's
- 9.6 % of Nicaragua's

# The Migration of Unaccompanied Minors

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- In Guatemala City, a study of 47 Children & adolescents by Univ of California (Hurtado Paz & Paz et al, *Gender and Refugees Studies*, 2015) reveals many are pushed by political, economic and family factors.
- According to a Recent Report by UNHCR (October 2015) Many immigrants experience violation of their basic human rights during apprehension, detention and return (voluntary or forced).
- **More than half composed of indigenous minorities**, Mayans and the rest of mixed race, many from rural and marginal communities.
- Minors experience repatriation by land from Southern Mexico and by air from Northern Mexico and from the US
- **Most women, solo migrant mothers from Nicaragua**, Honduras and El Salvador!
- Nicaragua and DR have similar share of SHH women in nation of origin!

# Causes of Migration

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- In 2006 only 13% of Children interviewed on the Mexican-Guatemalan border by UNHCR claimed protection due to Violence
- But by 2013 (53%) indicated violence was a main driver for migration from CA (UNHCR, 2013 “Children on the Run, pg. 24).
- Socio-economic and Environmental Factors (43%)
- Family Reunification a constant driver

## On Violence as push factor: Mary Small of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA and

29 **Shaina Aber (United States Jesuit Conference)** explain violence has increased, and

is driving migration from the Northern Triangle of Central America — El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — as children and parents flee for their lives. Published on Jul 30, 2014 (4 minute video) on youtube



Central American refugees flee violence

 Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

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# Migration from Guatemala

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- Main destination for children are Mexico and the US.
- In 2011, Mexico deports close to 2K (1,935) children and in 2014 close to 8K (7,973)!
- 1) Internal arm conflict of (1960-1996); lack of protection of children's rights (Hurtado Paz & Paz et al 2015).
- 2) Neoliberal economic system in place since the mid 1990s that has contributed to growing forms of social exclusión, poverty, and diverse forms of violence. Most affected, the poor, women and children, and indigeneous people.
- 3) Socio-economic and political events result from power struggles between the most influential social and political actors in the región(CA and North America) and lack of clear policies.
- **Examples:** 1980s national economy collapses due to massive flight of capital and sharp drop in private investments (Dardon Sosa 2005, c.f.);
- A Coffee crisis in 2000 forces growers to migrate to Southern Mexico;
- Natural disasters (2005 to 2012) and "El Nino" in 2014 devastes indigeneous and poor communities causing "environmental migration" (Guatemala, FLASCO 2013).
- Although Guatemala has ratified the major human protection of children; institutional responses have been lacking (Rodriguez de Ita, 2013, c.f.)
- Guatemala has one of highest levels of inequality in the world, 53% of population is poor (ENCOVI, 2011, November). "Probreza en Guatemala" and the least education, 4.1 years!

# The Penal Law (Article 53 of the PINA Law in Guatemala)

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- “The law in Guatemala prohibits violence against children and adolescents...
- Article 53 of the PINA Law states that every boy, girl, or adolescent has the right not to be the object of any form of negligence, discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, violence, cruelty, or oppression.
- Moreover, the law specifies that all children and adolescents have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse. The ill-treatment and abuse listed in the Law include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as negligence or neglect.”
- Yet, UNICEF (2010) reports increasing intra-family violence and by state/community authority.
- By 2012, increases of family abuse by 7.8%
- Bet 2003-2012, trend grew by 546%, MAJORITY VICTIMS FEMALES.
- In 2010 all homicides occurred in five departments with highest migration rates (Guatemala, San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango and Jutiapa) UNICEF 2012.
- The link between violence and migration!

# The Migration of Indigenous Women and Children

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- Indigenous groups compose the majority of the population in Guatemala and the poor; hence they are over-represented among migrants.
- Migration originates from parts of the country where the majority indigenous population lives.
- Many speak a minority language (Mayan Mam and Kiche) and face dire poverty combine with constant violence and discrimination.
- Many engage in circular migration with families to southern parts of Mexico for agricultural work; but gradual, unaccompanied migration has increased.
- Mexico influences the transculturation of indigenous people's culture but it leads to denial of Guatemalan identity and reproduces discrimination. (UNICEF 2010)
- ([www.unicef.org/lac/Ninez\\_Indigena\\_en\\_migracion%281%29.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lac/Ninez_Indigena_en_migracion%281%29.pdf))



# Migration and Situational Transculturation...

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- *“Straightaway they can tell we’re from Guatemala, that’s why we don’t wear our traditional dress [she smiles and covers her face with her hand] so they tell us what words not to use, that we shouldn’t talk, and that’s how we go. . .*
- 17-year-old indigenous girl (Hurtado Paz & Paz, pg 24)
- It is the Guatemalan indigenous women who still use their traditional dress and therefore experiences most pressure to hide her identity in the ‘cross over from Mexico to the US.
- Women most victims of rape by coyotes, police, immigration agents (the case of Ana Maria in El Salvador)\*
- ([http://rimd.reduaz.mx/documentos\\_miembros/76manuelacamus.pdf](http://rimd.reduaz.mx/documentos_miembros/76manuelacamus.pdf))

# Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America

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- According to the UNHRC (2013), all four countries are producing high numbers of unaccompanied and separated children seeking protection at the southern border of the United States.
- In 2013, the number of children from Mexico had surpassed the number of
- children from any one of the three Central American countries.
- In 2011, the number of Mexican children apprehended was 13,000,
- In 2012 = 15,709 and in 2013 = 18,754. Unlike the unaccompanied
- and separated children arriving from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, most of these children were promptly returned to Mexico.

# Mexicans rank top in the US among the deported

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Mexican and Mexican-American families wait to board Mexico-bound trains in Los Angeles on March 8, 1932. County officials arranged these mass departures as part of "repatriation campaigns," fueled by fears that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans

## **Removed Population by Citizenship**

In FY 2015, ICE removed individuals to 181 countries, the top 10 of which are provided in Table 3.<sup>10</sup> Mexico continued to be the leading country of origin for those removed, followed by Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. As a percentage of total removals, Mexican removals increased from 56 percent in FY 2014 to 62 percent in FY 2015. El Salvadoran removals remained constant at 9 percent of total removals. Guatemalan removals decreased to 14 percent in FY 2015 from 17 percent in FY 2014, and Honduran removals decreased to 9 percent from 13 percent.

Table 3

<b>FY 2015 Top 10 Countries of Removal by Citizenship</b>	
<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mexico	146,132
Guatemala	33,249
El Salvador	21,920
Honduras	20,309
Dominican Republic	1,946
Ecuador	1,305
Colombia	1,154
Nicaragua	867
Brazil	744
Jamaica	738
Other	7,049
<b>Total</b>	<b>235,413</b>

Vast majority  
deported are not  
criminals, only  
12% committed  
serious (level 1)  
71% deported in  
2013 committed  
crime or traffic/  
immigration  
violations

<http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/349/>



© 2014 TRAC

Figure 1. ICE Deportations in FY 2013

# Deportation in NYC by Ethnic Group

**Table 2A: New York City Excess deportations by Ethnic Group**  
**ICE Apprehensions New York City 2006 to 2010<sup>2/</sup>**

	Number of Apprehensions <sup>1/</sup>	Col A Share Apprehended	Col B 2006-2010 Male FB share	Excess Apprehended Col A-B	2012 FB share <sup>3/</sup>
Mexico	6795	20	5.8	14	5.7
El Salvador	3375	9.8	0.9	8.9	1.2
Dominican Rep	3038	8.8	12	-3.1	13
Ecuador	2590	7.5	4.5	3.0	4.0
Guatemala	2229	6.5	0.7	5.8	0.9
Honduras	2219	6.5	1.1	5.4	1.0
Jamaica	1900	5.5	5.6	-0.1	5.6
Colombia	1028	3.0	2.4	0.6	2.5
China	940	2.7	8.9	-6.2	9.4
Guyana	715	2.0	4.5	-2.5	4.4
Cuba	707	2.0	0.6	1.4	0.5
Trinidad & Tobago	697	2.0	3.0	-1.0	2.9
Haiti	490	1.4	3.1	-1.7	3.1
Peru	429	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.9
Pakistan	389	1.1	1.2	-0.1	1.3

1/ By borough: Queens 34%; Brooklyn 29%; the Bronx 19%, Manhattan 14%.

2/ Reported apprehensions from October 2005 to December 2010.

3/ Source: Occhiogrosso-Schwartz Joshua (2012) page 7.

<http://immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/NYC-FOIA-Report-2012-FINAL.pdf>

# The 2008 economic crisis led to return migration in Mexico & other LA regions

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- Return migration can be forced migration deportation, including “self-deportation” if conditions worsen
- From 1995-2000 net migration from US to Mexico 2.3 million, reversing to 20,000 net migration to Mexico 2005-2010 (post crisis)
- Conditions worsened in the U.S .but improved in Mexico, in 2015 33% of adults report live in the U.S. about the same as in Mexico (up from 23% in 2007)
- source: <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/350/>



# Deportation and single headed families

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- ❑ Vast Majority 90+% of those deported are prime age males
- ❑ In 2012, of 410,000 deported 94% were males, majority prime working age, 20-49.
- ❑ Due to more women and children crossing from El Salvador GTM and Honduras to the US via Mexico, the number of women deported rose slightly to about 25,000 raising the share of female deportees from 6% to 7%.
- ❑ **source:**  
<http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/350/>

# Reception and Integration in Communities of Origin

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- “Una Vida Dos Paises” (2015, Film, City College sponsored by the President’s Office) reveals experience of re-integration of youth mostly in high school in Puebla Mexico and challenges faced by language, culture and resources not available to these youth.
- Preliminary insights from my own studies suggest ‘return adult migrants, especially males, are stigmatized and viewed as ‘criminals’ by community of reception in DR and in Mexico, but mainly viewed as failure. Women are viewed as ‘lose’ or labeled as having abandoned their families or worst, their children!
- Local government/municipalities in Mexico are working to build ‘reception’ schools, now in place for over five years, to help these students integrate into bilingual classes, teachers training into English (President University of Colegio de Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala Mexico, Junio 30, 2016).
- Mexican Coalition working to participate and help capacitate a school in Puebla.

# The International Community

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- UNHCR works closely with Governments and others to ensure the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol* are honored.
- the “*Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration 10-Point Plan*” is a tool developed by UNHCR to assist Governments and other stakeholders to incorporate refugee protection considerations into migration policies,”.....The *10-Point Plan* stresses that.....
- It contains an entire section on “child protection systems,” one on identifying women and girls at risk, and another on protecting victims of trafficking.
- In accordance with these priorities, the UNHCR Regional Office for the United States and the Caribbean in Washington, D.C. (UNHCR Washington), has likewise
- identified the vulnerability of children as a primary concern, especially unaccompanied children, and has devoted many
- resources to investigating protecting issues relating to children arriving to and within
- the United States.
- In 2012, with the full cooperation and support of the U.S. Government, UNHCR Washington began monitoring the protection screening of unaccompanied and separated children from Mexico at the southern
- U.S. border of which a report was published in

# According to the UNHCR's 2013 Report

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- the number of requests for asylum has increased in countries *other than the U.S.*
- Combined, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Belize documented a 435% increase in the number of asylum applications filed by individuals from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.
- In the US, the number of adults claiming fear of return to their countries of origin to government officials upon arriving at a port of entry or apprehension at the southern border increased from 5,369 in fiscal year (FY 2009) to 36,174 in FY 2013.
- Individuals from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico account for 70% of this increase.

# Discrimination is a Constant *en route* to and Returning from the US or Mexico back home

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- Migrant children and adolescents continue to experience the same racism and discrimination that they experience in community of origin by Mexicans or US people.
- Upon repatriation, they find it difficult to adjust to traditional aspects of indigenous culture (language, dress, food, behavior patterns, etc)
- Some girls don't want to wear indigenous dresses or speak their native language or eat tortillas, paradoxically, migration seems to confer a status but also instill a sense that indigenous groups are inferior!

# Conclusions and Reflections

- Women-led immigration from Latin American to the US contributes to family fragmentation.
- ...the new waves of deportation, mostly of males, forces women to migrate as heads of households and guardians of the family but also as vulnerable subjects (Fuentes, 2011, on-going).
- Mass deportation is part of a larger and more complex problem involving geo-political and economic processes (privatization of detention centers in a neo-liberal economy, but also disregard for human rights and families. (Yolanda Gonzalez Cerdeira, IOM Report 2016, presented in Nicaragua July 14, 2016)
- We need to work with academic institutions and NGOs to come up with an integral plan to study the causes and impact of migration among vulnerable populations such as solo migrant mothers and unaccompanied youth as well as the link between the exportation of women as human labor, the declining work prospects and deportation of Latin American males and globalization.

# For further information

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- UNCHR,(date?) 2013