

California and Mexico: The Need for Joint Policies to Maintain Competitiveness

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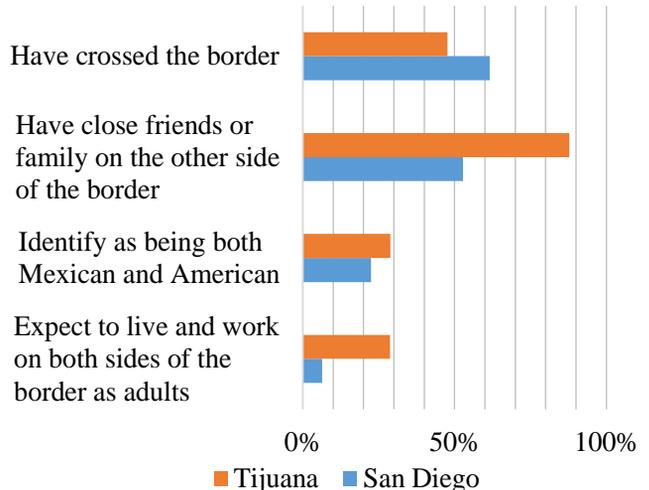
Many people are already aware of the important ties between Mexico and California in terms of both trade and migration. Mexico is California's most important export destination, with bi-directional trade of goods in 2015 exceeding \$70 billion. One out of every three Mexican immigrants to the U.S. settle in California and Latinos make up 40% of the state's total population. It is crucial for the State's overall competitiveness that policymakers unravel the key policy implications of these data points. It is important to examine the ways in which cross-border advanced manufacturing clusters, coupled with a sizeable cohort of young people whose education takes place on both sides of the border, creates the need for bilateral cooperation to produce policies in support of education and workforce development.

In California, we are failing to provide educational opportunities to Latinos, who now make up over half of the K-12 student population. In addition, unprecedented levels of return migration means that tens of thousands of students, the majority of whom are U.S. citizens, have left California classrooms to accompany their families back to Mexico. The scale and scope of the challenges these youth face is already underappreciated by both researchers and policymakers and these challenges are likely to become more complex in the coming years. While California has spent decades working to integrate immigrants into its education system, this is a new challenge for schools in Mexico. Our neighboring state of Baja California is home to the highest concentration of U.S.-born youth in Mexico and its school systems are the most affected by the wave of families emigrating from California.

Key Findings:

- ◆ In California, only 79% of Latinos graduate from high school and just a third of these graduates have completed the A-G requirements necessary to apply to a four-year public university. As a result, fewer than 15% of Latinos have earned an undergraduate degree by the age of 29.
- ◆ In Mexico, 500,000 students – predominately U.S. citizens – arrived from the U.S. between 2010 and 2015. More than 10% of this group is in Baja California.
- ◆ Our survey of high school students in San Diego and Tijuana shows that young people lead incredibly binational lives, have tremendous aspirations for the future, and deeply trust schools and teachers to help prepare them for adulthood. However, we have also seen that they often face barriers to success in terms of access to resources and information.

Students' Binational Experience



Implications for Policy

The trend of return migration to Mexico can be expected to continue to accelerate under President Trump's administration, with the potential for increased deportations and the removal of protections afforded by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This will disproportionately affect Southern California, home to 25% of the Mexican-born population in the U.S. The large cohort of students whose education takes place on both sides of the border is especially well-suited to participate in the binational economy given their cross-border cultural fluency. Supporting their educational success should be a major regional workforce development priority.

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