

THE LEADER IN LIFE RESTORATION

Immigration and Poverty



ABSTRACT

The issues of Poverty are hunger, education, family, racial inequality, social inequality, disability and more. This month we look at immigration and its role in perpetuating poverty.

Mission Statement: *Partnering with the community to serve those who are in crisis to restore them to freedom and purpose through the transforming power of the Gospel.*

Introduction

Currently immigration, in every context, is front and center in our collective awareness; poverty, not so much. Our task in this paper is to view the relationship between migrating groups and poverty. In addition, it is our intent to show the contrast in the economics of the country of origin vs the economic possibilities that draw migrants to leave their homes.

For our purposes here we will use migration of citizens of Mexico in our study to narrow down our search for the relationship between immigration and poverty.

Finally, we want to look at solutions, if any, that would ease human suffering and lift migrating people groups out of a life of poverty.

Immigration comes up, but the issue that is on everybody's mind is the economy.

Mario Diaz-Balart/US Representative, Florida

Immigration ebbs and flows at different times and for different reasons. However, one of the biggest reasons people migrate to the U.S. is an economic one. While they may have experienced political unrest, violence and war in their country of origin, sooner or later basic human survival becomes the focus. With that in mind, let's look at some economic statistics

from some Latin
American
countries of origin.

Demographics Estimate % of Total

Unauthorized Population 82,000 100%

Top Countries of Birth

Mexico 59,000 72%

Guatemala 5,000 6%

Honduras 3,000 3%

Data taken from U.S. Census Bureau 2012-16 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) data

- In Mexico the approximate Yearly Minimum Wage is **\$1,753.00 USD.**
- In El Salvador **\$2187.00**
- In Guatemala **\$2734.00**
- In Nicaragua **\$2218.00**
- In the U.S. **\$15,080.00**

(<https://www.minimum-wage.org/international/mexico>)

What would it be like to live in Mexico on \$1753.00 annual salary? For those who have not experienced it, it might be difficult to imagine. Imagine yourselves in any of these pictures.





Consider the economy in Mexico where these pictures were taken.

1. *Around half of the population lives in poverty; about 10 percent of people live in extreme poverty.*
2. *The number of people in poverty has mainly been increasing since 2006, when 42.9 percent of people were below the national poverty line.*
3. *Chiapas, Guerrero and Puebla are the states with the highest levels of poverty.*
4. *Mexico has a sizable GDP of about \$1.283 trillion. Even so, Mexico's GDP per capita or per person is \$14,000. This means that there is a sizable wealth gap in the country between rich and poor.*
5. *More than 20 million children live in poverty with more than five million living in [extreme poverty](#), according to Fusion, the United Nations Children's Fund.*

6. *About 25 million Mexicans make less than \$14 a day and a quarter of the workforce is underemployed.*
7. *The average salary in rural areas is 3 to 4 times less than that of urban areas in Mexico.*
8. *Economic growth is commonly believed to decrease poverty. Mexico's annual growth rate is somewhat small, around two to three percent. Additionally, this economic growth has mainly benefitted the rich.*
9. *Drug wars are thought to perpetuate poverty in Mexico.*
10. *Despite all of this, Mexico has decreased extreme poverty in the country by 20 to 25 percent since 1995. This is mainly because of social welfare programs that were enacted during economic crises.*

[\(https://borgenproject.org/poverty-in-mexico-2/\)](https://borgenproject.org/poverty-in-mexico-2/)

Bottom line: In Mexico, a person is considered to be living in poverty if he or she makes less than **\$157.50 a month**.

JORGE RAMOS

Mexican-born American journalist and author: "Not many countries offer second chances. The US gave me that."

We've just looked at the economic reasons a citizen of Mexico might want to leave their family, friends and country and move to a country that might offer a better life for them and their children.

Now we turn to the discussion of immigration and its relationship to poverty in the U.S.

If you watch the national news at all or look at the headlines on your web browser you will quickly notice that there are some distinct opinions regarding immigration; particularly focused on migrants at the southern border of the United States. The opinions can be simplified for our purposes into 3 groups, although there are variants of opinion within these 3 groups. Let's look at the economic arguments of all three:

1. Pro-immigration without restriction.
2. Anti-immigration
3. Immigration reform

"Our review of economic research finds immigrants not only help fuel the Nation's economic growth, but also have an overall positive effect on the income of native-born workers."

-Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear

Pro-immigration

Pro-immigration supporters find themselves trying to explain how the influx of large numbers of unemployed and essentially homeless migrants into the U.S. is a positive economically sound policy; particularly when the "open border" form of entry is suggested.

In a 2007 review by the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers in the George Bush White House you can find a good economic explanation for the benefits of immigration, and the extreme position of open borders.

Key Findings

1. *On average, US natives benefit from immigration. Immigrants tend to complement (not substitute for) natives, raising natives' productivity and income.*
2. *Careful studies of the long-run fiscal effects of immigration conclude that it is likely to have a modest, positive influence.*
3. *Skilled immigrants are likely to be especially beneficial to natives. In addition to contributions to innovation, they have a significant positive fiscal impact.*

In addition, those who are pro-immigration find themselves having to answer the question, “...and what about the displacement of native born workers by immigrants?” The review also suggests that American workers benefit from the migrant labor force in a couple of ways.

- *The presence of unskilled foreign-born construction laborers allows skilled US craftsmen and contractors to build more homes at lower cost than otherwise – therefore the US natives’ productivity and income rise.*
- *Thus, when immigrants are added to the US labor force, they increase the economy’s total output, which is split between immigrants (who receive wages) and natives (who receive wages and also earn income from their ownership of physical and human capital). Natives may also gain from having a wider variety of goods and services to consume and from lower prices for the goods and services produced by industries with high concentrations of foreign-born workers.*

As you will see there are some very good economic reasons why immigration can be a benefit to a country.

Here is the conclusion reached in the Council of Economic Advisers review.

Conclusion: Although subject to the uncertainties inherent to long-run projections, careful forward-looking estimates of immigration’s fiscal effects, accounting for all levels of government spending and tax revenue, suggest a modest positive influence on average. The fiscal impact of skilled immigrants is more strongly positive.

(https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html)

Anti-Immigration

Now let’s look at the reasons why those opposed to immigration (at least immigration status quo) are adamant in their belief that immigration is not so good for the economy of their country.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform is an organization which has a very different view of the effects of current immigration policies on the U.S. economy. In an article posted on their website titled [The Fiscal Burden of Illegal Immigration on United States Taxpayers](#) and written by [Matt O'Brien and Spencer Raley](#) | September 27, 2017, they provide another side of the relationship of immigration and poverty. Here are some statistics about the cost of illegal immigration in the U.S.

The Cost of Illegal Immigration to the United States

At the federal, state, and local levels, taxpayers shell out approximately \$134.9 billion to cover the costs incurred by the presence of more than 12.5 million illegal aliens, and about 4.2 million citizen children of illegal aliens. That amounts to a tax burden of approximately \$8,075 per illegal alien family member and a total of \$115,894,597,664. The total cost of illegal immigration to U.S. taxpayers is both staggering and crippling. In 2013, FAIR estimated the total cost to be approximately \$113 billion. So, in under four years, the cost has risen nearly \$3 billion. This is a disturbing and unsustainable trend.

The study goes on to say that the tax burden of U.S. taxpayers for supporting 12.5 illegal immigrants is approximately \$8,075 per “**illegal alien family member.**” In Oklahoma, the cost is \$4,366 per immigrant. (<https://www.fairus.org/issue/publications-resources/fiscal-burden>)

Immigration Reform

In researching immigration reform in the U.S. we found it difficult to find a plan that did not have political leanings one way or the other. The need for immigration reform suggests that immigration policies and laws currently on the books do not serve us well.

Let's compare some of the main points of two political leaders as we consider the idea of providing solutions for immigrants and low income native-born Americans. The first list of reform conditions is from Hillary Clinton, well-known political leader.

Pro-Immigration Reform

Immigration reform

Note: This page is a reproduction of the Hillary for America policy proposal on immigration reform.

Hillary has been committed to the immigrant rights community throughout her career. As president, she will work to fix our broken immigration system and stay true to our fundamental American values: that we are a nation of immigrants, and we treat those who come to our country with dignity and respect—and that we embrace immigrants, not denigrate them. As president, Hillary will:

- **Introduce comprehensive immigration reform.** Hillary will introduce comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to full and equal citizenship within her first 100 days in office.
- **End the three- and 10-year bars.** The three- and 10-year bars force families—especially those whose members have different citizenship or immigration statuses—into a heartbreaking dilemma: remain in the shadows, or pursue a green card by leaving the country and loved ones behind.
- **Defend President Obama’s executive actions—known as DACA and DAPA—against partisan attacks.** The estimated 5 million people eligible for DAPA—including DREAMers and parents of Americans and lawful residents—should be protected under the executive actions.
- **Do everything possible under the law to protect families.** If Congress keeps failing to act on comprehensive immigration reform, Hillary will enact a simple system for those with sympathetic cases—such as parents of DREAMers, those with a history of service and contribution to their communities, or those who experience extreme labor violations—to make their case and be eligible for deferred action.
- **Enforce immigration laws humanely.** Hillary will focus resources on detaining and deporting those individuals who pose a violent threat to public safety, and ensure refugees who seek asylum in the U.S. have a fair chance to tell their stories.

- **End family detention and close private immigration detention centers.** Hillary will end family detention for parents and children who arrive at our border in desperate situations and close private immigrant detention centers.
 - **Expand access to affordable health care to all families.** We should let families—regardless of immigration status—buy into the Affordable Care Act exchanges. Families who want to purchase health insurance should be able to do so.
 - **Promote naturalization.** Hillary will work to expand fee waivers to alleviate naturalization costs, increase access to language programs to encourage English proficiency, and increase outreach and education to help more people navigate the process.
 - **Support immigrant integration.** Hillary will create a national Office of Immigrant Affairs, support affordable integration services through \$15 million in new grant funding for community navigators and similar organizations, and significantly
- |
- increase federal resources for adult English language education and citizenship education. (<https://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues/immigration-reform>)

As you can see Hillary’s reforms are certainly pro-immigrant in terms of their scope. If you can read the plan without thinking of the political or overall economic impact on taxpayers her reforms are a gracious welcome to migrant populations.

Anti-Immigration Reform

On the other side of the aisle, as they say on Capitol Hill comes this reform idea from our current President, Donald Trump.

- **Triple the number of ICE officers.**
- **Nationwide e-verify. This simple measure will protect jobs for unemployed Americans.**
- **Mandatory return of all criminal aliens.**
- **Detention—not catch-and-release.**
- **Defund sanctuary cities.**
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- **Enhanced penalties for overstaying a visa.**

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- **Cooperate with local gang task forces.**
- **End birthright citizenship.**

In contrast to Hillary's reforms, President Trump's focus is reform that puts the welfare of American citizens first. Here are the 3 core principles from the President's plan.

1. **A nation without borders is not a nation. There must be a wall across the southern border.**
2. **A nation without laws is not a nation. Laws passed in accordance with our Constitutional system of government must be enforced.**
3. **A nation that does not serve its own citizens is not a nation. Any immigration plan must improve jobs, wages and security for all Americans.**

(<https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/Immigration-Reform-Trump.pdf>)

As you can see, immigration reform is not going to be easy to address. Within these 3 categories we've just described there are a multitude of variations of perspective. Some as extreme as excluding all migrant populations unless they are a particular race to opening the borders entirely without restriction.

Conclusion

In conclusion let's re-visit the title of this paper; "Immigration and Poverty." U.S. Customs and Border Protection say there are approximately 1600 undocumented, inadmissible, illegal migrants entering our borders every day. (<https://immigrationoffice.org/2019/02/number-of-illegal-immigrants>)

If I were to tell you that tomorrow there would be 1600 homeless and poor migrants coming to Muskogee to live, what would be your response? What would you say if I told you that most of them came with training to do your job?

Let's look at two definitions. First, the word 'immigration' very simply means...

"...an act or instance of coming into a foreign country to live."

Secondly, the word **poverty** means...

"...the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions." (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poverty>)

As we stated at the beginning of this paper, the biggest reason for immigrating to a country and leaving your country of origin is economic at its core. So immigration and poverty are related in these ways.

- The overwhelming **majority of immigrants** come to the U.S. seeking better economic conditions(**money to live on**).
- The overwhelming **majority of native-born Americans** do not migrate to other countries because they have good or adequate economic conditions (**money to live on**) in America.
- **Poverty** is the condition most immigrants would like to escape from.
- **Poverty** is the condition that most native-born Americans do not want to experience.
- Acceptable Immigration reform would then need to lift migrants out of **poverty** without pushing native born citizens down into **poverty**.
- We could then say that **poverty** is the driving force behind legal and illegal immigration...and there's your relationship.

One final thought...

I have my own personal responsibility to those in need (which includes all those suffering from the effects of poverty. Since I am a follower of Christ, I have agreed to be obedient to his word.

There are over 100 verses in the Bible that address the poor and poverty. Here's one of them.

1 John 3:17-18ESV

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

A man once came to a mission director to talk about opening a new mission. He asked many questions of the director about fundraising, volunteering, state and federal requirements, building sites, the annual costs of running a mission.

As the mission director began to answer the man's questions, the gentleman stopped smiling and appeared very depressed. He told the director he didn't have all those things so maybe the timing wasn't right...to which the mission director asked him a couple of questions. "Sir, do you have a home?" "Yes" the man replied. "Do you have a job?" "Yes I do" the man said. "Do you have an extra room in your home?" The man replied "Yes but what's that got to do with starting a mission?"

Very quietly the mission director said, "You could start helping people with what you have right now" and the man went away sad.

If we as native born Americans would just treat our neighbors/immigrants as we would like to be treated...we'd have immigration reform unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Opinion

While there is much discussion and VERY strong opinions on Immigration, there needs to be a healthy conversation around what it means to be a citizen. We must start with two very basic questions. What are our responsibilities as a citizen? What are our rights as a citizen?

From there we must examine our naturalization procedures. Currently it routinely costs at five figures of income and a decade of working through paperwork. Working through the system is too complicated even for native born, English speaking people. With modern technology the process should be simple, straight forward and should not cost a year's wages. We can do better.

Note: From Mexico and Jamaica come two opinions on U.S. immigration practices from native-born citizens of those countries...in Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of this paper.

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Appendix A

<http://jamaica-star.com/authors/curtis-campbell-0>Curtis Campbell, Jamaica Star

Article submitted to this paper by Marsha Johnson, a native of Jamaica and an accountant living in Green Acres, Spanishtown, Jamaica.

A look into immigration processes from immigrants.

Jamaican recording artist Shamracq, whose given name is Shamar Gowe, says the following about immigration and the discrimination that accompanies the processes.

"Jamaicans always make their mark everywhere they go, whether it may be good or bad. So people often times feel threatened by us. I have faced discrimination in the island. For example, if opportunities are available for progress, those in charge prefer to give those opportunities to

the native people regardless if they are more suited or qualified for the opportunity," Shamracq said.

"Full time we stop discrimination. It no matter where yuh come from, national or non-national, a the curse fi black man, the slave mentality, we have. It's a pity to see how we have been turned back from so many places in recent times. Note, we have only two types of people, it's either good or evil. Full time we stop discrimination. What's the issue?" he stated also pointing out that parts of his statement were quoted from the song **What's The Issue**.

Despite highlighting that Jamaicans are sometimes treated fairly by foreigners at their borders, Shamracq also admitted that some of the discrimination is caused by other Jamaicans who have misbehaved. He therefore advises Jamaican nationals to stay out of trouble.

"I think it's both a blessing and a curse being a Jamaican. I am proud of my culture and my people and fully embrace that I am Jamaican. But often times Jamaicans create bad reputation in places they go and most times the good suffer for the bad. I have been treated like a criminal numerous times when passing overseas borders. When you travel overseas you are a representative of your country more than yourself as an individual because people often times state your nationality over name. Let us be more positive in the things we do," he said.

<http://jamaica-star.com/authors/curtis-campbell-0> Article submitted to this paper by Marsha Johnson, a native of Jamaica and an accountant living in Green Acres, Spanishtown, Jamaica.

Opinion migration, racism and discrimination

Collaboration of:

Leticia Garfias Vargas and José Bribiesca Vázquez, citizens of Mexico

The talk of racism and discrimination suffered by immigrants who arrive in any country whatever may be the causes that causes it, forces us to review the history of differences in the origins of the country of origin of the immigrant, such as the destination country, Only then will it be possible to understand this phenomenon at present.

When talking about immigration in the American continent, it is important to stop to analyze, first, the structure of the original peoples, of their society, and how they were modified to the conquest and subsequent colonization; second, the social classes to which they belonged, the conquerors and later the colonizers.

In general terms we can say that the pre-Columbian societies were conformed by three social levels, nobility, people and slaves; and perhaps being the latter, the first evidence that racism and discrimination have existed since man lived in society, that is, segregation and subjugation have been present throughout the history of humanity, accentuating more product of the conquests of one nation over another; Many times, those who occupied positions in the

nobility, became a people, and part of the people became slaves or in some cases migrated to other latitudes seeking escape from slavery and subjugation, or simply by the desire to preserve or improve their way and lifestyle.

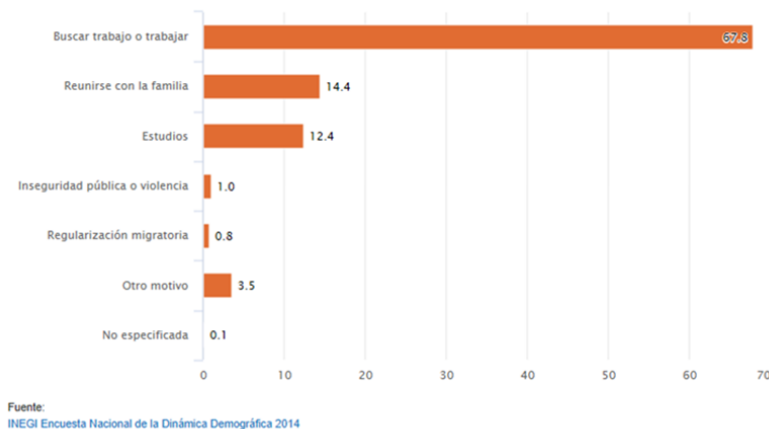
As the subjugation of indigenous peoples progressed, the inequalities between the social classes became more and more marked, a product of the idiosyncrasies and customs of the conquerors themselves and of the conquered peoples, since many sought only riches to take to their countries of origin, while others the prosperity that they did not have in the places where they came from; in both cases, they required labor to carry out the heavy work they required for their purposes.

And, faced with the need for hands to carry out hard work, trade and slave trade arises, first with the natives of the conquered peoples and later brought from other parts of the world; initiating thus one of the businesses that persists until our days; and is that in this issue things have not changed much, despite the different agreements signed worldwide, still persists the sale of human beings, and on the other hand has increased immigration to other nations, for different reasons and reasons, becoming one of the most lucrative businesses in the world, which is considered is managed by the big mafias worldwide.

In our continent, the phenomenon of immigration is our daily bread, where for political, economic and social reasons, more and more people seek in other countries the opportunities that in their places of origin are not possible for them; No matter how dangerous the journey, and knowing that nothing, no one guarantees that when they reach the desired destination they can find the desired opportunity.

The low scruples of the so-called "enganchadores" or "polleros" have caused innumerable losses of innocent lives that only looked for a way to live with greater dignity, because for these characters the only important thing is the money they receive, for them the people are just commodity; that conjugated with the corruption, concealment or conspiracy of many levels of the authorities, have made of immigration a business of many millions of dollars; there are few immigrants who achieve a decent and well-paid job, most end up living in conditions that are much worse than those of their places of origin, with the latent risk of being deported at any time, losing the money spent with them, and return with less than empty hands.

In the particular case of our Mexico, product of the excess in the bad decisions of many of our rulers, have caused that the indices of poverty, unemployment and insecurity are increased, due to the lack of support programs that encourage, both the investment and therefore the generation of new sources of employment, as for the development of the Mexican countryside; according to the latest information published by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), this would be the percentage distribution of emigrants due to emigration:



It is easy to understand the previous graph, when reviewing what is the average income that is paid in our country, which ranges from \$ 9.62 to \$ 26.62 * Dls. per day, according to the information published by the INEGI in the National Occupation and Employment Survey, in the first quarter of 2018; more for field workers, the average salary is around \$ 4.57. for almost twelve hours of work.

Under the most recurrent motive expressed by people who emigrate to the United States of America, which is to look for work opportunities, the question arises, why not do it legally?

I, processing the documentation that allows it?, the answer is simple, the paperwork to be done is expensive, since what has to be paid to obtain the Passport is \$ 82.00. on average, depending on the validity thereof, plus the \$ 200.00 Dls. which is the amount that must be paid for the processing of the Visa before the American Consulate; bureaucratic, for all the documentation that must be gathered, first for the Passport processing and then the one that is requested for the interview before the American Consulate; and even fulfilling all the documents and requirements that are requested, it is not guaranteed that the work visa could be granted;

Coupled with the above, immigration brings with it other costs for families and society in general, within which we could cite:

1. Perhaps the least important in the scale of values, is the money that must be paid to the "enganchadores or polleros", amounts ranging from \$ 5,000.00 to \$ 10,000.00. that depends on the place from where the person is transferred to the destination, money that does not contemplate what the migrant may need for meals and lodging on the route before reaching the border, as for the time that must wait to cross the same, money that in most cases those who seek to emigrate do not have, having to resort to very high interest loans, thereby compromising the family of those who wish to immigrate.

2. In propitiating family disintegration, every time, that family members of working age (children or spouse) will be the ones who have to find the money to survive, as long as they begin to receive the support of the emigrated relative.

3. With immigration, in rural communities the jobs that were previously carried out by men are now carried out by women, children or the elderly, causing that every time there is less land to be worked and more idle for lack of who works.

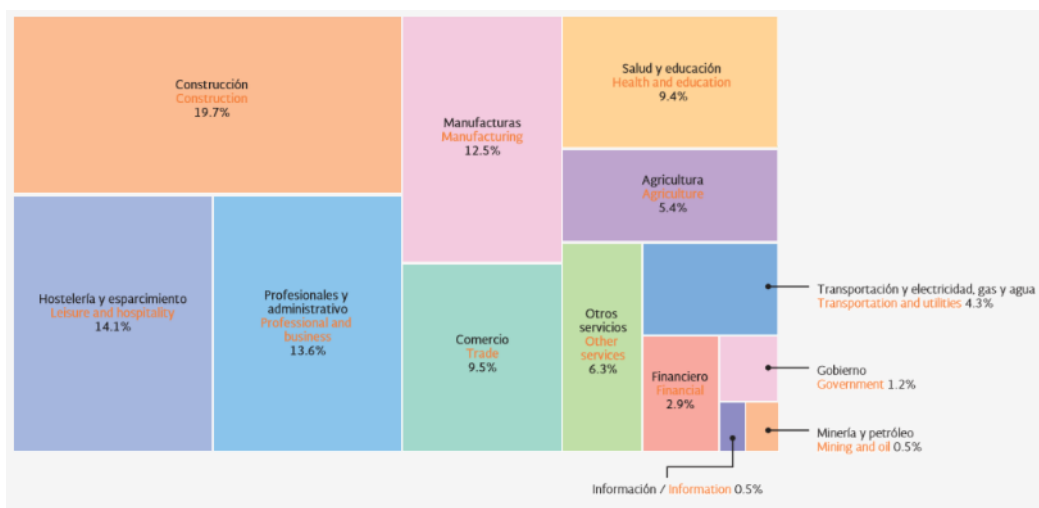
4. School desertion is another of the great costs that migration generates, since children and young people, first of all, because they have the need to support the family in search of an income, leave school, or the lack of a person. supervise and support their school work, little by little they leave.

5. In addition to the above, emigration becomes a kind of aspirational dream, since young people only expect to be old enough for them to emigrate.

6. Or products of bad influences, divert their way to activities linked to crime and drug trafficking.

While it is true that, with the sending of remittances, migrants support a better standard of living for their families, which has an economic impact on their communities, it is also true that this has turned into a way for some corrupt politicians to seek to benefit, by awarding works made with the resources of the emigrated workers, such as asking for these supports for their political campaigns.

Based on the information published by the National Population Council (CONAPO), belonging to the General Secretariat of the National Population Council, in the Yearbook of Migration and Remittances Mexico 2018, the main economic activities of Mexican migrants in the United States are:



Despite the diversity of sectors in which Mexican immigrants work, the discrimination they face is still very great, since in most cases the activities they develop are those that are on the bottom rungs of the rankings of the companies, or their incomes are lower than those perceived by US citizens who perform the same functions; which directly affects the forms and conditions of housing, the services they can access, as in the way in which they are provided.

We must consider that the discrimination and racism suffered by Mexican immigrants, not only receive it from the American citizens, but that these phenomena also appear among the different ethnic groups that migrate to the United States of North America, that in a lot of the cases is even more cruel, to call it in some way.

Since racism is a feeling or behavior consisting in the exacerbation of the racial sense of one ethnic group in relation to another, and since the manifestation of this is presented as contempt towards another or other ethnic groups, discrimination is originated, which we must accept with sadness, it appears among the population of a nation; only being able to be overcome with tolerance and respect.

Collaboration of: Leticia Garfias Vargas and José Bribiesca Vázquez