

# Measuring Mexican Emigration to the United States Using the American Community Survey

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*Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.*

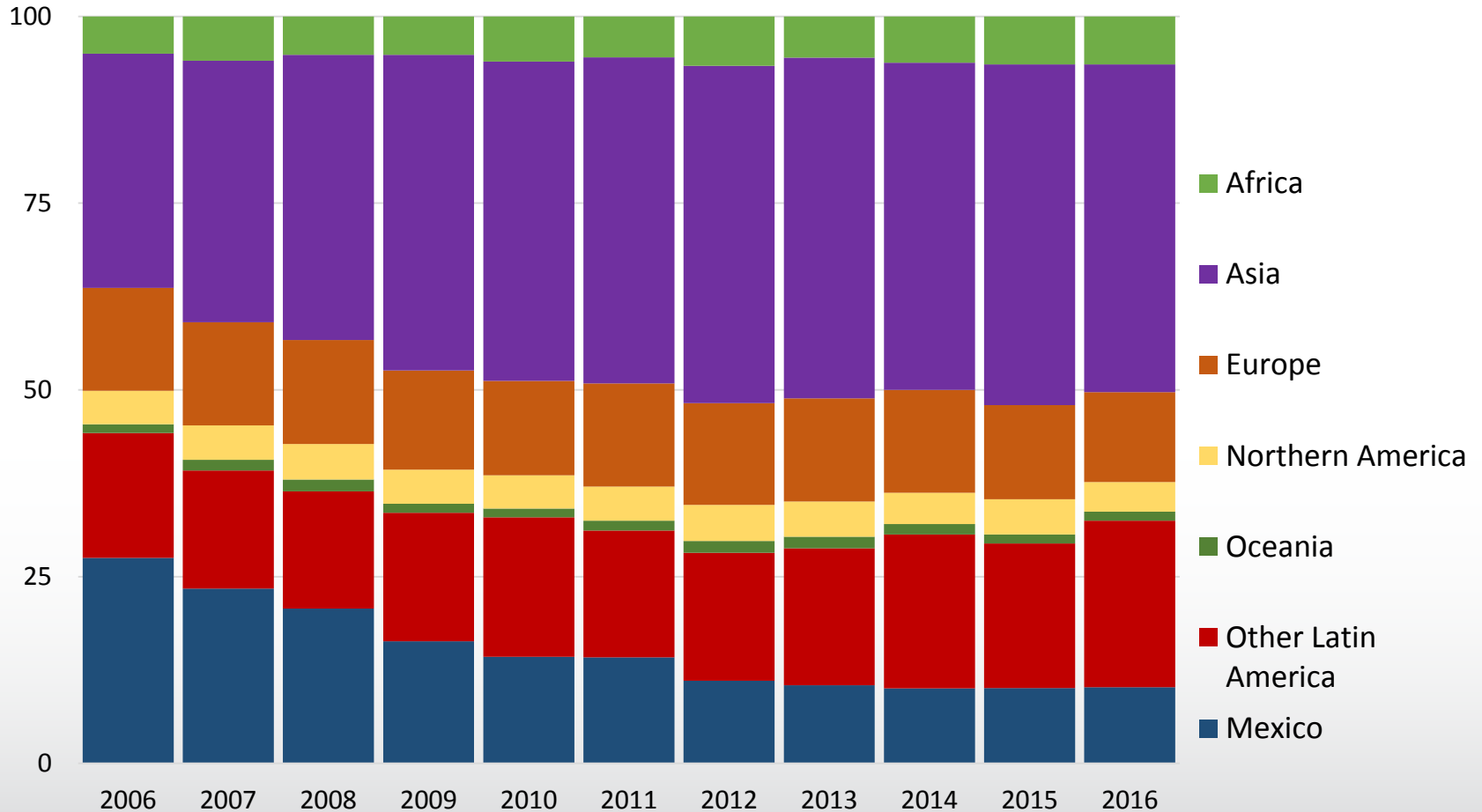
# Outline

- International migration to U.S. from Mexico
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- Estimating immigration from Mexico
- Strengths and limitations of the ACS data
- Recent and potential changes to migration questions in the ACS

# International Migration from Mexico

- Long history of migration between the United States and Mexico
  - Labor migration
  - Family migration
- Permanent, temporary, and circular migration
- Immigration from Mexico has slowed in recent years
- Mexico is still among the top sending countries

## International Migration to the United States by World Region and Country: 2006 to 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, 2006-2016 Single-Year American Community Surveys

# ACS

- ACS provides detailed socioeconomic information about the U.S. population
- Sample size of approximately 2.2 million households and 200,000 people in group quarters
- Continuous survey
- 1-year estimates and 5-year period estimates

# ACS

- Migration-related questions
  - Place of birth
  - Citizenship status
  - Year of entry (YOE)
  - Year of naturalization
  - Residence one year ago (ROYA)

# Place of Birth

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Where was this person born?

In the United States – *Print name of state.*

Outside the United States – *Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.*

Mexico

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)

<http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaires/2015/quest15.pdf>

# Citizenship

8

**Is this person a citizen of the United States?**

- Yes, born in the United States → *SKIP to question 10a*
  - Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas
  - Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents
  - Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization – *Print year of naturalization*  
↑  
*or*  
↓  
 No, not a U.S. citizen
- 

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)

<http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaires/2015/quest15.pdf>



# Year of Entry

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**When did this person come to live in the United States?** *If this person came to live in the United States more than once, print latest year.*  
Year

2015

*U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)*

<http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaires/2015/quest15.pdf>

# Residence 1 Year Ago

**15** a. Did this person live in this house or apartment 1 year ago?

- Person is under 1 year old → *SKIP to question 16*
- Yes, this house → *SKIP to question 16*
- No, outside the United States and Puerto Rico – *Print name of foreign country, or U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, etc., below; then SKIP to question 16*

*Mexico*

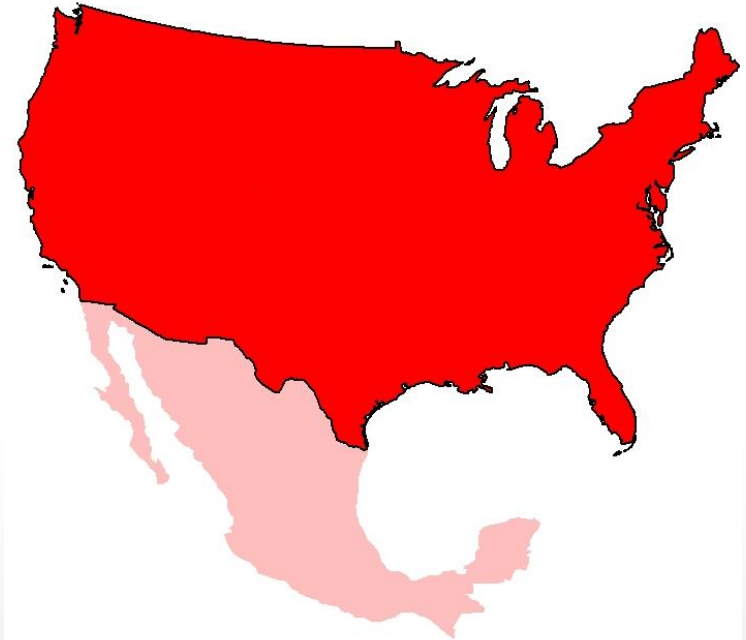
- No, different house in the United States or Puerto Rico

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)

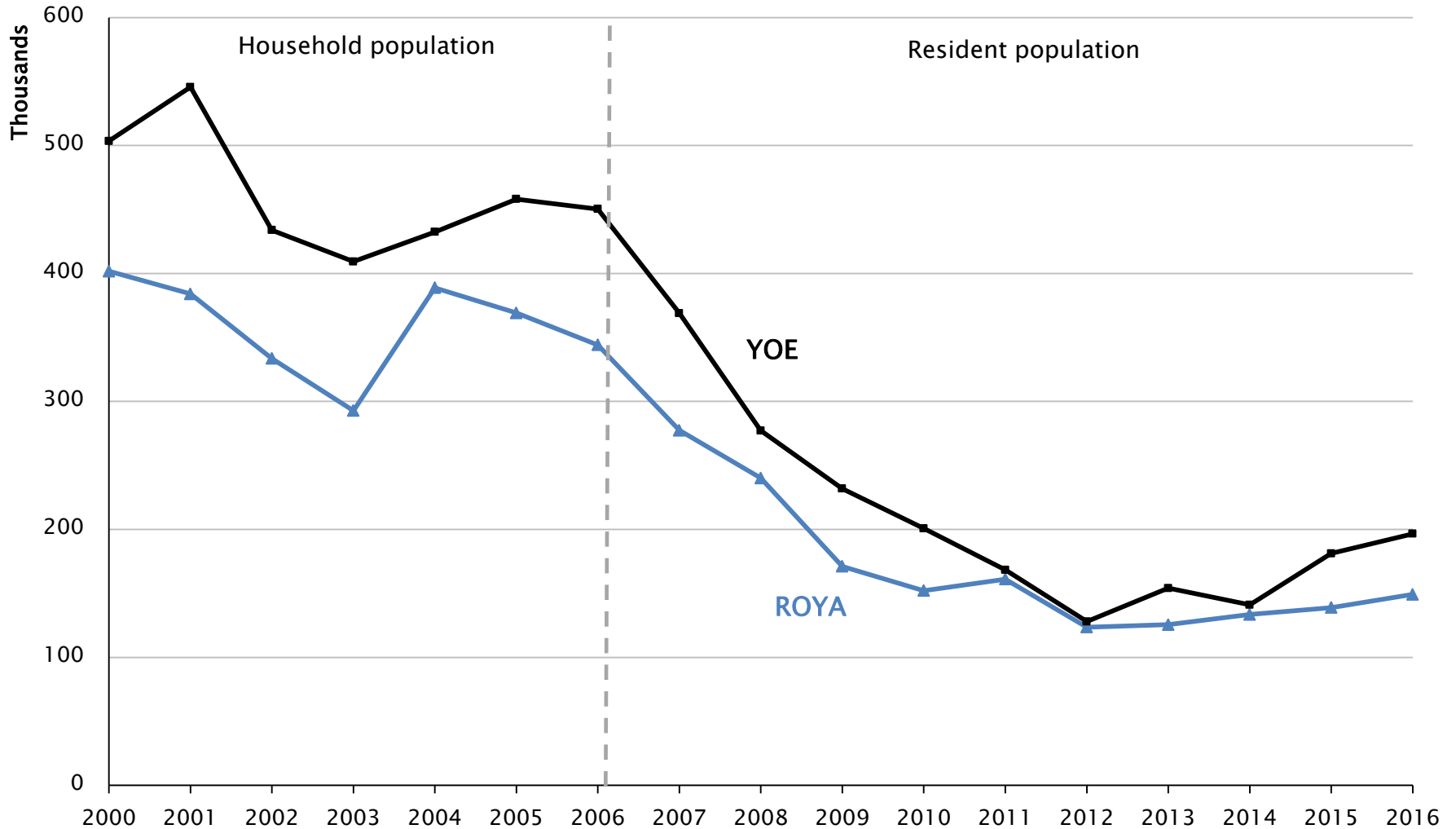
<http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaires/2015/quest15.pdf>

# Estimating Migration from Mexico

- Estimating the totals
- Residence one Year Ago (ROYA)
  - ROYA is Mexico
  - 0-year old adjustment
- Year of Entry (YOE)
  - Place of birth is Mexico and year of entry is in the prior year



# ROYA and YOE Estimates of Immigration Flows from Mexico: 2000 to 2016

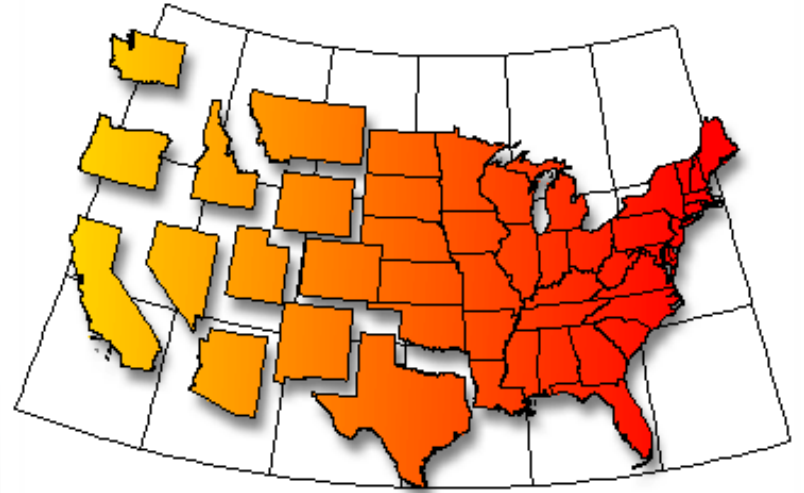


Note: The ACS did not include the group quarters population until 2006. The time series from 2000 to 2005 reports the household population while the time series from 2006 to 2013 reports the resident population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, 2000 to 2016 Single-Year American Community Surveys.

# Estimating Migration from Mexico

- Estimating characteristics
- Distributive method
  - Sub-national estimates
  - Demographic characteristics
  - Data from the 5-year ACS files
  - Distributions or “proxy universes” from the ACS that approximates the population being estimated
  - Mexican-born population who entered the U.S. in last 5 years



# Estimating Migration from Mexico

- **Example (hypothetical data):**
  - Los Angeles County, California
  - National total **200,000**
  - Percentage of the proxy universe in a 5-year ACS file living in LA County = **10%**
  - Estimate for LA County =  $200,000 * 0.10 = \mathbf{20,000}$



Los Angeles County, California

# Strengths and Limitations of ACS International Migration Data

- Strengths
  - Large sample size
  - Variety of indicators
  - Comprehensive measure of immigration
- Limitations
  - Data not always current
  - Measurement error
  - Coverage issues
    - Undocumented population?

# Improving the ACS migration data

## Administrative records

- Residence one year ago
  - Research to replace ROYA with admin records
  - Coverage issues in the administrative data
  - Protected Identification Keys (PIKs) could not always be created for international migrants
    - 77.8 percent of the sample moving from abroad
    - 93.1 percent of the sample moving within the United States
    - 94.1 percent of the sample in the same house (nonmovers)



# Improving the ACS international migration data

## Changes to the question

- Year of entry and Year of naturalization
  - Tested categories in place of single year responses
    - Respondents found it more difficult
  - Added instruction to YOE “give latest year”

In what year did you come to live in the United States?

1. Was it before 1985,
2. Between 1985 and 1996,
3. Between 1997 and 2004,
4. or 2005 or later \_\_\_\_\_?

If you came to live in the United States more than once, give the latest year.

# Conclusion

- Emigration from Mexico is one of the largest migration flows to the United States
- Measured using data from the ACS
  - ROYA and YOEA, distributive method for characteristics
- Benefits and limitations to using ACS data to measure international migration
- Potential improvements to the data

# Thank You

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