

# U.S.-born Mexicans abroad: Understanding the Migration of Binational Dual Citizens Using Mexican Birth Vital Statistics

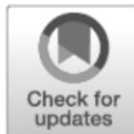
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# Half a million US-born children are living in Mexico; some were de facto deported

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## Immigrants in Their Parental Homeland: Half a Million U.S.-born Minors Settle Throughout Mexico



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### Abstract

In the past 10 years, a historical change occurred in migration flows within North America: specifically, Mexico–U.S. migration reached zero net migration. Alongside Mexican adults returning to their homeland was an unprecedented number of U.S.-born minors. Little is known about this massive migration of U.S. citizen children. We analyze Mexican census data from 2000 to 2015 to estimate the size and characteristics of the population of U.S.-born minors residing in Mexico. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of U.S.-born minors doubled to more than half a million. The population stabilized, aged, and became longer-term Mexican residents thereafter. The large majority of U.S.-born minors are primary school-aged. Although concentrated in the northern border and traditional migrant-sending regions, U.S.-born minors are distributed throughout Mexico. The majority of U.S.-born minors live in Mexico with two Mexican-born parents, but one-third are separated from one or both parents, and most of those separated from parents reside with grandparents. We interpret these trends in reference to the determinants of Mexico–U.S. migration, transnational and mixed-status families, and the future spatial and social mobility of U.S.-born minors living in Mexico.

**Keywords** U.S.-born minors · U.S.–Mexico migration · Child migration · Return migration

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## POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

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### U.S. Citizen Children De Facto Deported to Mexico

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### Abstract

Between 2000 and 2015, the U.S. deported unprecedented numbers of Mexican immigrants. During the same period, the population of U.S.-born children living in Mexico doubled in size. This study estimates the number of U.S.-born children who emigrated to Mexico from the United States in order to accompany a deported parent: de facto deported children. The data come from the Mexican National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID), a national probability sample of households in Mexico collected in 2014 and 2018. About one in six U.S.-born children living in Mexico in 2014/2018, amounting to an estimated 80,000–100,000 U.S.-born children, were there because the U.S. government deported one or both of their parents. De facto deported U.S.-born children are socioeconomically disadvantaged in Mexico compared to U.S.-born children whose parents migrate to Mexico for other reasons. Women are overrepresented among deported people who bring their U.S.-born children to Mexico, and when deported mothers bring their children, they are far less likely to do so with a partner than are deported fathers. U.S. policy should consider the interests of U.S. citizen children forced to live abroad when redesigning immigration and child welfare policies.

**More than half are living with two Mexican parents.  
Increase of binational parents among recent arrivals.**

Place of birth of parents	2010			2015		
	Nonrecent	Recent	Total	Nonrecent	Recent	Total
Mexico-Mexico	57.9	54.9	56.2	59.8	54.6	58
Mexico-Absent	25.8	27.2	26.5	26.6	22.9	25.4
Absent-Absent	10.2	8.2	9.1	7.6	6.4	7.2
Mexico- United States	4.4	6.7	5.7	4	11.1	6.4
U. S. – U. S.	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	1	0.6
Other	1.4	2.5	2.1	1.6	4	2.4

# Out of 751,000 U.S.-born, half a million under 18 in 2020

- A family affair

- Linked to return migration and, sometimes, deportation of a parent

(Boehm, 2009; D'Aubeterre Buznego, 2012; Medina & Menjívar, 2015; Román González, Carrillo Cantú, & Hernández-León, 2016; de la Peña Padilla, 2018; Caldwell, 2019; Zúñiga & Saucedo, 2020; Denier & Masferrer, 2020)

- Mixed migrant status families on both sides of the border

- Eligible for dual citizenship: U.S.-born children of Mexican parents

- *Jus soli*: U.S. for birth regardless of immigration status of parents
- *Jus sanguinis*: Mexican as a right by birth (for potentially around 13 million)

- Barriers from being “undocumented” in Mexico create incentives for registering to have a birth certificate

(Aguilar Zepeda, 2018; Jacobo-Suárez, 2017; Medina & Menjívar, 2015; Vargas Valle & Ortiz Rangel, 2019; Woo Morales & Ortiz Rangel, 2019; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015)

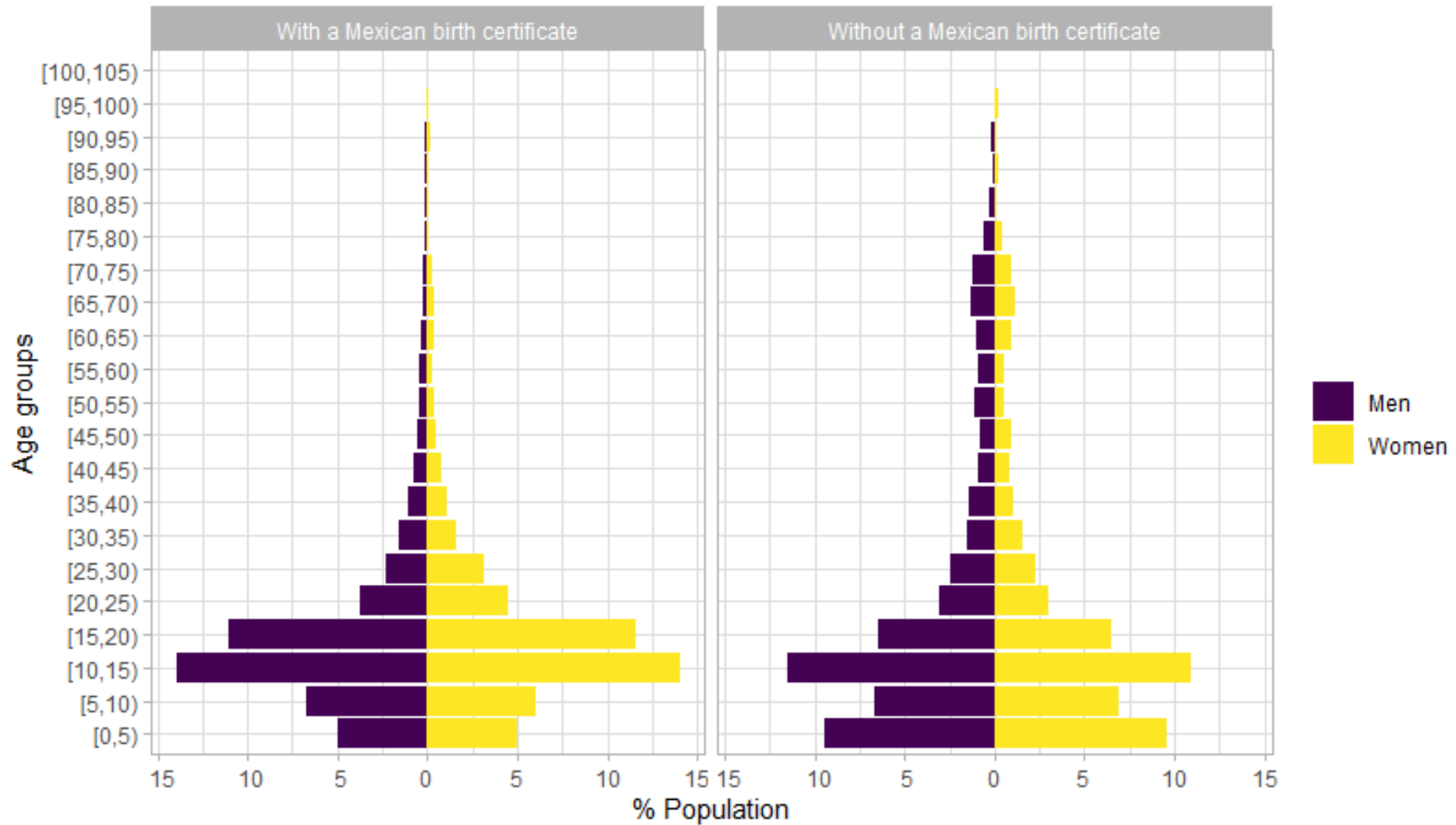
# Becoming a Mexican citizen by getting a birth certificate in Mexico

- In 2015, NGOs and migrant groups mobilized against lack of identity documents
- Binational Strategy “*Soy México*”
  - June 2016: Agreement with National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)
  - No apostille, only copy of US certificate
  - Registration free of charge
    - Before 2016: USD\$ 150-250
  - Started in Jalisco, then few others



- **Mexican birth vital statistics data from 1985 to 2019**
  - Civil Registry Vital Statistics of Births (INEGI)
  - Births occurred in the United States
  - By age, sex, year and location of registration
  - State (and region) of registration
  - Accumulated number of registries (1985-2019) = **462,699**
  
- **2020 Mexican censuses**
  - Born in the United States
  - With Mexican nationality and/or Mexican birth certificate = **492,284**

# 2020 Census: Different age structures



# Where did U.S.-born register for a birth certificate?

# Where are U.S.-born living in 2020?

Birth registries from 1985 to 2019



Census 2020



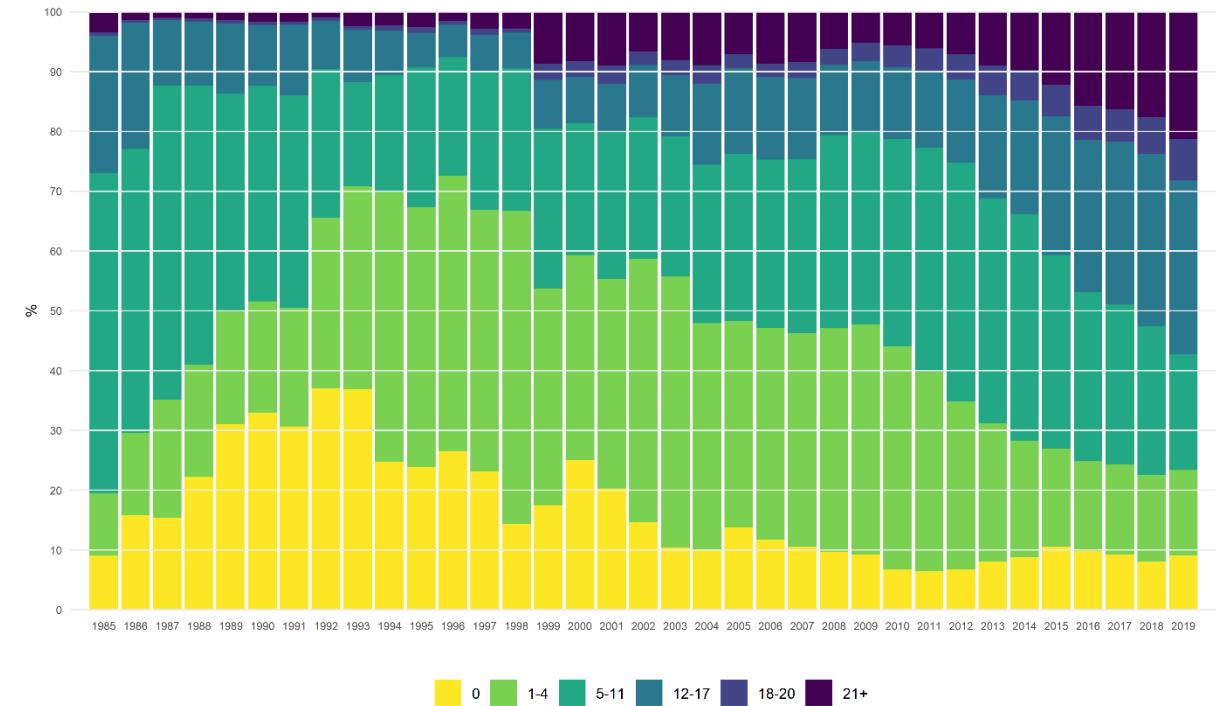
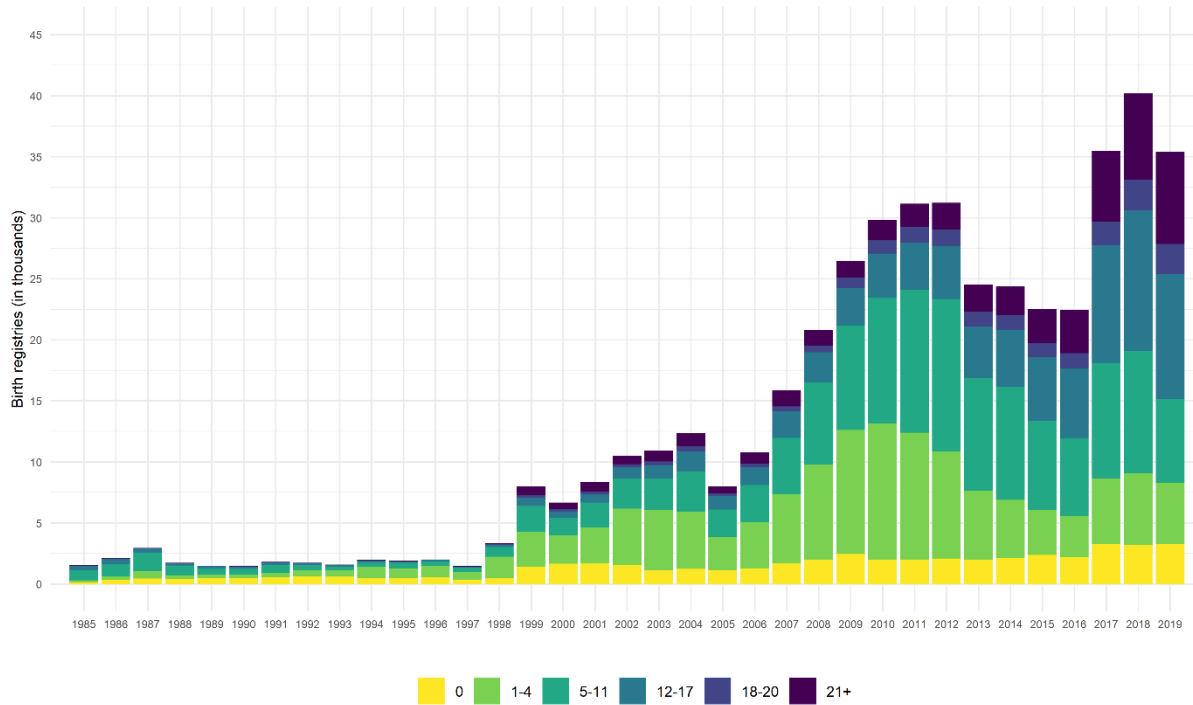


# State of registration over time changed

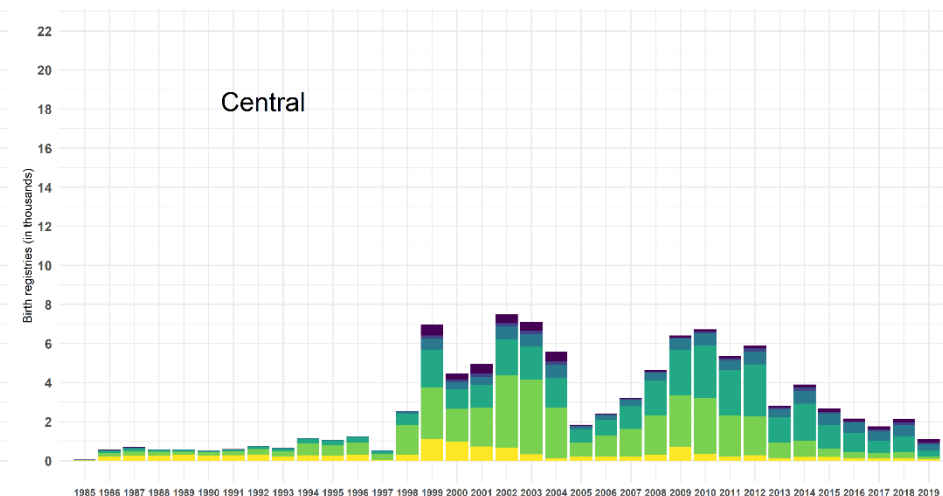
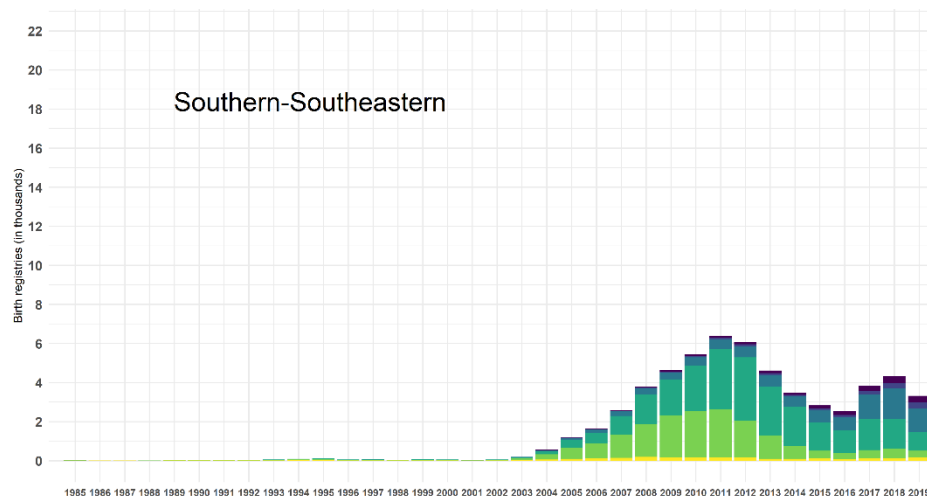
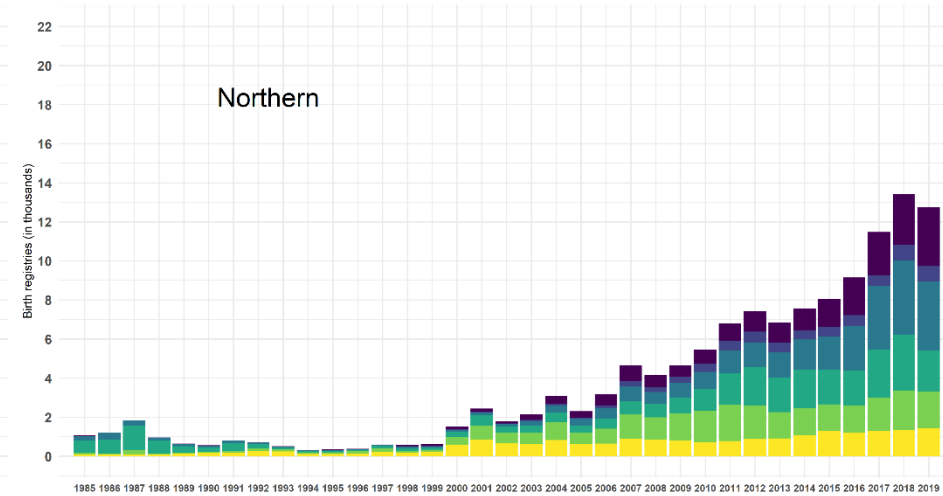
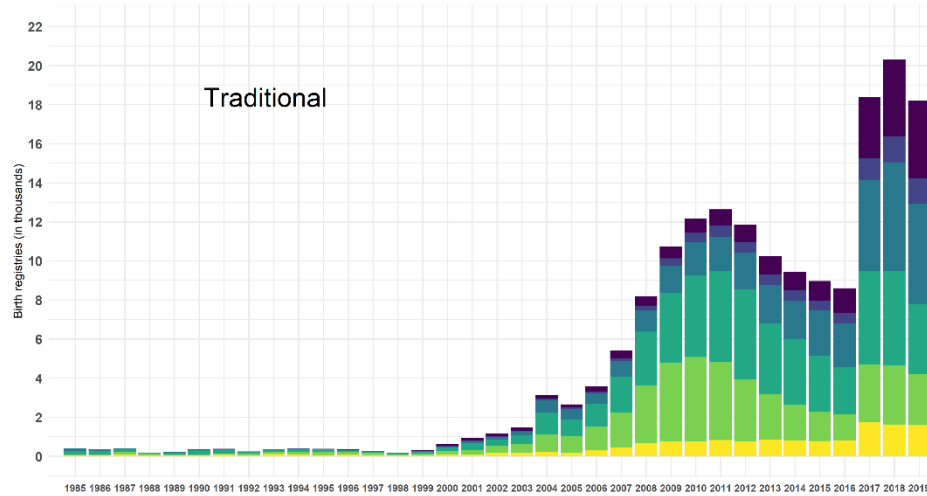


ligas\_year1985\_2019.gif

# Absolute and relative increase of registries at older ages

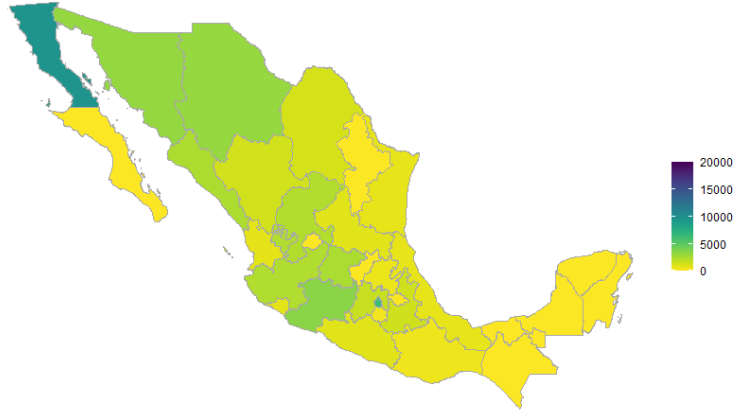


# Steady increase in Northern region, dramatic increase in traditional region in 2017



# Accumulated registries by age-group

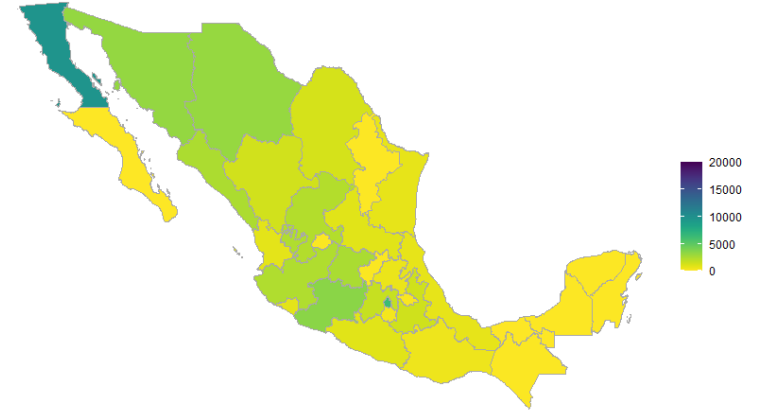
0-1 year



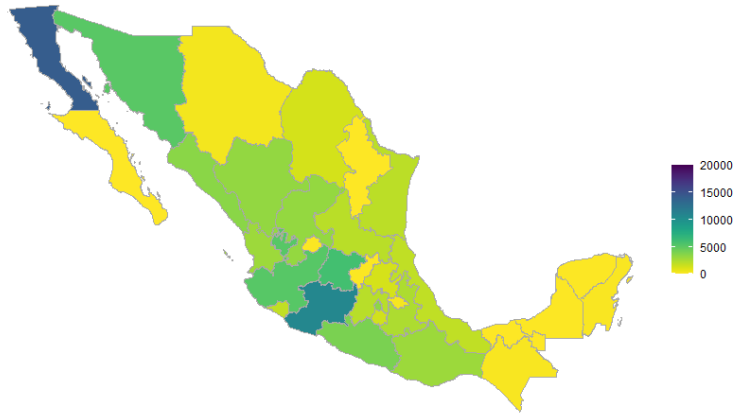
1-4 years



5-11 years



12-17 years



18-20 years



21+ years



# Some implications and open questions

- Emigration from the U.S.
  - Discussions on the undercount of U.S.-born children from Mexican immigrant mothers in the U.S. census  
(Johnson, 2021)
  - Unexpected migration of U.S. citizen children to Mexico between 2000-2010: Mexican and U.S. Census estimates of the size of youth populations were substantially off  
(García-Guerrero 2011; Jensen et al. 2018)
- Potential binational dual citizens
  - Why do U.S.-born opt to apply for Mexican citizenship? Or why not?
  - Barriers to integration or permanent stay?
  - Strategies for later re-emigration?

# Thanks. Gracias.

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