

Chapter Seven

International Migration Flows

Immigrants and Transnational Migrants

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*Methods, Measures, and Tools: Counting Immigrants,
Illegal Immigrants, and Emigrants*

MIGRATION HAS BECOME increasingly important as a vehicle for population change, with three dominant themes, namely internal and rural-to-urban migration, international labor migration (legal and illegal), and refugee flows. Out of all the possible population movements, international migration perhaps generates the greatest political, economic, and demographic interest owing to the large numbers of individuals that cross international borders.¹ In 2005 alone, it was estimated that there were 191 million international migrants, or 3 percent of the world’s population. Of these, 120 million immigrated to developed countries, representing a doubling of flows between 1985 and 2005.² The balance of yearly international flows are between developing countries.³

Fundamentally, immigration is an economic process motivated by a combination of “push” factors in the origin, including poor employment prospects, large populations, and low wages. The major sending regions are defined by Asia, North Africa, and Latin America, while both the developing world and developed world are important destinations. This chapter explores the theories

and drivers of international migration along with concepts of transnational migrants before considering policy and illegal immigration in the context of the United States. The “Focus” section explores the so-called “gap” in US immigration policy, and the “Methods, Measures, and Tools” section discusses how international flows may be measured.

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FLOWS

In the past, immigration was an important component of nation building in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and indeed remains a “myth” within many of these countries. The enduring and near-mythical status attained by places like Ellis Island in New York, Canada’s Pier 21 in Halifax, or Australia’s settlement by exconvicts are important components of each nation’s development and psyche. Countries have also encouraged labor recruitment through programs such as the Bracero Program, which recruited Mexican laborers for work in the United States, or Germany’s “guest-worker” program, which was created to supply German industry with low-cost labor. In both cases, the respective governments found that these temporary migrations institutionalized and encouraged long-term and permanent migrations, with businesses continuing to be dependent on immigrant workers.

We can make broad distinctions in international flows between developed-world countries, between the developing and developed world, and between developing-world countries. Of these three sets of flows, flows between developed countries tend to be dominated by professionals: those that are able to move with relative ease between countries and whose skills are in demand in the destination countries. Flows between developed countries account for relatively few international movements given immigration policies in receiving countries that impose restrictions on international moves. International migration from the developing to the developed world is also tightly controlled, with importing countries often placing a yearly limit on the number of entrants and a preference on highly skilled or educated entrants, as well as allowing entry under humanitarian or family reunification guidelines. Principal receiving countries include the United States, Canada, Australia, western Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia,⁴ where higher wages and increased opportunities serve as immigrant “pulls,” while sending countries include a long list of origins. In the United States, over 1.052 million immigrants received permanent residency in 2007,⁵ with major immigrant origins including China (76,655), Columbia (33,187), Cuba (29,104), the Dominican Republic (28,024), El Salvador (21,127), and Guatemala (17,908). International movement between developing countries is a third major flow. Although somewhat less restrictive, move-

ment between countries in the developing world is still often controlled by the receiving country, with most flows characterized by laborers.

THEORIES OF IMMIGRATION

As articulated by Douglas Massey and colleagues, immigration is a complex demographic and economic process,⁶ with a number of theories advanced to explain international migration. We can typically distinguish between those factors that initiate international migration and those that perpetuate immigration. Notwithstanding the diversity of these theories, no single theoretical viewpoint captures all the nuances of international population movements. In part, this is because national policies have created and influenced immigration flows, either intentionally or unintentionally. Consequently, immigration must be set within the broader context of national policies that promote or impede it.

Similar to internal migration, *neoclassical economic theory* focuses on macro-level factors such as employment opportunities.⁷ Essentially, this theory argues that international migration occurs because of imbalances in the supply and demand for labor, with the theory arguing that wages will be higher in countries experiencing a growing economy and scarcity of labor as compared to slower-growth economies. Because of the difference in wage rates, individuals will immigrate in search of higher wages. Doing so will increase the labor pool in the high-wage country, and as supply increases, wages will drop. For immigrant-sending countries, the decrease in the pool of labor will push wages up. Ultimately, the theory argues that wages will equalize between the two countries as the labor pools are changed. Similar to the faults noted in the discussion of internal migration, international migration is not free, but restricted by immigration law and policy. For sending countries, the absolute size of the change in the labor market due to emigration is small, with no apparent impact on wages for those remaining.

The *New Economics of Migration Theory* expands the discussion of macro determinants of migration to include such things as the volatility of local agricultural markets, access to credit, and remittances.⁸ In this case, emigration is the result of household decision making, with emigration allowing diversification of income sources. That is, international migration reflects family choice to spread the risks of migration. Oftentimes, the family will pay the travel expenses of the migrant in exchange for the migrant sending money home, diversifying income sources for the family.

The *dual-labor market theory* argues that international migration is determined by the labor needs of economies in the destination cities or countries, focusing on shortages in the labor markets of receiving countries and high- and

low-status positions, with immigrants frequently filling low-status (and low-income) job positions.⁹ The theory argues that the employment market can be subdivided into two sectors: the primary sector, which employs the highly educated and supports them with high wages, and the secondary labor market, which is characterized by low wages, unstable working conditions, and limited advancement. Frequently, secondary-sector positions are filled by the young or racial and ethnic minority groups. However, with slowing fertility rates and legislation that has created greater equity in the workplace for all groups, shortages have emerged, which are filled by immigrants from the developing world.

The *world systems theory* suggests that the main cause of emigration is globalization. With globalization, the world has divided into a set of developed and developing countries, with developing countries dependent on the developed world for investment and economic growth. The search for land, materials, and labor as developed countries invest in the developing world results in changes to production and pushes the unskilled out of jobs and off the land in the developing world, forcing international migration. The theory also proposes that flows will tend to be country-specific, with the developing world sending immigrants to the developed-world countries with whom they have the greatest contact, often the outcome of colonial ties.

Theories that discuss the perpetuation of international migrations include *social network theory*. Social network theory focuses on individual decisions, linking immigrants with family, friends, and the larger immigrant community between the origin and destination countries. In this way, continued immigration is promoted, as individuals in the destination are able to relay information back home regarding job opportunities while also providing links to accommodation and a broader community within which to interact. By doing so, the linkages and immigrant organizations decrease the costs of immigration (both physical and psychological) and increase the potential success of international migration.

Myrdal's *cumulative causation theory* argues that immigration alters the social context in which individual immigration decisions are made and makes further international migrations more likely.¹⁰ In the destination, the entry of immigrants into particular occupations may reinforce the demand for other immigrants to fill similar jobs. More generally, immigrants send income and knowledge of job opportunities and housing home, perpetuating immigrant flows from an origin to a destination. Income remittances in particular are important. Remittances act as an income stream for the sending family and may further encourage international migration to increase and diversify income sources.

Finally, *institutional theory* suggests that ongoing international migration is the result of informal and illegal migration and organizations that facilitate or

promote migration. Various institutions or groups may facilitate international migration by providing services, including securing housing or jobs. Illegal immigration may also be promoted as organizations smuggle people across borders.

THE IMPACTS OF IMMIGRATION

The United States has long defined itself as being a nation of immigrants, with immigrants arriving in search of economic opportunity, political or religious freedom, or to reunite with their families. Despite the long history of immigration, public attention has increasingly focused on the size, origins, and implications of large-scale immigration.¹¹ Over the past fifty years, polling has charted increasing opposition to immigrants within the United States. Ongoing and emerging debates reflect associated concerns: How will immigrants assimilate or incorporate themselves within the host society? How will the larger society be changed?

Discussions of the costs and benefits of immigration reflect a long-running debate found within most countries that receive a large number of immigrants, with answers cutting across economic, social, fiscal, and demographic perspectives.¹² Undoubtedly, public awareness is higher in those locations that are primary magnets for immigrants, including California, New York, Illinois, Florida, and New Jersey. But concerns with the impacts and number of immigrants are not limited to these areas. Recent reports, including the 2000 US census and the ACS, indicate that the foreign-born are increasingly found in areas that have not been traditional destinations for immigrants.¹³ States such as Iowa that could hardly be described as immigrant magnets are now counting larger foreign-born populations where the new arrivals frequently fill low-paying or unskilled positions, and their presence forces communities to deal with issues of immigration and assimilation that had previously been unheard of in small-town America.

Economic Impacts

Economically, the bulk of evidence indicates that immigration has a rather minimal but positive impact on economic well-being.¹⁴ Immigration most directly benefits the immigrants themselves, making them financially better off in their host country relative to their origin, even though they tend to earn less on average than the native-born in their host country and are predominately found in low-paying, low-skilled positions within the workforce. Domestically, immigrants increase the supply of labor, boost production and demand for goods, and have commonly been regarded as a potent short-term policy tool,

allowing skill shortages in the labor force to be alleviated quickly. Although the economy as a whole may gain, immigration may also create losers, including the less skilled native-born, who may compete directly with immigrants in the job market and who may see wages fall. Again, however, the available evidence suggests that immigration has only a small negative impact upon the wage and labor opportunities of the native-born. In the formal sector, minimum-wage laws, unions, and low unemployment rates have ensured “wage stickiness,” although workers in the informal economy or in regions that receive large numbers of immigrants may be somewhat more disadvantaged.

Fiscally, the debate on whether immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits is contentious and complex. In an analysis of the impacts of immigration on US society, the National Research Council (NRC)¹⁵ found that immigrant-headed households make small positive contributions to federal tax revenues.¹⁶ At the state and local levels, the picture is less clear, with net fiscal burdens reported in immigrant-receiving states such as New Jersey and California. In other words, the NRC calculated that immigrants receive more in services than they pay in taxes in these two states. However, the increased burden is explained by the fact that both states are important immigrant destinations with large numbers of immigrants. In turn, immigrant households tend to have a greater number of school-age children and therefore receive more transfers. Likewise, immigrant households tend to have lower incomes and less property, so they consequently pay lower taxes. Over generations, however, descendants of immigrants may contribute far more in taxes than their parents received. Fiscal burdens may be particularly acute at the local scale. In Phoenix, Arizona, the burgeoning Hispanic population, many of whom are believed to be illegal, has exerted pressures on institutions such as local school boards, hospitals, and libraries, even as their presence has been acknowledged to sustain the state economy.¹⁷ If the state or federal government does not reimburse local costs, the burden would fall to local taxpayers, a situation in which it is easy to imagine increased calls for immigration control.

Long-term projections of the fiscal costs and benefits of immigration reveal that they balance over the lifetime of immigrant residency. Immigrants, like the native-born, pose greater burdens during childhood and old age, owing to the costs of education and health care. During their labor force years, they tend to make a net fiscal contribution. Fiscal burden also varies by origin and education, with European and North American immigrants making a net fiscal contribution. On the other hand, immigrants from Central and South America create a fiscal burden owing to lower incomes, lower levels of education, and more school-age children than other households. Importantly, it must be realized that education and service provision to the poorly educated or low-income native-born pose similar fiscal burdens. In other words, the question of fiscal burden is not just an “immigrant” issue.

Of course, the discussion so far has focused on the economic impacts for receiving countries. But what about those countries that send immigrants? As an outcome of globalization, international migration provides the labor, with workers pushed out of their home countries by a lack of economic opportunities and pulled by opportunities elsewhere. As an economic lifeline, money is often sent home to family and used for consumption and new housing. These remittances have grown in economic importance, with international migrants sending home an estimated \$318 billion in 2007. India (\$27 billion), China (\$26 billion), Mexico (\$25 billion), and the Philippines (\$17 billion) are the leading beneficiaries of these capital flows.¹⁸ Unofficially, the dollar value is probably much larger when money is sent home directly with family or friends or through unregulated transfer agents. In relative terms, small countries benefit the most, with some increasing their national incomes by more than 20 percent. Egypt, for example, receives more from money sent home from its migrant laborers than it does from ships transiting the Suez Canal.¹⁹ The United States is the largest remittance source (estimated at \$42 billion being sent out of the country in 2006), with the balance of the developed world, along with oil-producing countries, the other main sources for these remittances.

Demographic Impacts

Demographically, immigration has frequently been touted as a cure to an aging population. As noted earlier, most developed countries have entered a period of below-replacement fertility. Economic development associated with urbanization, industrialization, economic uncertainty, and the welfare state has translated into a reduced need or desire for children. The result is an increasing proportion of elderly and a decreasing share of the population aged fifteen years and younger. In effect, we are seeing a fundamental change in the age distribution of the population away from the traditional “pyramidal” structure, with a large share of the population concentrated in the younger age groups, toward a “rectangular” age structure with a more even distribution of the population across ages (see discussion of population pyramids in chapter 3). In response, immigration could be used to offset the demographic implications of an aging population if young immigrants were targeted as the most desirable entrants.

Clearly, immigration has a profound impact on the demographic structure of the United States, with immigration a significant contributor in the country’s population growth, which is expected to total 438 million by 2050.²⁰ Moreover, the relatively high fertility levels in the United States reflect higher fertility among minority groups, particularly Hispanics.²¹ Most studies, including those of the NRC, have found that immigration merely postpones or alleviates the onset of an aging population, although it is likely that immigration has allowed the United States to maintain relatively high fertility levels. In part, family

reunification offsets the desired demographic effects as young adults sponsor their parents. Moreover, the dynamics of demographic change now underway within the developed world imply that the population will continue to statistically age in the coming decades.

The most visible impact of immigration will be changes to the cultural, racial, or ethnic composition of receiving countries as immigrants account for an increasing share of population, issues that most developed countries are already grappling with. Between 1990 and 2000, about one-third of the growth of population in the United States was due to immigration, with the number of foreign-born exceeding 31 million. Over the longer term, the share of non-Hispanic whites is projected to decline from 67 percent to 47 percent by 2050, while the shares of Hispanics and Asians will grow, reflecting both immigration and higher fertility levels within these groups.²² Socially, opposition to immigration has frequently focused on the perceived cultural and racial differences between immigrants and the native-born, but this raises debates associated with whether the receiving country has one culture or many. In Europe or Canada, the answer to this question is simple but reflects near-polar ends of the spectrum. Most European states see their borders encompassing a single nationality, hence the concern with increasing numbers of foreigners and their “dilution” of national identity. Canada, on the other hand, is a multicultural society, an agenda that has been fostered and actively promoted by the federal government for the past thirty years. In the United States, the answer is less clear but no less important. The unified vision of the “melting pot” contrasts with the reality of immigration. Immigration to the United States may have altered impressions of culture, but it does not necessarily suppress the cultural identity of immigrants, making the United States a *de facto* multicultural society as well. Even among groups that have been long-term residents of the United States, such as Germans or Scandinavians, their cultural heritage is embraced, and the identity of these groups has left lingering impressions upon the cultural and economic landscape.²³

IMMIGRATION POLICY

The demographic realities of low fertility and an aging population mean that European countries are faced with a labor force crisis. Given the difficulties and limitations associated with fertility policies as discussed in chapter 4, increased immigration may be the only option for meeting Europe’s employment requirements, but it is fraught with political, social, and cultural problems. Increased nativism in Europe and the United States, along with the emergence of anti-immigrant violence and right-wing political parties that have cultivated a fear

of foreigners, serve as a warning bell. In response, Europe has moved to limit immigration, but attempts to restrict it have often led to increased “backdoor” immigration through family reunification policies, illegal immigration, or seasonal-worker admission. The failure to control immigration means that European societies must be prepared to transform themselves into immigrant destinations, something that most states are unwilling to do at this time. In part, doing so raises questions regarding the integration of immigrants into the social, economic, and political structures of the host nations. The problem for all of these states is that they must define who “belongs” within their borders. In Europe, immigration has not provided a foundation as it has in North America, and the cultural shift involved in moving from labor exporter to labor importer is huge. Consequently, immigration debates are part of the much broader debate of national identity that pervades the economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of a society.

Traditional countries of immigration, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, cannot sit idle and hope that the emergent storms over immigration and national identity will pass them by. Fueled by shifts in immigration sources, policies, and rights in the past three decades, welfare reform in the late 1990s, California’s Proposition 187 (barring immigrants from various social and medical services), Arizona’s Proposition 200 (barring illegal immigrants from voting or seeking public assistance), cases of increased nativism, illegal immigration control, and the Balkanization debate provided evidence of the potential for public concern with legal and illegal immigration alike. Up until the 1960s, immigration to the United States and Canada was shaped by white Anglo-Saxon images of society. Liberalization of immigration policies during the 1960s broadened the scope of immigration, but injected new racial and ethnic tensions into the debate, even as they were defined as white versus black differences. But such debates cannot be cast in a “black versus white” or an “us versus them” context. In both Canada and the United States, there is a growing population that identifies with a mixed racial or ethnic heritage, and intermarriage between racial or ethnic groups is increasing. In the 2000 US census, for example, Americans could choose to identify themselves by more than one race, and responses pointed to an increasingly diverse population. Selling immigration’s humanitarian dimension is an alternative option, albeit one that is unlikely to meet with widespread success.

The recent history of European immigration policies and the pressure of domestic and international changes suggest that there is relatively little room for states to maneuver immigration policy. Countries might pursue economic development in origin countries, a policy that the European Union is pursuing in North Africa and which is roughly equivalent to the *maquiladoras* that line the Mexico–US border. Over the short term, however, the economic restructur-

ing generated by such policies may actually increase immigration as redundant workers search for employment. As a second option, states are increasingly reliant upon the removal of political rights among immigrants, flying in the face of decades of advances. Most nations, including France, Germany, and the United States, are now advancing a mix of agendas that remove or reduce access to welfare services, including education and health care; reduce employment options; and reduce programs meant to block the integration of immigrants and discourage permanent settlement. Recent policy shifts in the United States highlight this trend. In order to regain control of its borders, the United States has moved to restrict access and, in doing so, has realized that this requires a rollback of civil and human rights for noncitizens. Legislation, including welfare reform and California's Proposition 187 (see later in this chapter), either removed or proposed to remove rights and protections given to US immigrants. An additional example is the policy of interdicting Haitian immigrants on the ocean to prevent them from reaching the United States and initiating the refugee process.²⁴

Removal of the right to work is particularly problematic. Unless the right to work is withdrawn, curtailing the rights of immigrants is unlikely to reduce immigration, since there is little evidence that demonstrates that the provision of social services is an important reason for movement. Instead, employment and income are the main determinants: As long as countries demand low-cost labor, immigration will continue. As the native-born shun low-paying, manual-labor positions, there is a demand for inexpensive and illegal labor. Moreover, removing the right to work is hardly a deterrent, given the role of the underground economy and illegal immigration in the developed world. It is estimated, for example, that 50 to 80 percent of US farm workers are illegal immigrants, with an annual entry of an estimated 150,000 illegal immigrants into the United States.²⁵

Given the experiences of the United States and other countries, closing the doors to immigrants is unlikely to stem the flow given the strength of pull and push factors in both origin and destination areas. Realizing that state control over immigration is limited and incomplete, labor unions have, in the past, voiced *support* for more open and moderate immigration policies.²⁶ Fearing that immigrants would compete with the native-born for employment and reduce wages, unions have traditionally sought to limit immigrant numbers, making the current involvement of unions in the immigration debate a seemingly strange bedfellow. In recent years, however, unions in Europe and America have supported liberalized immigration policies and courted immigrant workers as a way of protecting workers and labor standards for all. In the United States, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) withdrew their support for employer sanctions and called for an

amnesty of illegal immigrants in February 2000, a call that was repeated in the spring of 2009 as discussions moved forward on President Obama's proposed revamping of US immigration law.²⁷ Similarly, one proposal that would benefit the agricultural sector would increase the number of seasonal workers in the United States from forty thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand per year, a measure that has been supported by some unions since these workers would be represented by unions.²⁸ In Los Angeles, unions have focused their organization efforts on immigrant workers, allowing them to add members faster than anywhere else in the United States.²⁹ Promoting moderate labor immigration is seen as one way to protect workers, ensure a safe work environment, reduce illegal immigration, and maintain union strength at a time of dwindling membership.

A Short History of US Immigration Policy

For much of the first century of its existence, US immigration was largely unrestricted, and it wasn't until 1875 that the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had authority over immigration.³⁰ Over subsequent years, the number of immigrants entering the country gradually increased, reaching a peak in the decade immediately before World War I (figure 7.1) While both the Depression of the 1930s and World War II reduced the number of immigrants entering the country on a yearly basis, numbers increased in the postwar era, surpassing one million entrants in the early 1990s as well as after 2000.

In large part, the variations in immigrant numbers over the years represent both changing economic conditions and changing immigration policy. The years between 1875 and 1920 witnessed the increasing regulation of entry into the United States, with regulations excluding those with criminal records, diseases, or unacceptable moral standards; anarchists; and particular groups based on origin or nationality. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act represented the first of several acts that restricted Asian immigration, with the Japanese excluded in 1907 and all Asians excluded in 1917. During the 1920s, national quotas were established that favored northern and western Europeans in an effort to maintain the racial and ethnic mixture in the United States. The Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 was the first to place quantitative restrictions on immigration, with annual immigration from a country limited to 3 percent of the number of foreign-born from that country that resided in the United States in 1910, when northern and western Europeans dominated the country. In effect, the law shifted immigrant origins away from regions that were not favored, including southern and eastern Europe, emphasizing instead an Anglo-Saxon immigration agenda. Interestingly, the quotas did not place restrictions on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Canadians were seen as no different from the existing American population stock, and immigration from Cen-

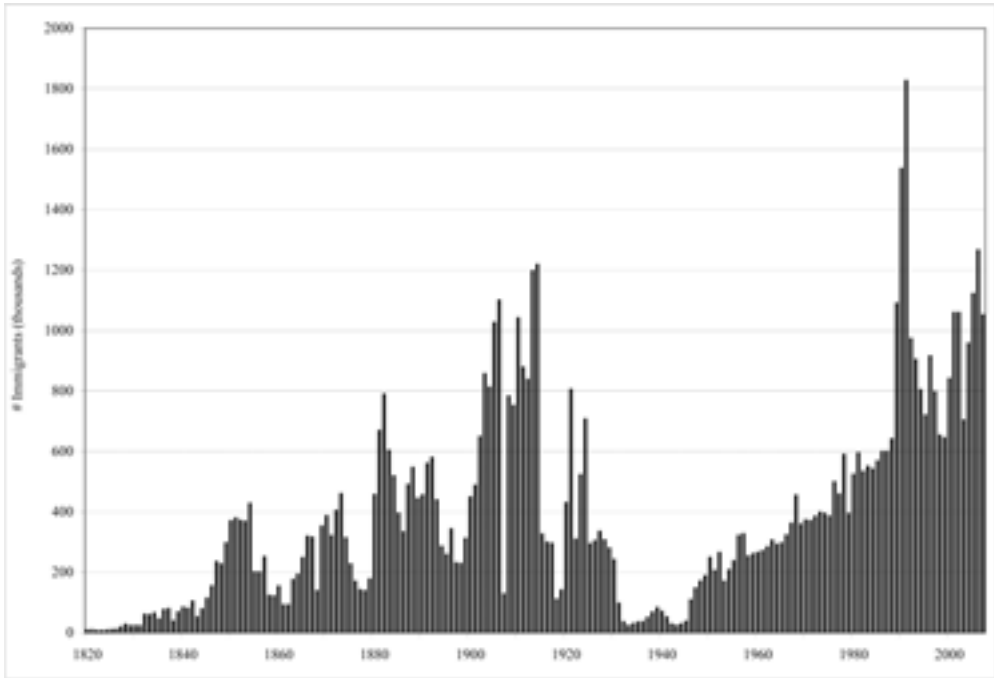


Figure 7.1 Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status: 1820–2005.

Source: Based on *2007 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, Office of Immigration Statistics.

tral and South America was not deemed a problem. In subsequent years, quotas were made increasingly tight, altering either the percentage or pushing back the base year, further reducing the number of immigrants allowed entry. But when restrictions were imposed on immigration, illegal immigrants were created. In response, Congress established the US Border Patrol in 1924, charged initially with apprehending illegal entrants.

The blatantly racist restrictions within American immigration policy were not removed until 1952 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The act introduced a preference system for those with needed skills. For the first time, limits were placed on the number of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere and a preference system was set in place, with priority given to family members of American citizens and permanent residents as well as those with needed job skills. The quota system was finally lifted in the 1965 revisions to the Immigration and Nationality Act and was replaced with hemispheric limits, having a significant impact upon the nature of American society. Although it was unintended, the family preference category dramatically shifted immigration away from traditional origins such as Europe toward new origins in Central and South America and Asia. Prior to 1965, Europeans represented the majority of immigrants arriving in the United States, but this group repre-

sented just 11.5 percent in 2007. Instead, approximately 41 percent of all immigrants were from the Americas by 2007, with Mexico representing the single largest origin (13.6 percent).³¹ Totalling 34 percent of all immigrant arrivals, Asians were the second-largest group. Minor adjustments were made to the Immigration and Nationality Act through the 1970s and 1980s, a period marked by an increasing awareness of the scope of illegal immigration, with the Immigration Act of 1990 being the last major revision. Although family reunification remained a significant component, the act increased the number of immigrants admitted on a yearly basis and expanded the number of visas given on economic grounds to 140,000 per fiscal year (tables 7.1 and 7.2).³²

In framing US immigration policy, US legislators have attempted to balance competing economic, social, and humanitarian goals. It is, for example, argued that a large illegal immigrant workforce is not beneficial for the United States. But competing interests have led to policy gridlock, a fragmented policy agenda, and unanticipated consequences, resulting in an emerging gap between the *goals* of national immigration policy and the *results* of those policies.³³ In her analysis of US immigration, Kitty Calavita argues that historical and current policies are best summarized as a triad of opposites between employers and workers, between an economy that needs unskilled workers and the political class that is unwilling to confront the conflicts this creates, and between human rights and border control.³⁴

Illegal Immigration

Most developed countries have instituted restrictions and barriers to immigration and recast immigration as a national security issue. But, if a country tries to close the door to immigration, will it succeed? Experiences from Europe and the United States, including the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and recent clampdowns on illegal border crossings, suggest not. In fact, restricting legal immigration may only serve to increase illegal immigration or other backdoor immigration through family reunification programs, illegal immigration, or seasonal-worker admission.

Beyond policy, enforcement also bears upon the presence and number of illegals within the country. Given the robust economic conditions and low unemployment rates of the late 1990s, reports suggested that the then–Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was no longer pursuing or prosecuting illegal aliens once inside the United States. Since 9/11, concerns with terrorism have led the Department of Homeland Security to focus on restrictions to entry into the United States and to increasingly crack down on illegal residents in the country through a series of high-profile raids on businesses.³⁵ The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) branch of Homeland Security highlights their successes on the Internet.³⁶

Table 7.1. Class of Admission of Legal Immigrants to the United States, Fiscal Years 2006–2008

	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total, all immigrants	1,266,129		1,052,415		1,107,126	
New arrivals	446,881	35.3	431,368	41.0	466,558	42.1
Adjustments	819,248	64.7	621,047	59.0	640,568	57.9
Preference immigrants	381,310	30.1	357,076	33.9	394,272	35.6
Family-sponsored immigrants	222,229	17.6	194,900	18.5	227,761	20.8
Unmarried sons/daughters of US citizens	25,432	2.0	22,858	2.2	26,173	2.4
Spouses of alien residents	112,051	8.8	86,151	8.2	103,456	9.3
Married sons/daughters of US citizens	21,491	1.7	20,611	2.0	29,373	2.7
Siblings of US citizens	63,255	5.0	65,280	6.2	68,859	6.2
Employment-based immigrants	159,081	12.6	162,176	15.4	166,511	15.0
Priority workers	36,960	2.9	26,697	2.5	36,678	3.3
Professionals with advanced degrees	21,911	1.7	44,162	4.2	70,046	6.3
Skilled workers, professionals, other workers	89,922	7.1	85,030	8.1	48,903	4.4
Special immigrants	9,539	0.8	5,481	0.5	9,524	0.9
Employment creation	749	0.0	806	0.0	1,360	0.1
Diversity	44,471	3.5	42,127	4.0	41,761	3.8
Immediate relatives of US citizens	580,348	45.8	494,920	47.0	488,483	44.0
Spouses	339,843	26.8	274,358	26.1	265,671	24.0
Children	120,064	9.5	103,828	9.9	101,342	9.2
Parents	120,441	9.5	116,734	11.1	121,470	11.0
Refugees	99,609	7.9	54,942	5.2	90,030	8.1
Asylees	116,845	9.2	81,183	7.7	76,362	6.7
Other immigrants	43,546	3.4	22,167	2.1	16,218	1.5

Source: 2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.

Table 7.2. Immigrants Admitted to the United States by Selected Country of Birth, Top Ten Origins, Fiscal Years 2006–2008

Rank	2006			2007			2008		
	Country	Number	%	Country	Number	%	Country	Number	%
—	All Countries	1,266,127	100.0	All Countries	1,052,415	100.0	All Countries	1,107,126	100.0
1	Mexico	173,749	13.7	Mexico	148,640	14.1	Mexico	189,989	17.2
2	China	87,307	6.9	China	76,655	7.3	China	80,271	7.3
3	Philippines	74,606	5.9	Philippines	72,596	6.9	India	63,352	5.7
4	India	61,369	4.8	India	65,353	6.2	Philippines	54,030	4.9
5	Cuba	45,614	3.6	Columbia	33,187	3.2	Cuba	49,500	4.5
6	Columbia	43,144	3.4	Haiti	30,405	2.9	Dominican Rep.	31,879	2.9
7	Dominican Rep.	38,068	3.0	Cuba	29,104	2.8	Vietnam	31,497	2.8
8	El Salvador	31,782	2.5	Vietnam	28,691	2.7	Columbia	30,213	2.8
9	Vietnam	30,691	2.4	Dominican Rep.	28,024	2.7	Korea	26,666	2.4
10	Jamaica	24,976	2.0	Korea	22,405	2.1	Haiti	26,007	2.3

Source: 2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.



Figure 7.2 Caution: A Roadside Sign in San Diego.

This sign warns motorists on busy Interstate 5 of the potential for people, including women and children, to be on the highway, posted in response to illegal immigrants' entering the United States in this area and escaping custody.

Source: Author's photo.

Policy Responses to Illegal Immigration

Ultimately, the imbalance between policy goals and realities may engender greater hostility toward immigrants, placing increased pressure on the government to restrict immigration. In 1986, for example, 1,615,854 illegal aliens were apprehended along the US–Mexico border, and aliens were brazenly entering the country by running directly past immigration agents at border crossings (figure 7.2). Such images provoked fears that the United States had lost control of its borders, and calls for tighter restrictions intensified.

Searching for ways to control immigration and responding to public concerns, legislators moved to restrict immigrant access to welfare and social benefits (seen in California's Proposition 187, Arizona's Proposition 200, and welfare reform in 1996) and to make entry more difficult, exemplified by increased border patrol measures. California's Proposition 187,³⁷ which was designed to remove public funding from all illegal immigrants, polarized immigration viewpoints within the state and pushed local immigration concerns into the national and international spotlight.³⁸ Propelled by the real and perceived

costs posed by illegal immigrants, including welfare (ab)use, criminal activities, and employment costs, California lawmakers attempted to curb the tide of illegal immigration into the state and encourage some illegal immigrants who were already resident to leave. Proposition 187 was designed to exclude illegal immigrants from schools and colleges, deny nonemergency health care to illegal aliens, require the police to verify the legal immigrant status of all people arrested, and require teachers and health care workers to report illegal aliens to the INS. While its provisions did not affect legal immigrants within the state, it nonetheless created an atmosphere in which all people of color, both legal and illegal, became suspect. Internationally, both Mexico and El Salvador expressed concern with Proposition 187, citing human rights violations. More realistically, both were likely concerned with the potential negative economic effects associated with a large number of returning workers.

Passed by public vote in November 1994 with 59 percent of the vote, Proposition 187 received broad-based support throughout the state and revealed the depth of frustration among California's voters with illegal immigration. Shortly afterward, a federal court ruled Proposition 187 to be unconstitutional, citing the fact that immigration was a federal, not state, matter and that federal law requires free public education to all children. The widespread support for Proposition 187 had considerable ethnic and spatial variation, stressing the complexity of the immigration debate and providing insight into public reaction to immigration and anti-immigrant sentiments.³⁹ Ethnic divisions in voting patterns followed expected divisions, with 63 percent of white non-Hispanics voting in support of the proposition. Greater support was found among middle- or upper-income white and Republican voters, expressing a simple anti-immigrant sentiment. African Americans and Asians were moderately likely to support the measure, voting 56 and 57 percent in favor, respectively, while only 31 percent of Hispanics supported Proposition 187. Analysis of the vote at the local scale shows additional variations, with greater support among Hispanic neighborhoods with higher socioeconomic status, suggesting a desire to control illegal immigration and mirroring white, non-Hispanic sentiments. Even in inner-city Hispanic communities, there was a surprising degree of support for the measure.

William Clark, a professor of geography at the University of California, suggested that voter response to Proposition 187 could not be defined simply as nativist or racist reactions, but instead reflected local responses to immigration. Recalling the findings of the NRC, Californians were forced to deal with the real and perceived consequences of immigration locally, where potentially significant (and costly) fiscal effects were more likely to occur.⁴⁰ Thus, Proposition 187 may simply have been a reaction to high immigration levels in the late 1980s, local fiscal implications, and the recession of 1990–1991, which seem-

ingly increased the cost of service provision by the state and local governments. Clark also suggested that the voting behavior placed California's concerns at odds with the national role of the United States as a receiver of immigrants, along with businesses' desire for low-cost labor.⁴¹ A darker implication is raised by George Sanchez, who argued that Proposition 187 presented immigrants as scapegoats for California's economic problems in the early 1990s.⁴²

California is not alone in its concern over illegal immigrants and their fiscal consequences. Arizona is also a frontline state and is also wrestling with a growing illegal population. In response, the electorate passed Proposition 200 in the 2004 elections, barring illegal immigrants from voting or seeking public assistance for state and local benefits that were not federally mandated. Although lawmakers had attempted to avoid the problems associated with California's Proposition 187, Proposition 200 still faces court challenges.⁴³ Even municipalities are enacting restrictionist immigration policies.⁴⁴ Prince William County, a suburb of Washington, D.C., has enacted laws similar to propositions 187 or 200 that aim to limit immigration in the face of large demographic change, including the denial of benefits to individuals who can't prove residency and requiring police to check the immigration status of people who are arrested.

Revisions to welfare in 1996 placed immigration concerns within a national forum. Officially known as The Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act, the act fundamentally altered welfare provision in the United States by cutting money to welfare programs, giving states greater control over spending, and enacting work and duration restrictions to programs. Although its impact upon the native-born was just as significant, welfare reform directly targeted immigrants and their use of programs. Revisions barred most legal immigrants from receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and food stamps, two programs where immigrants received proportionately more benefits than the native-born.⁴⁵ At the time, it was estimated that upwards of five hundred thousand aliens lost their eligibility for SSI. An additional one million were estimated to lose their eligibility to receive food stamps. Aliens legally admitted to the United States after August 22, 1996 (the date revisions took effect) were also barred from federal means-tested programs during their first five years of residency. States were also eligible to bar qualified aliens from receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF),⁴⁶ Medicaid, and Title XX social services that funded, among other programs, childcare and elderly services. Although objecting to provisions restricting eligibility for public benefits, President Clinton signed the bill. In subsequent years, several directives and new bills worked to soften the impact of the restrictions upon immigrants, and many state governments provided additional funding to services.

Perhaps the greatest impact on the number of illegal entrants to the United

States has not been policy and enforcement tools, but the global recession, which started in late 2007. Growth of the illegal population in the United States (and other countries) slowed with the start of the recession, and evidence suggested that the number of illegal immigrants entering the United States dropped dramatically as the recession took hold.⁴⁷ Concurrently, illegal residents already in the United States tended to “stay put,” preferring to ride the recession out by searching for employment in the United States for two broad reasons. First, while the recession severely reduced employment options in the United States, it was also affecting opportunities in their origin countries. Second, individuals would likely not want to risk the dangers of future border crossings given increased border security and the likelihood of apprehension.

The US Border Patrol

Ultimately, the “first line of defense” against illegal entry falls to the US Border Patrol, which works within the Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to detect and prevent the smuggling or entry of illegal aliens into the United States. In response to increasing concerns with the numbers of illegal immigrants entering the country, the Border Patrol increased the scope of its operations beginning in 1994 along the southern border with Mexico, the primary entry point from Central and South America. A series of operations, including Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, Operation Hold-the-Line in El Paso, and Operation Safeguard in Tucson, were meant to control the border in each of these areas by cutting off avenues of illegal entry (figure 7.3). Most operations included a variety of interventions, such as new fencing and use of new technology including infrared scopes, underground sensors, and computer tracking of illegal entrants to deter illegal entry. By USCIS measures, these programs have been highly successful, reducing the number of apprehensions from over 450,000 in 1994, to 284,000 apprehensions in 1997, to 111,515 in 2003 within the San Diego sector alone.⁴⁸ Programs in other sectors reported similar “successes” (table 7.3). While total apprehensions appeared to dip in 2003, they climbed again to over 1.2 million for 2004, 2005, and 2006, suggesting that the desire of individuals to enter the United States illegally had not decreased, despite increased border security.

The reality is that these programs may be somewhat less effective than advertised. While reducing the number of crossing attempts at key locations such as San Diego or El Paso, the deterrence effect of increased surveillance and capture has diverted the streams of illegal aliens to areas that have not received the same degree of attention from the Border Patrol.⁴⁹ Operation Hold-the-Line at El Paso, Texas, for instance, succeeded in reducing local border crossings (i.e., local domestic workers who traveled short distances), but failed to deter long-



Figure 7.3 The US–Mexico Border.

The fence separating the United States and Mexico in San Diego. Would-be illegal immigrants are on the Mexico side, waiting for nightfall, when they will attempt to enter the United States.

Source: Author's photo.

distance, illegal labor migration. Instead, crossings were diverted to Arizona or elsewhere along the border, where the number of apprehensions increased.⁵⁰ The problem is also indirectly seen in the Border Safety Initiative (BSI), a binational program initiated in 1998 between the United States and Mexico. With increasing risk of apprehension in traditionally high-traffic areas, illegal entry has shifted to hazardous areas such as deserts or mountains, where the number of deaths among illegal entrants rose from 44 in 1999 to 207 in 2005.⁵¹ Meant to reduce injuries and fatalities along the southwest border, one of the primary aims of the BSI has been public education with respect to the risks associated with illegal crossings, especially as illegals who are little prepared for the hardships of these locations are forced to cross in remote areas.

In placing additional resources along the border and proposing other policies aimed at controlling illegal immigration, the US government was effectively recasting the immigration debate as a national security issue. These concerns have become dominant themes within the immigration debate. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the potential threat to national security by immigration was further solidified as immigration and border issues were consolidated under the Department of Homeland Security. At the same time, a

Table 7.3. Yearly Border Patrol Apprehensions, Fiscal Years 2002–2008

Border Patrol Sector	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
All Southwest							
San Diego, CA	929,809	905,065	1,139,282	1,171,428	1,072,018	858,722	705,022
El Centro, CA	100,681	111,515	138,608	126,909	142,122	152,459	162,392
Yuma, CA	108,273	92,099	74,467	55,726	61,469	55,881	40,962
Tucson, AZ	42,654	56,638	98,060	138,438	118,537	37,994	8,363
El Paso, TX	333,648	347,263	491,771	439,090	392,104	378,323	317,709
Marfa, TX	94,154	88,816	104,399	122,689	122,261	75,464	30,310
Del Rio, TX	11,392	10,319	10,530	10,536	7,517	5,537	5,390
Laredo, TX	66,985	50,145	53,794	68,510	42,634	22,919	20,761
Rio Grande Valley, TX	82,095	70,521	74,706	75,342	74,843	56,715	43,659
	89,927	77,749	92,947	134,188	110,531	73,430	75,476
All Other Sectors							
Blaine, WA	25,501	26,492	21,113	17,680	17,118	18,065	18,818
Buffalo, NY	1,732	1,308	1,354	1,001	809	749	951
Detroit, MI	1,102	564	671	400	1,517	2,190	3,338
Grand Forks, ND	1,511	2,345	1,912	1,792	1,282	902	961
Havre, MT	1,369	1,223	1,225	754	517	500	542
Houlton, ME	1,463	1,406	986	949	567	486	427
Livermore, CA	432	292	263	233	175	95	81
Miami, FL	4,371	3,565	1,850	117	—	—	—
New Orleans, LA	5,143	5,931	4,602	7,243	6,032	7,121	6,020
Ramey, PR	4,665	5,151	2,889	1,358	3,054	4,018	4,303
Spokane, WA	835	1,688	1,813	1,619	1,436	548	572
Swanton, VT	1,142	992	847	279	185	337	340
	1,736	1,955	2,701	1,935	1,544	1,119	1,283
Total	1,062,270	1,046,422	1,264,232	1,291,142	1,206,457	960,756	791,568

Source: 2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.

coherent and sustainable solution to illegal immigration remains elusive, with the number of illegal immigrants in the United States estimated to be 11.8 million as of 2007.⁵²

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS

Although international migration for economic reasons is well-entrenched, a relatively new form of international movement is reflected in transnationalism.⁵³ Transnationalism can be broadly defined as a process by which immigrants create and maintain social, economic, and political relations through activities linking the origin and destination. This type of international movement highlights the complexity of international migrations and makes transnational migrants inherently different from other immigrants in that while they settle and become incorporated into their new place of residence they simultaneously maintain connections through a variety of social, economic, or political linkages outside the host country and most likely their country of origin. At the international scale, transnational migrants, such as businesspeople who work in one country while their partners and children live in another country, are increasingly common, reflecting economic and personal needs. Oftentimes, residency is determined by life-cycle stage, with transnationals often choosing to live in one country for economic opportunity during prime working years and residing elsewhere for educational purposes or retirement.⁵⁴ More generally, transnational migrants tend to be skilled workers. So-called “astronaut families,” where either one or both parents reside primarily in one country while their children remain in another, can be considered a distinctive form of transnationalism.⁵⁵ In both cases, their relative transience between countries makes it difficult to arrive at reliable estimates of the true magnitude of transnationalism.

CONCLUSION

Both forms of international migration—legal and illegal—are the major determinants of population distribution between countries. Countries are slowly awakening to the realization that immigration policy is truly problematic. Whichever way they turn—either to restrict immigration or to promote particular components of immigration—is not guaranteed to achieve the desired results. Attempts to decrease immigrant flows have proven largely unsuccessful in the face of economic restructuring and globalization. Increasing immigration is problematic in its own way, threatening ethnic, racial, or social instability, while creating a cadre of low-paid workers that would reduce wages and compete for positions with the native-born. Opening the doors may represent a slippery slope that governments would not be able to back away from, with immigration further spiraling beyond

their control. Both measures carry the risk of mixed messages that condone immigration on the one hand while reducing it on the other. Ultimately, the future shape of immigration policy is unclear.

FOCUS: THE “IMMIGRATION GAP”

Over the past hundred years, most governments have attempted to control the movement of populations into and out of their countries, and state governments wrote and rewrote immigration law throughout the later half of the 1900s to reflect emerging economic and demographic needs as well as the reality of the civil rights movement. The United States (and other developed countries) tightly control who enters through various measures including numeric limits on the number of entrants per year and skill qualifications. While many policies appeared to succeed at first, states have found it increasingly difficult to control immigration since the 1980s, with large amounts of illegal immigration. For instance, the number of illegal residents in the United States is estimated to be 11.8 million as of 2007,¹ with as many as 800,000 people entering the country illegally each year, despite the increased attention to border security since 9/11.²

Despite their best attempts to impose tighter entry restrictions and other controls,³ labor-importing states are faced with an immigration control crisis, defined by Wayne Cornelius and his colleagues as the “gap” between immigration control policies and their outcomes. While governments desire to control immigration, the reality is that they have less confidence in their ability to control immigration now than fifteen to twenty years ago. The gap between immigration policy and reality is aided and abetted by three concurrent factors.⁴

First, various domestic factors have lim-

ited the state’s ability to control its borders. For example, programs such as Germany’s guest worker program or the Bracero Program in the United States were meant to be short-term, with workers cycling in and out of the country as needed. The very existence of such programs, however, legitimized and concretized the movement of workers across international borders, connected regions, and created pathways for future immigrants by spreading information about jobs and receiving areas. Existing immigrant communities within the receiving regions have served as anchors for new arrivals, cushioning the stress of relocation. When states have attempted to restrict immigration, these networks maintain flows through illegal immigration and family reunification. Likewise, policies meant to close the border have created permanent residents from temporary workers. Concerned with labor shortages, employers maintained their existing pool of immigrant workers. Workers, on the other hand, feared that they would not be able to return should they leave their host countries. Instead, they remained. Both France and Germany have, at different points in time, declared their borders closed to further immigration, only to see the number of foreign-born increase through family reunification clauses or other “backdoor” immigration routes, including illegal immigration. Similarly, US domestic policies have failed to deter illegal immigration. Nowhere is this inability of policy to deter illegal immigration better illustrated than through the Immigration Re-

form and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which sought exemptions for California's agricultural growers to continue to use undocumented workers at the same time that other employers were required to verify the employment eligibility of workers.

Second, a number of factors from outside the state have contributed to the gap between policy and reality, including globalization and economic restructuring. Globalization opens economies to greater trade and capital flows and increases demands for cheap labor within industrialized countries. Stopping or controlling immigration becomes increasingly hard because of the underlying demand for inexpensive labor. With globalization, employers have shown an increasing insensitivity toward economic fluctuations. That is, employer demand for cheap labor remains strong even in conditions of relatively high unemployment, and employers have been successful in recruiting workers and co-opting state policies for their benefit. Concurrently, population growth and economic restructuring within

labor exporting countries promote economic and social disparities and create a ready pool of labor that encourages emigration. A second exogenous factor is that advances in communications and transportation technology are increasingly accessible to immigrants, aiding the expansion of international migration networks and sustained immigration flows.

Third, the rise of liberalism and the extension of human rights to foreigners within developed countries have further legitimized their position within host countries, hampering state efforts to control immigration. Policies aimed at protecting rights have helped immigrants get into countries (e.g., asylum) as well as remain within the host country. Canada, for instance, has had problems in the administration of its refugee policy,⁵ and Germany's generous asylum policies were seen as a quick and easy way to gain entry. Although some of the rights acquired by the foreign-born in the 1960s and 1970s have been lost through new legislation, they remain a barrier to immigration control.

METHODS, MEASURES, AND TOOLS: COUNTING IMMIGRANTS, ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, AND EMIGRANTS

Many of the measures that were introduced in the previous chapter to measure and quantify internal migration can also be used to quantify immigration. Typically, international movements are simply identified by the number of people moving from a country (emigrants), into a country (immigrants), net immigrants (the difference between immigrants and emigrants), or the number moving between two specific countries. We can also speak of the *immigration rate*

(usually defined as the number of immigrants relative to the population of the receiving country), *emigration rate* (the number of emigrants relative to the population of the sending country), and so forth. Given security and national policy concerns, governments in the developed world have a good count of *legal* immigration into a country at any one point in time, along with information such as the origin country, year of arrival, demographic measures of the im-

migrant (i.e., age, education, family structure), and immigrant type (such as whether they are refugees, or are entering the country to be reunified with a family member, to go to school, or to work).

The problem, however, is that while most countries, and particularly those in the developed world, keep track of the number of immigrants entering the country for permanent residency, relatively little is known about the number of illegal immigrants and the number of emigrants from a country, such is the task of trying to count these individuals, often under very difficult conditions.

COUNTING EMIGRANTS

Estimating the number of emigrants from a country represents the complexity of the task: Which individuals are truly leaving the country? What is the duration that they need to be away and/or the reason they emigrated before being defined as emigrants? The number of emigrants is frequently estimated based on a “residual” method, which defines the number of emigrants as the residual after accounting for the total population resident in a country on census day along with births, deaths, and immigration over a particular interval of time. Very simply, the number of emigrants over the period between t and h can be defined as the following formula.

$$\text{Emigrants } (t, t + h) = \text{total population } (t-h) + \text{births } (t, t + h) + \text{immigrants } (t, t + h) - \text{deaths } (t, t + h)$$

In other words, the known number of immigrants and births over a period $t + h$ is added to the enumerated population at some point in the past (t) minus deaths over the same period.

More complex estimates of the number of emigrants can also be made. Statistics

Canada, for example, provides quarterly estimates of the country’s population, a component of which is an estimation of the number of emigrants. These estimates are based on a number of sources, including data from the Office of Immigration Statistics, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Canadian social welfare programs. The first two sources are used to estimate emigration to the United States, while Canadian social welfare data provides an estimate of emigration to other countries (a major destination for Canadian emigrants) based on withdrawals from the program. Still, a number of further adjustments need to be made, given that there are typically delays in reporting and receiving data files, and that not everyone is covered by the social welfare data that is used.

COUNTING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Given that the total number of illegal immigrants in the United States is assumed to be greater than ten million, with impacts on service provision and labor supply and policies, the federal government is keen to have a robust estimate of their numbers. Arriving at firm estimates of the number of illegal immigrants is, however, difficult, given the reluctance of illegal immigrants to answer surveys and identify themselves, fearful that they may be deported. In the United States, Jeffrey Passel has used a variation of the residual method noted above to estimate the number of illegal immigrants.¹ First, the legally resident foreign-born population is estimated based on admissions from the DHS as well as data on refugees admitted and asylum granted. After allowing for legal temporary migrants and for legal immigrants missed in the census or CPS, an estimate of the illegal population is derived by subtracting the estimated legal

population from the census or CPS figure for the total foreign-born population. This initial estimate of the number of unauthorized migrants counted is then inflated for omissions. In a similar way, estimates based on the US experience suggest that greater than 30 percent of new immigrant adults granted residence in 1996 had previously illegally

entered the United States, with some of these working illegally during their stay in the country.² While it is reassuring to see that these entrants ultimately legalized their status, it also highlights the “immigration gap” discussed elsewhere in this chapter.
