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Media Relations

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UNH Research Finds Socioeconomic Status of Mexican Immigrants on Rise as Total Numbers Decrease

DURHAM, N.H. – As comments about the nature of Mexican immigrants to the United States have flashed in the headlines, new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire finds migration from Mexico to the U.S. dropped more than 50 percent in the last five years and that those migrating tend to have higher socioeconomic status, are older, and are more likely to be women.

“The number of immigrants from Mexico has plunged in recent years,” said Rogelio Sáenz, a policy fellow of Carsey. “And who is coming has also changed. They are better educated, speak better English, are older, less likely to be men and more likely to be U.S. citizens.”

The research uses data from the 2008 and 2013 American Community Surveys to compare the demographic and socioeconomic profiles of Mexican migrants who migrated in the five years prior to each survey. Between the two surveys the volume of migration fell from 1.9 million to 819,000, a drop of 57 percent.

In addition to the decline in migration, Sáenz’s research found the characteristics of Mexican migrants moving to the U.S. have shifted noticeably. Between 2008 and 2012 (compared to 2003-2007) Mexican migrants were more likely to be naturalized citizens, fluent in English, more educated and somewhat less motivated by employment factors. In addition, they are more likely to be people with socioeconomic resources who are fleeing violence in Mexico.

“Immigration reform continues to go unaddressed in the U.S.,” said Sáenz. “Whether this low level of Mexican migration represents a new reality or temporary response to current economic conditions remains an open question, and it is still not clear whether the more favorable socioeconomic standing of the most recent migrants will persist in the future and, if so, whether it will change the way Mexican migrants are commonly viewed in the U.S.”

The full analysis can be found here: <http://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/247/>

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

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