

Pew Hispanic Center
Moderator: Roberto Suro
March 2, 2005
11:00 a.m. EST

OPERATOR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Pew Hispanic Center conference call.

At this time, all lines have been placed on a listen-only mode and the floor will be open for questions following today's presentation.

It is now my pleasure to turn the floor over to your host, Mr. Roberto Suro. Sir, the floor is yours.

ROBERTO SURO, DIRECTOR, PEW HISPANIC CENTER: Thank you and good morning to everyone. My name is Roberto Suro. I'm the Director of the Pew Hispanic Center.

With me on the phone here – he's actually in Mexico City – is Geronimo Gutierrez, the Undersecretary for North America of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I'll give sort of a brief introduction of this study, and then Mr. Gutierrez will have some comments, and then we'll open the floor to your questions.

Let me first of all just say a thanks to the Mexican Foreign Ministry and the Institute for Mexicans in the Exterior, and the Mexican consulates in the seven cities where the survey was taken – took place – for their cooperation allowing us to use the premises of the consulates for the survey.

Having noted that, it's important to say that none of the findings here represent the views of the Mexican government. The entire survey was conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center. We controlled the methodology, the sampling, the questionnaire and all the results. And no Mexican authorities actually took part in any phase of the surveying itself.

The Survey of Mexican Migrants I believe is an unprecedented set of data about the Mexican migrant population in the United States, and particularly that segment of it which seeks identity documents at Mexican consulates.

The sample size here is 4,836 observations, individuals who were interviewed while they were in the process of applying for a consular ID card at Mexican consulates in seven cities – Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Raleigh and Fresno.

The surveying process started last July and was completed a little bit more than a month ago at the end of January of this year. The seven sites for the survey were chosen because they represent cities large and small and medium – several locations of long-time migration and ongoing migration, such as Los Angeles and Fresno, and some places like Raleigh and New York that have relatively new migrations, and some places that are sort of in between.

There's one city – Fresno was chosen because it has a large – the area around Fresno – has a large number of Mexicans who work in agriculture.

Being able to conduct the survey while people were in the process of applying for a matricula and waiting for their paperwork to be processed, and then waiting for their cards to be issued – gave us, in effect, a captive audience. We were able to administer a lengthy questionnaire, much longer than one could in a telephone survey, and collect a very large number of observations.

The survey was either self-administered – people filled out a written questionnaire if they wanted to and if they could – or if they preferred, an interviewer read the survey to them and marked down the answers.

This was a purposive sample, in that we set out to get the maximum number of observations of a specific segment of a population. It wasn't a random sample, in that we didn't set specific parameters that we were targeting, as one

does in some kind of public opinion and telephone surveys, typically where you're looking for X many people of a certain age and education range, et cetera.

We're confident that the sample is representative of a certain segment of the Mexican migrant population. All the people in the sample were, of course, Mexican nationals. All of them, as I said, were applying for a matricula when they were interviewed.

The sample is heavy with young people – 48 percent are between the ages of 18 and 29 – and it's also heavy with people who are recently arrived, those 43 percent here for less than five years. But having said that, there is a mix of older age ranges in the people who have been here longer.

One question that has arisen is, can this be portrayed as a survey of undocumented migrants in the United States? The answer to that is that the act of applying for a matricula itself is not evidence of immigration status. The appeal and utility of a matricula to legal immigrants who have access to other kinds of documents is a subject of debate.

What we do know is that 53 percent of the sample – that comes out to 2,566 individuals – said that they had no photo ID of any kind issued by a U.S. government agency.

We did not specifically ask people directly whether they were here undocumented, or what their legal status was specifically.

But of those who said – that sample of people who said they did not have any kind of photo ID issued by a government agency in the U.S. is a rich number of people who can – a sample can be examined separately.

One of the distinctive characteristics there is that 80 percent of the respondents who have been here in the United States for two years or less said they didn't have a photo ID. Seventy-five percent said that they had been – who had been here less than five years – said they had no photo ID.

These numbers conform with estimates based by U.S. researchers and by the Mexican Statistical Agency itself, on what the recent flow of migrants has been in terms of their legal status. The calculations both, with the exception (ph) of Mexican Statistical Agency and from scholars here is that about 80 percent or more of the flow over about the last 10 years has been of people who were added to the undocumented population here eventually. Some may have entered legally, but eventually went into undocumented status.

And we know that the overall sample conforms with our estimates of what the undocumented population looks like.

This kind of survey of Mexican migrants has never been done on this scale before, certainly not in the United States. Other major surveys have relied primarily on sampling in Mexico. Probably the best example of that is the Mexican Migration Project, which is now at Princeton – a very excellent data set. But in contrast, it was gathered over the course of a decade, and mostly in Mexico.

There's a great deal of demographic information about this population, which will be the subject of a series of reports. Some of the basics on income, education, employment and marital status, et cetera, are presented here and are available by region and cities in the U.S. for the first time.

These consulates are located in cities, but they draw people from a surrounding area.

There are some very significant comparisons between traditional and new settlement areas, clearly indicating that there are different kinds of migrant streams that have different impacts on public policy in those areas.

Just to summarize, those findings in a traditional settlement area like Los Angeles, which has an old but ongoing flow – about half of the people surveyed have children in the U.S. public schools. By comparison, the new settlement areas like Raleigh and New York, where a fairly sparse Mexican population is growing very quickly, one quarter of the respondents said they had children in U.S. public schools.

What we see really are two different kinds of streams – a more mature stream with more complete families, and developing streams with more single males.

And another broad point here is that there is a mix of labor and family reunification evident in these respondents, in terms of their forms of migration. We're used to thinking about these two as sort of distinct kinds of migration, but they seem very much intertwined in this sample.

We have virtually full employment among all the respondents, and there's very good detail on what industries they work in, in this report. And it's interesting how they match the economies of the cities where they were surveyed.

At the same time, very extensive family networks. Forty-five percent of the respondents have six or more relatives in the U.S., aside from their spouse and children. Even the most newly-arrived migrants have extensive family networks here. And among those who've been in the United States just for five years or less, 78 percent said they had relatives. And more than a third of those recent arrivals said they had six or more relatives, aside from family – spouses and children here.

Let me go on now to some matters of immigration policy.

The survey asked four questions about immigration policy. It probed views on both temporary programs and of permanent legalization program. And the answers, when we asked the respondents if they would participate in either a temporary or a permanent program, were very much the same. About four-to-one said they would. And there are almost identical responses.

The appeal of a legalization program is fairly predictable. We know that the 1986 legalization programs had tremendous appeal and generated a very large response among Mexican migrants.

We probed further on the question of temporary programs. We asked whether relatives and friends in Mexico would participate in a temporary worker program here. And the positive responses came in at even a higher margin, about six-to-one.

We asked whether participants would – whether respondents would participate in a savings program where their income went into a bank in the U.S., but earned interest, but could only be withdrawn if they returned to Mexico. The responses were – the positive responses – were lower, but still at a margin of two-to-one a very substantially positive response.

This data suggests that a large part of this population is open to the possibility of a program, which requires a return to Mexico. The devil is in the details, of course, in any kind of immigration policy. But certainly, there is an eagerness for something, including possibly a temporary worker program.

That finding seems to conflict with another important finding in this survey. We asked the respondents how long they intended to stay. And the questionnaire presented a list of options, from one to six months, six months to a year, one to two years, et cetera. And at the bottom of the list, there were two other options: “mientras pueda,” which is, as long as I can; or “por toda la vida” – for the rest of my life.

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents said they would – picked one of the options of five years or less, in terms of their intended stay. And those responses were especially strong among the young and the recently arrived.

But 42 percent picked “mientras pueda” – as long as I can. It's a phrase that could be interpreted as, you know, as long as the fates allow, as long as God allows, as long as family allows, as long as it's right to be here. And 17 percent said they would stay for the rest of their lives.

The intention to remain very clearly follows a gradient of age and time in the country, in that the older somebody is, the more likely they're to pick one of the long-term options. And the longer somebody's been here, they're more likely to pick one of the long-term options.

Having said that, though, even among the very young, recent arrivals, many come with the intention to stay here for a long time.

This suggests that this population has a variety of views about its tenure here, and that those views could shape responses to changes in immigration policy.

Some – especially among the young and the newly arrived – might eagerly participate in a temporary program and return. Among those who have been here longer and are better established and have children here, et cetera, my well be looking for a program that gives them legal status of some kind, and would prefer that to life in the shadows, obviously. But this older and more mature population has intentions to stay here, if it can.

I think with that, I'll – there's a lot more in this report, and a lot more to come from this survey in the future, but I'll live it at that and turn over the microphone to Geronimo Gutierrez. Again, he's the Undersecretary for North America at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Gutierrez, good morning and welcome.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ, UNDERSECRETARY FOR NORTH AMERICA, MEXICAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Good morning, Roberto. Buenos dias to everybody. Good morning.

We are glad to participate in this telephone press conference.

Allow me first to start by thanking Roberto Suro and the Pew Hispanic Center for their kind invitation to participate in this morning event.

For more than a year now, we have worked closely with Roberto Suro's team, in order to facilitate the survey's fieldwork within the premises of our consulates, as he mentioned, in Los Angeles, in New York, in Chicago, Atlanta and Dallas, Raleigh and Fresno.

Let me go first to the – try to answer the question, why are we doing this, why we decided to go ahead with this?

In collaborating with the Pew Hispanic Center, the ministry has pursued, in essence, three main objectives or goals. The first one is, obviously, to allow an important segment of the Mexican population – in this case in the United States – the opportunity to express their points of view on issues that affect their daily lives. Many issues – obviously migration – but also consular services, remittances, et cetera.

Related to this objective, obviously, and a second point, we want to enrich, really, the formulation of policy in Mexico, especially with regards, or based on empirical evidence, that in this case comes from a prestigious institution and public opinion source (ph) such as the Pew Hispanic Center.

And thirdly, we want – and I think that it is in the interests of both countries – that to promote an objective discussion on migration flows between both countries, try to put as much information – objective and non-biased information – available to everybody.

The role of the Mexican government was simply to fulfill data access to our consulate network. Needless to say, we – when we accepted and we decided to collaborate with the Pew, we did not know in advance the result ahead of time. And as Mr. Suro has stated, the formulation of the questions and the final selection of those who were included on the survey was the exclusive responsibility of the Pew Hispanic Center.

As you all know, the President Fox administration has insisted on the need – since its beginning – insisted on the need to improve the status quo in the management of migration flows between our countries. And from the beginning of his administration, he has advocated for a new framework in order to establish mechanisms that provide and allow for a safe, for a legal and an orderly migration between Mexico and the United States.

Our first looks at these results of the survey show something that we have expressed in the past, that essentially that the object – the above objective is achievable, that is, to try to establish better and new mechanisms to manage migration flows between Mexico and the United States.

As some of you know, part of the debate regarding migration policies on both countries have focused around the feasibility and convenience of establishing some form of temporary worker program between our countries. And today the Pew Hispanic Survey have found, we think, that a vast majority of the Mexican nationals that were interviewed would consider seriously participating in some kind of temporary worker program.

I think that the main finding here is their willingness also to follow and use avenues – legal avenues – available to the extent that they exist, and really to go and work for a period of time and then return to Mexico.

Mexicans, as we have expressed, go to the United States because there is a demand for their work there. And we believe that these results show that they want to do it in a safe and a legal and an orderly manner.

And as Roberto mentioned, I think also the survey clearly shows that they don't want to live clandestine lives and in the margins of society.

As he mentioned, this is, in fact, a first in a kind survey that will hopefully enrich public decisions on both sides of the border about how to better manage migration between our countries. And also, it has given in particular the ministry important information regarding our consular services and how to improve our consular services.

As all of you know, we have over 45 consulates in the United States. Probably no other country in the world has so many consulates in a particular nation. And there is a great need to improve the services that they provide, which was also in our minds when we decided to go ahead with this survey.

I think most of the issues regarding methodology have been perfectly addressed by Mr. Suro. And obviously, we would be very happy to take your questions and comments.

Thank you again for being present, and thank you again, Roberto and your team, for this effort.

ROBERTO SURO: Thank you, Geronimo. And operator, if there are questions, please connect them up.

OPERATOR: Thank you. The floor is now open for questions.

If you would like to ask a question, you may press star, followed by one on your touch-tone phone. If at any point your question has been answered, you may remove yourself from the queue by pressing the pound key.

We do ask that while you pose your question, that you please pick up your handset to ensure the best possible sound quality.

Once again, callers, if you would like to ask a question, you may press star followed by one on your touch-tone phone at this time.

Our first question is coming from Nina Bernstein with the "New York Times."

NINA BERNSTEIN, "NEW YORK TIMES:" Hello. I just wanted to ask whether a possible resolution of this conflict that you mentioned, Roberto, between those who say that they would participate in the temporary program and those – and the majority – the considerable majority that would like to stay as long as they can or all their lives – is simply that they say and may believe that they would go back to Mexico.

But in reality, after they've spent more time here and put down additional roots, they don't really want to go back. And they don't go back.

ROBERTO SURO: You know, the survey doesn't give us a direct answer to what, you know, how people might react in that situation. And I – and so, there's really no way to speculate.

I think you have identified what are conflicting desires in a segment of this population, which is that there is among a very large number, a majority, the idea of staying here indefinitely. But at the same time, there is an anxiousness to participate in some program which gives them legal status here.

You know, I would – you would imagine that a lot of how a temporary program would play out, given these circumstances, would depend on the details of the program and the incentives to return, the state of the labor market both here and in Mexico at the time and a variety of other factors, which influence migration.

It's – there's a less – a somewhat less conflicted and clear subpopulation here of young and recently arrived immigrants, who still have the intention to return, and who have very high responses to – positive responses – to the prospects of a temporary program.

Among those who said that they intended to return to Mexico within five years, 80 percent said they would participate in a temporary program. And it may be that such a program is most logically targeted at a segment of this population, rather than to the whole of it.

NINA BERNSTEIN: You mean by age, for example?

ROBERTO SURO: Or recent arrivals.

NINA BERNSTEIN: Or recent (ph) arrival?

ROBERTO SURO: And those two things tend to run together, because most of the recent arrivals are basically under 30. And the males among them – not necessarily the females – but the males, certainly a large number of them state an intention to return within a few, you know, a matter of years.

NINA BERNSTEIN: Just wait till they get married here.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: May I, Roberto, jump in?

NINA BERNSTEIN: Yes, please.

ROBERTO SURO: Sure, of course.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I think that one of the, you know, important discussions about the migration phenomenon that does point to the extent that the so-called circularity is there, or can be promoted or achieved, what are the conditions in which migratory flows become circularity? And that is a very important issue.

I think really that for decades, Mexican migration has shown a fairly consistent pattern, that, in the sense of the vast majority of the migrants who want to come to the United States to work and eventually return to Mexico.

At the same time, it is obvious that there is a small but significant minority that has always been present, who wants to stay for good in the United States.

In my opinion, that is the 17 percent that answered that they would be willing to remain in the U.S. for the rest of their (ph) life, which would seem to be consistent with that pattern. As Roberto expressed also, the other 42 percent doesn't necessarily tell us, give us a precise information about how will they react to a program.

Now, I think that it is also important to mention that there are, in fact, guest worker schemes that are already established, such as the H-to-A and H-to-B pieces. And to our knowledge, there is no evidence – any significant evidence – that people that have entered those programs, in fact, remain in the United States. But on the contrary, many of them do return.

I don't have the exact data, but I think that there is also evidence, if you look at those programs or those schemes, that do tell you that people would be certainly willing to enter a program of that type, and return, especially in the context where traveling is, you know, the cost of traveling has been reduced significantly.

In the opinion of many centers and institutions, the problem is that, when there is not enough legal avenues for people to go and return, obviously, that has an effect on the circularity notion, and people are more inclined to stay, because it becomes much more costly for them to go back and forth.

So, I think that we should also take that into account.

NINA BERNSTEIN: Well, thank you very much. I'm going to have to leave the conference now, but thanks. Bye-bye.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Sergio Bustos with Gannett News Service.

SERGIO BUSTOS, GANNETT NEWS SERVICE: Hi. Thanks a lot.

I'm kind of following up on the previous call, the previous question, too.

Mr. Gutierrez, you said that you think the main finding here is the willingness of Mexican migrants to use legal avenues available, and work for a period of time and return to Mexico. And you made that point again.

But, as you know, the argument in the United States is – I mean, immigration advocate's going to look at this survey and say, oh, it's surprising that folks are willing to take in the temporary program, because they've long argued that folks would not be willing to do that, that they wanted permanent status.

Yet they could also argue that, look at the other results in terms of people wanting to stay.

But I just wanted to be clear on this. Are you suggesting that that 42 percent that says they would like to stay, but – or, I think as Roberto said – “mientras pueda” – are you saying that group would likely go back under (ph) a temporary plan?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Yes, let me – yes. What I said is the following. I said that it is very clear that 17 percent would definitely want to stay in the United States. That figure is somehow consistent with other, you know, other information that has been available. I don't think we have enough statistical, you know, rigor in previous years. But that is, to some extent, what we had always imagined, in a sense.

Now, the 42 percent that want to remain or that expressed that would like to remain in the United States as long as they can – doesn't necessarily mean that, given an option to work legally five years and then return, would not enter. That there is a clear decision on the part of them to remain permanently in the United States.

And as Roberto said, I think that it varies, obviously, depending on gender and depending on age and other types of variables. But I think that it will largely depend on the characteristics that are, you know, put on the table for the program.

And if a legal avenue does become available, I think that it will be much more easier for people to define themselves about that matter.

And, again, I would point to the experiences of other programs that are still available, that in a sense have, to my knowledge have very low, if you like to call it, AWOL ratios. The people do return, in fact.

SERGIO BUSTOS: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Leslie Berestein with “San Diego Union.”

LESIE BERESTEIN, "SAN DIEGO UNION": Yes. Hello. And I'm also elaborating on the same question, another aspect of it.

Back to that 42 percent, the people that would like to stay as long as they can. And this is a question for both of you.

Did you get the sense – I realize you didn't really ask it – but did you get the sense that the idea of a temporary worker program is – they would be in favor of it, because it's taking what they can get, basically. It's the best they can do to enter the country or to be in the country legally, but that that's not really what they would hope for in the end.

But they would take it, because if it's it there. But they would, in the end, hope to be able to either stay permanently if they can't legally or not.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Roberto, would you like to (INAUDIBLE)?

ROBERTO SURO: Yes, I mean, it's – you know, you do surveys and you sometimes wish you could go back and ask all 4,836 people, well, can you elaborate on that?

LESIE BERESTEIN: Right. (INAUDIBLE).

ROBERTO SURO: But it's very hard to do speculative kind of questions in a survey. And so, I guess the short answer is, there's no easy answer to your question. There's no direct answer to your question from these data.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I would say that, I believe this information point that options should be considered, no? There is – many of you, I think, will agree that there is no perfect policies, but that there is, in a sense, there's room for maneuvering. I think this data shows and concludes that there is room for maneuvering.

And as, you know, different details of a possible – and I emphasize a "possible" program – start to be fleshed out, we will probably have a much more educated debate that will give us more precision on that specific data.

And at the same time, I think that there – those two things are not necessarily mutually exclusive. What do I mean by that?

It is not – you obviously have to address the fact that there is an important number of people in the United States without proper documentation, and that you have to address that immediately. And that to the extent, I think, that to the extent that a guest worker program could become, first, a way to have people come out of the shadows and for everybody to know who they are, and continue working and paying taxes – I don't think that that necessarily will cancel the possibility of those who remain.

And then, out of individual and not for the decision, you know, might decide to apply for a permanent residence through a way that is specifically established for that purpose, no?

LESIE BERESTEIN: Right. OK. Thank you.

ROBERTO SURO: You know, this is just one more pair of numbers, if it helps any or not, but when you cross specifically the intention to stay question with the temporary worker program, what you get is that, among those who said, as long as they can – with the "mientras pueda" response – 73 percent – seven three percent – said they would accept, they would participate in a temporary program.

Among those who said they were staying here for all of their lives, 56 percent said that they would participate in a temporary worker program.

And the responses were higher still among those who said they were thinking of being here for a matter of months or a matter of years.

LESIE BERESTEIN: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Dena Bunis with “Orange County.”

DENA BUNIS, “ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER: Hi, Roberto. How are you?

ROBERTO SURO: I’m fine, thank you.

DENA BUNIS: Two questions, actually. The first one is, were you surprised by the number of people who said that they would accept a temporary program?

And do you think if the debate goes forward on the Hill, that this will bolster the case of folks like Senator Cornyn and the president, who were talking about a temporary program as opposed to groups like, you know, Senator Kennedy and McCain and Representative Cannon and others, who are heading towards some kind of a earned tax for legalization?

ROBERTO SURO: Well, to answer your first question, it would take me all day to list the surprises in this survey. I mean, there’s just a whole lot of things that are very interesting and novel of them.

You know, I don’t want to speculate about the political impact of these findings. They will, I’m sure, get some attention, and they already are, to a certain extent.

You know, going back to what I was saying before, to me, the clearest finding – and there are obviously some ambiguity which we’ve been going back and around here. And that’s very much in the nature of this population and the nature of trying to change mass behavior.

But there is a clear finding that there is a population that is most disposed to a temporary program, and that is people who are young, male and recently arrived, are more disposed than others. And they are very highly disposed.

And it seems that’s certainly one solid conclusion one could draw in terms of how this kind of a program might – you know, where the audience for it is. And again, I want to emphasize, the devil will be in the details.

DENA BUNIS: But I thought you said that there were – you could go on all day about the surprises. Was one of your surprises that so many people said that they would accept a temporary program?

ROBERTO SURO: Gee, I suppose. I mean, it’s hard to say what – I mean, it’s hard to characterize. But the surprise is ...

DENA BUNIS: I mean, that particular finding, I mean, I think most people that have been following this debate for some time, if you would have asked us all before you did this, my expectation was that people would say they wanted a permanent program, because if they wanted something that was more temporary, they might not – they might have applied for some of the other temporary programs.

And Mr. Gutierrez talked about the other programs. People do go back.

The reality is, the H-to-A program is way undersubscribed. It’s not used very much. And ...

ROBERTO SURO: And it also has limited options.

DENA BUNIS: Right. Right.

ROBERTO SURO: And limited options in particular for this population, given where they live and where they work.

DENA BUNIS: So, I mean, given that, I’m just kind of wondering, is this what you expected in the results?

ROBERTO SURO: No. And particularly, you know, it's not – I mean, it's not surprising that, you know, among people who say they have no form of identity documents in this country, would by a margin of 79 to 16 say they would participate in a temporary program.

I mean, I think it's two – there are two elements here. One is the appeal of the program, and the other is the nature of life for somebody in this country who doesn't have access, then, to U.S.-issued identity documents.

DENA BUNIS: One final question. Do you think that there was a significant number of people that would participate in a temporary program, but let's say it ended after five or six years and they didn't have an ability to reapply – that they could just slip back into the underground, shadowy life that they had before that?

ROBERTO SURO: I mean, this – you know, the survey doesn't address that level. I mean, you're really – this is very speculative. And we didn't ask people to sort of play out scenarios in their minds.

DENA BUNIS: Thank you.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Can I jump in?

DENA BUNIS: Yes. And Mr. Gutierrez, could you spell your first name for me?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Geronimo?

DENA BUNIS: Yes.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Geronimo with a "G".

DENA BUNIS: "G".

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I agree completely, and, I mean, we cannot really speculate.

I think that, obviously, as I mentioned during my introduction, a very important part of this survey is that it is putting information there for everybody to analyze. I'm sure that the results will necessarily, will continue to be reviewed and analyzed from different perspectives. And I think that's, in a sense, what we're trying to foster, that information is available.

I don't think that there is too much of a, you know, of a surprise in the fact that people would be willing to enter a program. I think that we have never documented it. And there was always a – that was one of the questions that is always pending regarding the migration to-date.

And I think that these results help to shed some light, if not absolutely light, they shed some light on the matter.

And you mentioned that the H-to-A visa, for example, a program is undersubscribed. That might be the case, but that's not the case of the H-to-B, for example, visa, which is not undersubscribed.

And what I think that is careful (ph) is that you will be surprised about how little information there sometimes is available about what are the avenues legally available. And I think that this survey, and the discussion that follows, can help put information on people's minds, if they are deciding to go and enter the United States because they have a job there. I think that is very important to know that there are legal avenues available, no.

But I wouldn't speculate on what the political result will be of this. But I think that all would agree that it is helpful for everybody to have as much information that can help guide our discussions, no?

DENA BUNIS: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Eunice Moscoso with Cox Newspapers.

EUNICE MOSCOSO, COX NEWSPAPERS: Yes, hello.

I would like to ask Mr. Gutierrez, he mentioned that when he spoke at first about the need for unbiased information, do you think that's a big problem, misinformation that's out there? I'm talking a lot about the political debates on Capitol Hill, studies put out by different partisans that seem to be so different.

Do you feel like that's a big challenge to overcome in this debate?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I would say that, it's obvious that this issue of migration is of great political and social sensibility for both countries, on both sides of the border.

And given that great sensibility and great importance, there is still some pieces of information that are lacking in order to have the most educated possible debate about this issue.

I wouldn't – I would not characterize it, as you mention, that there's not enough information on Capitol Hill. I think there's not enough information even in Mexico about this discussion, to be quite honest.

Going to the point of whether the people are – to what extent are people willing to enter a guest worker program, I think that there will also – many people in Mexico will be surprised by the results that, in essence, show that only or less than one out of five persons interviewed would surely like to remain in the United States for the rest of his life, no?

So I think that it would help educate the debate very much also here in Mexico. And I think that is important.

ROBERTO SURO: Let me just add one institutional note that I don't think I said at the beginning, but I should have. The Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization. We don't take positions on policy issues. In fact, we don't even do sort of the in-depth policy analysis of the sort that a lot of think tanks do.

Our objective here is just to present facts that people on all sides of the discussion can use to have a more informed debate.

EUNICE MOSCOSO: Thank you.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Darryl Fears with "Washington Post."

DARRYL FEARS, "WASHINGTON POST": Hi, Roberto.

ROBERTO SURO: Hey, Darryl.

DARRYL FEARS: I wanted to focus in on one thing about the survey. You don't want to speculate, but you can almost make an inference here. And that's that younger respondents said that they were more likely to accept a temporary worker program that would send them back. Older people were more likely to say that they wanted to stay at least a time, some of them for the rest of their lives.

Young people have fewer kids, they don't have kids in school, more than likely. They don't have attachments. I mean, can't you make an inference that once people get here, on that basis, on an analysis of the survey, that once people get here they tend to want to stay when they put down roots? I mean, considering what, the age gap here?

ROBERTO SURO: You know, I mean, there's been – there's a long literature about migration that argues that people's intentions often – particularly in terms of something that starts out as a labor migration – their intentions change over time.

We've never really had this kind of data to look at the recent Mexican flow. And that flow has changed in the last 10 years. It's certainly increased enormously in numbers and the kinds of people coming have changed.

What you see in this data is that many people arrive here with an intention to stay for the long term. Or, at least they don't, you know, interpreting "mientras pueda," or as long as I can, is – it certainly means that they're not – they don't come – many do not come with a set plan to leave in X many years or months.

As people are here longer, as they get better jobs, as they move into better housing, as they get families, and as they have children, intentions change. And they move towards longer-term intentions. And that's very clear in the data, and it's very clear, for example, among women, many of whom are coming really as – they work overwhelmingly – but they are coming here as families, often, to join their spouses and they're raising children here.

And the intentions to stay in the long term are stronger among women. So there's – you know, there are a variety of indications.

Women picked "as long as I can" by a margin, you know, a two-to-one margin. It was very clear. And, again, it correlates to their family status.

So, yes. I mean, there are clearly – being here changes the way people think about their migration, and changes their attitudes towards their intentions to remain.

DARRYL FEARS: OK.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Can I just add something that I – on context really – but I think it might be useful. Mexico and Canada, for example, have had a – have a 30-year-old guest worker program, which is obviously much more smaller in scale.

But 98 percent – between 98 and 99 percent of the people that go there every year, a little over 12,000 through this program, return every single year to Mexico.

And they are, in fact now beginning to build business alliances with Canadian former employers, that are now investing in Mexico. And the people that go there return, and they invest here and they work here.

So, I mean, it's really to a large extent and a speculation about that important 42 percent. But there is also this case, which I think shows also, or points that people would be inclined to return also.

ROBERTO SURO: Yes, let me just add other thing. There's an ongoing discussion – even, I suppose, something of a debate – over the nature of circularity in Mexican migration. We know that for many years, there were a lot of people who went back and forth, and came here repeatedly and then returned to Mexico and were in a circular migration pattern.

And that – there's lots of evidence that suggests that's changed in the last 10 years. At the same time in the last 10 years, the flow has changed. It increased very dramatically in the mid-1990s when Mexico went through an economic crisis and the United States was going through an economic boom.

And the conditions of migration changed, because the border changed. And it's become more difficult and more expensive to cross. It's much less practical to think about going back and forth every six months, if you're crossing the border illegally. I mean, it's just more dangerous, more expensive, et cetera.

Which of all those conditions is driving this? Is it the nature of – is it the change in the nature of the people, that we have more, there are more women, there are more urban migrants?

They're going to new locations farther from the border. If you're not living in Texas or California, but instead you're in Georgia or North Carolina, does that – or New York – does that change the way you think about going back and forth?

You know, there's a mix here. This data gives us a little bit of a handle, and it's going to take some further interpretation. But that's very much one of the issues here, of which there's some uncertainty, is how, you know, over the last 10 years, the nature of circularity has changed.

DARRYL FEARS: Thank you very much, Roberto. I'm going to have to go now.

ROBERTO SURO: Thanks. OK.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Bill Hess with the "Herald News."

BILL HESS, SIERRA VISTA "HERALD NEWS": Yes. Mr. Suro, have you thought of looking at doing a different survey, talking to American citizens how they feel about a guest worker program to kind of balance this out?

I'm not saying it's unbalanced, don't get me wrong. But to get the American citizens' view of what they think should be done with a survey, and so that you could have a companion survey here.

ROBERTO SURO: Well, there are – you know, there are any number of public opinion organizations that have asked questions about temporary worker programs over the last year or so, I mean, including the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press here, and Gallup, the network polls.

You can, in fact, if you go to the Pew Research Center Web site, they link to other polls. I mean, CBS, "New York Times" have asked the questions.

So there's actually, you know – the American public's been polled on its views of some of these options pretty extensively.

BILL HESS: But having said that, here where I am at is on the border in Arizona in Cochise County, where we will be blessed in April with a group of people volunteers coming down, called the Minuteman Project, who wants to stop and watch the flow of illegal immigrants coming across the line.

They are coming in. There's nothing we can do to stop them.

But the people living in this area, in Cochise County – and we're the hardest hit when it comes to the flow of illegals – that they want – many of them say, yes, a new guest worker program, but not until the border is secured, until the federal government secures the border.

So, how do you and Mr. Gutierrez feel about that? I mean, there are people who says, and they don't want our government to even become involved in looking at a new guest worker program, until the government can prove the border is secured.

And how would that impact Mexican migrants who are in this country?

ROBERTO SURO: I mean, I don't – I don't have any feelings on it. I mean, it's not my business to have feelings on it. I mean, it's very clear in Arizona that there's been a great deal of political activity over the last six months – I don't need to tell you – on this issue.

I mean, I would turn the question over to Mr. Gutierrez if you want to say (INAUDIBLE).

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Yes. Thank you for the question.

I think that the type of concerns that are raised by, you know, certain segments of the population in the United States, deserve a pension and, obviously, consideration, even on the part of Mexico.

I would start by saying that, as I mentioned earlier, the results shows that to our, you know, in our interpretation that people are, you know, want to live legally in the United States and want to work legally in the United States, if the avenues are there.

And what we're trying to do – and I understand your comment about having, you know, a balanced view on these – what we want to do to here, what we have intended to do, is provide information.

Because Mexico, to the extent that there is agreement that we're not – that we should view migration as an issue of shared responsibility, and to the extent that we agree that we're not doing a good job on doing a good management of this issue on both sides of the border, we want – the Mexican government – wants to be a part of the solution, not only of the problem.

And we are, you know, we understand the concerns that are raised. We are obviously aware that migration reform would need to be viewed by the lens of also homeland security and, obviously, by law enforcement.

We think that to the extent that there are legal avenues, people will use them. And I believe that there are also ways to address in an intelligent manner, and in a balanced manner, the concerns that are raised, naturally, by people in the United States.

There are probably ways that we can address issues such as health care costs in a way that migrants are insured. We can provide, I think, avenues in terms of education and many other alternatives that should be there as part of the discussion.

Let me just emphasize that we are – you know, the Mexican government believes that, you know, these considerations deserve attention. And we want to be part of the solution. We want to help out with the solution, not only with the problem.

BILL HESS: OK. Mr. Gutierrez, you mentioned health care as an example.

Would that mean that the Mexican government may pay some of the cost that's now being borne by the American taxpayers, when, unfortunately, we do have some people who are hurt coming across the line, and they end up in our hospitals and things like that? Would the Mexican government pay some of those costs for the health care?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I think we should study, and we are studying, ways and schemes in which, if a guest worker program is established, people can have insurance that perhaps would allow them to take care of their health needs in what are called sometimes first and second level health care needs in the United States insured (ph), and health care is less costly in Mexico. And then third level maybe do it in Mexico.

I think, yes, we should look very carefully at ways to try to address that. And that's what we're doing.

To the extent that there's an educated debate about this issue, and we're able to think – allow me the word “together” – about policy options, all of them should deserve consideration.

BILL HESS: And another question. There's stories floating in the last couple of days that the foreign minister, Mr. Derbez, made a statement concerning the Minuteman Project that's coming here, that somehow – and according to the “Arizona Republican” and Reuters – hiring a – they don't want the project people, the volunteers, to come down here – and there's many people who would agree with that.

But they are trying to find a legal way and hiring U.S. law firms to try to stop them from doing what in the United States is a constitutional right to assemble.

Why is the Mexican government becoming involved in this?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: What there is concern about, sir, is that some of the actions that could be taken by this group could result in violations of state and federal U.S. law in detriment of also rights of Mexican citizens.

And I'm sure that in the event that that becomes the case, it is up to U.S. authorities, obviously, to take matters into consideration.

BILL HESS: Let me – let me just read you something that appeared today in the “Arizona Republic.” Studying (INAUDIBLE) ...

ROBERTO SURO: (INAUDIBLE) ask a question, OK?

BILL HESS: Yes, OK, fine. Studying legal efforts and hiring a Los Angeles law firm to stop – the word, I believe is used – stop this proposed project in April.

Does the Mexican government want the Minuteman Project stopped, from volunteers?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: The Mexican government, what it doesn't want is have the rights of Mexican citizens being transgressed by anybody. In addition, especially if that action results in a violation of U.S. federal or state laws. That is what we don't want.

BILL HESS: All right. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Michelle Guevara with Rumbo.

MICHELLE GUEVARA, RUMBO: Good morning. I wanted to ask regarding the family networks that were mentioned. Do you think that the finding that 80 percent of those who have been here for less than five years, has six or more family members in the U.S., serve as some type of evidence that people aren't going back?

ROBERTO SURO: No. I think the, you know, the findings on the family networks suggest clearly that even people who are new to the country come here with connections to family, and that there's an element of family migration, of reunification that's mixed into what we've sort of traditionally thought of as primarily a labor migration.

I mean, the people are coming here to work, but they're also coming here to be with relatives.

You know, there certainly is the potential that that changes the way they think about their stay here.

You know, having said that, it's also important to remember that this population retains very close ties to home, and most visibly through remittances. And that what we've seen develop – something that we've studied and with others' research before and that we're going to elaborate on with these data in a subsequent report – is really the development of transnational families, where you have people, family units that are operating on both sides of the border.

MICHELLE GUEVARA: Also – and this is for Geronimo – do you think that a guest worker program becomes an invitation to further extend these type of family networks in the U.S.?

Or maybe invitation is not the right word, but rather becomes easier, and it becomes – you know, once people are granted a guest worker program here, it becomes tempting for the family members in Mexico to also want to come here, whether it be through in documented terms, but once, you know, they see it also as an opportunity.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: No. I don't think that the data necessarily points to that. I don't think that a guest worker program would necessarily involve that type of invitation.

I have mentioned that there are some cases that are already occurring, in which there is no evidence that that is happening. And that depending on how the program and the scheme is designed, you can have, you know, 98 percent circularity.

MICHELLE GUEVARA: Thank you very much.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from David Brooks with “La Jornada.”

DAVID BROOKS, "LA JORNADA": Thank you very much for this.

I have a two-part question which is – I know you've gone over this again, but I still can't quite figure out why the permanent option is not vastly preferred or doesn't have more support expressed for it over the temporary option.

And I was just wondering. I know that you said that you can't speculate too much more on it, but is it – what your conclusion would be, would be that people are just looking at it as, this is the realist expectation? Or they're just desperate for anything? Or any light you could shed on why that's so.

And the second question would be more to Mr. Gutierrez, which is, why is the Mexican government not – why doesn't the Mexican government have an active proposal on immigration to negotiate with in Washington? Why are they just reacting to whatever is proposed by President Bush?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Roberto.

ROBERTO SURO: OK. It is hard to speculate. I mean, one way of looking at it is to say there is a small percentage that says no to either.

DAVID BROOKS: Right.

ROBERTO SURO: The other way to look at it is that there is a clear openness to either proposal. It's really not surprising that a large number of people would accept a legalization program.

As I said, we know just from experience. In 1986 there were two big legalization programs, and they drew unexpectedly large numbers of Mexicans, more than had been predicted. So that's not a surprise.

The appeal of a temporary program, you know, I think – we've talked about the various factors that go into that. One is the nature of life here, if you, you know, are in the country without authorization.

The other is that people do retain ties to Mexico, even after they've been here. More (ph) to that point of transnational families.

It – I'm trying to think of something that we haven't said already on this point.

DAVID BROOKS: I mean, the only reason – my concern is there, is that, of course, the politicians will say, see, they'll take the minimum.

And therefore, both governments from both countries will say, well, we can just offer the minimum, rather than – and interpret the results that way – rather than almost every immigrant would, whether you could interpret it the other way, which is, unfortunately, they will – the situation is desperate enough where they'll take whatever they can get.

But if their real desire, obviously, would be for full legalization and the ability to go back and forth no matter what, not under a temporary – not under the condition that once you enter into a temporary program, you will have to go back.

ROBERTO SURO: I – you know, the one thing you can say for sure is that people on different sides of the immigration debate will all find something in these data that they – that they find that supports their arguments. I mean, I have no doubt about that.

Geronimo, do you want to address the other (INAUDIBLE)?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: I would just, again, as I have mentioned already, the Fox administration, at its very outset, insisted on the need to improve the status quo of our, if you like to call it, migration agenda, and he has

advocated for new mechanisms that allow safe, legal, orderly migration, and one which respects the rights of Mexican citizens.

That – I would start with that, and then go and say that we have, you know, to the extent that through the appropriate channels, diplomatic channels that we have available to us, we will continue to try to present our arguments and our points of view in a way that we help find the best possible solution to the type of problems that we are now encountering. And that will continue to be the case.

And above all, I think it is up to the people to decide, you know, what they would be willing to consider. And I think that this survey is a helpful tool – not the only one and not a definite one – but is an important tool that helps shed light on this specific matter.

DAVID BROOKS: But there are – there are at least three or four proposals that are concrete, in the United States. There's not one in Mexico.

I mean, there are – in the Congress, in the United States, there's three or four (INAUDIBLE) ...

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: When – just when we – when – in January of 2004, when the administration presented a set of principles about how at that time it was viewing the migration agenda, ...

DAVID BROOKS: Right.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: ... we, if I'm not mistaken, on January the 8th of last year, we presented a set of points – 10 points, if I'm not mistaken – which define that action as a positive step, that will help reanimate and reinvigorate the debate.

And we, much as it has been expressed today, we also mentioned that, obviously, it was that not only the Mexican government, but that there were several issues that needed to be fleshed out. And these were not issues only of concern to the Mexican government, but for many other actors involved.

And I will be happy to send you a copy of those. And I think that these, again, these data, this process, this survey, help us educate the debate, and hopefully, take better and more informed decisions, if we do get to the point where decisions need to be taken.

ROBERTO SURO: OK. I think we've got time for maybe just one or two more questions.

Operator, is there anybody else still in queue?

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question is coming from Jerry Kammer with Copley.

JERRY KAMMER, COPLEY NEWS SERVICE: Hi, Mr. Gutierrez.

I'd like to ask if the Mexican government has a position on the question of whether undocumented folks in the U.S. should be offered a path toward a green card.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: The Mexican government since 2001, established also what you could label a set of principles. And within those four principles that were established, one of them was addressing the status of people that are already there, modernizing the mechanisms for people to go essentially for working purposes in the future, addressing the root causes of emigration in Mexico, and establishing a set of cooperation mechanisms regarding border security.

The last one has advanced through the, what is called our Smart Border alliance with the United States. The other one has been addressed, and is being addressed, by the Partnership for Prosperity and other policy decisions that have been taken by the Mexican government.

The rest two remain, obviously. And that is, we believe that those are two components that we must consider in the overall debate.

And again I would say that to the extent that a guest worker program can help construct a path that doesn't necessarily cancel the opportunity for people to apply for a permanent residence. We think that every policy option should be considered carefully.

JERRY KAMMER: Does this mean that you have taken no position in the discussion, that used to be called negotiations?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Well, I don't understand your question. What do you mean the (INAUDIBLE) ...

JERRY KAMMER: Well, in 2001, when President Fox was traveling in the country, especially when he was in the Midwest, he was urged, especially by Latino rights organizations, to take a position.

And his responses seemed somewhat ambiguous. And I was just wondering if there has been any clarification of this position on, obviously, a very difficult ...

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Topic.

JERRY KAMMER: Yes.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: We believe – and that has always been the case – that we must find a way to address both components. And that continues to be the position. We must find a way to address both components. And it will largely, to the extent that we can be successful in that, will largely depend on, I think, how a program, if it does get established, looks like, and what are the details of that.

And I hope that, again, this information helps everybody shed a light on this matter.

JERRY KAMMER: If I may just very quickly, you say ...

ROBERTO SURO: We have to – I'm sorry. I have to limit you to just a couple of questions, because we're running out of time here.

JERRY KAMMER: I'm sorry, Roberto. Yes.

ROBERTO SURO: Yes. OK. Is there anybody else there waiting, operator?

OPERATOR: We do have one final question coming from Edward Sifuentes with "North County Times."

Mr. Sifuentes, your line is live.

EDWARD SIFUENTES, "NORTH COUNTY TIMES": This is more of a policy question for Mr. Gutierrez. As you probably know, there is a large segment – well, there is a segment, I don't want to say it's a large one – of the population here in the U.S. that is very antagonistic towards immigration, particularly towards Mexican immigration.

Can you explain why the U.S. should continue to accept immigrants from Mexico, legally or illegally, in such great numbers?

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Let me start by saying that the Mexican government believes that migration should be legal, safe and orderly, and should be viewed as a shared responsibility issue between our governments. That was the statement base (ph) in 2001, and that continues to be, obviously, the position.

Now, this is, I think – we believe that there – first of all, Mexico and the United States have complementary population dynamics. To a large extent also have complementary labor markets.

And there is still, and it's obvious, an important income differential between the three (ph) countries.

When these two, three aspects are put together, you really have what I would call a structural element regarding migration.

And we believe that, to the extent that, you know, jobs are required by the U.S. economy and that we are able to find a way to establish legal, orderly and safe migration, taking advantage of these complementarities between our countries, we can, in fact, improve conditions and economic growth on both countries.

And that is why I think we should consider very carefully all policy options to try to improve the status quo of the management of the migration phenomenon as it currently exists.

ROBERTO SURO: Well, I thank you very much, Geronimo, and thank you to all who are listening. I think that brings us to a close.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Thank you very much, Roberto, and thank you very much to everybody for your presence and interest.

ROBERTO SURO: OK. Good afternoon to everyone. Bye-bye.

GERONIMO GUTIERREZ: Thank you. Good afternoon.

OPERATOR: Thank you. This does conclude today's teleconference. You may disconnect your lines at this time, and have a wonderful day.

END