



## The United States-Mexico Border Region at a Glance

The United States-Mexico border region is defined as the area of land that is 100 kilometers (62.5 miles) north and south of the international boundary (La Paz Agreement). It stretches approximately 2,000 miles from the southern tip of Texas to California. The population of this expanse of land is estimated to be approximately 13 million. This population is expected to double by the year 2025. The combined population of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California is 61,637,146 (2000 Census). The estimated combined population of the six Mexican border states in 1990 was 12,246,991. Two of the ten fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United States - Laredo and McAllen - are located on the Texas-Mexico border. Additionally, there are 154 Native American tribes, totaling 881,070, living in the four U.S. border states. In the actual border region, there are approximately 25 Native American Nations.

This is a dynamic region that is medically underserved, with a population that has pressing health and social conditions, higher uninsured rates, high rates of migration, inequitable health conditions and a high rate of poverty. The border area comprises:

- Two sovereign nations;
- Four states in the United States and six states in Mexico;
- A total of 44 counties and 80 municipalities; and
- 14 pairs of sister cities.

The U.S. Hispanic population is now the nation's largest minority group. In 2002, Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to reside in the West and the South. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), statistics indicate that in the U.S. border counties, 25-30 percent of the population is uninsured; inhabitants have less private health insurance, 40 vs. 60 percent for the state average; and the average yearly income is \$14,560.

In general, educational attainment is lower along the border when compared to the rest of the United States. With the exception of San Diego, 25 year olds residing in the border counties average two to three years less of school than in the United States as a whole.

In the border region:

- Three of the 10 poorest counties in the United States are located in the border area;
- Twenty-one of the counties on the border have been designated as economically distressed areas;
- Approximately 432,000 people live in 1,200 colonias in Texas and New Mexico, which are unincorporated, semi-rural communities characterized by substandard housing and unsafe public drinking water or wastewater systems;
- The unemployment rate along the U.S. side of the Texas-Mexico border is 250-300 percent higher than in the rest of the country; and
- Due to rapid industrialization, the communities on the Mexican side of the border have less access to basic water and sanitation services than the rest of the nation.

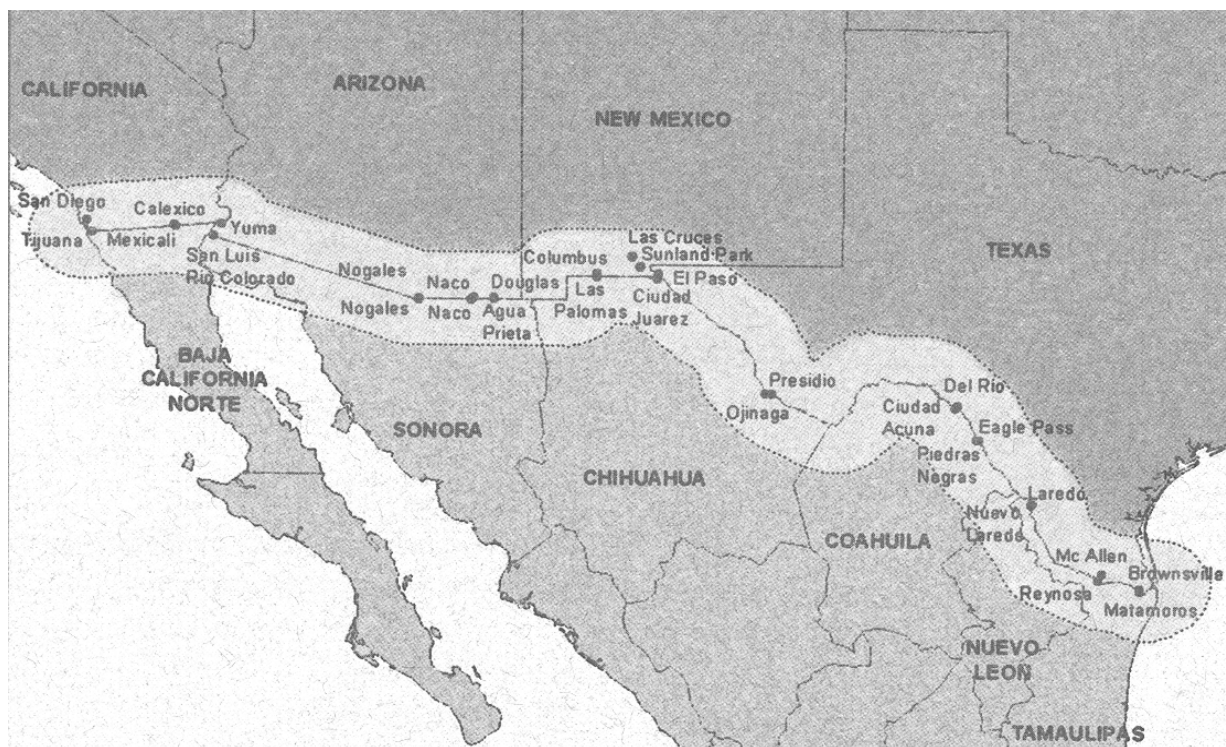
Mexico is the United States' second-largest trading partner, with U.S. \$261.7 billion in two-way trade in 2000 (about U.S. \$700 million/day). U.S. exports to Mexico in 2000 were more than U.S. \$110 billion and U.S. imports from Mexico were more than U.S. \$135 billion. Exports to Mexico quadrupled between 1986 and 1994, going from U.S. \$12.3 billion to more than U.S. \$50 billion, and doubled again by 2000.

The United States-Mexico Border is recognized as one of the busiest in the world. There are 43 points of entry (POEs) on the border between the United States and Mexico. Every day, 800,000 people arrive in the United States from Mexico. In 2001, over 300 million two-way border crossings took place at the 43 POEs.

Although there have been significant economic changes due to international trade agreements with Mexico, major problems associated with the general poverty of the border area continue to exist. Without increased and sustained federal, state and local governmental and private funding for health programs, infrastructure and education, the border populations will continue to lag behind the rest of the United States in these areas.

Health challenges along the border remain significant. The USMBHC requires the combined commitment and focused efforts of policy makers and health care, social services, educational and environmental agencies and organizations. According to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, if the border region were to be made the 51<sup>st</sup> state, the U.S.-Mexico border region would:

- Rank last in access to health care;
- Second in death rates due to hepatitis;
- Third in deaths related to diabetes;
- Last in per capita income;
- First in the numbers of school children living in poverty; and
- First in the numbers of children who are uninsured.



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