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# Interstate Migration Among Latinos and the Foreign-Born Latino Population in Nevada, 2007-2011

JAEWON LIM, JOHN P. TUMAN, DAVID F. DAMORE

Over the past two decades, Nevada's foreign-born Latino population has grown dramatically. As a consequence, by the end of 2011, approximately 42% of Latinos residing in Nevada had emigrated from Latin America, with over three-fourths of the foreign-born Latino population originating from Mexico.<sup>1</sup> In part, Nevada has been attractive to Latin American immigrants (and Latinos more generally) because of the relative abundance of jobs in the state that require relatively low levels of skill and educational attainment, as well as the state's close proximity to Arizona and California.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 2008, Latino employment was concentrated in Nevada's hospitality, construction, and retail and wholesale trade sectors, as well as other low-skilled occupations. However, in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008, the residential home construction and hospitality sectors were hard hit, with attendant consequences for patterns of unemployment among the U.S. and foreign-born Latino population in the state.<sup>3</sup>

A number of studies have suggested that as a consequence of the recession net migration flows from Mexico to the U.S. declined after 2008.<sup>4</sup> What remains unclear, however, is how the recession influenced net migration in states that had seen steady growth in their foreign-born Latino population, including Nevada, prior to the economic downturn.<sup>5</sup> In this study, we seek to contribute to the research literature on migration flows through an examination of migration among Latinos. Working with the data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), we examine changes in migration flows in Nevada from 2007 through 2011. The analysis focuses on the interstate migration flow for the total population, as well as for the Latino (both foreign and native-born) and foreign-born Latino population in the state.

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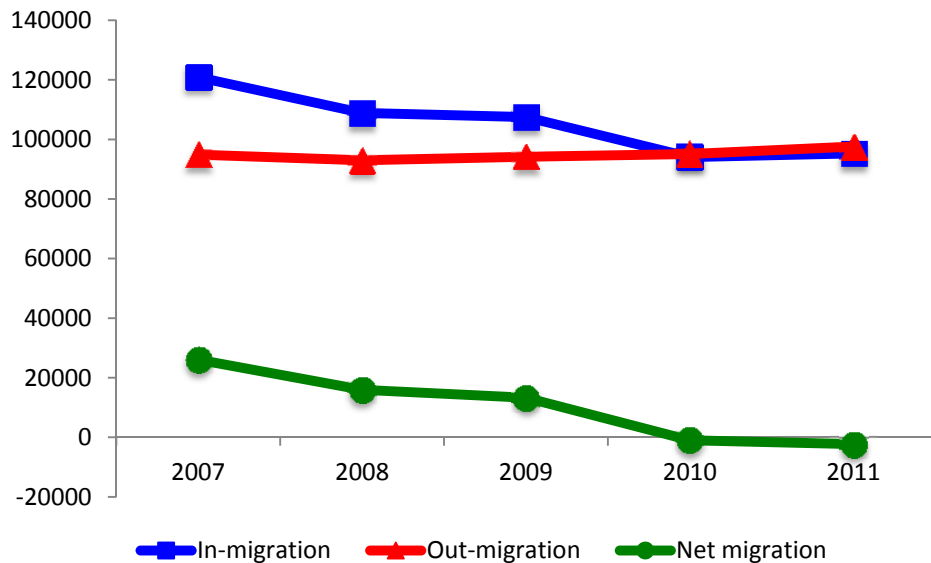
## Methodology

In this study, we employ data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).<sup>6</sup> Specifically, we examine interstate migration to and from Nevada, with a focus on the total population and the Latino population (all Latinos, and adjusting only for foreign-born Latinos). The migration partners included in the analysis are Nevada and other U.S. states. Due to limitations in the availability of the ACS data, we confine the temporal scope of the study to 2007 to 2011. Given that the Great Recession occurred during this five-year period, the data allows us to examine how changes in Nevada's economy affected migration into and out of the Silver State.

## Interstate Migration Patterns for the Total Population

We begin with an analysis of the migration trends for all groups in Nevada (Figure 1). As illustrated in Figure 1, during the time period under investigation the total number of migrants moving to (the blue line) Nevada from other states decreased sharply (120,900 in 2007 to 94,100 in 2010), with a slight rebound in 2011. During the same period, the number of out-migrants (the red line) from Nevada to other states increased modestly, reaching a peak of nearly 100,000 in 2011. The net change caused by interstate migration, which is measured by subtracting migration inflows from outflows (the green line), shows that Nevada's migration flow switched from a net gain to loss. Most notably, in 2007, Nevada registered a net migration inflow of 26,000, but by 2011 more people migrated out of Nevada than migrated to the state (-2,300 net change for 2011).

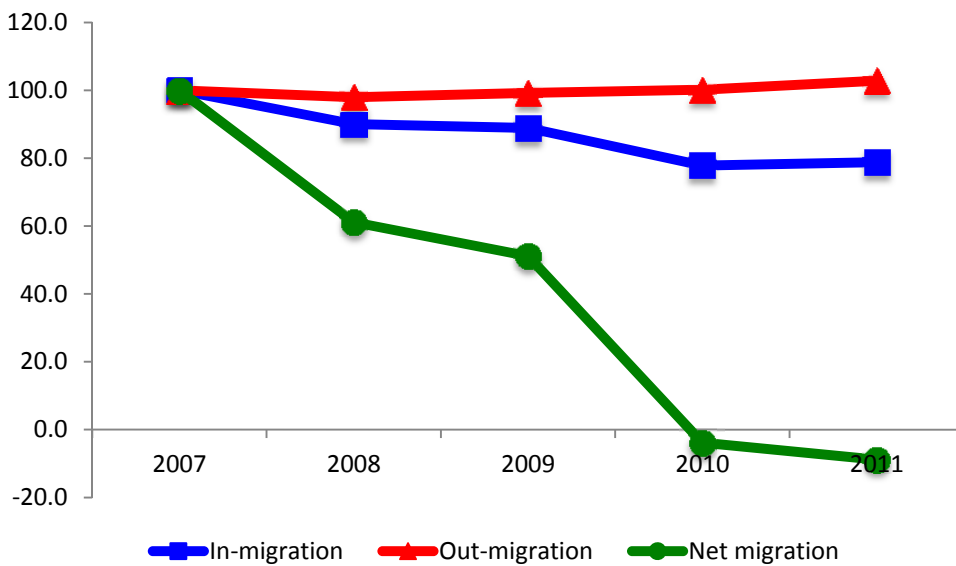
**Figure 1**  
**Interstate Migration in Nevada (All Groups)**



Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

In order to better investigate the temporal trend in net migration flows, we present a net migration index with a base year of 2007 (2007 = 100). The index (see Figure 2) allows one to discern patterns of change relative to the base year, 2007, which is also the year when Nevada’s housing sector (and economy, more generally) began to decline. The data presented in Figure 2 indicate that between 2007 and 2010 there was a 22.2% decline in migration into Nevada, while out-migration began to increase in 2008 before eventually peaking in 2011 (with a 2.8% increase over the base year of 2007). As a consequence of decreased migration to Nevada and increased migration out of the state, the index for net population change due to migration dropped significantly to its lowest point in 2011 (-8.8%).

**Figure 2**  
**Interstate Migration Index in Nevada (Base Year, 2007 = 100)**

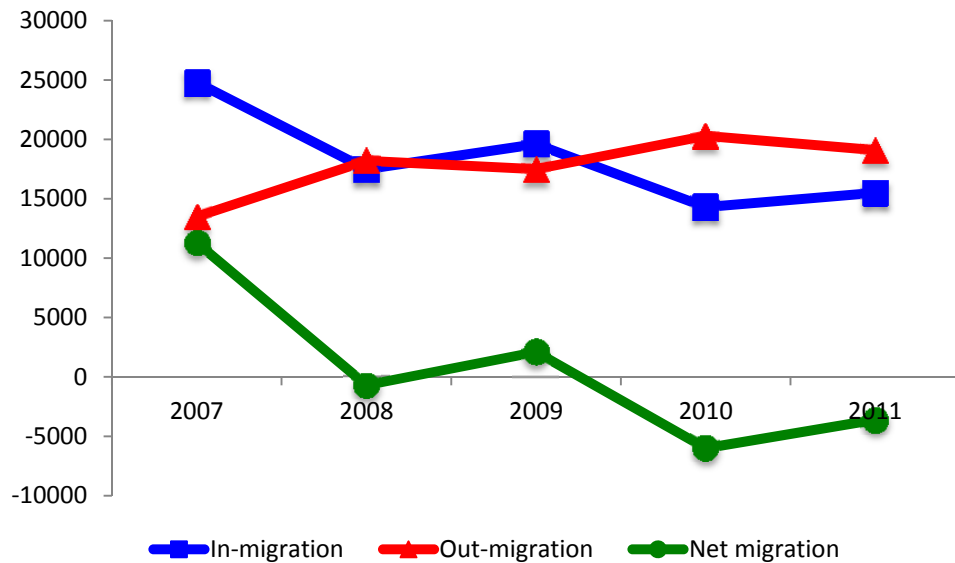


Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

### Interstate Migration Patterns for the Latino Population

The data presented in Figures 1 and 2 are consistent with the notion that the Great Recession and the resulting economic strife simultaneously deterred migration into Nevada, while also causing more Nevadans to migrate out of state. As we note in the introduction and demonstrate elsewhere, there is ample reason to expect that the economic downturn hit the state’s Latino population particularly hard.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, it might be that Latinos, both U.S. and foreign born, who were unable to find work in Nevada migrated from the state, while the state’s fragile economy deterred other Latinos from migrating to Nevada.

**Figure 3**  
**Interstate Migration of the Latino Population in Nevada, 2007-2011**

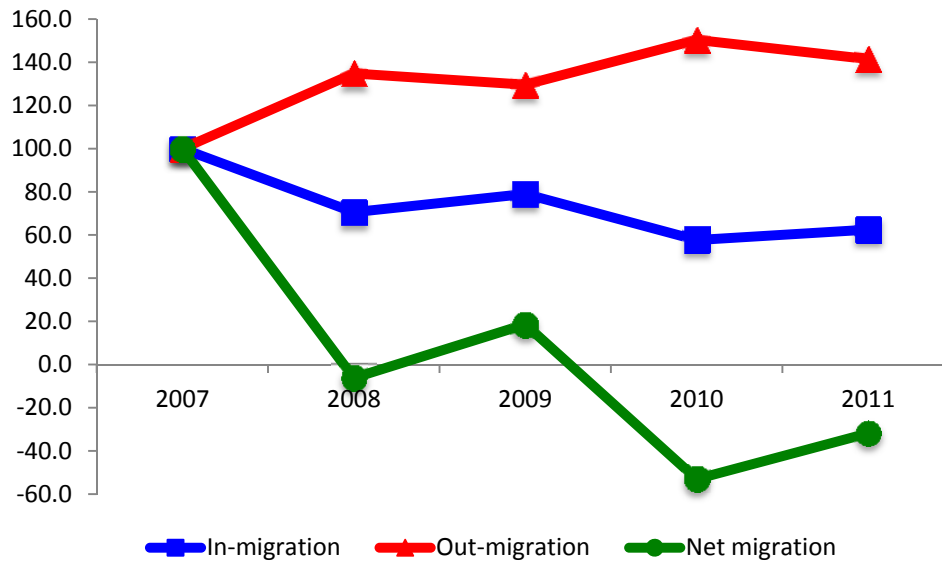


Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

The data presented in Figures 3 and 4 are consistent with these expectations, particularly during the years immediately after the onset of the recession. Specifically, as Figure 3 makes clear, between 2007 and 2008, the total number of native and foreign-born Latinos moving to Nevada (the blue line) from other U.S. states declined by 7,300, which is equivalent to a 29.4% annual decrease in Latino migration to Nevada. The comparable figure for the state's entire population was a decrease of 11% (see Figure 2). The number of Latinos migrating to Nevada continued to decline through 2010 before increasing slightly in 2011 (Figure 3). At the same time, migration of Latinos from Nevada to other states (red line) increased from 2007 to a peak of 20,300 in 2010.

As a consequence of these trends, the net Latino population change due to interstate migration (the green line) shifted from a net gain of 11,300 in 2007, to a net *loss* of 700 in 2008. Continuing low levels of Latino in-migration and high levels of out-migration contributed to a 6,000 net migration decrease among Latinos out of Nevada in 2010. In the following year, the net loss fell to 3,600 due to the 8.4% uptick in the number of Latinos migrating into Nevada and the 5.9% decrease in migration from Nevada compared to 2010.

**Figure 4**  
**Interstate Migration Index of the Latino Population in Nevada (Base Year, 2007 = 100)**



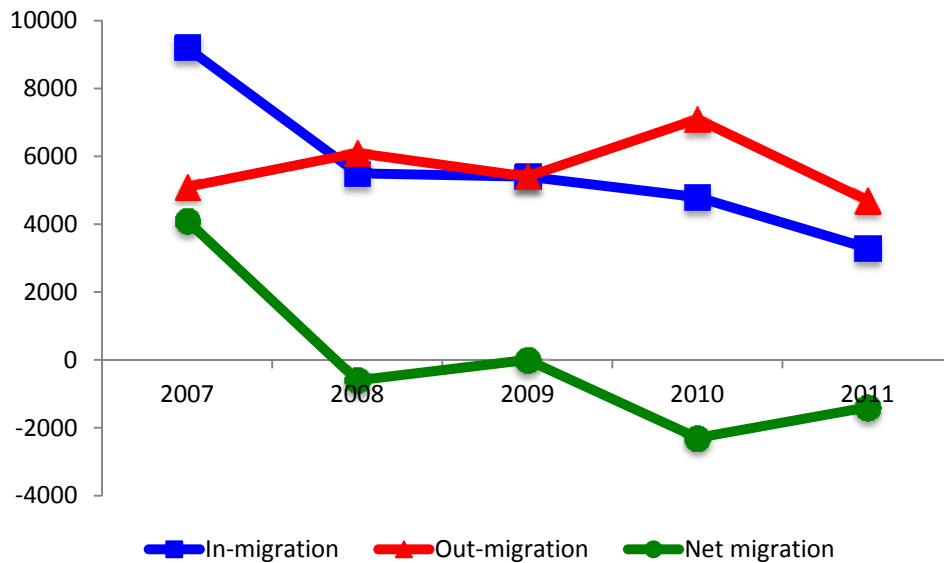
Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Figure 4 presents the change in Latino migration to Nevada relative to the base year of 2007. As can be seen from the figure, between 2007 and 2010, the index for Latino migration into Nevada (the blue line) fell continuously to 57.7% in 2010, indicating a 42.3% decline over the 3-year period. The index for Latino out-migration (the red line) from Nevada skyrocketed between 2007 and 2008 by 34.8%. The index of out-migration peaked at 150.4 in 2010, indicating a 50.4% increase over 2007. How did this affect the net flow? The index for net migration change (the green line) plunged to its lowest point (-53.1%) in 2010. Although the net index value remained negative in 2011, the value was smaller compared to the value in 2010 suggesting migration flows among Latinos may be stabilizing.

### Interstate Migration Patterns of Foreign-Born Latino Population in Nevada

In this section we replicate the analysis presented in the prior two sections, but limit our data to Nevada's foreign-born Latino population. It is important to note that there is a significant limitation to these data in that they only allow us to capture population exchanges among localities within the U.S. (the ACS count in-migration from foreign countries but do not consider out-migration to foreign countries).

**Figure 5**  
**Interstate Migration of the Foreign-Born Latino Population in Nevada, 2007-2011**



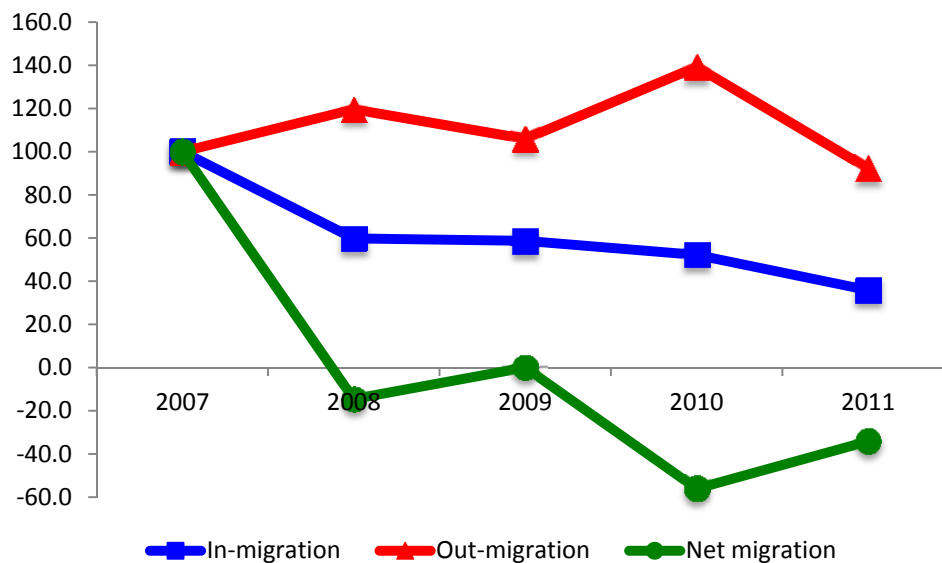
Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Figure 5 presents the trend in the total annual migration into Nevada among foreign-born Latinos. Between 2007 and 2008, the total number of foreign-born Latino migrants from other U.S. states to Nevada fell from 9,200 to 5,500. Comparing these declines to those for Nevada's total population (Figure 1) and Latino migrants (Figure 3) indicates that the reduction in the number of foreign-born Latino migrants to Nevada was far larger than for these other groups. After 2008, the number of foreign-born Latino migrating to Nevada continued to fall, reaching a low of 3,300 in 2011.

In contrast to the steady decline of foreign-born Latinos to Nevada, annual levels of migration from Nevada fluctuated between 2007 and 2011. Out-migration peaked at 7,100 in 2010. The biggest annual increase in out-migration occurred between 2009 and 2010, while the largest decline was between 2010 and 2011.

There was a net decline in migration among the foreign-born Latino population. Although the net flow was 4,100 in 2007, this changed to a net loss of 600 in 2008 (Figure 7). Persistent levels of migration from Nevada among foreign-born Latinos, coupled with low (and declining) levels of in-migration for this group, led to net losses of the foreign-born Latino migrants in 2008, 2010, and 2011. In 2011, the net loss of 1,400 was smaller than in the previous year (-2,300 in 2010), mainly due to a stabilization in the number of foreign-born Latinos migrating elsewhere.

**Figure 6**  
**Interstate Migration Index of the Foreign-Born Latino Population in Nevada**  
**(Base Year, 2007 = 100)**



Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Looking at the index of migration, one sees that migration into Nevada among foreign-born Latinos contracted by 40.2% between 2007 and 2008 (Figure 6), with the overall index declining by 64% between 2007 and 2011. Again, this trend is suggestive that the foreign-born Latino population residing in other U.S. states faced strong disincentives to migrate to Nevada.

The index of out-migration for foreign-born Latinos fluctuated annually between 2007 and 2011. The index reached its peak of 139.2 in 2010, equivalent to a 39.2% increase in out-migration compared to 2007. The index for net population change dropped to its lowest point of -56.1% in 2010 (green line of Figure 6). Compared to migration for all Latinos, migration from Nevada among foreign-born Latinos was less volatile, while migration into the state exhibited a rapid and consistent decline. This finding suggests that under conditions of economic turmoil, the foreign-born Latino population is less mobile in comparison to the total Latino population. The lack of economic resources for foreign-born Latinos—likely the result of a legacy of working in low-paid, precarious, and segmented labor-markets—may explain part of this pattern.

### **Nevada’s Migration Partners**

Thus far, we have examined continuities and changes in migration patterns in Nevada. We turn now to an analysis of the U.S. states that served as the major migration “partners” for Nevada. These data are presented in Tables 1 (for migration into Nevada) and 2 (for migration from Nevada). For the entire study period, 2007 through 2011,



California remained the top U.S. state-of-origin for the all migrants to Nevada. Arizona ranked second in four of the five years, while Texas was second in one year, 2007. Still, the relative contribution of these second-ranked “sending” states never exceeded 10% of the total population migrating to Nevada.

California also served as the top state-of-origin for Latino and foreign-born Latinos migrating to Nevada (middle and bottom panels of Table 1). However, as compared to all Latinos, a relatively larger share of foreign-born Latinos who migrated to Nevada originated from California. The only exception to this trend occurred in 2010, when 55.9% of Latinos migrating into Nevada resided in California during the prior year, while the corresponding figure for the foreign-born Latino population was 50%. In addition, for each year between 2007 and 2010, the percentage of all migrants and foreign-born Latino migrants originating in California fell, while the trend was much shorter for Latinos (the percentage fell between 2007 and 2008, but rebounded in 2009).

**Table 1**  
**Top States of Origin for Migrants into Nevada, 2007-2011**

Rank	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share
<b>All Migrants</b>										
1	CA	40.8%	CA	35.4%	CA	34.0%	CA	32.4%	CA	38.5%
2	TX	5.2%	AZ	5.2%	AZ	7.5%	AZ	8.5%	AZ	6.4%
3	AZ	5.1%	FL	4.3%	UT	5.2%	TX	6.0%	TX	5.5%
4	MI	4.0%	TX	4.3%	FL	4.5%	UT	4.4%	WA	4.5%
5	NY	3.9%	OH	3.9%	TX	4.3%	HI	3.4%	ID	4.0%
<b>All Latinos</b>										
1	CA	62.9%	CA	48.6%	CA	52.6%	CA	55.9%	CA	58.7%
2	TX	8.5%	TX	12.6%	AZ	8.7%	AZ	14.7%	AZ	8.4%
3	AZ	5.2%	AZ	4.6%	IL	6.6%	FL	4.2%	TX	6.5%
3			FL	4.6%			TX	4.2%		
<b>Foreign-Born Latinos</b>										
1	CA	66.3%	CA	54.5%	CA	53.7%	CA	50.0%	CA	72.7%
2	AZ	8.7%	FL	10.9%	AZ	7.4%	AZ	20.8%		
3	TX	6.5%	TX	9.1%	IL	7.4%	NJ	10.4%		
4					AZ	5.8%				

Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Texas, Florida, and Arizona were also second-ranked states-of-origin for the Latino and foreign-born Latino in-migrant population. Two unusual observations stand out, however. First, in 2010, Arizona accounted for 20.8% of the foreign-born Latinos who migrated to Nevada. Second, in 2011, no state other than California accounted for more than 3% of the foreign-born Latino population migrating to Nevada.

**Table 2**  
**Top Destination States for Migrants from Nevada, 2007-2011**

Rank	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share	State	Share
All Migrants										
1	CA	25.6%	CA	29.1%	CA	29.9%	CA	25.0%	CA	30.9%
2	AZ	7.8%	AZ	8.2%	AZ	6.8%	AZ	8.9%	AZ	6.6%
3	WA	6.1%	UT	7.2%	TX	6.7%	TX	5.9%	WA	6.4%
4	TX	5.9%	TX	5.3%	UT	4.7%	WA	5.9%	TX	5.3%
5	CO	5.0%	CO	4.2%	CO	4.1%	UT	5.3%	CO	4.6%
All Latinos										
1	CA	43.7%	CA	43.4%	CA	40.0%	CA	36.9%	CA	52.9%
2	AZ	12.6%	TX	11.0%	AZ	13.7%	AZ	9.4%	TX	8.4%
3	NM	9.6%	UT	8.2%	TX	7.4%	TX	7.4%	WA	7.9%
4	WA	7.4%	WA	5.5%	CO	5.7%	WA	5.4%	AZ	5.8%
Foreign-Born Latinos										
1	CA	45.1%	CA	47.5%	CA	46.3%	CA	36.6%	CA	42.6%
2	AZ	15.7%	TX	11.5%	CO	9.3%	AZ	11.3%	TX	14.9%
3	WA	9.8%	AZ	8.2%	AZ	7.4%	FL	8.5%	AZ	12.8%
4	OR	5.9%	FL	8.2%	IL	7.4%	NY	7.0%	WA	8.5%
5			NJ	8.2%	LA	5.6%	OK	5.6%	FL	6.4%
5					TX	5.6%	OR	5.6%		
5					WA	5.6%				

Note: Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

The data also reveal that California remained the top destination state for all three groups (Table 2). Perhaps due to weak economic conditions in Southern California, the share of each group migrating from Nevada to California declined in 2010, but then rebounded as the economy began to recover. In comparison to the total population migrating out of Nevada, a relatively larger share of Latino and foreign-born Latinos selected California as a destination state each year in the study period. This pattern

may be a consequence of the prevalence of demand for low-skilled labor, perhaps aided by the state's proximity to Nevada and the presence of migration networks.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond California, several other states served as frequent destinations for migrants from Nevada. For the total population, Arizona consistently ranked as the second-place destination state. The data suggest that Texas, Utah, and Washington were also common destination states. For Latino out-migrants, Arizona, Texas, and Washington were also major migration partner states, with Arizona being the largest partner (after California) with 13.7% of Latinos migrating there in 2009.<sup>9</sup> The pattern is similar, but less clear for foreign-born Latinos. Texas and Arizona each accounted for approximately 15% of the destination states for foreign-born Latinos in certain years – although for Arizona, the peak (15.7%) was in 2007, *prior* to the recession.

## Conclusion

This study has contributed to the demographic literature on Nevada by examining interstate migration trends since the emergence of the economic downturn in 2008. The findings suggest for all groups, net interstate migration declined continuously between 2007 and 2011, and started to register a net loss after 2010. The largest one-year decline in Nevada's net interstate migration flow occurred between 2009 and 2010. For the most part, this reflected a continuous decline in migration into Nevada and a slight increase in out-migration.

With the onset of the recession, patterns of interstate migration among all Latinos (native and foreign-born) and foreign-born Latinos in Nevada changed. Both groups saw the largest one-year loss in net migration between 2007 and 2008. The net interstate migration flow had turned negative for both the Latino and the foreign-born Latino population by 2008. There was a slight recovery (i.e., a reduction in the net loss to migration) between 2010 and 2011.

Yet, despite the similarity in the recovery for Latinos and foreign-born Latinos, the sources of the recovery for each group were quite different. For native-born Latinos, the stabilization in the migration flow was associated with a slight increase in in-migration to Nevada and a slight out-migration from the state. However, among foreign-born Latinos, migration to Nevada continually declined, which was offset partly by a large reduction in out-migration in 2011. The underlying reason for the variation in the interstate migration behavior between these two groups remains unclear, but it might reflect the greater sensitivity of foreign-born Latinos to conditions in the Nevada's housing sector (and other low-skilled employment sectors), along with greater resource constraints for foreign-born migrants who may otherwise have left Nevada.

Finally, California remained the largest migration partner state for all groups of interstate migrants in Nevada. This suggests that there was some continuity in trends before and after the recession. However, as noted, in comparison to the total migration

group, larger shares of Latinos and foreign-born Latinos migrated from California or selected California as a destination state.

More generally, the analysis presented here highlights the relentless churning of Nevada's population, a characteristic of the state since its founding. Indeed, one can easily extrapolate from these data a common Nevada narrative. During the state's periods of economic boom, many are drawn to Nevada for employment, particularly in sectors requiring little formal education. Once those opportunities evaporate, many respond by migrating elsewhere with the most common destination being neighboring California. Add to this Nevada's limited safety net, middling educational institutions, and meager investments in workforce training, for many, leaving the Silver State may be an easy decision to make.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> John P. Tuman, David F Damore, and Maria José Flor Ágreda, “Immigration and the Contours of Nevada’s Latino Population.” Brookings Mountain West Report, June 2013. <http://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/24/BrookingsReport-ImmigrationAndContours.pdf> (Accessed August 25, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Tuman, Damore, and Flore-Agreda, “Immigration and the Contours of Nevada’s Latino Population,” and John P. Tuman and Dawn Gearhart, “The Guatemalans,” in Jerry Simich and Tom Wright (eds.) *More Peoples from Las Vegas: One City, Many Faces* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010), 213-230. It is important to note that the demand for low-skilled labor in Nevada is related to a broader structural process of labor-market segmentation in the U.S. For a general discussion of segmentation, see Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Migration in an Era of Economic Integration*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> John P. Tuman, David F. Damore, and Maria José Flor Ágreda, “The Impact of the Great Recession on the Latino Community in Nevada.” Brookings Mountain West Report, forthcoming, December 2013, Figures 3 and 5; National Council of La Raza, “Monthly Latino Employment Report,” July 6, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel, D’Vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, “Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—Perhaps Less,” Pew Latino Center, Washington D.C., 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Although there have been a number of studies on the 2008 recession and total interstate migration, few studies have focused on Latino and Latin American immigrants. For general studies of the total interstate migration flow, see Raven Molloy, Christopher L. Smith, and Abigail Wozniak, “Internal Migration in the U.S.,” Working Paper, University of Norte Dame and National Bureau of Economic Research December 2010, <http://www3.nd.edu/~awaggone/papers/migration-msw.pdf>, and Michael A. Stoll, “Residential Mobility and the Great Recession: A Shift to Local Moves,” US2010 Project, Brown University, September 23, 2013, <http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Data/Report/report09232013.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), PUMS 1% Sample, 2007-2011, [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/). Because this is a 1% sample, estimation of the number of migrants is made by multiplying values by 100. The PUMS 1% (ACS, and decennial Census) data have been used widely in the demographic literature, and particularly in studies that adjust for race and ethnicity in analyses of interstate migration. See, for example, William H. Frey, “Metropolitan Magnets for International and Domestic Migrants,” in Bruce Katz, Alan Berube, Robert Lang (eds.), *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp. 12, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Tuman, Damore, and Flor Ágreda, “The Impact of the Great Recession on the Latino Community in Nevada.”

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<sup>8</sup> On the importance of migration networks as social capital (through family ties, friendships, and membership in immigrant organizations) that might link migrants across different areas, see Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Migration in an Era of Economic Integration*, pp. 19, 21, and 42. Although Massey et al. apply the concept of social capital to the study of international immigration, the concept has equal utility in explaining migration across U.S. states.

<sup>9</sup> For Latino out-migrants, the combined shares to California, Arizona and Texas were over 50% in 2010, while the corresponding share for all out- migrants was slightly less than 40% in the same year.

# BROOKINGS MOUNTAIN WEST

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Dr. Jaewon Lim is an Assistant Professor of School of Environmental and Public Affairs in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dr. Lim earned his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Regional Planning. Between 2003 and 2007, he served as a research assistant for the Regional Economics Applications Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Before joining UNLV, Dr. Lim held positions as regional economist and affiliated faculty in Office of Economic Development and School of Geography and Development at University of Arizona. His research interests concern urban/regional demographic and economic analysis with the tools of spatial analysis on the topics of sustainable economic development through R&D activities, technology transfer and workforce development.