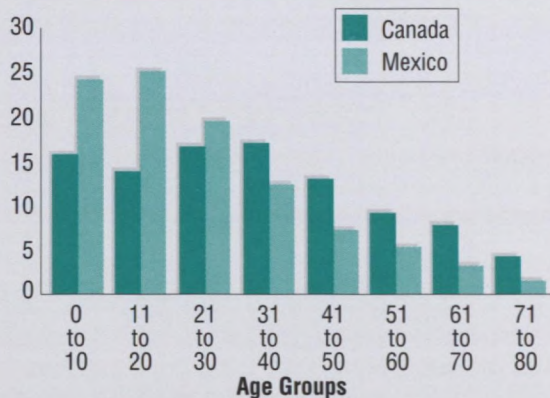


One of the consequences of this explosive growth in population is that Mexico has become a relatively young society. A comparison of the age distribution among the people of Canada and Mexico shows that a larger percentage of Mexico's population is concentrated in the younger age brackets (see Figure 2.2). In fact, half of the country's population is below the age of 20.

Figure 2.2
Age Distribution of Canadian and Mexican Population
(percent of population)



Source: Mexican National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information (INEGI).

Between 1930 and 1990, Mexico gradually transformed itself from a rural to an urban nation. At present, 70 percent of the country's population lives in cities. Better employment opportunities in the urban centres were the driving force behind a general migration to the cities and corresponding redistribution of the population. Today, 38 percent of the country's population can be found in the states of Jalisco, Nuevo León, Puebla, and the Federal District where Mexico's four principal metropolitan centres are located. Together these four regions account for 53 percent of the nation's GDP.

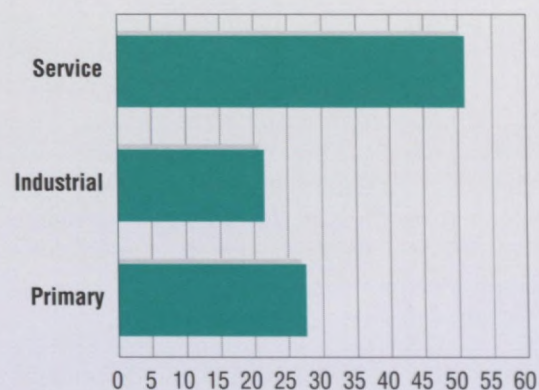
Within Mexico, there have been vast migrations of people for economic or social reasons. Much of this migration is accounted for by male seasonal labour. A 1987 study revealed that migratory movement is no longer only from the countryside to the cities, but also from city to city. Emigration from Mexico is insignificant on a national scale, but it is high in the states bordering the United States.

Employment

In 1991, the estimated size of the Mexican labour force was 31.5 million, less than 40 percent of the total population. This low participation rate reflects the fact that a large percentage of the population is under 15 years of age, and more importantly, that only about half of those of working age actually enter the formal labour market. Unemployment levels are therefore difficult to measure, but a 1989 study estimated unemployment to be at about 10.2 percent. It should also be noted that even among those who do have jobs, under-employment is a fairly common phenomenon.

More than two thirds of the Mexican work force is male, and women have yet to have the same impact on the economy that they do in Canada. More than a quarter of Mexico's workers are active in the primary sector, mostly agriculture (see Figure 2.3). Almost one quarter work in the industrial sector and about one half provide services.

Figure 2.3
Employment by Sector, 1988
(in percent)



Source: Mexico Social.