People in the US tend to attribute Mexican immigration (and Central American migration, often through Mexico to the US) to economic factors, focusing on the push factor of lack of economic opportunity, or on the pull factor of lax or ineffective border control policies. Actually, there is a complicated array of intertwined push and pull factors driving immigration flows.

You might think of the push-pull factor as flip sides of various coins, each coin representing a different kind of factor—economic, cultural, sociological, political, and geographic. Students can think about these various push-pull factors when examining different kinds of data—qualitative and quantitative—on immigration (news reports, fiction, memoirs, collections of immigrant correspondence, statistics, etc.). Keep in mind that push-pull factors regard the causes of migration flows, not their impact on sending and receiving countries. That’s a whole other controversial kettle of fish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push</th>
<th>Pull</th>
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| Lack of economic opportunity  
- debt & currency crises  
- neoliberal reforms  
- border industrialization  
- NAFTA | US economic development  
- expansion of service labor market  
- corporate restructuring and moves  
- recruitment  
- lowering costs of financial transactions (remittances) |
| Quickening communication and transportation | Social networks and chain migration |
| Globalization of Western image | Educational opportunities |
| Proximity | Intertwined histories of Mexico and US |
| Mexican Citizenship and Migration Policies  
- lax emigration regime  
- Central American immigration  
- encouraging Mexican émigré political participation | US volunteer immigration policy  
- porous door  
- family reunification  
- IRCA amnesty (1986)  
- citizenship by birth |
| Political and Public Violence  
- From revolution to one-party state in Mexico (1910-2000)  
- Civil wars in Central America (1970s-1990s)  
- US “war on drugs”  
- US Cold War interventions in Central America | US refugee policy  
- US bilateral relations with Mexico and neighboring Central American countries |
Figure 8. Immigration by Decade—Number Levels and Percent of U.S. Population: 1821–1830 to 2001–2010

Source: Detailed Table 4.