



At a Glance: Remittances from Illinois

- Over 830,000 adults born in Latin America currently reside in Illinois. Almost all migrated from Mexico.
- About 550,000 (66%) send remittances home regularly; averaging \$225.
- In 2004, remittances from Illinois to Latin America totaled approximately \$1.5 billion.
- 41% of foreign-born Latinos in Illinois have been in the United States for 10 years or more, representing a stable community with deep local ties.
- The majority of remittance senders have annual household incomes of less than \$30,000.
- The average remitter sends \$2,790 per year, representing close to 10% of their annual household income. The other 90% is spent locally in Illinois.
- Remittances account for more than half the annual income of remittance recipients in Mexico.
- Most remittance senders in Illinois do not have a relationship with a US financial institution

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**Inter-American Development Bank
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SENDING MONEY HOME

REMITTANCES TO LATIN AMERICA FROM ILLINOIS



**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JULY, 2005**

Background

The dramatic acceleration of remittances to developing countries in recent years is being fueled by the forces of a global economy. However, it is also a testimony to the strength of family bonds across national borders.

Nowhere is this process better illustrated than in the relationship between Latin America and the United States, which constitutes the highest volume remittance market in the world. Indeed, the Western Hemisphere is increasingly becoming an integrated labor market.

It is for this reason that the Inter-American Development Bank commissioned a survey to better understand various aspects of this relationship and the resulting remittance flows. The information contained in this survey presents the first detailed state-by-state analysis of remittances from the United States to Latin America, and provides particular insight into new migration patterns reaching geographic locations well beyond the traditional remittance sending states.

The totals indicate that over \$30 billion in remittances were sent from the United States to Latin America during 2004, with significant amounts (over \$50 million) coming from 37 states and the District of Columbia.

In addition to volume, the survey also provides relevant information about the remittance sending patterns of Latin American households.

More than 60% of the 16.7 million Latin American born adults currently living in the United States send money home on a regular basis. These 10 million immigrants remit on average 12.6 times a year, typically \$150/200/250 each time.

These remittances result in over 100 million separate transactions sent every year from the United States to Latin America, mostly outside the formal financial system.

Recent immigrants send remittances more often than those who have been living for longer periods of time in the United States. However, a significant percentage of all groups of Latin American immigrants send money home on a regular basis -- over 50% of all remittance senders have lived in the United States for more than ten years.

Remittances are not a drain on the local economy. For the ten million Latin American immigrants who send regularly, remittances constitute approximately 10% of their household income. The total income of Latin American immigrants living in the United States is estimated at \$450 billion. 90% of this income is spent locally in the United States.

For recipients in Latin America, remittances range from 50% to 80% of household income, depending on the country.

Remittances from the United States

- Immigrants from each of the 6 major “traditional sending” States (CA, NY, TX, FL, IL, and NJ) currently remit more than US\$1 billion annually. Of this group, New York (81%) has by far the highest percentage of immigrants sending money home regularly.
- Immigrants from each of the next 9 states, generally the more recent destinations for Latin American workers (GA, NC, AZ, VA, CO, MA, MD, NV, WA), send more than \$350 million home annually.

With the exception of Arizona, all states within this group send significantly more often than the national average, led by North Carolina (84%); Virginia (84%); Georgia (81%); Maryland (80%), and Massachusetts (80%)

- Immigrants from each of the next 16 states send home between \$100 and \$350 million annually.

The percentage of workers sending remittances regularly from this group of states is higher than the national average at 68%.

- Immigrants from the remaining 6 states and the District of Columbia send between \$50 and \$100 million. The percentage of workers sending remittances regularly from this group of states is slightly higher than the national average at 66%.

General Trends

- The frequency of sending remittances has been increasing over the past few years as transaction costs have been declining. Although average transaction costs have been reduced by 50% over the past five years (to 7.5%), given the technology available in an era of electronic transfers, fees should continue to decline by another 50 % in the coming years.
- The percentage of Latin American immigrants holding banks accounts in the US is approximately 50%. These immigrants are, therefore, five time more likely to be “unbanked” than the average adult living in the United States.
- The percentage of remittance recipients living in Latin America who have a bank account is estimated at less than 10%.

Remittances to Latin America from the US—2004
(in millions)

