

# The Impact of COVID-19 on Net International Migration Estimates in the United States

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# US Migration Policy Changes Resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2020-Onwards)

- Border closures
  - Closure of US land borders with Mexico and Canada, except for commerce and essential travel (initially implemented March 21, extended in July)
  - Flight restrictions from China (February) and European Union (March), for example
    - 98% reduction in international flight traffic in April
- Visa restrictions
  - Visa issuing offices closed outside the United States, greatly reducing number of approved visas (March 20, 2020)
- Executive Orders
  - Ban travel of non-residents from certain countries
  - “Pausing” legal immigration (issuance of green cards, family based visas) (April 22, 2020, extended to the end of year)
    - Expanded to include most forms of legal migration, especially employment-based (H1B)
- Other
  - US citizens/legal residents living abroad encouraged to return for fear of border closures (March 2020)

# Measurement

- The Population Estimates Program uses American Community Survey (ACS) data on residence one year ago to produce net international migration (NIM) estimates
  - The Vintage 2020 estimates will use 2019 ACS data, which would not measure the impact of COVID-19
- Two tasks to measure impact of COVID-19 on NIM
  - Develop method to make adjustment to NIM
    - Run normal production to develop NIM estimates, and then:
      - A. Do nothing
      - B. Set total monthly NIM to 1/2 for March, "0" for April-June using basic assumption of zero net migration gain/loss
      - C. Adjust total NIM based on other data sources
      - D. Adjust individual NIM sub-components based on other data sources
      - E. Combination of B-D
  - Utilize more up-to-date data sources (March-June 2020)
    - Limited availability at this time

# Adjustment Methods/Data Sources

- Total NIM
  - Flight data adjustment based on past historical relationship of net passenger movement and NIM (unsuccessful)
- Foreign-Born Immigration
  - Visas issued abroad; I-94 arrival data
    - Immigration decreased significantly
- Foreign-Born Emigration
  - Canadian flight data and Mexican border data
    - Emigration decreased significantly
- Net Native Migration
  - Administrative data on permanent and temporary migrants to Canada from the US; US flight data
    - Suggest there was not a net loss (large return in March, some net outflow from April-June)
- Puerto Rico
  - Flight data to/from Puerto Rico and mainland US (March-June “observed” vs “expected”)
    - Reduced net outmigration from Puerto Rico

# NIM Adjustment Scenarios

- Data were limited for making adjustments
  - Special tabulations from US Bureau of Transportation Statistics, US Office of Immigration Statistics, Statistics Canada
- Tried multiple methods/scenarios
  - Flight data could not be used to adjust total NIM
- General assumptions
  - Very likely that migration declined in March 2020 and remained low during the last quarter (April-June) of “Estimates Year” 2020 (near net “0”)
- Averaged estimates derived from eight different 2020 NIM series based on varying assumptions applied to March-June 2020.
  - First four scenarios assume “0” net migration for total NIM, or part of NIM, while last four adjust individual subcomponents of NIM
    - “0” net for April-June
    - ½ NIM for March
    - 10% monthly levels for sub-components (April-June)
    - Different estimates for Puerto Rico (based on ratio of observed-to-expected net passenger flights)
    - Adjustment for net native return in March

# Results/Questions

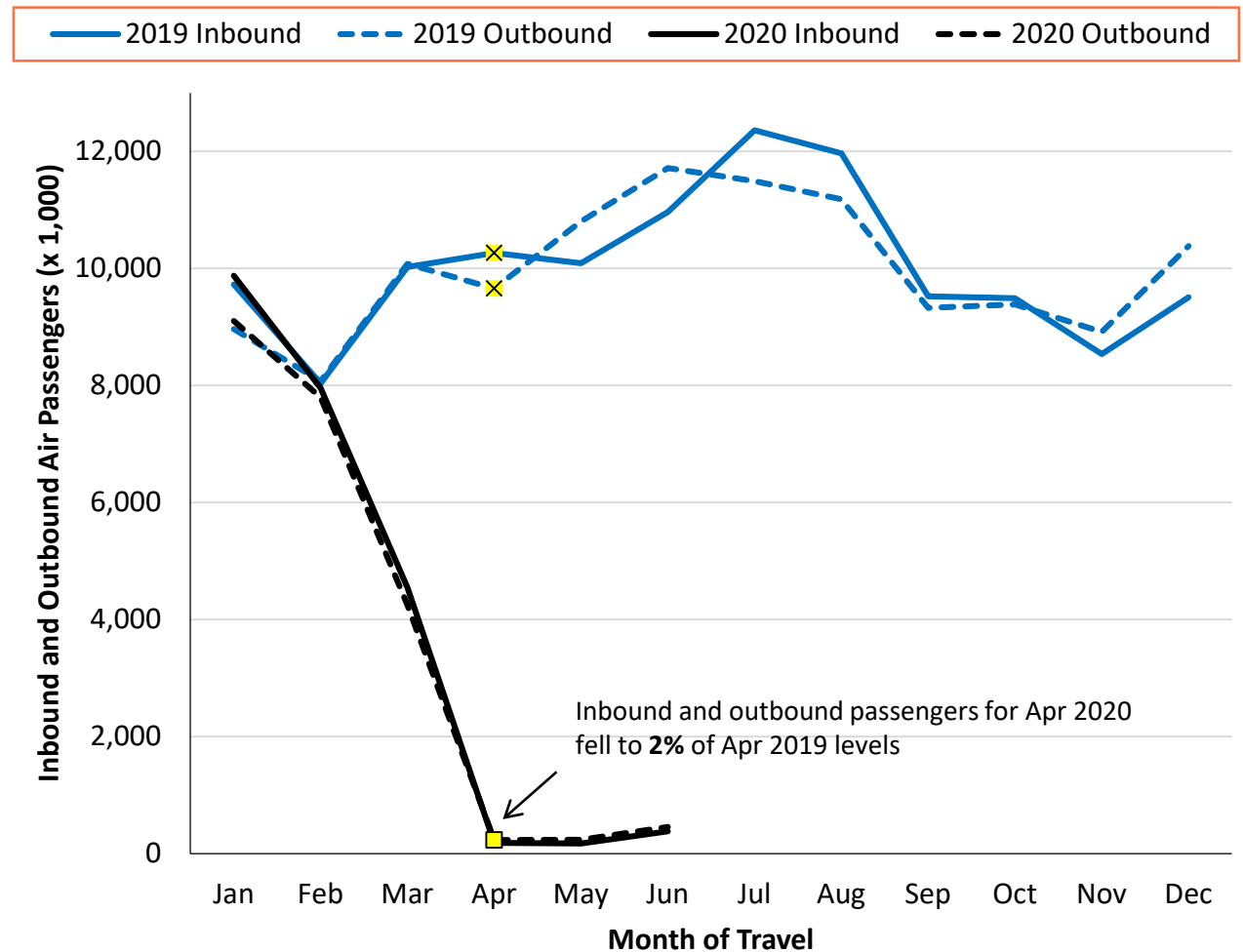
- Range of 87,000 between high and low estimates
- Changing adjustment factors (.05 or .15) for scenarios had little impact on NIM estimates (+/- 5,000)
- COVID-19 adjustments decreased EY2020 NIM by 24%
  - Essentially the same as setting NIM to “0” for 3 months
- Net native migration a big mystery
  - Return of US Citizens in March, potential departures in April-June?
- Seasonality of migration is not taken into account in NIM estimates
- We will potentially find out the answers once more data become available in coming months/years (OIS/2020 and 2021 ACS/Puerto Rico Community Survey, Internal Revenue Service tax returns, etc.)

# Appendix: Figures

# Flight Data: Inbound and Outbound Passengers

In 2020, inbound and outbound passenger totals fall well below 2019 levels:

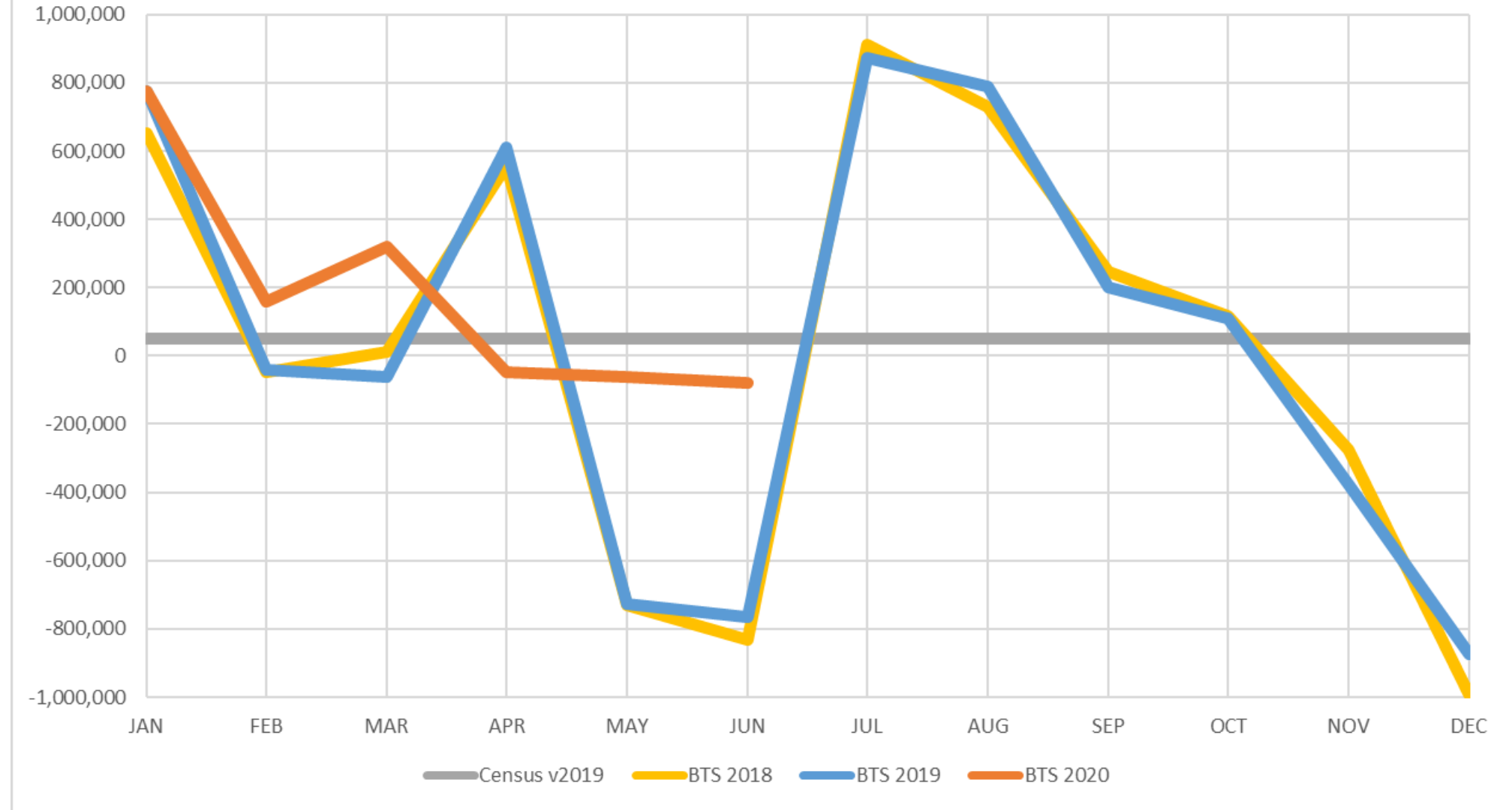
- Higher-than-expected net inflow for Feb and Mar (previous slide), but both inbound and outbound passengers declined for those months
- Outbound passengers declining faster than inbound passengers



Data Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics Form 41, T100 (International) Segment All Carriers



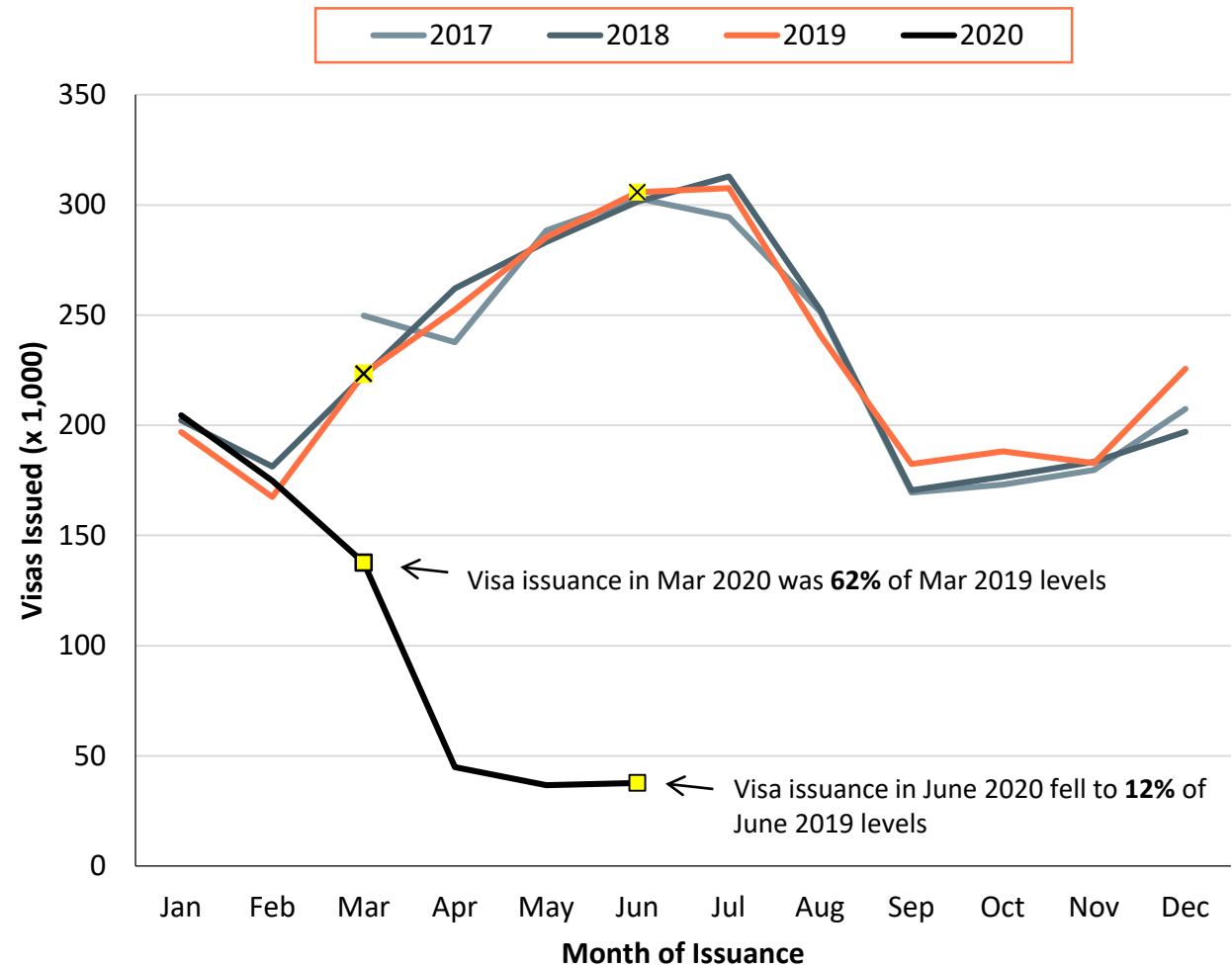
# BTS Net Air Passenger Travel



Data Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics Form 41, T100 (International) Segment All Carriers; US Census Bureau, Population Division, V2019 Population Estimates

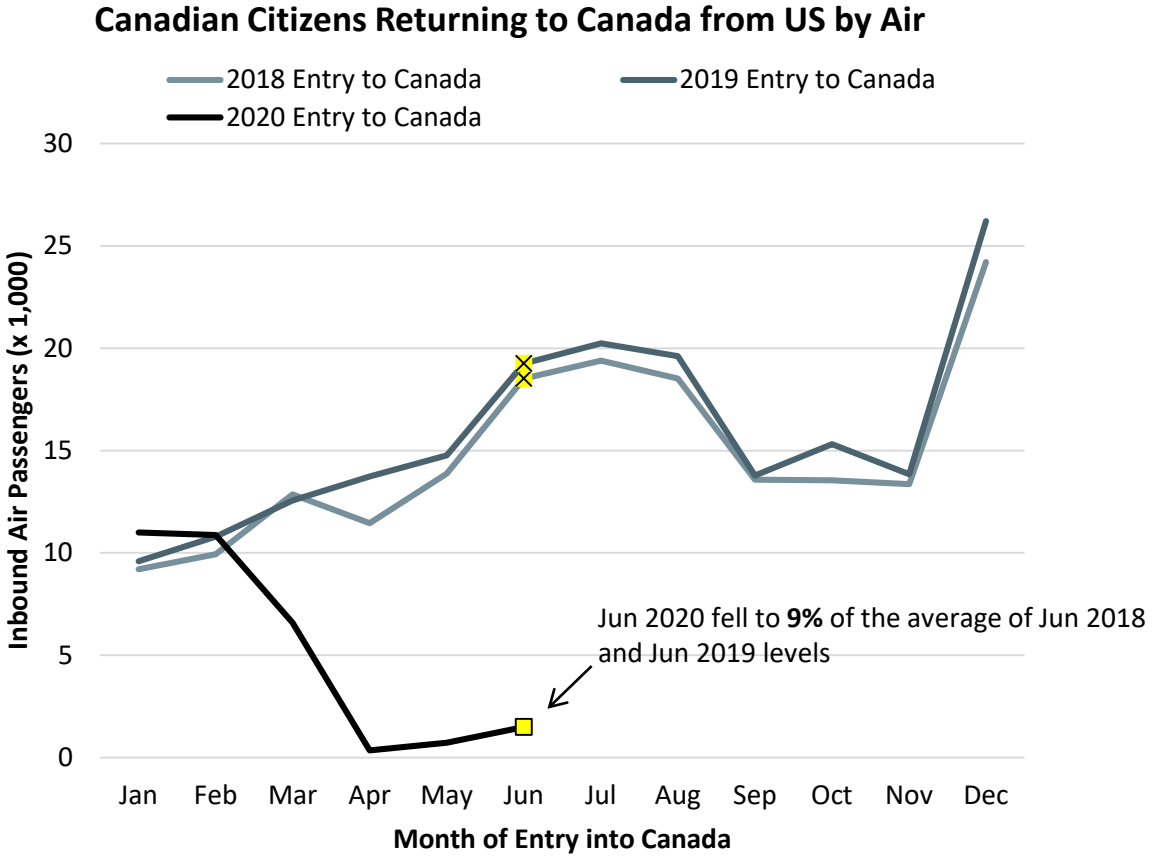
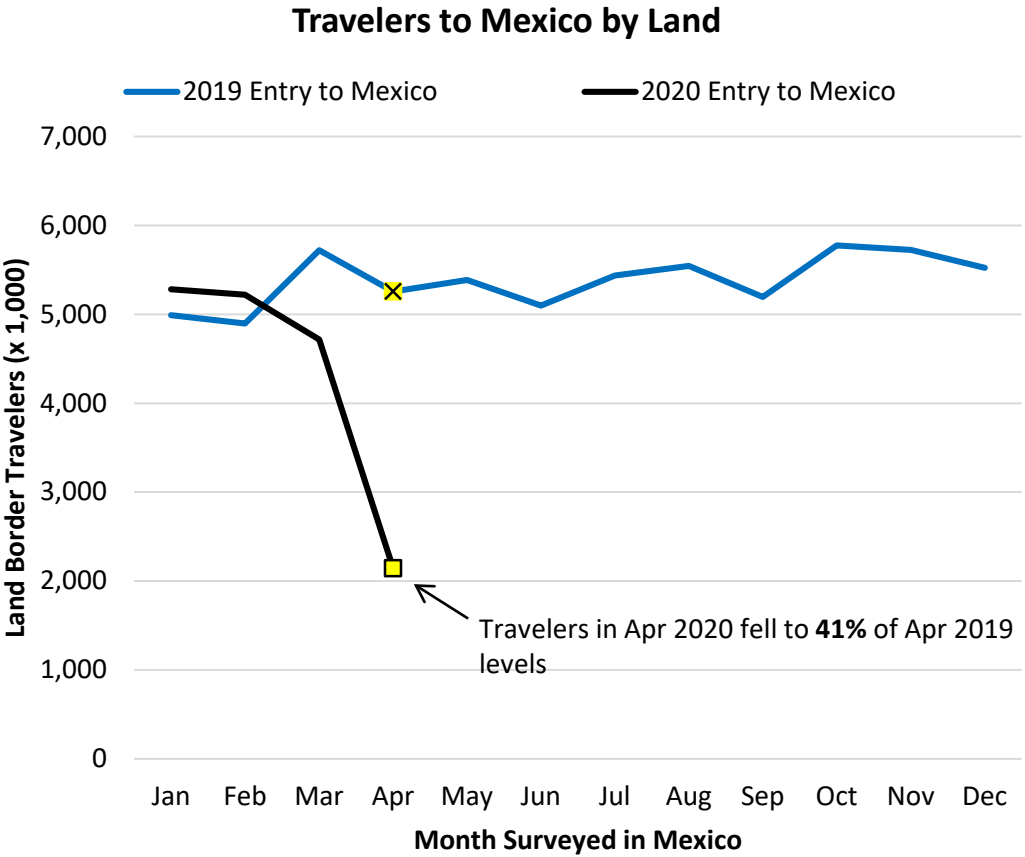
# Visas Issued Overseas and Foreign-Born Immigration

- Bureau of Consular Affairs began reporting monthly numbers in March 2017
- Seasonal patterns consistent before March 2020



Data Source: Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Visa Statistics

# Adjust Foreign-Born Emigration: Country Data



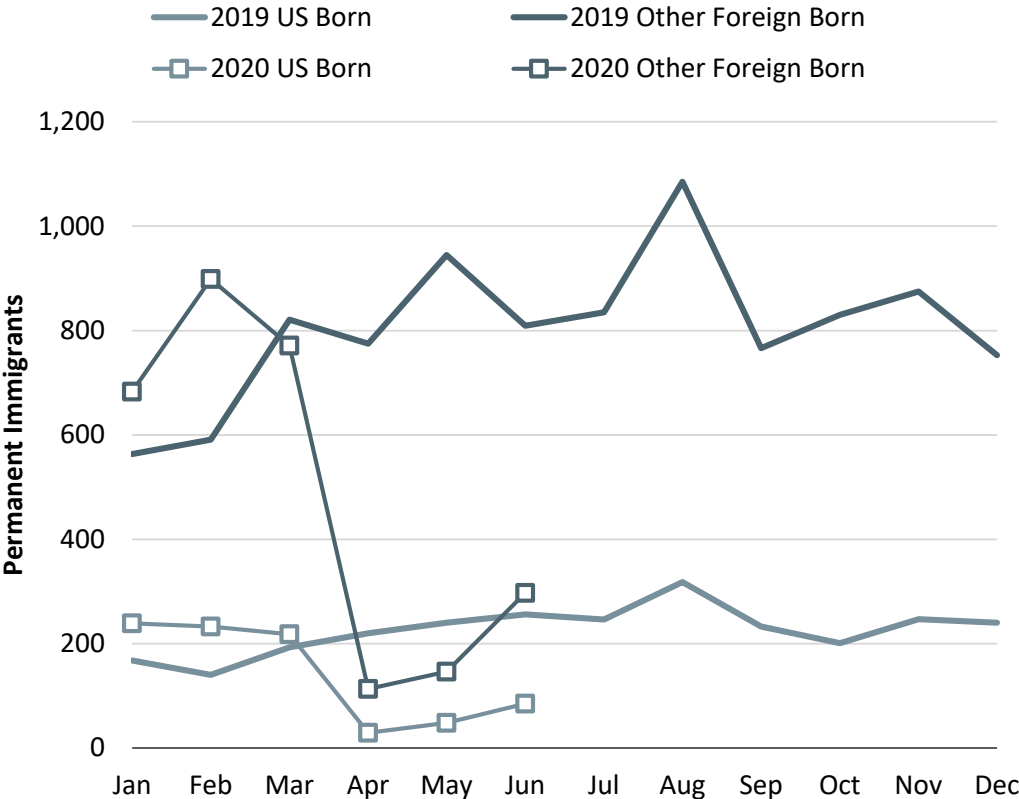
Data Source: Mexican Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), Border Traveler Survey (EVF); Statistics Canada, Border Enumeration from Primary Information Kiosks



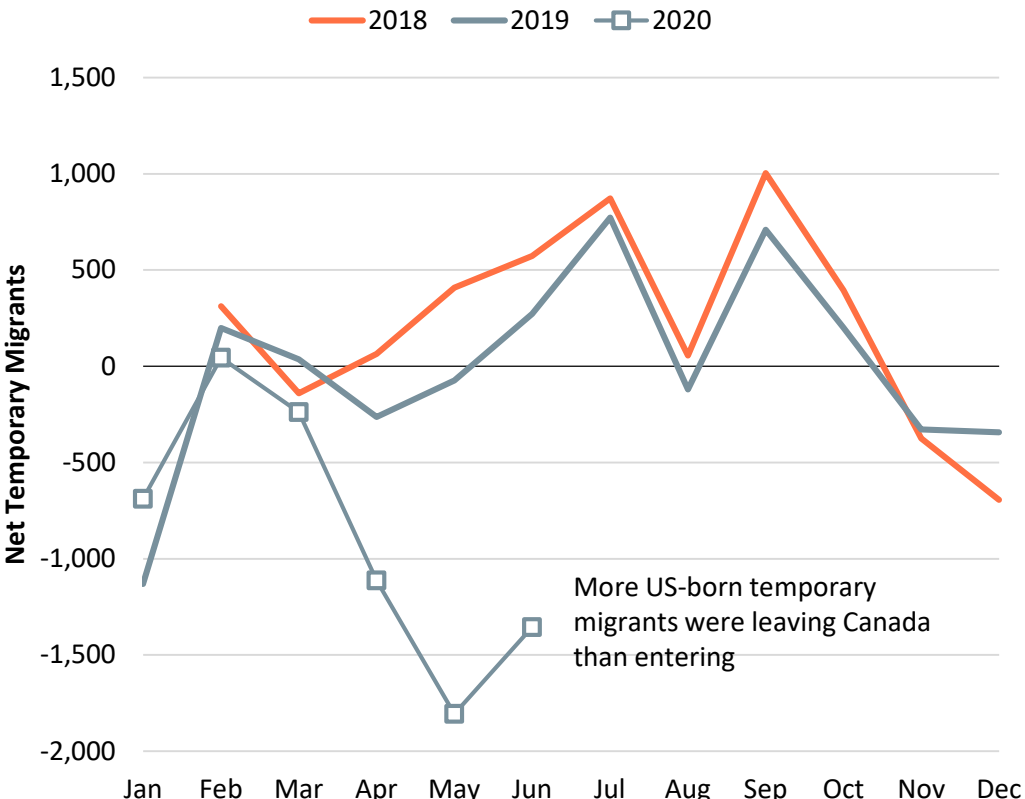
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# Adjust Net US-Born Migration: Country Data

Permanent Immigration to Canada by Country of Birth



Net Temporary Migration to Canada (US Born Only)

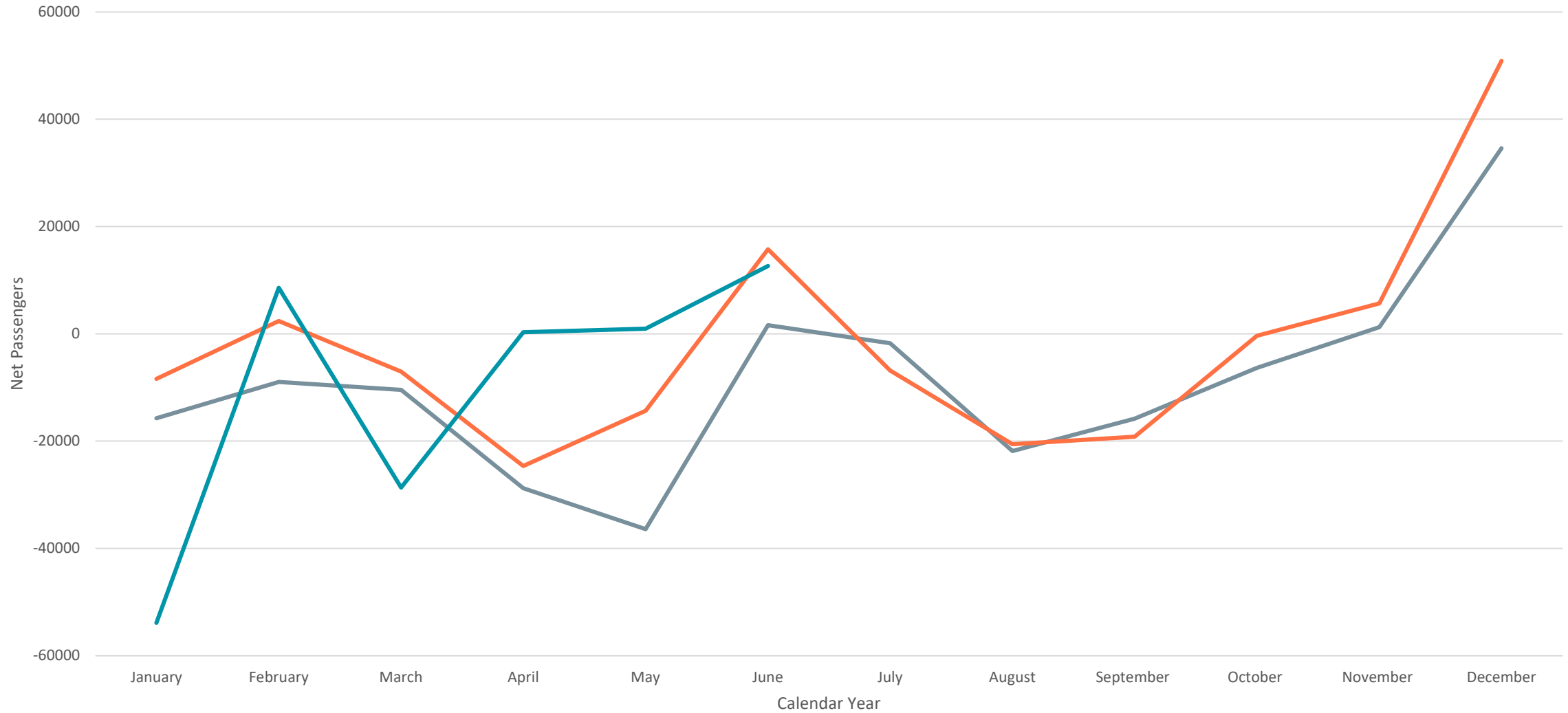


Data Source: Statistics Canada; Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC)



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# Puerto Rico Net Airline Passenger Flow Data: 2016, 2019-2020



— 2016 — 2019 — 2020

Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Airline Passenger Data



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