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The Impact of Region of Origin on Industry of Choice

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Abstract

America's population is constantly growing not just in numbers, but in diversity as well. Immigration, while a controversial issue, is a topic that affects every American. While there have been a multitude of studies done about migrants, few have looked at region of origin as a primary factor in economic decisions regarding migration. How much impact does their home country have on their occupational choices? Using microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS) from 2001 to 2016, this multinomial logit regression equation calculates the impact of certain regions of origin on choosing jobs in Manufacturing, Construction, Professional Services, and Other Services. While some of the results line up with expectations or typecasts, such as women being less likely to work in construction, other outcomes are less intuitive. Not only does this model help us to understand certain stereotypes better, but it has immigration policy implications. Occupational distinctions seen in the results could be generated in the region of origin or from barriers present in America. The conclusion encourages further research in the area.

The Impact of Region of Origin on Industry of choice

Despite the controversy and the stigma surrounding the topic, immigration is an important subject that should be thoroughly explored. There are many facets of the issue to understand and questions to answer. Immigrants are our neighbors, classmates, and coworkers. Any policy about immigration directly affects every American. Because of its prevalence, countless studies have been conducted to see what impact immigrants have on different aspects of the receiving nation. Unfortunately, America does not have the best record when it comes to accepting foreigners.

Since 1790, the United States has been passing legislation regarding foreigners. Some of these were strictly procedural, such as those about the naturalization process. Others were less neutral, even to the point of discrimination. For example, The Chinese Exclusion law was passed in 1882 in response to the large influx of Chinese migrants. Chinese workers were originally tolerated for their role in building railroad lines, but through restricting all Chinese immigration, the exclusion act made it clear the Chinese were not as welcome by the American public as other types of immigrants (FAIR 2018). This has been a pattern in America's history. Citizens tolerate certain types or ethnicities, while actively opposing those they think of as bad immigrants. While the country of origin on these undesirable migrants may change, the protectionist sentiment many citizens in the United States have may not.

The main reason millions of people migrate to America is the chance for educational and occupational advancement, but not every immigrant brings the same skillsets and abilities. Some may speak English or have degrees from universities while others may have had little education or experience with the English language. Does the

region a person migrates from have a causal effect on the industry in which that migrant works based on these factors? The answer to this question may have implications for future immigration policies and could also help us see how history has influenced stereotypes held about certain races and ethnicities in America.

Literature Review

Most labor economic literature about immigration discusses its impact on native jobs and wages. Scholars are divided on this issue. Some economists believe immigration forces low-skilled natives to emigrate or native wages to decrease (Borjas 2003). Others advocate that immigration can be beneficial to natives and to the nation overall (Ottaviano and Peri 2005). Yet, others claim the impact of immigration is minimal or statistically insignificant (Card 2001; Card 2005).

This disagreement in the literature can be extremely confusing at a first glance, but one article, "The Impact of Immigration: Why do Studies Reach Such Different Results?" (Dustmann, Schönberg, and Stuhler 2016), explains how these can all coincide as credible literature. They state that the biggest factors affecting this are assumptions about the economics of immigration and different parameters measured by researchers. Education-experience cells are the most prevalent assumption. Natives and immigrants are grouped into clusters based on the same level of education and experience. The problem with this is the differences in education among countries. Because education from their home country is not considered by employers as prestigious as the same education in America, any education gained overseas is "downgraded." The second assumption is "the labor supply elasticity is homogenous across different groups of natives." Instead, as employers are responding to immigration, the elasticities are

different for each skill level. Variances between models also contribute to differences in the literature. Researches use the National Skill-Cell Approach, the Pure Spatial Approach, and the Mixture Approach. The National Skill-Cell Approach classifies migrants into groups based on skills. The Pure Spatial Approach uses migration flows. And the aptly named Mixture Approach uses both techniques. The different approaches and assumptions cause coefficients between research to be widely different.

Overall, economists have examined the habits and characteristics of migrants. These focus on global migration of skilled and unskilled labor and how these migrants make residential decisions in their new homes. The United States, in particular, has seen an increase in skilled immigration. We know that English-speaking countries attract highly skilled migrants while less legally restrictive countries tend to experience higher portions of less skilled migrants (Kerr, Kerr, Özden, Parsons 2016). A major factor in deciding to migrate comes from income. People with skills and experience move to where their net income is highest (Grogger and Hanson 2008). If these immigrants choose to live in the United States, they tend to initially reside in large metropolitan areas. Migrants with higher skill levels are likely to be more geographically decentralized and live in less populated cities (Bartel 1989). Since smaller cities have less immigration, there is less competition than in large, populated metropolitan areas. There is also little evidence migrants disperse geographically over time. While immigrants move often, it is usually to other larger metropolitan cities with large migrant populations (Bartel and Koch 1991).

Recently there has been research done on several different aspects of migration. Most of the research focuses on the effect of migrants on productivity. The large number

of immigrants with a science or engineering degree has increased patenting per capita in the U.S. (Gauthier-Loiselle and Hunt 2010; Hanson and Slaughter, 2016). A different study showed that the type of visa an immigrant holds determines how productive they are. Those with a student visa outperformed their native counterparts in patents, authorization, and entrepreneurship. Immigrants with work visas were about equal with natives, but immigrants with neither visa type were less productive than natives. These are mostly family member that tag along with the visa-holder (Hunt 2011). Diversity induced by immigration is beneficial in that it makes natives themselves more productive (Ottaviano and Peri 2004). Having communities filled with people from different cultures and backgrounds helps to create innovation and improve problem solving.

Not all economists have reported such positive results. In a study about the market for computer scientists during the internet boom, economists found that while foreign hires did increase output of the sector, they crowded out native workers and lowered their wages (Bound, Braga, Golden, Khanna, 2015). Although Ottaviano and Peri's research showed a "positive correlation between cultural diversity and wages of white US-born workers" (2005), they also found assimilation into a community is vital for gaining all the possible benefits diversity brings.

Surprisingly, there is very little research that focuses on differentiating migrants by origin. Most economic literature treats all immigrants as if they were the same and had a combined effect on the area to which they migrate. But some migrants come from similar cultures, like those in Europe, and some come from places with extremely different cultures, like migrants from the rural parts of Africa. Differences in areas such

as languages, education standards, and climates may determine what type of work migrants are most apt to do once they arrive in America.

Howland and Nguyen looked at Hispanic and Asian immigrant employment in four specific industries: fruit and vegetable processing and canning; apparel; leather and leather products manufacturing; and meat processing (2010). Interestingly, their findings showed that Hispanic workers helped with job creation and retention in all the industries except meat processing. They also state this may be a reason economic literature has not found solid proof that the wages or employment of low-skilled natives are significantly or negatively impacted by migration. While Howland and Nguyen's research is one that makes the distinction between migrants, it is still only focused on a narrow area and population. This paper will focus on some these differences on a national scale.

Data

The data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) is used to explore questions related to migration and employment. The variables utilized in the model are industry, region of immigration, region of residence, industry growth, and demographic variables.

Industry

The dependent variable is made up of twelve industries: mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, financial activities, professional and business services, educational and healthcare services, leisure and hospitality, information and communication, utilities, other services, and public administration.

Immigrants in the agriculture, military, unemployed, and not applicable industries was excluded from the sample because of data restrictions.

Region of Immigration

The variable Region of Immigration is made up of eleven regions. These divisions were created by simplifying the twenty-two regions from the United Nations Geoscheme. Canada is included with Western Europe because they are similar in history, language, and culture. The regions in this paper are: Central America and the Caribbean; South America, Canada and Western Europe; Eastern Europe; Sub-Saharan Africa; North Africa and West Asia (commonly abbreviated as MENA for "Middle East and North Africa); South Asia; Central Asia; East Asia; Southeast Asia; and Oceania (Appendix A). This variable is measured by the Census Bureau as the country of residence one year ago. While this is not synonymous with country of origin, it is likely most immigrants coming to America are coming from where they were born. Jobs migrants have after one year of residence show what types of skills they had before they settled. If we used a longer

period, like five years, additional training and education in America could influence their employment.

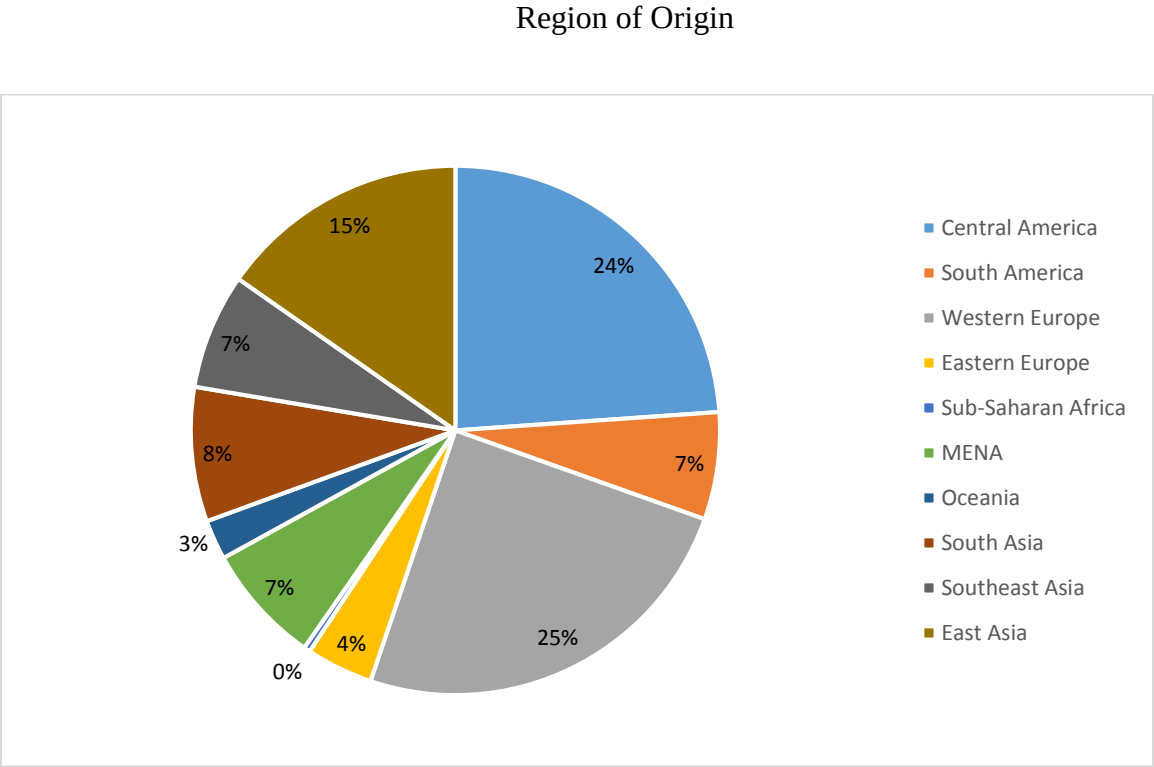

Figure 1 Region of Origin of the 102,045 individuals in the sample from the IPUMS data.

Region of Residence

Where an immigrant lives is also a factor in determining the industry in which they work. The United States can easily be divided into regions where economic, political, and societal factors are similar. For example, Ohio (Midwest) will have a higher demand for manufacturing workers than Montana (West) because it is more populated and has more factories. These distinctions come from the IPUMS data. The codes are distinguished into four main groups and nine subgroups. The regression will include the four main categories: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West (Appendix B).

Growth of Industry

This variable is the average growth rate of the industry for the three years prior. This will make sure the model does not overestimate the impact any of the other variables have on the dependent variable. If one industry has been growing rapidly within the last few years, migrants may choose to go where the jobs are, not where their skills are.

Demographic Variables

To control for variation between individual characteristics, the model will include gender, education (in years), and age. As stated in the literature review, education is not equivalent in every country. Getting a bachelor's degree in South America may be treated more like an associate degree in America. Since quality cannot be controlled for, years of education may not fully capture differences in education among migrants.

Despite the size of the data and the availability of variables, the American Community Survey data have some issues and limitations. One of the major problems with the data is that immigrants do not always get a job in the skill for which they are trained. A study in Canada showed that native Canadians or immigrants with degrees from Canadian schools were more likely to be employed in engineering jobs than those with training or education from non-European countries (Boyd and Thomas 2002). The IPUMS data do not show employment discrimination or systemic educational differences between countries. This problem may understate what immigrants are trained for before emigration from their home countries.

Summary Statistics

VARIABLES	(2) mean	(3) sd	(4) min	(5) max
Age (in years)	35.44	13.58	16	95
Years of Education	7.820	2.763	0	11
Female	0.444	0.497	0	1
Mining	0.00572	0.0754	0	1
Construction	0.0676	0.251	0	1
Manufacturing	0.103	0.304	0	1
Wholesale Trade	0.0273	0.163	0	1
Retail Trade	0.0968	0.296	0	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0.0293	0.169	0	1
Utilities	0.00433	0.0657	0	1
Info and Comm	0.0243	0.154	0	1
Finance Sector	0.0527	0.223	0	1
Professional Services	0.149	0.356	0	1
Edu, Health, Social Services	0.215	0.411	0	1
Arts	0.116	0.321	0	1
Other Services	0.0547	0.227	0	1
Public Administration	0.0541	0.226	0	1
Northeast	0.194	0.395	0	1
Midwest	0.151	0.358	0	1
South	0.372	0.483	0	1
West	0.284	0.451	0	1
Growth Rate	0.00889	0.0229	-0.101	0.0705
n= 102,045				

Empirical Model

$$Industry = \beta 1 + \beta 2\ Region\ of\ Immigration + \beta 3\ Region\ of\ Residence + \beta 4\ Gender + \beta 5\ Education + \beta 6\ Age + \beta 7\ Industry\ Growth$$

Because immigrants choose their jobs based on other exogenous variables, industry is the dependent variable. Using a multinomial logit regression shows what impact each independent variable has on immigrants choosing that particular industry

over the industries in the base outcome. I chose four industries that have distinct stereotypes: manufacturing, construction, professional services, and other services. The base outcome includes the remaining eight industries.

Manufacturing, while not necessarily stereotyped to one country or region, is closely tied with low-skilled immigration. Construction is commonly associated with Central and South Americans. Professional services include STEM jobs, company management positions, and information technology jobs. All of these can be stigmatized as Asian and other high-skilled immigrant type of jobs. Lastly, other services include occupations such as auto repairs, beauty/nail salons, and dry-cleaning services. While these are usually stereotyped as immigrant-held occupations, some are stereotyped as Asian female jobs while others are more typically held by Central American males.

Not all the regions had a large enough sample size to be included in the equation. Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa made up only three percent of the migrants in the data set. Being so small, individual migrants from these regions were included in the coefficient term. Western Europe and Canada, on the other hand, made up the largest portion of the sample, but because the culture and economic status of the region are so similar to that in the United States, they were also included in the coefficient.

Multinomial Logit Results

VARIABLES	(2) Manufacturing	(3) Construction	(4) Professional Services	(5) Other Services
Central America	1.344***	2.586***	1.243***	1.226***
	(0.0472)	(0.109)	(0.0348)	(0.0503)
South America	1.091	1.785***	1.002	1.661***
	(0.0581)	(0.112)	(0.0407)	(0.0884)
East Asia	1.058	0.755***	0.735***	0.749***
	(0.0392)	(0.0455)	(0.0224)	(0.0370)
South Asia	1.156***	0.883	2.301***	0.861**
	(0.0561)	(0.0692)	(0.0703)	(0.0588)
Middle East and North Africa	0.669***	1.044	0.758***	0.843***
	(0.0350)	(0.0661)	(0.0307)	(0.0522)
East Europe	0.971	2.079***	1.062	1.422***
	(0.0641)	(0.159)	(0.0512)	(0.0966)
Southeast Asia	1.086*	0.764***	0.724***	1.134**
	(0.0528)	(0.0591)	(0.0306)	(0.0640)
Northeast	0.955	0.788***	0.849***	1.021
	(0.0346)	(0.0358)	(0.0225)	(0.0424)
Midwest	1.568***	0.890**	0.732***	0.932
	(0.0553)	(0.0432)	(0.0221)	(0.0438)
South	0.960	1.220***	0.796***	1.018
	(0.0292)	(0.0407)	(0.0183)	(0.0360)
Female	0.549***	0.0880***	0.591***	1.398***
	(0.0137)	(0.00422)	(0.0112)	(0.0401)
Years of Education	0.976***	0.796***	1.092***	0.903***
	(0.00458)	(0.00408)	(0.00435)	(0.00486)
Age (in years)	1.012***	1.004***	1.000	1.003***
	(0.000855)	(0.00101)	(0.000706)	(0.00102)
Growth Rate	0***	1.21e-08***	104,459***	1.38e-08***
	(0)	(7.19e-09)	(56,009)	(9.10e-09)
Constant	0.144***	0.624***	0.134***	0.157***
	(0.00858)	(0.0412)	(0.00645)	(0.0107)
Observations	102,045	102,045	102,045	102,045

Se in Eform in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Analysis and Discussion

In general, the results of the regression followed the stereotypes held in America about these industries. As hypothesized, Central Americans and South Americans are more likely to choose a job in construction than in any other field. Surprisingly, East Europeans also are more likely to choose construction almost to the same magnitude at that of Central Americans. Two regional groups, East Asia and MENA, are less likely to be in any of the chosen industries than the base. This could be influenced by several reasons. The most likely explanation is there is another field that these immigrants choose, but it also could mean there are barriers preventing these specific migrants from these fields. Maybe this is because of the types of migrants that come from these regions. As stated in the literature, how migrants come over does matter. If some come over as refugees, then they do not have the same skills as those that migrate voluntarily. South Asians, the majority of which are from India, chose professional services more than other sectors. Southeast Asians, though close geographically, turn out to be less likely to choose professional occupations and more likely to have a career in the other category. These results make sense: many laundry mats and nail salons are owned or operated by Southeast Asian women. This can also be seen in the results for being female. Females are less likely to choose any occupation other than other services. Women are also extremely unlikely to go into construction. This is probably just as true for immigrant women as it is for native women.

The non-regional variables also yielded interesting results. Living in the South significantly increases choosing construction while living in the Midwest, or the "rust belt", does the same for manufacturing. If the weather is warmer in the South, the more days construction crews can work, making the South a better place for those skills, not to mention that the South is geographically closer to the main source of construction migrants, Central America. The Midwest is known for its factories and manufacturing, so it is primed for low-skilled migrants to find jobs easily. The North, on the other hand, is more likely to be a significant factor in another field such as financial services. Years of education was significant in all four industries but was only positive for professional services. Age, while significant in three of the four industries, seemed to neither increase or decrease choosing any occupation. Growth rate makes substantial differences in each of the industries, but affects professional services oppositely than the other sectors. This means that if professional service occupation has been rising the prior three years then migrants are extremely likely to enter that industry. This may be due to the fact that many professional service jobs have been created between 2001 and 2016. Naturally, since the United States receives a large proportion of high skilled immigrants, these immigrants find jobs that meet those skillsets. This also could account for the extreme decrease in choosing manufacturing, construction, or other services despite how those individual industries are performing.

The results generally follow what can be seen in real life. By reflecting reality, the model's results can provide insight to trends we may have never noticed or considered. Unfortunately, there seems to be a factor missing from the equation given such a low pseudo R^2. Unobservable variables may be the main contributor to this, but it is also

likely that some useful data is simply not recorded or kept well. Questions such as "Why did you migrate to the United States?" or "What type of visa do you currently hold?" could prove useful. The former could help to determine which immigrants can be classified as refugees. Since immigrants tend to be more skilled and bring capital with them in comparison to refugees, the distinction could improve the regression formula. The latter could further distinguish migrants based on the literature that states visa type matters (Hunt 2011). Overall, while the regression can be useful, it would help to add other exogenous variables.

Conclusion

The labor market works most efficiently when employers are matched with employees that meet their criteria. Whether these employees are natives or immigrants, it is imperative that there are not barriers to keep these connections from happening. Why is it that people coming from Central and South America go more into construction? Is it because they have a comparative advantage, they have construction skills no other migrants do, or there is some sort of barrier keeping them from other fields? This can be said about each of these categories. If there are barriers, are they in the regions of origin or here in America?

There are several policy implications that can be taken from these results. Two of these are what America can do, while the other is how other countries can respond. In the United States we can both make it easier for skilled migrants wanting to live in America and help those already living here that may be encountering barriers. Pathways could be made to make integration easier for immigrants in their area of expertise. Making it easier for connections to be forged between employers and immigrants would help foreigners to

quickly be productive members in the United States economy. This could involve recruiting overseas or providing support services for recent arrivals. In regional groups where it seems less likely to choose a high-skilled job, future research should explore what the potential barriers. Countries whose immigrants seem to be struggling to enter high-skilled work may want to adjust either their education system. While these results can affirm what we already see, there is a call here for future work. By investigating more deeply into why these results were found, we can make it easier and smoother for incoming migrants to assimilate, be productive, and thrive in America.

Appendix A

Central America and the Caribbean	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago
South America	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela
Canada and West Europe	Canada, Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, German, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vatican City
East Europe	Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
North Africa and West Asia	Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, UAE, Yemen
South Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
East Asia	China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan
Southeast Asia	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam
Oceania	Australia, Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Appendix B

Northeast Region	New England	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
	Middle Atlantic	New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
Midwest Region	East North Central	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
	West North Central	Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
South Region	South Atlantic	Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
	East South	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
	West South	Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
West Region	Mountain	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming
	Pacific	Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

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