

The State of Latino Chicago



THIS IS HOME NOW

Timothy Ready and Allert Brown-Gort

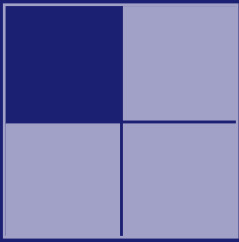
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Preface

Metropolitan Chicago is undergoing a profound transformation from a region dominated politically and demographically by European Americans to one in which no single racial or ethnic group will be the majority. Long a preeminent center of manufacturing and trade, Chicago is known as the city that works. In *The State of Latino Chicago*, we examine the status of the region's fastest growing and, arguably, hardest working population.

In this first edition of what will be a series of regular reports we present an overview of the contributions of Latinos to the region's economic vitality. We examine both the assets and contributions that Latinos bring to economic and civic life and the problems and challenges that must be addressed if Latino Chicagoans are to realize their full potential.

As will be argued in these pages, the future prosperity and well-being of the entire region depend on the well-being of each of its communities. Despite the recent arrival of many, the Latino presence in Chicago is well established. Latinos are here to stay; they now are the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the region. From this we draw the report's subtitle: *This Is Home Now*.

The State of Latino Chicago provides an overview of the growth and distribution of the Latino population throughout the region, along with information on income, employment, education, and other topics essential for understanding the current status and future prospects of Chicago-area Latinos. Subsequent issues in this series will provide more detailed analyses of specific topics—such as education, access to health care, cultural contributions, and employment. In each case, our goal will be to enhance understanding of this large and growing community and its role in the economic, social, and cultural life of Chicago, now and in the future.

We hope that this and future reports will help to provide an empirical foundation for public policies that will ensure Latinos' full incorporation into the economic and civic life of the region, both for their own benefit and the benefit of all Chicagoans. The Institute for Latino Studies is committed to this effort. Our primary vehicle for participating in Chicago-area research and discourse is our Metropolitan Chicago Initiative, located in Berwyn, Illinois.

I wish to thank the members of the Project Advisory Committee for generously contributing their wise counsel to shape the themes of this publication, as well as participants in the policy forum that coincides with the release of this report. Finally, an effort like this could not have been produced without dedicated staff, who once again demonstrated their commitment in the research, writing, and production of this publication.



Gilberto Cárdenas
Assistant Provost, University of Notre Dame, and Director, Institute for Latino Studies

Acknowledgements

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The Institute for Latino Studies gratefully acknowledges the members of our distinguished *State of Latino Chicago* advisory committee. Thanks to Metropolis 2020 and to Atakan Guven for production of the Chicago-area maps.

We thank the following Institute Fellows and staff members for their efforts in researching, writing, and producing this report: Victor Ortiz, Institute Fellow; Sylvia Puente, director, Metropolitan Chicago Initiative; Caroline Domingo, publications manager, and Zoë Samora, publications coordinator; John Koval, Institute Fellow; Martha Zurita, Claudia Hernández, and Heather Minihan, Metropolitan Chicago Initiative staff; and Wei Sun and Jen Laware, Institute Research Department staff. We also wish to thank Elizabeth Station, editorial consultant, and Laurie Glenn-Gista of Think, Inc. All photographs are by Javier Hernández, a student at the University of Notre Dame.

Finally, we wish to thank the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for making available an estimate of the number of Latino firms in the region prior to the release of official data.



“

The main reason why I decided to come to the United States was my two daughters. I want them to have a better future and go to better schools.

—Mother of a Morton East High School student, Cicero

”

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Timothy Ready



Allert Brown-Gort

A citizen of both the United States and Mexico, Allert Brown-Gort is the associate director of the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame. In previous positions he has worked at the University of Texas at Austin, the International Relations Department of the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM) in Mexico City, and at Columbia University. In these capacities he has addressed Latino, NAFTA, and Latin American issues. His current research involves a national qualitative study of the political opinions and policy priorities of the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American communities. In 2000 he served on a transition team for Immigration and Mexican Communities Abroad for the incoming administration of President Vicente Fox.

Latinos recently became the largest ethnic minority or racial group in metropolitan Chicago, numbering more than 1.6 million.

Executive Summary

At more than 1.6 million, or 20 percent of the population, Latinos recently emerged as the largest ethnic or racial minority group in metropolitan Chicago. Latinos have deep roots in the area, as Chicago has been home to a sizeable Latino community for more than eighty years. Metropolitan Chicago's Latino population currently is the third largest in the nation; for the Mexican-origin population it is the second largest. Even more remarkably, 29 percent of Chicago-area children are of Latino origin, as are 38 percent of the students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools.

Two-thirds of Chicago-area Latinos are citizens. While recent migration has contributed greatly to the growth of the area's Latino population and about two-thirds of Latino children have at last one foreign-born parent, 84 percent of the area's Latino children were born in the United States. With or without documentation, more than 20,000 new Latino immigrants, primarily from Mexico, take up residence in metropolitan Chicago each year.

Most recent Latino population growth has occurred in the suburbs and is dispersed in clusters throughout the six-county region. Suburban Latinos now outnumber those living in the city. Newly emerging and rapidly growing suburban enclave communities, like those in the city, have many positive features but also can lead to the linguistic, social, and economic isolation of their Latino residents. Innovative responses are required from schools, local government, and the private sector to fully incorporate new residents.

Latinos' economic clout in metropolitan Chicago has grown in tandem with the population. Between 1990 and 2003 the aggregate household income for Chicago-area Latinos increased from \$5.8 billion to \$20 billion. Nearly one-third of Latino households has incomes of \$60,000 or more; one in five households have incomes of \$75,000 or more. More than half of Latino households are now owner-occupied. Latinos were responsible for nearly half (46 percent) of the increase in owner occupied homes between 2000 and 2003. Between 1990 and 2003 the region would have suffered a net loss of jobs were it not for increases attributable to Latinos. In 2002 there were 40,000 Latino-owned businesses generating over \$7.5 billion in revenues.

The family is especially important for the economic security of Chicago-area Latinos. Latino workers, on average, have much lower earnings than both non-Latino Whites and Blacks. However, Latinos are much less likely than Blacks to be poor and much more likely to own a home. Combining the earnings of two or more working family members who live in a household enables all to enjoy a higher standard of living than would otherwise be possible.

While Latinos' progress in metropolitan Chicago has been impressive in many ways, it has also been fragmented and uneven. Latino workers' disproportionate concentration in low-paying jobs along with discouraging school completion rates for their children raise questions about future prospects for success.

Although the Latino population exhibits many of the classic characteristics of metropolitan Chicago's previous immigrants, the structure of today's economy makes it far more difficult for Latinos to advance. Today's immigrants continue to arrive hard-working, young, and ambitious, but the knowledge-based and services-oriented economy of the early twenty-first century generally demands a level of technical training or educational credentials that many do not possess. Most foreign-born Latino residents of metropolitan Chicago arrive in the United States with very little formal education. Imaginative policy responses are needed to

prevent their becoming trapped in jobs that offer few possibilities for advancement. Given this reality, access to non-formal instructional programs to learn English as well as job skills and GED preparation is essential.

Chicago-area Latino families are uniquely binational, bilingual, and bicultural—a major asset in this era of globalization. Both English and Spanish are spoken in more than three-quarters of the region’s Latino homes. However, many Latino children are growing up in households where no adult speaks English very well. This increases the responsibility on schools to develop and implement effective programs of instruction for students with limited English proficiency and to overcome linguistic barriers to communication with parents.

The average level of educational attainment of US-born Latinos is much higher than that of their foreign-born counterparts but still very low. Future success in the workplace and in other arenas largely depends on dramatically improving educational outcomes. Many Latino children are among those with the greatest needs, but they tend to be enrolled in schools with the fewest resources. Illinois’ funding disparity between school districts serving affluent versus low-income students is the largest in the nation. To further complicate matters, many Latino school children, most of them citizens, are being raised by parents who are undocumented. Regardless of the immigration status of their parents, the proper education and development of these children will greatly influence the shared destiny of the entire region.

More resources should be made available to those students with the greatest needs. But to make a difference, the resources must also be wisely used so that Latino children, in coordination with their teachers, families, and communities, become engaged in learning, graduate from high school, and go on to college and other postsecondary educational programs.

In this first edition of what will be a series of regular reports, we present an overview of the contributions of Latinos to the region’s economic vitality. We examine not only the assets and contributions that Latinos bring to economic and civic life but also the problems and



challenges that must be addressed if Latino Chicagoans are to realize their full potential. Future editions in this series will provide more detailed analyses of specific topics—such as education, access to health care, cultural contributions, and employment.

Other key findings of this report include:

- The Latino population of the Chicago area is, by itself, 15th among all the metropolitan areas in the country. Latino Chicago is approximately the same size as metropolitan San Antonio or Indianapolis.
- The \$20 billion in Latino household income accounts for more than 9 percent of the region's total and is approximately equal to the gross domestic product of Panama or Luxembourg.
- During the five-year period between 1997 and 2002 the number of Latino-owned businesses increased 44 percent, while the dollar value of their sales receipts rose 56 percent.
- High concentrations of Latino businesses have revived declining commercial districts in some neighborhoods and created new ones in others.
- During the 13-year period between 1990 and 2003 growth in the number of Latino workers was nearly equal to the total number of new jobs created in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2003 the total number of jobs in the six-county metro area increased by an additional 41,000. During the same three-year period the number of jobs held by Latinos increased by more than 105,000.
- Also during the 13-year period between 1990 and 2003 the number of homes owned by Latinos increased by 126,000, accounting for 34 percent of the total growth in owner-occupied homes.
- Between 2000 and 2003 the number of homes owned by Latinos increased by 41,000, while accounting for 46 percent of total growth in owner-occupied homes.
- Only 53 percent of Latino students who enter high school in ninth grade graduate four years later.
- Although 78 percent of US-born Latinos eventually graduate or obtain a GED by their late 20s, less than half as many US-born Latinos as non-Latino Whites graduate from college.

The future of metropolitan Chicago depends on the successful incorporation of Latino children—and their mostly foreign-born parents—into the economic, social, and political life of the region. Absent deliberate planning, the best-case scenario is that the current pattern of fragmented and uneven progress will continue. However, with well-informed policies and with political will sufficient to match the formidable challenges that lie ahead, Chicago can and will do better. We hope that this report will serve to inform discussion about the incorporation of this large and growing community into the economic, social, and cultural life of Chicago, now and in the future.

Introduction

Hard work, devotion to family, and a strong sense of community have placed Latinos firmly in the tradition of immigrant groups that have made Chicago¹ one of the great cities of the world. Latinos' already considerable contributions to the economic, civic and cultural life of the region will inevitably increase as their population continues to grow. A fundamental question, however, is whether Latino Chicagoans' economic progress will keep pace with their demographic growth. The fact is that the future prosperity of the entire region is inextricably linked to the Latino population's prospects for full incorporation into the economic and social fabric of the city.

Latinos² recently became the largest ethnic minority or racial group in metropolitan Chicago, numbering more than 1.6 million. Were it not for Latino population growth, metropolitan Chicago would be in the midst of a long-term population decline. In 2004 one of every five (20 percent) Chicago-area residents was Latino (ACS 2004) compared to only 12 percent in 1990 (Census 1990). Indeed, Chicago has already become a major Latino metropolis—with the third largest Latino population in the United States and the second largest Mexican community in the nation (ACS 2003). Even more remarkably, 29 percent of Chicago-area children are of Latino origin. Among students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools (District 299), 38 percent are Latino (ISBE 2004c). And while approximately two-thirds of adult Chicago-area Latino residents are immigrants, the vast majority (84 percent) of Latino children were born in the United States. It is clear that, to no small degree, the future of Chicago is Latino.

Although the growing Latino community possesses salient assets, it also faces significant challenges. Both facts will affect the manner and degree to which Latinos are incorporated into the economic and civic life of metropolitan Chicago. Latinos are workers, consumers, business owners, and community members who contribute greatly to the region and who are experiencing growing levels of success. Nevertheless, their disproportionate concentration in low-paying jobs, along with discouraging school completion rates, raise questions about their future levels of success. Their progress as a young and rapidly growing segment of the metropolitan population (Zurita 2003) and the many challenges that must be addressed loom large for the future of the region.

In twenty-first century America urban centers that continue to experience a steady flow of immigrants are much more likely than others to thrive economically (Singer 2004). The challenge, as always, is finding ways to incorporate the newcomers, along with all other segments of society, in a manner that lets them contribute as fully as possible to the city's economic, civic, and cultural life and, in turn, to reap the benefits from it.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, 'Chicago' in this report refers to the six-county Chicago metropolitan area, including Cook, DuPage, Will, McHenry, Lake and Kane counties of Illinois.

² A note on terminology is appropriate here. Hispanics or Latinos are persons who identify with the terms 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' or with specific Hispanic or Latino categories listed in Census questionnaires—'Mexican,' 'Mexican American,' 'Chicano,' 'Puerto Rican,' or 'Cuban'—as well as those who indicate that they are 'other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino.' Origin can be considered as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race.



Between 1970 and 2004 Latinos accounted for 96 percent of the region's population growth.

In this report we highlight information relevant to understanding the area's Latino population in relation to the present and future of the Chicago region as a whole. We hope that the information presented will spur discussion and debate and, ultimately, inform public policies that will promote the full incorporation of Chicago-area Latinos into the life of the city—not only for their own sake but also for the continued prosperity of the metropolitan area.

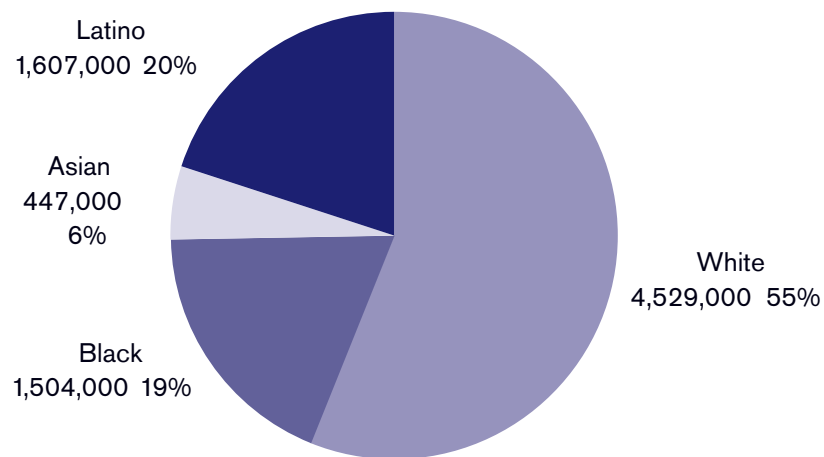
This report is based on various sources. It draws on research conducted by the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Latino Studies, including our Chicago Area Survey of 1500 Latino households, 400 non-Hispanic White households and 400 African American households, as well as on other work done by Institute faculty and Fellows, including reports and papers by John Koval, Rob Paral, Tim Ready, Sung Chun, Wei Sun, and Martha Zurita. The report also draws upon information collected by the US Census Bureau, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the US Department of Education, the Illinois State Board of Education, and others.

Demographic Overview

In recent years Latinos have become an increasingly visible component of the racial and ethnic tapestry that is metropolitan Chicago. Yet economic and ancestral ties have linked many Latinos to the region from as far back as the 1800s, when the first Mexican Consulate was established in the city. Many Mexicans came to live and work in Chicago during World War I, taking the place of those who had gone to war. By the 1920s Chicago was known to have the largest Mexican population in the United States outside of the Southwest. Later, from the 1950s through the 1970s, tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans also migrated to Chicago (Paral, Ready, Chun, and Sun 2004, 23).

Latino Chicago is approximately the same population as metro San Antonio or Indianapolis.

Figure 1.
Metro Chicago Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2004



Source: ACS 2004.

Notes: Based on 6 counties.

Numbers are rounded to nearest 1000.

By far the greatest Latino population growth occurred during the last three decades of the twentieth century and has continued to the present. This recent growth has been fueled primarily by migration from Mexico and natural population increases among US-born Latino residents. By 2002 Latinos had surpassed African Americans as the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the area, one year after this occurred nationally.

Metropolitan Chicago³ ranks third in the nation in the number of Latino residents, after metro Los Angeles and New York. At the same time, the region ranks second in Mexican-origin population after Los Angeles. This means that if Chicago's Latinos formed their own city, they would be the fifteenth largest metropolitan area in the country. Latino Chicago is approximately the same size, in population terms, as metro San Antonio or Indianapolis.

³ For purposes of comparison to other metro areas, the term 'metropolitan area' here refers to the nine-county Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA).

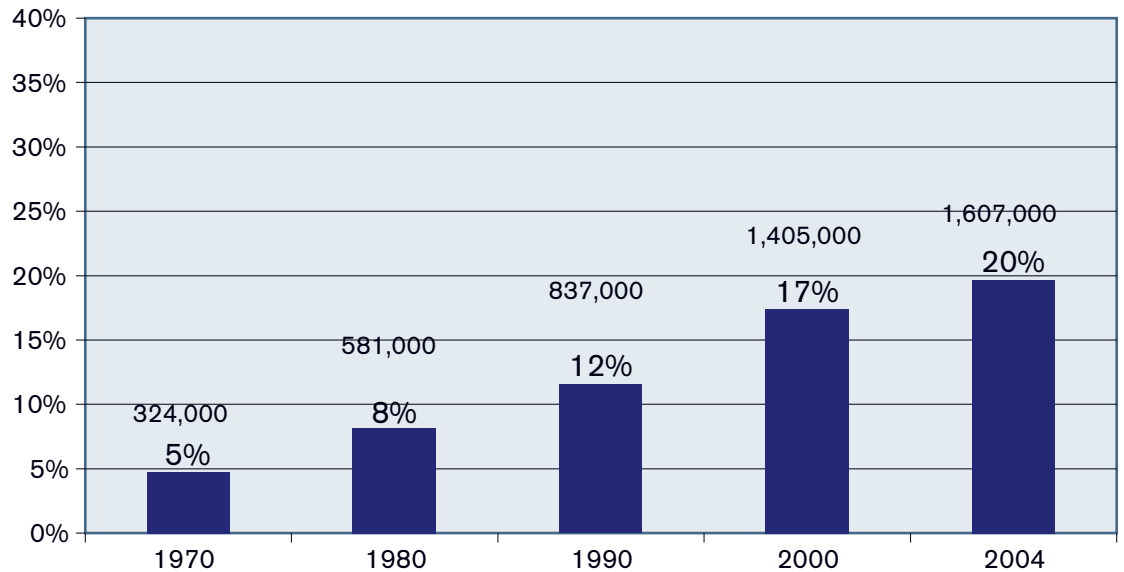
Illinois Latinos are disproportionately concentrated in the Chicago metropolitan area. Ninety-two percent of the state's 1.7 million Latino residents live in the six-county area, compared to only two-thirds of the state's population overall.

Latino Population Growth in Metro Chicago

Between 1970 and 2004 the Latino population of metropolitan Chicago increased from slightly less than 325,000 to more than 1.6 million. During this 34-year period growth in the Latino population accounted for 96 percent of the region's total population increase. The greatest surge took place in the decade of the 1990s when the Latino population increased by nearly 570,000, or about 57,000 per year. This was nearly double the annual rate of increase that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Between 2000 and 2004 metropolitan Chicago's Latino population increased by about 50,000 per year.

During the 34-year period between 1970 and 2004 the proportion of the total population of the area that is non-Latino White decreased from more than 75 percent to 55 percent. Between 1990 and 2004 the number of non-Latino Whites in the six-county region fell by more than a quarter of a million from 4,758,000 to 4,529,000. During the same period the Latino population increased by more than three-quarters of a million persons.

Figure 2.
Latinos as a Percentage of Metro Chicago Residents,
1970–2004



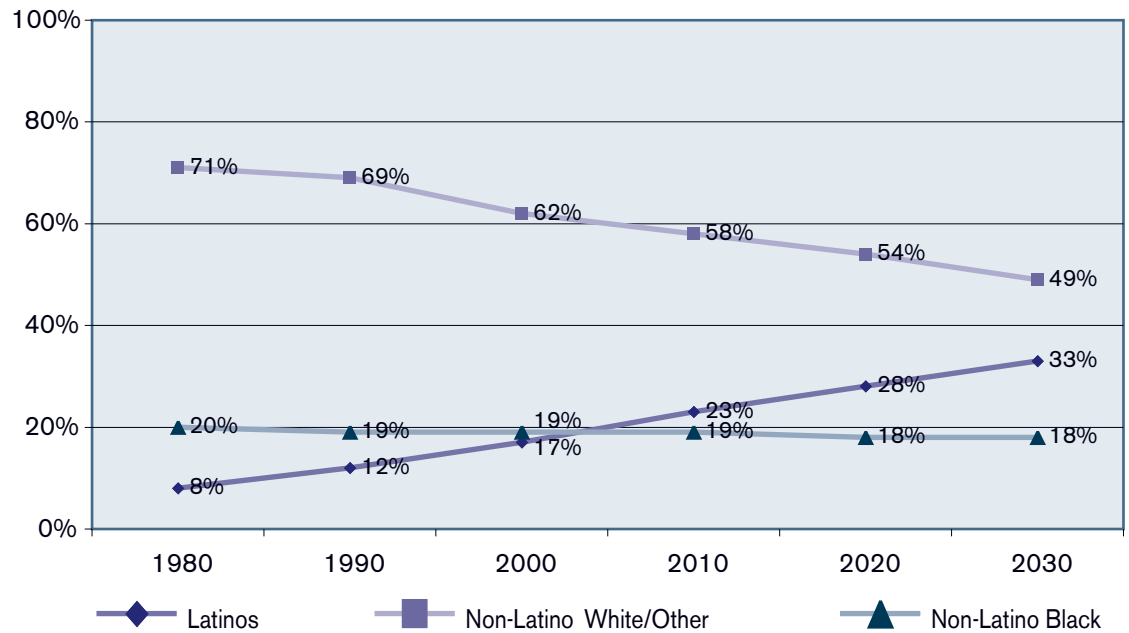
Sources: 1970–2000 Census, ACS 2004.

Notes: Based on 6 counties.

Numbers rounded to nearest 1000.

The rapid growth of the Latino population is expected to continue. A recent projection by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC)⁴ indicates that by 2030 one-third of the region’s population will be Latino.

Figure 3.
Proportion of Metro Chicago Population Groups,
Actual and Projected, 1980–2030



Source: Northern Illinois Planning Commission.
Note: *White/Other includes Asians.

*The majority of
Chicago-area
Latinos now live
in the suburbs.*

Latino Suburbanization

For many years the region’s Latinos were primarily concentrated in the city, but since the 1980s the Latino population has been growing faster in the suburbs than in the city (figure 4).

In 1970 a quarter of a million Latinos lived in the city of Chicago—7.5 percent of the city’s population. That same year only 76,000 Latinos were spread throughout the suburbs of the six counties, and they accounted for only 2 percent of the suburban population. By 1990 the Latino population in the city of Chicago reached 546,000, and by 2000 it had grown to more than three-quarters of a million. Representing more than a quarter of the city’s total population, Chicago Latinos have come to exert an enormous influence on the social, cultural, and economic life of the city. Yet between 1990 and 2000 each of the five collar counties more than doubled its Latino population.

⁴ See www.nipc.org/2030_forecast_endorsed_093003.htm.

Figure 4.
Location of Residence of Latinos in Metro Chicago, 1970–2004

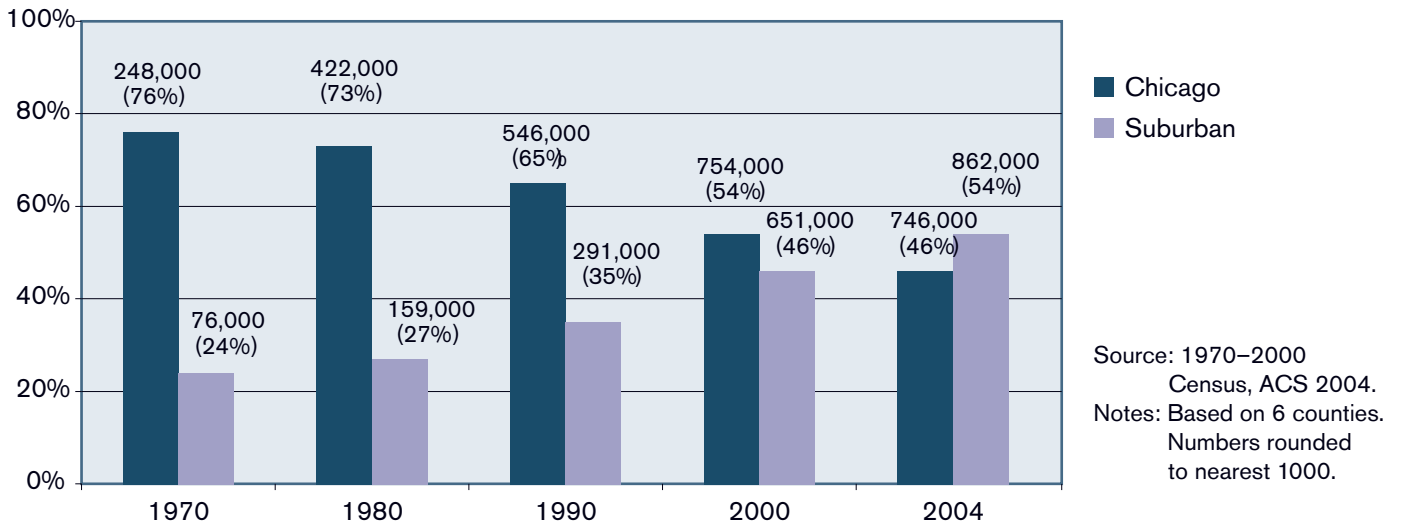
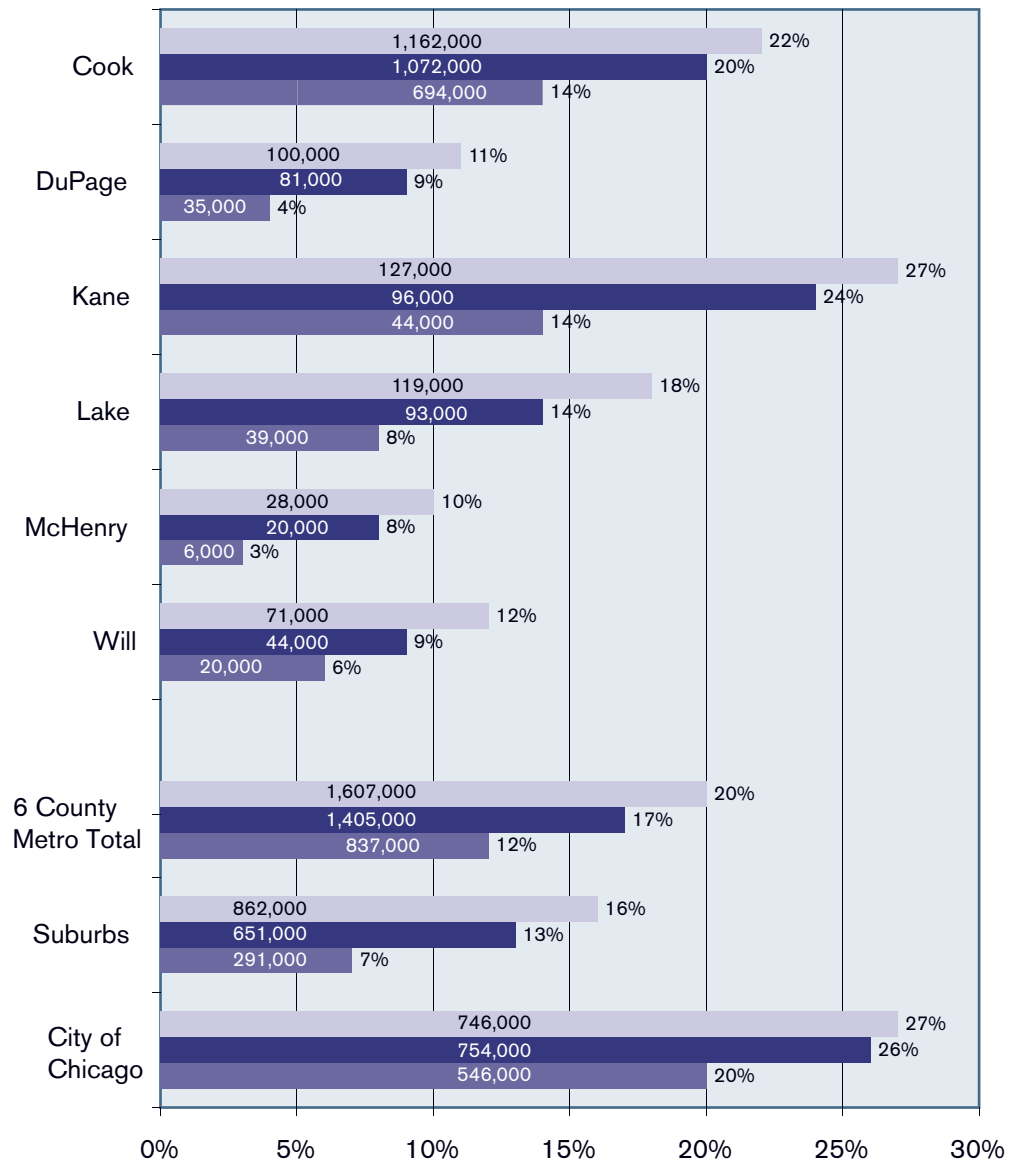


Figure 5.
Metro Chicago Latino Population by Percentage and Number, 1990, 2000, 2004

■ 1990
 ■ 2000
 ■ 2004



Source: 1990 and 2000 Censuses, ACS 2004.
 Notes: Based on 6 counties. Numbers rounded to nearest 1000.

From a tiny fraction of the suburban population in 1970, Latinos have rapidly become a major presence in the suburbs as well. In 1980 only about a quarter of metropolitan Chicago Latinos lived in the suburbs. The proportion grew to more than one-third in 1990 and to just under half in 2000 (Paral, Ready, Chun, and Sun 2004). By 2004 a majority (54 percent) was living in the suburbs, and 2003 and 2004 were the first years in decades in which the city's Latino population did not grow. In marked contrast, the rapid pace of growth of the suburban population has continued. It is as a result of the continued growth—now concentrated in the suburbs—that Latinos have become the largest racial or ethnic group in the region, surpassing African Americans in 2002.

As illustrated in Figure 5 and in the maps that follow, Latinos are widely dispersed across the six-county suburban region. Between 1990 and 2004 the suburban Latino population increased by more than 570,000, or 205 percent. Each of the five suburban counties, plus the suburban portion of Cook, experienced triple-digit increases in the percentages of their residents who are Latino. Increases ranged from 189 percent in Kane County to 367 percent in McHenry. Numerically, each county's increase was substantial not only in absolute terms but also relative to the size of the counties' population.

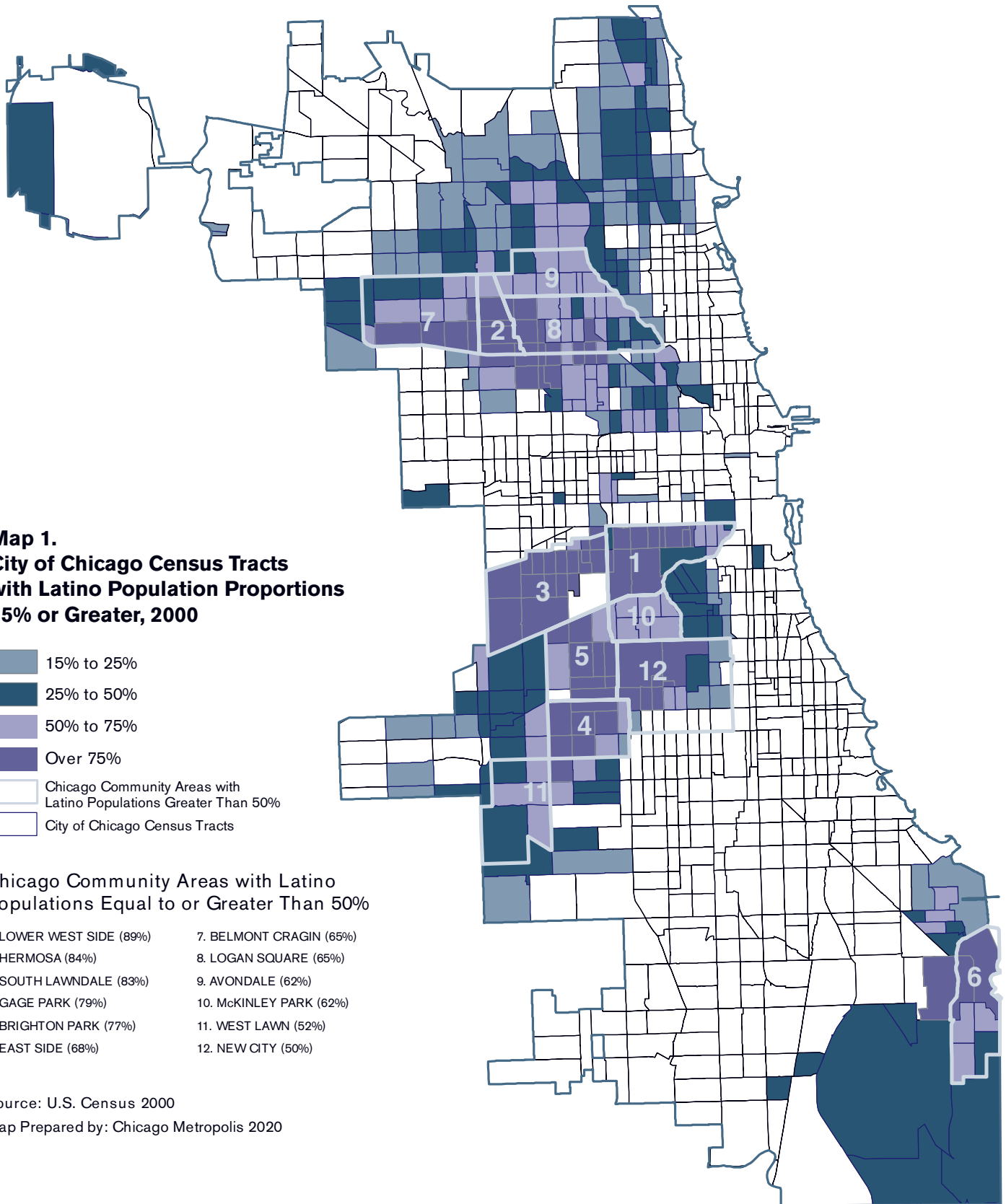
A major factor behind the disproportionate population growth is migration directly from Latin America—especially Mexico. According to Census 2000, immigrants who arrived in the United States during the 1990s were more likely to take up residence in the suburbs than in the city (55 percent as opposed to 45 percent respectively). More than 68,000 suburban residents indicated that they had moved to suburban Chicago directly from Latin America during the latter half of the 1990s. Also contributing to the suburban growth is out-migration from the city. During the latter half of the 1990s, 55,000 Latinos moved from Chicago to the suburbs, while only 22,000 moved from the suburbs to the city.

The following maps illustrate both the concentration and growth of Latinos in the region. Map 1 details the concentration of the Latino community in the city of Chicago, where Mexican enclaves have replaced distinct European ethnic neighborhoods in the northwest and southwest bungalow belts. Latinos have high concentrations in many areas of the city with the exception of the Lakefront, West Side, and South Side. There are now 12 Community Areas in Chicago with a population that is at least 50 percent Latino. This is up from 7 in 1990. In addition, the 'Clark Street Corridor' has expanded north to the city limits and south along Ashland Avenue to Irving Park Road.

As Map 2 indicates, there has been a staggering transformation in southwest side neighborhoods such as Gage Park and West Lawn and northwest neighborhoods such as Belmont Cragin. Some areas have lost a small portion of their Latino population, with the greatest losses in West Town and the Near West Side.

Maps 3 and 4 indicate that, regionally, there are Latino settlements in each of the surrounding counties with the largest concentrations in the satellite cities of Joliet, Aurora, Elgin, and Waukegan. Cicero and Berwyn have joined these areas as municipalities to be counted among the areas with the largest Latino populations. Importantly, the metropolitan Chicago area has seen the emergence of three majority Latino suburbs, Stone Park,⁵ Cicero, and Melrose Park, and an even greater number of Latino ethnic enclaves, primarily in the satellite cities.

⁵ Stone Park has been majority Latino since at least 1980.



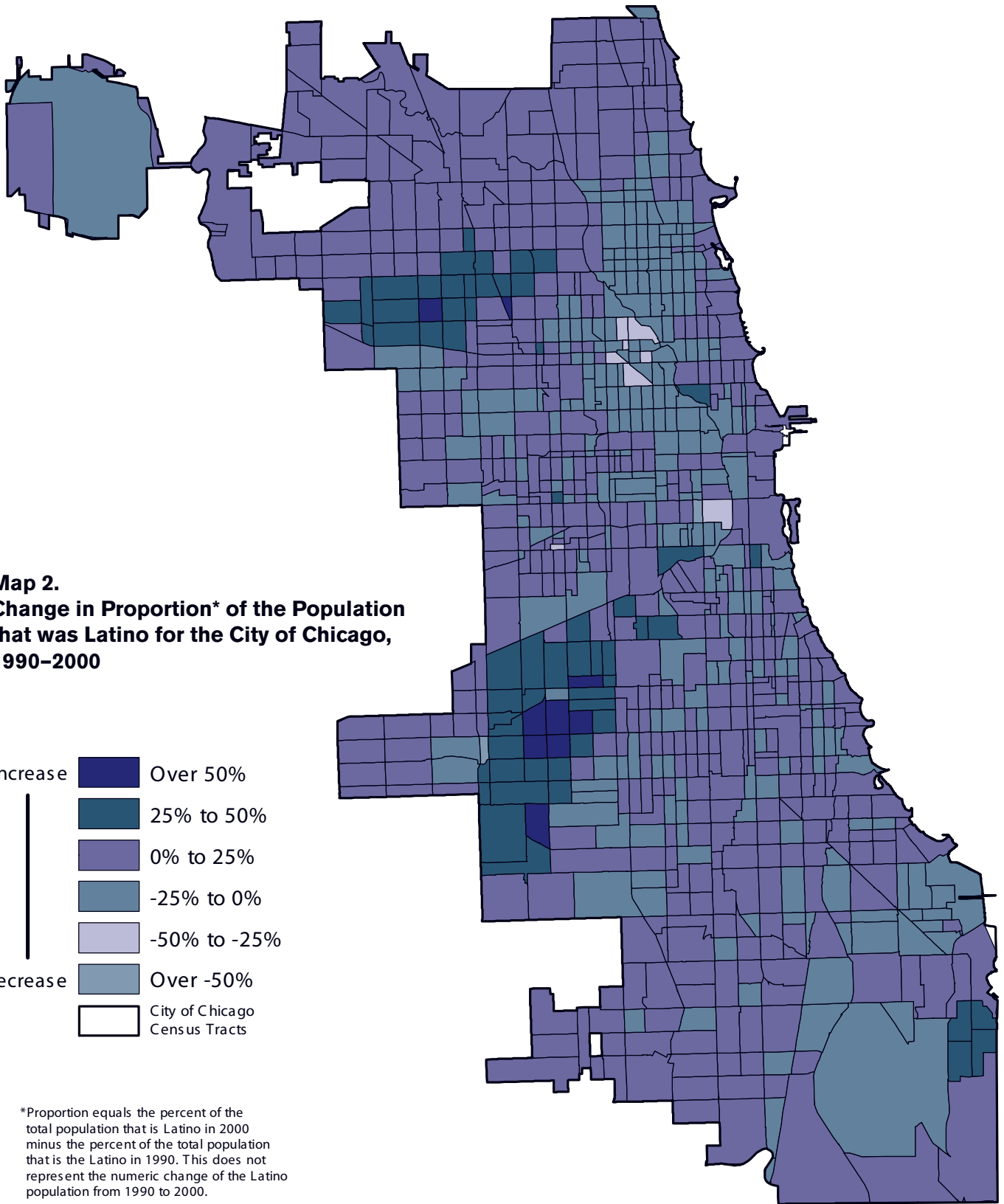
Map 1.
City of Chicago Census Tracts
with Latino Population Proportions
15% or Greater, 2000

- 15% to 25%
- 25% to 50%
- 50% to 75%
- Over 75%
- Chicago Community Areas with Latino Populations Greater Than 50%
- City of Chicago Census Tracts

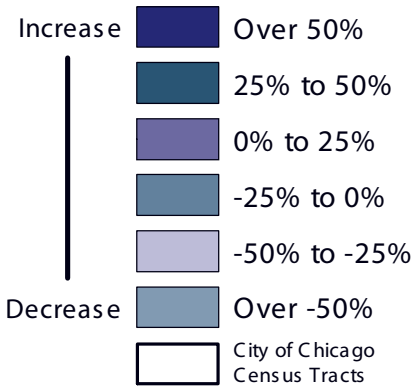
Chicago Community Areas with Latino Populations Equal to or Greater Than 50%

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. LOWER WEST SIDE (89%) | 7. BELMONT CRAGIN (65%) |
| 2. HERMOSA (84%) | 8. LOGAN SQUARE (65%) |
| 3. SOUTH LAWNSDALE (83%) | 9. AVONDALE (62%) |
| 4. GAGE PARK (79%) | 10. MCKINLEY PARK (62%) |
| 5. BRIGHTON PARK (77%) | 11. WEST LAWN (52%) |
| 6. EAST SIDE (68%) | 12. NEW CITY (50%) |

Source: U.S. Census 2000
 Map Prepared by: Chicago Metropolis 2020

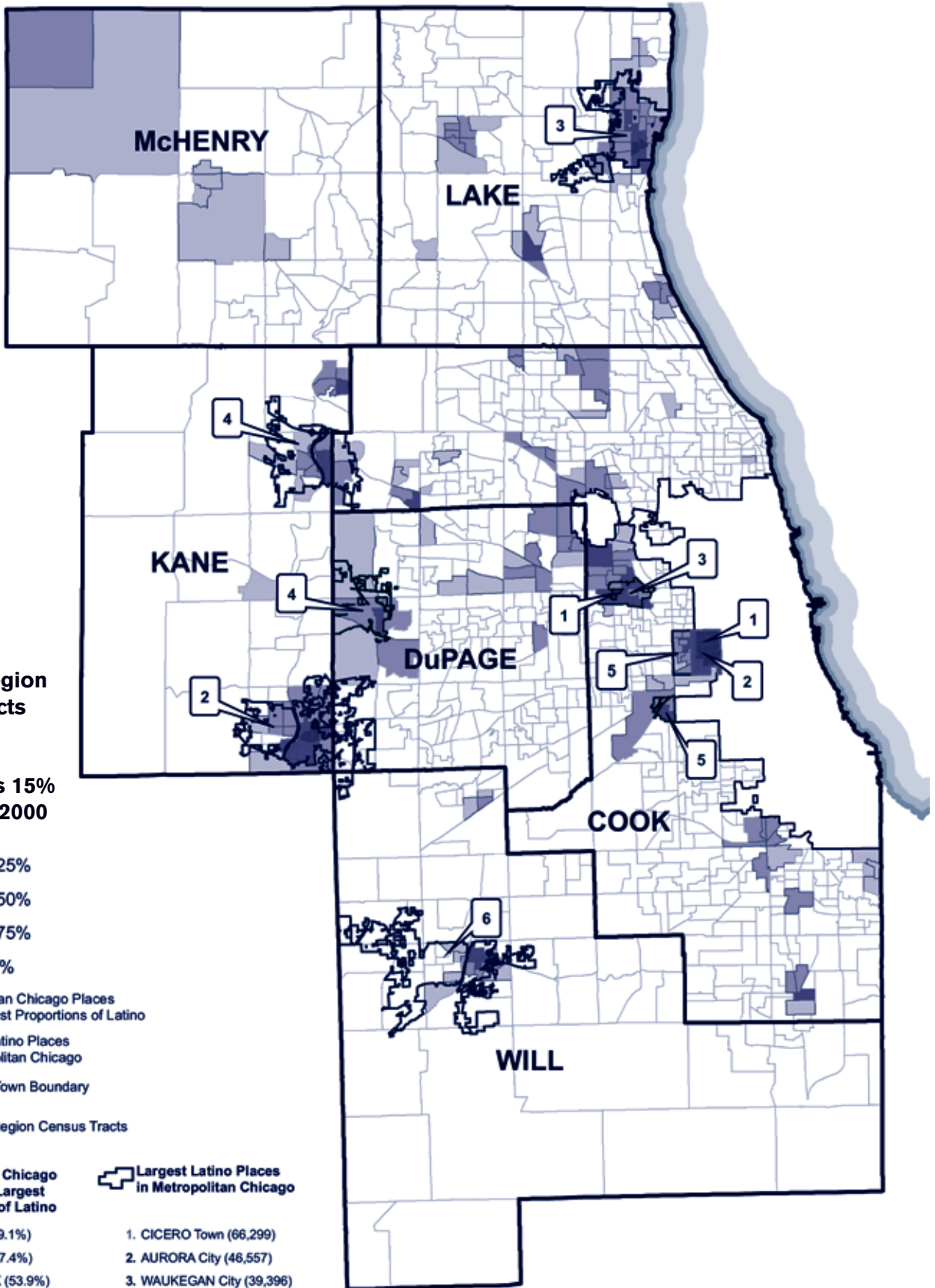


Map 2.
Change in Proportion* of the Population
that was Latino for the City of Chicago,
1990-2000



*Proportion equals the percent of the total population that is Latino in 2000 minus the percent of the total population that is the Latino in 1990. This does not represent the numeric change of the Latino population from 1990 to 2000.

Source: U.S. Census 1990 & 2000
 Map Prepared by: Chicago Metropolis 2020



**Map 3.
Chicago Region
Census Tracts
with Latino
Population
Proportions 15%
or Greater, 2000**

- 15% to 25%
- 25% to 50%
- 50% to 75%
- Over 75%

Metropolitan Chicago Places with Largest Proportions of Latino

Largest Latino Places in Metropolitan Chicago

CICERO Town Boundary

Chicago Region Census Tracts

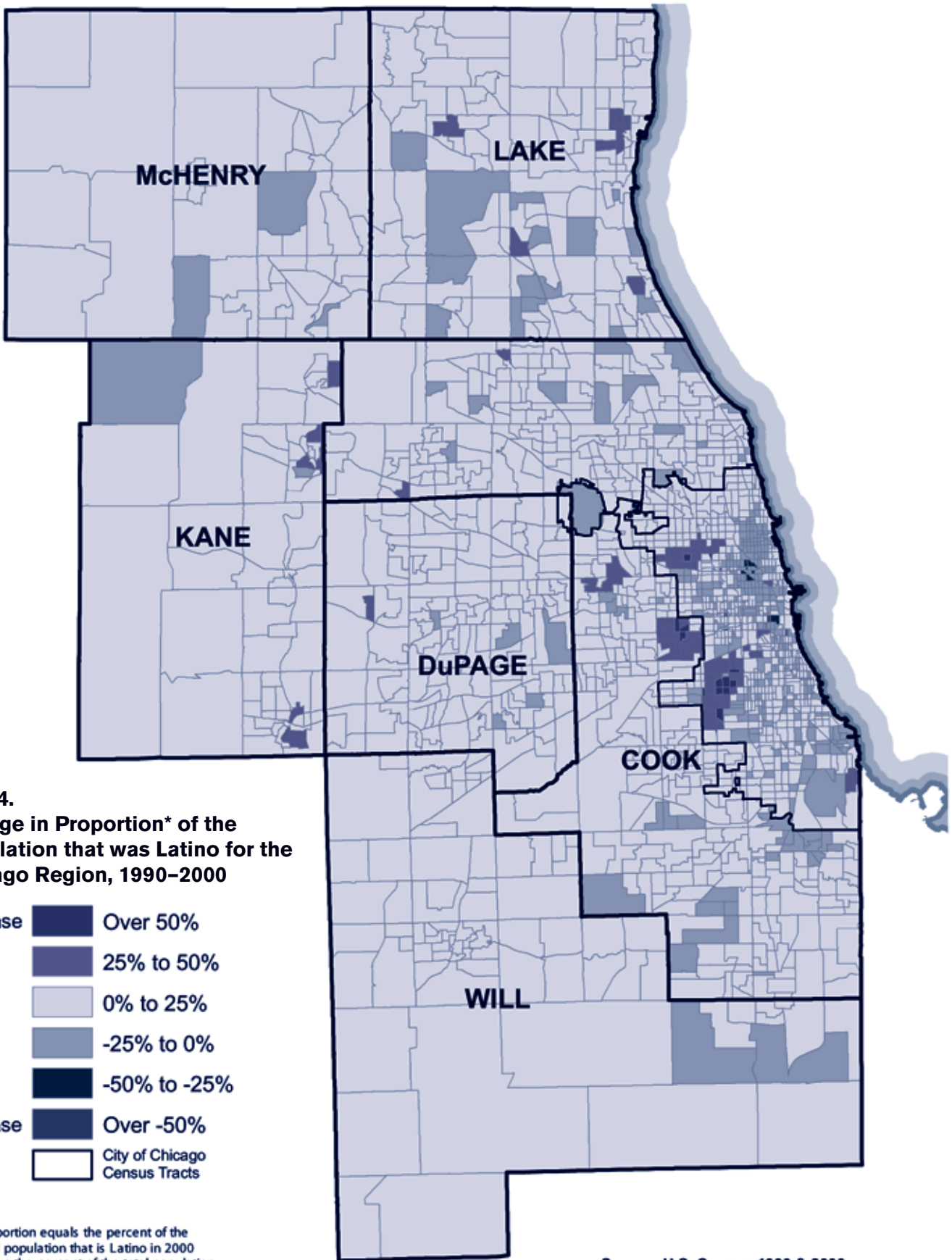
Metropolitan Chicago Places with Largest Proportions of Latino

Largest Latino Places in Metropolitan Chicago

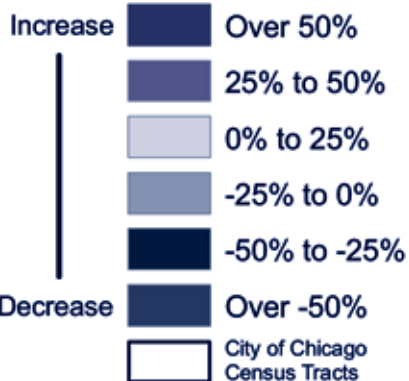
1. STONE PARK (79.1%)
2. CICERO Town (77.4%)
3. MELROSE PARK (53.9%)
4. WEST CHICAGO City (48.6%)
5. SUMMIT (48.5%)

1. CICERO Town (66,299)
2. AURORA City (46,557)
3. WAUKEGAN City (39,396)
4. ELGIN (32,430)
5. BERWYN (20,543)
6. JOLIET City (19,552)

Source: U.S. Census 2000
Map Prepared by: Chicago Metropolis 2010



Map 4.
Change in Proportion* of the
Population that was Latino for the
Chicago Region, 1990-2000



*Proportion equals the percent of the total population that is Latino in 2000 minus the percent of the total population that is the Latino in 1990. This does not represent the numeric change of the Latino population from 1990 to 2000.

Source: U.S. Census 1990 & 2000
 Map Prepared by: Chicago Metropolis 2020

Latino enclaves provide a safe space for the acculturation of new arrivals and act as incubators for business start-ups. But living in predominantly Latino neighborhoods—which also are likely to be low income—can create both geographic and social barriers to opportunities, including better jobs and schools.

Segregated Communities or Ethnic Enclaves?

Despite the substantial shift in the Latino population from the city to the suburbs, Latinos continue to be highly clustered in enclave communities. As for previous generations of immigrants from Europe, ethnic enclave communities, whether in the city or the suburbs, surround residents with the comforting familiarity of residents' mother tongue or ancestral language (Spanish), ethnic stores and restaurants, and neighbors who share a common culture and similar experiences. Latino enclaves also can provide a relatively safe space for the acculturation of recent arrivals and can act as incubators for business start-ups. Indeed, these neighborhoods have created busy commercial strips that help to solidify neighborhoods by providing residents with access to jobs as well as to needed goods and that contribute significant tax revenues for the region.

On the other hand, one could also view the distribution of Latinos across the region as highly segregated, and there is evidence that the segregation is not entirely voluntary. Recent surveys show that both Latinos and African Americans frequently experience discrimination when seeking rental housing, looking to buy a home, or seeking mortgages (Turner, Ross, Galster, and Yinger 2002). Although such discriminatory practices may be only one of many factors explaining the emergence of neighborhoods that are highly segregated by race, ethnicity, and class in the region, there is evidence that living in predominantly Latino neighborhoods—which also are likely to be low income—can create both geographic and social barriers to opportunities, including better jobs and schools (Lukehart, Luce, and Reece 2005).

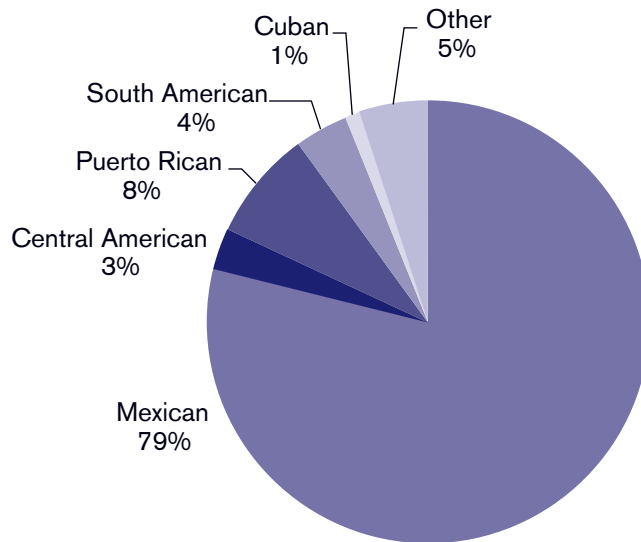
In recent years long-standing patterns of segregation between city and suburbs have been replicated within the suburbs themselves. A recent study found that although the degree of residential segregation of Latinos from Whites declined marginally in the city between 1990 and 2000, it rose substantially in the suburbs (Stuart 2002). A widely used indicator of segregation⁶ shows that between 1990 and 2000 Latino-White residential segregation increased in the suburbs, and Latino-White segregation of school children increased even more during the same period, both in the city and in the suburbs. Children in highly segregated Latino communities, many of whom are among those with the greatest needs, are often clustered into under-resourced, high-poverty schools that too often have not met the expectations of residents (Institute for Latino Studies 2002, 2005).

⁶ The segregation index measures the extent to which the proportions of two groups of people in a particular area (e.g., Census tract or school district) are different from the proportions of those two groups in the metropolitan area (Stuart 2002, 8). For more information on the index and on segregation in metropolitan Chicago see www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/metro/Chicago%20Study4.pdf.

National Origins

Nearly four out of every five Latino residents of metropolitan Chicago are of Mexican origin, compared to 64 percent nationally (ACS 2004). At 1,260,000 million, the Chicago area's Mexican population is the second largest in the nation. Puerto Ricans make up the second largest group with eight percent of the area's Latino population.

Figure 6.
Percentage of Metro Chicago Latino Population
by Place of Origin, 2004



Source: ACS 2004.
Source: Census 2000.
Notes: Based on 6 counties.
All data are rounded to
the nearest whole number.

In marked contrast to the rapid rise of Mexicans in the region, the area's Puerto Rican population has not grown in recent years. In fact, the number of Chicago-area Latinos who identified themselves as Puerto Rican in 2004, 133,000, is 9,000 fewer than in 1990.⁷ That year Puerto Ricans comprised 17 percent of Chicago-area Latinos; by 2004 their share of the six-county Latino population had fallen to only 8 percent. The area's small Cuban population of about 20,000 has seen modest growth but fell from 2 percent of the area's Latino population in 1990 to 1 percent in 2004.

The rate of growth of the Chicago area's South and Central American population has been very fast in recent years but from a much smaller base than that of Mexicans or Puerto Ricans. In 2004 the numbers of South and Central Americans living in the Chicago area were 71,000 and 50,000, respectively. Persons of Guatemalan origin are by far the largest Central American nationality in the region at 29,000, followed by Salvadorans at 11,000. The largest South American nationalities in the region are Ecuadorians (24,000), Colombians (21,000), and Peruvians (12,000).

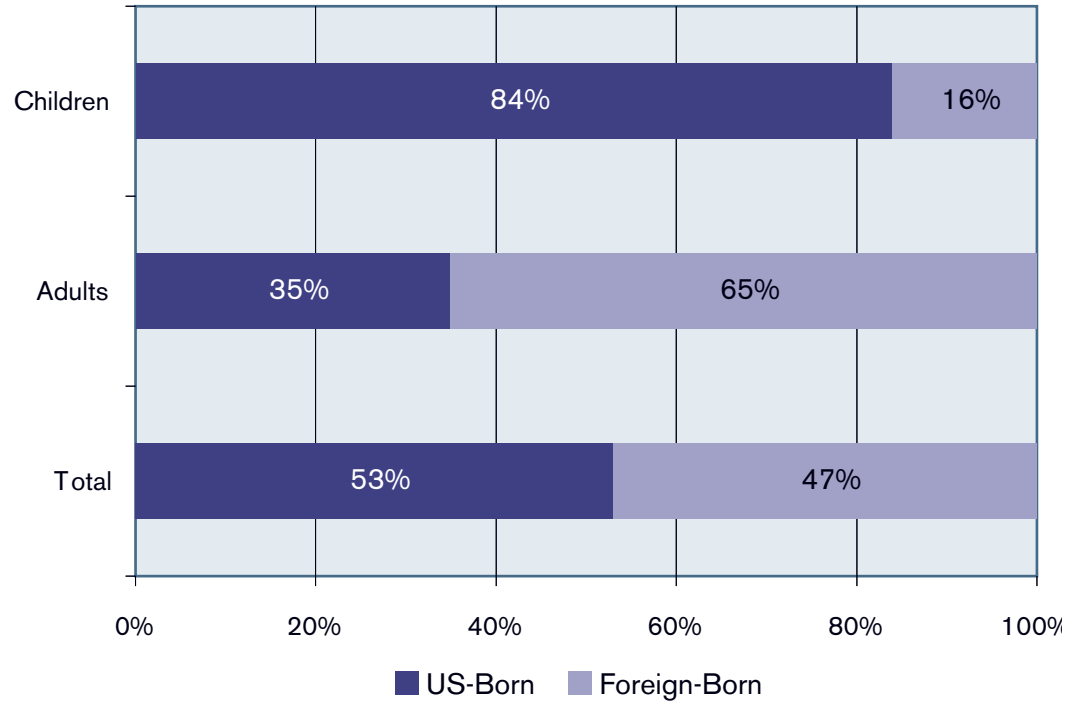
⁷ In recent years more Latinos have chosen not to identify themselves on Census surveys as being of any particular national origin because of marriages between persons of different backgrounds and for other reasons (Chun 2005).

US- and Foreign-Born Latinos

More than half (53 percent) of Chicago-area Latinos were born in the United States (Census 2000; ACS 2003; Paral, Ready, Chun, and Sun 2004). However, between 1990 and 2003 the total increase in the foreign-born Latino population exceeded that of the US-born population (393,000 to 355,000).

Most foreign-born Latinos completed their schooling before coming to the United States. To avoid becoming stuck in jobs that offer few possibilities for advancement, learning English and obtaining skills for obtaining higher paying jobs are essential.

Figure 7.
Percentage of US- and Foreign-Born Metro Chicago Latinos, Children, Adults, and Total, 2000

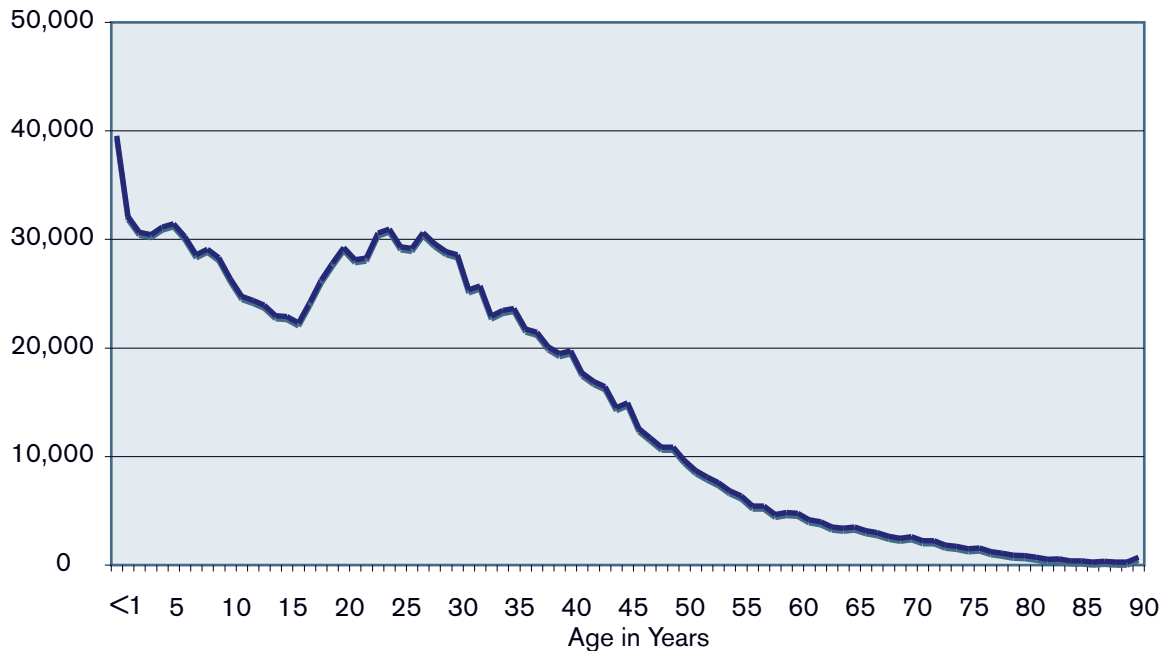


Source: 2000 Census.
Note: Based on 6 counties.

Migration was especially heavy during the 1990s when, on average, 32,000 foreign-born residents were added each year. During the same period the number of US-born Latino residents increased by about 27,000 per year, due to high fertility rates and very low death rates among this very young population—and in spite of significant out-migration to other parts of the United States (Census 2000, PHC-T-25). However, from 2000 to 2003 Latino population increase among the US-born has slightly outpaced that due to international migration. Between 2000 and 2003 the number of foreign born increased by 24,500 per year while US-born Latino residents increased by 28,200 per year. In the same period, the annual rate of increase for US-born residents rose faster than during the 1990s, while the rate of increase among the foreign-born slowed significantly. Thus, a fundamental shift may be occurring in the factors that explain the growth of the Latino population in metropolitan Chicago.

Even during years like the most recent when the rate of growth in the US-born population has exceeded that of the foreign-born, migration can still be understood as the primary engine of population growth. This is because nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of adult Latinos are foreign-

Figure 8.
Age Distribution of Metro Chicago Latino Population, 2000



Source: 2000 Census.

Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

Median ages of foreign-born Latinos, US-born Latinos, and non-Latino Whites are 33, 12, and 37 respectively.

born, while more than eight in ten (84 percent) Latino children were born in the United States (Census 2000; Paral, Ready, Chun, and Sun 2004). Thus, even though the great majority of children are US-born, at least two-thirds of all Latino children in Illinois have foreign-born parents⁸ (CPS 2002–04). A majority (52 percent) of foreign-born residents arrived in the United States during the prime child bearing years; nearly two-thirds were between the ages of 16 and 26 when they arrived (Institute for Latino Studies Chicago Area Survey).

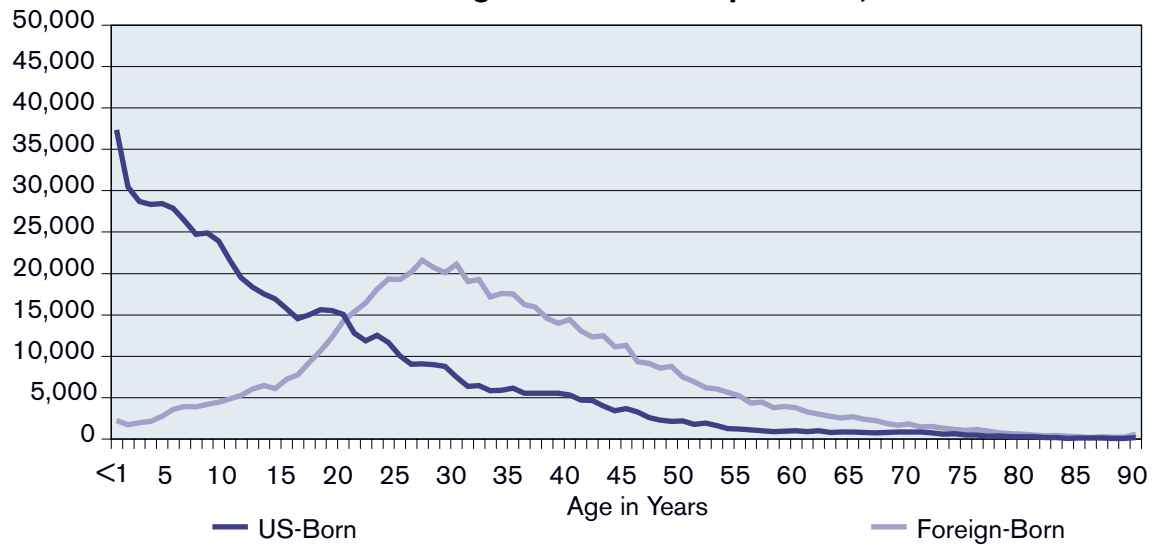
As a result, nearly six in ten foreign-born Latinos are concentrated in the young adult years between 18 and 40, and only 12 percent are under the age of 18. This compares to only 30 percent of the US-born between 18 and 40, and 61 percent under the age of 18 (Census 2000). The median age of foreign-born Latinos is 33, compared to a median age of 12 for US-born Latinos. In contrast, the median age of the area’s non-Latino White residents is 37. These demographic facts have profound implications for understanding various topics of importance to the Latino community and for the Chicago area overall.

The most obvious is that, despite the fact that most Latino adults are immigrants, and many are recently arrived, the vast majority of Latino children are US citizens by birth, and metropolitan Chicago is the only home they have ever known. Nearly 30 percent of all children under five years of age are Latino. While Latino adults of working age are having an enormous impact on the economic and social life of the region, the future impact of young Latinos will be greater still.

Another important implication has to do with the clustering of adult Latinos in their 20s, with far fewer above 45 years of age. As will be discussed in greater detail below, young Latinos are work-

⁸ Sixty-five percent of the fathers and 59 percent of the mothers of all Latino children in Illinois were born outside of the United States. Sixty percent of the fathers and 54 percent of the mothers of US-born Latino children in Illinois were born outside of the United States.

Figure 9.
Age Distribution of Metro Chicago
US- and Foreign-Born Latino Populations, 2000



Source: 2000 Census.

Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

“
*Don't hire a
 second shift.
 We'll work
 both shifts.*”

– Latino poultry
 worker, Fulton
 Street Market

ing very hard for very low wages. Will they be successful in accessing better paying jobs as they progress through the middle and latter stages of their working lives? What can be done to ensure that they rise through the occupational hierarchy and become more prosperous as they advance through their careers and thereby contribute even more to the prosperity of the region?

Latino workers are paying taxes and contributing to social security but make few demands on the area's health care and retirement systems because of their youth. However, their needs will inevitably increase as they grow older. Will the private and publicly financed health and pension systems meet the needs of Latinos as they age?

To no small degree, the future of the region depends upon the successful incorporation of Latino children—and their mostly foreign-born parents who care for them—into the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the region.



Issues of Immigration and Citizenship

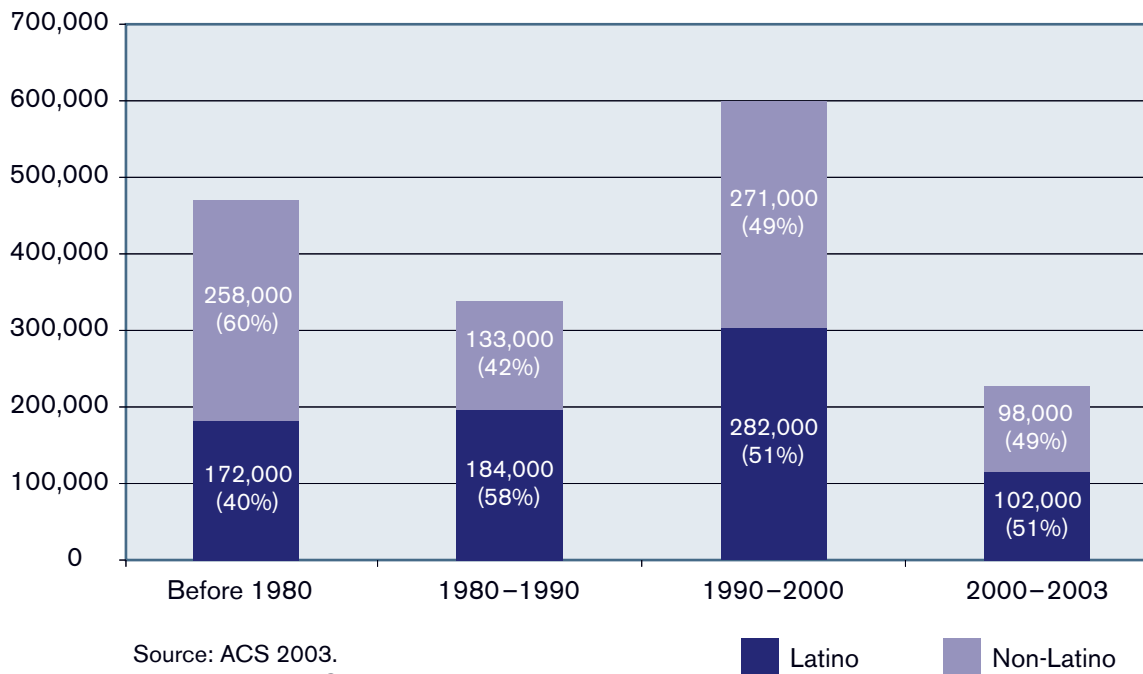
As described above, immigrants, a steadily growing proportion of whom have come from Mexico, have driven much of the growth of the Latino population in metropolitan Chicago since 1980. The percentage of Mexicans among all Latin American immigrants increased from 76 percent of foreign-born Latino residents of metro Chicago who arrived in the United States before 1980 to 92 percent of those who arrived after 2000 (ACS 2003).

More than two-thirds of Chicago-area Latinos are citizens.

When asked why they had come to Chicago, approximately two-thirds of male respondents and one-third of female respondents to the Chicago Area Survey indicated work as the principal reason. About half of both men and women also indicated that the presence of family in the area was an important consideration.

It is important to point out that despite the large and much publicized migration of Latin Americans—especially Mexicans—that has taken place in recent years, Latinos have remained only slightly more than one-half of all new arrivals in recent years. In fact, Latino immigrants account for a substantially smaller proportion of all new arrivals in recent years than they did during the 1980s. The metropolitan Chicago area, like the nation as a whole, has become home to a growing number of immigrants from all regions of the world.

Figure 10.
Latino and Non-Latino Foreign-Born Metro Chicago Residents by Year of Arrival in USA



Considering the large number of recent immigrants, it is important to note that more than two-thirds (67 percent) of Chicago-area Latinos are citizens (ACS 2003). Among adult Latinos, a majority of whom are immigrants, 55 percent are citizens. This includes 36 percent who are citizens by birth and 19 percent who are naturalized citizens—31 percent of foreign-born Latinos are naturalized.

Compared to foreign-born residents of the Chicago area from other parts of the world, foreign-born Latinos are less likely to become naturalized citizens. Only 31 percent of the Latino foreign born are citizens, compared to 54 percent of Asian- and 58 percent of European-born residents of the area who are citizens. Interestingly, 66 percent of foreign-born Latinos who arrived prior to 1980 are citizens compared to only 21 percent of those who arrived after 1980 (ACS 2003). Two-thirds of the Latino foreign-born arrived after 1980. For the more than half who arrived after 1990, only 13 percent are citizens.

Thus, Latinos are much less likely than the Asian or European foreign born to naturalize, even when the year of arrival is statistically controlled. Also, naturalization rates vary substantially among Latinos from different countries. In general, naturalization rates are higher for persons born in South America and the Caribbean (excluding Puerto Ricans, who are citizens by birth), lower for Central Americans, and especially low for persons born in Mexico, after controlling for year of arrival. Lack of formal documentation very likely is a significant contributing factor to the relatively low naturalization rates.

Two recent reports from the Pew Hispanic Center discuss legal and unauthorized immigration trends. It is estimated that the number of undocumented immigrants living in Illinois from all parts of the world is approximately 400,000 (Passel 2005a)—approximately one-fourth of all foreign-born persons. Well over 90 percent of foreign-born residents of Illinois live in metropolitan Chicago, where about half of all immigrants are from Latin America. The reports estimate that well over half of recent migrants from Mexico lack official documentation and that in recent years unauthorized immigrants have outnumbered those with documentation (Passel 2005b). If these estimates are correct, then at least 200,000 of the 740,000 foreign-born Latino residents of metro Chicago are undocumented. However, any estimate of the size of the undocumented population is necessarily inconclusive, given the unofficial nature of their arrival.

With or without documentation, more than 20,000 new Latino immigrants, primarily from Mexico, take up residence in metropolitan Chicago each year. As will be described below, most are very hard working but earn exceptionally low wages. Without them many employers would have difficulty keeping their businesses profitable. Most Latino immigrants in the area have enjoyed some degree of economic success—even those without documentation. However, the many who are undocumented lack the most basic rights and protections accorded to legal residents and are forced to live what is in many ways an ‘underground’ existence. Accordingly, they are subject to potential exploitation in the workplace and in other settings. They are also raising children who mostly are citizens—yet many of those children grow up seeing their parents working long hours in low paying jobs, living at the margins, and wondering what lies ahead for them.

Family and Household

For Chicago-area Latinos, as for people of all backgrounds, the family is the cornerstone of social life and culture. It is our first and most important source of nurturing and support and the primary social unit from which each of us learns who we are as individuals and community members. Latino families perform these essential functions in ways that distinctively define Latino culture and community in metropolitan Chicago. While much could be written about the Latino family in Chicago, here we highlight a few characteristics that shed light on the economic and educational status of Latino families and households.

Binational, Bicultural, and Bilingual

Perhaps most distinctive of Latino households is their binational, bicultural, and bilingual character. As previously discussed, two-thirds of Latino adults migrated to the United States from another country (principally Mexico), while 84 percent of children under 18 were born in the United States. It is not surprising, then, that a large majority (approximately 60 percent) of US-born Latino children and 70 percent of all Latino children have one or both parents who are foreign-born (CPS data for Illinois 2002–2004). As a result, both English and Spanish are spoken in 76 percent of the homes—these are truly binational families. In only 14 percent of homes is English the only language spoken; only 10 percent of Latino homes are exclusively Spanish speaking.

Bilingualism, of course, is an asset that makes it possible to overcome barriers of language and culture and to communicate and interact with people of different backgrounds. It is also an invaluable skill in the workplace. To take full advantage of this skill, however, it is important to be proficient in both languages. In the context of Chicago, as in the rest of the United States, full mastery of English is extremely important for school success and access to better-paying jobs. But more than a quarter (27 percent) of Latino children grow up in linguistically isolated households—households in which there are no members who speak English very well (Census 2000, SF3 PCT 013; Chicago Fact Finder).⁹

Linguistically isolated households not only make it more difficult for children to learn English well but also complicate parents' task of helping their children to access the wide variety of information in English needed for success in school and beyond. This, in turn, increases the onus of responsibility on schools to develop and implement effective approaches to instruction for students with limited English proficiency and to overcome linguistic barriers that could impede effective communication with parents. Thirty-three percent of all Latino children in metro Chicago between the ages of 5 and 17 speak English less than “very well” (Census 2000, SF3 PCT 62H).

“*Being bicultural is one of the biggest assets. I would encourage all Latinos to be bilingual. It's a gift to be able to draw from both worlds.*”

– Maria, a Pilsen resident

⁹ Respondents to Census surveys are asked if they speak English and whether they speak another language (e.g., Spanish). Those who indicate that they speak another language are asked if they also speak English “Very well,” “Fairly well,” “Not very well” or “Not at all,” and whether they speak more than one language.

Family is especially important for the economic security of Chicago-area Latinos. Combining the earnings of two or more workers living in the family enables household members to enjoy a higher standard of living.

Household Size

Latino households in metropolitan Chicago, on average, are much larger than others. Latino households are much more likely to have five or more members and much less likely to be composed of a single person living alone. Thirty-six percent of Latino households have five or more members, compared to 17 and 9 percent of African American and non-Latino White households, respectively. Latino households are less than half as likely as African American and non-Latino White households to be composed of a single person living alone.

Family Structure

Latino households also are much more likely than either African American or non-Latino White households to have children under 18. Fifty-six percent of Latino-headed families have their own children under 18 in the household, compared to only 30 and 34 percent of White and Black households, respectively. Of those families that include the householder's own children under 18, Latinos are much more likely than Blacks but less likely than non-Latino Whites to be headed by a married couple rather than a single parent.

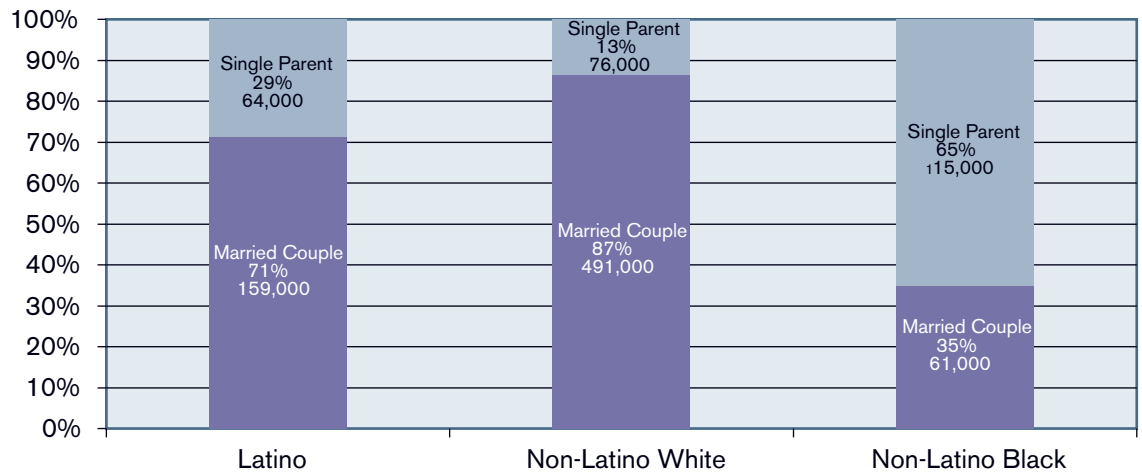
Figure 11.
Family Type by Race and Ethnicity in Metro Chicago, 2003



Source: ACS 2003.

Note: Based on 6 counties.

Figure 12.
Family Type for Metro Chicago Households
with Own Children under 18, by Ethnicity, 2003



Source: ACS 2003.
 Note: Based on 9-county Chicago PMSA.

Income and Poverty

Family structure is an extremely powerful correlate of economic security for families with children. Those families that are headed by a married couple are far less likely to be in poverty than are those headed by a single parent (ACS 2003, P116). Overall, 14 percent of Latino families were in poverty in 2003 compared to 21 percent of African American and 3 percent of non-Latino White families. The poverty rate for Latino children is higher than for Latino families: One in five (20 percent) of Latino children was poor in 2003.

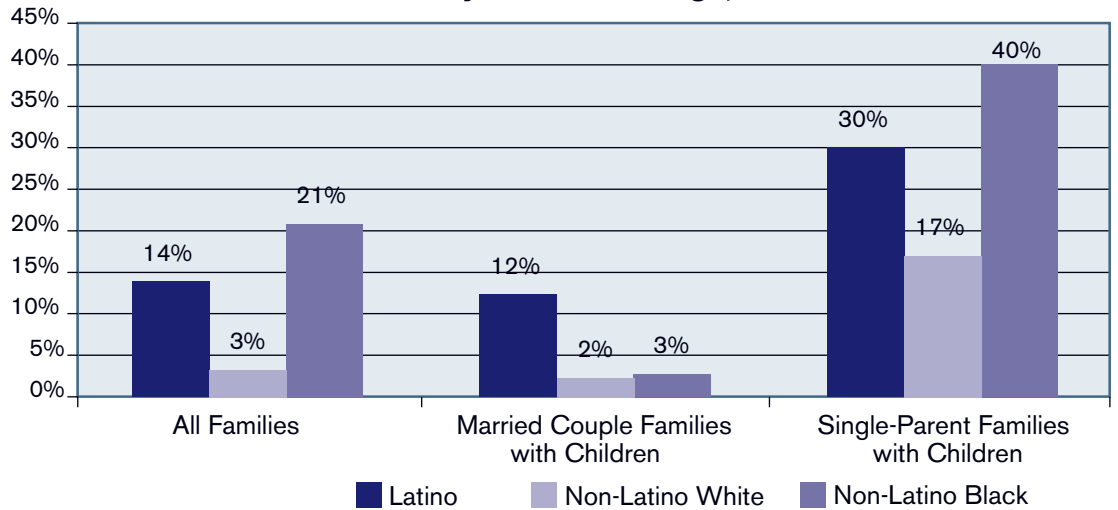
It is interesting to note that while the overall poverty rate for Latino families in 2003 was one-third lower than that of African Americans, when the rates for married couple families were compared, Latinos were much more likely than Blacks to be poor, and the poverty rate of African American married couple families was only slightly higher than that of non-Latino Whites.

As will be explained in greater detail below, Latino workers have, by far, the lowest wage and salary earnings of any group in metropolitan Chicago. The fact is that the high rate of poverty for Latino married couple families is primarily attributable to the low wages of the worker(s) in those families. That is, the working poor are a far higher proportion of Latinos than of African Americans or non-Latino Whites. Latino families partially compensate for their low salaries and wages by pooling the earnings of multiple workers within households.

Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of Latino families have three or more workers contributing to the support of their households compared to only 12 percent of African American and 15 percent of non-Latino White households. Besides the spouse of the householder, the additional workers may include their adolescent and adult children, a relative outside of the nuclear family, or a non-relative. Indeed, 21 percent of Latino workers live in households in which they either are not a member of the family or are a relative but not a member of the nuclear family of the householder. This compares to 8 percent of non-Latino workers (CPS 2002–04).

Differentiating between Latino families with foreign-born and US-born householders shows that those headed by foreign-born persons are nearly twice as likely to include three or more

Figure 13.
Families in Poverty by Family Type, Race,
and Ethnicity in Metro Chicago, 2003



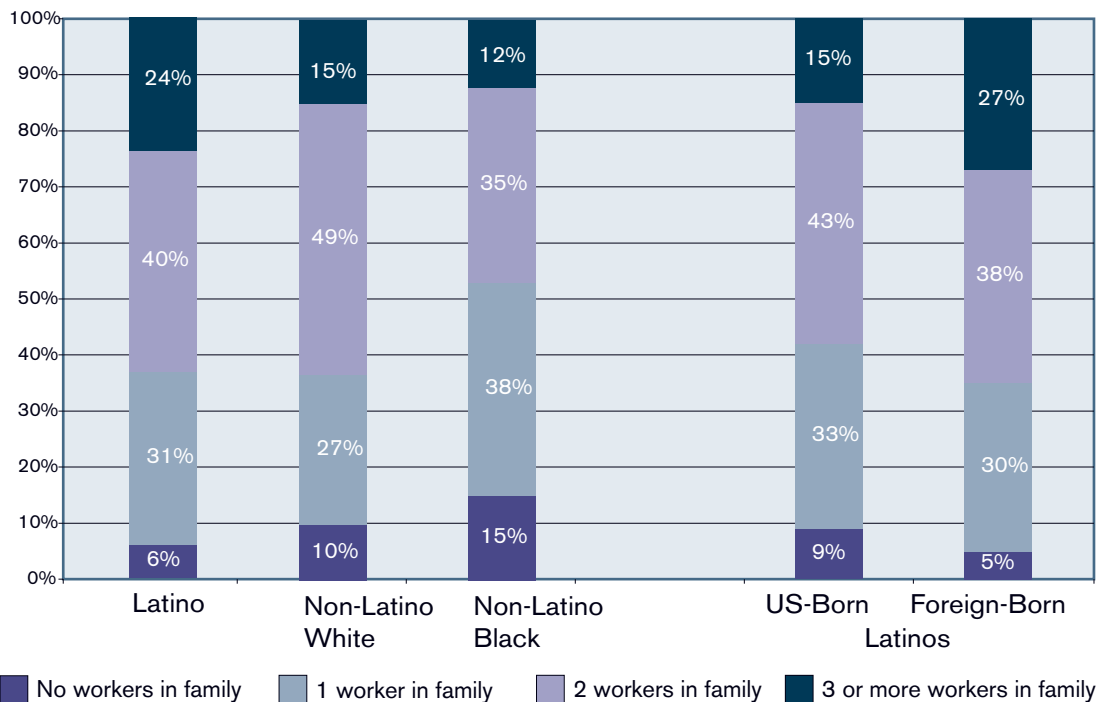
Source: ACS 2003.

Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

workers as those headed by the US born (27 percent vs. 15 percent). This is understandable, given that foreign-born Latino workers tend to earn less than their US-born counterparts.

The importance of multiple workers for the economic stability of Latino families is apparent when examining the relationship of multiple worker households to median household income. In metro Chicago the median income for all households in 2000 was \$52,200 compared to \$44,300 for Latino households. Only 14 percent of Latino households with one worker had incomes of at least \$50,000—enough to approximate or surpass the median for all households. However, 45 percent of households with two workers had income of at least \$50,000 per year, as did 74 percent of households with three or more workers (Census 2000, Advanced Query).

Figure 14.
Workers per
Family Households
by Race, Ethnicity,
and Nativity, 2003



Source: 2000 Census.
 Note: Based on PMSA.

Education

Latinos' disproportionate concentration in low-paying jobs along with discouraging school completion rates raise questions about their future levels of success and, indeed, the future of the region.

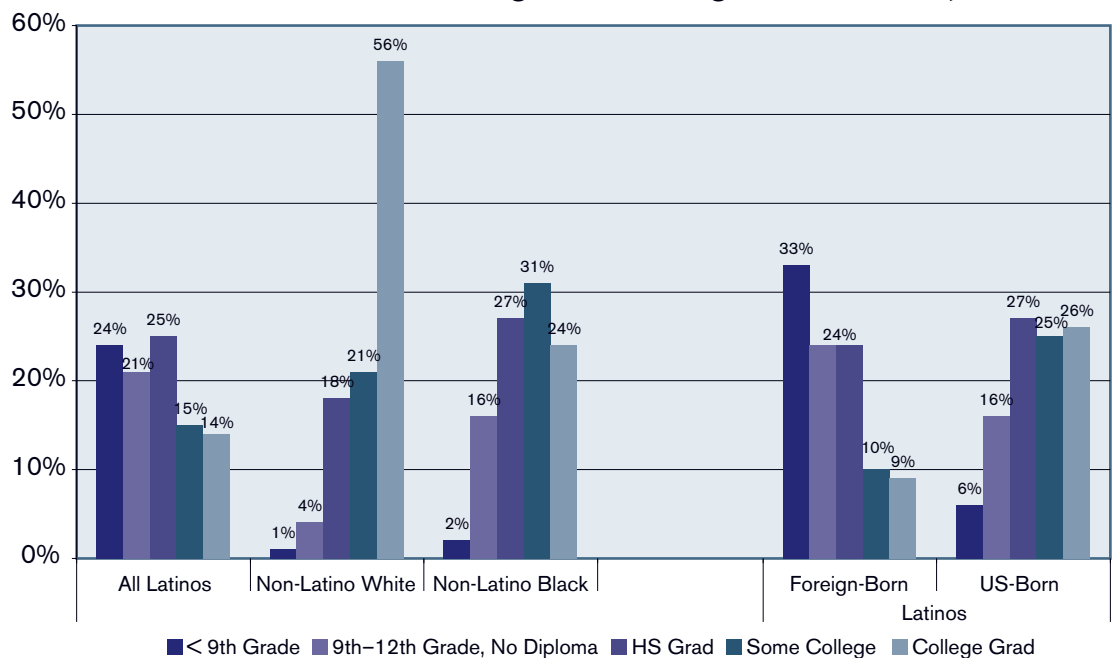
Intergenerational Learning

The Latino family has a powerful influence on its members, and familial ties and loyalties probably exert an influence that is even more powerful than is typically observed in many non-Latino families. Pride in cultural heritage runs deep among young Latino Chicagoans, just as it does among the older generation. However, Chicago is very different from Mexico and the other Latin American countries that most of the parents of the area's young people left behind.

Some aspects of Latin American cultures and their behavioral norms and expectations that were well suited to the parental generation prior to migration may seem less suited to new social environments encountered in Chicago. The demands caused by social and cultural displacement (that to some extent are inevitably associated with international migration) can be a cause of stress and tension for individuals and families. It is reasonable to assume that the older generation's "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore 1993)—that is, the cultural and linguistic templates learned from family and community along with knowledge acquired in school—may require some modification and some new learning to meet the demands of life in Chicago. At the very least, learning English is almost essential.

In addition, the level of formal education of most Latino immigrant adults prior to migration severely restricts their access to better-paying jobs in metro Chicago. Their limited schooling also poses a challenge for parents who struggle to help their children advance their formal education. Nearly a quarter of all Latino young adults in the prime parenting age of 25–34 completed no more than nine years of schooling, and 45 percent did not complete high school. Among the foreign born, who are approximately two-thirds of all Latino parents, one-third have completed no more than ninth grade and nearly six in ten did not complete high school. Only 26 percent of all US-born and 9 percent of foreign-born Latinos (ages 25–34) have com-

Figure 15.
Educational Attainment, Ages 25–34 by Ethnicity
and for US-Born and Foreign-Born Chicago Metro Latinos, 2000



Source: 2000 Census.

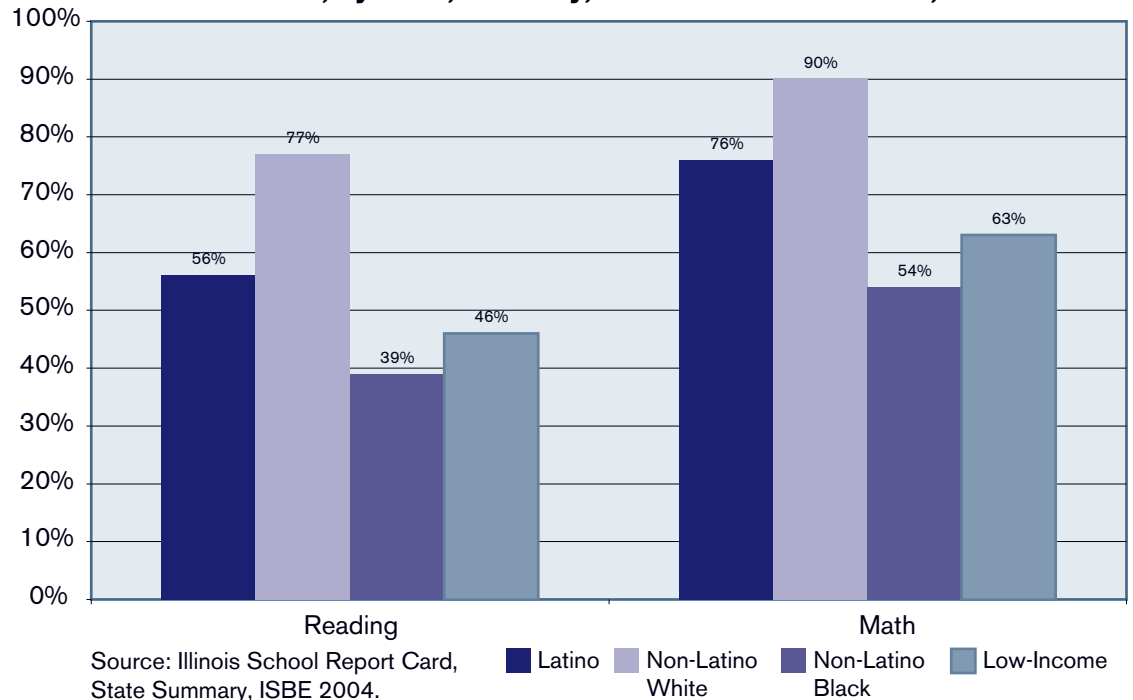
Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

Substantial disparities in school-related skills emerge even before children begin first grade.

pleted college. These levels of educational attainment are far lower than those of either non-Latino White or Black residents of the area.

But does this matter, besides limiting access to better-paying jobs? It matters because low parental educational attainment, especially in combination with poverty and limited English proficiency, are strongly related to how well children do in school from the earliest grades onward (National Research Council 2000, 267–96; Lloyd, Tienda, and Zajacova 2002; Miller 1995, 143–71). Substantial disparities emerge even before children begin first grade (National Research Council 2001, 59–127; Lee 2002; ISBE 2004c) and are routinely measured by the third grade (ISBE 2004c). These disparities generally do not go away as children progress through the educational continuum; on the contrary, they tend to grow larger (Lloyd, Tienda, and Zajacova 2002). Eliminating disparities in school readiness during early childhood has been a major policy goal for many years.¹⁰ If progress could be made toward the achievement of this goal, it is likely that Latino educational outcomes would be greatly improved (Lee 2002).

Figure 16.
Percent of Illinois Third Grade Students Who Are Proficient in Reading and Math, by Race, Ethnicity, and Low-Income Status, 2004



The Needs of Foreign-Born Latinos

As previously noted, the educational attainment for Chicago-area Latinos is very low relative to that of both non-Latino Whites and Blacks. Indeed, Latinos consider education to be the greatest challenge facing their community (Institute for Latino Studies 2002; Pew Hispanic Center 2004). However, statistics describing the educational profile of Latinos in general tend to mask important differences between two distinct segments of the population with very different educational profiles—those persons born in the United States and the foreign-born. As previously discussed, the great majority of foreign-born residents, who on average have exceptionally low levels of educational attainment, finished their formal schooling prior to

¹⁰ For example, see Goals 2000, US Department of Education, www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/stw/sw0goals.htm.

migrating to the United States as young adults. And, of the approximately 75,000 foreign-born children in the area, many arrived in the United States at a very young age.

An Institute for Latino Studies analysis of Latino students in Chicago shows that the so-called 1.5 generation, foreign-born school children who arrived in the country prior to age eight, are about as likely as US-born Latino students to graduate from high school and go on to college. Those who were age nine or older upon arrival are much less likely to complete high school (Ready 2005) and go on to college. It is likely that many more of these students will need to enroll in educational settings especially tailored to meet their needs if they are to successfully complete their schooling through high school graduation and beyond. Identifying and replicating programs and schools that have been successful in educating these students is a crucial task. It is important to note in this regard that for undocumented students who complete high school, the recent passage of the “Dream Act” by the Illinois legislature—allowing these students to enroll in state colleges and universities and to pay in-state tuition—will also help them become more successful and productive contributors to the region’s social and economic life.

Only 12 percent of Chicago’s foreign-born Latino population is under 18 years of age. Most foreign-born residents arrive in the United States as young adults or in their late teenage years. They come to the Chicago area primarily in search of employment (Institute for Latino Studies Chicago Area Survey) and most completed their formal schooling in their country of origin. Thus, the primary educational challenges facing foreign-born residents of the area who are adults are to learn English, to obtain job-related training, and to improve their general educational preparation through non-formal means such as GED programs. As described later in this report, foreign-born Latinos have been remarkably successful overall in finding work, obtaining adequate housing, and in making a living despite their low level of educational attainment. Yet to avoid becoming stuck in jobs that offer few possibilities for advancement, learning English and obtaining skills that are important for obtaining higher-paying jobs are essential.

Building the Capacity of Schools and Communities to Better Serve Latino Students

The area’s US-born Latino residents are an exceptionally young population—more than 60 percent are of school age (ages 5–17) or younger. With half of the US-born population younger than 12 years of age, improving educational outcomes depends on building the capacity of elementary and secondary schools to serve these students more effectively and increasing the capacity of Latino families and communities themselves to improve children’s learning. Fewer than half of Chicago-area Latino children have a parent who was born in the United States, and this has consequences for their educational outcomes. Approximately 80 percent of Latino children in metropolitan Chicago are bilingual; however, about 30 percent speak English less than very well (ACS 2003). These include not only students who are foreign born but some US-born students who are from linguistically isolated households—those in which there is no one 14 years of age or older who speaks English very well (US Census definition).

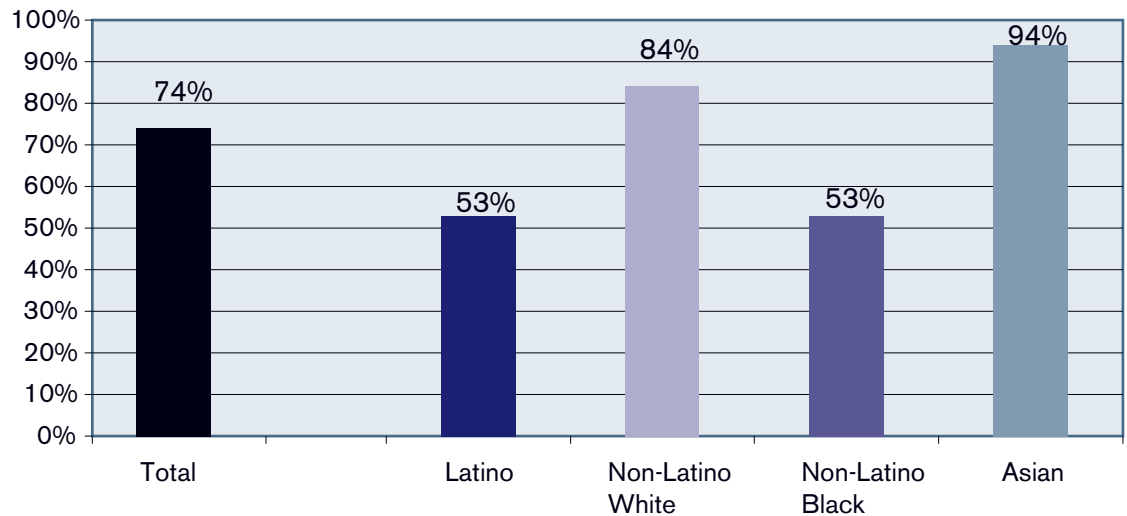
In addition, 26 percent of the 350,000 Latino children of school age (5–17) are living in poverty, and many attend schools in which a very high percentage of children are from poor families (Institute for Latino Studies 2005). Such schools in Illinois are more likely than others to have teachers who are not fully certified or are teaching out of their fields of expertise (Education

“*If I could learn English, I could do the same jobs as the Americans. In this country if one doesn’t prepare oneself, one will not advance.*”

– José, a recent immigrant

Trust 2004). The high-poverty schools in which many Latino students tend to be clustered are also likely to receive less funding for instruction than are schools serving students from more affluent backgrounds (Institute for Latino Studies 2005). Indeed, with a gap of \$2,384 per student between richer and poorer, Illinois has the largest funding disparity in the nation between districts serving the lowest and highest percentages of students in poverty (Education Trust 2004). Thus many Latino children, who are among those with the greatest needs, tend to be enrolled in the schools with the fewest resources.

Figure 17.
Illinois Students Who Graduated from High School
Four Years after Entering Ninth Grade, 1997–2001



It is no wonder, then, that an ethnic achievement gap that is already apparent when children enter first grade tends to get larger as students progress through elementary and secondary school (ISBE 2004c). Only 53 percent of Illinois Latino students who enter high school in ninth grade graduate four years later (Education Trust 2004). Although 78 percent of US-born Latinos eventually graduate or obtain a GED by their late 20s, less than half as many US-born Latinos as non-Latino Whites graduate from college.

Given these statistics, a program of applied research specifically examining the educational needs of Latino students and families and how best to meet them should be a high priority. The research campaign should begin by examining topics such as:

- promising strategies already being implemented in Chicago;¹¹
- the potential benefits of developing strategies to enable more Latino students to attend Catholic schools (Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993); and
- strategies to more effectively engage Latino students in school and schools in Latino communities (National Research Council 2004; Bryk 2002).

¹¹ See smallschools.cps.k12.il.us/.

Health

Are the area's public and private health-care systems structured to meet the needs of Latinos as they grow older?

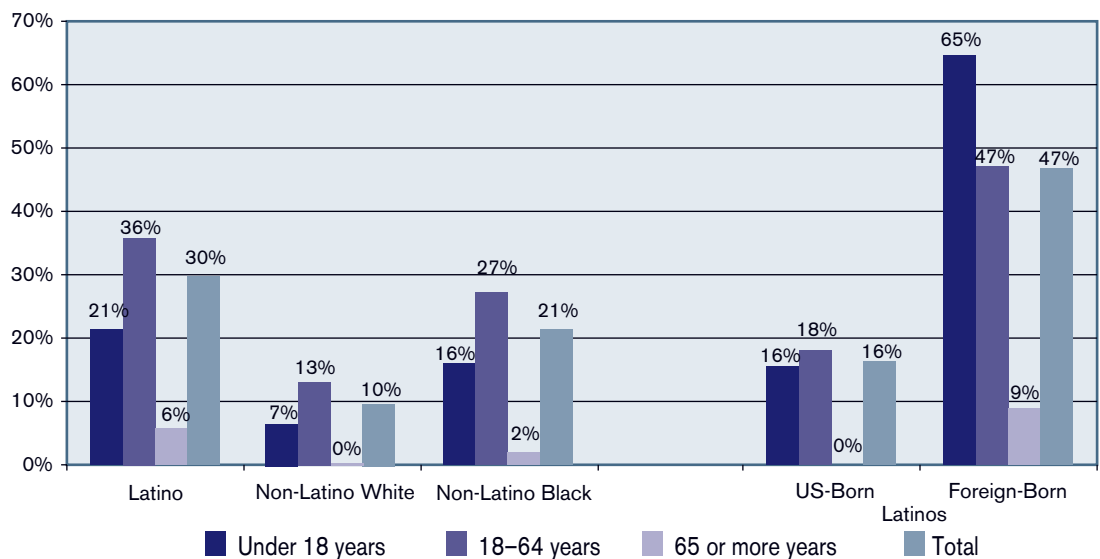
Because Chicago-area Latinos are a very young population, mortality rates tend to be low. Although Latinos comprised 14 percent of the total population of Illinois in 2001, only three percent of all persons who died in Illinois that year were Latino (National Center for Health Statistics 2001).¹² Because of international migration and population growth, it is difficult to measure and interpret morbidity and mortality statistics in this community. However, with relatively few exceptions, even age-adjusted morbidity statistics suggest that Illinois Latinos are no more likely to suffer from most diseases than are others.¹³

This is not to say that Latinos do not face major issues related to health care. By far the most salient issue is the lack of health insurance. Overall, Latinos are much less likely to have health insurance than either non-Latino Whites or Blacks. However, there are major differences between US-born Latinos and the foreign born in the rates of the uninsured, with the foreign born three to four times more likely to be uninsured than their US-born counterparts, depending on age. US-born born Latinos are less likely to be insured than non-Latino Whites, but more likely to have insurance than Blacks. Nearly half (47 percent) of foreign-born Latinos have no health insurance compared to 16 percent of the US-born.

Amongst all Latinos, those of working age (18–64) are the least likely to have health insurance, except when foreign-born Latinos are examined separately. Insurance coverage rates are higher for the elderly primarily because of Medicare. Levels of coverage under Medicare approach 100 percent for the elderly in all groups, except for the very small number of Latino foreign-born residents in that age bracket, only 76 percent of whom are covered by Medicare. Similarly, levels of coverage are higher for children than they are for working-age adults for all but the foreign born. This is because of the State of Illinois' Kid-Care program (de la Torre, Garcia, Nuñez de Ybarra, and Cortez 2005). With only one-third having health insurance, foreign-born Latino children are the least likely of any group to be covered. Only 12 percent are covered by Illinois Kid-Care, compared to 29 percent of US-born Latino children and 45 percent of African American children.

Figure 18.
Percent of the Illinois Population with No Health Insurance by Race, Ethnicity, Nativity, and Age, 2002–2004

Source: 2002–2004 Current Population Survey.
Note: Based on State of Illinois.



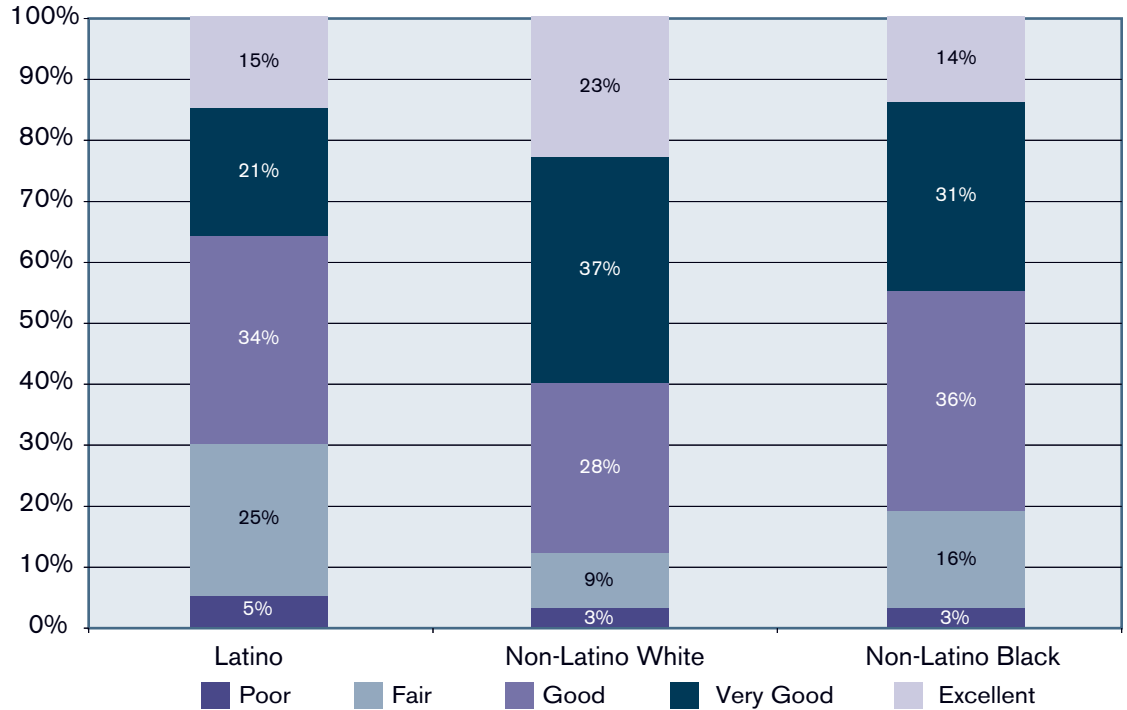
¹² Accessed on-line at www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statab/mortfinal2001_workorig10.pdf.

¹³ To review mortality statistics for Illinois by racial and ethnic group, see <http://webapp.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcaus.html>.

Finally, it should be noted that government health surveys routinely ask respondents to evaluate whether their health is “excellent,” “very good,” “good,” “fair” or “poor.” Latino respondents are far more likely than others in Illinois to indicate that they consider their health to be only fair or poor. Although the reasons for this relatively negative self-assessment of health are not entirely clear, lack of insurance may result in their having to leave untreated various health problems that might otherwise be alleviated with easier access to care.

An important consequence of these low rates of enrollment in health insurance is that people often wait until they are very sick before seeking medical help, and when they do, it is in an emergency room. This means that medical costs for municipalities are much higher than they need be, because patients often arrive requiring more help in the place where medical costs are the highest.

Figure 19.
Illinois Residents’ Self-Assessment of Health Status
by Race and Ethnicity, 2004



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control.

Latinos and the Economy

Latino Economic Power

Latinos' economic clout in metropolitan Chicago has grown in tandem with the population. Between 1990 and 2003, the aggregate household income for Chicago-area Latinos increased from \$5.8 billion to \$20 billion. Currently, Latino household income accounts for more than 9 percent of the region's total, and is approximately equal to the gross domestic product of Panama, Bolivia, Honduras, or Luxemburg (Central Intelligence Agency 2005).

Following are a few salient facts about the growth of Latino businesses, employment, and housing:

Latino Business Growth

- In 2002 there were 40,000 Latino-owned businesses in the state, generating over \$7.5 billion in revenues.
- During the five-year period between 1997 and 2002 the number of Latino-owned businesses increased 44 percent.
- During the same five-year period the dollar value of sales receipts rose 56 percent (State of Illinois Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, 1997, and Survey of Business Owners, 2002; data include firms with paid employees and firms with no paid employees).
- High concentrations of Latino businesses have revived declining commercial districts in some neighborhoods and created new ones in others.

Employment

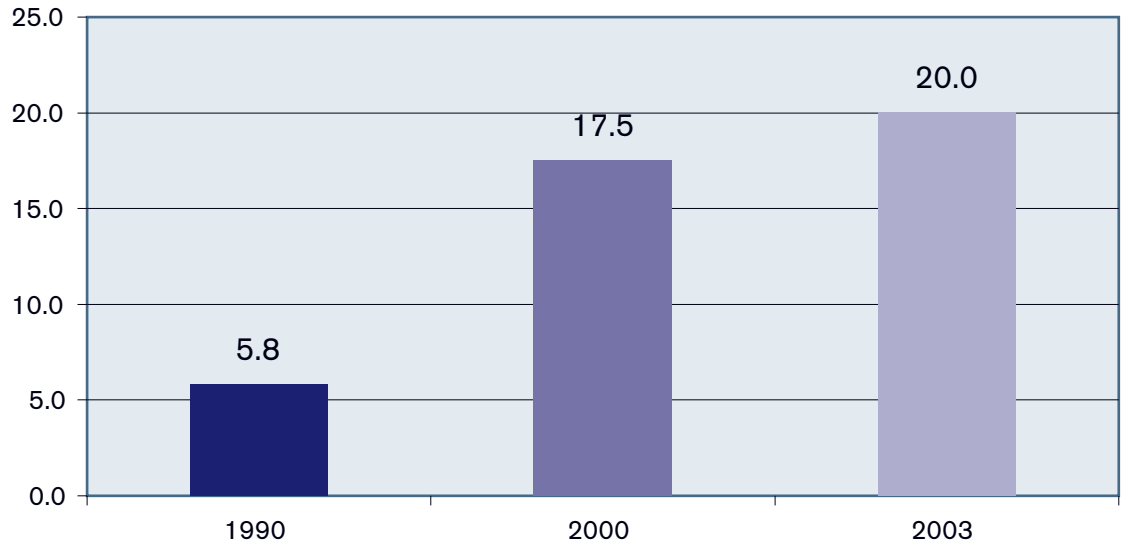
- During the 13-year period between 1990 and 2003 growth in the number of Latino workers was nearly equal to the total number of new jobs created in the region.
- Between 1990 and 2000 Latinos accounted for 76 percent of the 250,000 jobs that were added in the six counties of metro Chicago.
- Between 2000 and 2003 the total number of jobs in the six-county metro area increased by an additional 41,000. During the same three-year period the number of jobs held by Latinos increased by more than 105,000.¹⁴
- Between 1990 and 2003, the region would have suffered a net loss of jobs were it not for increases attributable to Latinos.

Housing

- More than half of Latino households are owner-occupied.
- Between 1990 and 2003 the number of homes owned by Latinos increased by 126,000, accounting for 34 percent of the total growth in owner-occupied homes.
- Between 2000 and 2003 the number of homes owned by Latinos increased by 41,000 accounting for 46 percent of total growth in owner-occupied homes.

¹⁴ 1990 and 2000 Census and ACS 2003. No data are available on Latino employment in 2003 for Will and McHenry counties.

Figure 20.
Aggregate Household Income of Latinos
in the Metro Chicago Region, 1990, 2000, and 2003
(in Billion US\$)



Sources: 1990 Census STF, 2000 Census SF3, ACS 2003.
 Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

Income Trends

Between 1990 and 2000 income increased much faster in metro Chicago than it did nationwide, which helped to make Chicago an attractive place for migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries. The increased income benefited Chicago-area Latinos as well as every other racial and ethnic group in the region.

During this period, for example, the median household income of metro Chicago Latinos jumped from \$30,200 to more than \$44,300,¹⁵ an increase of 47 percent. Nearly one-third of Latino households have an income of \$60,000 or more; one in five Latino households has an income of \$75,000 or higher. Blacks and non-Latino Whites registered major gains during

The median household income of Latinos in metro Chicago increased a remarkable 48 percent during the 1990s. Since 2000, however, Latinos' income has stagnated.

¹⁵ Figures in 2000 constant dollars.

¹⁶ See www.nd.edu/~chifacts.



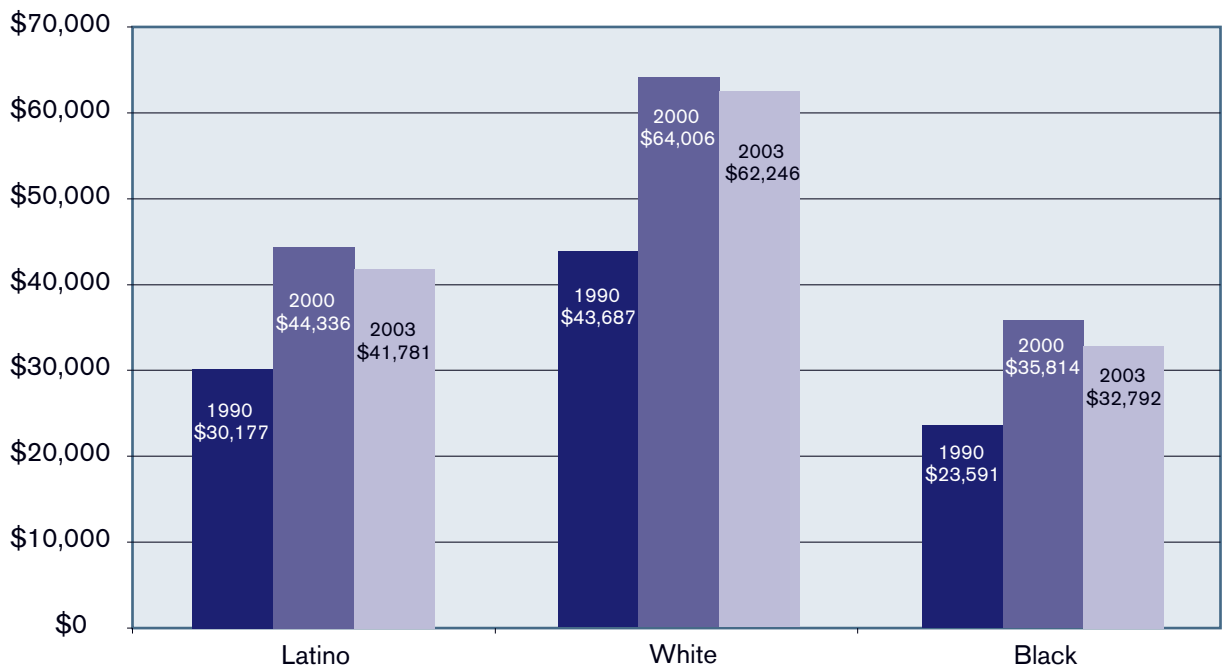
this period as well.¹⁶ Other measures of income also registered dramatic gains for Chicago-area residents of all backgrounds during the 1990s.

Since 2000, however, the income growth has stopped for Latinos and has been inconsistent for others in the region. Depending on the measure used, Latino income has either remained relatively unchanged (e.g., per capita income) or has decreased since 2000. For example, Latino household income in metro Chicago decreased 6 percent between 2000 and 2003.¹⁷ Between 2000 and 2003 the earnings of Latino men who worked full-time, year round, decreased 6 percent, although Latinas' earnings increased by 3 percent. The earnings of African American men and women increased by 2 percent, while those of non-Latino White men and women increased by 8 percent.¹⁸ No matter which measure of income is used, the income gap between Latinos and non-Latino Whites increased between 1990 and 2004. Whether or not this pattern persists will have profound implications for Chicago-area Latinos and for the region as a whole.

¹⁷ From \$44,336 to \$41,781 in 2003 constant dollars.

¹⁸ Earnings figures are in 2004 constant dollars.

Figure 21.
Median Household Income* by Race and Latino Origin, 1990–2003



Sources: ACS 2003, 2000 Census SF3.

Notes: 1990 data are from Chicago Fact Finder, and are based on 6 counties.

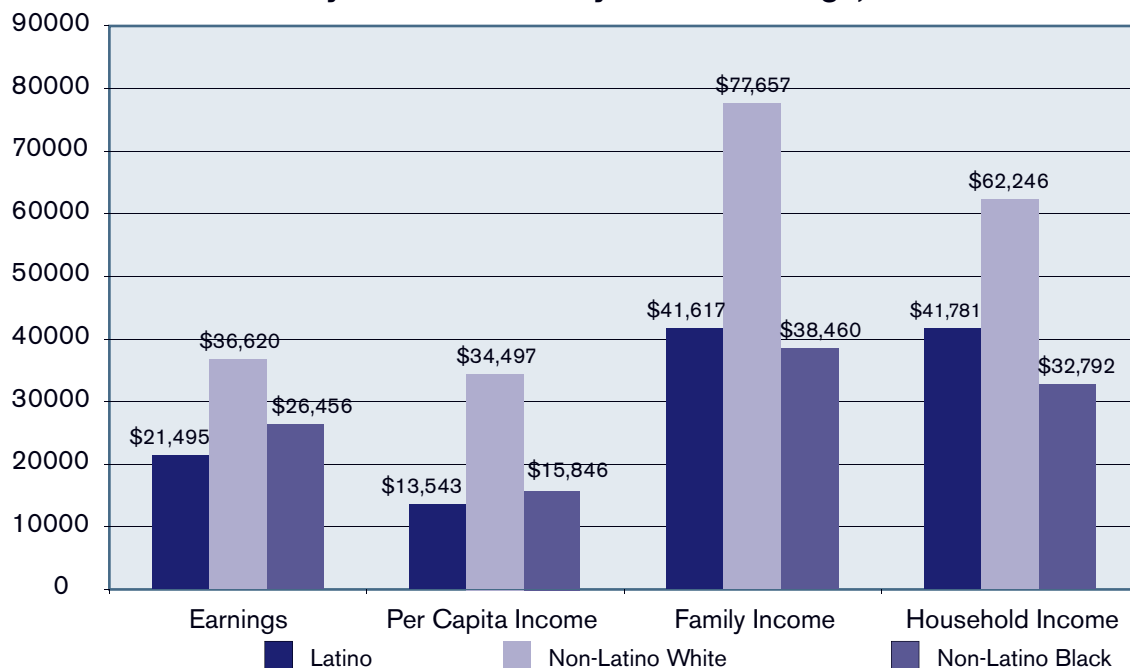
2000 and 2003 data are based on 9-county Chicago PMSA. Amounts are in 2003 constant dollars.

“
*I'm not rich,
 but I've
 moved ahead
 with my life.*”
 – Metal worker,
 western suburbs

Different Measures of Income—Gaining Perspective

One’s assessment of the economic status of Chicago-area Latinos depends upon the economic indicator that one uses. As illustrated in the graphs below, Latinos are the most disadvantaged segment of population in terms of the workers’ earnings and per capita income. However, when one uses family, and especially household, income as the primary measures of economic well-being, Latinos appear to be somewhat better off.

Figure 22.
Median Earnings, Median Family Income, and Median Household Income
by Race and Ethnicity in Metro Chicago, 2003



Source: 2003 American Community Survey.

Note: Based on Chicago 9-County PMSA.

The median earnings¹⁹ of Latino workers are substantially lower than those of both African American and White workers. On average, Latino workers in metropolitan Chicago earned only \$21,495 per year in 2003—which is less than 60 percent of the earnings of non-Latino Whites and only 80 percent of those of African American workers. Similarly, Latino per capita income²⁰ was only \$13,543—more than \$2,000 lower than that of African Americans and equal to only 39 percent of the per capita income of non-Latino Whites.

However, unlike earnings and per capita income, Latinos’ median family²¹ and household²² incomes are substantially greater than those of African Americans. As previously noted, this is primarily because the larger Latino family households on average contain more workers contributing to the family and household than do Whites and African Americans.

¹⁹ Median earnings are the earnings of all male and female workers from wages, salaries, and net self-employed income.

²⁰ Per capita income is the average obtained by dividing the aggregate income of a group by the total population of that group.

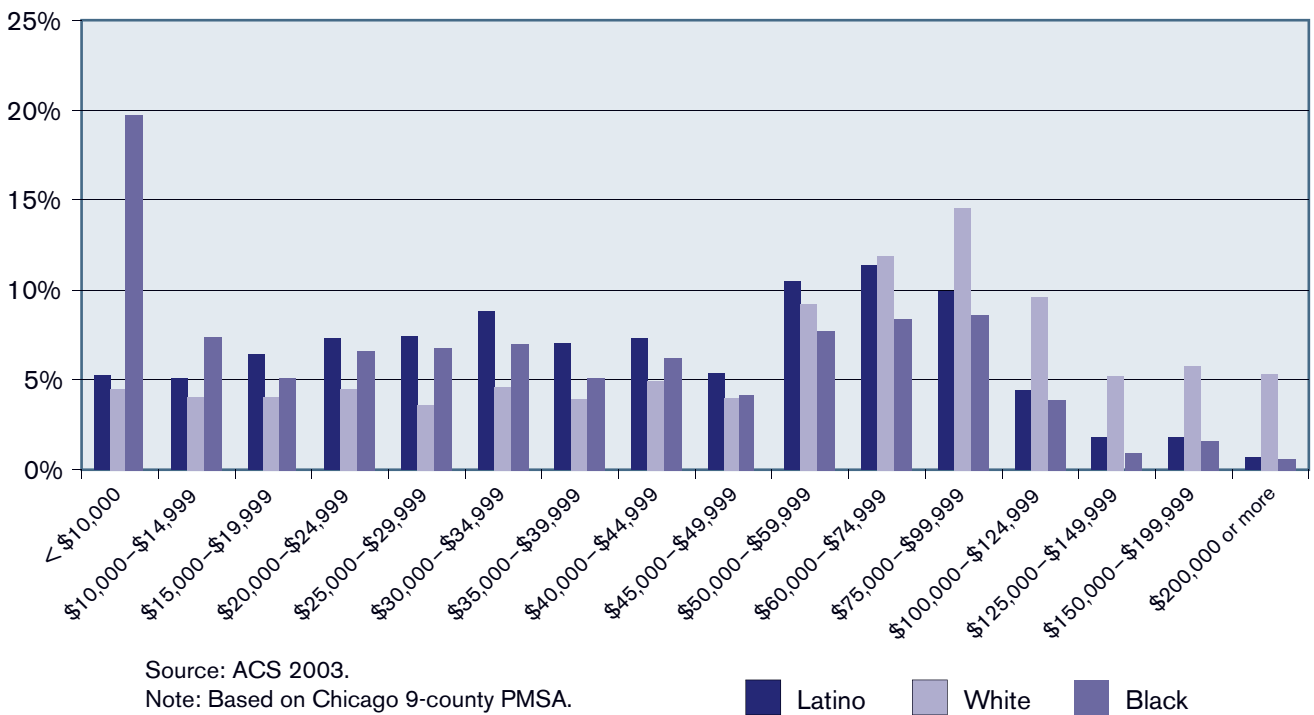
²¹ ‘Family households’ here means households with two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

²² Median household income is the median income of one or more persons living in a housing unit that is the usual place of residence for that (those) person(s).

Latino families are much less likely than either African American or non-Latino White families to not have any household members in the workforce. In addition, Latino-headed households—especially those headed by the foreign born—are more likely than others to include three or more members who work.²³

When examining the distribution of Latinos, Whites, and African Americans across different household income categories, it is apparent that Latinos are fairly evenly distributed across low-, medium-, and high-income categories compared to African Americans and Whites. In contrast, there is a large concentration of African Americans in the lowest income categories while non-Latino Whites are disproportionately clustered in the upper income bands.

Figure 23.
Household Income Distribution by Race and Ethnicity in Metro Chicago, 2003



One implication that can be drawn from the discussion of these four measures of income is that the family is especially important for the economic security of Chicago-area Latinos. Combining the earnings of two or more workers living in larger families and households enables household members to enjoy a higher standard of living than would otherwise be possible. Despite very low wages, more than half of Chicago-area Latinos live in owner-occupied homes, and Latinos have a much lower poverty rate than do African Americans, whose median earnings and per capita income are higher.

²³ It is important to recall that approximately two-thirds of Latino adults in metro Chicago are foreign-born.

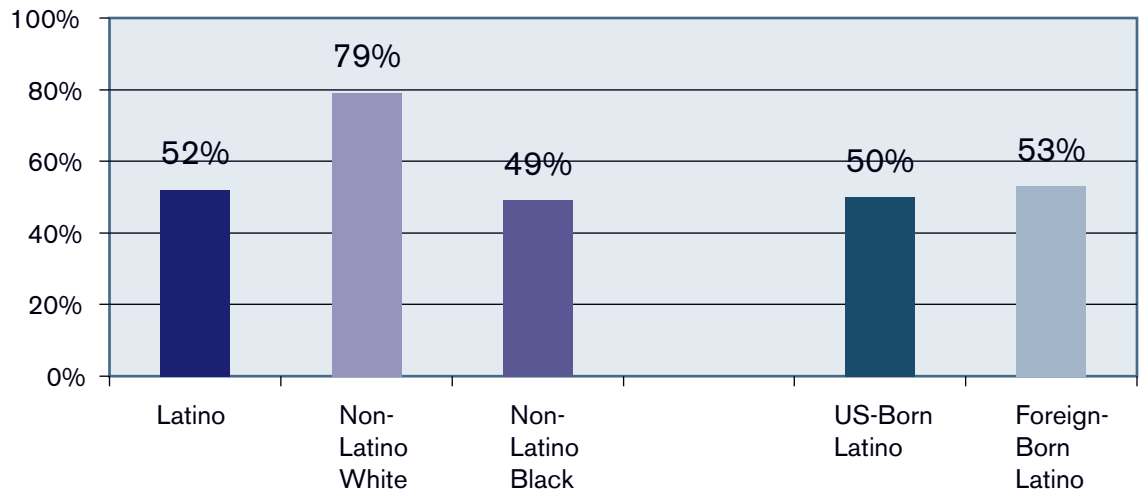
Latinos have accounted for a major portion of the growth in homeownership since 1990.

Housing

Latinos are an extremely important component of the housing market in the metropolitan area, especially in the suburbs. In 2003, there were 203,000 Latino-owned homes in the 6 county area, an increase of 126,000 since 1990. Since 1990, Latinos have been responsible for 34 percent of the overall growth in owner-occupied homes in metro Chicago. Between 2000 and 2003, 46 percent of the growth in owner-occupied homes is attributable to Latinos.

More than half of all Latino households are owner-occupied. Although Latinos' homeownership rate still lags behind that of the population at large, the gap is narrowing. Latinos' homeownership rate increased by 14 percentage points, from 38 percent in 1990 to 52 percent in 2003. This compares to only a 6 percentage point increase for all metro Chicago households. In 2003, 69 percent of all homes in the area were owner-occupied.

**Figure 24.
Homeownership Rates in Metro Chicago, 2003**



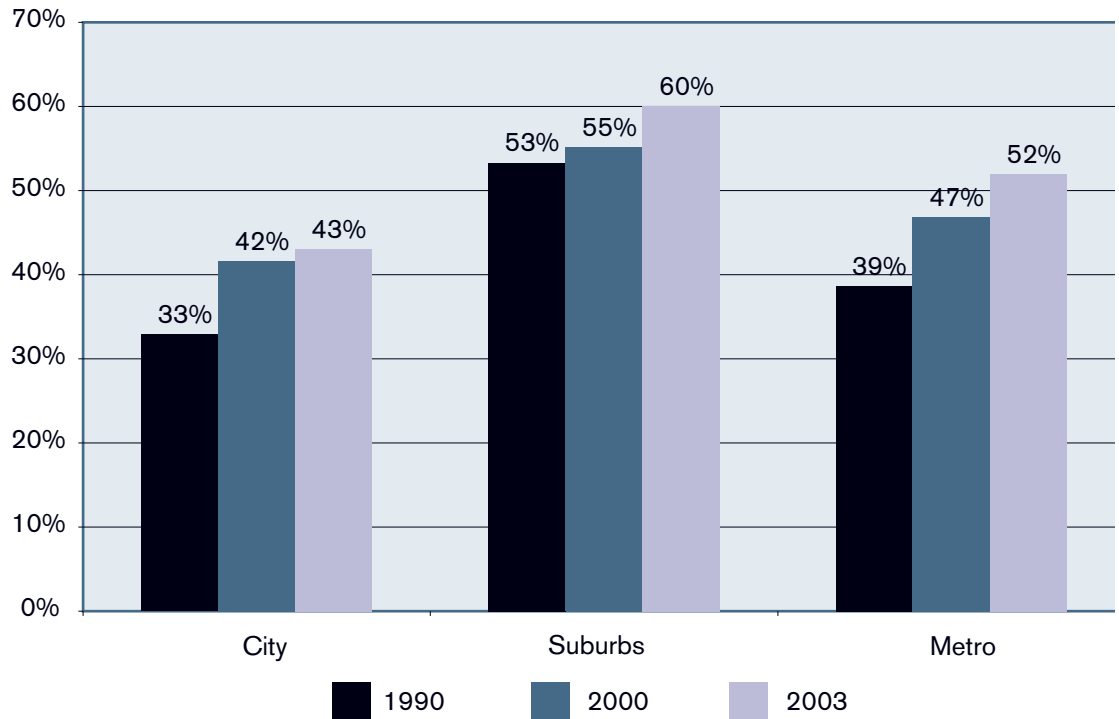
Source: AHS 2003, McConnell and Ready 2005.
Note: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

Between 1990 and 2000, three-quarters of the growth in Latino-owned homes occurred in the suburbs; since 2000, all of it has been suburban. After many years of steady growth, the number of Latino-owned homes in the city of Chicago has been falling since 2000.

Latinos living in the suburbs are more likely to be homeowners than city residents. Sixty percent of suburban Latino households are owner-occupied, compared to 43 percent of Latino households in the city of Chicago.

A very different picture emerges when examining metropolitan Chicago rental housing. Despite the massive increase in the Latino population that occurred between 1990 and 2003, the number of Latino-occupied rental homes increased by only 62,000 during this 13 year-period. Nearly all of the growth in Latino-occupied rental housing was in the suburbs. During the same period, the number of rented homes occupied by non-Latinos decreased.

Figure 25.
Metro Chicago Latino Homeownership Rates, 1990–2003



An important consequence of the increase in Latino owner-occupied homes is that it is becoming a significant factor in wealth accumulation, especially with the major increase in home values that has occurred in recent years. According to estimates, the average value of Latino-owned homes is \$150,000—between the average value of \$205,000 for non-Latino Whites and the \$107,000 average value of African American-owned homes.

Labor and Workforce

Although Latinos' progress in metropolitan Chicago has been impressive in many ways, it has also been fragmented and uneven. For example, while the percentage of Latinos making over \$75,000 per year increased significantly, one out of every five (20.3 percent) Latinos can be characterized as working poor (Chicago Urban League 2004). Many more Latinos are working full time through the full year, yet wage and salary earnings make it difficult to support a family.

Position at the Low End

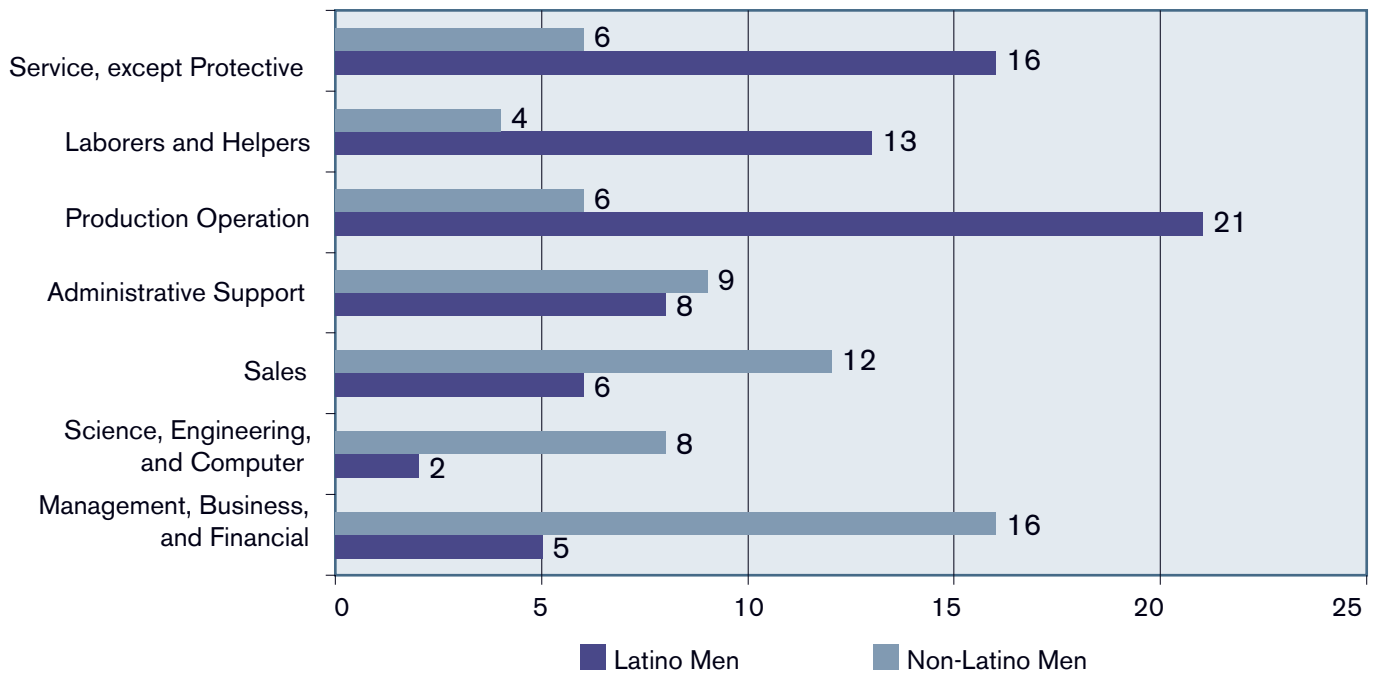
Where are Latinos working? Of the 820 occupational categories listed by the Illinois Department of Employment Services and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics,²⁴ Latino workers are concentrated in fewer than 75 occupations clustered in five industries:

- manufacturing, with women concentrated in 'light industry';
- food services;
- construction;
- retail trade; and
- clerical and administrative support (principally US-born women).

²⁴ Standard Occupational Classification System (SOCS), US Bureau of Labor Statistics www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm.

Few of these occupations offer much opportunity for significant advancement. One out of every five Latino men works as a production operative worker,²⁵ in contrast to only about 6 percent of non-Latino men. Similarly, 13 percent of Latino men work as laborers and helpers—mostly in the construction industry—while only about 4 percent of non-Latino men work in these areas. Another 16 percent of Latino males work as service workers, in contrast to 6 percent of non-Latino males. Mexican immigrant men, in particular, are highly concentrated in these job sectors. On the other end of the spectrum, less than 5 percent of Latino men are employed as management, business, and financial workers, while non-Latino men are more than three times as likely to work in these areas (16 percent).

Figure 26.
Metro Chicago Latino and Non-Latino Men in Selected Occupations, 2000



Source: 2000 Special Tabulation EEO Tabulation File, US Census Bureau from Illinois Department of Employment Security.

Universe: Population 16 and over.

Notes: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.

Data are rounded to the nearest whole number.

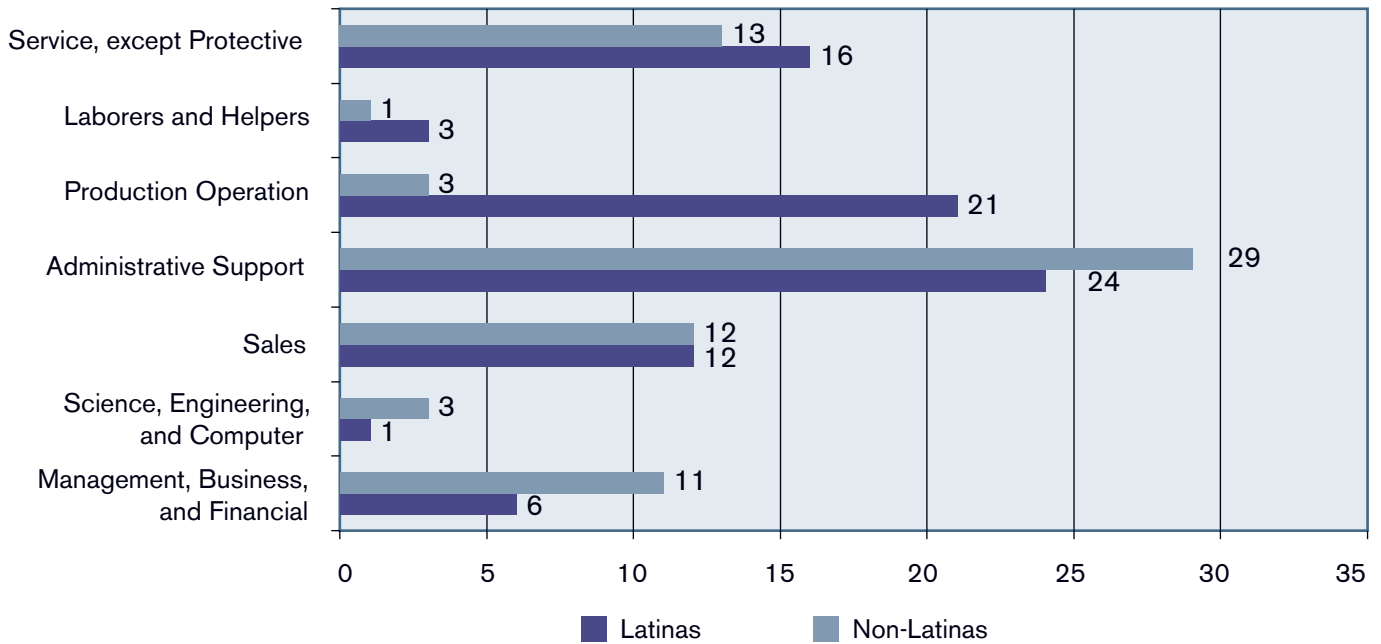
“ *I thought it would be easier to get a job here [and] make the American Dream. Now I think it’s difficult but not impossible.* ”

- Andrés, a 22-year-old US citizen who grew up in Mexico

²⁵ Workers involved in the production or assembly of goods.

The situation is no better for Latinas. They are over-concentrated in the production operation sector (21 percent) compared to only 3 percent of women who are not Latina. They are also under-represented among management, business, and financial workers, 6 percent compared to 11 percent. However, Latinas, like women in many other ethnic groups, are greatly concentrated in administrative support worker positions (24 percent).

Figure 27.
Metro Chicago Latinas and Non-Latinas in Selected Occupations, 2000



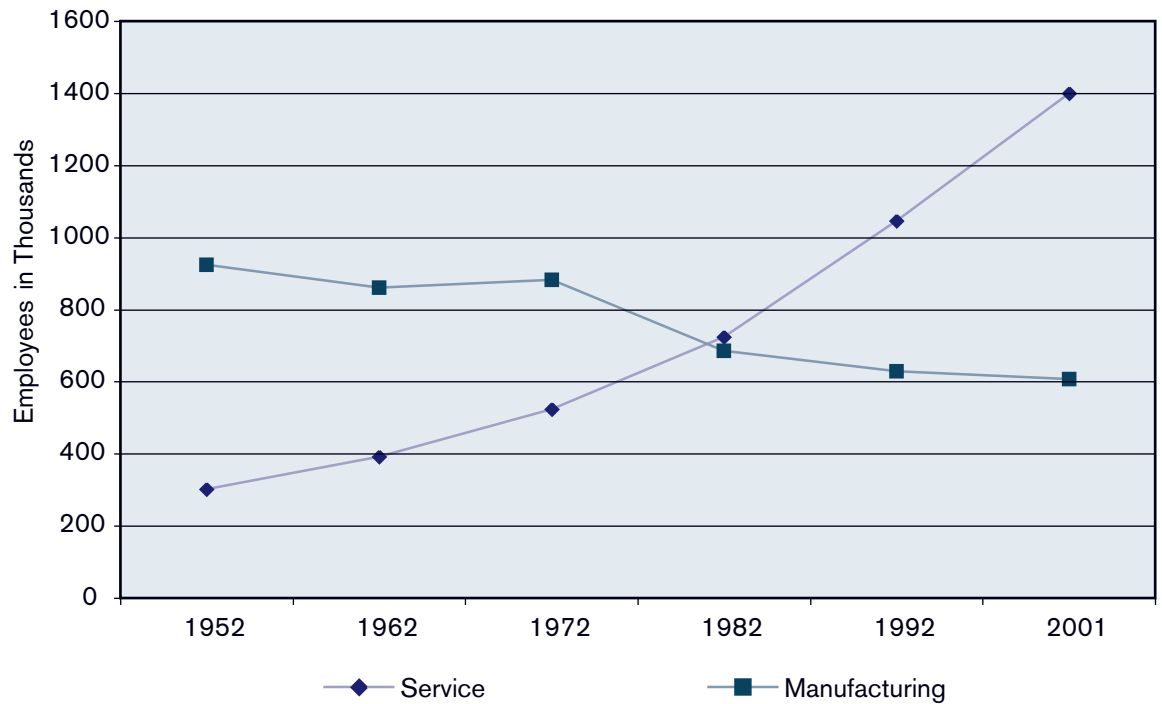
Source: 2000 Special Tabulation EEO Tabulation File, US Census Bureau from Illinois Department of Employment Security.
Universe: Population 16 and over.
Notes: Based on Chicago 9-county PMSA.
Data are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Short-Term and Long-Term Prospects

To understand the present and future economic prospects of Latino workers in Chicago’s economy, we must first understand the larger economy in which that labor force is embedded. One important consideration is that Chicago’s economy, like that of the nation, is shifting from one that is dominated by industry and manufacturing to one dominated by information-technology and service industries.

In the early and mid-1950s there were three times more manufacturing jobs in the Chicago metropolitan areas than service jobs. By 2001 the situation was almost entirely reversed. There were nearly two-and-a-half times as many service jobs as there were manufacturing jobs. This economic transformation is still in process and is projected to soon complete the reversal of the service/manufacturing ratios found in the 1950s.

Figure 28.
Metro Chicago's Economic Transformation, 1952–2001



The US labor force, its occupational structure, and the economy itself are undergoing radical change, and that change is plainly visible in Chicago (Koval 2004). There is an increasing danger that as what had been the premier industrial economy in the United States is transformed into to one that is knowledge-based and services-oriented, the gap between those with good jobs and those without will widen. In the absence of deliberate policies to mitigate these trends, barriers to upward mobility will become even more formidable, and many workers, including the great majority of Latino workers, will be relegated to the bottom tier of an increasingly polarized economic and social structure. The most vivid example of this economic/employment change can be found in the Illinois Department of Employment Security's employment projections for the decade of 2002–2012.

The Short-Term Job Outlook

Approximately two million of Illinois' seven million jobs will need to be filled over the next decade, due to worker replacement. Four of the ten largest categories to be filled in the coming years—with over 500,000 jobs—presently have a strong Latino presence. The challenge facing Latinos in the short tem, then, is not so likely to be a shortage of jobs but rather a shortage of *good jobs*, jobs that pay well and have potential for upward mobility. The jobs in which Latinos are now concentrated, like most of those projected to require replacement workers in the near future, are exceptionally low-paying.

As a result, it is likely that in the near future, as in the present, Latino workers will continue to earn the lowest salaries and wages of any racial or ethnic group in the Illinois labor force. Indeed, the job market for Latino workers could get tighter as the long-term decline in manufacturing jobs is projected to continue through 2012 and beyond.

There is a clear disconnect between the ‘growth’ jobs—new jobs that are projected to become available—and the ‘replacement’ jobs. As the table above shows, there is a relative balance among production, managerial, business, sales, and food service in the large job replacement occupations. On the other hand, the table below illustrates that the industries in which the most job growth is projected are mainly service industry jobs—professional, technical, and scientific—reflecting the economic restructuring that is the hallmark of the new economy.

Figure 29.

State of Illinois Occupational Employment Projections: 2002–2012
Total: Job Replacement

Sales and Related Occupations	264,910
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	257,380
*Food Prep & Serving Occupations	223,310
*Retail Sales Workers	173,240
Transportation/Material Moving Occupations	148,680
Education, Training & Library Occupations	147,220
Management Occupations	146,630
*Production Occupations	140,870
*Food & Beverage Serving Workers	133,640
Healthcare Practitioners & Tech Occupations	105,920

*Jobs with high Latino concentrations

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Economic Information and Analysis Division.

State of Illinois Industry Employment Projections: 2002–2012
Ten Largest Growth Industries

Education and Health Services	181,504
Professional and Business Services	151,801
Health Care and Social Assistance	124,752
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	100,191
Administrative and Waste Mgmt. Services	81,029
Administrative and Support Services	78,684
Leisure and Hospitality	76,182
Professional, Scientific, and Tech Services	66,034
*Accommodation and Food Services	59,845
Educational Services: Private and Public	56,752

*Industry with high Latino concentrations

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Economic Information and Analysis Division.

The Long-Term Job Outlook

Over the long term Chicago-area Latinos face two challenges. First, only one of the ten largest job growth industries has a significant Latino worker presence—Accommodations and Food Service. Second, the remaining nine high-growth industries typically require technical training or postsecondary educational credentials, two resources typically lacking for Latinos. Therefore, large numbers of Latinos are unlikely to be able to enter these jobs at the start of their working careers or even to access them by learning work skills on the job. With the shrinkage of the manufacturing sector projected to continue, access to good jobs will increasingly require advanced education and training.

In the years ahead the personal characteristics of hard work, adaptability, and opportunism that have served Latino workers well in obtaining the mainly low-paying jobs they currently have are unlikely to be as effective in obtaining good jobs in the new economy. Without a concerted, large-scale effort to improve opportunities for advanced education and technical training, and without dramatically better outcomes for Latinos in this regard, the growing prosperity that Chicago-area Latinos enjoyed during the 1990s will not be easily replicated in future decades. Indeed, income trends reported above for the years since 2000 to 2003 suggest that it has not been replicated during the current decade.



“
*Many of our young people
have a lot of potential, but
little education. It's really
hard for these kids.*”

– Joel, a Melrose Park resident
who was born in Mexico

Discussion and Policy Directions

The Latino population of metropolitan Chicago has grown tremendously over the past thirty years and now constitutes 20 percent of the region's population. Most of this growth occurred in the suburbs, where a majority of Chicago-area Latinos now live. Spurred by migration and natural growth in an exceptionally young population, Latinos are now the largest ethnic or racial minority group in the Chicago area. More than six in ten Latino adults are immigrants, but 84 percent of Latino children were born in the United States. Overall, two-thirds of Chicago-area Latinos are citizens—55 percent of adults and nearly 90 percent of children are citizens. Were it not for growth in the Latino population due to immigration and natural population increases, metropolitan Chicago would have suffered a net decrease in population.

In recent years almost all of the increase in employment and much of the increase in owner-occupied homes and in entrepreneurial activity has been attributable to Latinos. Latinos have registered impressive gains in income, earnings, and homeownership, especially during the 1990s. However, since 2000 median earnings and household income for Latinos have declined while those for non-Latino Whites continued to increase. Latinos have become stakeholders in metropolitan Chicago, and now Chicago has a stake in ensuring that Latinos succeed in becoming fully incorporated into the economic, social, and political life of the region in the years ahead. This process can be facilitated through bold and imaginative leadership that draws on the strengths of this community while recognizing the unique challenges it faces.

The Latino community's strengths are an asset to the Chicago region. Latinos are young, hard working, and tend to have close-knit families. They are entrepreneurial, starting many small businesses. To a great extent, they represent the future workforce: One in five Chicago residents is Latino, and children account for a much greater proportion—nearly one in three—of the population in their age group. The strength of Latino families helps to significantly reduce poverty levels in the population, even as Latino workers occupy the lowest-wage jobs. By pooling the earnings of multiple workers within families, Latinos achieve a higher standard of living than would otherwise be possible, and fewer Latino children live in poverty.

But Chicago-area Latinos also face serious challenges. Besides the challenge for the foreign born of learning English, Latinos on average have less formal education and are less likely to have health insurance. Most Latino children are the offspring of foreign-born parents, many of whom have limited knowledge of English and little formal education. Many foreign-born parents also have a limited understanding of how local institutions work and few social ties that transcend ethnic boundaries and linguistic barriers. Together, these factors can make it difficult for parents to help their children in school to the extent that they would like and, more generally, to take advantage of the full range of opportunities for advancement that the Chicago area has to offer.

Immigrant Latinos exhibit many of the classic characteristics of previous immigrant populations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Latino immigrants to Chicago typically arrive as young adults. Their work ethic compensates for limited knowledge of English and limited formal education. However, while previous generations of immigrants could get ahead with little more than hard work and ambition, this formula is less likely to produce the same results for recent Latino immigrants trying to make their way in the current knowledge-based and services-oriented economy of the area. To get ahead in this economy requires a higher level of technical skill than is possible to acquire through on-the-job training. Frequently the

training opportunities, like the jobs themselves, also require a level of proficiency in English that few immigrant adults could easily acquire without significant assistance.

An estimated 200,000 of the 740,000 foreign-born Latino residents of metropolitan Chicago are undocumented. An unknown number of the children of undocumented parents—probably in the tens of thousands—are citizens by birth. The undocumented status of so many immigrants represents a special challenge for all. For the undocumented themselves their lack of status translates into severely circumscribed lives, limiting possibilities for advancement. This condition also has dire consequences for their children, since their parents’ marginalization often hinders involvement in their schooling and can affect their vision of the possibilities available to the children as citizens.

“ *We want the neighborhood to get better for people. We’re committed to making it better for our parents and our future.* ”

– Victoria, a city employee who lives in Pilsen

Policy Directions

Chicago’s future prosperity depends on the full and successful incorporation of immigrant Latinos into the economic and social life of the region. For this to occur policies should be designed to assist Latinos to play on their strengths and to overcome the particular challenges facing them.

Future economic policy should concentrate on business creation, including technical assistance and basic financial education, to help ensure the long-term success of entrepreneurial activities. Also, given the importance of homeownership for the maintenance and creation of wealth, policies to assist even more families to acquire homes should be developed.

Another issue of great importance to the future of Chicago will be the ability of Latinos to advance in their jobs and to become eligible for good jobs. Policies that promote adult education and skills acquisition are crucial in this regard. The educational attainment levels of Latino immigrants are exceptionally low relative to the rest of the Chicago-area population. Most completed their formal education prior arriving in the United States. Their educational needs are primarily for informal instructional programs such as GED preparation, English classes, and job training programs. While these services are currently provided by many fine community-based organizations serving Latinos, the need for such programs far outstrips the supply.

Health insurance is a very large concern. US-born Latinos are significantly less likely to be insured than non-Latino Blacks or Whites. Foreign-born Latinos are much less likely still to be covered by a health insurance plan, and least likely to be covered are the approximately 70,000 foreign-born Latino children in metropolitan Chicago.

Currently, the Latino population is very young and relatively healthy. As Latinos grow older, their lack of insurance will make it more likely that treatable medical conditions will be left untreated or that family financial insolvency will be the price to be paid when medical care is

required. Latinos' high uninsurance rate will also increase financial strains on the healthcare system. Perhaps most importantly, the future largely depends on the extent to which Latino children, the great majority of whom are US-born citizens, develop the competencies, skills, and sensibilities needed to assume positions of responsibility and leadership in their communities, in the workforce and in all arenas of civic life. The future not only of Latinos but of the region itself depends on improving young people's access to opportunities and resources and, ultimately, on improved achievement in schools. Thus, a high priority should be the creation of a program of applied research specifically examining the educational needs of Latino students and families and how best to meet them. The research should begin by examining the effectiveness for Latinos of promising strategies already being implemented in Chicago, as well as strategies to more effectively engage Latino students in school and engage schools in Latino communities. The viability of strategies to enable more Latino students to attend Catholic schools should also be examined. Finally, increased support is needed to assist those responsible for the nurturing, development, and education of the next generation of Chicagoans. United in this goal, the public sector, along with churches, community organizations, and philanthropists, should redouble their efforts to:

- help parents in their task of facilitating the healthy growth and development of their children in the first years;
- make Head Start and other quality pre-school programs more widely available;
- increase the capacity of elementary schools, in collaboration with the families and communities they serve, to accelerate Latino children's learning and achievement—especially for English language learners and those from low income families;
- enhance the ability of high schools to provide healthy, engaging environments that motivate students to stay in school through graduation and beyond; and
- increase the enrollment and retention of Latino students in colleges and in other post-secondary educational programs.

The influence of Latinos on the economic, civic, and cultural life of metropolitan Chicago is already enormous and will become much larger still when the current generation of children begins to make its mark in the next few years. Strong, principled, and factually informed leadership can help to ensure that Chicago-area Latinos continue to prosper and contribute fully to the future vitality of metropolitan Chicago. We hope that the information presented in this report spurs dialogue on these issues and will help efforts directed towards a better future for all.

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