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July 14, 2011

The Mexican-American Boom: Births Overtake Immigration

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About the Pew Hispanic Center

The Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization that seeks to improve public understanding of the diverse Hispanic population in the United States and to chronicle Latinos' growing impact on the nation. It does not take positions on policy issues. The Center is part of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" based in Washington, D.C., and it is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, a Philadelphia-based public charity. All of the Center's reports are available at www.pewhispanic.org.

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About this Report

This report analyzes the sources of population growth—fertility and immigration—among the Mexican-American population in the U.S. since 1980. It also examines Mexican-American fertility patterns, comparing them with those of other U.S. demographic groups and those of Mexico. The report also explores trends in Mexican migration to the U.S. since 1970.

The report is based on an analysis of data from the U.S. and Mexico. For the U.S., the primary data sources are the 2010 U.S. Census, the March U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS) and the June U.S. CPS, Fertility Supplement. For Mexico, the primary data sources are the 2010 Mexican Census and the Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE).

This report is the work of the Pew Hispanic Center staff. The overview was written by the Center's Director Paul Taylor. Associate Director Mark Hugo Lopez wrote parts of the report and managed the report's production. Senior Researcher Gretchen Livingston tabulated fertility statistics and provided guidance for the report overall. Senior Demographer Jeffrey Passel tabulated population and immigration statistics and provided guidance on the demographic portions of this report. Emilio Parrado of the University of Pennsylvania provided general guidance. Rakesh Kochhar provided comments. Seth Motel and Gabriel Velasco helped with the production of the report. The report was copy-edited by Molly Rohal. It was number checked by Seth Motel.

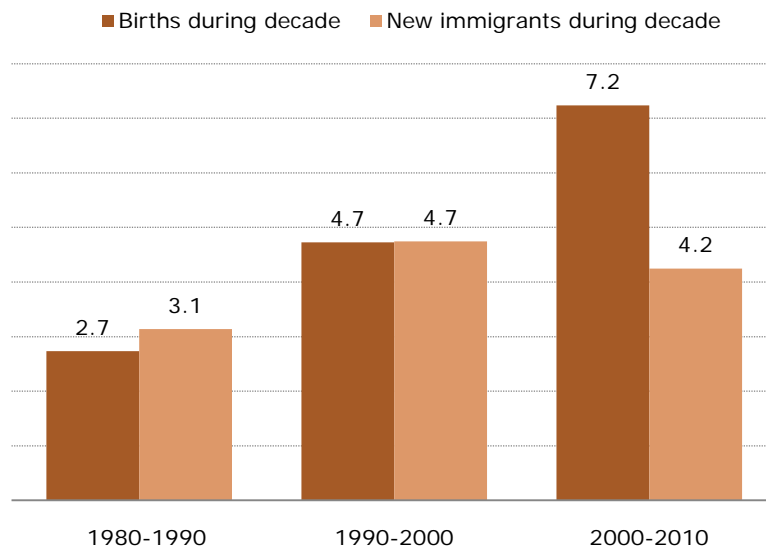
The Mexican-American Boom: Births Overtake Immigration

Births have surpassed immigration as the main driver of the dynamic growth in the U.S. Hispanic population. This new trend is especially evident among the largest of all Hispanic groups—Mexican-Americans,¹ according to a new analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data by the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center.

In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the Mexican-American population grew by 7.2 million as a result of births and 4.2 million as a result of new immigrant arrivals. This is a change from the previous two decades when the number of new immigrants either matched or exceeded the number of births.

The current surge in births among Mexican-Americans is largely attributable to the immigration wave that has brought more than 10 million immigrants to the United States from Mexico since 1970. Between 2006 and 2010 alone, more than half (53%) of all Mexican-American births were to Mexican immigrant parents. As a group, these immigrants are more likely than U.S.-born Americans to be in their prime child-bearing years. They also have much higher fertility.

Figure 1
Mexican-American Population Growth, 1980-2010
(millions)



Note: Deaths are not included in the figure.

Source: For 2000-2010, Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of March 2010 and March 2000 Current Population Surveys adjusted for omissions. For 1980-1990 and 1990-2000, Pew Hispanic Center tabulations based on 1980 to 2000 Census Integrated Public Use Micro Samples (IPUMS).

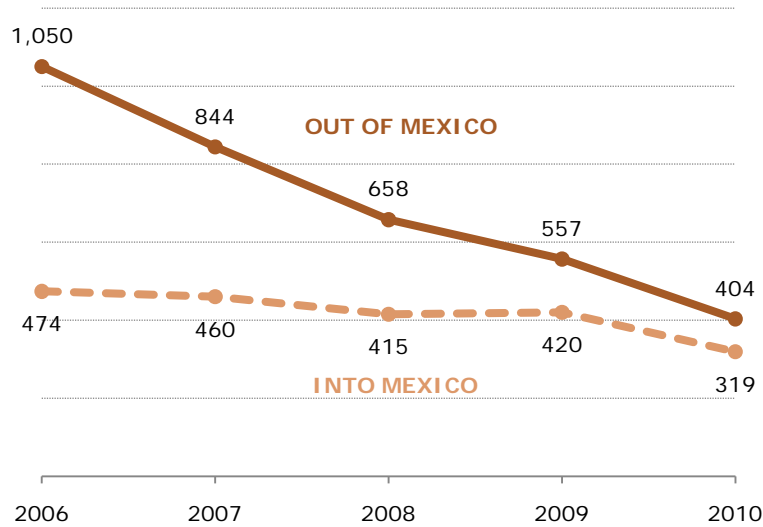
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¹ The term "Mexican-American" refers to Hispanics who were born in Mexico or U.S.-born Hispanics who trace their ancestry to Mexico.

Meanwhile, the number of new immigrant arrivals from Mexico has fallen off steeply in recent years. According to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of Mexican government data, the number of Mexicans annually leaving Mexico for the U.S. declined from more than one million in 2006 to 404,000 in 2010—a 60% reduction.² This is likely a result of recent developments in both the U.S. and Mexico. On the U.S. side, declining job opportunities and increased border enforcement (Passel and Cohn, 2009) may have made the U.S. less attractive to potential Mexican immigrants. And in Mexico, recent strong economic growth may have reduced the “push” factors that often lead Mexicans to emigrate to the U.S.

Figure 2
Migration of Mexicans Into and Out of Mexico,
Mexican National Survey of Occupation and
Employment, 2006-2010

(thousands)



Note: About 97% of Mexicans leaving Mexico go to the United States, and 93-96% of those returning come from the U.S. Figures reported are for 12-month periods ending in November.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center estimates based on Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE) published by Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), March 17, 2011

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As a result, there were fewer new immigrant arrivals to the U.S. from Mexico in the 2000s (4.2 million) than in the 1990s (4.7 million). However, the Mexican-American population continued to grow rapidly, with births accounting for 63% of the 11.2 million increase from 2000 to 2010.³

² These figures reflect Mexican emigration to all countries, not just the United States. However, 97% of Mexican emigrants migrate to the U.S. For details on methodology and the Mexican government’s Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE), see Passel and Cohn (2009).

³ The 11.2 million increase reflects the net change in births, deaths and net migration of the Mexican-American population in the U.S. between 2000 and 2010. It is different from the 11.4 million shown in Figure 1. That figure reflects population changes due to births (7.2 million) and net migration (4.2 million) only, excluding deaths.

At 31.8 million in 2010, Mexican-Americans comprise 63% of the U.S. Hispanic population and 10% of the total U.S. population ([Ennis, Ríos-Vargas and Albert, 2011](#)). According to Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from the March 2010 U.S. Current Population Survey, 39% of Mexican-Americans—or 12.4 million—are immigrants.⁴ With the exception of Russia, no other country in the world has as many immigrants from all countries as the U.S. has from Mexico alone.⁵ Nor does any country in the world have as many citizens living abroad as does Mexico. According to the World Bank (2011), more than 10% of Mexico’s native-born population lives elsewhere, with the vast majority (97%) of these expatriates living in the United States.

Overall, the Hispanic population of the United States grew from 35.3 million in 2000 to 50.5 million in 2010, accounting for more than half of the nation’s overall population growth during that decade ([Passel, Cohn and Lopez, 2011](#)). Some 58% of this Hispanic population increase came from births rather than the arrival of new immigrants. However, for many non-Mexican-origin Hispanic groups in the U.S., births accounted for less than half of their population growth in the past decade. For example, from 2000 to 2010, births accounted for just 38% of the growth of the Cuban-American population and just 39% of the growth of the population of U.S. Hispanics of Central or South American origin.

Hispanics now comprise 16.3% of the total U.S. population. This share is projected to rise to 29% by the middle of this century, with the bulk of the future increase driven by births, many the descendants of today’s immigration wave, rather than the arrival of new immigrants. ([Passel and Cohn, 2008](#)).

⁴ This estimate has been adjusted for undercount.

⁵ Alone, the number of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. is larger than the immigrant population in any other country in the world, with the exception of the Russian Federation (World Bank, 2011). However, while Russia hosts 12 million immigrants, many are natives of countries that were part of the former Soviet Union.

Mexican-American Fertility Patterns

U.S. births are disproportionately Hispanic, accounting for one-in-four (25%) of the nation's newborns in 2008 (Martin, et. al, 2008). U.S. births are also disproportionately Mexican-American. While 10% of the nation's population in 2008 was Mexican-American, 16% of the nation's births were to Mexican-American mothers.

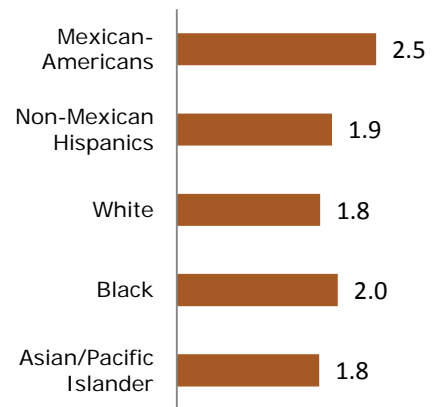
Two demographic factors explain the high share of births among Mexican-Americans: age and fertility. On average, Mexican-Americans are younger than other major racial and ethnic groups. The median age of Mexican-Americans in this country is 25, compared with 30 for non-Mexican-origin Hispanics, 32 for blacks, 35 for Asians and 41 for whites.⁶ This means that a higher share of Mexican-American women is of child-bearing age than is the case for other racial or ethnic groups.

In addition, Mexican-American women have more children than do their same-aged counterparts in other racial and Hispanic origin groups. For example, according to Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from the 2006 to 2010 June Fertility Supplements of the U.S. Current Population Survey, the typical Mexican-American woman ages 40 to 44 has given birth to 2.5 children, compared with 1.9 children for the typical same-aged non-Mexican-Hispanic woman, 1.8 children for the typical same-aged white woman, 2.0 for the typical same-aged black woman and 1.8 for the typical same-aged Asian woman.

Mexican-American fertility is also higher than that of non-Mexican-origin U.S. Hispanics. Across all cohorts ages 20 and older, Mexican-American women have anywhere from about 20% to 50% more children than non-Mexican U.S. Hispanic women.

Among Mexican-American women, fertility differs by immigration status. On average, the typical Mexican immigrant woman ages 40 to 44 has about one-third more children over the

Figure 3
Children Ever Born by Race/Ethnicity Among Women Ages 40 to 44, 2008



Note: The children ever born (CEB) measure is a cumulative measure of fertility indicating the average number of children that women, in a given age range, have had throughout their lives.

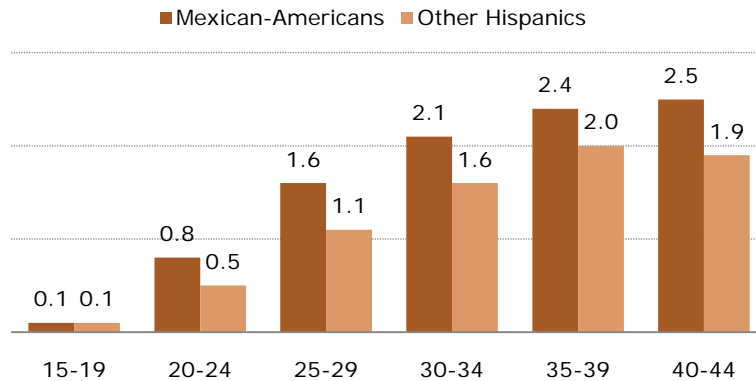
Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2006 to 2010 Current Population Survey June Supplements

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⁶ In this report, white, black and Asian populations include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups are not shown. Hispanics can be of any race.

course of her lifetime than the typical U.S.-born Mexican-American in the same age group—2.7 versus 2.1.

Figure 4
Children Ever Born Among All U.S. Hispanic Women, by Age Cohort, 2008

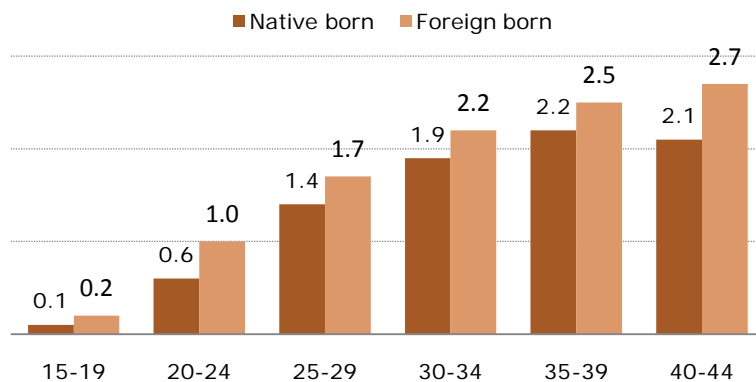


Note: The children ever born (CEB) measure is a cumulative measure of fertility indicating the average number of children that women, in a given age range, have had throughout their lives.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2006 to 2010 Current Population Survey June Supplements

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Figure 5
Children Ever Born Among Mexican-American Women, by Age Cohort, 2008



Note: The children ever born (CEB) measure is a cumulative measure of fertility indicating the average number of children that women, in a given age range, have had throughout their lives.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2006 to 2010 Current Population Survey June Supplements

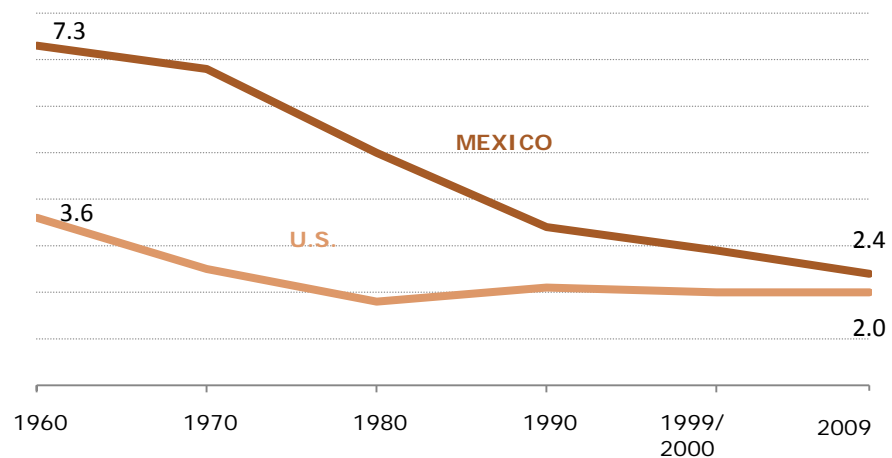
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Comparing Mexicans and Mexican-American Immigrants

Mexican-American immigrant women ages 40 to 44 have nearly as many children, on average, as their same-aged counterparts living in Mexico—2.7 versus 2.9. This overall similarity in the fertility of Mexicans in Mexico and Mexican emigrants to the U.S. is notable given the vast differences in the past 50 years in the overall fertility patterns of all women in these two neighboring countries. Back in 1960, the total fertility rate⁷ for women in their child-bearing years was 7.3 children per woman in Mexico versus 3.6 per woman in the U.S. (all women—not just Mexican immigrants). By 2009, the fertility rate in Mexico had fallen to 2.4, while the rate in the U.S. had fallen to 2.0 for all U.S. women.

The sharp decline in fertility rates in Mexico in the past half-century is consistent with the demographic changes that often occur when countries undergo periods of rapid economic growth and modernization (Tuiran, Partida, Mojarro and Zuniga, 2002). In addition, changes in Mexico's population policy in 1974 played an important part in facilitating fertility declines (Partida-Bush, 2005).

Figure 6
Total Fertility Rate, 1960 to 2009



Note: 2009 U.S. data are preliminary.

Source: For Mexican data 1960-1990: http://www.conapo.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=42&Itemid=238. For Mexican data 1999-2009: INEGI total fertility rate estimate from *Principales Resultados del Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010*. 2011. INEGI. For U.S. data 1960-2000: Pew Research Center calculations from National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States 2010: with Special Feature on Death and Dying*. 2011. Hyattsville, MD. For 2009 U.S. data: Hamilton, Brady, Joyce A. Martin, and Stephanie J. Ventura. 2010. *Births: Preliminary Data for 2009*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

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⁷ The total fertility rate (TFR) represents the average number of children a woman will bear by the end of her childbearing years, if the birth rates that all women in the general population are presently experiencing remain constant. An alternative measure of fertility is the children ever born (CEB) measure. It is a cumulative measure of fertility indicating the average number of children that women in a given age range have had throughout their lives.

The Mexican Migration

The period between 1970 and 2010 has witnessed one of the largest mass migrations in modern history—the net movement of more than 10 million Mexicans from Mexico into the United States. In 1970, there were fewer than one million Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. By 2000, that number had grown to 9.8 million and by 2007 it reached 12.5 million. Since then, the Mexican-born population has remained roughly constant.

Many Mexican immigrants are in the U.S. without authorization. In 2010 some 6.5 million—more than half

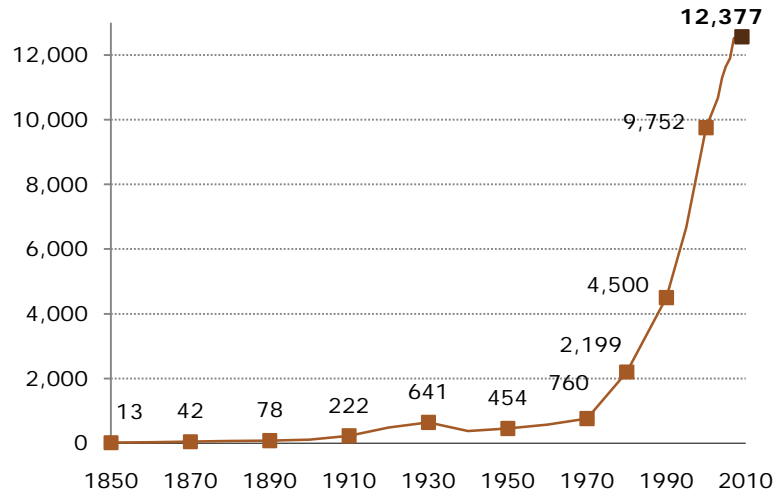
(52%) of all Mexican immigrants—were unauthorized immigrants. Among the nation's 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants from all parts of the world, the majority (58%) are from Mexico ([Passel and Cohn, 2011](#)). Many of these unauthorized immigrants have had children in the U.S. Between March 2009 and March 2010, 68% of the 350,000 U.S. births to unauthorized immigrant parents were to Mexican unauthorized immigrants.

Mexican migration to the U.S. has long been characterized, at least in part, by a circular pattern. While many Mexican migrants enter the U.S. to settle permanently, a significant number come to the U.S. to work for a short time, often in seasonal jobs, and return to Mexico. According to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of Mexican government data, there appears to be less of this return migration now than in the past, possibly because of the increased financial costs of migrating back to the U.S. and the increased danger of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2006 and 2007, more than 450,000 Mexican migrants returned from the U.S. to

Figure 7

Mexican-Born Population in the United States, 1850-2010

(thousands)



Source: For 1850 to 1990: Gibson, Campbell and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850-2000," U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Working Paper No. 81, 2006; For 2000 to 2010: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from augmented March Current Population Surveys adjusted for undercount.

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Mexico each year. Since then, the number of Mexicans returning to Mexico annually from the U.S. has declined, to 319,000 in 2010.

From Mexico's perspective, a significant share of its population, especially its working-age population, is abroad. One-in-ten (10%) of everyone born in Mexico resides in the U.S. Among Mexican-born men ages 30 to 44, one-in-five (20%) are in the U.S. Among Mexican-born women in the same age group, more than one-in-seven (15%) are in the U.S.⁸

⁸ This estimate is based on a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of data from the March 2010 U.S. Current Population Survey, adjusted for undercount, and the 2010 Mexican Census.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1

Children Ever Born Among Women Ages 15 to 44, United States and Mexico

	AGE COHORT					
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
U.S. total, 2008	0.1	0.5	1.0	1.6	1.9	1.9
U.S. Hispanics	0.1	0.7	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.3
Native born	0.1	0.6	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.0
Foreign born	0.2	0.9	1.5	2.0	2.3	2.4
Mexican-Americans	0.1	0.8	1.6	2.1	2.4	2.5
Native born	0.1	0.6	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.1
Foreign born	0.2	1.0	1.7	2.2	2.5	2.7
Non-Mexican Hispanics	0.1	0.5	1.1	1.6	2.0	1.9
Native born	0.1	0.5	1.1	1.5	2.0	1.9
Foreign born	0.3	0.6	1.1	1.7	1.9	1.9
U.S. Non-Hispanics	0.1	0.4	0.9	1.5	1.8	1.8
Native born	0.1	0.4	1.0	1.5	1.8	1.8
Foreign born	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.3	1.8	1.8
White	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.5	1.8	1.8
Black	0.1	0.7	1.3	1.8	2.0	2.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.1	0.3	0.6	1.2	1.7	1.8
Mexico total, 2010	0.2	0.8	1.5	2.1	2.5	2.9

Note: The children ever born (CEB) measure is a cumulative measure of fertility indicating the average number of children that women, in a given age range, have had throughout their lives.

Source: Results for U.S. based on Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2006 to 2010 Current Population Survey data; Results for Mexico based on 2010 Mexican Census data as published by INEGI.

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