Trends in North Central Latino Demographics

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Abstract

Latino immigration has rapidly changed, and continues to rapidly change the demographics of the north central region of the United States. These demographic shifts are amplified in the context of an aging non-Latino population. This paper explores the extent of the growth of the Latino population vis-à-vis the non-Latino population’s changes from 2000-2010. The paper then breaks down the changes by rurality of county, finding that changes are amplified in rural areas where Latino immigration combines with non-Latino depopulation. We find that Latino immigrants are more likely to be of a working age than non-immigrants and are hence well placed to offset aging patterns in the majority population, and we again find that these differences are amplified in rural areas. On average, Latino immigrants are less educated than non-immigrants, but education levels increase with distance to country of origin.

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Introduction

To formulate effective rural development policies, it is important to be cognizant of demographic change affecting the region. This short document explores trends in the rural Latino population in the twelve-state North Central region. Population change, age structure, educational levels, and country-of-origin are considered. The document concludes with some implications for rural development.
Population Change

The Latino population grew substantially from 2000 to 2010 in each of the twelve Midwest states featured in this report. As shown in Figure 1, in ten of the twelve states, the Latino population grew by over fifty percent.

Figure 1. Latino and Non-Latino Population Change in the North Central Region 2000-2010 (Decennial Census)

In the Midwest overall, the Latino population grew by 49 percent. This exceeds the forty-three percent growth in the nationwide Hispanic population\(^1\) and far outstrips the ten percent growth in the overall U.S. population and the four percent growth in the overall population of the 12 Midwestern states over the same period. Put another way, between 2000 and 2006, Latinos comprised 26% of the 2.7% growth in the Midwest (2000/2010 Census Data). Figure 2 (next page) shows the total Latino population change graphed against total non-Latino population change in the twelve Midwestern states from 2000 to 2010. In terms of total population change, Latino growth exceeded Non-Latino growth in half of the states. This includes states that would have seen a substantial population decline without Latino population growth (Illinois and Michigan).

\(^1\) The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” refer to slightly different populations. Where source materials use “Hispanic” we maintain that term.
Demographic shifts are in general even stronger in more rural areas, where non-Latino depopulation combines with Latino population growth to slow or even reverse the overall depopulation occurring in some rural areas. The data show the Latino population increased on average in all county types, regardless of rurality. To distinguish between rural and non-rural population change, Figure 4 (below) shows the total Latino and Non-Latino population change between 2000-2010 in the Midwest by USDA county rural urban continuum code, (a commonly accepted designation for rurality). The code ranges from 1 to 9 (least to most rural). The definitions of each designation appear in the appendix.
While Latino population growth in metro areas is very important (accounting for about one-half to two-thirds of population growth in metro areas), the more rural counties (codes 7-9) exemplify that with the rural decline in non-Latino population, many communities would be experiencing a strong depopulation without Latino immigration. Figure 4 (below) illustrates just how widespread this phenomenon remains. The green counties (most of the area of the map) indicate counties in which the non-Latino population decreased, but the Latino population increased. Note also that only in the sparsely seen orange and red counties did the Latino population not increase.

Figure 4. Latino and Non-Latino Population Change in North Central Region Counties Map 2000-2010 (Decennial Census)
Age Structure

Net Latino immigration has slowed and may have even gone negative in the last few years. For example, from 1995-2000, about 3 million Mexicans moved to the United States and 700,000 returned to Mexico, while from 2005-2010, only 1.4 million Mexicans moved to United States and 1.4 million returned to Mexico (Economist 2012). Nonetheless, due to differences in age and child bearing habits, Latino births in the United States will continue to increase the size and importance of the Latino population.

Reinforcing the growing importance of the Latino population are demographic trends in the majority population, with about 78 million baby boomers who are beginning to retire (Borich and Martinez 2010). This retirement implies an increased dependence of retirees on workers. Latino immigrants are more likely to be of working age and hence are positioned to help. Figure 5 (below), which shows the difference in the average age of recent Hispanic immigrants in the Midwest to that of the Non-Hispanic population from 2000-2008, helps illustrate this point.

Figure 5. Non-Immigrant and Recent Hispanic Immigrant Age Composition North Central Region (IPUMS-USA 2000-2008)

More rural areas have an older population in general, as Figure 6 illustrates. An exodus of the younger population has largely driven the non-Latino depopulation of rural areas, and rural areas hence lack young workers. Logically, this amplifies the importance of Latino immigrants in rural areas because as shown earlier they are younger on average than the non-immigrant populations. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 7, the Hispanic immigrant population is younger on average in rural areas than in non-rural areas and hence the potential workforce is increased in rural areas.

1 While Hispanic (a language grouping) is not the same as Latino (a geography-of-origin-based designation), in the US, data on Hispanic immigrants provides an approximation of Latino immigrants. When the source data uses Hispanic, it is maintained here.

2 In this example, “immigrant” is a non-citizen resident who lived abroad the previous year any year 2000-2008.

3 Figures 5, 6, and 8 rely on PUMA (Public Use Microdata Area) codes and the Rural-Urban Continuum Codes are based on counties, so the data per county code is found by averaging the county codes within each PUMA.

4 Code 9 is excluded here and in Figure 8 the within puma averaging leads to insufficient observations of immigrants in PUMAs with an average county code of 9.
Figure 6. Age Composition of Non-immigrants in the North Central Region by Rurality (IPUMS-USA 2000-2008)

Figure 7. Age Composition of Recent Hispanic Immigrants in North Central Region by Rurality (IPUMS-USA 2000-2008)
Countries of Origin & Education

The 12 million Mexican citizens living in the United States account for the majority (about 65%) of Latino immigrants (Taylor, Charlton, and Yúnez-Naude 2012). Although other immigrant groups comprise a smaller percent of the total, there are still other large country-specific groups of Latino immigrants. Furthermore, country of origin is a notable predictor of the average education of an immigrant. Figure 8 (below) shows the percent of immigrants with different levels of education from various countries of origin on the left vertical axis and the distance from the center of the country of origin to the center of the United States on the right vertical axis. In general, the average education of Latino immigrants increases the farther away their country of origin is from the United States. We can typically account for outliers, such as Venezuela, with an examination of the country-specific political or economic climate.

Figure 9 (next page) shows how the average Hispanic immigrant education tends to decrease as the county becomes more rural. From county code 2 (counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population) to 7 (counties with an urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area), the number of Hispanic immigrants without a high school diploma increases by almost 20%. In general, immigrants follow the general population trend in having lower education in more rural areas. The more highly educated gravitate towards urban markets and hence, for rural areas, policies probably need to focus on how to help the less educated. As mentioned earlier, Latino immigrants are well placed to help maintain a critical mass of workforce in areas with an aging non-immigrant population. If not addressed, however, low education levels of immigrants may be a hindrance to this potential particularly in rural areas.
Conclusion

Serving to underscore the importance of immigrants to support and aging non-immigrant population is the fact that more white non-Latinos died than were born in the United States for the first time ever in 2013. Furthermore, new evidence indicating a slowing net migration from Mexico (Taylor, Charlton, and Yúnez-Naude 2012), rather than undercutting the future importance of our findings, only increases the consequence of immigrants outreach efforts seeking to incorporate rural immigrants into the economy. Otherwise they may return to their home country and not be replaced, or flow into the US cities. Either outcome could hurt rural areas that are struggling to maintain a population base. Although the country of origin discussion highlights that no one-size-fits-all-immigrants outreach program can succeed, lower education levels on average indicate a need to focus programs on the less educated, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, all of the demographic aspects heretofore examined are amplified in rural areas and hence rural areas have the most to gain by focusing efforts on helping immigrants succeed.
USDA 2003 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes

Metro counties:
1. Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more
2. Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population
3. Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population

Non-metro counties:
4. Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area
5. Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area
6. Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area
7. Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area
8. Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area
9. Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area.
References
