

REPORTS ON RURAL AMERICA



New Immigrant Settlements  
in Rural America:  
Problems, Prospects, and Policies

LEIF JENSEN



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE FOR RURAL AMERICA'S  
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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# New Immigrant Settlements in Rural America: Problems, Prospects, and Policies

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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY PARK, PA

*A Carsey Institute Report on Rural America*



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# Foreword

We often think of immigration as an urban phenomenon. We picture families with suitcases arriving by boat to Ellis Island and settling in New York and other cities that promised employment and reconnection with family members and others of similar ethnic origin, urban enclaves of newcomers looking for a new lives and opportunities. In this report, Leif Jensen describes a different pattern of immigration in the 21st century, examining the growing numbers of immigrants who are choosing to settle in rural places and small towns where their presence brings new faces and diverse culture to places where everyone often knows everyone else, and knew their Daddy and Mama too.

Many rural leaders hope these new rural residents, bringing youth and determination, new skills and cultures, will help to revitalize those rural communities struggling with low incomes, a low-skill labor force, an aging population base, limited access to services, and weak infrastructure. These new Americans, like the waves of immigrants before them, may come to join the middle class, providing new vitality for small town civic life, new support for the tax base, new and improved services, and better education systems.

However, long term residents may not be so sure of these benefits. They may worry about the social and economic impact of immigrants who bring with them different languages, racial makeup, and class standing. Sullivan County in the Catskills of New York, depicted in the report by writer Julie Ardery, illustrates these dynamics. Will Hispanic immigrants to Sullivan County help the area rebound from a collapsed tourist industry and become absorbed into the community, or will they continue to be treated as invisible as they go to their hard work each day in the Foie Gras factories and elsewhere?

Certainly, whatever the outcome, we can see that rural communities are changing as more and more new immigrants arrive and settle in small town America. As one immigrant to Sullivan County says, “We’re not leaving.”

This report, *New Immigrant Settlements in Rural America*, examines the implications of these settlements to rural America. Immigration has a big impact in places where population is low and where more limited resources and social service infrastructures make rural areas especially vulnerable to the costs of new immigrant flows. This report describes immigrants moving in to rural communities, considers the implications for communities, and describes some on the ground

cases where rural people are working to build stronger communities with the new Americans who are coming to their small towns.

The Carsey Institute’s Center on Rural Families and Communities has produced this report for our series, Reports on Rural America, with support from the Annie E. Casey, W. K. Kellogg, and Ford Foundations. This report contributes to the Carsey Institute’s goal of building awareness and understanding of rural families and communities and stimulating fresh thinking about effective rural policy and programs that invest in those families and communities. We thank Leif Jensen for his analysis of new immigration to rural America. We appreciate thoughtful reviews by Ken Johnson and William Kandel, and thank our editors, Amy Seif here at Carsey and Barbara Ray.

In writing this report the author, Leif Jensen, conducted original analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, and relied on the published work of a number of scholars who have contributed greatly to our understanding of this issue. In assembling this report, Jensen relied on the infrastructural support of the Population Research Institute at Penn State, which has core support from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (1 R24 HD1025 and 2 R24 HD041025-06), and The Pennsylvania State University Agricultural Experiment Station Multi-state Research Project (NE-1011) on Rural Communities, Rural Labor Markets, and Public Policy. The assistance of Tse-Chuan Yang, Jeanne Spicer and Steve Graham, all at Penn State, is gratefully acknowledged by the author.

—Cynthia M. Duncan  
Director, Carsey Institute

# Executive Summary

This report examines recent immigrants in rural and small town America, through analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau. For many decades urban areas have been, and they remain, the destination of choice for the nation's immigrants. Recent evidence suggests, however, that many immigrant groups are dispersing away from traditional gateway cities. Many small towns and cities in every region of the country are contending with new challenges and opportunities brought by rapid increases in their immigrant populations.

To inform policy discussions of this important issue the report:

- Places the latest wave of immigration to the United States in historical and policy context;
- Calls attention to prevailing evidence on the residential preferences of the foreign born, including their movement away from metropolitan areas and their segregation from the native born in regards to neighborhood of residence;
- Pinpoints geographically and describes socio-economically places across the vast expanse of rural America that have received relatively large influxes of recent immigrants; and,
- Compares the characteristics of recent immigrants in rural areas both to their native-born counterparts in those areas, and to their foreign-born counterparts living in more urban locales.

**The report suggests that while immigrants are still highly urban in their residential location, there is evidence of deconcentration, particularly to areas at the periphery of traditional settlement areas.** However, rural counties with relatively high inflows of recently arrived immigrants can be found throughout the country. This includes, for example, a clear swath of counties in North Carolina and elsewhere in the Southeast, a pocket of counties in interior south Florida, rural counties in Arkansas and east Texas, counties along the Rio Grande, several pockets throughout the Heartland and upper Great Plains, and in the Mountain West and West Coast.

**The industrial base of these rural counties suggest recent immigrants are drawn to opportunities in meat packing and other food processing and agricultural sectors, to certain kinds of manufacturing (e.g., carpeting), and to**

**tourism and amenity based economies.** Rural counties that recent immigrants were drawn to were those with favorable characteristics in the early 1990's (e.g., relatively low poverty rates). However, evidence suggests their presence meant for less improvement in these same characteristics over the economically prosperous 1990's than would otherwise have been the case.

**A comparison of recent immigrants in rural areas suggests that, compared to their more urban counterparts, they are more likely to be Hispanic (and Mexican-origin in particular), more likely to be married, less well educated but still skilled, more likely to be employed but also more likely to be underemployed, more likely to be poor but less likely to receive food stamps when they are poor, and more likely to be homeowners.** At the risk of romanticizing, the image of these new arrivals is of a group of people in rural areas who are striving to live up to American values of hard work, marriage, homeownership, and making a contribution.

**The impact of immigration can, and often is, more acutely felt in rural communities than big cities, even if the absolute numbers of new comers may be much smaller.** The social and economic infrastructures of rural places are often ill-prepared to handle even comparatively modest increases, and significant inflows can quickly overwhelm. In small places, even numerically modest increases can represent a large increase in population growth.

**The unique demographic profile and impact of new immigrants to rural areas need to be a part of the policy discussion.** The report suggests that context of reception—the receptivity of rural and small towns to new immigrants—can vary greatly from place to place and can have significant impacts on the ability of communities to cope and immigrants to assimilate and prosper. Communities need resources, and need to be rewarded for being proactive in being as accommodating as possible. Local, state and federal policies and programs also need to be better informed by solid research on the causes, nature and consequences (both positive and negative, short- and long-term) of immigration to rural areas. Immigration scholars have been heeding that call, but they need greater support in doing so.

# Introduction

## **A New Immigration Wave, the Same Old Questions**

America is nothing if not a nation of immigrants. Since the 1800s our history has been marked by great waves of immigration from abroad that have served to populate the heartland, coastal cities, and most everywhere in between. And with every wave of immigration comes a familiar refrain. At the turn of the last century, when immigrant streams shifted from northwestern to southern and eastern Europe, natives worried openly and loudly about what the newest arrivals would do to the nation's social fabric and economy. But the Italians, Poles, Greeks, and others prospered, assimilated, and—square by square—added to the growing cultural quilt that is the United States.

For two generations now, America has been in the midst of another great wave of immigration, this time from countries in Asia and Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world. The response has echoed previous concerns. Will they learn English and become American? Are they too poor? Will they be a drain on public coffers and social services? Will they take our jobs? Although the question remains open, evidence to date suggests a familiar image of immigrants working hard, contributing, assimilating, but also broadening the cultural mosaic.

A distinguishing feature of immigration since the late 19th century has been its decided urban orientation. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, immigrants entered and settled in gateway cities such as New York, Miami, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In recent years, however, that appears to be changing. A flurry of research and popular observation has confirmed that immigrants are beginning to settle in new destinations and gateway communities. Although many of these are smaller metropolitan areas, a great many small towns and rural areas are seeing an influx of new immigrants.

## **The Effects of Immigration Today Are More Noticeable in Rural Locales**

As in the past, the new immigration to rural areas magnifies long-standing concerns for some, while for others it signals possibilities. Flows to places such as New York City may hardly be felt. Traditional gateways with long histories of accommodating cultural difference have existing ethnic enclaves and social services that new arrivals can rely on to build a new life. This is not so in rural areas. Given their small populations, any sizable immigration flow may be profoundly felt. Newcomers speaking a different language, eating different foods, attending different churches, and rearing children differently can spark fear, hostility, and indignation in rural populations that have remained stable for generations. Even modest immigration can quickly exhaust housing stocks, tax local school systems, and stress social services.

Immigrants also offer many potential benefits to fading rural communities. New arrivals bring vitality, determination, and diligence that can breathe new life into towns that might otherwise be failing. They work, they consume, and they volunteer. They bring new ideas, cuisines, music, and cultural practices that can make rural communities vibrant and exciting. Because immigrants tend to be young and have relatively high fertility, they can also repopulate communities that have declining populations. Consider two communities—described on the following page—both experiencing a wave of immigration, but both reacting very differently to the experience.

These vignettes from typical American towns underscore how a rapid influx of new immigrants can catch municipalities off guard; how smallness of place dramatizes and magnifies the stresses and costs placed on community infrastructures; how newcomers will be greeted with some resentment by natives as communities seek to adapt; how immigrants can demographically and culturally revitalize a place; how local public school systems often feel the stresses most acutely, yet also represent a critical forum where old and new cultures interact; and finally how the receptiveness and openness of local leadership can be essential for creating an atmosphere in which new immigrants can be viewed positively and crafting local policies that enhance their chances for success. It also illustrates how undocumented immigration exacerbates an already difficult situation, and can undermine the receptivity necessary for the success of legal immigrants.

## The Case of Hazleton, Pennsylvania

An Associated Press article by Janice Podsada (Centre Daily Times, 10/30/05) describes the influx of Hispanic immigrants to Hazleton, Pennsylvania, a coal-mining town whose population surged from 21,000 to 27,000 due to the arrival in just four years of “6,000 Hispanic immigrants.” Passages from this article capture some of the essential elements of new immigrant settlements in rural and small town America.

“No one saw it coming,” Podsada writes of the influx of new immigrants, and “efforts to accommodate them have angered some residents.” Specifically, “[t]he school system’s efforts to educate the new immigrants have angered some parents who think the district is catering to Hispanic students at the expense of others. ‘They redo everything for them’ [says one parent]. As she discusses her complaints, [she] notes that [one of her son’s] buddies is Hispanic.” Podsada goes on, “Hazleton’s bulging school system may be its brightest hope, a place where kids—the town’s future—meet, mingle and become friends.” This more positive perspective is seen strongly in the observations of the mayor of Hazleton. “The mayor says the arrival of the immigrants... gives the area a chance for a new beginning. ‘This

was a town with an aging population and a bleak outlook,’ [Mayor] Barletta says. With the influx of Hispanic immigrants, the pace of life has picked up, new businesses are opening and property values have increased. The grandson of a miner, Barletta says people are quick to forget this town was settled by immigrants. ‘Ninety-nine percent of them want the same thing my grandfather wanted when he left Italy—a better life for their kids.’”

Yet only a half-year later Hazleton was back in the immigration headlines. Reacting to documented instances of violent crime and other problems linked to the influx of undocumented immigrants, in July 2006 this small Pennsylvania city enacted the “Illegal Immigration Relief Act Ordinance.” The ordinance declares that “illegal immigration leads to higher crime rates, contributes to overcrowded classrooms and failing schools, subjects our hospitals to fiscal hardship and legal residents to substandard quality of care, contributes to other burdens on public services, increasing their cost and diminishing their availability to lawful residents, and destroys our neighborhoods and diminishes our overall quality of life.” It revokes or denies business permits to businesses found to employ

undocumented workers, fines landlords “not less than \$1,000” for renting to illegal immigrants, and makes English the official language of the city (all forms, signage, etc., will be in English only). In an open letter regarding the ordinance, Mayor Barletta writes, “This ordinance does not roll back the welcome mat to those who are legally in the United States. This country was built on the backs of legal immigrants. My own great grandparents came to this country seeking a better life. Rather, this ordinance seeks to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into Hazleton. They are not welcome here!” The ordinance sparked an immediate national reaction because of its boldness and severity, and because it underscored the frustration of one small locality that perceived inadequacies in federal immigration law. It generated an immediate reaction from immigrant and Hispanic rights groups concerned about, among other things, the chilling and discriminatory fallout on legal immigrants. It also drew the attention of Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, who characterized the ordinance as “mean-spirited” (AP 7/22/2006).

## The Case of Marshalltown, Iowa

In the small town of Marshalltown, the Hispanic population grew from 248 to 3,265 during the 1990s (Grey and Woodrick 2005). As described by Grey and Woodrick, before Swift and Company constructed the world’s third largest pork processing plant in Marshalltown, the town was aging rapidly, as young people left. The largely Mexican-origin workers at the plant and their families rejuvenated the population. They moved to Marshalltown because it offered employment, high-quality schools, a safe environment, and a comparatively low cost of living. As the Latino population grew, small ethnic businesses including restaurants, ethnic groceries, bakeries, and clothing retailers emerged. Other Hispanic entrepreneurial pursuits including roofing and auto repair catered to both Latino and non-Latino clientele. As a re-

sult, Marshalltown has become a transnational community that “looks more and more like Mexico” (Grey and Woodrick 2005, p. 138).

As in Hazleton, natives differ in their opinions and reactions to it. Grey and Woodrick suggest a “20-60-20 rule”: roughly 20 percent of natives are receptive, supportive, and welcoming of newcomers; another 20 percent are antagonistic; and the majority are ambivalent. In Marshalltown, negative sentiment focuses on concerns over lack of English, illegal immigrants, and drugs and crime. The outcry among some in Marshalltown and places like it have been so acute that other communities where would-be meatpacking plants seek to locate have sought to prevent this from happening.

After an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) raid on a plant that

resulted in the deportation of many workers, local leaders were faced with healing the inevitable tensions and divisions that had resulted. Grey and Woodrick encouraged local leaders to visit the Mexican village of Villachuato, where the majority of the new immigrants had roots. The village’s “poverty, lack of power, and lack of opportunities left deep impressions on the Marshalltown leaders,” Grey and Woodrick write (2005, p. 149). The period of adjustment has not been easy, and inherent class differences remain—including between local Anglo leaders and the Latino community—that must be addressed constructively. However, they conclude, “The long-term prospects for Marshalltown are positive because there is a strong commitment to making it work among Anglo community leaders” (p. 152).

# A Brief History of U.S. Immigration

**Colonial period to 1820:** Immigrants through the early 1820s were dominated by English and northern and western Europeans (Bouvier and Gardner 1986). Even then, natives raised cultural and economic concerns about immigrants. Some of the earliest settlers reacted negatively toward the arrival of other non-English groups, especially the Irish and Germans, who were sometimes greeted with derision, distrust, and outright discrimination (Jones 1960). Economic worries focused on the poverty and pauperism among immigrants. Indeed, new arrivals during this period were often quite destitute. Some arrived in indentured servitude, while others came from European countries purging their relief rolls by encouraging emigration (Jones 1960; Stephenson 1926). Also contributing to the anti-immigrant sentiment was the tendency for immigrants to settle in ethnic enclaves. Similar concerns about poverty and immigrant enclaves are evident today in both rural and urban America. The colonies responded to immigration by levying “head taxes” on ship captains for immigrants deemed likely to become paupers, or holding ship captains or domestic sponsors liable should an immigrant become a “public charge” (Hansen 1940). Although immigration during this earliest period was modest, distrust of newcomers was common, immigrants were often poor and they tended to concentrate in ethnic enclaves in both urban areas and the countryside.

**1820–1900:** The first great wave. The first great wave of immigration to the United States began around 1820, with roughly 143,000 immigrants arriving in the 1820s. Just 30 years later, 2.6 million immigrants arrived during the 1850s (Jensen 1989). Given that the total U.S. population in 1850 was only 23 million, this was a sizable influx in relative terms. Immigration stemmed largely from labor displacement in Europe owing to advances in technology; rapid population growth in Europe; advances in trans-Atlantic travel; labor recruitment by U.S. employers; and from stories of a better life in the United States (Davis 1974; Mayo-Smith 1980; Portes and Bach 1985; Stephenson 1926; Violet 2002).

As Violet (2002, pp. 13, 14) reports, immigration during this time “was the result of a near perfect match between the needs of a new country and overcrowded Europe....America...had a boundless need for people to push back the fron-

tier, to build the railways, to defend unstable boundaries, and to populate new States.” Policy reflected this need, and was largely pro-immigration. The Homestead Act of 1862 made agricultural lands in the Midwest, the Plains, and beyond available to immigrants as well as the native born. The settlement of Norwegians, Swedes, and other northern Europeans in these regions is still evident in the cultural traditions of the regions today. Ironically, some of these same communities now face population and economic decline that might be stemmed by a new stream of immigration.

**1860–1930:** The second wave. The second great wave of immigration to the United States, which overlapped with the first, shifted away from northwestern European countries to southern and eastern Europe, as economic and demographic dynamics that caused emigration from northwestern Europe spread south and east (Jones 1960). In appearance, religion, and in other ways, second-wave immigrants stood out, making assimilation more difficult. These immigrants arrived in an America that was far more urban and industrial than that encountered by the first wave of immigrants. The second wave hailed from poorer countries, frequently arrived with very little, settled in destitute urban neighborhoods, and strained the resources of cities ill-equipped to handle them. All of this fueled concerns that the United States was admitting far too many poor immigrants.

Despite evidence that these immigrants were proving economically successful (Lieberson 1980), perceptions of negative social and economic consequences were strong. The result was an era of restrictive immigration laws. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 quickly halted the influx of Chinese labor. In 1891 Congress sought to restrict the entry of “classes” of immigrants, notably paupers and those deemed likely to become public charges. The Immigration Act of 1917 institutionalized literacy as a criterion of entry, doubled the head tax on new arrivals, and extended the exclusion of Chinese immigrants to other Asian nations (Jones 1960). The Immigration and Nationality Acts of 1921 and 1924 fundamentally altered immigration by implementing the National Origin Quota System, which strictly limited immigration and set country-of-origin quotas greatly favoring northwestern Europe.

**1930–1965:** An era of limited immigration. The National Origin Quota System dramatically diminished the flow of immigrants, and the Great Depression further reduced the motivation and ability to leave Europe. Labor demand during World War II eased some of the restrictions. For example, the Bracero Program actively recruited Mexican labor into U.S. agriculture (Samora et al. 1971). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 gave priority to would-be immigrants with skills needed in the labor market and, secondarily, to those seeking to be reunited with kin. The 1952 act passed over President Truman's veto, who objected to its retention of the discriminatory quota system.

**1965 to today:** The third wave. The third great wave of immigration began in 1965 and continues to this day. In an era in which civil rights and equality were increasingly valued, 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act dismantled the National Origin Quota System and replaced it with a far more equitable worldwide distribution of visas. The legislation also shuffled the preference categories, giving priority to family reunification as a criterion for entry. As a result, immigration accelerated and migration flows shifted toward Asian and Latin American nations. Parallels to the second wave are noteworthy including the shift toward less developed and poorer countries of origin and immigrant groups who were different in culture, language, and appearance. Both waves also stirred popular and political concern about presumed negative social and economic impacts.

Today, two economic questions are paramount, yet definitive answers are elusive. First, do new immigrants displace native workers and depress wages? Martin and Midgley (2003) suggest that displacement and wage effects are quite modest, but they may be sizable in particular industries (notably meatpacking and agriculture). Second, do new immigrants pay their own way and contribute more in taxes than they take in services? Here it is important to recognize that fiscal impacts tend to be place specific, with states and localities often bearing the cost of education and services. In contrast, benefits such as immigrant tax contributions are disproportionately federal. Immigrants with higher education and thus higher earnings are likely to produce an immediate net benefit. Finally the long-term fiscal impact of immigrants remains to be

seen because it will depend on the economic fortunes of their children (Martin and Midgley 2003).

**A postscript on immigration reform:** Immigration policy again tops the legislative agenda. During the 1980s, worries about the flood of immigration, particularly those entering or staying in the country illegally, brought loud calls for action from organized labor and the NAACP (LeMay 2004). A protracted and contentious debate gave rise to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). The principal features of IRCA were employer sanctions and an amnesty program that legalized 2.7 million undocumented immigrants (Martin and Midgley 2003). For rural America, a key component was the Special Agricultural Worker program (SAW), which legalized those who had worked in agricultural for 90 days or more. Kandel and Cromartie (2004) note that an unintended (but not surprising) consequence of the SAWs program was that these agricultural workers, now legalized, were free to move to other regions and sectors of the economy. As they did so, they left behind unmet demand for agricultural labor, which created a magnet for additional undocumented immigrants. This had implications both for the rural communities they were leaving and those in which they were settling.

# Background and Evidence

## Immigrants are Moving Beyond Traditional Gateway Cities

Hazleton and Marshalltown are but two examples. But just how real and widespread is this phenomenon? Where exactly are new immigrants to rural areas moving, and what are these places like?

A common image is that immigration to the United States has been an almost exclusively urban phenomenon. Teeming immigrant neighborhoods in Boston, New York, or San Francisco come to mind. However, as alluded to in the brief history of U.S. immigration, many early immigrants bypassed cities altogether and settled in rural locales, often to eke out a living in agriculture and extractive industries. However, by the mid-1800s, the prime destination for new immigrant groups was the large gateway cities. Even today, more than one-half of the foreign-born live in the 13 traditional gateway cities identified by Logan (2003), including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

However, new evidence suggests immigrant groups may be bypassing traditional gateways altogether. Demographer Audrey Singer (2004) of the Brookings Institution describes emerging gateway metropolitan areas (such as Atlanta, Dallas, and Washington, DC), and other metro areas that appear destined to be new gateways (such as Austin, Texas and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina). There is also evidence that immigrant groups are also settling in small town and rural America.

Daniel T. Lichter and Kenneth M. Johnson (2006) studied the movement of recent arrivals to emerging rural settlements between 1990 and 2000. They find that 297 counties, or nearly 10 percent of all counties, had foreign-born populations that totaled 5 percent or more of the population for the first time in 2000. Many of these counties are at the peripheries of traditional settlement areas with already high concentrations of foreign-born individuals. However, they find the same scattering of new immigrant destinations elsewhere in rural America noted by others (Kandel and Cromartie 2004): pockets in the Midwest, Southeast, and elsewhere. Indeed, it was increases in the foreign-born population that prevented or stemmed population losses during the 1990s in many heartland counties. As a result of these population shifts, Lichter and Johnson document a decline at the county level in spatial segregation of the native-born and the recently arrived foreign-born during the 1990s, a decline registered in both urban and rural areas and in most regions of the country.

### ***Majority of Immigrants Residing in Rural Areas Are Hispanic***

A disproportionate share of all immigrants residing in rural America is Hispanic. For this reason, it is worth exploring recent rural settlement patterns of Hispanics, regardless of their immigrant status.<sup>1</sup> As William Kandel and John Cromartie (2004) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture show, the overwhelming majority of Hispanics were urban in 1990 (95 percent). However, during the 1990s, Hispanics accounted for more than one-quarter of the total population growth in rural areas. Hispanics moved to rural areas in all parts of the country, but particularly to the Southeast and Midwest. They were attracted by, if not outright recruited for, opportunities in agriculture, meat packing and other food processing, timber harvesting and processing, and other industries.

### ***Hispanic Immigrants Are Dispersing More, But Are Still Segregating in Ethnic Enclaves Once They Arrive***

A clear sign of assimilation is the level of residential and community integration. Therefore, it is worth asking, if Hispanics are moving in substantial numbers to new rural settlements away from the traditional gateway communities in the Southwest, are they integrating with the non-Hispanic white population? Kandel and Cromartie (2004) found that, at the county level, Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites were intermingling more. However, when looking at communities or neighborhoods within counties, residential segregation increased during the 1990s. Thus, Hispanics are moving to new counties in rural America, but once there, they are still living in ethnic enclaves within a town or community.

<sup>1</sup> In much of the research reviewed and presented in this report, the term “rural” refers to nonmetropolitan counties, and rural residents are the people residing in such counties. Terms are defined in the data and methods section.

# Nopalitos in the Catskills—Immigration in Sullivan County, NY

BY JULIE ARDERY

Between late May and early September each year, the population of Sullivan County, NY (est. 76,000) triples. The streets of sleepy Woodbourne—once the famed Borscht Belt—bustle with Hasidic visitors in long whiskers and black hats. Bungalow colonies fill up with families, and harness track fans pack the “racino” outside the county seat.

Though its glory days as the summer stopover for Milton Berle and Buddy Hackett have passed, the summer tourists still come. Immigration in this seasonal sense is nothing new to Sullivan County.

Since 1990, however, other sorts of immigrants have arrived—New Yorkers fleeing the city post 9/11, second-home buyers from the eastern seaboard, a Ukrainian community that settled in the southern township of Lumberland, and, significantly, a new wave of Latino residents who have moved here into cheap housing and low-wage jobs.

Though its influx of Hispanic newcomers doesn't match big increases in the South and West, Sullivan County between 1990 and 2000 saw the third highest gain in new immigrants (those coming to the U.S. after 1965) of all nonmetro counties in the Northeast (after Nantucket and Dukes counties, Massachusetts).

“We're on a rebound,” says Marc Baez of the county's Partnership for Economic Development. Baez, whose Puerto Rican parents moved here in the heyday of the old resorts. Baez says that when Sullivan's tourist industry collapsed, starting in the 1970s and declining steeply over the next ten years, “We fell on really hard times.”

“We didn't have an underlying industry poised to expand,” explains Laura Quigley, director of Sullivan's Workforce Development Board. Local leaders adopted a fairly desperate strategy, “Then, anything that walked through the door we'd take,” says Baez.

The western half of Sullivan County had long been dairy country, but local dairymen have been phasing out for the past 20 years. Meanwhile, poultry indus-

tries multiplied and expanded. “There are 26 million New Yorkers only 50 minutes away,” Baez notes. “What do they want and how can we serve them?”

In this regard, one of Sullivan's more exceptional businesses is Hudson Valley Foie Gras. Here some 170 workers, nearly all recent immigrants, force feed ducks on a strict schedule throughout the day and night, producing the ingredient for pâté, a delicacy priced at over \$50 a pound. Sullivan County is home to more conventional chicken plants, egg processing factories, and over two dozen small poultry farms. “The types of people who are willing to work in those environments are very few,” Baez says. All these enterprises rely on immigrant labor.

Sofia Romero, 32, moved to Sullivan County in 2001 from San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Her long trip north involved, among other risks, three days walking through the Arizona desert. In Honduras, she had worked since age 14 at a garment factory, raised by her grandparents; her mother had come to the United States when Sofia was only 12. When Romero emigrated to the U.S., she left behind her own son, now age 12, in her grandmother's care.

In Honduras she had earned 340 lempira—less than \$19—per 40-hour week. Romero says she came to the U.S. for higher wages, and because in Honduras “when you're 30, there's no more work.” Factory owners typically shuffle older women out of the plant and hire teenagers to replace them.

After two years at an egg processing plant in Woodridge, Romero was earning \$5.75 an hour, working 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Her job peeling eggs under a constant stream of cold water and washing machinery with a high-pressure hose and caustic detergents caused psoriasis on her hands, a condition that worsened after Romero became pregnant. She quit, and says she will soon start work at a chicken processing plant.

At a small gathering of friends in Hurleyville, Romero expresses shock; she's just heard about a new on-line video game called “Border Control,” where the object is to kill immigrants coming over the Mexican border. “You get more points if you shoot a pregnant woman,” she informs the group. Her life in Sullivan County has been hard but by staying she sees “an opportunity to make money to send home to my son and my grandmother.”

Carlos Mendoza, 34, moved from El Salvador to Sullivan County with his wife in May 2004. They left their two sons behind with his mother. Mendoza had a sister in Sullivan County and relatives in Texas also. He says he chose rural New York over Houston thinking that there would be “not so many people” and that finding employment would be easier here. His first job was cutting sacks at the Formaggio cheese plant, six days a week. He then worked at one of the egg companies, and most recently at a factory in Liberty packaging “galletas” -- snacks. On an evening in April, Mendoza was fuming having just been fired from the snack company for a dispute over his hours. He contended that he'd been shortchanged for 3.5 hours of work and was told by a manager “the computer doesn't lie.” When he continued to press for the lost wages, he was dismissed. Mendoza's wife works second shift at the snack factory, but he'll be looking for something else—not easy, since the couple lives in Liberty, has no car, and, as in many rural counties, there's no public transportation.

Among most long-time residents in Sullivan County, this new wave of immigrants remains fairly invisible. “They work in restaurants and garages, and generally keep to themselves in this area. You know, they have their niche,” said a staff person at the Chamber of Commerce. Both the foie gras farm and Formaggio cheese house many of their employees, an arrangement that eases getting to work but further isolates an immigrant

community already set apart by language. Undocumented workers, who may first welcome such invisibility, have found themselves, like Carlos Mendoza, at the mercy of employers.

Ninon Hutchinson, minister of St. John's Episcopal Church in Monticello, has tried various ways to involve her largely non-Latino parish with the new community, from serving coffee and doughnuts outside the duck farm to winterizing the shabby apartments near one of the chicken factories. When an immigrant family was "run out of housing over a labor protest," Hutchinson said, the family moved temporarily into the church itself. With two other clergy from nearby towns, Hutchinson officiated at a service to bless the opening of Monticello's new Latino Deli. St. John's holds periodic fundraisers for organizations serving the immigrant community. Still, she concedes, "It's a very difficult connection to make."

Gradually, new institutions have emerged to make the presence, contributions, and needs of Latino residents known. In 1992, Aspacio Alcántara, himself a Dominican, helped to organize the Centro Independiente de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CITA). The group, first based in neighboring Orange County, worked to get basics like bathrooms and clean drinking water for farm workers in the Hudson Valley. The organization's legal arm brokered one of its first agreements with a Sullivan County poultry firm, a company that had been unfairly withholding workers' wages for rent and uniforms.

Attorney Dan Werner worked with CITA on that early case though the Farmworkers Law Center. He and his partners recognized that the area was changing, "shifting from agriculture to a suburban economy" more focused on construction, landscaping and light industry. The Hudson Valley's farm workers have been, "almost exclusively Mexicans," most of them from the impoverished Southern state of Puebla, but "in these other industries it's much more of a mixed bag," says Werner. The recent immigrants who work in Sullivan's poultry and food processing plants come from across Central and



South America, notably Peru, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Honduras.

Werner now directs the Workers Law Center of New York. Founded in 2004, based in Kingston, it serves nine Hudson Valley counties. The Center has been involved in more than 300 labor disputes, several in Sullivan County. All its Sullivan clients have been immigrant workers. (Federal law protects workers' rights regardless of their immigration status.)

Because immigrants often move from job to job, like Carlos Mendoza, and fear arrest and deportation if they confront an employer, violations of labor law often go unchallenged. And without long-term advocates, like CITA and the Workers Law Center, such challenges tend to sputter out. Employers can outspend or just outlast immigrant plaintiffs. Aspacio Alcántara believes that CITA's decade-plus of work, backed up in court, has "changed the relationship" between farm workers and employers. "They cannot fire people so easily." He also finds, "There's a little more respect... There's not one legislator in New York State who doesn't know about the farm worker now." Likewise, with a recent ruling against Formaggio, Dan Werner says, "I think that a lot of people who might have been afraid to step forward will recognize this is real."

Sandra Cuellar Oxford is a community activist who's been involved most recently in the living-wage issue, opposing tax-abatements and other governmental supports for companies that pay low-wages. In Sullivan County, Bella Poultry, Hudson Valley Foie Gras and Formaggio Cheese all have received funding and/or tax breaks through the local Industrial

Development Agency and state Empire Zone program. These financial incentives are "the engines," Oxford says, "helping these employers who've been abusing workers."

A native of Colombia, Oxford moved to Hurleyville from Long Island looking for affordable housing. When she first moved to Sullivan County 14 years ago "not one Latino student had graduated from (Fallsburg) high school." She and others founded Somos la Llave del Futuro (We're the Key to the Future) in 2002 to rally local Hispanics and work on their behalf.

The group first mobilized around health, a serious problem for immigrants here. Sullivan County has New York State's highest rate of HIV/AIDS outside New York City, and though by the 2000 U.S. Census, Hispanics composed only 9.24 percent of the county's population, in 2004 25 percent of the HIV patients in care at Catskill Regional Medical Center were Latinos. In 2004, Sullivan's infant mortality rate was the highest in New York State.

Carol Ryan, the county's public health director, says that many new immigrants are in bad health. She recounts a wide range of health concerns, from poor diet to rape: "No health insurance. No sick pay. Not enough sleep. Respiratory complaints. No prenatal care. Domestic violence. Alcoholism...these are the problems of any impoverished group." Yet among immigrants "there's also despair," she says, "and a lot of stress on them, being away from their families."

Ryan emphasizes that just making programs like WIC, prenatal care and immunizations available isn't sufficient when dealing with these new communities. Immigrants resist seeking medical care when doctors speak only English, and they are typically reluctant to enroll in basic health programs, fearing discovery and deportation. To reach immigrant clients, Ryan says her office has adopted "more of a service orientation." Two years ago, Sullivan County's public health office hired its first bilingual outreach worker, Zaida Chasi. A native of Ecuador, Chasi had already worked as a translator in the local courts and in Sullivan County's

Headstart program. “That’s when I started working with the community, with families in crisis,” she says. After three years with Headstart, “people started to know me, I was out in the community, doing outreach, getting the children into the program.” She noticed a change, “The more I was an advocate for families, the more children who were enrolled in the programs.”

Ryan agrees. “It takes a trusted person. That trust brings them into care.” Her department records show no immigrant families participating in the WIC program until 2004, the year Chasi was hired. Since then, WIC enrollment among immigrants has gradually increased, from 10 families in January 2004 to 41 in March 2006.

A promising new organization in Sullivan County is Hudson River Community Health. This 30-year-old nonprofit, with 14 branches throughout the region, offers primary, preventive and behavioral health services without regard for ability to pay. The Monticello office has hired both Chasi and Aspacio Alcántara as outreach workers. In neighboring counties, the organization, as well as administering health care services, has been a conduit for language training, social services, and community empowerment through its “Comités Latinos.” Sandra Oxford believes the organization will take the same strong role in Sullivan County. “Once that health center really takes root, it can be a cornerstone for the emerging community,” she stresses. “There’s a path of support.”

Since September 2003, a Latino Service Providers group—involving Sullivan County health care, school, and social service offices—has met monthly to discuss changing needs and strategies for cooperation. But beyond this group of professionals, citizen organizing within the Latino community has been erratic. What’s often inscrutable to longtime residents here, Hispanic immigrants are a diverse group. Zaida Chasi says, “Even though we’re Latino, we don’t speak the same language, in a sense. We have different dialects. We have different culture, and there is not that unity. There needs to be.” Chasi, Oxford, and others say that



discrimination based on education is especially keen among Hispanics and has made unifying the immigrant community hard.

In the public schools, such divisions sharpen. Fallsburg High School’s bilingual social worker Paco Mazo, after 16 years, can count the Latino graduates on one hand. All of them had come to the U.S. as young children, from educated or affluent families. “The younger the child, the easier it is to assimilate,” Mazo says. “The older they are, the more barriers.” He has yet to see an immigrant student who arrived in Sullivan County as a teenager—and there have been many—earn a Fallsburg diploma.

When young people arrive in Sullivan County as teenagers to rejoin their birthparents, after sometimes a decade or more apart, they bring high expectations: “There’s a honeymoon for awhile but it’s a short honeymoon,” Mazo says. “They give up their peer group, they don’t know the language.” A teenager finds that he or she has traded a big extended family back home for life in a Catskills housing project, the newcomer among relatives they barely know.

Most Latino teens, Mazo says, look around and soon ask themselves, “What am I doing here in school when I could be working in the chicken plant and buy myself a gold chain?” They’re playing football,” says Mazo, “staying among their Spanish speaking friends, listening to novellas. They’re here in America but they’re immersed in a Hispanic subculture, and that’s where they stay.”

He and Chasi both are trying to bring to light a widespread problem in the La-

tino community here. Teenage girls, who are struggling both at home and at school, are easy prey for older men. “The young girls who are being seduced and getting pregnant so young, they’re not finishing school,” Chasi says. “It’s like an epidemic.” Mazo agrees. “A girl has a one night stand and is thrown out by her parents, living with an older man. When the baby comes, he’s out the door.” Sullivan’s teenage pregnancy rate is by far the highest in the Hudson Valley.

Historically, Sullivan County society has been more patched than woven. Planning Commissioner Bill Pammer, who grew up on a farm here, says that diverse populations have tended to self-segregate. Segregation can be a state of mind as well. The many commuters and second-home owners buying and building in Sullivan County tend to view the area, Marc Baez says, as “a playground,” missing its very real, “urban”-seeming problems: poverty, lack of public transportation, AIDS, slum housing, traffic.

“When you have (groups) that isolate, they want to land in your community but not live in your community,” says Laura Quigley, the workforce development director. Quigley’s description fits both of Sullivan County’s new immigrant groups: the Hispanic newcomers here to work and wire money off to relatives in other countries, and the city émigrés who have come looking for a rural idyll. Over time, these social disjunctions “can impact your image of yourself as a community,” she says; a county or a town devolves into “just a fractured group of people on the same plot of land.”

Groups like the Workers Rights Center and Hudson River Community Health, and activists like Oxford, Alcántara, Hutchinson, Mazo and Chasi have made inroads. Their endurance may be the most significant victory. “This town has changed their attitude,” Zaida Chasi says about Monticello. “Before it was like they would close the door on you. They’re a little bit more receptive to see the (Hispanic) community walking in the streets or seeing the stores open. Now there’s more awareness that we’re here, and we’re not leaving.”

## Immigration's Role in Rural Poverty

The arrival of immigrant groups in rural and small-town America is a new phenomenon in some parts of the country, but has been going on for some time in other areas. At the forefront of research on immigration to rural areas has been that of Philip Martin, J. Edward Taylor, and colleagues at the University of California-Davis. Their Changing Face project seeks to “assess the prospects for migrants and their children arriving in Rural America.” A key issue is whether there is a circular relationship, a “vicious circle” in their terms, between three key characteristics of rural communities: farm employment, immigration, and poverty (Martin, Fix, and Taylor 2006). The process commences with solo male workers acting as pioneers taking seasonal farm jobs, sending home much of their income and otherwise costing localities little and being statistically invisible. Some workers successfully exit seasonal work to take more full-time work in agricultural and other industries, creating unmet demand for seasonal agricultural labor and thus additional immigration. Families of solo males join them, and their presence, particularly that of their children, begins to be felt as poverty and demand for services increases. Finally, new immigrants become more integrated and politically active, calling for action to address the chronic and deep poverty they face (Taylor, Martin, and Fix 1997; Martin and Taylor 2003).

Analyzing 1970, 1980, and 1990 data from a random sample of rural and urban census tracts, Martin and Taylor (2003) confirm a circular relationship between farm employment and immigration, with one reinforcing the other. Interestingly, they find that in 1980 farm employment reduced poverty, but by 1990 the relationship had reversed. In that year “a 100-person increase in farm employment was associated with an 85-person increase in poverty” (Martin, Fix, and Taylor 2006, p. 24). This and other studies suggest an interconnection between farm employment, immigration, and poverty. While the areas likely to be significantly impacted by this dynamic are rural, it is imperative that discussions of immigration to rural and small-town America reach beyond farm employment and agriculture, which even in rural America do not employ a majority of immigrant workers.

This research calls attention to the implications of immigration for poverty rates within rural places. A related and important question is the extent to which the dispersal of immigrants to new locales has improved their own circumstances. Martha Crowley, Daniel T. Lichter and Zhenchao Qian (2006) show that the dispersal over the 1990's of Mexican workers, immigrants in particular, away from the Southwest served to significantly reduce their poverty rates.

# Region by Region: Where Immigrants Are Moving and Why

This section locates and describes rural places that have had significant inflows of recent immigrants. As a point of departure, however, it is important to indicate where recent immigrants are, and where they are not. Map 1 shows the absolute size of the recent immigrant population in counties as of 2000, with darker shades of red indicating places with the greatest numbers. Recent immigrants continue to live in traditional destinations, such as the Boston to Washington corridor, south Florida, the metropolitan areas and border region of Texas, Chicago, and urban California.

Map 2 shows the relative change in the recent immigrant population between 1990 and 2000 in the 75 percent of U.S. counties that are nonmetropolitan. Darker shades of red indicate places that have had large recent immigrant inflows relative to their 1990 population size.<sup>2</sup> The map illustrates that immigration has had at least a moderate impact on each rural area of the country. Given the economic, demographic, and social diversity of the country, it is not surprising that immigration patterns differ as well.

<sup>2</sup> This somewhat novel measure of change seeks to identify those places where the inflows of recent immigrants would be more acutely felt. This county-level measure is calculated as the post-1965 foreign-born population in 2000 minus that in 1990, divided by the county's total 1990 population. See data and methods section.

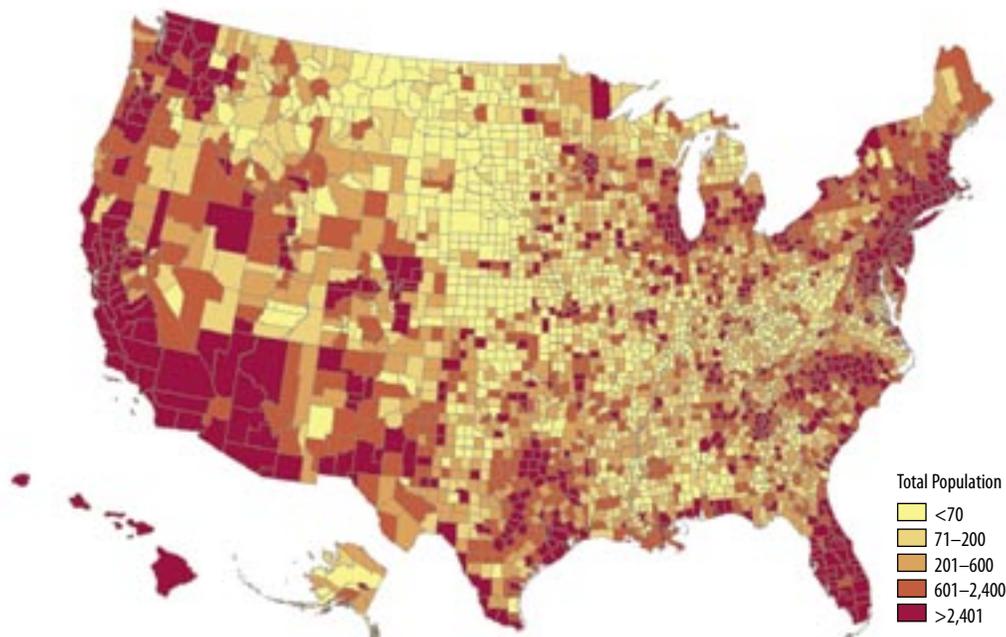
## The Rural Northeast Has Seen Relatively Little Change

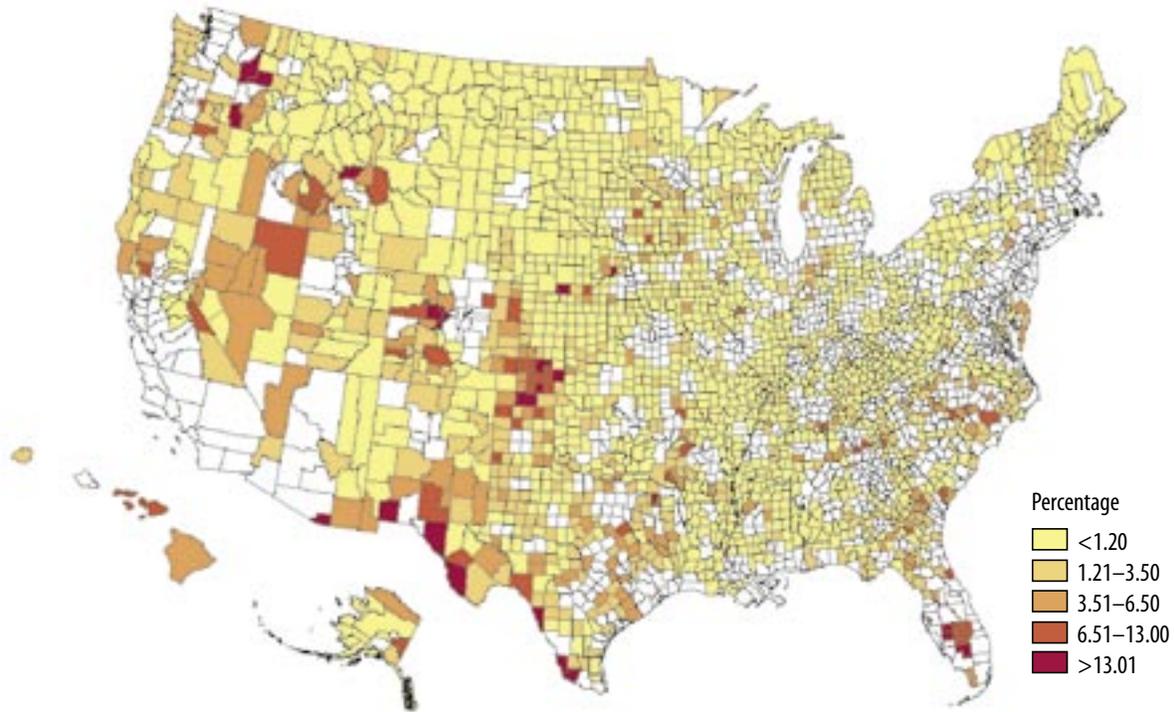
Although no rural county in the Northeast has experienced extremely high immigration (as measured here), modest gains are evident in northern Vermont and New Hampshire, in the region between New York City and Albany, and in eastern Pennsylvania. In Monroe County, Pennsylvania, for example, the recent immigrant population more than doubled, from 2,259 to 5,805. Monroe County is sometimes referred to by locals as the sixth borough of Manhattan as more and more residents are commuting the 80 miles or so to New York City. Although there are certainly rural counties and communities in the Northeast that have been destinations for recent immigrants, the majority of the action is elsewhere.

## Immigrants to the Southeast Are Drawn to Manufacturing, Food Processing, and Agriculture

The Southeast has several pockets of substantial immigration. Often the economic base of these places relies on natural resources (agriculture, lumber) and their processing or manufacture (e.g., poultry processing, furniture manufacturing). A belt of rural counties with high immigrant influx runs east to west across North Carolina (Map 2). The impact of this im-

MAP 1: TOTAL POST-1965 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN 2000: ALL COUNTIES IN THE U.S.





MAP 2: NEW IMMIGRATION POPULATION CHANGE: NON-METRO COUNTIES IN THE U.S.

migration is reflected in the website of Duplin County, NC, which offers a Spanish version and boasts a rural charm and agricultural heritage but with “urban access.” Its recent immigrant population increased nearly tenfold over the 1990s (from roughly 500 to 5,000), and only 11 percent of its current foreign-born population are citizens. Other counties in this belt include Sampson, Lee, and Montgomery. The Hispanic population in these counties (between 10 and 15 percent) is roughly half the size of the African American population. The counties’ industrial structure is dominated by manufacturing and food processing (including poultry, pork, vegetable), as well as lumber processing and furniture manufacturing. One local official from Montgomery County excitedly mentioned that an Elite Food turkey processing facility was coming soon to complement their furniture manufacturing.

Lumber, molding, and other wood products are also common farther south in Atkinson County, Georgia (pop. 6,000), where 17 percent of the population is Hispanic. Its recent immigrant population grew from a negligible 93 to 895 during the 1990s. Gilmer County, which describes itself as Georgia’s “Apple Capital,” features some food processing as does neighboring Gordon County. Manufacturing, carpeting, and other floor coverings also contribute significantly to the economy. Although the percentage of the population that is Hispanic is small (less than 10 percent), the increase is dramatic. For

example, the recent immigrant population of Gilmer County increased nearly 30-fold, from 46 to 1,286 over the decade. A cluster of rural counties in southern interior Florida also is quite apparent in Map 2. Several of these counties are dominated by agriculture. Hendry County, for example, the “Citrus Capital of Florida,” employs 23 percent of its workforce in agriculture. About 40 percent of Hendry’s population is Hispanic, with an immigrant population gain from about 3,200 to about 8,100 over the decade. Several other counties in this cluster have agricultural workforces ranging from 20 to 30 percent. Included are Hardee County, the self-described “Cucumber Capital of the World,” and DeSoto County, whose economy is based on citrus, cattle, and softwood processing. The proximity of these rural counties to Tampa and Miami, both places of high immigrant concentration, might be contributing to this rapid rise in recent immigrant populations in the interior.

### The Heartland Draws Immigrants with Its Meatpacking

Vast swaths of the Midwest are rural, and Map 2 indicates pockets where recent immigrants are flowing in substantial numbers. Almost without exception, these counties house sizable meatpacking or other food processing concerns. An

example is Cass County, Illinois, home of a large Cargill hog processing plant employing 2,300 workers, some 35 percent of whom are Latino according to one local official. Although only 9 percent of Cass County's population is Hispanic, the recent immigrant population grew roughly 25 times, from 41 to 1,049, over the 1990s. A pallet plant and a hardwood drying company also provide local employment. A local official pointed out that many of the latest arrivals are undocumented and thus undercounted in official statistics, and they also concentrate in one part of the county near the Cargill plant. Although this strains the local school and social services, he said, it was his own personal philosophy that they are human beings first and deserved to be helped, regardless of their legal status.

In Minnesota, Nobles County has a Swift meatpacking plant, while Watonwan County has plants run by Conagra and Tony Downs Foods. Both counties are characterized by high percentages employed in manufacturing, relatively low Hispanic populations (11 and 15 percent, respectively), and five- or sixfold increases in their recent immigrant populations. In Nebraska, Dawson County's recent immigrant population grew from 38 to about 3,800 over the 1990s, with a big draw being an IBP plant (Gouveia and Stull 1995). The meatpacking industry also helps account for substantial new immigrant population growth in Finney, Ford, Seward and other counties in rural southwestern Kansas.

### **Arkansas, East Texas, and the Rio Grande Draw Immigrants**

An area flowing south from Arkansas and arcing west into east Texas is drawing immigrants to meat processing and other opportunities. Yell County, Arkansas, is 13 percent Hispanic with an economy based on poultry, hog, and beef processing. Its recent immigrant population grew 12-fold over the decade. Sevier County, Arkansas, has a similar industrial structure, featuring a Pilgrim's Pride poultry processing plant, helping to explain why 30 percent of workers are in manufacturing and why its recent immigrant population quadrupled over the decade to nearly 2,000. A Pilgrim's Pride plant in Titus County, Texas accounts for the tripling of the recent immigrant population there.

A string of rural counties along the border of Texas and Mexico, and stretching into New Mexico and Arizona also have experienced rapid increases in their recent immigrant populations. Given their proximity to Mexico and roots as former territories of Mexico, it is little surprise that they are overwhelmingly Hispanic. Seven of the eight rural counties noted on Map 2 have populations that are more than one-half Hispanic, five are more than 80 percent Hispanic, and Starr

County, Texas is fully 98 percent Hispanic. The economies across these border counties are more diverse, and feature agriculture and other extractive industries (mining) or services.

### **Tourism-Based Economies Draw Immigrants to the Mountain West and the West Coast**

A distinctive feature of many of the rural counties in the West that are attracting recent immigrants is their tourism-based economies that capitalize on natural amenities. Examples include Summit County and Eagle County, Colorado, home to the Breckenridge and Vail ski areas. In both cases, the leading industry of employment is recreation services (i.e., arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services), followed by construction, which also is related to the growth of tourism in the area. Although the recent immigrant populations grew substantially in both these counties, the increase was especially striking in Eagle County, where the immigrant population grew more than fivefold, from 1,284 to 7,289, or a 27.4 percent increase from the 1990 total population (21,928). Other rural counties with tourism-based economies that received significant numbers of recent immigrants include Teton County, Wyoming (home of Jackson Hole ski area); Mono County, California along the Nevada border, which touts its natural beauty, fishing, and other outdoor recreation; Blaine County, Idaho, another ski area; and Elk County, Nevada, which promotes its high quality of life and easy urban access.

Other counties in the West attract recent immigrants with their agricultural employment opportunities. These include Colusa County, in California's fertile Central Valley, where the recent immigrant population increased from approximately 3,000 in 1990 to 5,000 in 2000. Three counties in northern Oregon (Morrow, Hood River, and Jefferson) have attracted many recent immigrants. Morrow County had a stagnant or declining population until the late 1970s but subsequently grew owing to the advance of its agricultural, food processing, and lumber industries. Its recent immigrant population tripled during the 1990s. Jefferson County produces vegetables, grass and flower seeds, garlic, mint, and sugar beets, industries that have attracted immigrant workers. Grant County, Washington, touts itself as the leading grower of potatoes, with apples and green peas following close behind. Its population is 30 percent Hispanic, and nearly one in five workers are in agriculture. Its recent immigrant population roughly tripled, from 3,623 to 11,850, expanding its total population by 15 percent during the 1990, a tremendous increase by any standard. Neighboring Adams County saw a similar increase; its population is now 47 percent Hispanic and highly agri-

TABLE 1. AVERAGE RELATIVE CHANGE IN RECENT IMMIGRANT POPULATION FOR COUNTIES BY COUNTY TYPE\*

Recent immigrant population change	All counties	Metro counties	Nonmetro counties	Micro counties	Non-core counties
Low	.12	.42	.02	.20	-.06
Medium	.89	1.60	.66	.92	.55
High	4.81	6.74	3.60	4.83	2.96
Total	1.94	2.91	1.42	1.97	1.14

\*Cell entries are averages of the following indicator: change in the recent (post-1965) immigrant population divided by total county population in 1990 multiplied by 100. Counties were subdivided into thirds according to this indicator to form low-, medium-, and high-growth categories of recent immigrant population change. See data and methods section for more detail.

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, summary files.

cultural. Finally, Clark County, Idaho, and a cluster of three other Idaho counties (Lincoln, Jerome, and Gooding), all have more workers employed in agriculture than any other single industry. By and large, however, these Idaho counties are very sparsely populated, and although their recent immigrant populations taken together quadrupled over the decade, the absolute numbers are relatively small.

### **Immigrants Settling in Both Sparsely Populated Rural Areas and More Populated Nonmetro Areas, but Urban Locales Predominate**

To further illustrate general trends in recent immigration, Table 1 shows average percentage changes in recent immigrant population (as defined for Map 2) with counties evenly divided into low-, medium-, and high-growth groups. This was done for all counties, separately for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties, and among the latter, for micropolitan and noncore counties.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 shows that relative increases in the recent immigrant population were considerably higher in urban counties (around 3 percent) than rural counties (less than 2 percent), and that within rural places, they were higher in micropolitan areas (2 percent) than noncore counties (1 percent). In sum, urban areas remained the residence of choice among recent immigrants, and to the extent there was growth in rural areas, it was faster in more city-like micropolitan areas than the more rural noncore counties. Even among high-growth counties, the increase in

the recent immigrant population is relatively modest. Among all high-growth rural counties, the average increase was only 3.6 percent. This relatively low average, however, masks rather high growth in a small number of counties.

<sup>3</sup> Micropolitan counties are nonmetropolitan, but contain a town or city of at least 10,000 population, or are tied economically to a micropolitan county through commuting patterns. Noncore counties are not metropolitan and have no such urban settlement, and are not economically tied to a micropolitan county. See data and methods section for more detail.

# A Closer Look: High-Growth, Low-Growth Rural Counties

## *Rural Counties with Highest Immigration Growth Employed More in Construction and Services, and County Residents Were More Economically Stable*

Table 2 shows assorted economic and demographic characteristics of rural counties in 1990, and relative changes in these characteristics between 1990 and 2000, with these rural counties evenly subdivided according to whether they had low, medium, or high growth in their recent immigrant populations. The table shows that high-growth rural counties employed smaller shares in agriculture and other extractive industries than those counties with less growth, although the decline in agricultural employment over the decade also was lower in high-growth counties. Otherwise, high-growth rural counties employed slightly more in construction in 1990, fewer than average in manufacturing (and the decline in manufacturing over the decade was greatest), and more in services. This lesser role of manufacturing might seem contradictory to the profiles presented in this report. However, that the overall percentage employed in manufacturing was lower and declined more precipitously in high-growth counties may reflect the infusion of immigrant labor into a manufacturing sector that is otherwise employing a declining number of native workers.

Table 2 also shows that populations in high-growth rural counties were relatively better-off. They had the lowest rates of public assistance receipt, poverty, and fewer residents lacked a high school degree in 1990 and in 2000 (not shown). Although they started the decade with lower rates of poverty and public assistance use, declines over the 1990s, a decade featuring a strong economy and welfare reform, were least impressive in the high-growth counties. Finally, high-growth rural counties had more working aged adults (aged 18–64), fewer elders, and smaller overall declines in percentages under age 18 over the decade. This illustrates the rejuvenating effect that immigrants and their children can have on the local population. On balance, recent immigrants are settling in places that were relatively privileged in 1990 (lower poverty, lower welfare receipt, higher education), but improvements in these indicators over the decade were least impressive in high-growth counties. In addition, it should be cautioned that differences in the indicators among the growth types are relatively modest.

TABLE 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF NONMETROPOLITAN COUNTIES BY RELATIVE GROWTH IN RECENT IMMIGRANT POPULATION (ALL CELL ENTRIES ARE PERCENTAGES)

Recent immigrant population change*	Assorted economic and demographic characteristics of counties in 1990 and 1990–2000 change in these characteristics									
	Employment in agriculture/extraction		Employment in construction		Employment in manufacturing		Employment in services		Public Assistance receipt	
	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change
Low	15.3	-27.9	6.4	12.5	17.3	-11.2	42.6	23.7	9.7	-60.6
Medium	12.0	-29.2	6.5	14.7	19.6	-11.5	42.6	23.5	9.4	-60.3
High	12.6	-27.1	7.1	14.1	17.3	-13.4	43.5	23.0	8.3	-51.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>-28.0</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>-12.0</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>-59.2</b>
	Poverty rate		Completed adult education less than high school		Age less than 18		Age 18–64		Age 65+	
	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change	1990	Change
Low	19.8	-17.7	33.2	-26.7	27.1	-7.3	55.9	3.8	16.7	0.7
Medium	18.2	-17.0	32.1	-27.2	27.0	-6.5	56.6	3.7	16.2	-1.1
High	17.4	-12.6	31.6	-22.0	27.2	-5.1	57.4	3.0	15.4	-2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>-15.9</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>-25.3</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>-6.3</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>-0.8</b>

\* Nonmetropolitan counties were divided evenly into low, medium and high groups with respect to the change in their recent (post-1965) immigrant population, expressed as a percentage of their total 1990 population. See data and methods section for more detail.

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing, summary files.

# New Immigrants in Rural America: A Demographic Snapshot

Evidence suggests that the movement of immigrant groups to rural and small town America is new, real, and having an impact, both positive and negative, on localities. But just who are these new arrivals, and how do they compare with the native population? Using data from a nationally representative household survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, we compare the recent immigrant population (foreign-born who arrived since 1965), and the very recent immigrant population (those arriving since 1990), with the native-born population (including those born abroad of native-born parents). I make these comparisons for the nation as a whole, and separately by place of residence, with a focus on nonmetropolitan areas.<sup>4</sup>

## New Immigrants Are More Likely to be 18–64-Year-Old Adults

Compared with natives, the foreign-born are more likely to be aged 18–64 rather than children or elders (see Figure 1). For example, about 12 percent of natives are aged 65 or more, while only 3.2 percent of the foreign-born who arrived since 1990 are elderly. And while 28 percent of the native-born are under age 18, only 11 and 20 percent of post-1965 and post-1990 arrivals, respectively, are children and youth. More of the foreign-born in rural than urban areas are children, and fewer are elderly. This stands in direct contrast to the residential pattern for natives, where there is a greater prevalence of elders in the countryside than in metro America. It should be borne in mind that these figures do not count as immigrants the native-born children of the foreign born, that is, the second generation. Clearly their social and economic circumstances and trajectories will have a bearing on the overall impact of immigration on the United States. It is noteworthy in this regard that foreign-born women have higher levels of fertility than natives. Data from the June supplement of the 2004 Current Population Survey indicate that the number of births per 1,000 ever-married women aged 15-44 was 73.3 among natives and 91.6 among the foreign born. For Hispanic women this fertility measure stood at 100.3.

<sup>4</sup> Data for central cities of metropolitan areas are provided for comparison since cities do remain the predominant place of residence for recent immigrants. The focus of the discussion is on immigrants in nonmetropolitan areas. See data and methods section for details on the CPS, definitions of place of residence and other variables, and other analytic details.

FIGURE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS

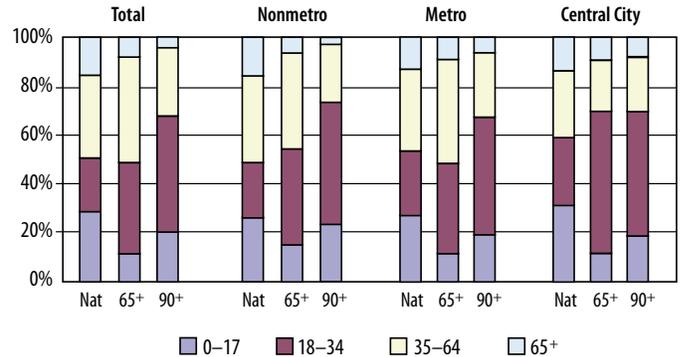
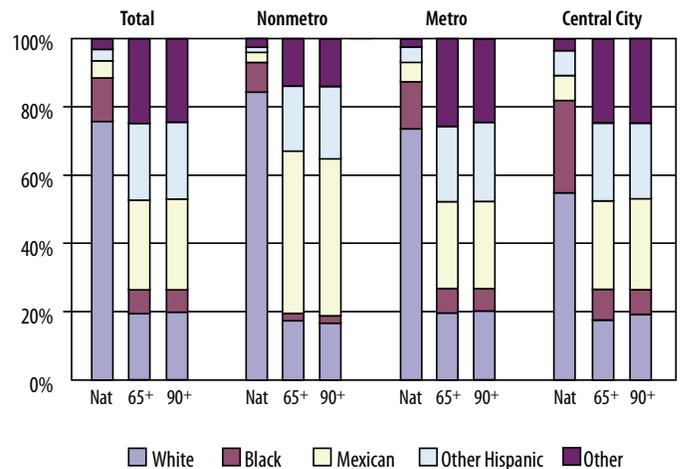


FIGURE 2: RACE/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS



## Many New Immigrants are Hispanics from Mexico

The vast majority of the native population is non-Hispanic white, while immigrants are far more likely to be Mexican, other Hispanic, and Asian. Figure 2 indicates that about three-quarters of natives are non-Hispanic white, while only about one in five recent immigrants are white. The makeup of post-1965 and post-1990 arrivals is remarkably similar. Approximately 26 percent of recent immigrants are Mexican, 23 percent are other Hispanics, approximately 24 percent are Asian, and approximately 7 percent are black.

There are, however, some important differences between urban and rural immigrants. Most notably, rural immigrants

are far more likely to be Mexican (48 percent of all post-1965 immigrants in rural areas) compared with only about 25 percent in urban areas. As a result, approximately two-thirds of recent immigrants in rural areas are Hispanic while slightly less than one-half of immigrants in urban areas are Hispanic. Recent immigrants to urban locales are more likely to be Asian or of African descent.

### Recent Immigrants Are Often Married

Marital status is a clear factor in individual and family well-being. Indeed, recent antipoverty initiatives have stressed marriage as did the recent reauthorization of welfare reform laws. As seen in Figure 3, about 75 percent of adult recent immigrants in rural areas are married, compared with less than 70 percent of recent immigrants generally, and approximately 64 percent of recent immigrants in central cities. The somewhat lower prevalence of marriage among native adults is due to the fact that they are older and, therefore, more likely to be widowed. Not surprisingly, being younger, new immigrant adults, recent arrivals in particular, are more likely than native adults to have never married. However, recent immigrants in rural areas are much less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to have never been married, and are less likely to be divorced or separated.

### New Immigrants Are at an Educational Disadvantage but Not Less Skilled

Educational attainment is critical for success in the U.S. labor market. Compared with natives, immigrants overall are more likely to be either very poorly educated or very well educated (see Figure 4). For example, while only about 14 percent of native adults (aged 25+) have not completed high school, more than one-third of post-1965 and post-1990 immigrants have not completed high school. On the other hand, more recent immigrants (26 percent) and very recent immigrants (30 percent) have a college or higher degree compared with approximately 25 percent of natives.

However, the picture differs in rural areas. There, approximately one-half of all recent immigrant adults have not completed high school. By contrast, only about one-third of all recent immigrants, and less than 40 percent of those in central cities, have such limited education. With respect to college completion, while the most recent immigrants in rural areas are more likely to have completed college than their native counterparts, they are far less likely to have done so than either earlier immigrants overall or those residing in central cities. The point is simple: new immigrants to rural areas are at an educational disadvantage. This may be particularly problematic in small towns and rural areas that often

FIGURE 3: MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS

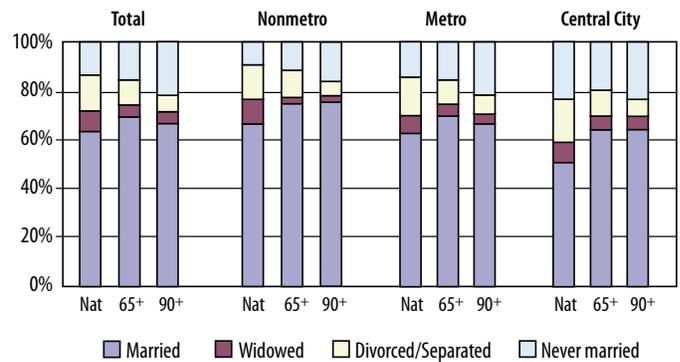
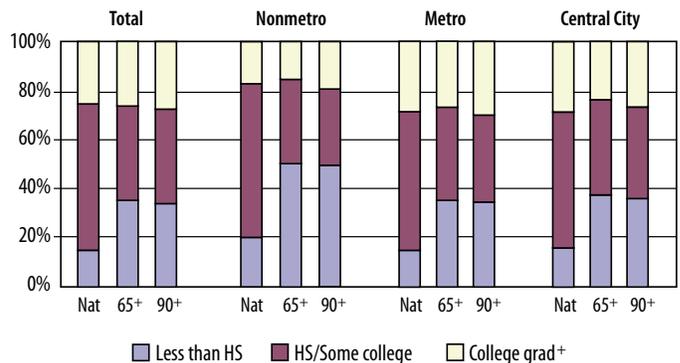


FIGURE 4: EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS



have constrained budgets and limited personnel needed to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and other educational services to immigrant children. Again, the higher fertility among immigrants noted above may compound the problem. Even numerically modest immigrant inflows can quickly stress local educational resources. To be sure, the rural disadvantage in immigrant education is likely a function of the nature of job opportunities that attracted them in the first place. The many low-skilled jobs in rural areas often do not require a high school degree.

While recent immigrants to rural areas are less well educated, this does not necessarily mean they are unskilled. A study of workers in Marshalltown, Iowa, finds that the Hispanic workforce has a wide range of skills, often with years of experience, in the domains of communications (e.g., telecommunications), construction (e.g., carpentry), industrial service (e.g., vehicle repair), and manufacturing (e.g., assembly) (Baker and Hotek 2003). Although less well educated, immigrant workers may bring a pool of human capital that can contribute to the revitalization of rural economies.

## Recent Immigrants Are More Likely to be Employed

Recent immigrants, particularly those residing in rural areas, are more likely than their native counterparts to be employed and, in this sense, “playing by the rules.” Figure 5 indicates that almost two-thirds (65 percent) of the foreign-born population (aged 18–64) who have arrived since 1965 and who are residing in rural areas are employed (either full- or part-time). This compares with 62 percent of immigrants arriving since 1990 and 56 percent of rural natives. The labor force participation rates for both groups of immigrants (recent and very recent arrivals) in central cities are lower, by about 4 percentage points. Although modest, these differences suggest that recent immigrants to rural areas, more so than their counterparts elsewhere, are seeking to make a living through formal employment.

## More Recent Immigrants Work in Agriculture Than Natives

Overall, only 2 percent of the population is employed in agricultural industries in the United States (Figure 6). Recent immigrants are more than twice as likely as natives to be so employed. Of course, rural residence and farming are not synonymous. Nonetheless, the prevalence of agricultural work is far greater in rural America, and here recent immigrants are strikingly more likely to be employed in agriculture than their native counterparts—nearly 14 percent of recent immigrant versus slightly more than 5 percent of native-born rural workers.

## Recent Immigrants May Be Employed, But Many Are Underemployed

The data in Figure 5 points to a solid attachment to the labor force among recent immigrants residing in rural America. Clearly, attachment to the labor force is key to economic adaptation and success for immigrant groups. However, simply being in the labor force does not guarantee success. Individuals, for example, may technically be in the labor force but underemployed. This group includes (1) the unemployed: those not working but looking for work, (2) discouraged workers: those out of a job and not looking for work, but who would like a job if they thought they could find one, (3) involuntary part-time workers: those working part-time only because their employer(s) cannot provide full-time hours; and (4) the working poor: those whose wages (adjusted for weeks and hours worked) are insufficient to lift them significantly out of poverty. All other workers are considered adequately employed (see Jensen and Slack 2003).

FIGURE 5: EMPLOYMENT STATUS AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

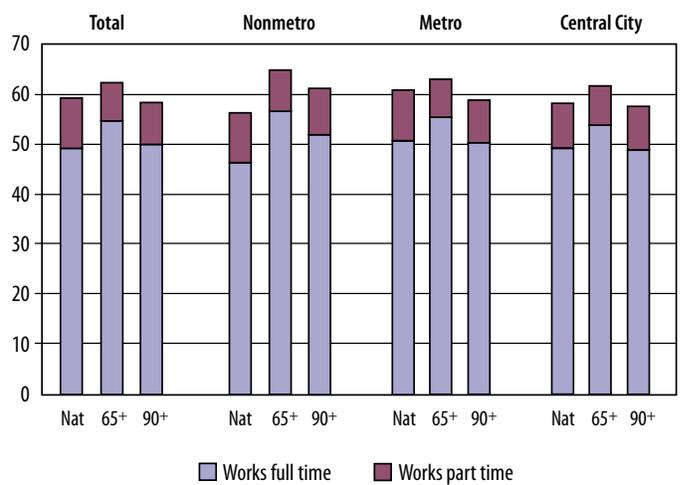


FIGURE 6: PERCENT EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

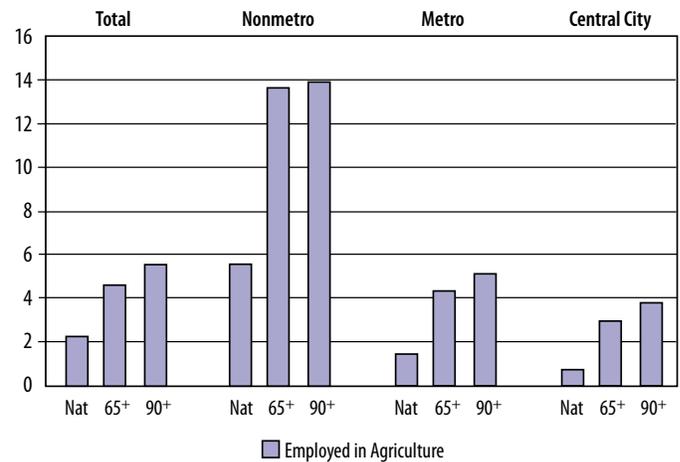


FIGURE 7: UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

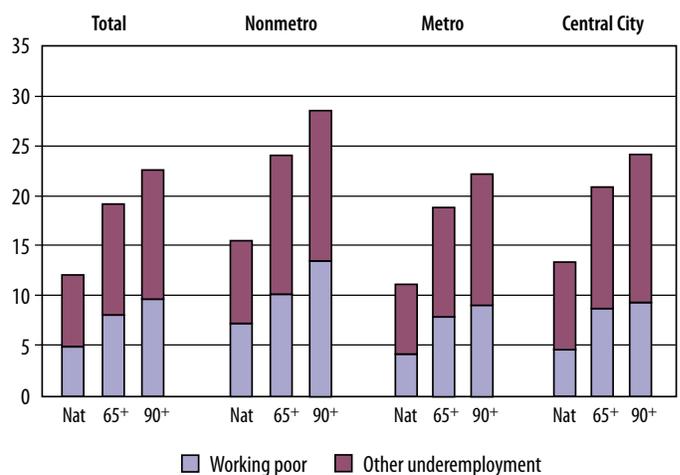


Figure 7 shows the prevalence of underemployment, and indicates a clear disadvantage for recent immigrant workers, particularly those arriving since 1990. This disadvantage is greatest for recent arrivals to rural areas. Nationally, about 12 percent of native workers are underemployed, compared with 19 percent of post-1965 immigrants and 23 percent of those who have arrived since 1990. The rates for recent immigrants in rural areas are significantly higher; 24 percent of post-1965 immigrants and 29 percent of those who arrived since 1990 are underemployed. (Nearly 14 percent of very recent immigrant workers in rural areas are working poor.) Thus, although rural immigrants are more likely to work, the adequacy of their employment is noticeably worse.

### Recent Immigrants Are More Likely to be in Poverty or Near Poverty Than Urban Counterparts

A more direct measure of economic deprivation is poverty, as defined by the federal poverty thresholds. In 2005, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two adults and two children was \$19,806. Figure 8 examines both the poor (income below the poverty threshold) and the near-poor (income less than 150 percent of poverty thresholds).

Both recent and very recent immigrant groups have higher poverty rates (by either definition) than their native-born counterparts. Immigrants residing in rural areas have higher poverty rates than their counterparts living elsewhere, even those in central cities where poverty rates generally are high. This rural disadvantage is particularly apparent in the near-poverty rates. Among very recent immigrants (those arriving since 1990), 48 percent were poor or near-poor in rural areas compared with 43 percent in central cities, and 39 percent among all such recent immigrants. Clearly, the most recent immigrants to rural America are at the highest risk for poverty.

### Although Recent Immigrants May Be Poor, They Are Less Likely to Receive Food Stamps

As the history of immigration outlined above reveals, the admission of impoverished immigrants has long been a point of contention and contradiction in America. On the one hand, the nation prides itself on being a haven for “the tired and the poor,” to paraphrase the famous poem by Emma Lazarus etched into the Statue of Liberty. On the other, those deemed likely to become public charges have long been excluded by immigration policy. At issue then is not the admission of the poor per se, but rather the admission of those likely to burden social welfare systems. Figure 9 shows the percentage of individuals in households receiving food stamps by nativity and place of residence. The figure shows prevalence of receipt for

FIGURE 8: POVERTY AND NEAR-POVERTY RATES (%) AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

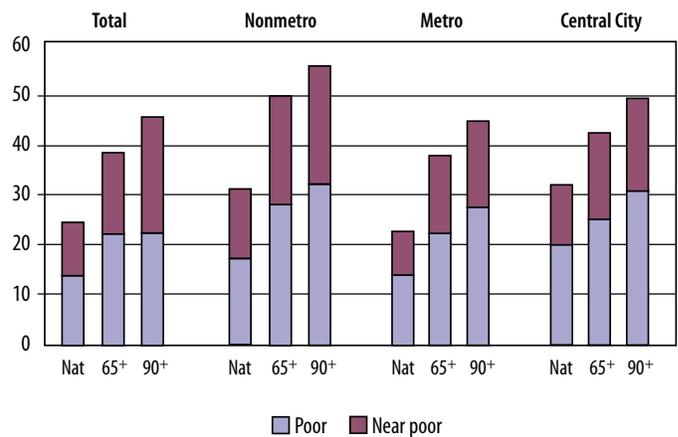
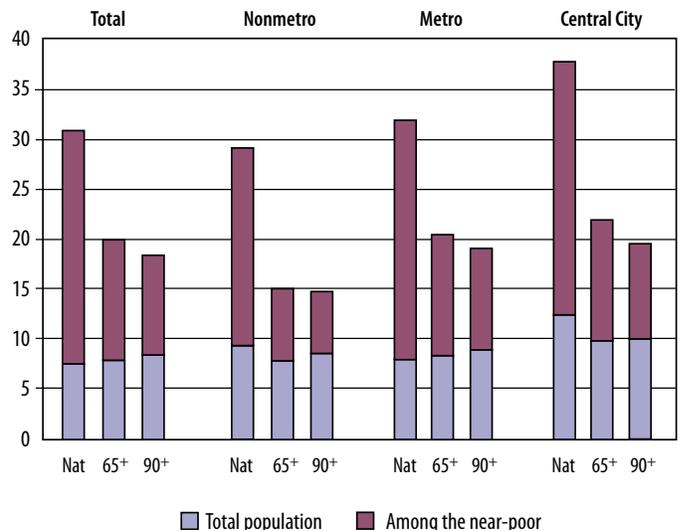


FIGURE 9: TOTAL AND NEAR-POOR FOOD STAMP RECEIPT RATES (%) AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE



the total population (blue), as well as the receipt rate among the near-poor (purple). Three items stand out. First, the rate of receipt in the entire population differs little by nativity and residence, although receipt is lowest among recent immigrants in rural areas. Of course, the Food Stamp Program is targeted to low-income individuals, so it is important to examine the prevalence of receipt among those more likely to be income eligible. A second important point, then, is that food stamp receipt among the near-poor is decidedly lower among recent immigrants than natives. About 31 percent of near-poor natives are in households receiving food stamps, which compares with 20 percent of post-1965 and 18 percent of post-1990 arrivals. Third, near-poor immigrants in rural areas are about half as likely as their native counterparts to

be receiving food stamps. In short, recent immigrants may be poor, but they are less likely to use food stamps, especially in rural areas. To the extent the nation values immigrants who work to make it on their own, these findings suggest that new immigrants to rural America come closer to that ideal.

### Rural Immigrants Are More Likely to Own Their Home than Their Urban Counterparts

Owning a home is an important measure of economic and social success in America. For immigrants, in particular, it is a clear marker of social and economic integration. Not surprisingly given their more limited economic means, years of residence within the United States, and youth, recent immigrants overall are less likely than natives to own their own home. Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of natives own their home, while fewer than one-half (45 percent) of all post-1990 immigrants, and fewer than one-third (31 percent) of those who arrived since 1990 (see Figure 10) own their own home. Immigrants in rural areas are more likely than those elsewhere to own their home. This is consistent with the higher prevalence of home ownership in rural areas generally, but it serves to underscore the efforts of rural immigrants, even very recent ones, to integrate themselves into the American system.

### Recent Immigrants Are Likely to Report Good Health but May Not Have Access to Health Insurance

Post-1965 immigrants are less likely to claim excellent health than natives (28 versus 35 percent, respectively), owing largely to the low percentages reporting excellent health among those who arrived between 1965 and 1990. Given their relative youth, very recent immigrants are more likely to report excellent health. This is not to deny that in some circumstances significant health problems exist, as noted in Julie Arderly's description of Sullivan County, New York, earlier in this report. There are few significant residential differences. Recent immigrants do show a clear disadvantage relative to natives with respect to access to health insurance, perhaps a reflection of being more likely to have jobs that do not offer health insurance benefits. Figure 11 indicates that although more than 80 percent of natives live in households with some form of health insurance, only 63 percent of post-1965 arrivals, and 56 percent of post-1990 immigrants are in households with any health insurance. It is noteworthy that rural immigrants are less disadvantaged than their central city counterparts in this regard. The health and health care use patterns of new immigrants in rural America is an issue that bears watching since, like education, even modest inflows of immigrants and their children can stress rural health care systems.

FIGURE 10: LIVES IN A HOME THAT IS OWNED (%) AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

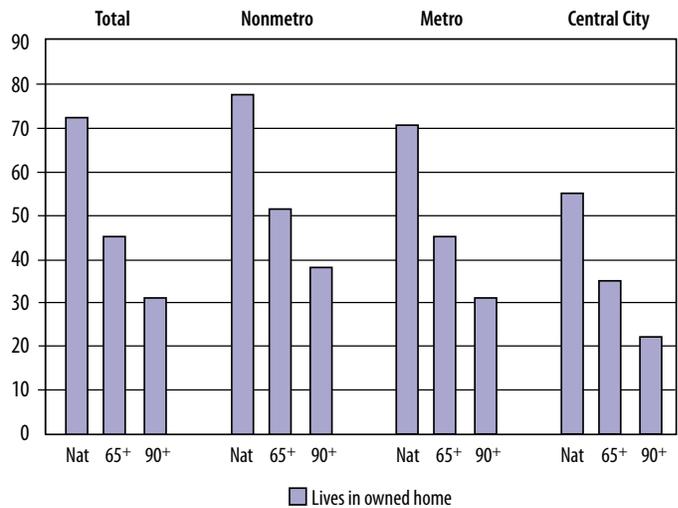
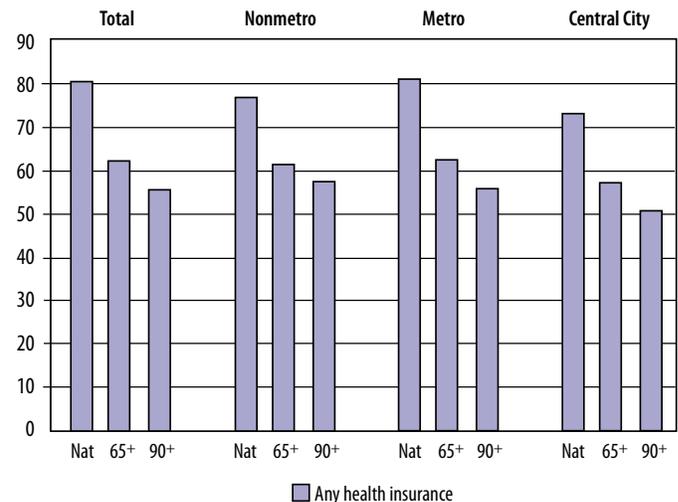


FIGURE 11: LIVES IN A HOUSEHOLD WITH ANY HEALTH INSURANCE (%) AMONG NATIVES, POST-1965, AND POST-1990 ARRIVALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE



### The Snapshot of Rural Immigrants

The picture of the recent immigrant population in rural America differs in important ways from recent immigrants overall or those in cities. Rural immigrants are more likely to be Hispanic (and of Mexican origin in particular); they are less well-educated; they are more likely to be poor, but when poor, less likely to receive Food Stamps; they are more likely to be married; more likely to be working, but also underemployed; more likely to own their own home; and they may be in better health and more likely to have access to health insurance.

# Research and Policy Directions

United States immigration history tends to repeat itself. The latter decades of both the 19th and 20th centuries were marked by waves of immigration from poorer countries bringing new and different languages and cultures. Then as now, these waves of immigration have sparked concern about the social and economic impact on the country. And then as now, these new immigrant groups have tended to settle in America's cities. However, in recent decades, a new chapter in U.S. immigration history appears to be emerging. Immigrants are lately dispersing from gateway cities and other urban centers. Although the majority of the foreign-born still live in the nation's cities, towns and small cities all over rural America are now experiencing dramatic increases in immigrants. The immigrants, largely Hispanic, appear to be drawn to employment opportunities first and foremost, but also to the lower costs of housing, good schools, and an environment that is regarded as safe and peaceful.

Although there may be some reason for concern among rural communities, given that compared with their urban counterparts, recent immigrants in rural areas tend to be poorer and less well educated, this group also brings some comparative advantages: they are more likely to be working (albeit more often underemployed), less likely to use welfare programs when poor, more likely to be married, and more likely to own their own homes. They also are more likely to be Hispanic (and more specifically of Mexican), and thus are bound by a common language. The reaction among long-term residents to these influxes has been mixed, with some locals reacting negatively out of concern for presumed detrimental social and economic impacts, some reacting positively and viewing these newcomers as a source of much needed revitalization, and a large number are simply ambivalent. Whether indeed the new arrivals are a bane or a blessing for rural America depends on some blend of reality and perception. That is, new arrivals to a place inevitably bring both good and bad in reality, and natives might either perceive or not perceive these beneficial and detrimental effects. But one thing is certain: rapid increases in immigrant populations will be more acutely felt in rural than urban areas.

## ***The Effects of Immigration on Smaller Communities Must Be Forefront in Policy Discussions***

At this writing, Congress is embroiled in a debate over new legislation that would address the problem of illegal or undocumented immigration to this country. This issue is as complex as it is contentious, in part because it places various interests (such as labor versus business) and values against each another. It is noteworthy that the key issues of conflict, employer sanctions, border security, and especially amnesty for undocumented workers, are the same as those that fueled debate over IRCA in the 1980s. The 1986 legislation itself followed a long and tortuous legislative process.

This report takes no position on the question of amnesty. It does, however, offer the more general caution regarding immigration policy: the effects on localities must be at the forefront of concern. In other words, new federal immigration law must recognize that the effects of immigration are felt acutely in places such as Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and Marshalltown, Iowa. Communities contend daily with the pressures that necessarily accompany rapid increases in populations. The smaller size of rural places and often more limited resources and social services make them especially vulnerable to the pressures from immigration. Should new legislation include an amnesty provision, governments at all levels should be prepared for the possibility that legalized workers will be freer to move to new destinations while also leaving behind a vacuum in the labor force. The impact on rural communities in this regard would warrant special scrutiny.

## ***Funding Should be Used to Spur Collaboration across Governments and within Communities***

Rural communities will continue to differ in their receptivity to new arrivals. It may be more adaptive, however, to follow Marshalltown's example by taking active steps to minimize immigration's negative effects and maximize the benefits. National and state legislators should consider collaborating with and supporting nongovernmental organizations that are seeking to help rural immigrants and their communities cope, adjust, and prosper. The federal government could also provide funding to create incentives for local governments to support programs that would bring immigrant and native populations together in the joint task of community development and understanding.

### ***Expand Research on Rural Effects of Immigration***

Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of the flow of immigrants to rural and small-town America. In-depth, coordinated, and systematic community studies using roughly comparable research designs would provide critically needed new evidence. Developing a typology of destinations would be especially helpful and go beyond the valuable but parsimonious classifications currently in use (Kandel and Cromartie 2004). A coordinated series of studies would provide a clearer understanding of fiscal impacts, the effects of local context on individual outcomes, and other critical issues with both macro and micro dimensions. For example, research might examine relations between recently arriving Latinos and the native African American population in the rural Southeast. Cravey (1997) has uncovered, for example, a highly stratified and racialized division of labor in a small North Carolina town, a division that newly arrived immigrants, themselves economically vulnerable, reinforce. This juxtaposition of rural blacks, who endure chronic and concentrated poverty, with new and principally Hispanic immigrants who likewise are often poor or near-poor, bears special scrutiny by researchers and policymakers alike.

Research should also explore more fully the range of reasons why migrants are moving to rural locales, and their relative importance and implications. At the same time, longitudinal analyses of rural immigrants both within and across immigrant generations would help document and understand the pace and process of integration. As noted by Martin, Fix, and Taylor (2006), although the focus has justifiably been on immigrants themselves, it is the circumstances of their children that will be key to the ultimate impact of immigration on rural communities.

# Data and Methods

The demographic portrait of recent immigrants in rural and urban America is based on original analysis of data from the March Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a nationally representative survey of approximately 50,000 U.S. households and the individuals residing within them conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. To increase the cases available for analysis, I pooled data from the 1996–2003 CPS surveys and used the outgoing rotation groups, such that any given sampled household is incorporated in this analysis only once. Data are weighted by the March supplement weight for a given year. I used the CPS rather than public use micro data files of the Census 2000 because this set of surveys includes key indicators not included on the census long form (e.g., those needed to define underemployment).

Place of residence is defined using the federal government's designation of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties. Metropolitan (metro) counties consist essentially of one or more urbanized areas (e.g., cities) with a population of 50,000 or more, plus surrounding counties tied economically to the central county via commuting patterns. The 1990 metropolitan definitions are used with CPS surveys analyzed here. I further identified residents who are living in the central cities of metro areas, given that central cities are a popular destination for immigrants to the United States. I use the terms “rural” and “nonmetropolitan” interchangeably, often preferring the former given that it is more readily understood. “Urban” here means “metropolitan,” which includes both central cities and their surrounding metropolitan suburbs. It should be noted that counties (e.g., in the Central Valley of California) can be both metropolitan and heavily agricultural, and there are many nonmetropolitan counties in which agricultural activity is negligible. Stated simply, rural and farming are far from synonymous. Also, a county might be metropolitan by virtue of having an urbanized area that meets official criteria, but also have vast swaths of open country dotted by very small settlements. The point here is, metropolitan counties can, and often do, have areas that most observers would regard as rural. With respect to nativity, I defined the foreign-born as those not born in the United States (excluding those born abroad of American parents). I sometimes use the term immigrants for this foreign-born population, with the caveat that some foreign-born individuals (e.g., international students) are legal

residents on temporary visas and have no intention of becoming permanent residents. I further distinguished between the foreign-born population that arrived after 1965 (“recent immigrants”) and after 1990 (“very recent immigrants”). Note that these categories are therefore not mutually exclusive. Those who arrived after 1965 include that subset of foreign-born individuals who arrived after 1990.

It should be stressed that this is a national-level portrayal of new immigrants in rural and urban areas. Such highly aggregated analyses necessarily gloss over the unique and important population profiles that can characterize immigrant flows to particular localities. Moreover, since the CPS sample weights are tied to the decennial census, CPS data may not accurately characterize populations in areas experiencing high recent immigration. This is especially so in places where the influx has been composed disproportionately of undocumented individuals who tend to be less likely to respond to formal questionnaires. Nevertheless, this analysis points to ways in which new immigrants compare with natives nationally, and suggests potential differences of which more localized appraisals should be aware.

The section of the report that maps and describes the places where new immigrants are settling is supported by analysis of data from the summary files of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing. The key variable driving this analysis is the change between 1990 and 2000 in the number of recent immigrants (foreign-born individuals excluding those born abroad of American parents and regardless of citizenship, who arrived in the United States to stay after 1965). Recognizing that a given absolute change can have very different effects depending on whether the population of a county is large or small, I divided the change in the recent immigrant population by the county's 1990 total population and multiplied by 100 to obtain a measure of relative change. A value of 5.0 for this variable can be interpreted as the absolute increase in the recent immigrant population expressed as a percentage of the 1990 population.

Map 2, which shows change in recent immigrant population for nonmetropolitan counties, uses the 2000 metropolitan area definitions. Further, to capture some of the clear rural-urban variation that exists within nonmetropolitan America, Table 1 differentiates between micropolitan counties and noncore counties, both of which are nonmetropoli-

tan. Micropolitan counties are those with an urban cluster of at least 10,000 persons (metro areas require an urban cluster of 50,000+), plus contiguous counties linked to the central county through commuting patterns. All other counties are considered noncore. There are about twice as many noncore counties (1,378) than micropolitan counties (674), but noncore counties have only about one-quarter the nonmetropolitan population. Maps of change in recent immigrant populations for metropolitan, micropolitan, and noncore counties are available on request.

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BUILDING KNOWLEDGE FOR RURAL AMERICA'S  
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