



Hispanics Increasingly Leaving Established U.S. Gateway Communities

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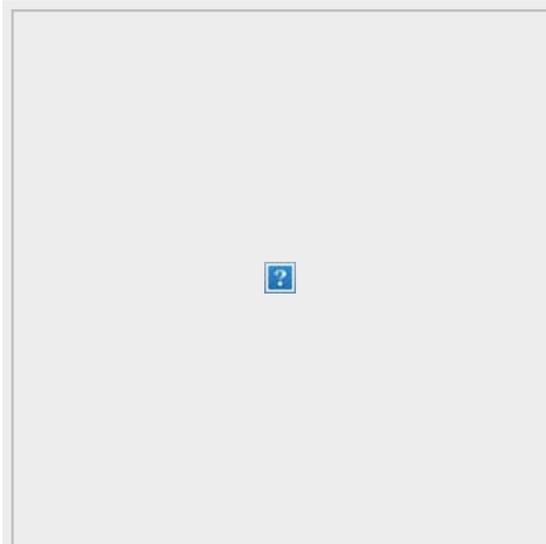
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Ken Johnson, Professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire and senior demographer at the UNH Carsey Institute

DURHAM, N.H. –The Hispanic population in the United States has experienced a transformation in migration in the last two decades as Hispanics have left traditional gateway communities for the economic opportunities in new communities, according to new research by the University of New Hampshire.

“The widespread geographic diffusion of Hispanics from immigrant gateways to newly emerging destinations is perhaps the most significant trend in U.S. population redistribution over the past quarter century,” said Ken Johnson, professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire and senior demographer at the UNH Carsey Institute. The research was conducted by Johnson and Daniel Lichter, the Ferris family professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management, and professor of sociology at Cornell University.

The researchers found that rates of Hispanic growth over the 1990–2000 and 2000–2006 periods were much higher in new destinations than in established areas in the United States. The research is presented in the article “Immigrant Gateways and Hispanic Migration to New Destinations,” which is published in the current issue of *International Migration Review*.

The study also showed that the post-2000 period brought a considerable slowdown in Hispanic population growth overall. However, the average annual Hispanic growth rate remained much higher during 2000–2006 in new destinations (about 8.7 percent) than in established Hispanic areas (3 percent). In the 1990s, the Hispanic population in new destinations grew at an annual rate that was roughly five times greater than in established areas. After 2000, the growth rate in new destinations was roughly three times greater than in established areas.

The Hispanic growth in new destinations was a result of Hispanics from other parts of the United States moving to these new communities and immigration from Mexico and other parts

of Latin America. In contrast, Hispanic population growth in established Hispanic communities was solely the result of immigration. In fact, these established areas actually experienced a net domestic out-migration of residents to other parts of the country.

The least educated Hispanics were overrepresented in established Hispanic areas. The most educated Hispanics lived in areas that were not established Hispanic areas or new areas of migration.

“Out-migration from new destinations is selective of highly educated Hispanics, which diminishes the stock of human capital in new Hispanic growth areas. Low levels of education among Hispanics represent a major impediment to upward economic mobility in new destinations,” the researchers said.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, during the 1990s, the Hispanic population increased by nearly 13 million (or 58 percent), and accounted for 40 percent of U.S. population growth. In 1990, about 9 out of 10 Hispanics lived in just 10 states; California and Texas alone accounted for 54 percent of all Hispanics in the United States. Since then, the geographic spread and demographic impact of Hispanics has accelerated nationwide. Many communities beyond the southwestern gateway states have witnessed large influxes of Hispanics, especially in small-sized metropolitan cities, suburban communities, and nonmetropolitan (non-metro) areas.

Johnson and Lichter recently showed that 221 non-metro counties would have experienced overall population decline during 2000–2006 if not for Hispanic population growth. New Hispanic population growth has revitalized many small and dying towns, especially in the Midwest.

“Our analyses raise important policy questions about whether recent Hispanic in-migrants represent a source of human capital that can infuse local communities with new economic vitality or, alternatively, represent mostly recently arrived Hispanic immigrants who are ‘hard to assimilate,’ that place new fiscal burdens on local taxpayers, or that raise the specter of heightened intergroup hostility and conflict,” Johnson and Lichter said.

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PHOTO

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