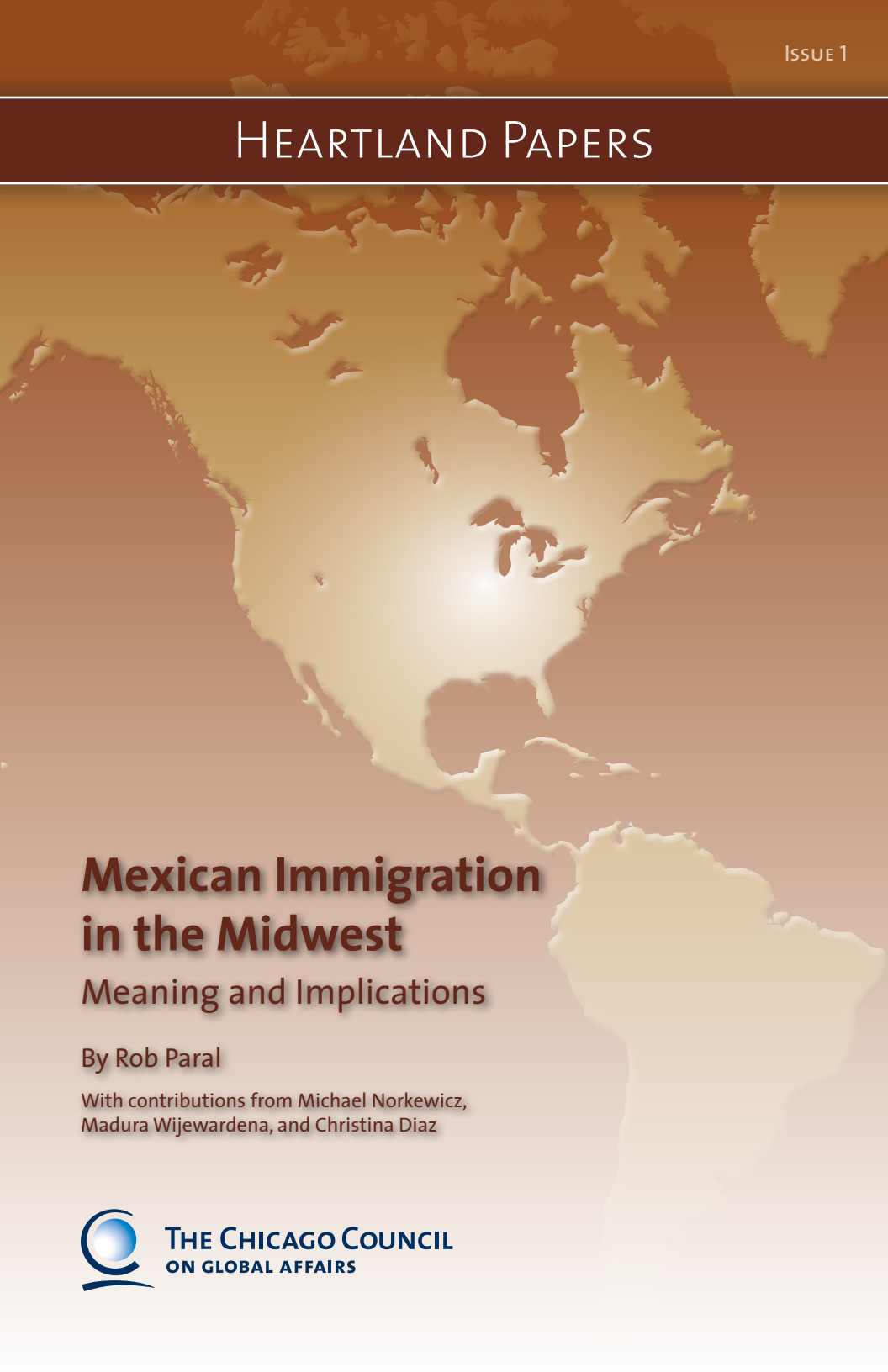
Issue 1

Heartland Papers



Mexican Immigration in the Midwest

Meaning and Implications

By Rob Paral

With contributions from Michael Norkewicz, Madura Wijewardena, and Christina Diaz

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

HEARTLAND PAPERS

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About *Heartland Papers*

Heartland Papers are a monograph series devoted to helping the Midwest succeed in an era of globalization. Published by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs as part of the Global Midwest Initiative, *Heartland Papers* address issues that are vital to the future of the Midwest as it transitions from its industrial past. The views are those of the author(s), and The Chicago Council takes no institutional position. All statements of facts and opinions are those of the author(s).

In October 2008 The Chicago Council on Global Affairs launched the Global Midwest Initiative, a regional effort to promote interstate dialogue between government, business, and civic leaders about how best to respond to globalization. Through a series of conferences, seminars, and publications, including *Heartland Papers,* the Initiative aims to serve as a resource for those interested in the Midwest's ability to navigate today's global landscape.

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Foreword

Americans are growing increasingly concerned about immigration. A recent Chicago Council poll showed that Americans believe that immigration at current levels is bad for most aspects of the U.S. economy. Seventy-six percent of the public views immigration as bad for job security, and 67 percent believe it is bad for creating jobs. At the same time, immigrants are filling jobs that are crucial to the well-being of the U.S. economy, jobs that those born in the United States are unable or unwilling to fill. Immigrants in the Midwest remain the most important source of population growth in a region experiencing significant native population decline.

Mexican immigration is not new to the Midwest. In the early 1900s Mexican immigrants arrived in the Midwest to work on the railroad or to pick sugar beets. Later, Mexicans and others were attracted to Detroit's manufacturing plants and Chicago's meatpacking industry. Today, the manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and service sectors draw Mexican immigrants. Mexicans now comprise the Midwest's largest foreign-born population.

Because Mexican immigration is such a rapidly changing phenomenon and is having such a remarkable impact on the Midwest's economic, political, and social fabric, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs chose this subject as the focus of its first *Heartland Paper. Heartland Papers* are a new Chicago Council monograph series that explore how to best position the Midwest in the age of globalization by examining key issues and providing policy recommendations to improve regional success. The focus is the region rather than a particular state. Unlike other studies that focus on a particular state's response to immigration or on federal policy, this report is the first, to our knowledge, to examine the economic and social impact of Mexican immigration on the eight-state Midwestern region.

The Chicago Council has devoted significant attention to immigration over the past five years. In 2004 it released *Keeping the Promise: Immigration Proposals from the Heartland,* which examined the opportunities and challenges posed by immigration in the United States. In 2006 The Chicago Council released the report *A Shared Future: The Economic Engagement of Greater Chicago and its Mexican Community.* In this *Heartland Paper,* The Chicago Council continues its work on immigration and contributes research and recommendations to practitioners, policymakers, and civic communities throughout the Midwest and the United States.

This report would not have been possible without the dedication and passion of its author Rob Paral and his team. Rob spent tireless hours collecting raw data, analyzing correlations, and traveling around the Midwest to develop this report. The Chicago Council is deeply grateful to him for his willingness to serve as the first *Heartland Paper* author.

The Chicago Council is also indebted to three anonymous readers whose insights greatly contributed to this report as well as to the editors Ellen Hunt and Catherine Hug, whose attention to detail is invaluable.

A report of this nature needs the input and collaboration of other institutions specializing in the unique topic of Mexican immigration, and The Chicago Council extends its sincere appreciation to the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, in particular to its associate director Allert Brown-Gort, for serving as a cosponsor of this project and its vision.

Lastly, I would like to extend a special thanks to The Chicago Council's staff. Rachel Bronson, the Council's vice president for programs and studies, has guided the development of this first *Heartland Paper* and the Global Midwest Initiative of which it is a part. Juliana Kerr Viohl, director of Global Chicago/Global Midwest, oversaw the production of this report. Richard Longworth, whose book laid out the vision for a global Midwest that The Chicago Council on Global Affairs has enthusiastically embraced, continues to serve as an inspiration for our global Midwest efforts.

Marshall M. Bouton
President
The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

March 2009

Executive Summary

Mexican immigration is playing an increasingly important role in communities across the Midwest. These immigrants contribute to population growth and change in many locations currently undergoing population loss. Mexican immigrants are an important source of workers for several Midwestern industries.

At the same time, the social and economic status of these immigrants raises concerns for their long-term prosperity. Most Mexican immigrants have relatively little formal education and are concentrated in low-skill jobs. Mexican immigrant households have been experiencing serious declines in income since 2000, and their poverty rate is rising faster than that of the rest of the population.

The presence of Mexican immigrants is largely due to the substantial creation of low-skill jobs in the Midwest. Because of the many low-skill jobs still being created, Mexican immigrants are likely to continue migrating to the Midwest. Yet, since federal immigration policy leaves few options for Mexican immigrants to enter the United States legally, a majority of the most recent immigrants are undocumented.

This report recommends that policymakers seek options to maximize the incorporation of Mexican immigrants into their communities to help increase communication between these immigrants and the rest of society and to provide them with adequate access to government services. The failure to devise immigration laws that effectively balance the United States' current economic and security needs and offer legal status for recent Mexican immigrants is an impediment to Midwestern economic development since it hampers the ability of the immigrants to move within the labor market.

Immigrants come to the Midwest from all parts of the world. The large Arab immigrant population in Dearborn, Michigan, and the numerous Somali refugees in the Minneapolis-St.Paul area of Minnesota attest to this fact. This report focuses on Mexican immigrants because of their numbers and impact, the particular role that Mexicans play in the regional economy, and their prominent position in the national debate on immigration reform.

This report, the first of its kind, describes major demographic and socioeconomic features of Mexican immigration across the eight-state Midwest region. It uses both recent data and other statistics that delineate historic transformations to the regional economy over 100 years. The report reveals a wide range of information on Midwestern Mexican immigrants that has never been published before.

Following are some of the major findings of the report.

Population Trends

The Midwest is home to 1.2 million Mexican immigrants.
The eight states of the Midwest are home to 1,163,238 Mexican immigrants as of the 2005-06 period.[1] The largest numbers of Mexican immigrants are in Illinois (724,845), Indiana (102,777), Michigan (83,896), and Wisconsin (80,515).

Mexican immigrant populations are growing rapidly.
While the average annual population growth of the Midwest is 0.5 percent, Mexican immigrants in the region are growing ten times as fast, at 5 percent annually.

Mexican Immigrants in the Midwestern Labor Force

The portion of Mexican immigrants in the labor force has tripled since 1990.
The Mexican immigrant portion of Midwestern workers has tripled since 1990, when Mexican immigrants were 0.8 percent of the labor force. By 2005-06, their share had increased to 2.5 percent.

Mexican immigrant employment is concentrated in low-skill jobs.
Nearly half of all Mexican immigrants hold jobs that require only short-term training on the job, compared to only 25 percent of all Midwestern workers.

The majority of all job growth is in low-skill jobs.
The U.S. economy is creating large numbers of low-skill jobs that far exceed the number held by Mexican immigrants, which suggests that Mexican immigrants are not taking away jobs, but are filling the large increases in demand for those jobs. Between 2000 and the end of 2010, almost 58 percent of job openings are projected to be for low-skilled workers.

1. This report combines survey data from 2005 and 2006 to reduce variability due to sampling constraints.

Income Trends

Household income of Mexican immigrants and of all Midwesterners has been in decline.
Between 2000 and the 2005-06 period, median household incomes for the Midwestern population fell by 9 percent—from $52,032 to $47,343. This decline wiped out many of the gains of the 1990s. Mexican immigrant households, however, were hit harder by the declining income trend since 2000. Median Mexican immigrant household income was $43,311 in 1990, but fell by 12.2 percent to $38,034 by 2005-06.

Immigration Policy

The current immigration system provides few entry points for Mexican immigrants.
There are few permanent resident visas based on family relationships available to Mexicans. There are few temporary immigration visas, and those that exist disproportionately benefit the agricultural needs of southern and western states. For most Midwestern factories, construction companies, or restaurants, the existing avenues of temporary immigration are of little value.

Much of the recent Mexican immigration is undocumented.
Nearly two-thirds of recent Mexican immigrants to the Midwest cannot be accounted for via the legal immigration process. Undocumented immigration, therefore, accounts for the majority of Mexican immigrants arriving in a given year.

Immigrant integration is an economic development tool.
Local communities in the Midwest have become interested in immigration control through cooperative agreements with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, restrictive housing ordinances, and other strategies. Yet these efforts run counter to local governments' commitments to providing services in areas like health, job creation, and education.

State and local governments should let federal agencies handle immigration control and should instead focus on the economic development opportunities that come from fully integrating Mexican immigrants. Immigrant integration efforts include ensuring that immigrants and local institutions like police departments and government agencies enjoy healthy communication with each

other. Integration means that immigrants are able to utilize government services. Successful integration for communities with large numbers of Mexican immigrants will also entail providing access to legal status for many of the Midwestern Mexican immigrants who are undocumented.

I. Introduction

Mexican immigrants are playing an increasingly important role in the Midwest.

Mexican immigration is an important issue to the Midwest. The number of Mexican immigrants is large, they are moving to new parts of the region, and they are playing a key role in the economy. Mexicans embody core elements of globalization: changes in the types of jobs and workers needed, migration of human capital, and increasingly diverse populations. Many Mexican immigrants are undocumented, and more than any other group, they represent a deep tension between U.S. labor needs and the attempt to control immigration.

The Midwest is currently home to some 1.2 million immigrants from Mexico, or 2 percent of the regional population and 30 percent of all foreign-born persons in the region. While a majority of Midwestern counties are experiencing population decline and the region's overall growth rate is almost flat, the Mexican immigrant population grew by a quarter million persons between 2000 and 2006. As more Mexican immigrants move to the Midwest, they have expanded their residential patterns away from traditional settlement areas like Cook County, Illinois, and Lake County, Indiana. Mexican populations are booming in towns in Iowa that offer meatpacking jobs and in cities like Minneapolis with growing service sectors. In essence, recent Mexican immigrants have flowed into regional areas where jobs that require low skills are being created, but where there is little or no experience with integrating immigrants. The immigrants bring linguistic, cultural, religious, and other traditions that alter existing social arrangements and typify the rapid societal changes that come with globalization.

Mexican workers are a substantial portion of the agriculture and construction industries. They continue to be an important source of labor for the manufacturing industry, which is an integral part of the Midwestern economy. In fact, the manufacturing industry increasingly relies on Mexican immigrants as a labor source. Mexican immi-

Definitions
This report defines "Midwest" as including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. "Mexican immigrants" are defined as persons born in Mexico and include both documented and undocumented immigrants.

grants are 5 percent of manufacturing workers in the region and as much as 16 percent in Illinois.

The presence of so many Mexican immigrants is both a reflection and an accelerator of globalization. The restructuring of industries due to globalization has led to many jobs being outsourced from their original towns or cities to places where labor is cheaper, including abroad. Most of these jobs once paid high wages to workers with low-to-medium levels of skills, especially skills that were learned on the job. In the wake of this transformation, an economy has emerged that is generating jobs at the opposite ends of the skills spectrum. Few jobs with skill requirements in the middle are being created. Mexican immigrants often fill the new job openings at one end of this spectrum, namely those requiring relatively low skills. Once Mexican immigrants take up residence, they often bring other family members. The presence of Mexican immigrant families brings increased diversity to the areas where they settle.

Because Mexican workers are concentrated in low-skill and low-wage jobs, their social and economic situation is precarious. On average, the immigrants have low levels of formal education, and their household incomes had been falling rapidly even before the recession of 2008. Nearly one in five lives below the poverty level. Their disadvantaged status raises concerns about the ability of their children to acquire higher levels of education and to integrate economically as previous generations of immigrants have done.

Immigrants come to the Midwest from all parts of the world. For example, there are numerous Arab immigrants in Dearborn, Michigan; Somali refugees in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota; and Polish immigrants in Chicago. These and other immigrant and refugee groups require attention and careful thought from policymakers and commentators.

No group, however, approaches Mexican immigrants in the Midwestern states in terms of sheer numbers and geographic spread across the region—in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. This report focuses on Mexican immigrants because of their numbers and impact, the particular role that Mexicans play in the regional economy, and their prominent position in the debate on immigration reform.

Immigration policies deeply impact Midwestern communities.

A drive across the Midwest is a repeated encounter with arriving Mexican immigrants, whose language, business ownership, culture, and growing population are a feature of many cities and counties.

Most observers agree that the current system of legal immigration, which should govern the entry of foreign-born persons to the Midwest, is broken. It fails to align immigrant admissions with labor force needs, its bureaucracy is rife with error and delay, and it has enabled a national population of some 12 million undocumented immigrants to develop. These undocumented immigrants play an increasingly critical role in the economy and yet are outside of the normal protections and social advancements that the economy offers.

At the center of the debate on immigration reform are Mexico and its migrants. Mexican immigrants, in fact, are the largest single group of all documented immigrants coming to the Midwest. In a given year, the majority of Mexican immigrants coming to the Midwest are undocumented, and the issue of immigration control is largely a question of striking a balance between admitting larger numbers of needed workers and finding a practical method of controlling any illegal entries that would occur under expanded immigration quotas.[2]

The U.S. Constitution grants the federal government plenary power to regulate and enforce immigration. However, the impact of immigration is not felt as strongly in Washington, D.C., as it is at the local level—in communities receiving large numbers of immigrants and among members of the increasingly substantial immigrant populations themselves. The former may wonder how to cope with sudden increases in neighbors who come from different cultures and do not speak English. The latter often wonder whether they are wanted or not by their new society, aware that they work long hours at low pay. Both sides are vulnerable to the effects of ill-conceived federal policies.

2. The majority of Mexican immigrants arriving in a given year are undocumented. However, a majority of all Mexican immigrants in the Midwest (including persons who arrived years ago) are indeed documented immigrants or naturalized U.S. citizens.

A Midwestern response to Mexican immigration is needed.

The Midwest has a particular stake in reforming immigration policies because of the region's unique experience with Mexican immigration. More than the South or West of the United States, which are magnets for U.S. citizens migrating from the North and East, Mexican immigration to the Midwest represents an infusion of people and at least a slowing of population decline. In contrast to the eastern states, Mexican immigration in the Midwest has deep historical roots because urban centers in states like Illinois and Indiana have hosted large Mexican populations for decades. Furthermore, the sheer scale of recent Mexican immigration in the Midwest surpasses that of the eastern states. The Midwest region, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, received 373,000 Mexican immigrants between 2000 and 2006—more than twice the 180,000 Mexican immigrants that went to the Northeast region.[3]

The Midwestern states share a common history, comparable demography, and similar industrial sectors. Mexican immigration, which is beginning to affect all states in the region, is a new, shared Midwestern experience. As the respected journalist Richard C. Longworth has recently written, the region should begin to act as a region and consider policies and programs that address regional challenges comprehensively.[4] To answer the question of what should be an appropriate Midwestern reaction to the social and economic phenomenon of Mexican immigration, we need a Midwestern voice.

Some of the potential elements of a Midwestern response to immigration might reflect the particular nature of Mexican immigration. For towns that have been losing population, shutting schools, and seeing their fortunes fade with the loss of younger people, Mexican immigration has sometimes been a shock, requiring new investments in municipal services that have been unchanged for years. State and federal support may be needed to help such places rebuild their infrastructures, particularly as they relate to the needs of a younger Mexican immigrant population, so that they can provide adequate services to the newcomers and leverage their new arrivals' economic contributions to the fullest.

3. The states in the Census Bureau definition of Midwest region include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The states of the Northeast region include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

4. Longworth, Richard C., 2008, *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism,* New York: Bloomsbury USA.

Another issue concerns immigration policy. The history of U.S. immigration law is full of examples of southern and western agricultural enterprises writing portions of the law to ensure access to the seasonal migrants required to harvest the fruit and vegetables grown in those regions. For example, the "Texas Proviso" of 1952 exempted employers from penalties for hiring undocumented immigrants. Yet U.S. immigration policy has rarely taken into account specific needs of the Midwest to ensure that manufacturing companies, for example, have access to the type and duration of labor needed by their industry.

This report offers information and the rationale necessary to begin building an effective Midwestern response to Mexican immigration. The following pages present recent and historical data on the scope of immigration, the characteristics of the immigrants, and their role in the economy, in particular as workers. Interviews with civic leaders and representatives of the immigrant community in two places with large numbers of recently arrived Mexican immigrants—Marshalltown, Iowa, and Waukegan, Illinois—form the basis for a section that describes how local areas are coping in very different ways with the new wave of immigration. The report concludes by offering strategies for policymakers who are responding to the challenges and opportunities of Mexican immigration.

II. Population Trends

The Midwest is home to 1.2 million Mexican immigrants.

The eight states of the Midwest are home to 1,163,238 Mexican immigrants as of the 2005-06 period. Of these, the largest population is in Illinois, home to 724,845 Mexican immigrants. This is about 62 percent of the entire population of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest. Other major population centers for Mexican immigrants are Indiana, with 102,777; Michigan, with 83,896; and Wisconsin, with 80,515 Mexican immigrants.

Mexican immigrants are a relatively large portion (5.6 percent) of the statewide population in Illinois, yet they remain a small portion of the population elsewhere. As seen in Figure 1, Mexican immigrants are almost 6 percent of the Illinois population, but less than 2 percent of residents in all other states. Indiana has the second largest Mexican immigrant population in the Midwest (1.6 percent of Indiana residents). Ohio, meanwhile, with Mexican immigrants representing only 0.4 percent of residents, has the smallest proportion.

Figure 1 also shows that Mexican immigrants are a substantial portion of all recent immigrants arriving in Midwestern states. The Mexican immigrant population is 30.6 percent of all immigrants who have arrived since 2000. Mexicans are 45 percent of the newest arrivals in Wisconsin, 41 percent in Indiana, and 40 percent in Illinois. Only in Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio are Mexicans less than one-fifth of all newcomers. The data in the table represent statewide populations. The proportion of Mexican immigrants in most urban areas in these states is even higher.

Figure 1 - Mexican Immigrant Portion of Midwestern Population (2005-06)

	Total population	Mexican immigrants	Percentage of total population	Percentage of all recent immigrants (2000-06 arrivals)
Midwest	60,267,544	1,163,238	1.9%	30.6%
Illinois	12,831,970	724,845	5.6%	40.0%
Indiana	6,313,520	102,777	1.6%	41.1%
Iowa	2,982,085	33,055	1.1%	29.0%
Michigan	10,095,643	83,896	0.8%	15.4%
Minnesota	5,167,101	58,450	1.1%	18.9%
Missouri	5,842,713	36,522	0.6%	23.8%
Ohio	11,478,006	43,178	0.4%	16.5%
Wisconsin	5,556,506	80,515	1.4%	45.4%

Note: "2005-06" represents an average of the two-year period.
Source: American Community Survey.

Mexican immigrant populations are growing rapidly. All states in the Midwest are experiencing increases.

Mexican immigrants may be only 1 or 2 percent of all residents in some Midwestern states, but their numbers are growing rapidly, especially compared to flat growth in the overall population. While the average annual population growth of the Midwest is 0.5 percent, Mexican immigrants in the region are growing ten times as fast, at 5 percent annually (see Figure 2).

Mexican growth has been strong for decades.

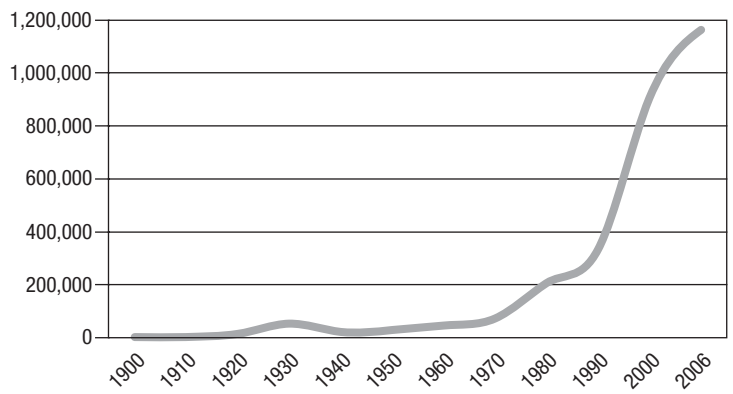
In some locations, Mexican immigration is a recent phenomenon, noticeable only in the past few years. But in the Midwest as a whole, Mexican immigrants have been increasing rapidly for decades. The total number of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest was less than 100,000 in 1970, but grew to 205,000 in 1980; 333,000 in 1990; and

Figure 2 - Average Annual Population Growth of All Persons and of Mexican Immigrants Between 2000 and 2005-06

	Total population growth	Mexican immigrants
Midwest	0.5%	5%
Ohio	0.2%	18%
Indiana	0.6%	11%
Illinois	0.6%	3%
Michigan	0.3%	7%
Wisconsin	0.6%	8%
Minnesota	0.8%	7%
Iowa	0.3%	5%
Missouri	0.7%	7%

Note: "2005-06" represents an average of the two-year period.
Sources: 2000 Census; American Community Survey.

Figure 3 - Mexican Immigrant Population in Midwestern States



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

Figure 4 - Mexican Immigrant Populations in the Midwest

	Midwest	IL	IN	IA	MI	MN	MO	OH	WI
1900	1,022	156	43	29	56	24	162	53	499
1910	3,014	672	47	620	86	52	1,413	85	39
1920	13,490	4,032	686	2,650	1,333	248	3,411	952	178
1930	52,217	21,570	7,612	2,532	9,778	2,097	3,397	3,274	1,957
1940	22,261	10,065	2,160	1,335	3,694	1,096	1,883	1,232	796
1950	28,071	12,463	3,222	1,253	5,235	950	2,057	1,824	1,067
1960	45,736	25,477	5,058	1,038	6,292	846	2,506	2,639	1,880
1970	72,271	50,098	5,060	1,224	7,604	968	2,298	2,621	2,398
1980	205,473	167,924	9,460	2,725	9,903	1,980	3,259	3,910	6,312
1990	332,906	281,651	10,294	3,764	13,656	3,487	4,763	4,325	10,966
2000	904,593	617,828	62,113	25,242	58,392	41,592	25,191	20,551	53,684
2005-06	1,163,238	724,845	102,777	33,055	83,896	58,450	36,522	43,178	80,515

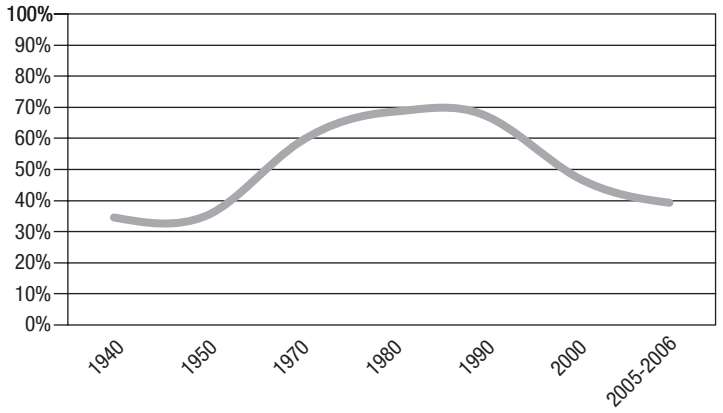
Note: "2005-06" represents an average of the two-year period. Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

905,000 in 2000. By 2006, as noted earlier, there were 1.2 million Mexican immigrants in the Midwest. Figure 3 displays the regional growth of Mexican immigrants, and Figure 4 provides data on state-by-state growth trends.[5]

Cook County, Illinois, which includes Chicago and its nearby suburbs, became the unofficial capital of Midwest Mexican immigration beginning in 1970, when it was home to 59 percent of Midwest Mexican immigrants. In 1980 the percentage of Midwestern Mexican immigrants who lived in Cook County rose to 68 percent and remained at that level in 1990. By 2000, however, the Midwestern Mexican immigrant population had grown rapidly in other parts of the region. This caused the percentage of Mexican immigrants who lived in Cook County to fall to 48 percent in 2000 (see Figure 5). At the same time, the percentage of Mexican immigrants in Illinois also fell, from 85 percent in 1990 to 68 percent in 2000.

While the portion of Mexican immigrants living in Cook County declined, the number of Mexican immigrants continued to grow. Cook County had a net gain of more than 200,000 Mexican immi-

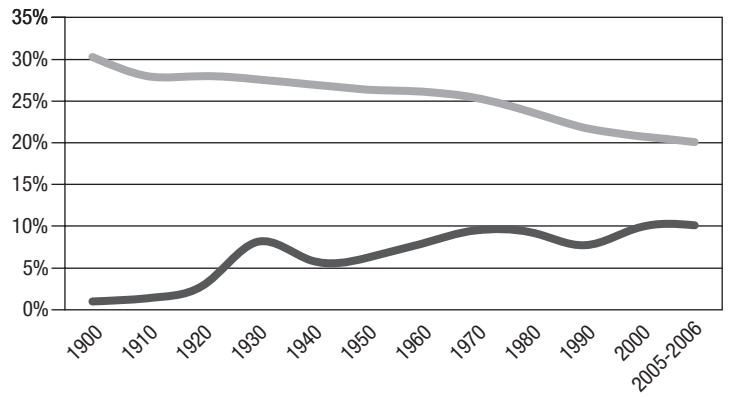
Figure 5 - Percent of Midwest Mexican Immigrants in Cook County, Illinois



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

5. Note the decline in Mexican immigrants during the 1930s, when many were either forcibly or voluntarily deported (along with their U.S.-citizen children in some instances) in an effort to reduce unemployment and use of public assistance. Note also that 1940 and 1950 data on Mexican foreign-born were collected only on "white" Mexican foreign-born persons. This includes nearly all Mexican immigrants, however, as seen in the fact that in 1960, 99.4 percent of the population born in Mexico was classified as white.

Figure 6 - Percent of National Population in Midwest States



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

grants between 1990 and 2000. But rapid Mexican growth was happening outside of Illinois, and at a faster rate, as new Mexican immigrants arrived in other areas of the Midwest.[6] The fast, recent growth rate of Mexican immigration in Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin is shifting the traditional centers of Mexican immigration in the Midwest.

A growing proportion of Mexican immigrants in the United States is settling in the Midwest.

The high average growth rates of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest, coupled with low growth among the overall population in the Midwest, has led to remarkable population trends: A declining portion of the total U.S. population lives in the Midwest, yet a growing portion of the Mexican immigrant population in the United States is making the Midwest its home.[7]

6. The graph excludes 1960 because county-level data on Mexican immigrants are not available for that year.

7. This graph does not imply that Mexican immigrants are replacing lost population on a one-to-one basis. Despite Mexican immigration, the Midwest continues to have a declining share of national population.

Figure 6 displays this trend. In 1900 more than 30 percent of all U.S. residents were in the Midwest. By 2005-06 this portion had fallen to 20 percent. Conversely, only 1 percent of all Mexican immigrants in the United States lived in the Midwest in 1900, but by 2005-06 the Midwest was home to 10 percent of Mexican immigrants in the United States.

With widespread population loss at the county level, Mexican immigration plays a critical role in maintaining growth and reducing decline.

Regional and statewide analyses of population change can mask important shifts within states and obscure both population growth and loss of native-born residents in certain local areas. For example, the statewide population in Illinois grew 3.5 percent in the 2000-07 period, but the population within Cook County—the largest county of the region—fell by almost 2 percent in the same period.

A large portion of Midwestern counties are losing population, even while the region continues to grow as a whole. During the 2000-06 period, 42 percent of the region's counties declined in population. This included 311 of the 738 counties of the Midwest.

County-level population loss was most acute in Illinois and Iowa, where population is declining in nearly two-thirds of counties. Each of the Midwestern states except Wisconsin has recently experienced

Figure 7 - Population Decline Across Midwestern Counties (2000-06)

	Total counties	Counties with population decline	Percent of counties with population decline
Midwest	738	311	42.1%
Illinois	102	66	64.7%
Indiana	92	30	32.6%
Iowa	99	64	64.6%
Michigan	83	27	32.5%
Minnesota	87	43	49.4%
Missouri	115	36	31.3%
Ohio	88	31	35.2%
Wisconsin	72	14	19.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

population decline in nearly one-third or more of its counties, as shown in Figure 7.

Given the increase in Mexican immigration regionally, the question arises as to what role Mexican immigration plays in stemming population loss in the Midwest. In the region, the total population grew by 1.7 million between 2000 and the 2005-06 period. The Mexican immigrant population grew by 259,000 in the same period. Thus, Mexican immigration accounts for about 15 percent of all regional population change.

Recent data on the demographic impact of Mexican immigrants at the county level are not available. The U.S. Census Bureau, however, does provide information on the county-level effect of international migration, the largest portion of which is from Mexico. The bureau's estimates reveal that immigration accounts for a large portion of the slight population growth that is taking place in the Midwest. As mentioned previously, Mexicans represent a very large portion of all immigrants.

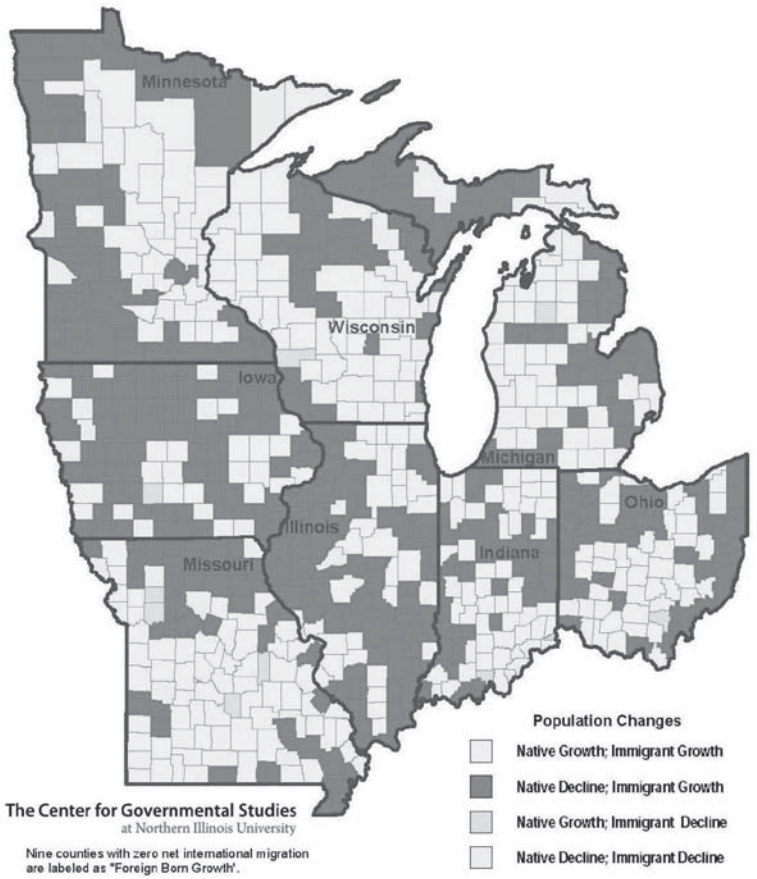
The map in Figure 8 displays the interaction between patterns of native growth or decline and immigrant growth or decline. The darkest areas of the map represent counties where the population that existed in 2000 fell in numbers by 2007, and where new immigrants arrived during that same period.

As the map makes clear, a broad swath of counties from western Minnesota, through most of Iowa, northern Missouri, and eastward through much of western and central Illinois, into Indiana and Ohio are losing their native populations. For this extremely large section of the Midwest, immigration, much of it from Mexico, represents growth in the face of population decline.

U.S. Census Bureau data specific to Mexican immigrants in Midwest counties are available only as recently as 2000 and only as early as 1940 (data for 1960 are not available). Given that the county-level data on Mexican immigrants show an impressive trend of settlement across a growing portion of the region, we developed a series of county-level maps shown in Figures 9a-9f. These maps required hand coding data for more than 700 Midwestern counties from the 1940 and 1950 U.S. Census Bureau volumes. To our knowledge, the resulting set of maps is unique.

The maps give a sense of the dispersion of Mexican immigrants over time and the concentration of their new destinations within the Midwest. Going back to 1940, Mexican communities of several hundred persons or more may be discerned in Cook County and in Rock Island County, Illinois. Rock Island County is along the Mississippi

Figure 8 - Native and Immigrant Population Change (2000-07)



River, home to Moline and Rock Island, cities that have long been manufacturing centers. Other notable sites include Jackson County, Missouri, home to Kansas City, which rivaled Chicago as a destination for Mexican immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in great part because of employment in its railroad centers. In 1940 Mexican populations are also seen in the urbanized manufacturing areas of Michigan.

Between 1940 and 1980, Mexican immigrants extended their settlement areas across northern Illinois and the Great Lakes manu-

facturing belt around southern Lake Michigan and across southern Michigan and northern Indiana and Ohio. Lake County, Indiana—home to Gary, Indiana, and the Gary Works of United States Steel—is noticeable for its large concentration of Mexican immigrants.

As the maps show, the dispersion of Mexican immigrants between 1990 and 2000 is dramatic. Counties with 2,500 or more Mexican immigrants are found in each state. The Mexican presence becomes visibly stronger in Minnesota and Iowa, states with little history of Mexican immigration until recently.

Figure 9a - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (1940)

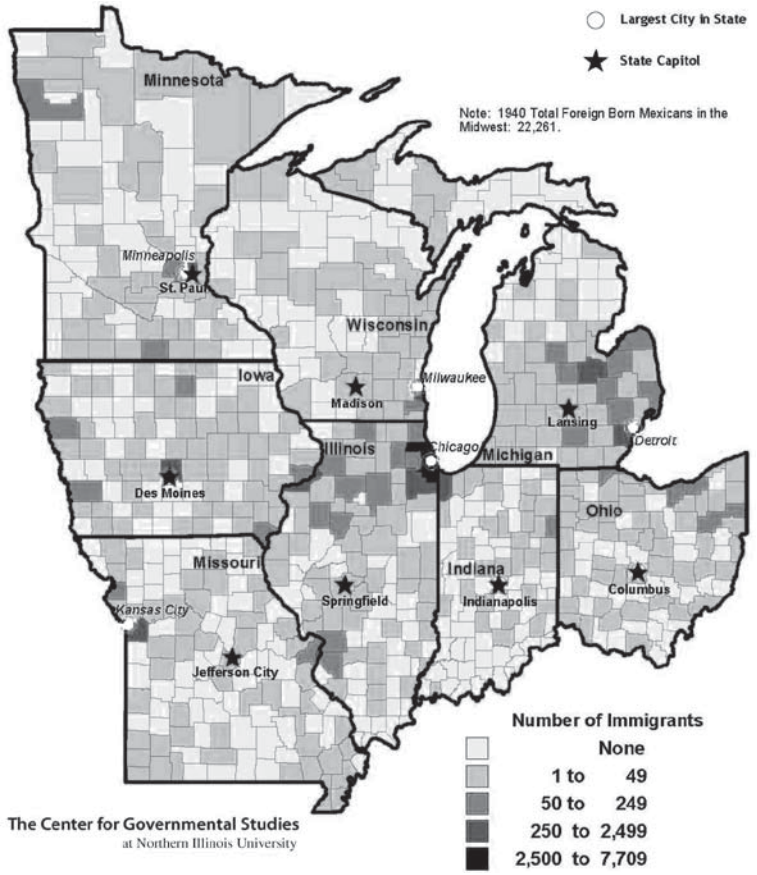


Figure 9b - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (1950)

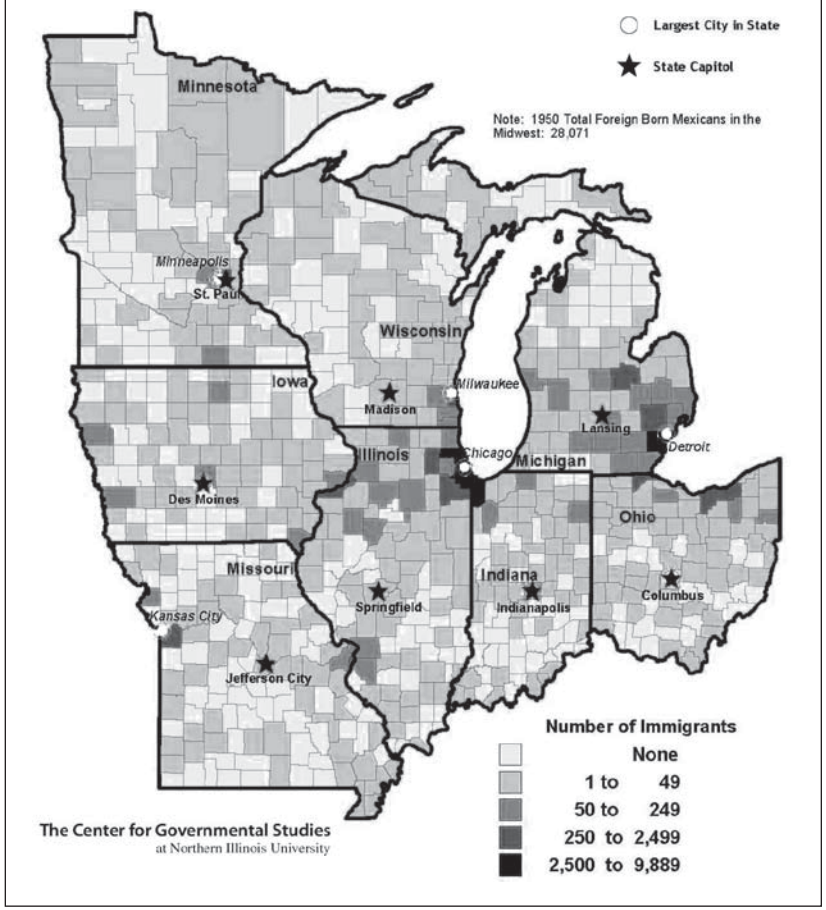


Figure 9c - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (1970)

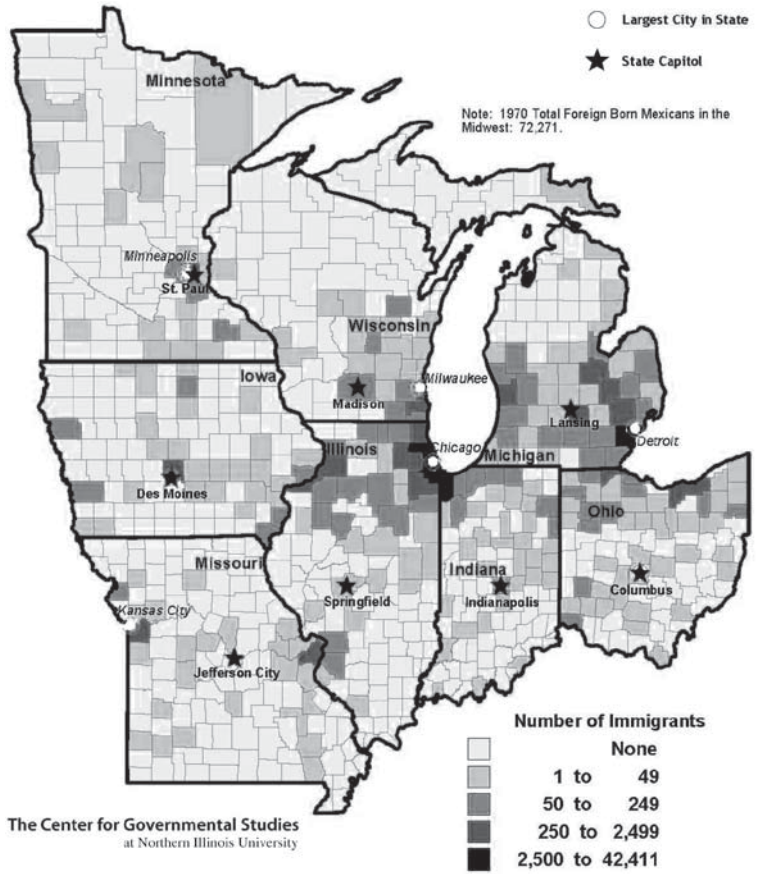


Figure 9d - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (1980)

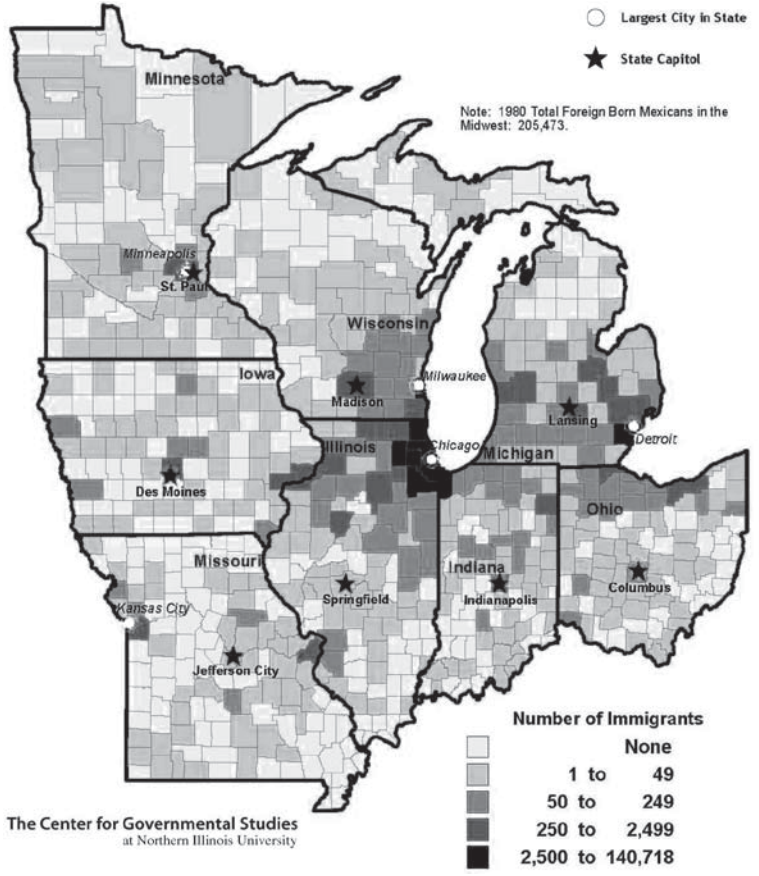


Figure 9e - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (1990)

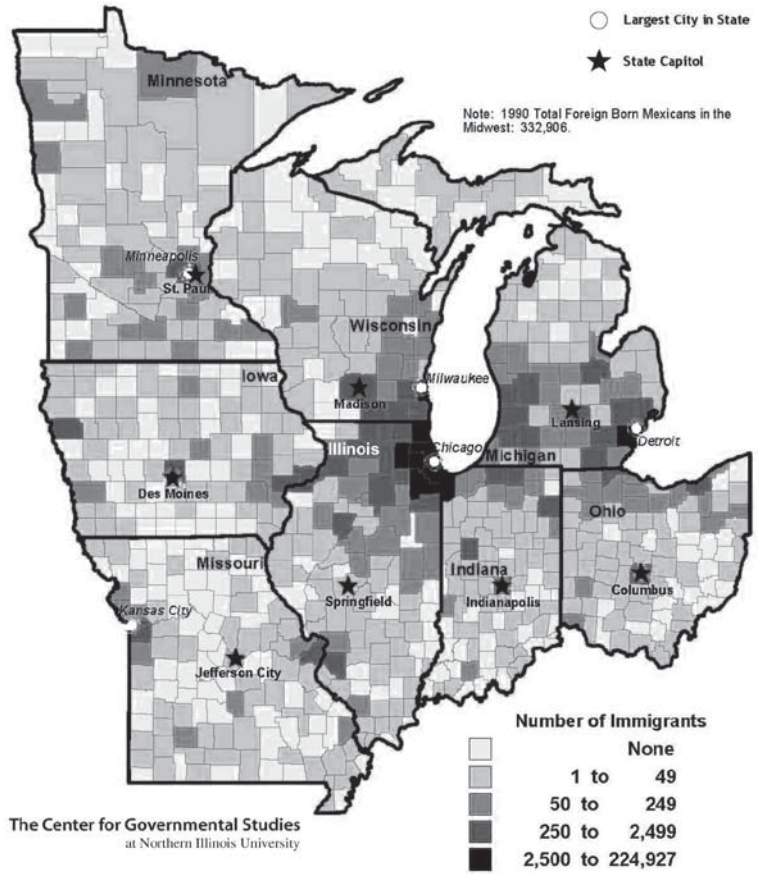
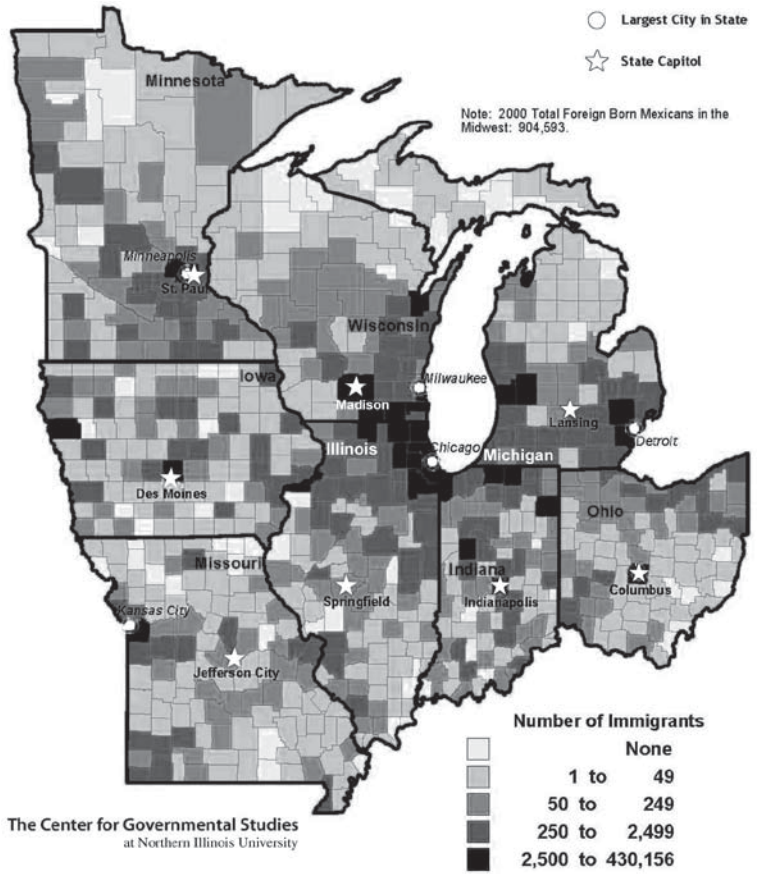


Figure 9f - Mexican Immigrants in Midwestern States (2000)



Summary: Mexican immigration represents demographic renewal and uncertain economic potential.

The population data in this section are important because they highlight the reason that Mexican immigration has taken on a major role in political and policy debates, both nationally and in the Midwest. Mexican immigrants are growing rapidly in number, even in locations with little or no growth of the native-born U.S. population.

The growth of the Mexican immigrant population raises the possibility that these persons may, to some extent, represent demographic renewal for many Midwestern communities that have stagnant or declining populations. Local and state policymakers need to recognize Mexican immigration as one of the primary demographic features of the new century, one that is likely to continue on an upward trend, involving a greater proportion of community populations as time goes by.

At the same time, the population growth of Mexican immigrants raises questions about their potential to represent not just demographic increase but new economic vitality. Whether the immigrants can contribute economically will depend on the skills they bring to the labor force, the types of jobs available to them, and whether they have access to the legal immigration status that would permit them to accept jobs commensurate with their abilities. The following sections of the report attempt to address these questions.

III. Profile of Mexican Immigrants

What are the characteristics of Mexican immigrants, the fast-growing group that is becoming such a presence in so many parts of the Midwest? The data in Figure 10 compare Mexican immigrants to the rest of the population in the Midwest in the 2005-06 period, as reported by the American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The following is a current snapshot of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest. The data describe Mexican immigrants as distinct from the general population along demographic, social, and economic lines.

- Mexican immigrants are largely males (58 percent), compared to 49 percent of everyone else. Mexican immigrants are mostly in their working years, with 86 percent of them between the ages of 18 and 64 years, compared to only 63 percent of others. As immigrants, only 50 percent speak English well.

- This largely male, working-age population has low levels of formal education, with 44 percent holding a high school diploma, compared to 88 percent of others. Only 6 percent of Mexican immigrants have a college degree, compared to 26 percent of others.

- Mexican immigrants are substantially more likely to be in the labor force than the rest of the population. Some 72 percent of Mexican immigrants are in the labor force—defined as working or seeking work—compared to 66 percent of others. Their unemployment rate is only 1 percent higher than the rest of the population: 8 percent compared to 7 percent.

- Despite high involvement in the labor force and an unemployment rate comparable to other residents, some 22 percent of Mexican immigrants live in poverty, compared to 12 percent of others.

More comprehensive data on the characteristics of Mexican immigrants compared to the total population by state can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 10 - Socioeconomic Characteristics of Mexican Immigrants and Others in the Midwest (2005-06)		
	Mexican foreign born	All other persons
Gender		
Male	57.6%	49.0%
Female	42.4%	51.0%
Age Group		
Under 18 years	10.6%	24.0%
18 to 44 years	67.2%	37.0%
45 to 64 years	18.7%	26.0%
65 years and over	3.5%	13.1%
Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English among Persons 5 Years and Over		
Speak English only, "very well" or "well"	50.4%	98.9%
Speak English "not well" or "not at all"	49.6%	1.1%
High School Graduates among Persons 25 Years and Over		
High school graduate or higher	44.3%	87.6%
Not high school graduate	55.7%	12.4%
Bachelor's Degree among Persons 25 Years and Over		
Bachelor's degree or higher	5.5%	25.8%
No bachelor's degree	94.5%	74.2%
Labor Force Participation (16 Years and Over)		
In labor force	72.4%	66.0%
Not in labor force	27.6%	34.0%
Employment of Civilian Labor Force (16 Years and Over)		
Employed	92.2%	92.9%
Unemployed	7.8%	7.1%
Poverty Rate		
Below poverty level	21.6%	12.2%
Source: American Community Survey.		

Summary: Mexican immigrants are productive but face challenges.

This brief overview of major social and economic characteristics of Midwestern Mexican immigrants suggests some of the challenges they face in becoming economically prosperous. Half do not speak English well, more than half lack a high school diploma, and only a small percentage have graduated from college.

On the other hand, the immigrants are more likely to be in the labor force than the rest of the population—either employed or actively seeking employment. Those in the labor force find employment at nearly the same rate as others. Thus, despite their disadvantages in language skills and formal education, Mexican immigrants are an important part of the workforce and are quite successful in terms of being in the workforce. Indeed, their high rate of labor force participation and employment suggests they are valuable to the economy: They seek and find jobs.

The *types* of jobs available to Mexican immigrants is critical to their long-term economic success. These jobs tell a story about the larger economy and reflect the substantial shifts taking place in the Midwest job market. The next section discusses the role of Mexican immigrants as workers in the Midwest.

IV. Mexican Immigrants in the Midwestern Labor Force

Mexican immigrants in the Midwestern labor force have grown considerably, and this growth is concentrated in industries that require low skills.

Mexican immigrants are a significant and growing portion of the Midwestern labor force. Yet this growth is concentrated in certain industries and occupations. The types of jobs held by Mexican immigrants have implications for the economic opportunities available to both immigrants and to the communities where they live. The pattern of Mexican immigrant employment is not a stand-alone phenomenon, but one that is intimately linked to and driven by the monumental long-term transformations in the Midwestern economic landscape. Employment is a significant determinant of how Mexican immigrants and their families will be integrated into the mainstream of American society.

The portion of Mexican immigrants in the labor force has tripled since 1990.

The Mexican immigrant portion of Midwestern workers has tripled since 1990, when Mexican immigrants were 0.8 percent of the labor force. By 2006 their share had increased to 2.5 percent (see Figure 11).[8]

Mexican immigrant employment is concentrated in a few industries.

As seen in Figure 12, Mexican immigrants in the Midwestern labor force are not evenly distributed across different industries. Thirty-one percent of Mexican immigrants are concentrated in manufacturing, and almost 26 percent are in the wholesale and retail trade.[9]

8. Up to this point, this report has combined American Community Survey data for 2005 and 2006. In this section we discuss historical industrial trends using Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). The most recent data period is simply 2006.

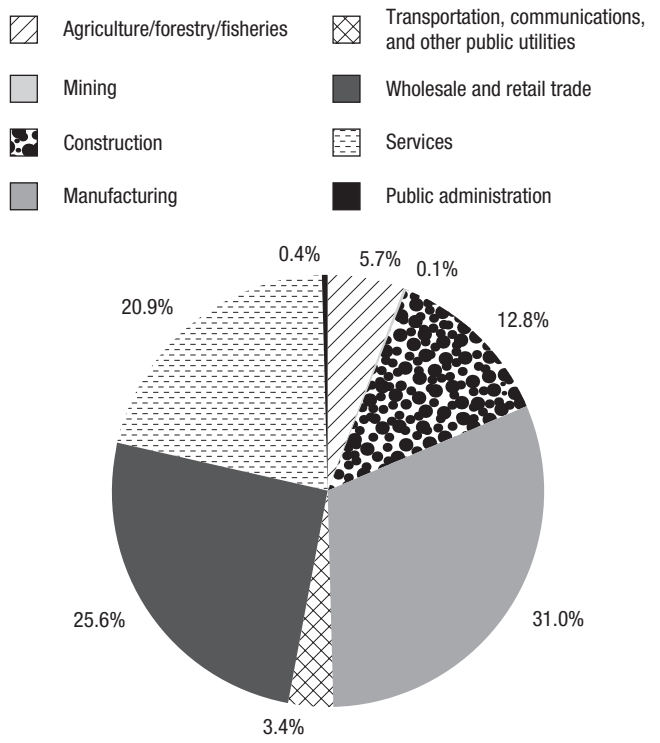
9. A large portion of Mexican workers in the retail trade are employed in eating and drinking establishments.

Figure 11 - Mexican Immigrant Percentage of Total Midwestern Labor Force

	1990	2000	2006
Total labor force	25,388,650	28,275,982	29,183,976
All persons except Mexican immigrants	25,187,724	27,800,324	28,465,818
Mexican immigrants	200,926	475,658	718,158
Mexican percent of Midwest labor force	0.8%	1.7%	2.5%

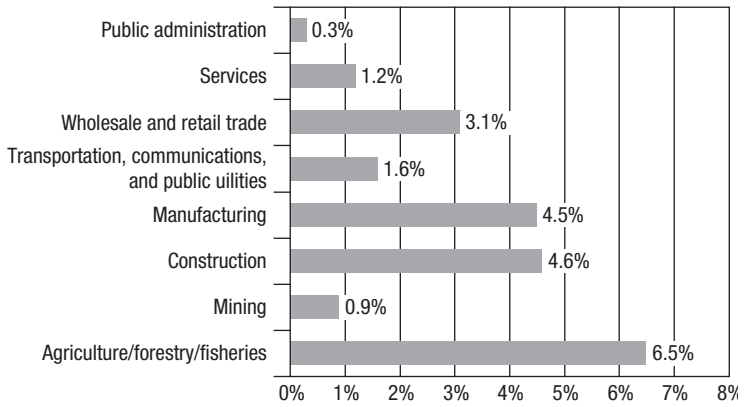
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

Figure 12 - Distribution of Mexican Immigrants in the Labor Force by Industry (2006)



Source: American Community Survey.

Figure 13 - Mexican Immigrant Percentage of Midwestern Workers by Industry (2006)



Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

Figure 14 - Impact of Mexican Immigrants on Sectors of the Midwestern Service Industry (2006)

	Total Midwestern labor force	Mexican-born Midwestern labor force	Mexican immigrant percentage of total Midwestern labor force
Total services	12,735,432	150,449	1.2%
Finance, insurance, and trade services	2,261,476	18,770	0.8%
Business and repair services	1,743,598	58,536	3.4%
Personal services	707,425	25,458	3.6%
Entertainment and recreation services	487,421	7,137	1.5%
Professional and related services	7,535,512	40,548	0.5%

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

While Figure 12 shows the industries in which Mexican immigrants work, Figure 13 shows their impact in these industries as a percentage of total workers. In some industries, Mexican immigrants constitute a disproportionate share of workers compared to their total share in the labor force. For example, Mexican immigrants are 6.5 percent of the agriculture/forestry/fisheries industry, but only 2.5 percent of the total Midwestern labor force. Mexican workers are

also overrepresented in the wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, and construction sectors.

Although the service industry employs 21 percent of all Mexican immigrants in the Midwest, Mexican immigrants are underrepresented in the service industry as a whole, accounting for only 1.2 percent of all persons employed in the service industry. While jobs that fall under the category of "services" include lower-skill workers such as busboys or waiters, they also include lawyers and medical doctors. Figure 14 shows that Mexican immigrants are overrepresented in personal services and business/repair services sectors of the service industry, yet underrepresented in higher paying, professional service sectors.

Mexican immigrant employment is concentrated in low-skill jobs.

Agriculture and the personal services sectors of the service industry are well known to include many jobs requiring little formal education. The overrepresentation of Mexican immigrants in these areas suggests that these immigrants are especially likely to be found in jobs that require low skill. Analysis of the U.S. Department of Labor data for the Midwest confirms that Mexican immigrants are overrepresented in jobs—regardless of industry—that can be classified as low skill.[10]

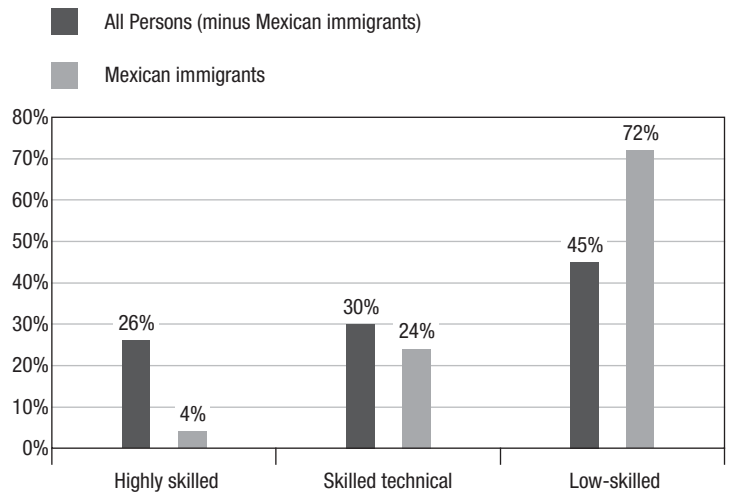
Nearly half of all Mexican immigrants hold jobs that require only short-term, on-the-job training, compared to only 25 percent of other Midwestern workers. Another 24 percent of Mexican workers are in jobs that require moderate-term, on-the-job training. Only 20 percent of other workers are in these jobs. As seen in Figure 15, the vast majority of Mexican immigrants (72%) are employed in low-skilled jobs.[11]

Some people argue that Mexican immigration is undesirable because it brings low-skilled workers to the Midwest. However, the

10. Data was developed using information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that describes the skill level needed to perform particular jobs. These skill definitions were then applied to the jobs held by Mexican immigrants and others in the 2006 American Community Survey.

11. An industry is categorized as "highly skilled" if workers require at least a bachelor's degree; as "skilled technical" if workers require long-term, on-the-job training, work experience in a related occupation, a postsecondary vocational award, or an associate's degree; and as "low-skill" if workers there require moderate-term on-the-job training or less.

Figure 15 - Skill Levels of Employed Person in the Midwest (2005-06)



Source: Author's calculations (see footnote 10).

concentration of Mexican immigrants in industries where low-skill labor is required is primarily driven by demand for that kind of labor. The Midwest economy—and, indeed, the U.S. economy—is creating large numbers of low-skill jobs that far exceed the number held by Mexican immigrants. This suggests that Mexican immigrants are not taking away jobs, but filling the large increases in demand for those jobs.

The growth in low-skill employment can be seen in the U.S. Department of Labor's projections for employment growth between 2000 and 2010. The Labor Department estimates that during this period almost 58 percent of job openings nationally will be for low-skilled workers who need only moderate or short-term, on-the-job training. Only 21 percent of all job openings will be for persons with a bachelor's degree (see Figure 16). Most jobs are expected to be created at these opposite extremes. New jobs that fall in between the extremes of high and low skill are estimated to be relatively few in number. This shows the emergence of a labor force that is splitting into two extremes in terms of skills.[12]

12. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "BLS Releases 2000-2010 Employment Projections: Occupations with the Largest Job Growth," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 2001. Available at www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.nr0.htm, January 23, 2002.

Figure 16 - U.S. Job Openings by Level of Education or Training (2000-10)

Training required	Number of openings (in thousands)	Percent of all openings
B.A. degree or higher	12,130	20.9%
Associate degree or vocational award	5,383	9.3%
Work experience in a related occupation	3,180	5.5%
Long-term, on-the-job training	3,737	6.5%
Moderate-term, on-the-job training	8,767	15.1%
Short-term, on-the-job training	24,735	42.7%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 17 - Occupational Wages in the East North Central Census Division (July 2006)

Occupation	Mean wage
Management, business and financial	$33.62
Registered nurses	$28.04
Construction laborers	$19.22
Transportation/material moving	$15.58
Building cleaning workers	$10.92
Home health aides	$9.96
Food preparation workers	$8.92
Dishwashers	$7.70
Waiters and waitresses	$3.58

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Occupational Wages in the East North Central Division*, July 2006 (East North Central Census Division includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin).

When jobs are relatively concentrated among high and low skills, wages are also extremely disparate. The manufacturing industry was traditionally defined by high wages, and low skilled workers could find employment there. But, as we will show later in this report, the number of manufacturing jobs in the Midwest has fallen sharply in recent years, with 555,000 fewer manufacturing jobs in 2006 than in 1990.

With the decline of manufacturing, low-skilled workers are increasingly pushed into the service industry and the hospitality sector of the wholesale and retail trade industry, where wages are usually lower than in manufacturing. As seen in Figure 17, in the new

Midwestern industrial landscape, there is massive disparity between wages of highly skilled and low-skilled workers.

Growth in Mexican immigrants in the Midwestern labor force continues a tradition of dramatic changes in the labor force in response to industrial transformation.

The last decade or so of employment in the United States and the Midwest is marked by the concentration of the labor force at the two extremes of the skills spectrum. However, the Midwest has a history of undergoing dramatic industrial transformation and responding with dramatic labor force changes. Therefore, the growth in Mexican immigrants in certain sectors of the economy should not be seen in isolation, but as part of the larger continuum of change that characterizes the Midwestern economy.

The service industry is the key employment growth sector for Midwesterners.

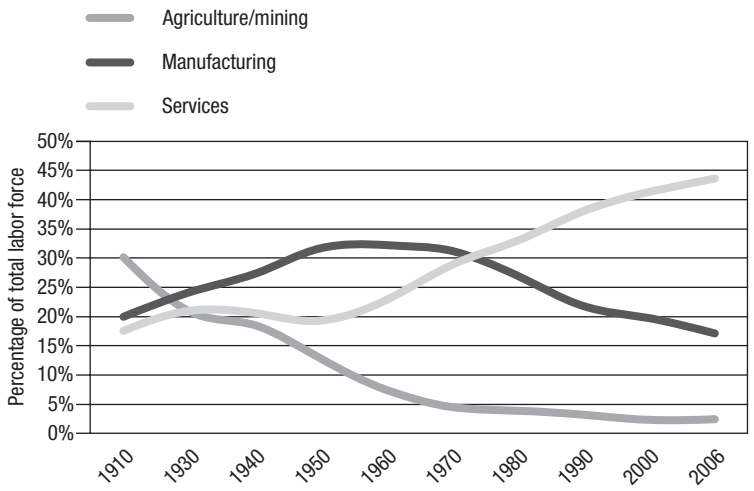
Changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and services industries are key to understanding transformations in the Midwestern economy. As seen in Figure 18, in 1910 nearly one-third of the Midwestern labor force was employed in agriculture. A century later in 2006, this industry employed only 2 percent of workers. Manufacturing rose precipitously through the 1950s and employed more than 30 percent of workers until 1970. In the 1970s manufacturing began a long descent and today employs only 17 percent of Midwesterners. The service industry began its rise in the 1950s and has not reached its peak yet. It currently accounts for 44 percent of all Midwestern workers.

Several industries are key employment growth sectors for Mexican immigrants.

Mexican immigrants have a different story to tell of their role in the Midwestern economy in the previous century. As seen in Figure 19, Mexican immigrants primarily entered the Midwest to work in railroad construction and maintenance. In 1910 this sector included more than half of all Mexican immigrants.

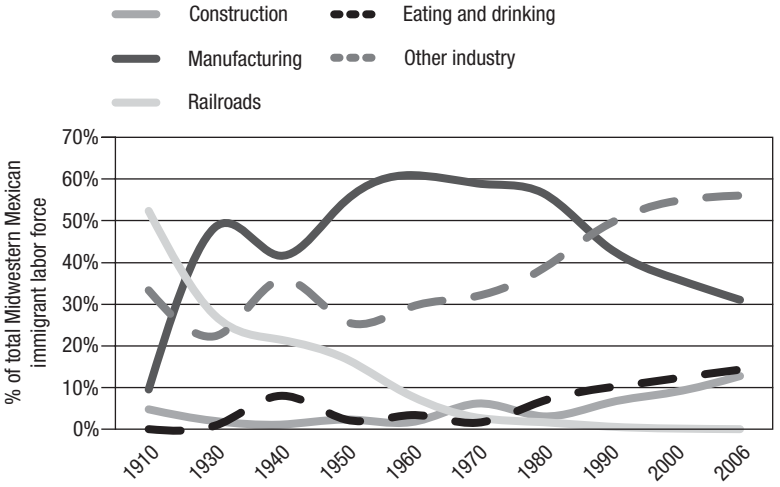
Over time, however, Mexican immigrants joined the manufacturing boom. In 1961, 61 percent of all Mexican immigrants worked

Figure 18 - Over Twentieth Century, Midwest Workers Shift Out of Agriculture, into/out of Manufacturing, and into Services



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

Figure 19 - Over Twentieth Century, Mexican Workers Shift from Railroads, into/out of Manufacturing, and into Other Industries



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

in manufacturing. In subsequent decades, the portion of all Mexican immigrants involved in manufacturing declined as they entered other industries such as service, construction, and the wholesale and retail trade industries. By 2006 only 31 percent of all Mexican immigrants were employed in manufacturing.

Manufacturing retains outsized importance for Mexican immigrants.

Although the proportion of Mexican immigrants employed in manufacturing has declined since the 1960s, manufacturing is still a far more important source of employment for Mexican immigrants than for Midwesterners overall. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 2006 only 17.1 percent of Midwesterners overall were employed in manufacturing, but 31 percent of Mexican immigrants were employed in the industry. As seen in Figure 20, throughout most of the last 100 years, the proportion of Mexican immigrants in manufacturing was 15 percentage points higher than Midwesterners overall, and was 30 points higher in 1960, 1970, and 1980.

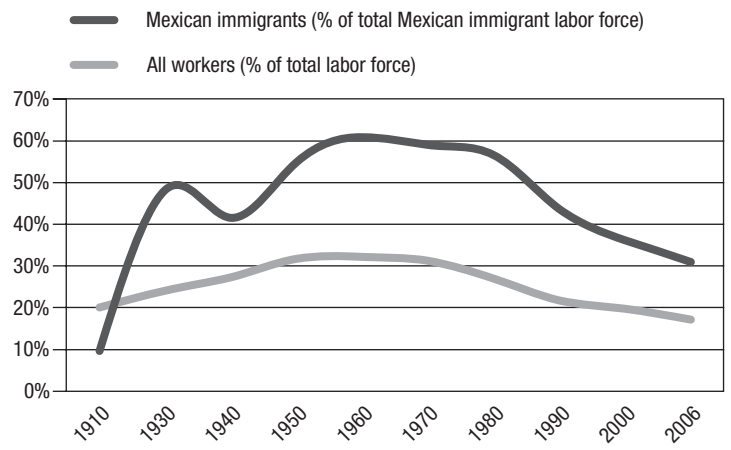
Mexican immigrants continue to gain manufacturing jobs.

In fact, Mexican immigrants have continued to gain jobs in manufacturing, while other Midwesterners have not. As seen in Figure 21, between 1990 and 2006 Mexican immigrants gained 134,999 jobs in manufacturing across the Midwest, while the remainder of the Midwest population lost 690,954 manufacturing jobs in the same period.

The growing number of Mexican workers and the declining numbers of other workers in manufacturing does not mean that Mexican immigrants are taking jobs from other workers. Job losses and gains in manufacturing vary by location and industry—not to mention pay scale—so that, for example, Mexican immigrants workers may gain jobs in meatpacking plants in Iowa at the same time that native-born workers lose steel-making jobs in Ohio. There is not a direct trade-off of jobs in this kind of scenario.

This suggests that manufacturing in the Midwest has come to rely increasingly on Mexican immigrants. Figure 22 shows that as recently as 1990, Mexican immigrants were 1.6 percent of Midwestern manufacturing workers, but today are 4.5 percent of the Midwestern manufacturing labor force. The growth in the share of Mexican immigrants

Figure 20 - Percent of Workers in Manufacturing: Midwestern States



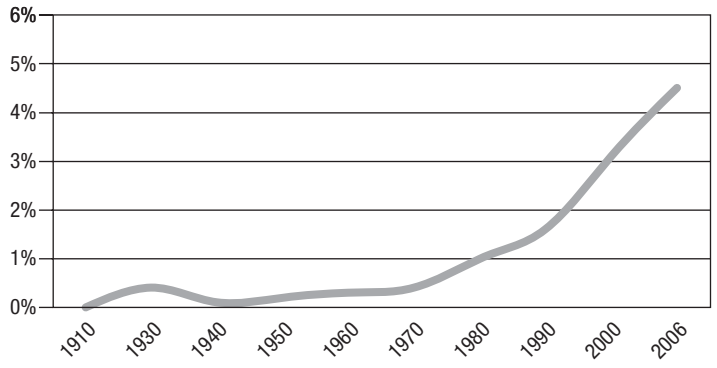
Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

Figure 21 - Change in Number of Manufacturing Workers between 1990 and 2006

	All workers (excluding Mexican immigrants)	Mexican immigrants	Numeric growth of all workers (excluding Mexican immigrants)	Numeric growth of Mexican immigrants
Midwest	-12.7%	153.8%	-690,954	134,999
Illinois	-25.6%	81.2%	-249,958	61,996
Indiana	-4.3%	1006.5%	-28.075	23,089
Iowa	3.4%	522.8%	7,985	8,202
Michigan	-13.6%	386.4%	-140,347	10,309
Minnesota	1.5%	1267.8%	6,001	8,900
Missouri	-17.2%	714.4%	-74,627	3,865
Ohio	-16.5%	674.7%	-188,238	5,006
Wisconsin	-4.1%	465.3%	-23,695	13,632

Source: IPUMS.

Figure 22 - Mexican Immigrant Portion of Midwest Manufacturing Workers



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

in manufacturing has occurred in all Midwestern states, including more than 1,000 percent increases in Indiana and Minnesota.[13]

Summary: Many of today's low-skilled jobs lack opportunity for advancement.

The data in this section offer some insight into the "why" of Mexican immigration in the region. A perfect confluence of factors has promoted immigration: (1) the availability of immigrants with low skills but high labor force participation and (2) large-scale creation of jobs that explicitly require only low levels of training and education. What would be surprising in this situation is the absence of immigration, not its growth.

The historical data show how Mexican immigrants have traditionally been a good fit for portions of the Midwestern labor market. They worked in railroads during the age of expansion in that industry. They became concentrated in manufacturing during the heyday of that sector of the economy. Now, they are shifting to service sector jobs—especially into low-skill jobs like restaurant and hotel workers and landscapers—as that portion of the labor market takes off.

The constant in all these historical periods is the availability of low-skill jobs. What is different today is that modern low-wage jobs

13. As implied in the table, the dramatic percentage increase in some states is the result of starting from a very low base. For example, Minnesota had only about 700 Mexican immigrant manufacturing workers in 1990.

do not offer opportunity for advancement to better paying positions within the same industry. Much has been written about the fact that manufacturing jobs often paid good wages and benefits to lower-skilled workers, some of whom could rise to better-paid positions based on the skills they learned on the job. The same is not true of much of low-skill service-sector work.

These trends suggest that Mexican immigrants—and indeed all Midwestern workers—are, on average, in a more precarious economic situation today. The next section of the report discusses recent trends indicating that Midwestern Mexican immigrant households are struggling economically.

V. Mexican Immigrants and Income Stability

The 1990s witnessed a sustained economic boom for the United States and its workers. Poverty rates fell, household incomes climbed, unemployment rates dropped into the low single digits, and households that owned stock enjoyed a long run-up in the value of those equities. Mexican immigrant households in the Midwest saw their incomes increase past the inflation rate, although their income growth was slower than that of other households. The current decade, however, has seen a reversal of the family prosperity of the 1990s, despite the fact that until at least 2006, there was robust economic growth nationally, as shown by increases in gross domestic product.

The question of how Mexican immigrants have fared during this time is relevant to policymakers. Economic downturn is likely to hit low-wage workers like Mexican immigrants especially hard in terms of rising unemployment or stagnant wages. Declining income of the general population will also limit tax payments and constrain the government's ability to provide support to the lowest paid workers.

Household income of Mexican immigrants and all Midwesterners has been declining.

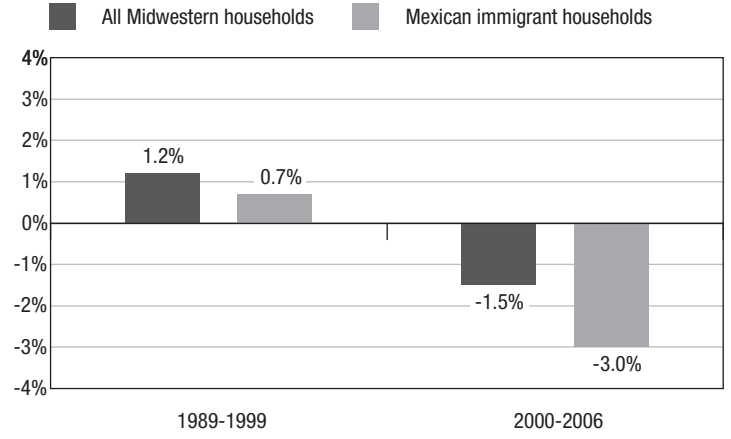
Household income levels in the Midwest experienced strong growth in the 1990s and have declined since 2000.[14] Among all Midwestern households, median household income rose from $46,633 in 1990 to $52,032 in 2000. This represented an annual average gain of 1.2 percent. (All income data in this report are adjusted for inflation.)

During the period between 2000 and 2005-06, however, median household income for the Midwestern population fell from $52,032 to $47,343. This decline wiped out many of the gains of the 1990s in just six years and represents an average annual decline of 1.5 percent.

Mexican immigrant households, however, enjoyed less growth in the 1990s and were hit harder by the declining income trend since 2000. Median Mexican immigrant household income was $43,311 in 1990; $46,285 in 2000; and $38,034 in the 2005-06 period. The decline meant that these households lost, on average, 3 percent of their income annually, double the losses of their other Midwestern neighbors (see Figure 23).

14. The source of data for this section is the American Community Survey, and survey data from years 2005 and 2006 are combined to reduce sampling variability.

Figure 23 - Average Annual Change in Household Income



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

Income declines for Mexican immigrants far outpace those of the overall population in every state. Incomes of Mexican immigrant households fell by double digits across all the Midwestern states except Missouri (see Figure 24). For example, the median income fell by almost one-third in Indiana.

The state-by-state data reveal disparate state trends among the overall population. Median income of all households in Michigan declined by more than 12 percent between 2000 and the 2005-06 period and by nearly 10 percent in Ohio. Minnesota had the lowest decline at 5 percent.

Poverty has increased for all Midwesterners, but especially for Mexican immigrants.

The federal poverty level measures how many persons are considered to have insufficient income to pay for their basic needs. Many federal and state safety net programs are pegged to the poverty level, and thus changes to the number of persons in poverty is a key indicator of the economic well-being of communities.

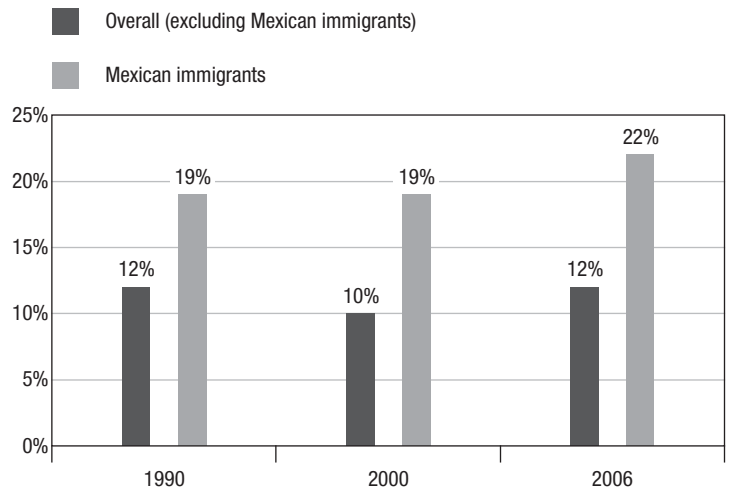
As suggested by the income declines discussed earlier, poverty is on the rise in the Midwest. For the general population, excluding Mexican immigrants, poverty fell during the booming 1990s, but by the 2005-06 period, the poverty rate of Midwesterners, exclud-

Figure 24 - Median Household Income Change in Midwestern States (2000 to 2005-06)

	Total population			Mexican immigrants		
	2000	2005-06	Percent change	2000	2005-06	Percent change
Midwest	$52,032	$47,343	-9.0%	$46,285	$38,034	-17.8%
Illinois	56,267	51,618	-8.3%	48,765	41,757	-14.4%
Indiana	49,878	45,279	-9.2%	44,167	31,393	-28.9%
Iowa	47,555	44,272	-6.9%	37,028	31,554	-14.8%
Michigan	54,089	47,343	-12.5%	47,192	35,034	-25.8%
Minnesota	56,703	53,655	-5.4%	39,448	35,217	-10.7%
Missouri	45,982	42,925	-6.6%	33,760	33,666	-0.3%
Ohio	49,128	44,296	-9.8%	41,142	31,393	-23.7%
Wisconsin	53,121	48,297	-9.1%	41,142	32,193	-21.8%

Note: "2005-2006" represent an average of the two-year period.
Source: Decennial Census of 2000; American Community Survey.

Figure 25 - Midwestern Poverty Rates



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

ing Mexicans, had returned to its 1990 level, when 12 percent of the population was below the poverty line.

Mexican immigrants in the Midwest share a somewhat similar trend. Poverty levels for these immigrants were the same throughout the 1990s, but 22 percent of Mexican immigrants were in poverty by the 2005-06 period, up 3 percentage points from 19 percent in 1990 (see Figure 25).

Poverty rates among Mexican immigrants were much higher than those of the overall population in 1990, 2000, and 2005-06. In the 2005-06 period, for example, the Mexican immigrant poverty rate of 22 percent was almost twice as high as the 12 percent rate for the rest of the population.

Poverty among the general population, excluding Mexican immigrants, has increased in most Midwestern states. The poverty rate for all residents who were not Mexican immigrants rose by 1.5 percentage points in Illinois from 1990 to 2006, for example, and was up by as much as 3.2 points in Michigan. Poverty rates among Mexican immigrants rose more rapidly than overall poverty rates in all states except Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri (see Figures 26 and 27).

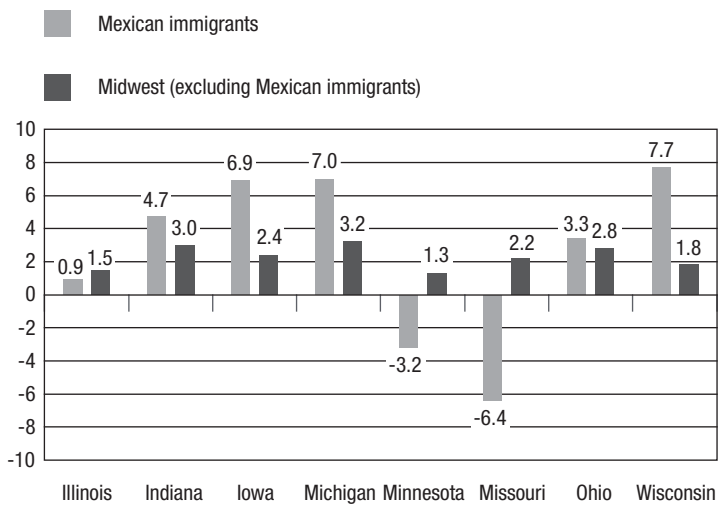
Summary: Mexican immigrant households are particularly vulnerable.

As discussed, Mexican immigrants have relatively low levels of formal education and are concentrated in the low-wage sectors of the Midwest economy. The region's economy is a powerful draw for low-skilled workers from Mexico because so many jobs created are low-skill jobs.

Yet the data in this section show that these Mexican immigrant workers holding low-skill jobs are particularly vulnerable, with low and declining household incomes and rising poverty rates. Since the 2008 recession is not reflected in this data, economic instability among Mexican immigrant households is probably much more severe than the numbers suggest.

The financial situation of Mexican immigrants is complicated by their low skill level and often "dead-end" job opportunities. Further complicating the situation is the substantial number of undocumented immigrants from Mexico. Undocumented status hampers the ability of Mexicans to move from job to job and limits a family's access to public assistance such as Medicaid, which helps working persons remain fit for work. The next section discusses undocumented immigration from Mexico.

Figure 26 - Point Change in Poverty Rates by State (2000-06)



Sources: Decennial censuses; American Community Survey.

Figure 27 - Change in Poverty Rates in Midwestern States (2000-06)

	Total population (excluding Mexican immigrants)			Mexican immigrants		
	2000	2005-06	Point change	2000	2005-06	Point change
Midwest	10.1%	12.4%	2.3	19.3%	21.6%	2.3
Illinois	10.6%	12.1%	1.5	17.3%	18.2%	0.9
Indiana	9.5%	12.5%	3.0	21.0%	25.7%	4.7
Iowa	9.0%	11.4%	2.4	19.0%	25.9%	6.9
Michigan	10.5%	13.7%	3.2	22.2%	29.2%	7.0
Minnesota	8.0%	9.3%	1.3	25.8%	22.5%	-3.2
Missouri	11.7%	13.9%	2.2	32.2%	25.8%	-6.4
Ohio	10.7%	13.5%	2.8	23.9%	27.2%	3.3
Wisconsin	8.6%	10.4%	1.8	23.8%	31.5%	7.7

Source: Decennial Census of 2000; American Community Survey.

VI. Immigration Trends

A large portion of foreign-born Mexicans in the Midwest are undocumented immigrants residing in violation of federal immigration law. This fact distinguishes Mexican immigration from earlier waves of immigration to the United States. The great immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included virtually no undocumented immigrants—simply because immigrants were not subject to quotas based on country, skills, and relatives, as they are today. Undocumented immigration also distinguishes Mexicans from most other modern immigrant groups. Mexico is physically close to the United States, and Mexican workers have a long history of being the principal source of labor for many low-skill jobs, particularly in agriculture. As a result, Mexicans are much more likely to be undocumented than most other immigrant groups.

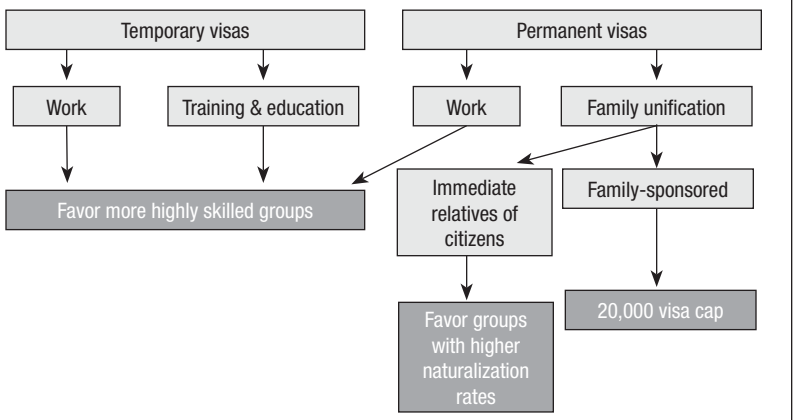
The modern immigration system in the United States has exacerbated the problem, as it leaves out the very type of worker needed for many jobs in the Midwest: immigrants without specialized training who want to work. Policymakers need to understand the limitations of the legal system as it pertains to Mexican immigrants. In an economy creating large numbers of low-skill jobs, many of which are filled by Mexican immigrants, the pressure is on, so to speak, to maintain the flow of immigrants. The current shortcomings of immigration law—resulting in a growing undocumented population—will only become magnified over time in the Midwest.

Current immigration system provides few entry points for Mexican immigrants.

While the system of admitting immigrants into the United States is complex, it may be described as generally covering—with different rules, limits, and categories—permanent immigrants on the one hand and temporary immigrants on the other. Within the system of permanent immigration, by which an individual obtains a "green card" and can live indefinitely in the United States, entrants are divided between those who are closely related to U.S. citizens—such as a spouse or minor child—and those who are not.

All of the major immigration pathways in effect discriminate against Mexican immigrants. As Figure 28 demonstrates, temporary visas for limited stays in the United States are available for persons who seek to work here or who come for specialized training and edu-

Figure 28 - Limited Legal Entry Points for Mexicans in Current Immigration System



cation. Nearly all these visas favor highly skilled immigrants. These include, for example, H1-B visas used widely in the computer industry to hire programmers for the short term. The training and education visas include J-1 visas, which are a major source of entry for foreign-trained, foreign-born doctors to come to the United States for clinical training. Clearly, these categories, nearly all of which require an immigrant to have a bachelor's degree or higher, do not fit the profile of the majority of Mexican immigrant workers.

There are two categories of temporary visas for low-skilled workers, but these categories are of limited value to Midwestern Mexican immigrants. The H2-A is a temporary visa for agricultural workers, but as explained previously, few Mexican workers in the Midwest are in agriculture. Another temporary visa can be used for seasonal work, but it is of little use to those in Midwestern manufacturing plants who are needed all year.

While a portion of permanent visas are reserved for highly skilled workers, regardless of whether they have family in the United States, few Mexican immigrants meet the educational requirements for them.

Casual observers of immigration policy are perhaps most aware of family-based immigration, a category of permanent immigration in which visas are awarded based on how an immigrant is related to a family member who lives in the United States and on whether that family member is a U.S. citizen. Unfortunately for Mexican immigrants, the easiest route for family-based immigration requires the

prospective immigrant to be petitioned by a spouse or parent who is a U.S. citizen. Undocumented Mexican immigrants lack relatives in the United States who are documented residents. Even fewer have relatives who are U.S. citizens, since only about one-quarter of Mexican immigrants to the United States are naturalized.

In theory, the legal immigration path most suitable for Mexican immigrants to come and live permanently in the United States is the one available to immigrants who are being petitioned by a family member who is not a close relative, but is a U.S. citizen. However, the number of visas for such persons is capped at 20,000 per year. The 20,000 cap is the same for Mongolia or Mozambique as it is for Mexico. It is not adjusted to suit the different volume of petitions for legal immigrant visas or for the fact that Mexico is neighbor to the United States.

Much of recent Mexican immigration is undocumented.

Undocumented migration is the inevitable outcome of a labor force hungry for low-skilled workers and a broken immigration system that largely ignores those workers. The scale and scope of unauthorized Mexican immigration, in fact, affects all Midwestern states.

Figure 29 presents estimates of the scope of undocumented Mexican immigration among recent Mexican immigrants to the Midwest. The table identifies the number of immigrants who reported to the American Community Survey that they came to the United States between 2001 and 2006. The table then compares the self-reported number of immigrant entries against an estimate of legal immigrant visas—both temporary and permanent—provided to Mexican immigrants during the same period.[15]

These estimates cover recent immigrants who have arrived since 2001. They should not be construed to apply to all Mexican immigrants regardless of when they arrived.

Figure 29 shows that nearly two-thirds of recent Mexican immigrants to the Midwest cannot be accounted for via the legal immigration process. Undocumented immigration, therefore, accounts for

15. The number of documented permanent residents is reported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The estimate of temporary residents includes students and exchange visitors, temporary workers, and diplomats and other representatives. It excludes transitory temporary visitors on tourist visas. We developed a national estimate of the percent of Mexican immigrants on temporary visas who are in categories that imply a long-term stay (e.g., students and exchange visitors) and applied this estimate to U.S. DHS data on total Mexican immigrants with temporary visas by Midwestern state.

Figure 29 - Approximation of Undocumented Mexican Immigration in Midwestern States between 2001 and 2005-06

	Number of Mexican immigrant arrivals per American Community Survey: 2001-06	Estimate of legal permanent and legal temporary immigrants (a)	Difference	Percent unaccounted for through legal immigration
Midwest	285,903	105,760	180,143	63%
Illinois	134,708	65,669	69,039	51%
Indiana	36,948	7,143	29,805	81%
Iowa	8,062	5,202	2,859	35%
Michigan	24,572	8,047	16,525	67%
Minnesota	23,676	4,482	19,194	81%
Missouri	13,173	3,844	9,328	71%
Ohio	18,078	3,750	14,328	79%
Wisconsin	26,688	7,623	19,065	71%

(a) See text for methodology
Note: "2005-06" represents an average of the two-year period.

the majority of Mexican entries. The percent of Mexican immigrants who cannot be accounted for through the legal immigration system represents more than half of recent immigrants in each state except for Iowa. This is a result of a legal immigration system, described above, that favors highly skilled immigrants for temporary visas and immigrants with close relatives who are U.S. citizens for permanent visas, of which neither category provides much opportunity for most Mexican immigrants.

Note that not all of the undocumented Mexican arrivals in a given year remain in the U.S. permanently. In fact, there are well-documented patterns of return migration of documented and undocumented Mexican immigrants over time. Historically, in fact, Mexican immigration had a more cyclical pattern, with workers coming to the United States seasonally, returning home, and migrating north again later. However, increased immigration control at the U.S.-Mexico border has interrupted the cycle. As a result, once a migrant has been able to cross the border, he or she is more likely to stay rather than risk interdiction at a subsequent re-entry.

It is important to note that the majority of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest are documented immigrants. The total Mexican immigrant population includes many persons who have been in the

United States for quite some time. Longer-term Mexican immigrants are more likely to be documented immigrants or to have become naturalized. These persons arrived prior to policy changes since the 1990s that have made it harder to adjust status from undocumented to documented immigrant. Some were able to acquire legal status through the "amnesty" provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Summary: Immigration laws impede legal access to needed labor.

The lack of legal immigration status clearly limits the job opportunities for Mexican immigrants and is a critical factor in their low incomes and high poverty rates. The lack of legal avenues available to these immigrants is ironic given the need for these workers. While the Midwestern economy has created large numbers of jobs for low-skilled workers, a primary source of workers for those jobs—persons from Mexico—have little access to legal employment.

Up to this point, this report has described Midwestern Mexican immigration using statistics. The next section provides an on-the-ground description of how two local Midwestern areas have reacted to the arrival of Mexican immigrants.

VII. Integrating Immigrants: Local Snapshots in Iowa and Illinois

Hundreds of communities across the Midwest are experiencing growing immigrant populations, often fueled by increases in the Mexican immigrant population. To understand some of the dynamics as they involve local policymakers and the immigrant community, the authors of this report spent time in Marshalltown, Iowa, and Waukegan, Illinois, two Midwestern cities that are grappling with the effects of new immigration from Mexico.

Marshalltown, Iowa

Marshalltown, Iowa, is the county seat of Marshall County, about 60 miles northeast of Des Moines in the east central portion of the state. Marshalltown's population remained steady during the 1990s, but the native, mostly white, population departed and was replaced to a significant degree by immigrants and a Latino, mostly Mexican population. The number of foreign-born persons in Marshalltown rose by more than 500 percent from 1990 to 2000. Many of the Latino immigrants had children born in town, so during the same period the overall Latino population (native- and foreign-born together) increased by more than 1,000 percent. Of the 2,400 immigrants in Marshalltown in the year 2000, more than half had arrived in just the last ten years (see Figure 30).

Marshalltown is located squarely within corn-producing country, but it has a long history as home to substantial manufacturing firms. These include Emerson Process Management/Fisher Controls, which employs 3,700 persons worldwide; the Marshalltown Company, which makes a famous line of high-quality hand tools; Lennox Manufacturing, which was headquartered in Marshalltown for decades; and other manufacturing companies.

In the last few decades, the number of manufacturing jobs in Marshalltown has declined. Local firms moved part of their operations to southern states like Arkansas and to some extent abroad, including to Mexico. But many of the white-collar jobs related to these industries have remained in Marshalltown. As a result, Marshalltown may have experienced economic downturn, but it has not gone through the scale and scope of job losses that have taken place in some other Midwestern cities. The downtown and nearby

Figure 30 - Key Facts about Marshalltown, Iowa

	1990	2000	Percent change
Total population	25,178	26,032	3%
Foreign-born	394	2,387	506%
Percent of foreign-born who arrived in the last ten years	31%	58%	–
Foreign-born in Mexico	53	1,849	3389%
Hispanic or Latino (including foreign-born in Mexico)	291	3,254	1018%

Source: Decennial Censuses.

neighborhoods are situated around a healthy business district, and most of the housing, while not luxurious, is well maintained.

One major change has been the arrival of a meatpacking plant owned by JBS Swift and Company. The facility, located on the edge of town, where homes give way to cornfields, processes thousands of hogs a day for consumers. The plant employs large numbers of immigrants, primarily from Mexico. The bumper stickers on cars parked in the employee parking lot attest to the home states of Jalisco, Michoacan, and other places in Mexico. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raided the JBS Swift facility in December 2007, and numerous employees were detained and removed from the United States for working without legal authorization.

Civic leaders in Marshalltown who were interviewed for this report describe Mexican immigration as growing quickly in the 1990s and recall early experiences that were difficult for both the town residents and the immigrants. As recalled by town residents, the early Mexican immigrants were primarily young males without spouses or children, and there were numerous reports of public drinking, careless driving, and loud music. Residents say that Marshalltown now includes many wives and children of the original immigrants and report that the Mexican immigrant community has transformed itself somewhat into a more settled and stable population.

The civic leaders and native-born residents interviewed for this report included the mayor of Marshalltown, two school principals, employees of the local library, the head of the local chamber of commerce, the director of a philanthropic foundation, and others. These residents of Marshalltown admitted to seeing tension due to the arrival of Mexican immigrants, but they all said that the number of native-born residents who are extremely angry about immigration and upset with the immigrants themselves is relatively small.

Representatives of the immigrant community were also interviewed for this report. They included a group of a half-dozen students at a local adult education center who were at the site to take English classes, and a director of programs from the site. An undocumented immigrant was also interviewed at length in her home.

The immigrants concurred with the natives about Marshalltown being a place with relatively low tensions among different groups. They described liking Marshalltown quite a bit as a place to live. Many of the interviewees said that, frankly, they would rather not have had to leave their home country, and they miss Mexico. But life was better in Marshalltown, and it gave them an opportunity to offer their children a better future.

Marshalltown provides examples of steps that civic leaders can take to integrate immigrant communities. For example, in the 1990s groups of Marshalltown civic leaders, public servants, and others began taking organized trips to Mexico to better understand life there. These visits were funded through private foundation grants.

Some of the visits were to Villachuato, a small town in the Mexican state of Michoacan that is home to a large percentage of the Marshalltown immigrants. Every interviewee from the native-born population of Marshalltown said that their eyes were opened to the lives of Mexican immigrants by visiting their home towns. The visitors understood better the basic human nature of the immigrants, including their motivations and struggles.

Other institutional efforts have helped integrate immigrants into Marshalltown. The town library, for example, has assiduously reached out to immigrants. The children's librarian maintains a large collection of Spanish-language books and runs programs to regularly bring in children from the local schools. She finds that the way to bring parents to the library is to give their children a library card. This leads the parents to accompany the child on future visits. The need for this kind of outreach was clear to the children's librarian after visiting small towns in Mexico and understanding that libraries there have nowhere near the resources of American libraries, and the community does not see libraries as a place to go on a regular basis.

The school system in Marshalltown has also reorganized itself in a way that fosters immigrant integration. Elementary schools in the community used to feed into different junior high schools, which fed into one high school. The elementary schools were neighborhood based, so the segregated white and Mexican communities were mostly in different schools until high school. This arrangement was changed so that all students are in one school for grades five and six and then move together to another school for grades seven and eight. As a result, native-born children and immigrant children are in the same school beginning no later than fifth grade. The children grow up with one another in the same classrooms and the community is less divided socially.

Waukegan, Illinois

Waukegan is a city in Lake County, Illinois, about an hour's drive north of Chicago. Situated on the shore of Lake Michigan, the city has traditionally had a large manufacturing base, although jobs in manufacturing have declined as they have in many other Midwestern cities. At the same time that the industrial base has changed, Waukegan has acquired a growing immigrant population. Unlike Marshalltown, Waukegan's immigrants are not attracted primarily to one employer. Some immigrant residents, in fact, may live in Waukegan and work in any one of numerous locations in the metropolitan Chicago area.

In 2000 Waukegan was home to 27,000 immigrants, most from Mexico. Immigrants comprise about 30 percent of the entire population, and their number in 2000 had risen 148 percent over the previous decade. As with Marshalltown, the majority of immigrants are relatively new arrivals, having come to the United States in the last ten years (see Figure 31).

Civic leaders, public employees, and community advocates from both the native-born and immigrant populations were interviewed about the impact of Mexican immigration in Waukegan. The interviews of native-born residents and leaders told a different story than the interviews with persons representing the immigrant community.

Figure 31 - Key Facts about Waukegan, Illinois

	1990	2000	Percent change
Total population	69,392	87,969	27%
Foreign-born	10,730	26,556	148%
Percent of foreign-born who arrived in the last ten years	44%	55%	–
Foreign-born in Mexico	6,310	19,039	202%
Hispanic or Latino (including foreign-born in Mexico)	15,755	39,706	152%

Source: Decennial Censuses.

City government representatives had a generally positive view of immigrants in their area and felt that the local government was taking active steps to be receptive. They expressed concern that undocumented immigrants are victimized by crimes and are afraid to report them to police. Many immigrants lack bank accounts and carry large sums of cash on payday, making them targets for robbery.

The town representatives noted that traffic-related offenses were the largest problem for the town government. Many individuals drive without licenses, and there is too much driving under the influence of alcohol. The city has instituted roadside sobriety and seat belt checkpoints that seem to have reduced driving problems. In some cases, immigrants stopped for minor traffic violations are not ticketed but sent to a local community center for renewed instruction on rules of the road. The city has also distributed a free DVD in English and Spanish for immigrants that explains local ordinances and parking rules.

The city has taken a strong stance on driving under the influence and driving without a license. Drivers found to be in violation of these rules receive an additional $500 fine when stopped, and their cars are seized. The city also attempted to enter into a formal agreement with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency of the Department of Homeland Security. The federal agency trains and supervises local police officers in immigration enforcement.

Representatives of the immigrant community in Waukegan have a far less benevolent interpretation of city policies that affect immigrants. Individuals from the public education system, an immigrant-rights group, and others see the city's tough stance on drivers as harsh and directed at undocumented immigrants. These interviewees cited fines of $1,000 for a person driving without a license and without insurance, plus towing charges of about $200 and extremely high vehicle storage fees that are excessive for the typical low-wage immigrant worker who can only get to work by driving.

The undocumented immigrants have no ability to secure drivers' licenses. Efforts to provide licenses to immigrants, in fact, have failed in the Illinois state legislature. The lack of licenses has a cascading effect, according to those interviewed. Without a license, a driver cannot get a city vehicle tag; without a vehicle tag, a driver cannot park on some streets overnight; and without a city vehicle tag, a nonresident fee has to be paid to use the city's beaches.

The tough driving-related penalties and the city's willingness to work with ICE represent, for the immigrant leaders, a wedge between the city and its immigrants. They believe that immigrants

have moved away from the city, finding it hostile. The willingness of the city to work with ICE, the immigrant representatives claim, has led to adult students staying away from the community college, which they say is near a police substation.

Regardless of whether Waukegan's policies on driving and on cooperating with ICE represent an overbearing stance toward immigrants, the fact is that the interviews make it clear that such a perception exists. The situation vis-à-vis these immigrants and their local government is likely to be found in other parts of the Midwest, where police chiefs, mayors, and city councils try to develop and enforce policies involving newcomers. The immigrants may see the policies as hampering their integration into the community rather than as an attempt to create a shared understanding of acceptable behavior in the community.

Summary: Marshalltown and Waukegan offer lessons in immigrant relations.

These descriptions of Marshalltown, Iowa, and Waukegan, Illinois, offer a spectrum of options for Midwestern policymakers. As seen in Marshalltown, communities can take steps such as visits to the home communities to understand the causes of immigration and the cultures that the immigrants come from. The community has attempted to communicate with and integrate immigrants by finding ways to introduce them to the library system, for example, and to create relationships with native-born populations by changing school systems that are segregated by race or place of birth.

Waukegan has also taken steps to communicate with immigrants. It has produced electronic media in English and Spanish to educate immigrants on local ordinances and works with local community groups to educate first-time offenders of some minor traffic violations.

The information obtained from interviews in Waukegan highlight the importance of both substance and perception. The decision to sign a memorandum of agreement with ICE is the prerogative of a community's leadership. It may be detrimental, however, to human relations in that same community. Waukegan, where immigrants are 30 percent of the population, is a community whose every action involving immigrants will potentially have a large-scale impact, and the implications of immigrant-related policies require local policymakers to proceed with subtlety and discretion.

VIII. Recommendations

This report describes a Mexican immigrant population that has complex meanings for the Midwest. On the one hand, Mexican immigrants represent population growth for a region that is experiencing outright population decline in many local areas and fairly modest growth in most other areas. Mexican immigrants participate in the labor force at high rates, and they are an increasingly important share of the workforce in the service sector—even in manufacturing, the mainstay of the regional economy for many decades.

At the same time, the economic status of Mexican immigrants is weak. Recently, their household incomes have sharply declined, and measures of that income decline presented in this report do not include the recession of 2008. Their poverty rates are substantially higher than the remainder of the population, and those rates are rising. Mexican workers are disproportionately employed in the low-wage sector of the economy, where benefits are minimal and where there are few opportunities for long-term advancement.

The 2008 recession and subsequent hard economic times may substantially temper Mexican immigration, at least in the short term, but the long-term forecast has to be that Mexican immigration will be a continued feature of the Midwest. The data presented in this report on the types of jobs being created in the American economy—disproportionately low-skill jobs, paying low wages—is precisely the type of employment suited to the skills that the immigrants bring and is precisely the type of employment that native-born U.S. workers are not likely to base their careers on.

Reform immigration laws at the federal level.

With Mexican immigration a fairly permanent part of the landscape, considerable thinking is required to address how to best leverage the contributions of these immigrants. One policy solution that is crucial—and which would liberate many Mexican workers to contribute more fully to local economies—is immigration reform. As this report shows, substantial majorities of Mexican immigrants arriving in a given year in the Midwest are undocumented. Because they are unauthorized immigrants, they are limited in the types of employment they are able to find. They either need to find an employer willing to ignore their illegal status, or they need to risk the use of fraudulent identification. Either way, their mobility in the labor market is constrained, and as a result they are unable to fully leverage the skills they have.

Immigration reform needs to address undocumented migration comprehensively. This means developing a new system of immigrant visas that is based less on family connections and more on the types of workers needed, including low-skilled workers. It means offering a way for many of the undocumented immigrants already in the Midwest to obtain legal status. It also means having the federal government develop workable immigration control policies—at the border and in the interior of the United States—for persons who do not meet the requirements of a reformed system.

Focus on immigrant integration at the local and state levels.

Across the United States, including the Midwest, local and state policymakers have attempted to control immigration by using laws designed to make life more difficult for undocumented immigrants. These attempts include restrictive zoning laws that have sought to limit the number of persons in a housing unit, cooperative agreements whereby local police work with U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement, restrictions on day-labor gathering areas, and unwillingness to allow undocumented immigrants to legally drive a motor vehicle.

Although such policies are directed at immigration control, they often directly contradict the duties of elected officials to promote economic development, public health, and safety. For example, police departments need to be in communication with the entire community in order to promote public safety, but they lose communication with immigrants if these persons are afraid to talk to the police for fear of deportation. A county hospital is often judged by its ability to deliver healthy babies, but the hospital will have a hard time reaching immigrant women if they are discouraged from using the public health system because of their legal status. Local leaders are tasked with developing a competitive labor force, but this means teaching immigrants to speak English, and some of those immigrants are undocumented.

Communities that institute their own immigration control sometimes unknowingly trade reduced immigration for the economic development that it allows. Control efforts can also alienate large segments of the immigrant-related population: the U.S.-citizen chil-

dren, siblings, cousins, and other relatives of the immigrants who are growing in number.

Immigration control is best left to the federal government. State and local governments can more effectively focus on immigrant integration as an economic development tool for their local economies. Immigration integration means allowing immigrants to work to their fullest capacity, while providing them with access to the public health, education, and safety services necessary to thrive economically.

Within the Midwest, the state of Illinois provides one example of how immigrant integration can be used to actively leverage contributions of immigrants. The state has opened an immigrant welcoming center in the Chicago suburb of Melrose Park that is convenient to many of the new arrivals. The immigrants can visit the center to get basic information on services and opportunities available to them. The state has undertaken other initiatives to promote immigrant integration, including spending $5.5 million annually on education, outreach, and application assistance to help documented immigrants naturalize. A comprehensive review is under way among state agencies to determine how to improve their ability to communicate effectively with clients who do not speak English well. These are just some examples of steps that can be taken to make a state or locality a place that supports the capacity of immigrants, including Mexican immigrants, to contribute economically and integrate socially.

Establish a Midwestern think tank for regional analysis and information sharing.

Finally, while growing numbers of Midwestern communities are receiving increasing numbers of immigrants from Mexico and from other parts of the world, there is no institution devoted to either sharing information on how to integrate immigrants or supplying a regional voice on immigration reform. As Richard Longworth explains, there is a lack of significant Midwestern-focused policy analysis on a number of pressing issues in the region.[16] An institute that does this needs to be established, or existing regional efforts need to place immigration more squarely on their agenda. Given the difficulty that state governments will have in funding an interstate effort, support from the philanthropic community will be the key in creating a Midwestern think tank.

16. Longworth, 2008.

In the 1960s, 1970s, and perhaps even up to the 1980s, Mexican immigration in the Midwest could be seen as essentially an Illinois issue or even a metropolitan Chicago issue, given the concentration of the immigrants in those areas. Today, Mexican immigration has broken far beyond those boundaries and is now a regional fact. The time has come to think about Mexican immigration from a Midwestern perspective.

Data Sources

Except as otherwise noted, the data sources in this report include:

IPUMS-USA. The Integrated Public Use Microdata set of decennial census data provided by the Minnesota Population Center (www.ipums.org) was the source of microdata from decennial censuses:

Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2004.

Most major decennial reports are also available in PDF format from the Census Bureau Web site (www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/index.htm).

American Community Survey. The source of data for periods labeled "2006." Note that "2006" data actually represent an average of 2005 and 2006 survey microdata records. This averaging was done to increase sample size. The 2005 microdata excluded records of persons in group quarters, while such persons were included in the 2006 data. To estimate characteristics of the persons in group quarters in 2005, the 2006 group quarter records were read in twice.

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Appendix: Snapshot of Mexican Foreign Born in the Midwest by State

Years in the U.S. for the Foreign Born

		0 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 to 20 years	21 or more years	Total
Illinois	Mexican foreign born	18.9%	21.8%	15.9%	13.6%	29.8%	714,129
	All Immigrants	19.2%	19.5%	15.3%	11.3%	34.7%	1,745,902
Indiana	Mexican foreign born	37.4%	23.8%	14.5%	9.2%	15.0%	98,712
	All Immigrants	33.3%	19.3%	12.7%	8.5%	26.1%	255,116
Iowa	Mexican foreign born	24.8%	27.0%	12.9%	18.9%	16.4%	32,563
	All Immigrants	28.6%	26.4%	11.4%	12.3%	21.4%	111,126
Michigan	Mexican foreign born	28.8%	31.0%	14.9%	8.7%	16.5%	85,224
	All Immigrants	23.9%	20.6%	13.3%	8.4%	33.9%	613,723
Minnesota	Mexican foreign born	35.9%	25.3%	14.4%	10.9%	13.5%	65,948
	All Immigrants	27.2%	23.2%	14.7%	10.6%	24.2%	340,041
Missouri	Mexican foreign born	32.4%	29.0%	12.9%	12.6%	13.1%	40,619
	All Immigrants	28.5%	23.5%	13.2%	8.2%	26.6%	198,107
Ohio	Mexican foreign born	3.5%	29.5%	6.1%	7.9%	13.0%	41,602
	All Immigrants	25.5%	19.5%	10.8%	7.9%	36.3%	405,508
Wisconsin	Mexican foreign born	33.6%	29.1%	13.8%	7.6%	15.9%	79,407
	All Immigrants	25.5%	20.5%	13.5%	8.6%	31.9%	232,180

Age Group

		Under 18 years	18 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	65 years and over	Total
Illinois	Mexican foreign born	9.2%	65.2%	21.3%	4.4%	714,129
	Total population	25.3%	38.4%	24.4%	11.9%	12,798,741
Indiana	Mexican foreign born	12.0%	71.3%	14.2%	2.6%	98,712
	Total population	25.3%	37.4%	24.9%	12.3%	6,286,761
Iowa	Mexican foreign born	9.3%	71.0%	16.9%	2.8%	32,563
	Total population	23.1%	36.8%	25.5%	14.7%	2,967,211
Michigan	Mexican foreign born	13.9%	68.1%	15.8%	2.1%	85,224
	Total population	24.6%	37.1%	25.9%	12.4%	10,104,184
Minnesota	Mexican foreign born	12.0%	73.5%	13.4%	1.1%	65,948
	Total population	24.2%	38.2%	25.5%	12.1%	5,135,978
Missouri	Mexican foreign born	14.1%	69.8%	13.6%	2.5%	40,619
	Total population	24.2%	37.2%	25.3%	13.3%	5,821,196
Ohio	Mexican foreign born	15.1%	69.4%	13.4%	2.0%	41,602
	Total population	24.1%	36.6%	26.0%	13.2%	11,466,190
Wisconsin	Mexican foreign born	13.0%	69.8%	15.1%	2.1%	79,407
	Total population	23.7%	37.2%	26.0%	13.1%	5,559,066

Educational Attainment for Persons 25 Years and Over

		Less than 9th grade	9th to 12th grade, not high school graduate	High school graduate, no college completed	High school graduate, no bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher	Total 25 years and over
IL	Mexican foreign born	39.0%	15.5%	29.8%	10.9%	4.8%	562,670
	Total population	6.6%	8.3%	28.7%	27.6%	28.8%	8,307,163
IN	Mexican foreign born	40.3%	17.8%	27.4%	9.4%	5.1%	72,018
	Total population	4.6%	10.4%	37.1%	26.6%	21.3%	4,076,169
IA	Mexican foreign born	47.3%	20.7%	19.8%	8.0%	4.2%	23,573
	Total population	4.2%	6.9%	36.1%	29.0%	23.8%	1,965,417
MI	Mexican foreign born	42.5%	20.4%	21.1%	8.2%	7.8%	61,178
	Total population	3.8%	9.3%	32.1%	30.3%	24.6%	6,632,672
MN	Mexican foreign born	33.7%	22.4%	26.9%	8.0%	9.0%	47,962
	Total population	3.9%	5.6%	28.6%	31.5%	30.3%	3,384,473
MO	Mexican foreign born	37.6%	13.8%	32.9%	9.4%	6.4%	28,899
	Total population	5.2%	10.1%	33.8%	27.1%	23.8%	3,828,733
OH	Mexican foreign born	31.1%	16.3%	33.0%	9.6%	10.0%	29,014
	Total population	3.7%	10.4%	36.9%	26.1%	22.9%	7,589,815
WI	Mexican foreign born	34.7%	22.5%	27.8%	9.6%	5.5%	55,172
	Total population	4.1%	7.6%	34.1%	28.9%	25.3%	3,677,804

Labor Force Participation for Persons 16 Years and Over

		In labor force	Not in labor force	Total 16 years and over
Illinois	Mexican foreign born	71.8%	28.2%	664,278
	Total population	66.3%	33.7%	9,930,656
Indiana	Mexican foreign born	73.9%	26.1%	88,583
	Total population	65.8%	34.2%	4,874,432
Iowa	Mexican foreign born	79.3%	20.7%	30,204
	Total population	68.7%	31.3%	2,362,513
Michigan	Mexican foreign born	71.6%	28.4%	75,646
	Total population	63.8%	36.2%	7,925,009
Minnesota	Mexican foreign born	75.9%	24.1%	59,925
	Total population	71.0%	29.0%	4,040,623
Missouri	Mexican foreign born	74.5%	25.5%	35,642
	Total population	34.8%	65.2%	4,579,645
Ohio	Mexican foreign born	71.5%	28.5%	36,119
	Total population	64.9%	35.1%	9,026,404
Wisconsin	Mexican foreign born	70.5%	29.5%	70,907
	Total population	68.8%	31.2%	4,406,146

Skill Level

		Highly Skilled	Skilled Technical	Low skill	Total
Midwest Total	Mexican foreign born	4.1%	23.5%	72.4%	607,802
	Total all population groups	25.3%	29.5%	45.3%	24,660,118

		Highly Skilled	Skilled Technical	Low skill	Total
Illinois	Mexican foreign born	3.5%	24.5%	72.0%	387,520
	Total population	27.4%	28.4%	44.2%	5,228,660
Indiana	Mexican foreign born	2.3%	23.3%	74.5%	48,804
	Total population	21.8%	30.5%	47.7%	2,549,870
Iowa	Mexican foreign born	2.8%	28.5%	68.7%	17,937
	Total population	24.0%	30.1%	45.9%	1,285,290
Michigan	Mexican foreign born	6.3%	16.2%	77.5%	40,256
	Total population	25.5%	29.2%	45.4%	3,925,584
Minnesota	Mexican foreign born	8.5%	20.7%	70.7%	35,644
	Total population	28.6%	29.4%	42.0%	2,291,840
Missouri	Mexican foreign born	6.4%	21.4%	72.2%	20,954
	Total population	24.6%	29.5%	45.9%	2,347,790
Ohio	Mexican foreign born	10.0%	22.5%	67.5%	19,990
	Total population	24.3%	29.5%	46.2%	4,631,057
Wisconsin	Mexican foreign born	2.5%	22.9%	74.6%	36,700
	Total population	24.1%	30.7%	45.2%	2,400,028

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