

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED  
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION



IMPROVING US AND EU IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS

# Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States

By Kate Brick, A. E. Challinor, and  
Marc R. Rosenblum



European  
University  
Institute

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies



*mpi*  
MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

---

# MEXICAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Kate Brick  
A. E. Challinor  
Marc R. Rosenblum

June 2011



## Acknowledgments

This paper has been produced in cooperation with the Pilot Projects on Transatlantic Methods for Handling Global Challenges in the European Union and the United States, a project funded by the European Commission. The project is conducted jointly by the Migration Policy Institute and the European University Institute. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

© 2011 Migration Policy Institute.  
All Rights Reserved.

Cover Photo: Modified version of “American Flag” (104660440) and “Flag of the European Union” (WFL\_074) - Photos.com  
Cover Design: Burke Speaker, MPI  
Typesetting: Danielle Tinker, MPI

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the Migration Policy Institute. A full-text PDF of this document is available for free download from:

[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org).

Permission for reproducing excerpts from this report should be directed to: Permissions Department, Migration Policy Institute, 1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036, or by contacting [communications@migrationpolicy.org](mailto:communications@migrationpolicy.org).

Suggested citation: Brick, Kate, A. E. Challinor, and Marc R. Rosenblum. 2011. *Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>II. Increased US Immigration from Mexico and Central America Since 1970</b> .....	2
<b>III. A Snapshot of Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States in 2010</b> .....	4
A. Immigration Status .....	4
B. Family Structure .....	6
C. Education .....	7
D. Employment .....	10
E. Income.....	12
F. Geographic Distribution .....	13
<b>IV. Conclusions: Mexican and Central American Immigrants and the US Immigration Debate</b> .....	15
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	17
<b>About the Authors</b> .....	19



## Executive Summary

The US immigration debate focuses overwhelmingly on immigrants from Latin America, particularly from Mexico and Central America. This is not surprising in light of the rapid growth in their numbers since 1970 — a period during which the overall US immigrant population increased four-fold, and the Mexican and Central American population increased by a factor of 20. In addition, numerical limits on permanent migration from the Western Hemisphere and the ending of the guest worker programs of the mid-20th century, in combination with increased demand for low-skilled labor, have meant that a substantial share of the immigrant population from Mexico and Central America is unauthorized. The visibility of these new inflows has been further enhanced by the fact that more are settling in states that previously had little or no immigration from this region (e.g. Georgia, Colorado, and North Carolina).

Compared to the US born and other immigrant groups, Mexican and Central American immigrants are younger, more likely to be male, and more likely to be married with children, most of whom are native-born US citizens. They have lower education levels than the US born, and Mexicans in particular have the lowest levels of formal education of any immigrant group. Both Mexican and Central American immigrants also have lower levels of English language proficiency than other immigrants. Their workforce participation rates are very high, but concentrated in low-paying jobs; as a consequence, Mexican and Central American immigrants earn incomes lower than other foreign-born groups and substantially lower than their US-born counterparts. About a quarter of Mexican, Honduran, and Guatemalan immigrants live below the poverty line. The fact that a high proportion of immigrants from Mexico and Central America are unauthorized supersedes all other considerations for some stakeholders in the debate, and sharply constrains these immigrants' economic, social, and political opportunity structures.

Second-generation Mexicans and Central Americans (those born in the country to first-generation immigrants) have higher education levels and higher household incomes than their parents. They also have somewhat lower labor force participation rates, and a smaller gender gap in their employment. These trends make their labor market profile more similar (though not equal) to that of US-born non-Hispanic whites. There is evidence that second-generation Mexican Americans, in particular, lag behind their counterparts from other countries.

## I. Introduction

In the United States, as in much of the European Union, immigration and immigration policy have been controversial issues throughout the post-9/11 period. Immigrants account for a substantial share of the population in most developed countries and often an even larger share of the workforce. Residents of immigrant-receiving countries frequently express concerns about the social and economic impact of new immigrants. The rapid pace of growth of this population and the demographic and cultural differences between native and immigrant populations have, in many cases, heightened such fears.

In the United States, popular and policy conversations about immigration focus overwhelmingly on Latin Americans, and Mexicans and Central Americans in particular. This emphasis is not surprising, since Mexicans account for about 30 percent of the US immigrant population (including naturalized citizens and noncitizens, regardless of their immigration status); Central Americans represent another 7 percent, and all Latin American and Caribbean immigrants together account for 53 percent of the US foreign-born population.<sup>1</sup>

These numbers are particularly striking because they are unprecedented. As recently as 1970, Mexicans were only 8 percent of foreign-born Americans, and Latin American and Caribbean immigrants overall

1 US Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2009\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release/).



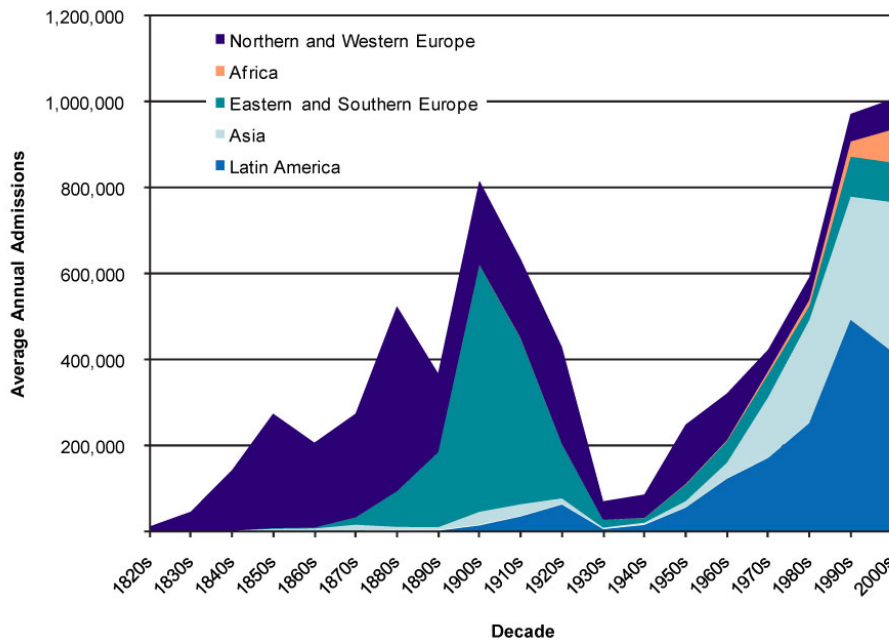
were only 26 percent of all immigrants.<sup>2</sup> While the overall foreign-born population increased about four-fold in the four decades since, the Mexican and Central American populations doubled in each decade between 1970 and 2000, and — after exhibiting a slower rate of growth during the most recent decade — reached 20.4 million in 2010, a twenty-fold increase since 1970.

This report examines Mexican and Central American immigrants in the United States. We begin by briefly reviewing the policy changes and regional economic forces driving their migration. Next we provide a demographic overview of both first- and second-generation Mexican and Central American immigrants in the United States, including a description of their migration status and family structure; education, employment, and income patterns; and geographic distribution. The paper concludes with a discussion of how these characteristics have influenced the recent US immigration debate, and how they are likely to affect policymaking in the future.

## II. Increased US Immigration from Mexico and Central America Since 1970

While contemporary discussions often portray US immigration as an overwhelmingly Mexican and Central American phenomenon, the region is in fact a relatively new contributor to US immigration flows. As Figure 1 illustrates, Latin Americans accounted for less than 10 percent of US immigrants prior to World War II (WWII), and were only a quarter of US immigrants in the early postwar period — before climbing to about 40 percent beginning in the 1960s and half of all US immigrants in the 1990s.

**Figure 1. Average Annual Permanent Immigration Flows to the United States, by Region of Origin, 1820s-2000s**



Source: Department of Homeland Security (DHS), *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: DHS, 2010), [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois\\_yb\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois_yb_2009.pdf).

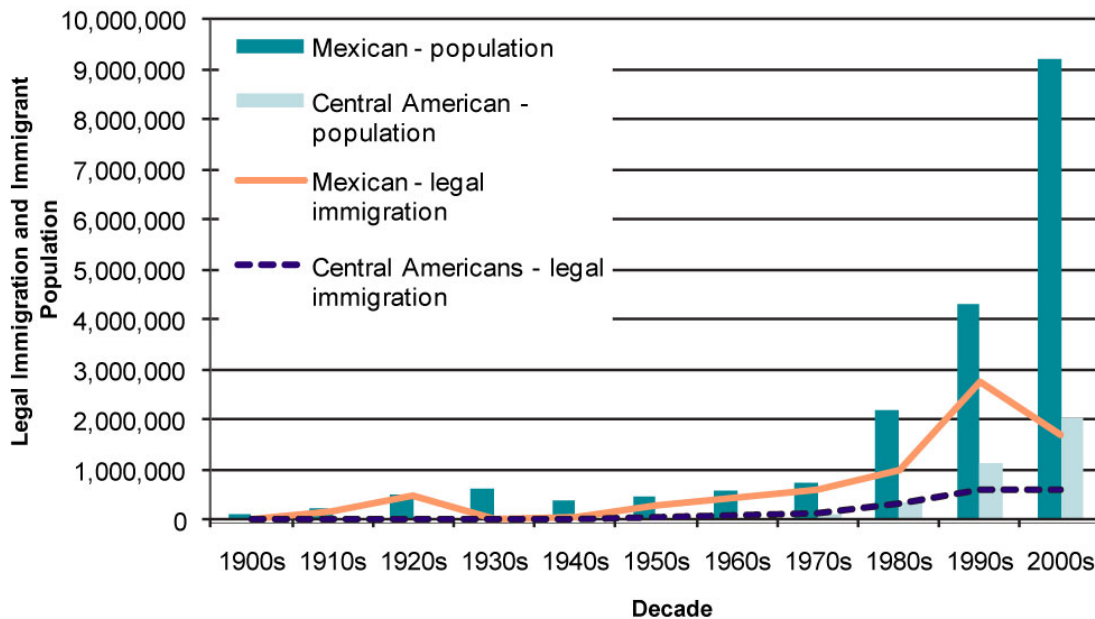
<sup>2</sup> Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 1999), [www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html).





Most of this change is a function of a surge in Mexican and Central American migration since the 1970s. Indeed, fewer than 300,000 Mexicans and 40,000 Central Americans gained legal permanent residence in the United States per year prior to the 1970s (see Figure 2). If we include legal and unauthorized immigrants, fewer than 1 million Mexicans and Central Americans lived in the United States at the time of the 1970 census.

**Figure 2. Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States, Legal Permanent Immigration Flows and Total Population, 1900s-2000s**



Source: DHS, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, various years (Washington, DC: DHS); US Census Bureau, US Census, various years.

Yet as Figure 2 also illustrates, legal permanent immigration from Mexico and Central America to the United States roughly doubled during each of the next two decades, and the total Mexican and Central American populations in the United States doubled during each of the next three decades. The rise in Mexican and Central American legal inflows to the United States and the even larger rise in the stock of these immigrants (including those without legal status) remaining in the United States reflects changes to the structural pushes and pulls that motivate international migration, as well as changes to US immigration policy.

In the Mexican case, migration flows were partly a legacy of the US-Mexican Bracero Program, a bilateral guest worker program initiated in the first few months of World War II, and extended until 1964. The Bracero Program offered government support for the recruitment of about 4 million Mexican workers on temporary visas during this period (including a high number of repeat entrants), helping to foster a culture and economy of emigration in Mexican communities of origin, deepen dependence on low-wage labor on the part of US agribusiness, and create a transnational network of labor recruiters connecting the two.

Throughout this period, demographic, economic, and social conditions in Mexico and Central America encouraged a high volume of migration outflows. Post-WWII population growth rates, at above 3 percent throughout the region, translated into the rapid growth of the working-age population beginning in the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Yet these years were also characterized by uneven employment growth and substantial

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Terrazas, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, and Marc R. Rosenblum, *Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends in Mexico and Central America and Their Implications for Regional Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011),



economic uncertainty associated with the oil shocks of the 1970s, Mexico's sovereign debt default in 1982, and repeated currency devaluations as the country made a rocky transition from inward-looking state-led development during the 1950s and '60s to more competitive markets and trade-oriented growth beginning in the 1990s. For the countries of Central America, these economic challenges were compounded by civil wars (in Guatemala, 1960-96, and El Salvador, 1980-92) and repeated natural disasters, both of which contributed to substantial population displacement.

These regional "push" factors were accompanied by new pulls from within the United States. While Mexican immigrants traditionally were concentrated in agricultural jobs in a handful of border states, by the 1970s and 1980s downward pressure on US wages in traditional blue-collar jobs and growth in service-sector employment fueled demand for low-skilled immigrants in other sectors of the economy and more regions of the country. These changes were driven primarily by economic restructuring and policy shifts in the United States (such as deunionization and deregulation), reinforced by global trends such as lower transportation costs (which both encouraged the trade of goods and services and facilitated international migration flows).

Changes in US immigration policy and policy enforcement during this period meant that an increasing proportion of Mexican and Central American immigrants to the United States were unauthorized. By ending the Bracero Program in 1964 and imposing numeric limits on permanent migration from the Western Hemisphere in 1976, the United States eliminated most opportunities for legal employment-based migration from Mexico and Central America. However, the demand for low-skilled labor persisted. The growth of nonagricultural employment opportunities on the one hand, and the increasing costs and risks associated with illegal border crossings beginning in the 1980s on the other, meant that an increasing proportion of unauthorized immigrants settled permanently in the United States, rather than returning to Mexico or Central America on a seasonal basis.

### III. A Snapshot of Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States in 2010

These trends have transformed the demographics of US immigration over the past four decades and produced a large immigrant population from Mexico and Central America, a substantial share of which is unauthorized. These immigrants and their US-born children differ in important ways from US natives and from other immigrant groups. In this section we provide an overview of their immigration status, education, income, employment, and geographic distribution.

#### A. Immigration Status

Mexicans make up the largest share of US immigrants of any country of origin — about 11.5 million of the 38.5 million total. Mexicans and Central Americans together account for 37 percent of all US immigrants (14.4 million, or about 4.7 percent of the total US population).<sup>4</sup> As Table 1 shows, *emigrants*, too, represent a substantial share of the population from countries of origin in this region: Mexico, Belize, and the so-called Northern Triangle countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) all have expatriate US migrant populations of between 6 and 19 percent of their national populations.

---

[www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-human-capital.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-human-capital.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.



**Table 1. US Migrant Populations from Mexico and Central America, 2009**

	US Immigrant Population (thousands)	Share of US Population (percent)	Country of Origin Population (thousands)	Expatriates in US as Percent of Native Population
El Salvador	1,150	0.4	6,194	18.6
Belize	49	0.02	313	15.7
Mexico	11,478	3.8	110,645	10.4
Honduras	468	0.15	7,616	6.1
Guatemala	799	0.26	14,377	5.6
Nicaragua	253	0.08	5,822	4.3
Panama	104	0.03	3,508	3.0
Costa Rica	86	0.02	4,640	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,387</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>153,115</b>	<b>9.4</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2009); Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*, [http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008\\_highlights.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008_highlights.pdf).

The remainder of this paper focuses on US immigrants from Mexico and the Northern Triangle states — groups that are united not only by high per capita emigration rates, as noted above, but also by high levels of illegality. According to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Mexico (6.7 million), El Salvador (530,000), Guatemala (480,000), and Honduras (320,000) represent the top four countries of origin of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, 60 percent of all unauthorized immigrants to the United States come from Mexico,<sup>6</sup> and about 62 percent of all Mexican immigrants to the United States were unauthorized in 2009.<sup>7</sup> Unauthorized immigrants make up a similar proportion of Central Americans in the United States. As Figure 3 illustrates, about 46 percent of Salvadorans, 60 percent of Guatemalans, and 68 percent of Hondurans were unauthorized in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Between 2000 and 2010, the number of unauthorized Mexican immigrants increased by 42 percent, Salvadoran immigrants by 44 percent, Guatemalans by 79 percent, and Hondurans by 106 percent.<sup>9</sup>

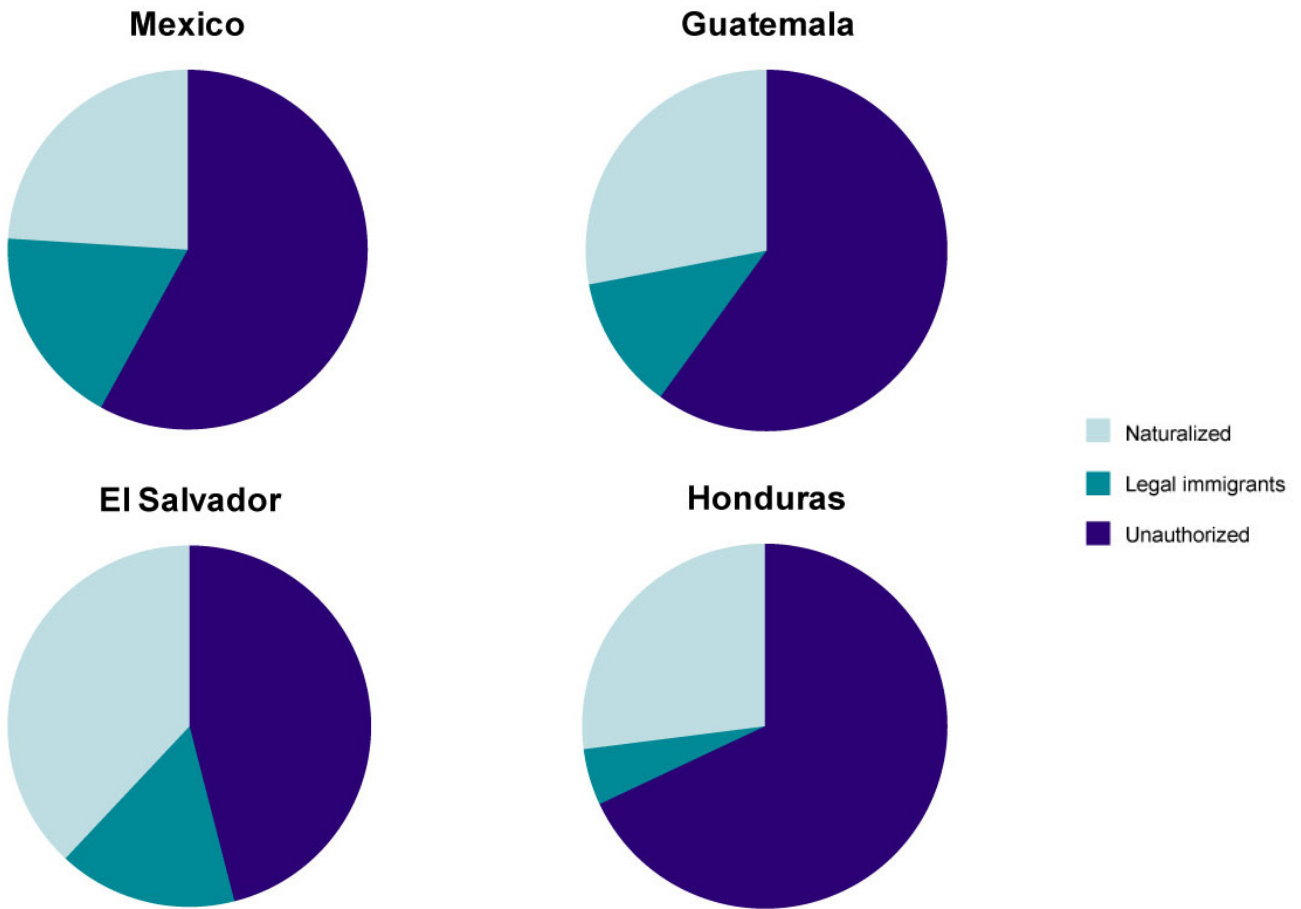
5 Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009* (Washington, DC: Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, 2010), [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf).

6 Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply since Mid-Decade* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2010), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/126.pdf>.

7 Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009* (Washington, DC: Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, 2010), [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf); US Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

8 Based on 2009 ACS estimates of the total immigrant populations from these countries and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimates of unauthorized populations for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

9 Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2010* (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2011), [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2010.pdf).

**Figure 3. Immigration Status of Mexican and Northern Triangle Immigrants in the United States, 2009**

Source: DHS, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2009; US Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

Among these four groups, Salvadorans are most likely to be naturalized (see Figure 3). Twenty-nine percent of the total Salvadoran population in the United States are US citizens, followed by Guatemalans with 24 percent, Mexicans with 22 percent, and Hondurans with 22 percent.<sup>10</sup> These shares are, however, much lower than for the overall foreign-born population, 43 percent of which are naturalized.<sup>11</sup> If all eligible Mexican-origin legal permanent residents were to naturalize (raising the share of naturalized citizens among Mexican immigrants to 46 percent, in line with other immigrant groups), it would double the number of Mexican-born US citizens.<sup>12</sup>

## B. Family Structure

Immigrants have higher fertility rates than US natives and larger families. Completed fertility rates

10 Pew Hispanic Center, "Hispanics of Honduran Origin, 2008," (fact sheet, April 22, 2010), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/65.pdf>; Pew Hispanic Center, "Hispanics of Guatemalan Origin, 2008," (fact sheet, April 22, 2010), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/63.pdf>; Pew Hispanic Center, "Hispanics of Salvadoran Origin, 2008," (fact sheet, April 22, 2010), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/61.pdf>.

11 Census Bureau, 2008 ACS, [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2008\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2008_release/).

12 Aaron Terrazas, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Information Source*, February 2010, [www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=767#16](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=767#16).



(the total number of previous births for women 40-44 years old) were 1.85 births per native woman in 2008, compared to 2.13 for all immigrant women, 2.12 for naturalized citizens, and 2.14 for noncitizen immigrants. Overall, the fertility rate (or annual number of births per woman) was 76.4 births per 1,000 women among immigrants in 2008, compared to 55.1 among native-born citizens.

These higher fertility rates are associated with larger immigrant families. The size of foreign-born Central American families is, on average, over four persons; for foreign-born Mexicans it is nearly five persons. The average US family size, by contrast, is 3.2.<sup>13</sup> Foreign-born Hispanics are more likely to have larger families: 33 percent of households headed by a foreign-born Hispanic immigrant comprised at least five people, compared to just 13.5 percent of all US households.<sup>14</sup> Mexican immigrants are slightly more likely to be married (58 percent) than the American population as a whole (49 percent) or than Central Americans (47 percent).<sup>15</sup>

Overall, 35.9 million second-generation immigrants (i.e., US-born children of at least one immigrant parent) lived in the United States in 2009, including more than 12 million second-generation Mexican and Central American immigrants, according to the 2009 Current Population Survey. Since much of the immigration from the region is quite recent, and given that many immigrants arrive during their child-bearing years, a large proportion of the second generation consists of children under 18 years of age — about 14 million children overall, including 5.9 million US-born children with Mexican parents and 1.6 million US-born children with Central American parents, as of 2008.<sup>16</sup>

The United States Constitution makes all children born in the United States US citizens, regardless of the citizenship or legal status of their parents. Thus, second-generation immigrants (i.e., the children of immigrants) from Mexico and the Northern Triangle are automatically US citizens from birth. Nonetheless, about 4.5 million children with US citizenship have at least one unauthorized parent, and an estimated 1 million unauthorized immigrants are under 18 years of age. About 70 percent of children with an unauthorized parent are second-generation Mexican immigrants.<sup>17</sup>

### C. Education

Mexicans are the immigrant group with the lowest levels of formal education. In 2008, 61.5 percent of Mexican immigrants 25 and older had less than a high school degree (compared to 32.5 percent among all foreign-born adults), and 5.2 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 27.1 percent among all foreign born; see Figure 4).<sup>18</sup> Yet there is significant variation in graduation rates among Mexican immigrants, as a function of their age at arrival: data from earlier this decade indicates that less than a third of Mexicans who migrate to the United States between the ages of 15 and 21 completed high school, compared to a 40 percent graduation rate for Mexicans who arrived between ages 5 and 15, and a 78 percent rate for those who arrived before the age of 5.<sup>19</sup>

13 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

14 Pew Hispanic Center, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009," February 17, 2011, <http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets/factsheet.php?FactsheetID=70>.

15 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

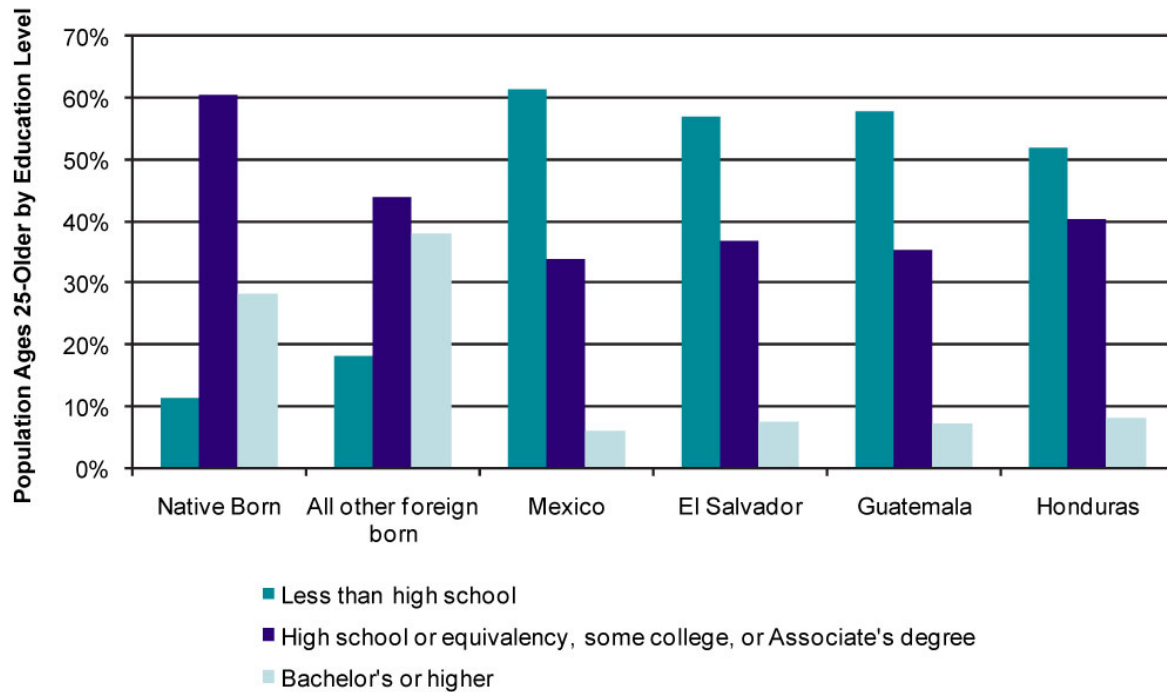
16 Authors' calculation from the Urban Institute "Children of Immigrants Tool," <http://datatool.urban.org/charts/datatool/pages.cfm#>. Note that these data include all of Central America and the Spanish Caribbean, not just the Northern Triangle countries. These numbers do not include an additional 1.2 million first-generation immigrant children from Mexico (951,000) and Central America (220,000).

17 Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf>.

18 Francisco Alba, "Política migratoria: un corte de caja," *Nexos* 317 (2004): 31-7.

19 Jeffrey Grogger and Stephen J. Trejo, *Falling Behind or Moving Up? The Intergenerational Progress of Mexican Americans* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2002), [www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_502JGR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_502JGR.pdf).

**Figure 4. Education Levels among Mexican, Central American, Native-born, and All Other Foreign-born US Residents, Aged 25 and Older, 2009**



Source: US Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

The skill level of Mexican migrants is gradually rising, as an increasing proportion gain the equivalent of at least a high school education.<sup>20</sup> This trend partly reflects new educational opportunities in Mexico that have outpaced growth in employment opportunities there, creating incentives for more educated people to emigrate to the United States. Between the periods 1985-90 and 2000-05, the numbers of Mexican migrants with intermediate education levels rose 25 percent, and the numbers with higher education increased 21 percent.<sup>21</sup> The population of Mexican-born professionals in the United States nearly doubled between 1997 and 2007, from 259,000 to 552,000.<sup>22</sup>

Central Americans have similar education rates — about half have less than a high school education, or 54 percent of Guatemalans, 53 percent of Salvadorans, and 50 percent of Hondurans.<sup>23</sup> Only 5 percent of Salvadorans and Guatemalans and 6 percent of Hondurans aged 25 or older have a college degree (see Figure 4).

Mexicans and Central Americans lag behind other immigrants in terms of English ability. While about 52 percent of all foreign-born persons aged five and older reported limited English proficiency in 2008, the rate was 74 percent for Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants and 72 percent for Hondurans and Salvadorans.<sup>24</sup>

20 Terrazas, Papademetriou, and Rosenblum, *Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends*; Elena Zúñiga and Miguel Molina, *Demographic Trends in Mexico: The Implications for Skilled Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2008), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Zuniga-Paper.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Zuniga-Paper.pdf).

21 "Intermediate levels" includes all high school graduates, those with some college but no degree, and those with an associate's degree from an occupational/vocational program or an associate's degree from a college academic program. "Higher education" includes those with bachelor's, master's, professional (e.g., law, medicine, etc), and doctoral degrees. Zúñiga and Molina, *Demographic Trends in Mexico*.

22 Zúñiga and Molina, *Demographic Trends in Mexico*.

23 Pew Hispanic Center, *Hispanics of Honduran, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran Origin* fact sheets, 2010.

24 Terrazas, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States;" Aaron Terrazas, "Central American Immigrants in the United States,"



The education gap narrows for second-generation Mexican and Central American immigrants. While 36 percent of first-generation Mexican immigrants aged 16-24 do not have a high school diploma (or its equivalent), only 11 percent of the second generation are in the same position. US-born children of Mexican immigrants were more than three times as likely to obtain some college than first-generation Mexican immigrants (29 percent versus 10 percent), attending college at a rate comparable to the US public as a whole.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the share of those holding bachelor's degrees or higher is 6.8 percent in the first generation but a much higher 17.4 percent in the second.<sup>26</sup>

Yet among children of Mexican immigrants, 33.4 percent had completed only high school in 2010.<sup>27</sup> Only 61 percent of second-generation Mexican Americans aged 16-24 were enrolled in school, compared to 66.3 percent of second-generation Central Americans and 70.7 percent of all American youth.<sup>28</sup> US-born Mexican Americans also are more likely to hold only a high school degree compared to other second-generation immigrants (33.4 percent to 26.1 percent), Central Americans (25.7 percent), and native-born Americans (28.5 percent).<sup>29</sup> These three groups also outpace second-generation Mexican Americans in terms of college graduation rates — only 17.6 percent of second-generation Mexican Americans have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34.1 percent of second-generation Central Americans, 35.5 percent of other second-generation immigrants, and 27.9 percent of native-born Americans.<sup>30</sup>

The difference between first- and second-generation Central American immigrants is even greater. Even though 39.7 percent of Central American immigrants between the ages of 16 and 24 are high school dropouts, that number is a mere 6 percent for the second generation.<sup>31</sup> When considering all ages, only 8.3 percent of second-generation Central Americans lack a high school diploma, compared to 14.7 percent of all US citizens and 10.7 percent of all second-generation immigrants.<sup>32</sup> Second-generation Central Americans also are more likely to have a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree than other Americans (34.1 percent to 27.9 percent). This difference between the Mexican and Central American academic experience may be due, in part, to Central American children being more likely to have a parent with a four-year college degree.<sup>33</sup>

Intergenerational progress also slows after the second generation. Third-generation (and higher) Mexican Americans between the ages of 16-24 are less likely to be attending school than the second generation — 53.6 percent to 61.1 percent.<sup>34</sup> They are half as likely to complete high school as their non-Hispanic white peers, and earn half as many bachelor's degrees as other third-generation Americans.<sup>35</sup> Educational attainment also drops off between the second and third generations. While more third-generation Mexican Americans obtained high school diplomas than their parents, those earning college degrees dropped slightly, from 17.4 percent to 16.3 percent.

---

*Migration Information Source*, January 2011, [www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=821#17](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=821#17). The term limited English proficiency refers to any person aged 5 and older who reported speaking English “not at all,” “not well,” or “well” on their ACS survey. Individuals who reported speaking only English or speaking English “very well” are considered proficient in English.

25 US Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

26 US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS), March 2010.

27 Ibid.

28 BLS, “Table 2. Labor Force Status of Persons 16 to 24 Years Old by School Enrollment, Educational Attainment, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” October 2009, [www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgc.t02.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgc.t02.htm).

29 BLS March 2010 CPS.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

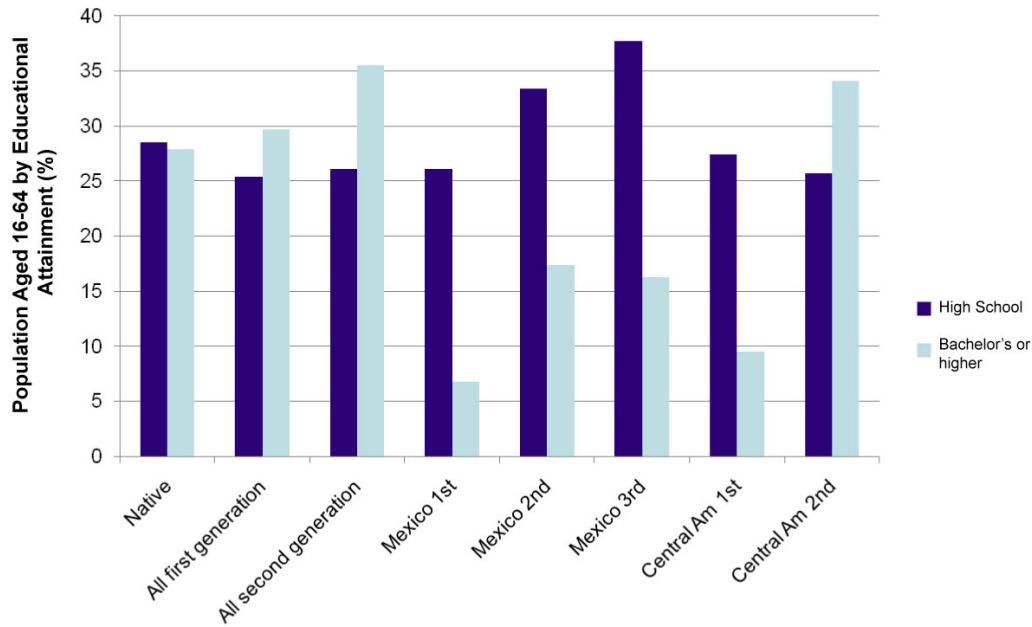
32 Ibid.

33 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

34 BLS, March 2010 CPS. Sample sizes for Americans of Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran heritage were too small to tabulate statistically significant third generation numbers.

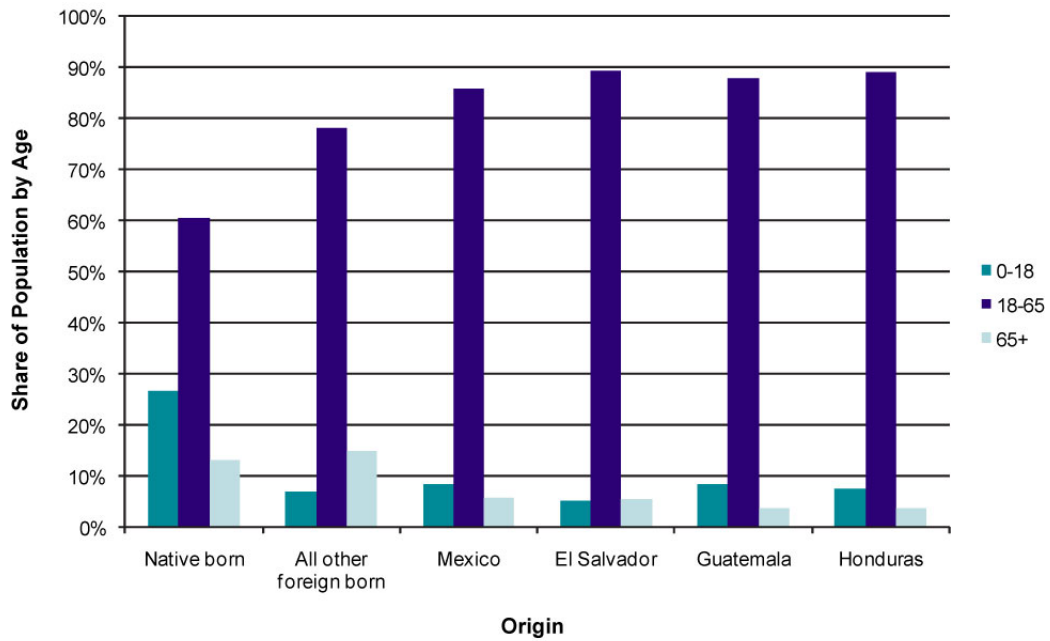
35 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

**Figure 5. Educational Attainment of Native-born Population and Immigrants Aged 16-64, 2010**



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), March 2010.

**Figure 6. Mexicans, Central Americans, Native Born, and All Other Foreign Born, by Age, 2009**



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, March 2010



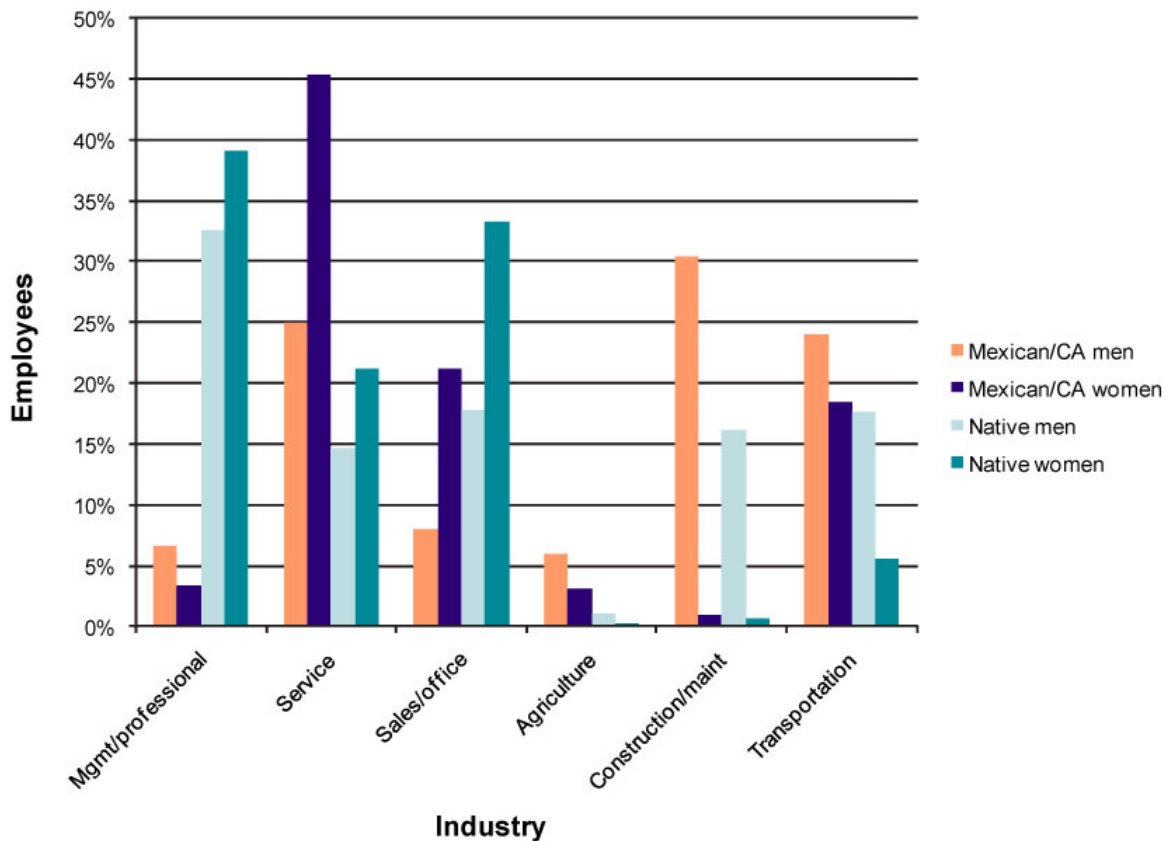


## D. Employment

Overall, Mexican and Central American immigrants are younger, more likely to be male, and have higher workforce participation rates than US natives and other immigrant groups. As Figure 6 illustrates, 86 percent of Mexican immigrants are between 18 and 65 years old (versus 60 percent of the total US population). Similarly, 89 percent of Salvadoran, 88 percent of Guatemalan, and 89 percent of Honduran immigrants in the United States are between 18 and 65.<sup>36</sup> And as of 2009, men outnumbered women by 55 to 45 percent among Mexican immigrants, 53 to 47 percent among Salvadorans and Hondurans, and 58 to 42 percent among Guatemalans.<sup>37</sup>

These demographic characteristics are associated with high workforce participation rates. According to the 2009 and 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS), 80 percent of Mexican, 81 percent of Honduran, 84 percent of Guatemalan, and 87 percent of Salvadoran immigrant men were employed in the civilian labor force.<sup>38</sup> Mexican and Central American immigrant men are overwhelmingly represented in jobs that are predominantly low-skilled, including construction, extraction, transportation, and service occupations (see Figure 7).<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 7. Industry of Employment, by Nativity and Sex, 2009**



Note: CA = Central American.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of microdata from a sample of the 2009 ACS published by Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> BLS, 2009 and 2010 CPS.

<sup>39</sup> Census Bureau, 2008 ACS.



Immigrant women have lower workforce participation rates than men, especially in the case of Mexicans. Only 47 percent of Mexican immigrant women participated in the labor force in 2009-10. Among Central Americans the gap is smaller, with Salvadoran and Guatemalan women working the most (64 percent), followed by Hondurans (54 percent). A plurality of employed immigrant women worked in the service industry — approximately 44 percent (see Figure 7).<sup>40</sup> While most nonworking Mexican and Central American immigrant men were either in school, unemployed (i.e., seeking work), or disabled, the main reason women from these countries were out of the workforce in 2009 was because they were taking care of households or family members.<sup>41</sup>

Second generation labor force participation is more modest than that of the first generation, and shows less of a gender gap. For individuals aged 16-64, labor force participation among Central American men was much higher in the first generation than in the second (91.4 percent compared to 67 percent) in 2010, while participation for Central American women was about the same for both generations (at just over 60 percent). There was a corresponding gap in school attendance rates (29.4 percent for the first generation and 73.5 percent for the second) among those aged 16-24.<sup>42</sup>

Significantly, second-generation Mexican American women are more likely to be employed (62 percent) than their first-generation counterparts (54 percent), a greater difference than seen among Central American women.<sup>43</sup> Second-generation Mexican American men had lower labor force participation rates than first-generation Mexican immigrant men (71.5 percent to 88 percent), but still remained slightly more likely than second-generation women to be in the workforce.<sup>44</sup> School attendance among 16-24 year olds is higher in the second generation (61 percent) than in the first (30 percent).<sup>45</sup>

## E. Income

Even within low-wage sectors, Mexican and Central American immigrants are employed in the lowest-paying jobs. They have lower median incomes than other foreign-born groups, and substantially lower incomes than their native-born counterparts (see Figure 8). About a quarter of Mexican, Honduran, and Guatemalan immigrants live below the poverty line, along with 18 percent of Salvadorans — poverty rates well above the share for the general US population, which is 14.3 percent.<sup>46</sup> Rates fall among second generations, as Central Americans meet the US median, but the share of second- and third-generation Mexican Americans in poverty remains high, at 20.1 and 18.6 percent, respectively.<sup>47</sup>

Median household income increases across generations, even as labor market participation and educational attainment fluctuate. Median second-generation Mexican household incomes were 25 percent higher than the first generation's, at \$50,060 per household, and second-generation Central American incomes were 33 percent higher, at \$60,000. Poverty rates for second-generation Mexican Americans are higher than other immigrant groups: 20.1 percent are living in poverty compared to 14.4 percent of second-generation Central Americans and 13.6 percent of all second-generation immigrants — rates that are only slightly higher than that of the general US population.<sup>48</sup> Similar to education levels, income gains slow among Mexican immigrants, from 20 percent between the first and second generations, to only 7 percent between the second and third generations.<sup>49</sup>

40 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

41 Marc R. Rosenblum, Randy Capps, and Serena Yi-Ying Lin, *Earned Legalization: Effects of Proposed Requirements on Unauthorized Men, Women, and Children* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-requirements.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-requirements.pdf).

42 BLS, 2010 CPS.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

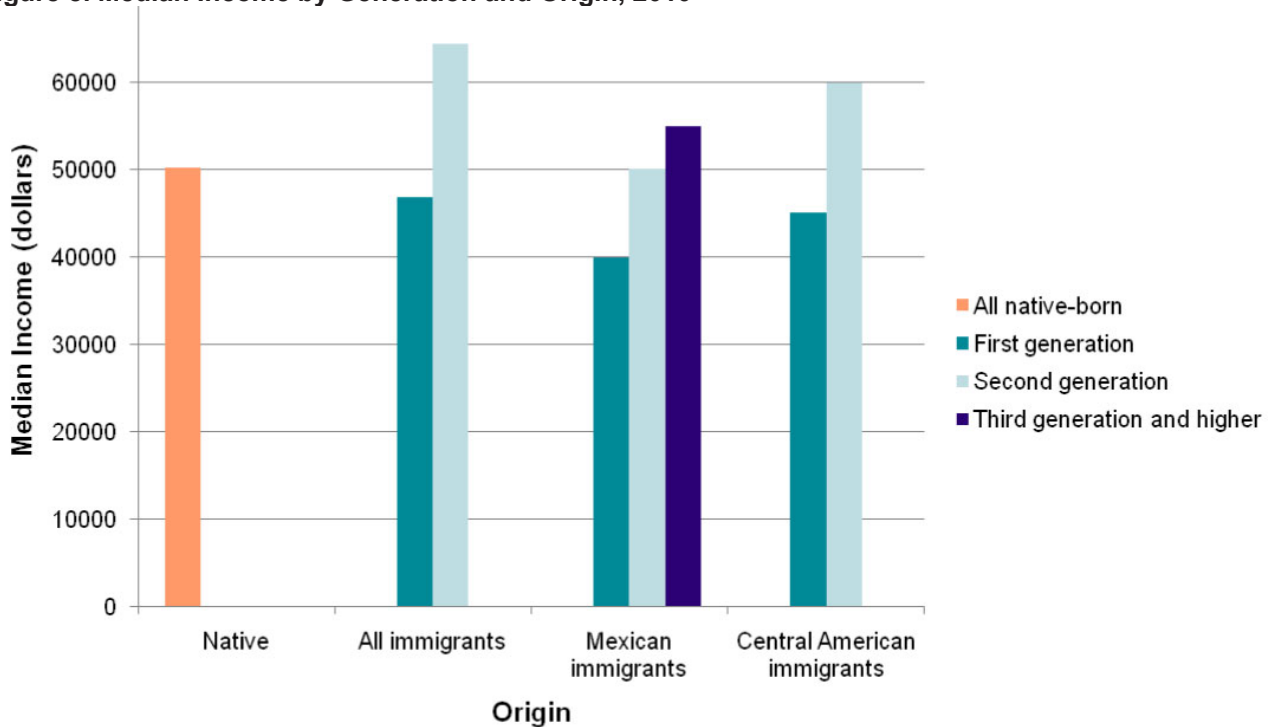
47 BLS, 2010 CPS.

48 According to the 2009 ACS, 14.3 percent of all Americans live in poverty.

49 BLS, 2010 CPS.



Figure 8. Median Income by Generation and Origin, 2010



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPS, March 2010.

## F. Geographic Distribution

As of 2009, about 75 percent of Mexican immigrants resided in five traditional receiving states. California had the largest number, with 37.5 percent of the total, followed by Texas (21 percent), New Mexico (7 percent), Illinois (6 percent), and Arizona (5 percent) (see Table 3). Mexicans made up more than half of the foreign-born population in three of these states: New Mexico (71 percent), Arizona (68 percent), and Texas (60 percent).<sup>50</sup> Central Americans are found in many of the same states; California, Texas, Florida, and New York host the largest populations (see Table 3).

Table 3. Central American and Mexican Immigrants' Top Five US States of Residence

El Salvador		Honduras		Guatemala		Mexico	
State	Percent	State	Percent	State	Percent	State	Percent
California	36	Texas	19	California	33	California	38
Texas	15	Florida	18	Florida	8	Texas	21
New York	8	California	13	Texas	8	New Mexico	7
Maryland	7	New York	9	New York	6	Illinois	6
Virginia	7	N. Carolina	6	New Jersey	5	Arizona	5
<b>Top 5</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>Top 5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>Top 5</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>Top 5</b>	<b>77</b>

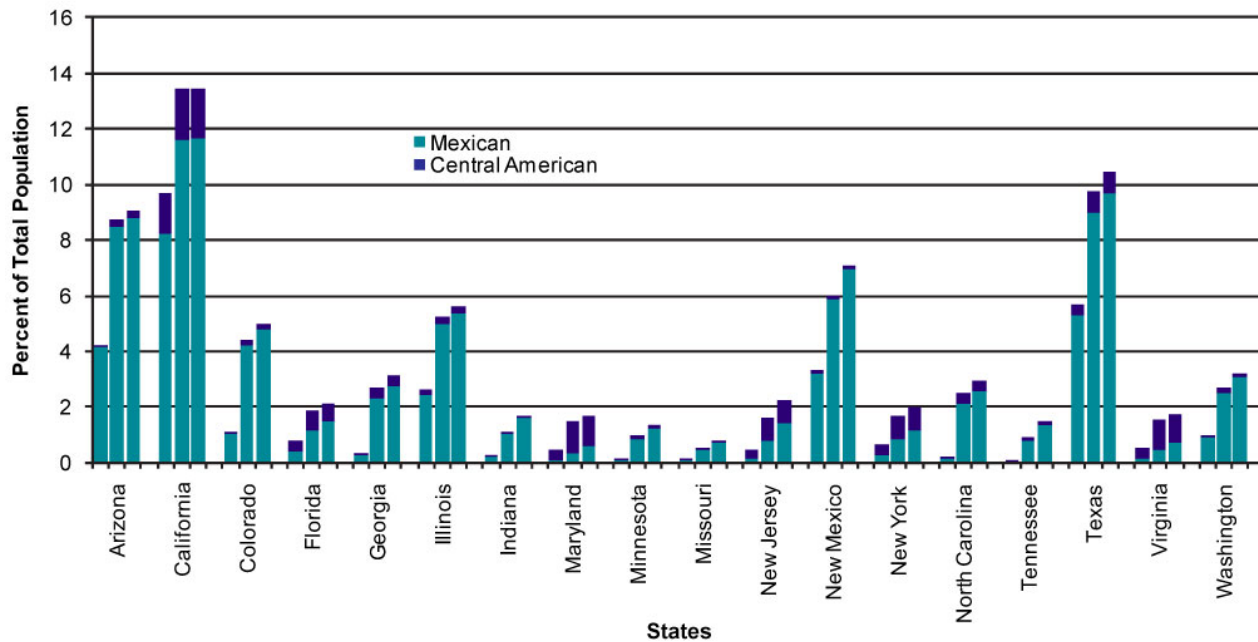
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 and 2009 ACS.

<sup>50</sup> Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.



One of the most significant trends of the past decade has been the diffusion of Mexican and Central American migrants to destinations beyond the traditional receiving states. Between 2000 and 2009, eight additional states saw their Mexican-born populations grow by at least 50,000 people: Georgia (83,516), Nevada (70,739), North Carolina (70,491), New York (68,923), Colorado (58,099), New Jersey (57,703), Washington (55,328), and Florida (53,060).<sup>51</sup> Mexican immigration accounted for 79 percent of Michigan’s total population growth between 2000-09, 20 percent in New Jersey, 17 percent in New Mexico, 15 percent in Illinois, and 11 percent in Nevada.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, at least eight states (Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington) saw their Central American populations double between 2000-09 (see Figure 9).<sup>53</sup> Central Americans accounted for 9 percent of Massachusetts’s total population growth in this period, 10 percent of New Jersey’s, and 16 percent of Maryland’s.<sup>54</sup> Overall, as Figure 9 illustrates, Mexican and Central American immigrants now account for at least 1 percent of the total population of 17 different states, with the population at least doubling since 1990 in 15 of these states (all but California and Texas).

**Figure 9. Mexican and Central American Immigrants as Share of State Populations in 1990, 2000, and 2009**



*Note:* Figure includes the 17 states whose Mexican and Central American populations account for more than 1 percent of the total state population in 2009. The bars for each state report Mexican and Central American immigrants as a percentage of state population at three different points in time: 1990, 2000, and 2009.

*Sources:* MPI analysis of microdata from a 5 percent sample of the 1990 census, published by Ruggles et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*; US Census Bureau, Census 2000 and 2009 ACS.

Many of these new destination states have especially high proportions of unauthorized Mexican immigrants. While Mexicans are about 60 percent of unauthorized immigrants in the United States overall, the percentage of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico is even larger in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin, where Mexicans are more than three-quarters of the total unauthorized population, and in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico, where they are at least 90 percent of the total unauthorized population.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Census Bureau, Census 2000; Census Bureau, 2009 ACS.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Terrazas, “Mexican Immigrants in the United States.”



**Table 4. States with Largest Hispanic Populations, by Share, 2009**

State	Hispanic population	Percent Hispanic
New Mexico	916,360	45.6
California	13,682,187	37
Texas	9,151,255	36.9
Arizona	2,031,990	30.8
Nevada	700,203	26.5
Florida	3,987,190	21.5
Colorado	1,017,424	20.2
New York	3,274,572	16.8
New Jersey	1,453,972	16.7
Illinois	1,969,336	15.3
Utah	342,715	12.3
Rhode Island	125,549	11.9
Idaho	165,192	10.7
Washington	687,238	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,348,144</b>	<b>15.7</b>

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009,” 2011, <http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets/factsheet.php?FactsheetID=70>.

## IV. Conclusions: Mexican and Central American Immigrants and the US Immigration Debate

The US immigration debate focuses primarily on immigrants from Mexico and Central America. This is reflected in the popular image of the immigrant in the United States: that of a young, single Mexican or Central American man who does not speak English and works in a low-skilled job. This emphasis on Mexican and Central American immigrants is not surprising in light of the rapid growth in their migration since 1970 — a period during which the overall US immigrant population increased four-fold while the Mexican and Central American population increased by a factor of 20. The visibility of these new inflows has been further enhanced by the fact that more are settling in states where few had previously.

For better or worse, the characteristics of Mexican and Central American immigrants shape the contours of the contemporary US immigration debate. On one hand, these immigrants tend to be less educated than native-born Americans or other immigrants, more likely to be limited in their English proficiency, and more likely to earn lower incomes. On the other hand, they also tend to have higher rates of workforce participation and to be married and have children, most of whom are native-born US citizens. Perhaps most important — and in part as a result of policy changes in the 1960s and ’70s — a high proportion of immigrants from Mexico and Central America are unauthorized, a fact that supersedes all other considerations for some stakeholders in the debate, and one that sharply constrains immigrants’ economic, social, and political opportunity structures.

Questions about whether and how to reform the American immigration system will depend on how these immigrants interact with other groups and on how they participate in the political system. As of now, their interactions reflect the characteristics described above. Mexican and Central American immigrants played a key role during the mid-2000s economic boom, providing low-wage labor in high-growth



construction and service-sector jobs. This economic contribution was at the heart of a left-right political coalition in favor of legalization and visa reform to ensure continued employment growth in 2006-07. More recently, during the economic downturn beginning in 2007, high unemployment rates exacerbated fears that immigrants compete with natives for certain jobs, while concerns about the deficit raised questions about the country's ability to absorb additional low-wage workers, who contribute relatively little to the tax base.

Ultimately, the same demographic factors that have cast a spotlight on these immigrant groups — that is, their rapid growth, large families, and the high proportions that are unauthorized — will shape the future of the immigration policy debate. First-generation immigrants face substantial barriers to political participation, including their low education levels, limited English proficiency, and, for many, their unauthorized status. Yet these factors did not inhibit hundreds of thousands of immigrants, legal and unauthorized, from participating in protests around the country in 2006 in support of comprehensive immigration reform. Since then political participation has remained relatively limited, and the impact that Mexican and Central American immigrants can have on the immigration policy debate is as yet unknown.

---

*For better or worse, the characteristics of Mexican and Central American immigrants shape the contours of the contemporary US immigration debate.*

---

Perhaps the most important questions focus on the second generation, now entering adulthood and poised to become an important block of English-speaking, high-school-educated citizens with broad geographic distribution. Many of those who participated in the 2006 demonstrations and recent elections were the children of immigrants, who identify immigration reform as a top policy priority. These American citizens have significant potential to shape future policy. Yet the influence of the second generation (and beyond) will also depend on their political engagement, which, in turn, will likely depend on rising education levels and incomes, as has been the case with previous waves of migration to the United States. In this respect, while second-generation Central Americans appear to be on a fast track to successful economic integration, second- and even third- generation Mexican Americans may be lagging behind on key indicators of income and educational attainment.

For more on the Improving US and EU Immigration Systems Project, please visit:  
[www.migrationpolicy.org/immigrationsystems](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/immigrationsystems)





## Works Cited

- Alba, Francisco. 2004. Política Migratoria: un corte de caja. *Nexos* 317: 31–7.
- Gibson, Campbell J. and Emily Lennon. 1999. *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.  
[www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html).
- Grogger, Jeffrey and Stephen J. Trejo. 2002. *Falling Behind or Moving Up? The Intergenerational Progress of Mexican Americans*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.  
[www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_502JGR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_502JGR.pdf).
- Hoefler, Michael, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker. 2009. *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2008*. Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. [www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2008.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2008.pdf).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009*. Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.  
[www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2010*. Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.  
[www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2010.pdf).
- Lawler Dye, Jane. 2010. *Fertility of American Women: 2008*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, Current Population Reports. [www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p20-563.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p20-563.pdf).
- Passel, Jeffrey S. and D’Vera Cohn. 2010. *U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply since Mid-Decade*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/126.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf>.
- Pew Hispanic Center. 2010. Hispanics of Guatemalan Origin, 2008. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/63.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. Hispanics of Honduran Origin, 2008. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/65.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. Hispanics of Salvadoran Origin, 2008. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/61.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009.  
<http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets/factsheet.php?FactsheetID=70>.
- Rosenblum, Marc R., Randy Capps, and Serena Yi-Ying Lin. 2011. *Earned Legalization: Effects of Proposed Requirements on Unauthorized Men, Women, and Children*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.  
[www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-requirements.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-requirements.pdf).
- Ruggles, Steven, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. 2010. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable Database]*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Terrazas, Aaron. 2010. Mexican Immigrants in the United States. *Migration Information Source*, February 2010.



[www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=767](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=767).

\_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Central American Immigrants in the United States. *Migration Information Source*, January 2011. [www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=821](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=821).

Terrazas, Aaron, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, and Marc R. Rosenblum. 2011. *Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends in Mexico and Central America and Their Implications for Regional Migration*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-human-capital.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-human-capital.pdf).

United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2008. *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*. [http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008\\_highlights.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008_highlights.pdf).

US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). 2009. Table 2. Labor Force Status of Persons 16 to 24 Years Old by School Enrollment, Educational Attainment, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity. [www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgc.t02.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgc.t02.htm).

\_\_\_\_\_. 2010. Current Population Survey (CPS), March 2010. Washington, DC: BLS.

US Census Bureau. 2008. American Community Survey (ACS). [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2008\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2008_release/).

\_\_\_\_\_. 2009. ACS. [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2009\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release/).

US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Various years. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. [www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm).

Zúñiga, Elena and Miguel Molina. 2008. *Demographic Trends in Mexico: The Implications for Skilled Migration*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Zuniga-Paper.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Zuniga-Paper.pdf).



## About the Authors



**Kate Brick** is an Associate Policy Analyst at Migration Policy Institute, where she works on the International Program and the Transatlantic Council on Migration. Prior to joining MPI, Ms. Brick was Program Associate for the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where she edited and co-authored the study *Local Goes National: Challenges and Opportunities for Latino Immigrants in the Nation's Capital*. Ms. Brick received her Master's in International Affairs with a focus in social policy and immigration at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. While pursuing her MA, she worked with the Open Society Foundations' International Migration Initiative, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, Unbound Philanthropy, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). She is a co-author of the report *Refugee Resettlement in the United States: An Examination of Challenges and Proposed Solutions* that was produced for the IRC in 2010. She received her BA magna cum laude from George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs in Latin American Studies.



**A. E. Challinor** was Research Assistant for the International Program at MPI in the spring and summer of 2011. In addition to a BA from the University of Toronto, she holds an MSc from the London School of Economics and an MA from the University of Southern California, where she wrote her dissertation on microfinance and female entrepreneurship. Currently, she teaches and researches in the Republic of Georgia.



**Marc R. Rosenblum** was a Senior Policy Analyst at MPI and Co-Director of MPI's Regional Migration Study Group at the time of the writing of this report. An Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of New Orleans, Dr. Rosenblum is the author of *The Transnational Politics of US Immigration Policy* (University of California, San Diego Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, 2004) and has also published over 40 academic journal articles, book chapters, and policy briefs on immigration, immigration policy, and US-Latin American relations. He is the coeditor of *The Oxford Handbook of International Migration* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Dr. Rosenblum earned his B.A. from Columbia University and his Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego. In 2005-06, he served as a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow at MPI and on the US Senate Judiciary Committee's immigration subcommittee; and in 2008-09 he served on President-Elect Barack Obama's Presidential Transition Team Immigration Policy Committee. He is currently a Specialist in Immigration Policy at the Congressional Research Service.



The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 001 202-266-1940  
Fax: 001 202-266-1900