

NEWCOMERS TO THE ALOHA STATE

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR MEXICANS IN HAWAI'I



By Jeanne Batalova, Monisha Das Gupta, and Sue Patricia Haglund

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Foreword

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco, California, oversees a jurisdiction of 13 counties in Northern California and the states of Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawai'i. To serve the Mexican population in these vast territories, the Mexican government has established consular offices in the cities of Portland, Seattle, and Anchorage under the supervision of the Consulate General in San Francisco.

Due to its nature, the Honorary Consulate of Mexico in Hawai'i has very limited capabilities to attend the needs of the Mexican population established in the islands of Hawai'i, for whom the Consulate General in San Francisco is directly responsible. This situation represents serious challenges to the Consulate General in San Francisco when responding to the basic needs of the Mexican population as well as in emergency situations, as many of them live in isolated conditions aggravated by language barriers and in many cases, their immigration status. In recent years, an anti-immigrant environment in the islands and the lack of immigrant civil-rights organizations has complicated the daily life and vulnerability of many Mexican workers and their families in the Hawaiian Archipelago.

Given this complex scenario, the Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco has carried out a strategy during the last four years to address this situation through the expansion of its services with mobile consulates in several islands, hiring local lawyers to assist Mexicans who need legal representation, sustaining innovative videoconference interviews with Mexicans detained in the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities in Honolulu, and promoting local community-based organizations in each of the islands.

As part of this strategy and in order to gain a better understanding of the living conditions and the issues affecting the Mexican community in Hawai'i, The Consulate General in San Francisco requested that the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico fund this study. The study's objective was to gather insight into strategies to meet the needs of the Mexican population in Hawai'i, in accordance with the public policy programs in place serving the Mexican communities throughout the 50 consulates of Mexico in the continental United States.

This study, being the only analysis of its kind, will be extremely useful to the Consulate General in San Francisco and to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the design and implementation of policies for the short- and long-run to defend the rights of Mexicans in Hawai'i and to collaborate with local authorities to promote the integration of the Mexican population as into the greater community in Hawai'i.

The Consulate General of Mexico expresses its gratitude to the researchers at the University of Hawai'i and the Migration Policy Institute for their contributions in producing this important report.

Ambassador Carlos Felix Corona,
Consul General of Mexico in San Francisco
September 2013



Executive Summary

This report explores the unique features of the Mexican community in the state of Hawai'i, identifying the challenges and prospects faced by a population that has increased significantly over the past two decades. The report draws on a qualitative survey, in-depth interviews, and an analysis of the most recent years of data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). In the report, the authors present a detailed demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural profile of the Mexican-origin population (or Mexicans for short, which comprises people who are Mexicans either by birthplace, origin, or ancestry) in Hawai'i.

Interestingly, Mexicans in Hawai'i differ from their counterparts on the continental United States in terms of human capital, citizenship, legal status, and labor market characteristics, as well as the socioeconomic context in which they build their community. This newcomer population also is unlike other immigrant-origin groups in Hawai'i, who are mostly Asian, have a much longer history of residence in the state, and are able to access comparatively well-developed community infrastructure and social support.

In brief, the report finds the following about Mexicans in Hawai'i:

They represent a relatively small but growing population in multi-ethnic Hawai'i. According to analysis of 2009–11 ACS data, Hawai'i had about 38,700 Mexican-origin residents (including both civilians and the military), up 165 percent from just 14,600 in 1990. Mexicans represented the largest newcomer Latino group in this multi-ethnic state, in which no single racial or ethnic group constituted a majority. However, Mexicans comprised 3 percent of the overall state population of 1.36 million, and their population share was dwarfed by non-Latino Asians (38 percent), whites (23 percent), and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (9 percent).

Of the 38,700 Mexicans in Hawai'i, only about 5,500 (14 percent) were born in Mexico or other countries such as Philippines and Colombia, while 33,200 were born in the United States (86 percent). The ACS-based estimates presented here are conservative and likely to underestimate the true size of the Mexican-origin population because some members of the Mexican community (e.g., the unauthorized and/or migrant workers in remote farm areas) might not be captured by US government surveys. Service providers and advocates interviewed for this report in fall 2010 estimated the size of the Mexican-born population on the islands to be closer to 10,000, or almost double the ACS estimate.

The majority of Mexicans have lawful US immigration status, but many in the community said they feel targeted by immigration enforcement authorities. About nine in ten Mexican-origin residents in the state are US citizens either by birth or naturalization. Only a small number of Mexican residents in Hawai'i are unauthorized: roughly 4,000 (or about 10 percent of the 38,700 Mexicans in the state). What is important is that Mexicans represented only 10 percent of the entire unauthorized population in Hawai'i (about 40,000). Thus the “face” of unauthorized immigration in Hawai'i is not Mexican but largely Asian (e.g., about 40 percent of the unauthorized in the state are from the Philippines and another 12 percent are from China/Hong Kong). By contrast, in the continental United States, 58 percent of the 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants were from Mexico, and only 11 percent were from Asia.

Although most unauthorized immigrants in Hawai'i are Asian, members of Mexican community felt targeted as unauthorized migrants and reported problems stemming from the public and institutional conflation of their ethnicity, nationality, and immigration status. The perception of unauthorized status sometimes prevents foreign-born Mexicans from accessing the services to which they or their US-born children are legally entitled. Despite the high proportion of US-born and legally present Mexicans in Hawai'i and a small proportion of the unauthorized, this community feels it has been disproportionately targeted by immigration and local law enforcement officers for detention and deportation. For instance, fully half of all those detained in and deported from Honolulu immigration facilities from April 2007 to March 2008 were Mexican.



Mexicans are dispersed within and across the Hawaiian islands. In 2009–11, Mexicans were concentrated most heavily on the island of O‘ahu, with 64 percent residing there. But according to our study respondents, Mexicans in Hawai‘i do not concentrate in *barrios* (ethnically distinct neighborhoods) — unlike in the rest of the United States. The authors’ ethnographic work on three islands (O‘ahu, Maui, and Hawai‘i Island, known as the Big Island) found that the Mexican population on O‘ahu, though representing the largest population share in the state, is the most dispersed. In comparison, certain towns on Maui and the Big Island are associated with Mexican residents, even though on all islands they live in ethnically mixed neighborhoods. Yet, Mexicans are not well incorporated into mainstream society when it comes to accessing resources and services. The dispersed settlement of Mexicans poses significant challenges for getting to work, accessing services, and interacting with other community members for those who do not have cars or drivers’ licenses, especially given the islands’ limited public transportation options.

In addition, Mexican residents’ mobility from island to island is restricted because of the expense of air travel and, in the case of the unauthorized population, due to the risk of immigration enforcement-related surveillance at airports. These barriers to air travel make it difficult for Mexican residents of other islands to access critical services offered only in Honolulu, O‘ahu, including health care, immigration and naturalization appointments with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), consular services, and appearances in immigration court.

Mexicans in Hawai‘i struggle economically. In the 2010–11 period, Mexican residents of Hawai‘i worked primarily in tourism-related industries and construction. Construction workers overall were disproportionately affected by the recession, as the Mexican share of all construction workers dropped from 21 to 15 percent between the 2005–06 and 2007–09 periods. By the 2010–11 period, the unemployment rate for Mexicans in Hawai‘i (10 percent) was lower than the rate for Mexicans living elsewhere in the United States (12 percent) but higher than the state average (7 percent).

While Mexicans in Hawai‘i were less likely to be in poverty (13 percent) than their counterparts in the rest of the country (27 percent), these relatively low national-level poverty rates may understate the economic hardship faced by Mexicans in the state because of higher cost of living in Hawai‘i relative to many other places in the continental United States. The report found that about only 36 percent of Mexicans in Hawai‘i lived in their own houses in the 2010–11 period, compared to 51 percent of Mexicans in the United States as a whole and 61 percent of the state’s total population. The authors’ qualitative research suggests that many Mexicans, especially those who are immigrants, occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, along with three other traditionally marginalized groups: Filipinos, Native Hawaiians, and Micronesians.

The community lacks common goals and identity. The Mexican community in Hawai‘i is far from uniform. The largest group is composed of *Chicanos*, US-born persons of Mexican descent, who moved from other parts of the United States. Other groups include Mexican immigrants and their US-born children, as well as a sizable number of Mexican-origin military personnel stationed in Hawai‘i temporarily. Thus, the Mexican community in Hawai‘i is divided along generational, legal status, and class lines and does not necessarily share common goals and identity.

Community respondents reported that a lack of cohesion makes it more challenging for the Mexican community to represent itself politically and culturally. Increasing immigration enforcement that appears to target Mexican immigrants has further eroded cohesion in the community. Study participants recommended strengthening the social support services — including English language instruction and translation resources — delivered by the state and county governments. Study participants also recommended that the Mexican community follow the example of Asian immigrants in Hawai‘i by developing community-based organizations and increasing its political power through advocacy for the community.



Recommendations

Based on the findings, the report offers a number of recommendations for both the Mexican government and the state of Hawai'i.

Establishing a consulate in Hawai'i will ease the difficulties that Mexican nationals face in accessing consular services and keeping their identification documents updated. A permanent consulate in the state will act as an important intermediary between the Mexican community and state and federal agencies. The consulate can also play an active role through public diplomacy by incubating civil-society organizations within the Mexican community, and fostering an appreciation of Mexican culture among other residents of the state. These steps can address the negative stereotypes about this community.

Establishing a consulate in Hawai'i will ease the difficulties that Mexican nationals face in accessing consular services.

The state government of Hawai'i needs to recognize that Mexicans form a steadily growing and stable community. To address the community's sense of marginalization, the state needs to restore the trust that has been negatively impacted by the local-federal cooperation in enforcing immigration law. It needs to work with ICE to ensure that the goals of the Secure Communities program are in line with federal immigration policy, and to investigate the charges of racial profiling leveled at various state agencies. The report further recommends that the state attend to the issues of language access for Spanish speakers whose ability to interact with government agencies may be impaired if these residents are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Lastly, the state needs to prepare itself for providing age-appropriate services for Mexican children growing up in Hawai'i, and for the elderly, particularly those who have limited English proficiency. Though Hawai'i is a new destination for Mexicans, its long history of migration positions it to be better equipped to integrate these newcomers than many other new destinations across the United States.



I. Introduction

Hawai'i is a new destination for Mexicans.¹ While the overwhelming majority of the 34-million Mexican-origin population in the United States resides in states along the Southwestern border with Mexico, such as California, Texas, and Arizona,² Mexicans have been moving to other parts of the country, including Hawai'i, since the late 1980s. In the 2009–11 period, the 38,700 people of Mexican heritage in Hawai'i comprised just 3 percent of the state's overall 1.36 million population, but they accounted for 32 percent of the 122,500 Latinos in the state. Latinos overall comprise 9 percent of Hawai'i's population versus 16 percent of the US population. And while Puerto Ricans,³ the largest Latino group in the state, have lived in Hawai'i since the early 1900s, Mexicans constitute the largest *newcomer* Latino group in the state.

Despite its substantial size, the Mexican community is relatively invisible socially and culturally in this ethnically and racially diverse state. Asians constitute more than one-third of the state's population, with Japanese Americans and Filipino Americans representing the two largest groups.⁴ Native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of Hawai'i, constitute nearly one-tenth of the state population,⁵ and non-Latino whites account for almost one-quarter. In the course of introducing the authors' research to Latino residents, the actual numbers as well as the percentage of Latinos (and Mexicans) were always met with a surprised response: "If there are so many of us, where are they?" This self-perception that Mexicans, and Latinos as a whole, are an insignificant part of the state's multi-ethnic mix is reinforced by the external perception of their invisibility, which is reflected in the lack of research about Latinos⁶ and the lack of attention to their language and immigration-related needs by most service providers and state government agencies.

The Mexican community is relatively invisible socially and culturally in this ethnically and racially diverse state.

A. Purpose and Methodology

This report describes the Mexican-origin population, highlights the unique features of the Mexican community in the state of Hawai'i, and identifies the challenges and prospects faced by its members. The report defines the "Mexican" population to include both immigrants⁷ and people of Mexican origin born in Hawai'i or other parts of the United States. By drawing on 35 qualitative surveys of Mexicans, 27 in-depth

- 1 For the purposes of this report, the term "Mexican" or "Mexican-origin" refers to a person's place of birth, origin, or ancestry. This broad definition reflects the composition of the Mexican community, which consists of both immigrants and US born who can trace their heritage to Mexico. To best reflect the characteristics and distribution of this population, this report defines as part of the Mexican community anyone who 1) was born in Mexico or 2) self-reported Mexico as their origin or ancestry. This includes immigrants who were born in other countries as well as the US-born persons who self-identify as Mexican. In this qualitative study, the authors use "Mexican" as an ethnic identity in keeping with the way most research participants described themselves and the community.
- 2 Of the 34 million Mexican-origin residents in the United States, 36 percent reside in California, 25 percent in Texas, and about 5 percent in Arizona and Illinois each.
- 3 Puerto Ricans accounted for 35 percent of the state Latino population and have a long history of living and working on the islands, as they were recruited for the plantation economy in the early 1900s.
- 4 The race and ethnicity percentages refer to the people who identified as non-Latino Asians or native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders as a single race.
- 5 If one includes those who reported their membership in the *Native Hawaiians* ethnic group alone or in combination with other groups, then the share of Native Hawaiian population increases to one-quarter of the state population.
- 6 With the exception of Puerto Ricans.
- 7 In this report, the term "foreign born" is used to define a person with no US citizenship at birth. Thus foreign-born Mexicans include those who were born in Mexico as well as those who were born in other countries (excluding the United States and Puerto Rico) who report Mexican origin or ethnicity. The terms "immigrants" and "foreign born" are used interchangeably. Similarly, the terms "US born" and "US natives" are used interchangeably and refer to persons born in the United States or its outlying territories.



interviews with Latino and non-Latino community leaders (all conducted between September–November 2010 on O‘ahu, Maui, and the Big Island), and an analysis of the ACS data,⁸ this report presents a detailed demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural profile of the Mexican-origin population in Hawai‘i. (For a full methodology, see Appendix). The demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Mexicans in Hawai‘i are described, and this population is compared with Mexicans living elsewhere in the United States, as well as other residents of Hawai‘i.

To understand the Mexican community in Hawai‘i, several unique factors must be taken into account. First, the state’s demographics are different from the US continent, and thus Mexicans in Hawai‘i come into contact with a different set of racial and ethnic groups. In the continental United States, race relations and competition for resources have occurred largely among three major racial/ethnic groups: non-Latino whites, blacks, and Latinos. In Hawai‘i, Mexicans have the most contact with Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, and Micronesians because they work in the hospitality industry, construction, and agriculture — the three sectors in which these groups are overrepresented.⁹ Socioeconomically, these ethnic groups occupy the lower rungs, though for somewhat different reasons given their distinct histories and differing immigration statuses. Japanese Americans and whites rank at the top in Hawai‘i in terms of socioeconomic status and political power.¹⁰

*To understand the Mexican community in Hawai‘i,
several unique factors must be taken into account.*

Second, community formation among Mexicans in Hawai‘i does not revolve around *barrios* or ethnically distinct neighborhoods in which ethnic enterprises flourish. While each of the islands studied (O‘ahu, Maui, and the Big Island) has districts with substantial Mexican concentrations, no significant residential concentration or a critical mass was spatially evident. The Mexican community in Hawai‘i comes together around faith and sporting events (i.e., churches and soccer), with community members traveling significant distances to participate in both activities. The dispersed nature of the Mexican community can be an important barrier in community building and poses significant mobility challenges for those without driver’s licenses or access to efficient public transportation.

Third, because of the distances involved, residents must travel from island to island and to other parts of the United States by airplane, which can be expensive and unaffordable for low-income people. Mexican residents often need to travel to Honolulu for medical care and social services, as well as for appointments with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and immigration courts. Travel also poses a risk to unauthorized Mexican immigrants. When traveling from one island to another, all travelers face security checkpoints, including immigration checks, at the airports. For those who lack proper documentation, accessing medical and social services has become increasingly challenging in the post-9/11 world, where domestic air travel requires a valid form of identification, and in the case of immigrants, proof of lawful presence in the United States.

Lastly, Hawai‘i has one of the highest costs of living in the country.¹¹ At the same time, better employment conditions have attracted Mexican workers to Hawai‘i. The state’s history of unionization and its commitment to providing employer-mandated health care that covers most working people have ensured

8 Unless otherwise stated, all demographic and socioeconomic data in the report are based on analysis of the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). Because the ACS sample size is smaller than decennial Census sample sizes, the authors pooled data over several years of ACS to ensure reliability of results.

9 Jonathan Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

10 Ibid.

11 State of Hawaii, Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, “Cost of Living Analysis for Honolulu and the United States Average, January 1, 2008,” last accessed April 23, 2011. Sumner La Croix, “The Economy” in *The Value of Hawaii: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future*, eds. Craig Howes and Jon Osorio (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).



that wages and benefits are higher as compared to many other US states.¹² But like all working-class and middle-class residents, Mexicans struggle with the cost of living, particularly in terms of home ownership.

B. Report Organization

The report starts with a brief historical background on Mexican migration to Hawai'i. The size and growth of the Mexican-origin population in Hawai'i, as well as its distribution across the state, are discussed. The report also outlines the citizenship, immigration status, and period of entry for foreign-born Mexicans, and provides an overview of the age composition of the Mexican population in the state, as well as their levels of human capital, labor market experience, and indicators of economic well-being. It also compares the economic characteristics of Mexicans in Hawai'i during the recession (2007-09) versus afterwards (2010-11). The report further discusses the community's contributions to the state, and the challenges it faces on the basis of ethnicity, language, and immigration status; in particular, the report highlights the challenges of immigration enforcement, unmet language needs and access, and stereotypes. The study concludes by drawing implications of the findings on the prospects of the Mexican community in Hawai'i.

II. Origins, Size, Growth, and Geographic Distribution

A. Historical Background

The history of Mexicans in Hawai'i began with the arrival in the early 1830s of 200 Mexican *vaqueros* (cowboys) from California to the then-independent Kingdom of Hawai'i. The *vaqueros* came to teach cattle ranching to Native Hawaiians, who called these newcomers *paniolos*.¹³ Some speculate that *paniolo* is a derivative of the Spanish word *pañuelo*, which means handkerchief, at that time a popular accessory worn by Mexican cowboys around their necks. And while the number of Mexicans landing on the shores of Hawai'i has been insignificant compared to the large waves of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino migrants recruited to work on sugar and pineapple plantations, the arrival of Mexican cowboys together with interracial marriages and cultural interactions marked the beginning of a Mexican legacy in Hawai'i. This first, small wave of Mexican migration lasted from 1831-59, and significant Mexican migration to the islands was not renewed until more than a century later, during the late 1980s.

The history of Mexicans in Hawai'i began with the arrival in the early 1830s of 200 Mexican vaqueros.

In the late 1980s, Mexican *campesinos* (farm workers) began coming to Hawai'i.¹⁴ These workers were recruited mostly from other US states, although some came directly from Mexico. Migration of the *campesinos* was sparked by an acute labor shortage in agriculture, a sector that has traditionally relied of cheap migrant labor to remain competitive in the world market. This initial phase of Mexican migration resulted from active recruitment by corporations such as Dole, Del Monte, Maui Land and Pineapple Com-

12 For health care coverage in Hawai'i, see Dean Neubauer, "Health and Healthcare" in *The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future*, eds. Craig Howes and Jon Osorio (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).

13 Daniel Dixon, "The Paniolo: Cowboys of Hawaii," *Wild West* 11, no. 4 (1998): 54; Richard W. Slatta, Ku'ulani Auld, and Maile Melrose, "KONA: Cradle of Hawai'i's Paniolo," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 54, no. 2 (2004): 2-19.

14 In the 20th century, two other periods — one after World War II and the other in the 1970s — saw trickles of Chicanos settling in Hawai'i. Those who came in the 1970s were middle-class (with a small number of Chicano professionals migrating mostly from California) and Chicanos in the military making Hawai'i their home. See Kyle Shinseki, "El Pueblo Mexicano de Hawaii: Comunidades en Formación/The Mexican People of Hawaii: Communities in Formation" (master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997).



pany, and the then-operating Hamakua Sugar Company. These companies recruited *campesinos* in the hopes of reviving the cultivation of the state’s main cash crops (pineapple and sugar) on O’ahu, Maui, and the Big Island.

As the population of Latinos in general and Mexicans in particular grew, a fledging community started to be built around social institutions and, to a lesser extent, media. Churches began to offer Spanish services.¹⁵ St. Michael’s church in Kona held weekly Spanish masses while the Maria Lanakila Catholic Church in Lahaina, Maui, offered monthly Spanish services. Maui Economic Opportunity, a federally funded program for farmworkers, made efforts to help *campesinos* adjust to their new environment through education, social services, and housing assistance. They also sponsored job-training programs to move seasonal farmworkers into sectors that offered permanent and better-paying jobs, which in turn helped foster the establishment of a more permanent community. Soccer teams with a significant Mexican presence started to proliferate on the three islands in the mid-1990s. In 1992, the Hawai’i Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was founded on O’ahu to better represent the growing Latino community.¹⁶ In 1994, Pedro Valdéz began hosting an hour-long TV program, “Que Pasa Hawai’i,” and launched a bilingual newspaper by the same name.¹⁷ The newspaper evolved into the Spanish-language *Angulos Hispanos*. The other ethnic newspaper that emerged was the English-language *Hawai’i Hispanic News*, which continues to publish an issue every month.

B. Demographics

The Mexican population of Hawai’i grew from 14,600 in 1990 to 23,400 in 2000 and to 38,700 during the 2009-11 period (see Table 1). The state’s Mexican population grew 165 percent between 1990 and 2009-11, with the immigrant population growing faster than the US-born Mexican population (264 percent versus 154 percent, respectively).

Table 1. Mexican-Origin Population in Hawai’i, 1990, 2000, and 2009-11

Nativity	1990	2000	2009-11*	% Change 1990 to 2000	% Change 2000 to 2009-11	% Change 1990 to 2009-11
Total	14,600	23,400	38,700	60	66	165
US born	13,100	20,000	33,200	53	66	154
Immigrants	1,500	3,400	5,500	124	63	264
Percentage						
Total	100	100	100			
US born	90	86	86			
Immigrants	10	14	14			

Source: Authors’ analysis of the US Census Bureau’s 1990 and 2000 US Decennial Census; pooled 2009-11 American Community Survey (ACS), accessed through IPUMS. Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2012).

One of the distinctive characteristics of Mexicans in Hawai’i is that the majority is comprised of US-born citizens and, therefore, having the same rights and access to social safety-net services as other citizens. In the 2009-11 period, 86 percent of Mexicans in Hawai’i were US born, compared to about two-thirds in the nation overall and in California, the state with the largest Mexican-origin population. The actual share of Mexicans who are US citizens might be lower than that suggested by the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) data, which may undercount hard-to-reach populations such as farmworkers and

15 Joan Conrow, “Paradise Lost,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 9, 1995.

16 Omar Rivera, “La Cámara de Comercio Hispana de Hawaii (HHCC) Fue Fundada en 1992,” *Angulos Hispanos*, May 1996: 11.

17 Conrow, “Paradise Lost.”



One of the distinctive characteristics of Mexicans in Hawai'i is that the majority is comprised of US-born citizens.

unauthorized immigrants. Nonetheless, based on the report's quantitative and qualitative data analysis, one can surmise that the majority of the Mexican residents in the state are US citizens. Many of the US-born Mexicans were not born in Hawai'i but moved there from other states, such as California, Arizona, and Texas. Others are currently serving in the US military or remained in Hawai'i after finishing their service.

C. Age and Gender Distribution

Unlike their Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean counterparts on the islands, Mexicans do not represent a multi-generational community formed through long periods of residence. As a result, the Mexican population is younger than other populations in the state. In Hawai'i, the average age of foreign-born Mexicans is 36, and the average for US-born Mexicans is 23 years. In contrast, the average age for all state residents is 47 for immigrants and 35 for the US born. Moreover, the share of state population that is age 65 or older is much higher than the share among the Mexican population.

Table 2. Age of the Mexican-Origin Population in Hawai'i and the United States, and Age of All Residents of Hawai'i, 2009-11

	Mexicans in Hawai'i		Mexicans in the United States		Residents of Hawai'i	
	US Born	Immigrants	US Born	Immigrants	US Born	Immigrants
Total	33,200	5,500	22,129,000	11,847,300	1,116,500	245,100
Average age	23	36	22	38	35	47
Percentages	100	100	100	100	100	100
Under 16	41	7	48	6	24	6
16 to 64	57	91	49	88	63	74
65 and older	2	3	4	6	13	20

Source: Authors' analysis of pooled 2009-11 ACS.

Similar to their counterparts in the United States and in keeping with gendered patterns in Mexican migration overall, men accounted for a slight majority (53 percent) of the Mexican-origin population in Hawai'i in 2009-11. The gender distribution of the entire state population was more even, at nearly 50-50.

D. Place of Former Residence

Migration from other US states contributed significantly to the growth of the Mexican community in Hawai'i in the 1990s. For instance, about 40 percent of Mexicans residing in Hawai'i in 2000 had lived elsewhere five years earlier, including 13 percent who used to reside in California, 6 percent in Texas, and about 13 percent in other states (see Table 3, left panel). Mexican residents of Hawai'i also came directly from Mexico (2 percent). The top origin states of the Mexican-born participants in the report's qualitative study were Jalisco and Michoacán.¹⁸ Both are traditional sending states for Mexican migration to the United States as a whole.¹⁹

18 About one-third of the participants in the qualitative study came from Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. The northern sending states were Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Zacatecas, while those in the east were Distrito Federal, Estado de Mexico, and Morelos. Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz constituted the southern sending states.

19 Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

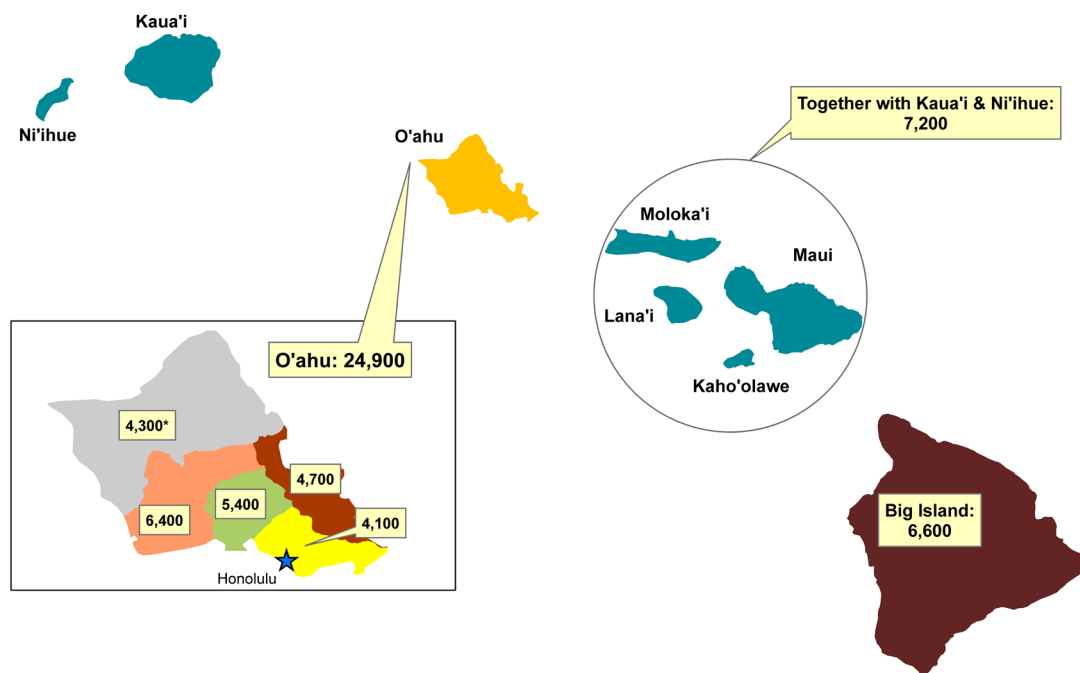
Table 3. Prior Residence of the Mexican-Origin Population in Hawai'i, Age 5 and Older, 2000 and 2009-11

Place of Residence 5 Years Ago		Place of Residence 1 Year Ago	
2000		2009-11	
Total population (5 and older)	20,100	Total population (5 and older)	32,200
Percent	100	Percent	100
Hawaii	62	Hawaii	87
Another US state	32	Another US state	11
California	13	California	5
Texas	6	Texas	2
Other states	13	Other states	3
Foreign country	6	Foreign country	2

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2000 Decennial Census and pooled 2009-11 ACS.

E. Geographic Dispersal within Hawai'i

About 70 percent of all residents of Hawai'i lived on O'ahu in in the 2009-11 period. Similarly, 64 percent of the origin population lived on that island, where the state capital of Honolulu is located (see Figure 1). Of the Mexican population on O'ahu, nearly half resided in the south-central part of the island.²⁰

Figure 1. Mexican-Origin Population on the Islands of Hawai'i, 2009-11


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Note: *includes Midway Islands.

Source: Authors' analysis of the US Census Bureau's pooled 2009-11 American Community Survey data.

Between 2000 and 2009-11, the Big Island experienced the fastest growth of the Mexican population (85 percent), compared to 70 percent growth on O'ahu and 41 percent growth on the other islands. Nearly 3,600 people (15 percent of all Mexicans in Hawai'i) lived on the Big Island in 2000; that number grew

²⁰ Particularly in the neighborhoods of Ewa, Mililani-Waipio, Wahiawa, Waipahu, and Mililani Mauka.



to 6,600 (17 percent) by 2009-11. An additional 7,200 (or 19 percent of all Mexicans in Hawai'i) lived on Maui, Kaua'i, Lana'i, and Moloka'i. The participants in the qualitative part of this study suggested that the Mexican population on Maui and the Big Island are larger than estimates based on US Census Bureau surveys, due primarily to undercounts of farmworkers and unauthorized immigrants in these surveys

The authors' ethnographic work established that the Mexican population on O'ahu, though representing the largest share in the state, is the most dispersed. In comparison, certain towns on Maui and the Big Island are associated with Mexican residents, even though on all islands they live in ethnically mixed neighborhoods. On Maui, the towns of Wailuku, Kihei, Kahului, Lahaina, and Honokowai are associated with Mexican residents who work in agriculture and tourism. On the Big Island, Mexican communities have formed in Kailua-Kona, Kealahou, Honoka'a, Pahoa, and Waimea (where the first *vaqueros* worked in the 1830s). Similar to the 1997 Shinseki study of Mexicans in Hawai'i,²¹ used as a baseline for this work, this report found the most closely knit Mexican community on the Big Island is in Kailua-Kona, where the economy is dominated by tourism and coffee plantations.

III. Citizenship and Legal Status

A. US Citizenship and Permanent Residency

US-born citizens comprise the vast majority of Mexican population in Hawai'i, and, additionally, naturalized immigrants comprise about half of the state's foreign-born Mexicans (see Table 4). The share of non-citizens among Mexican immigrants rose from 54 percent in 2000 to 62 percent in the 2007-09 period, but then dropped to 49 percent by the 2009-11 period. Recession-driven job loss and increasing immigration enforcement are likely contributors of a decline in the unauthorized population in Hawai'i after 2007, just as it did nationally.²²

Table 4. Citizenship Status of the Foreign Born, 2009-11

	2000		2009-11	
	Number	%	Number	%
Mexican Immigrants in Hawaii				
Immigrants	3,400	100	5,500	100
Naturalized citizens	1,600	46	2,800	51
Non-US citizens	1,800	54	2,700	49
Mexican Immigrants in the United States				
Immigrants	9,303,400	100	11,847,300	100
Naturalized citizens	2,091,000	22	2,782,800	23
Non-US citizens	7,212,400	78	9,064,500	77
All Immigrants in Hawaii				
Immigrants	212,200	100	245,100	100
Naturalized citizens	127,500	60	139,500	57
Non-US citizens	84,700	40	105,500	43

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2000 US Decennial Census and pooled 2009-11 ACS.

21 Shinseki, *El Pueblo Mexicano de Hawaii*.

22 Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrants: 11.1 Million in 2011* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center), www.pewhispanic.org/2012/12/06/unauthorized-immigrants-11-1-million-in-2011/.

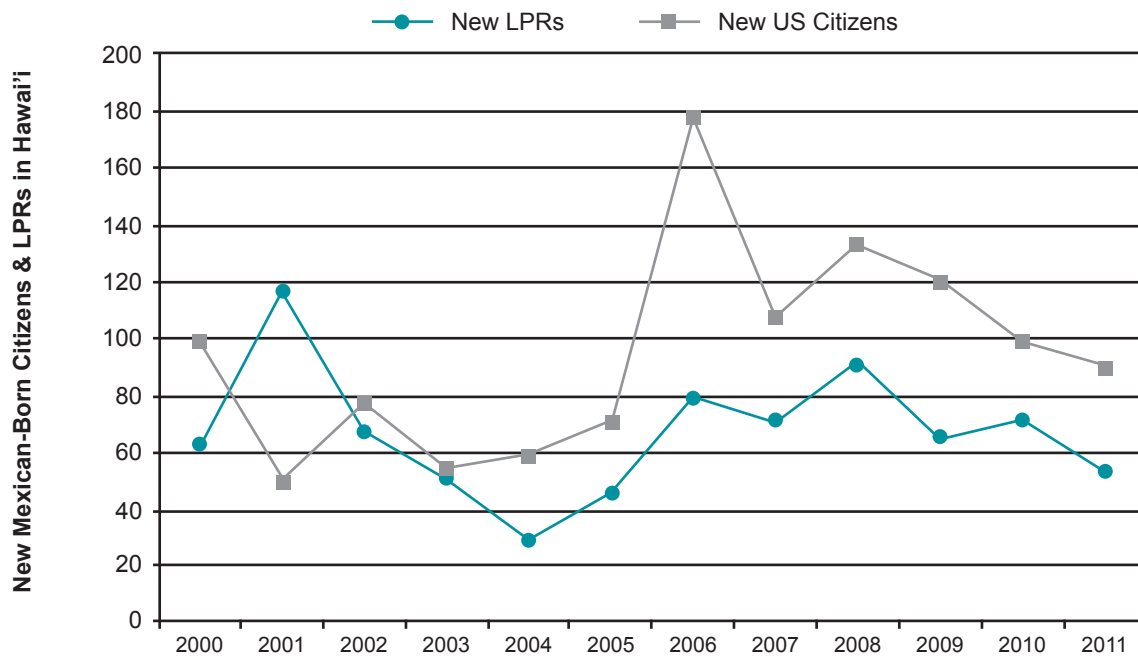


Foreign-born Mexicans in Hawai'i appear more likely to be US citizens by naturalization (51 percent) than their counterparts in the United States as a whole (23 percent), but less likely than the entire foreign-born population in Hawai'i (57 percent). The relatively high shares of Mexicans who are US-born and naturalized citizens in Hawai'i means that the share of people eligible to vote in the community is also relatively high, signaling a strong potential for political power relative to the community's small size.

It must be noted that the number of new green-card holders (also known as lawful permanent residents) and new US citizens among Mexicans in Hawai'i is very small compared to the overall statewide trends. Of the nearly 7,300 immigrants who obtained legal permanent resident (LPR) status in Hawai'i in 2011, those from the Philippines (4,399), China (864), and Japan (493) made up the top three groups. In contrast, only 53 Mexican-born persons became LPRs (see Figure 2).²³

In 2011, 89 Mexican LPRs became US citizens through naturalization.²⁴ The number of Mexicans in Hawai'i obtaining US citizenship increased after 2005, perhaps reflecting the peak in Mexican immigrants obtaining LPR status in 2001 (most LPRs become eligible to apply for US citizenship after five years in LPR status). Following the national trend, the number of naturalizations among Mexicans in Hawai'i peaked in 2008 in advance of the expected 80-percent increase in naturalization fees and promotion of naturalization prior to the 2008 presidential elections.²⁵ Both the numbers of LPRs and new citizens have been declining since 2008.

Figure 2. New Mexican-Born Lawful Permanent Residents and Citizens in Hawai'i, 2000 to 2011



Source: US Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, various years (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2012).

B. Legal Status

The Mexican-origin immigrant population in Hawai'i stood at about 5,500 in the 2009-11 period. Of those, roughly 90 percent (4,900) were born in Mexico. Given the small numbers of Mexican nationals who

23 Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, various years (Washington, DC: DHS, 2012), www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm.

24 Ibid.

25 Anne Nielsen and Jeanne Batalova, "Naturalization Trends in the United States," *Migration Information Source*, June 2011, www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=844.



obtained LPR status and have become US citizens since 2000, it is reasonable to assume²⁶ that the majority of Mexican-origin immigrants are unauthorized. We estimate that about 4,000 unauthorized migrants living in Hawai'i were born in Mexico.²⁷ Although unauthorized immigrants account for a large share of the 5,500 Mexican immigrants in Hawai'i, they represent only a small share of the entire unauthorized population in the state (10 percent of the roughly 40,000 unauthorized immigrants), which consists mostly of Asian-born immigrants.²⁸ In contrast, Mexican-born immigrants accounted for 58 percent of the entire 11.2 million unauthorized population in the United States and, together with immigrants from other Latin American countries, made up 81 percent of the unauthorized US population as of March 2010.²⁹ Asian born accounted only for 11 percent of the 11.2 million unauthorized.

C. Mexicans Eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Initiative

On June 15, 2012, the Obama administration announced a new initiative known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which provides a two-year grant of relief from deportation as well as work authorization to certain unauthorized immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. Eligible candidates have to provide evidence that they meet the following criteria: They have entered the United States before age 16; have resided in the United States for at least five years; are under the age of 31; are currently in school, have graduated from high school or have a GED, or are honorably discharged from the military or Coast Guard; and have not been convicted of any felony or significant misdemeanor offenses and are considered not to pose a threat to national security or public safety.

Nationwide, an estimated 1.76 million unauthorized young adults and children in the United States are currently eligible for DACA or will be in the future.³⁰ About two-thirds of potential DACA beneficiaries in the United States are Mexican born. The profile of DACA-eligible youth is very different in Hawai'i from nationally. Of the roughly 6,500 unauthorized youth living in Hawai'i who could benefit from the initiative, Mexicans accounted for only 2 percent (or less than 200), while 90 percent were from the Philippines and countries in Oceania.³¹ Since the Hawai'i chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association ran its first workshop in August 2012, lawyers and service providers across the islands have reported helping several DACA-eligible Mexican youth file their applications for relief.

D. Period of Entry

The authors' data show that about 30 percent of foreign-born Mexican residents in Hawai'i entered the United States between 2000 and the 2009-11 period, while another 35 percent entered the United States between 1990 and 1999 (see Figure 3).³² While many Mexicans were recent arrivals (i.e., arrived in the

26 A caveat to this reasoning might have to do with unknown trends of immigration and/or emigration of Mexican legal permanent residents (LPRs) and naturalized citizens to and from Hawai'i.

27 The authors first analyzed data from the 2006-08 US Current Population Survey (CPS), augmented with assignments of legal status to noncitizens by Jeffrey Passel of the Pew Hispanic Center. According to 2006-08 CPS, Mexican immigrants accounted for 10 percent of the then-35,000 unauthorized population in Hawai'i. Applying the same rate to the 2010 estimate of the unauthorized population in the state – 40,000 – the authors estimate that about 4,000 Mexican immigrants were unauthorized. For the state-level estimates of the unauthorized population, see Passel and Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population*.

28 Analysis of 2006-08 pooled CPS data augmented with assignments of legal status by Jeffrey S. Passel at the Pew Hispanic Center. Of the unauthorized Asian population, about 40 percent were born in the Philippines, 12 percent in China/Hong Kong, 12 percent in Oceania, and 6 percent in Japan.

29 Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), www.pewhispanic.org/2011/02/01/unauthorized-immigrant-population-brnational-and-state-trends-2010/.

30 Jeanne Batalova and Michelle Mittelstadt, *Relief from Deportation: Demographic Profile of the DREAMers Potentially Eligible under the Deferred Action Policy* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/FS24_deferredaction.pdf.

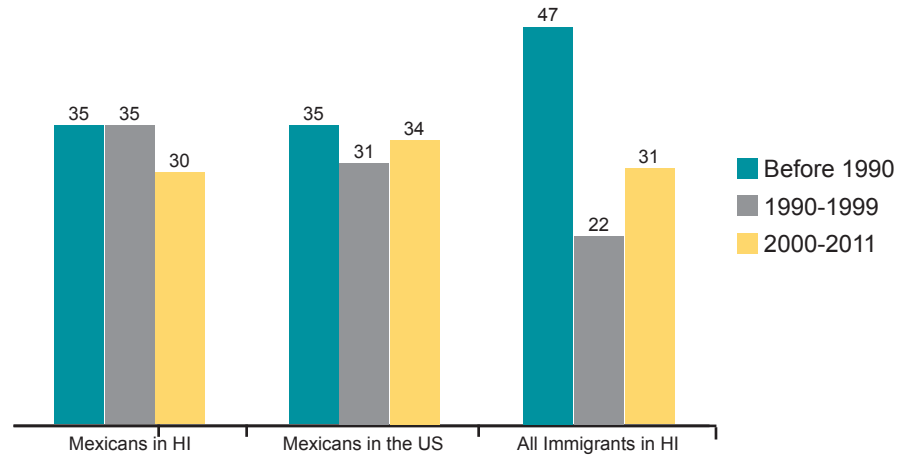
31 Authors' unpublished estimates.

32 Because the number of foreign-born Mexicans sampled for in the 2009-11 ACS in Hawai'i is relatively small, the number of foreign-born Mexicans who entered the United States during each period reported in Table 5 should be considered rough estimates, rather than precise counts.



past 10 years), immigrants in Hawai'i overall were much more settled: 47 percent have been in the United States for two decades or more. Thus, the Mexican immigrant population has had less time on average to integrate into the state economy and society than other immigrant groups. The Mexican population overall, however, benefits from a high share who are US-born citizens.

Figure 3. Year of Immigration to the United States, 2009-11



Source: Authors' analysis of pooled 2009-11 ACS.

IV. Language and Education

A. English-Speaking Ability

Mexicans in Hawai'i have higher levels of English proficiency than the total state population. In the 2009-11 period, about 92 percent of Mexicans age 5 and older in Hawai'i were English proficient (defined as speaking "English only" or speaking English "very well") compared to 65 percent of Mexicans in other states and 88 percent of the total population of Hawai'i. Thus, unlike in the continental United States, Mexicans are more likely to be English proficient than other residents in the state.

The qualitative research, which factored out military personnel, suggests that the relatively high English proficiency of Mexicans in Hawai'i is associated with the large number of Chicanos, residents who have lived in the United States or Hawai'i for over two decades, and Mexicans who have intermarried with other ethnic groups that tend to be English proficient. However, civilians who are first-generation immigrants, newer arrivals to the United States, and those who do not hold professional jobs have limited English proficiency or speak only Spanish. Nearly half of survey participants (49 percent) needed an interpreter. Most of these respondents indicated a need for interpretation at hospitals and schools; others needed interpreters at government offices, courts and police stations, and at their workplace. Overall, only 9 percent of participants said they do not speak Spanish at home or work, though this is not a direct indicator of English proficiency. A little less than half, 48 percent, speak Spanish both at home and work, and 43 percent speak Spanish only at home.

B. Education

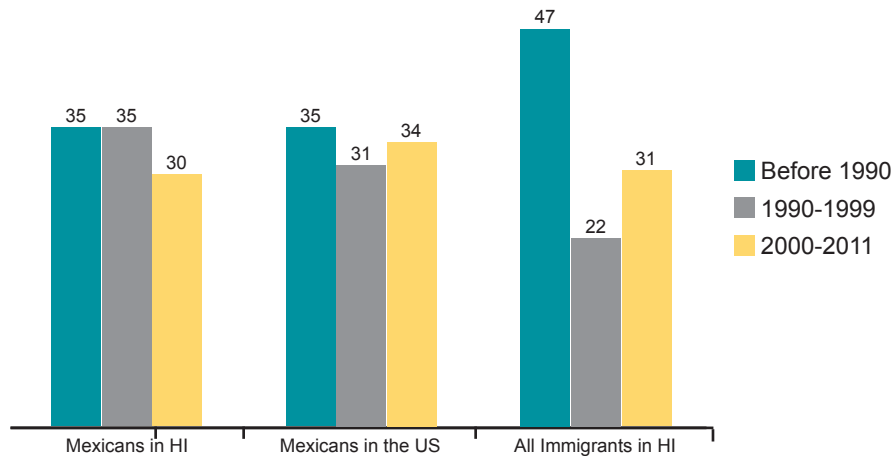
Regardless of nativity, Mexican adults (ages 25 and older) in Hawai'i are far better educated than Mexicans nationally. Especially, the contrast is apparent in the case of US-born Mexicans: 68 percent of US-born adults of Mexican origin in Hawai'i had at least some college education in the 2009-11 period, just



above the share for all US-born residents of Hawai'i (64 percent). By contrast, only 48 percent of Mexicans nationwide had this level of formal education. Only 5 percent of US-born persons of Mexican origin in Hawai'i had less than a high school education, similar to the share for all adults in Hawai'i (7 percent) but significantly below Mexicans nationwide (22 percent).

Mexican immigrants in Hawai'i had substantially higher educational attainment than their counterparts elsewhere in the country, though their educational attainment was below average for immigrants in Hawai'i.

Figure 4. Educational Attainment of Adults (Ages 25 and Older) by Nativity, 2009-11



Source: Authors' analysis of pooled 2009-11 ACS.

This report's qualitative research that focused on civilians also found that the majority of survey participants had at least completed high school. However, both quantitative and qualitative studies under-sampled agricultural workers, especially on the Big Island,³³ where service providers reported that those working in agriculture, and the hotel and hospital industry, had lower levels of education — on average, six years of schooling or less.

Despite relatively higher human capital than those who live in other US states, Mexican immigrants in Hawai'i as a group have not been able to obtain jobs commensurate with their education. Several survey participants reported previous white-collar or professional jobs while living in Mexico, but following immigration to the United States, they could only find work in the lower-paid service sector.

These higher-educated Mexican-origin immigrants are among the 1.5 million-plus college-educated immigrants in the United States whose skills and education go underutilized — a phenomenon called “brain waste” — with substantial costs to both the individual immigrants and their families and state and national economies.³⁴ Brain waste's main risk factors include poor English skills, lack of professional networks, unauthorized status, little or no previous US work experience, as well as difficulties gaining recognition of foreign credentials and lack of effective work-related English classes.³⁵

33 Agricultural workers are under-sampled in this study because the authors visited the Big Island at the height of coffee-picking season, a seasonal time when workers log extended hours, most working seven days a week.

34 Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix with Peter Creticos, *Uneven Progress: The Employment Pathways of Skilled Immigrants in the United States* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2008), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/BrainWasteOct08.pdf.

35 Ibid.



V. Economic Outcomes and Challenges

The next few sections present data from three periods — 2005-06, 2007-09, and 2010-11 — to demonstrate the impact of the Great Recession of 2007-09. The 2005-06 data were collected before the recession started in late 2007, the 2007-09 data captured trends during the recession, while the 2010-11 data represent post-recession trends.

A. Mexicans in the Armed Forces

Given the predominance of military bases in Hawai'i, especially on O'ahu, it is not surprising that the share of the entire state labor force engaged in the military (5 percent in the 2010-11 period) is greater than that of the country overall (0.7 percent). Among the Mexican-origin population in Hawai'i, this share was much higher: About 17 percent of those ages 16 and older were in the US military in the 2010-11 period, compared to less than 0.5 percent of Mexicans in the United States overall. One explanation could be that the recession prompted some to join the military:³⁶ whereas 11 percent of Mexicans in Hawai'i reported being in the armed forces in the prerecession years of 2005-06, this figure grew to 14 percent by 2007-09 and rose to 17 percent in the 2010-11 period.

B. Civilian Labor Force Participation and Employment

Mexicans in Hawai'i have a relatively high employment rate. The civilian labor force participation rate³⁷ of Mexican civilian adults ages 16 and older in Hawai'i was 74 percent in the 2010-11 period, just below the 76 percent rate in both the 2007-09 and 2005-06 periods (see Table 5). The Mexican civilian employment rate was higher than the rate for all adults in the state in all three periods (65-66 percent), and was also higher than for Mexicans nationwide.

Table 5. Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates of Civilian Adults, Ages 16 and Older, 2005-06, 2007-09, and 2010-11

	Mexicans in Hawai'i			Mexicans in the United States			Adults in Hawai'i		
	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06
Total civilian population	20,000	22,000	18,000	22,497,000	20,560,000	19,132,000	1,029,000	969,000	959,000
Number in civilian labor force	15,000	17,000	13,000	15,463,000	14,433,000	13,249,000	679,000	644,000	619,000
Percent in labor force	74	76	76	69	70	69	66	66	65
Percent unemployed	10	10	4	12	9	8	7	5	4

Notes: This excludes those in group quarters.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census Bureau's pooled 2005-06, 2007-09, and 2010-11 ACS.

36 There might be an alternative explanation, i.e., a large number of military personnel of returned and/or were relocated to bases in Hawai'i from abroad or elsewhere in the United States since the mid-2000s.

37 Sections describing labor force, industry, and poverty characteristics of the Mexican population are based on the civilian population only. Respondents serving in the armed forces or residing in group quarters are excluded. The labor force participation rate represents the share of those employed or looking for work among the civilian population ages 16 and older.



The unemployment rate of adults ages 16 and older in Hawai'i overall increased between the 2005-06 and 2010-11 periods (from 4 percent to 7 percent), but it was lower than the national unemployment rate in both time periods (6 percent in 2005-06 and 10 percent in 2010-11), respectively. However, not all groups in Hawai'i were sheltered from the recession's impact. The unemployment rates of Mexican-origin adults ages 16 and older in Hawai'i more than doubled between the 2005-06 and 2007-09 periods, from 4 percent to 10 percent (see Table 5) and remained at the 10 percent mark by the 2010-11 period. It should be noted that the unemployment rate for Mexican adults was lower in Hawai'i than nationwide in 2005-06 and 2010-11, although the gap narrowed substantially by the 2010-11 period.

C. *The Impact of the 2007-09 Recession on the Industry of Employment*

Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics³⁸ suggest that Hawai'i fared better than most states throughout the recession and early post-recession periods. The state's 6 percent unemployment rate in September 2010 was about 3 percentage points below the national average, and only the small, mostly rural states of Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Hampshire, and Vermont had lower rates. Despite this, Mexicans in Hawai'i may have been disproportionately affected by the relatively mild slowdown in the state because so many worked in construction and service industries. The overall Mexican labor force fell slightly from 15,000 to 13,400 between the 2007-09 and 2010-11 periods.

Mexicans in Hawai'i may have been disproportionately affected by the relatively mild slowdown in the state because so many worked in construction and service industries.

Shifts occurred in the types of industries Mexican-origin workers were employed in before, during, and after the recession. The losses of employment in construction were the most profound. Whereas 21 percent were engaged in construction in the 2005-06 period, only 15 percent worked in that industry by the 2007-09 period and just 11 percent by 2010-11 (see Table 6). The share of those employed in manufacturing also dropped (from 5 percent in 2005-06 to 2 percent in 2007-09 to less than 1 percent in 2010-11). At the same time, the share employed in wholesale and retail trade increased from 11 percent (2005-06) to 15 percent (2007-09) but then declined to 13 percent by 2010-11. The share employed in public administration nearly tripled between pre-recession and recession periods (from 3 percent in 2005-06 to 9 percent in both 2007-09 and 2010-11 periods). Mexicans in Hawai'i did not appear to lose much ground in the tourism-related industry (which includes hospitality and entertainment, certain retail trade and some ground and air transportation), but it is likely that there were some shifts within this broad industry group that we could not discern with available data.

38 Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Regional and State Employment and Unemployment Summary," (news release, September 16, 2011), www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.nr0.htm.

**Table 6. Industries of Employment of Adults 16 and Older, 2005-06, 2007-09 and 2010-11 2008-09**

	Mexicans in Hawai'i			Mexicans in the United States			Adults in Hawai'i		
	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06	Post-recession 2010-11	Recession 2007-09	Pre-recession 2005-06
Total civilian employed	13,400	15,000	12,800	13,531,500	13,158,100	12,187,800	628,800	609,600	591,800
Hospitality and entertainment	28	21	22	14	13	12	16	15	15
Wholesale and retail trade	13	15	11	15	14	14	14	14	15
Construction	11	15	21	11	14	16	7	8	8
Health care	9	7	5	6	5	5	8	8	7
Professional, scientific, and management services	9	10	9	10	10	9	10	10	10
Public administration	9	9	3	3	3	3	9	8	9
Educational and social services	8	10	9	9	8	8	13	12	12
Finance, insurance, and real estate	4	3	4	4	4	4	7	7	7
Transportation and utilities	4	4	4	4	4	4	6	6	6
Information and communications	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2
Agriculture, forestry, and mining	1	1	1	5	4	4	2	2	1
Manufacturing	0	2	5	12	12	14	3	3	3
Other industries	3	2	4	5	5	5	5	4	5

Notes: This excludes those in group quarters. *It is likely that hard-to-reach populations such as those engaged in agriculture are undercounted.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census Bureau's pooled 2005-06, 2007-09, and 2010-11 ACS.

During the 2010-11 period, more than half of Mexicans in Hawai'i were employed in three industry groups: hospitality and entertainment (28 percent), wholesale and retail trade (13 percent), and construction (11 percent).

Hospitality and trade were also the top two industries of employment of all workers in Hawai'i. Of the state's nearly 628,800 workers, about 16 percent were employed in hospitality, 14 percent in wholesale and retail trade, and 13 percent in education and social services. Interestingly, for the overall workforce, there were virtually no major employment sector shifts between 2005-06 and 2010-11.

Fieldwork conducted for this report revealed that industry patterns vary from island to island. On O'ahu, where the majority of Mexicans live, survey and interview data indicated that Mexicans are found in professional services, construction, landscaping, food service, and housecleaning; they also own small businesses such as restaurants or drywall companies. Unlike on Maui, hardly any Mexicans work in O'ahu's hotel industry.



On Maui, hotels and restaurants in Kihei, Lahaina, and Ka'anapali employ Mexican workers. As plantations started to close in the 1990s, Mexican workers started to transition from agriculture to hotel and other tourism-related jobs. During this period of decline in plantation-based jobs, Mexicans also moved from Moloka'i to Maui in search of service industry jobs. Because of this history, Mexicans have a presence in the hotel and hospitality industry in Maui, and the union has a number of Mexicans members.³⁹ Construction and landscaping are also sectors in which Mexicans work on Maui, and Mexicans work in agriculture in upcountry Maui in and around Makawao.

Agriculture is still a significant sector of employment on the Big Island, with the major agricultural products being coffee, papaya, and macadamia nuts. Hawai'i is the only coffee-growing state in the United States. At the turn of the 20th century, Japanese tenant farmers made coffee production commercially viable. However, by the mid-1980s, third-generation Japanese Americans were no longer interested in farming coffee, creating a labor vacuum that Mexicans, other Latino workers, and Micronesians filled.⁴⁰ On the Big Island, the then-president of the Kailua-Kona-based Organization of Latin Americans in Hawai'i (OLAH) told the authors in a 2010 interview that Mexicans represent an estimated 80 percent of the workforce in coffee farms. Workers from Mexico are recruited for this industry through the H2-A visa program, although a number of workers' rights violations have been reported.⁴¹ Interviewees said that many coffee workers live on the farms in housing provided by employers because they cannot afford rents on the open market. This housing situation in remote, rural, and mountainous areas is a likely factor for what the authors think is an undercount of the Mexican population in Hawai'i, particularly in rural areas on islands other than O'ahu, as well as an explanation for the implausibly a small share of Mexican workers (only 1 percent) employed in agriculture (as reported in Table 6). Mexicans also work in nurseries, and vegetable and fruit farms in Ka'u and Kohala, and papaya farms in the Puna district. Employment in the tourist sector is concentrated in Kailua-Kona and Waikoloa.

In general, the concentration of Mexican workers in construction and tourism-related industries meant that these workers were disproportionately affected by the recession. Mexicans share this vulnerability with other workers who work in these sectors.⁴² The fact that tourism is the state's major economic engine, and the reliance of the construction sector on tourism-related development, make these two industries flashpoints for tensions over job loss when the economy is not performing well. Respondents reported that they had experienced these tensions not only as workers struggling to survive in a state with one of the highest costs of living but also as an ethnic minority group perceived to be perpetual foreigners, unauthorized, and linguistically and culturally different — and therefore not "local." The combination of the difficulty of finding and keeping a job and coping with hostility stemming from job competition prompted some Maui survey respondents to consider relocating to the US mainland or returning to Mexico, though this study does not estimate how many have eventually done so.

39 Authors' interview with UNITE HERE! Local 5 leader and treasurer Eric Gill, October 28, 2010.

40 Catherine Kekoa Enomoto, "A New Generation of Latino Immigrants Harvest Hawaii's Golden Crop," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 17, 1997, <http://archives.starbulletin.com/97/11/17/features/story1.html>.

41 In 2009, the US Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour Division investigated charges brought by the San Francisco Mexican Consulate on behalf of Mexican H2-A employees of the Kona Coffee Company. The agricultural workers had complained that the company violated the wage and hour protections that the H2-A program provided by guaranteeing a minimum hourly wage, and guaranteed hours of work. DOL was successful in 2011 in getting the company to pay \$25,290 in back wages to 24 Mexican nationals, and \$21,000 in penalties. See DOL, Wage and Hour Division, "Hawaii-Based Kona Coffee Grounds Pays More than \$25,000 in Back Wages to Migrant Workers Following US Labor Department Investigation," (news release, October 12, 2011), www.dol.gov/whd/media/press/whdpressVB3.asp?pressdoc=Western/20111012.xml.

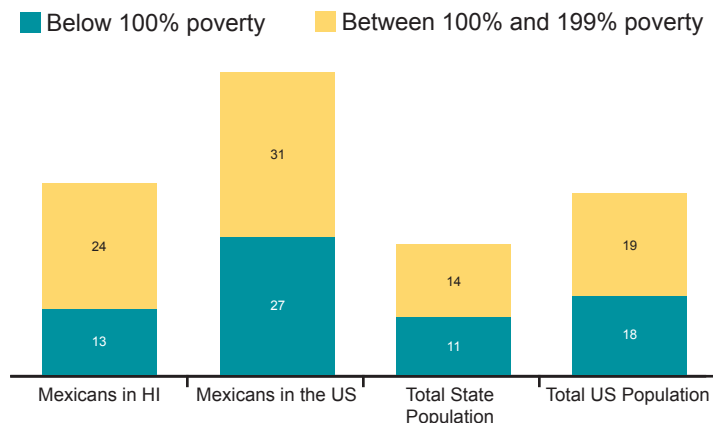
42 Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i*.



D. Economic Well-Being

Before, during, and after the recession, Mexicans in Hawai'i had a slightly higher poverty rate than the overall population in this state. In 2010-11, 13 percent of the state's Mexican population had family incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level⁴³ compared to 11 percent of the total state population (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Poverty and Low-Income Rates, 2010-11



Notes: Excludes those living in group quarters. For comparison, 12 percent of Mexican-origin population was in poverty in 2005-06 and 14 percent in 2007-09.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census Bureau's pooled 2010-11 ACS.

But the poverty rate of Mexican-origin population in Hawai'i was much lower than that for Mexicans in the United States overall (27 percent) and also somewhat lower than the rate for the entire US population (16 percent). Mexicans in Hawai'i also were less likely to live in families with annual incomes between 100 percent and 200 percent of federal poverty level (24 percent) than Mexicans in the United States as a whole (31 percent).

However, the poverty level does not take into account variations in the cost of living across the United States. Because the cost of living in Hawai'i is high relative to many other places in the continental United States, these relatively low federal poverty and low-income rates may understate the economic hardship faced by Mexicans in Hawai'i. Perhaps a more telling indicator of economic well-being is home ownership. Mexicans in Hawai'i have a relatively low homeownership rate due to a combination of the high property costs and their low incomes relative to other groups in the state. This report found that only 36 percent of Mexicans in Hawai'i lived in their own houses in the 2010-11 period, compared to 51 percent of Mexicans in the United States as a whole and 61 percent of the state's total population.

VI. Building a Community: Opportunities and Challenges

Despite the presence of Mexicans on the islands since the 1980s, the authors' field research did not reveal substantial development in the social institutions necessary for community building beyond what Shinseki found in his 1997 research.⁴⁴ Ethnic institutions, ethnic media, and channels of advocacy have not dramatically expanded, indicating that this newcomer community is still struggling with building social and political institutions outside of the community's main support systems: the family and the church.

⁴³ The federal poverty level varies depending on the number of adults and children in a family. In 2010, the federal poverty level, as defined by the US Census Bureau, was on average \$22,314 for a family of four; \$17,374 for a family of three; \$14,218 for a family of two; and \$11,139 for single individuals. For more see, US Census Bureau, "Poverty Thresholds, 2010," www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html.

⁴⁴ Shinseki, *El Pueblo Mexicano de Hawaii*.



While Mexicans work and live in multi-ethnic environments — undoubtedly a positive trend in community integration — this has interfered with development of a distinct identity for Mexican community. Another factor that has stood in the way of community building is the cleavage between US-born Chicanos and more recently arrived Mexican immigrants, whose social worlds often do not overlap.

To respond to these challenges, new leadership has emerged within the community. Interviewees reported that they have participated in “Know Your Rights” training, and language access training. In February 2013, the University of Hawai‘i’s Board of Regents (BOR), as a result of student activism, unanimously adopted a policy that would grant in-state tuition to unauthorized immigrant students.⁴⁵ Unauthorized youth of Mexican origin testified in person during the hearings the BOR held in Honolulu (O‘ahu), Kahului (Maui), and Hilo (the Big Island) between October 2012 and February 2013.

A. Social Institutions as Community Building Blocks

Mexican residents in Hawai‘i have developed their sense of community around families, recreational and religious institutions, and civic organizations. Although these institutions have been instrumental for Mexicans to develop networks for housing, employment opportunities, and assistance with police harassment, detention, and deportation, the community’s self-representation and self-advocacy remain weak. Many interviewees and survey participants said they support additional collective endeavors to voice the community’s needs to governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

Churches and soccer clubs function as the most important socializing and networking institutions outside the family. In these contexts, participants not only described their identities in national terms but also embraced a pan-ethnic Latino identity to express common cause and cultural commonality with other immigrants from Central and South America. Since Mexicans tend to work with people from non-Latino backgrounds,⁴⁶ they are more likely to connect with *paisanos* (compatriots) at church or soccer fields. Among study participants, 57 percent worked with other Latinos, but 86 percent reported spending their leisure time outside of work with other Latinos and *paisanos*. The role churches play goes beyond Spanish-language masses and includes connecting congregants to services, supporting families affected by deportation, and conducting domestic violence prevention work.

Mexican residents in Hawai‘i have developed their sense of community around families, recreational and religious institutions, and civic organizations.

Soccer fields offer a different kind of social space, though they too are not just recreational but also places to gather, exchange news, and network. The game is dominated by men, but women and children come to socialize. Like churches, soccer fields offer Mexicans the opportunity to mingle with residents from other parts of Latin America. Unlike the Spanish-language masses, soccer allows Mexicans to interact with other ethnic groups — usually Asian — outside their workplace. Soccer has enabled Mexicans to cross a number of social divisions, including social class lines within the community.

⁴⁵ With this ruling, the state of Hawai‘i has joined 13 other states, including California, Texas, New York, and Maryland, that provide in-state tuition rights to eligible unauthorized residents.

⁴⁶ Okamura, analyzing the census data from 2000, shows that Native Hawaiians, Filipino Americans, and Samoans were concentrated in construction, hospitality, and retail. These are the sectors that also employ Mexicans. While data from the 2010 census have not been analyzed, Okamura has argued that the occupational patterns of these ethnic groups have held steady since statehood. See Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i* (47-48). In agriculture, Mexicans work with Micronesians, Tongans, and first-generation immigrants from Thailand and the Philippines.



Civic organizations constitute a third type of institution in which Mexicans are involved.⁴⁷ Most of these organizations promote culture but some also play a critical role as advocates and service providers. On O‘ahu, events that were the most publicized in the larger Honolulu community were organized by the editor of the monthly newspaper, *Hawai‘i Hispanic News*, which circulates on O‘ahu and neighboring islands. However, the English-language paper is not widely read by Mexican nationals, who appear more comfortable with Spanish-language media that cover news from Mexico. The activities organized through *Hispanic News* include mixers that connect Latino entrepreneurs with the larger business community. In 2010, political candidates were invited to the mixers.

Revived and reformed in 2004, the Organization of Latin Americans in Hawai‘i (OLAH), based in Kailua-Kona, is the only membership-based Latino-led organization in the state. It combines cultural programming, community building, and immigrant-rights advocacy. The organization’s goal is to develop an awareness of the diverse cultures of Central and South America, and also work on issues that Latinos face locally. The center connects community members to services, though does not offer any of its own. Significantly, OLAH successfully negotiated with the coffee growers’ associations in Kona in 2010 to recognize the contributions of the Mexican-majority labor force at the Kona Coffee Grand Parade. And OLAH has worked to build alliances with Tongan families who face some of the same challenges as the Mexican residents — a form of cross-ethnic coalition building with a population that contends with similar problems.

Maui Economic Opportunity started the Enlace Hispano program in 1999 to provide a range of free services to clients in order to facilitate their access to housing and health care, and to help them negotiate with government offices and schools.⁴⁸ Enlace Hispano provides cultural competency training to the Maui police, and has developed a program to cut down tobacco use in the community. It also hosted its first festival in 2010, *Somos Amigos* (“We Are Friends”), showcasing Latino culture and food to bridge the gap between Latinos and other ethnic communities on Maui.

Other organizations work on immigration and enforcement issues. For example, Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), though not Latino-led, has worked over the past few years to include Latino residents and their issues in its advocacy. It has organized several rights education trainings. In April 2009, FACE-Maui was part of the members of the clergy who met with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) chief counsel in Honolulu to protest what it believes to be the agency’s profiling of Latinos on the islands. The event spurred a meeting with politicians running for office to discuss the impact of enforcement on the community. The group conducted a petition drive to protest the use of driving under the influence traffic stops to arrest those without documents. A number of people the authors surveyed on Maui had attended its “know your rights” workshops and were active in the organization.

On all three islands, participants expressed the need to develop a greater range of Latino-led community-based organizations that would give voice to the needs and issues of the community and act as an advocate. However, lack of funding for community-based organizations, as well as the magnitude of the community’s problems, have made it difficult to create a strong institutional infrastructure; however, this is essential for successful immigrant integration.

B. Context of Reception and Integration

While Hawai‘i takes pride in the cultural diversity that immigration has introduced to the islands, the public sentiment on the islands, especially toward the newcomer Mexican community, has not always been welcoming.

47 Unlike many Mexican communities on the rest of the country, residents of Hawai‘i have not formed hometown associations that, as recent US scholarship has shown, not only lend the community its transnational character but also nurture their habits of civic participation. See Alejandro Portes, Cristina Escobar, and Alexandria Walton Radford, “Immigrant Transnational Organizations and Development: A Comparative Study,” *International Migration Review*, 41, no. 1 (2007): 242–81.

48 Ruth Mantell, “Enlace Hispano Helps Hispanics Adjust to Maui Life,” *Pacific Business News*, May 15, 2003, www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2003/05/19/smallb3.html.



I. Immigration and Local Law Enforcement

The authors' research found that compared to other immigrant groups, the Mexican community in Hawai'i has been disproportionately targeted for detention and deportation. Immigration raids and removals have been a part of the experience of this community since the mid-1990s, when the then Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) raided businesses and homes.⁴⁹ Enforcement has escalated since 2006, especially on Maui. Over the past few years, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has engaged in highly publicized large-scale workplace raids, apprehensions at workplaces following reports by co-workers, visits and raids on homes in the community, and apprehensions via traffic checkpoints set up by local police. The worksite raids that got the most media coverage occurred in 2007, mostly on O'ahu and Maui. In addition to these publicized raids, study participants reported arrests and apprehensions of pedestrians, drivers, and even passengers who "look" Mexican.

Public sentiment on the islands, especially toward the newcomer Mexican community, has not always been welcoming.

The community advocates interviewed for this study maintained that Mexicans are more visible than immigrants in other ethnic groups to local law enforcement officers as well as federal immigration authorities. Data on immigration court proceedings and deportations appear to buttress this claim. The Department of Justice's Executive Office of Immigration Review data show that of the 767 proceedings received by the Honolulu immigration court in fiscal year 2011 (the majority of which are removal proceedings),⁵⁰ Mexican nationals accounted for the second largest number of court cases (168 or 22 percent) following immigrants from China (185 or 24 percent). Nationals of the Philippines represented the third-largest group (154 or 20 percent). However, whereas the relative numbers of unauthorized Mexicans and Chinese are roughly similar (10-12 percent), both groups are far behind those from the Philippines who account for 40 percent of the state's total unauthorized population. Similarly, deportation data show that Mexican nationals experience greater exposure to immigration enforcement than an ethnic group (Filipinos) that had many more unauthorized migrants. Between April 2007 and March 2008 (the latest period for which the deportation data are available), Mexicans represented the largest group of detainees who were deported or voluntarily departed from the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu (176 of 314 detainees, or 56 percent).⁵¹ Filipinos represented the distant second-largest group, with 36 persons who were deported or accepted voluntary departure.

The Secure Communities program was activated on O'ahu in April 2010 and on Maui and the Big Island in September 2010.⁵² Secure Communities requires local law enforcement to share fingerprints with ICE to identify whether a person in police custody has a civil immigration violation. ICE's explicitly stated goal in introducing the program is to ensure that "... criminal aliens are not released back into communities. *Top*

49 Shinseki, *El Pueblo Mexicano de Hawaii*.

50 US Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review, *Honolulu Immigration Court Proceedings Received by Nationality, FY 2002-2012* (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2012); US Department of Justice and Executive Office of Immigration Review, *FY 2011 Statistical Year Book*, accessed January 10, 2013 www.justice.gov/eoir/statspub/fy11syb.pdf. The majority all of the cases are removal proceedings, however, the overall case number also includes asylum requests and other court proceedings. Data show that the total cases received by the Honolulu immigration court went up by 66 percent between fiscal year (FY) 2007 and 2008 (from 886 to 1,395) then dropped slightly to 1,113 in FY 2009, and decreased further to 785 in FY 2010 and to 767 in FY 2011, to pre-2008 levels.

51 See Transactional Records Access Clearing House (TRAC), "Detainees Leaving ICE Detention from the Honolulu Federal Detention Center," TRAC Immigration, 2010 (Syracuse, NY: TRAC, 2010) <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/detention/200803/BOPHON/exit/>.

52 Hawai'i entered a Secure Communities agreement between the Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in March 2010; initially described by the federal government as a voluntary program, it was later made mandatory and has been deployed in virtually all of the nation's 3,181 jails. For the initial agreement, see ICE, "Memorandum of Agreement between US Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Hawaii Criminal Justice Data Center" (Washington, DC: ICE, 2010), www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/secure_communities-moa/r_hawaii_4-18-10.pdf.



priority [authors' emphasis] is given to individuals who pose a threat to public safety, such as those with prior convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping." However, in Hawai'i, as well as across the United States, Secure Communities has been used to carry out the removal of many immigrants with minor criminal offenses or without any criminal convictions at all.⁵³

Prior to the 2010 Secure Communities launch, Hawai'i did not have any type of official agreement permitting cooperation between ICE and the state or local police for the enforcement of immigration laws. However, local police were involved in a number of large-scale and high-profile raids on O'ahu and Maui at construction sites, housing complexes, and restaurants before 2010.⁵⁴ A spate of arrests of Mexicans residents occurred in September 2009 at traffic checkpoints set up by the Maui police during which ICE agents, also on site, took into custody those who could not produce proof of legal residence.

Mexicans represented the largest group of detainees who were deported or voluntarily departed from the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu.

Just after Secure Communities was initiated in Hawai'i in 2010, bills to authorize ICE agents to conduct state and local policing functions were introduced in the state legislature in 2011 and 2012. None of these bills passed, however.⁵⁵

The incidents that community leaders, service providers, and survey participants discussed highlighted the shared feeling of racial profiling in immigration enforcement on all three islands, and a history of cooperation between the police and federal immigration authorities several years before Hawai'i entered into the Secure Communities agreement. The community advocates interviewed for this survey maintained that the local police and ICE have targeted Mexican-origin US citizens and noncitizens, including lawful permanent residents, on the basis of their appearance, language, place of residence (on Maui and the Big Island), type of workplace, and identification documents. Local police is not alone in actively engaging in immigration enforcement. The media widely covered a case in which whistleblowers alleged that two Transportation Security Authority (TSA) agents were regularly "profiling" Mexican-looking travelers at the Honolulu airport.⁵⁶ According to the whistleblowers, the two TSA agents, trained to detect potential terrorists, mostly focused their attention on targeting Mexican travelers to determine if they are in the country illegally. TSA launched an official internal investigation in late 2011. When TSA announced that it found no evidence to support the allegations, the Mexican Embassy and the Mexican Consulate in

53 Randy Capps, Marc R. Rosenblum, Cristina Rodríguez, and Muzaffar Chishti, *Delegation and Divergence: A Study of 287(g) State and Local Immigration Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/287g-divergence.pdf.

54 For instance, on O'ahu in 2007, nine workers were arrested at a downtown construction site at which the contractor was suspected of employing unauthorized Mexican nationals, and, in a separate raid, 11 workers were arrested at a warehouse in Halawa. On Maui, an operation in May 2008 coordinated the raids and arrests of 22 Mexican workers at three restaurants. There were two separate raids within a month of each other in August and September of 2008 at the Honua Kai construction site at Ka'anapali. For a map of the locations see: www.honolulumagazine.com/Honolulu-Magazine/April-2009/Undocumented/index.php?cparticle=1&siarticle=0#artanc. Honolulu Advertiser Staff, "Feds Arrest 19 Illegal Workers in Hawaii," *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 20, 2007, <http://the.honoluloadvertiser.com/article/2007/Dec/20/In/hawaii712200378.html>; Pacific Business News, "Feds Grab 22 Illegal Maui Restaurant Workers," Pacific Business News, May 8, 2008. www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2008/05/05/daily48.html.

55 The 2011 bills introduced in the Hawai'i state legislature were HB 1008 HD2SD1, and SB 676. In 2012, three more bills (HB 2466, SB 1235, and SB 2728) were introduced.

56 Keorri Kerr, "TSA Whistleblowers: HNL Screeners Target Mexicans, TSA Employees Complain of Racial Profiling," KITV News, November 8, 2011, www.kitv.com/TSA-Whistleblowers-HNL-Screeners-Target-Mexicans/-/8906042/5339010/-/4s0uk3z/-/index.html#ixzz2MnTYrSAB.



San Francisco sent official letters to TSA requesting an independent investigation. Numerous civil-rights organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union, demanded an independent probe into possible profiling at other airports as well.⁵⁷

At the same time that immigration enforcement activities were increasing, the already inadequate pool of pro bono and affordable legal service providers in Hawai'i competent to handle a Spanish-speaking clientele shrank. As of January 2013, only one legal office that deals with asylum cases was listed on the US Department of Justice's list of free legal service providers,⁵⁸ following the folding in 2008 of Nā Loio, the premier nonprofit that provided legal support and representation to low-income immigrants. The legal clinic at the University of Hawai'i was discontinued in the summer of 2010; it has been revived in 2013 to take on a limited number of pro bono cases. The few lawyers who represented immigration detainees now carry substantial caseloads. The lack of immigration lawyers experienced in handling detention and deportation issues is particularly acute on Maui and the Big Island. The problem is not only one of shortage but also that of the lack of competent Spanish-speaking lawyers who understand the difficulties posed by air travel from the islands to the mainland, and the inter-island reach of the immigration enforcement system that transports detainees from neighboring islands to Honolulu, cutting them off from their support systems. To respond to these challenges, the San Francisco Mexican consulate (which oversees Hawai'i because the state does not have its own consulate) has contracted two Spanish-speaking lawyers with extensive experience and practice of immigration, civil, family, and criminal law. Although one lawyer is based on O'ahu and the other on the Big Island, both have practices and represent clients in other parts of the state.

The lack of immigration lawyers experienced in handling detention and deportation issues is particularly acute on Maui and the Big Island.

2. Driver's Licenses

Study participants reported that state regulations governing the issue of driver's licenses pose one of the biggest problems for Mexicans on every island. In 2010, Hawai'i began requiring proof of legal presence for driver's license applicants.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the English-only availability of the driver's test makes it difficult even for some lawful residents and others with limited English skills who are eligible to take the test. Unlike states such as California, Hawai'i does not offer the written part of the driver's test in Spanish.⁶⁰ In addition, Limited English Proficient (LEP) applicants are generally not allowed to use a translator.

On Maui and the Big Island, where public transportation is not as frequent as on O'ahu, driving is essential. Mexican residents in Kihei and the Lahaina area who live near their workplaces reported that they can walk to their jobs. Despite the efforts these residents made to not break the law by driving without a

57 Jennifer Sinco Kelleher, "TSA Investigation: No Racial Profiling at Honolulu Airport," The Associated Press, April 14, 2012, <http://mauinews.com/page/content.detail/id/560147/TSA-investigation--No-racial-profiling-at-Honolulu-airport.html?nav=5031>.

58 US Department of Justice and the Executive Office of Immigration Review, "Free Legal Services Providers List, Updated October 2012, Honolulu Immigration Court," accessed January 10, 2013, www.justice.gov/eoir/probono/freelglchtHI.pdf.

59 National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "Enacted Immigrant Related Law and Resolutions: January-June 2010," (Washington, DC: NCSL, 2011), accessed October 14, 2011, www.ncsl.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=HvbCBDNnewM%3d&abid=20881. See State of Hawai'i, Department of Transportation, "List of Acceptable Documents - Hawaii Driver's License," <http://hawaii.gov/dot/list-of-acceptable-documents-2013-hawaii-driver2019s-license>.

60 It used to be the case that prospective applicants could take the test in Vietnamese, Tongan, Samoan, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Tagalog (which were discontinued as of October 2008), but Spanish has never been an option.



license, some interviewees reported that police would regularly stop and check the legal status of pedestrians. The fact that Mexicans are dispersed across the islands means they have to drive to churches and soccer fields, or to access services such as those offered by the Mexican mobile consulate. For those lacking a license, the dispersal functions to isolate them and cut them off from needed services or to expose them to enforcement.

In Hawai'i, the only mode of travel from one island to another, and to the continental United States, is by air. In the post-9/11 era, domestic air travel requires photo identification, the most commonly used form being a driver's license. Other forms of identification accepted at airports for noncitizens are a current passport with proof of authorized entry into the United States, or proof of lawful permanent residency. Unauthorized Mexican nationals, even those eligible to adjust their status, reported that they are unable fly to another island for critical services, such as complicated medical treatments and USCIS appointments.

3. Language Needs and Access

Unlike California, Arizona, Texas, and New York, where many study participants previously lived, Hawai'i does not provide government documents and forms in Spanish. These documents are available in a number of Asian and Pacific languages since these groups have larger numbers of LEP speakers. The top five languages among LEP residents in the state were Ilokano, Tagalog, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. Spanish ranked sixth.⁶¹ Almost half of study participants said that they had been in situations in which they needed an interpreter when attempting to access services (i.e., federal, state, and nonprofit assistance with social, medical, and economic needs in addition to public assistance). Hospitals, schools, and government offices were the most frequent sites at which this assistance was required. Friends, spouses, and community members were the most frequent resources survey respondents used for interpretation. Respondents reported that their limited English skills interfered with their ability to access health care, interact with public school administrators and teachers, and be adequately represented and follow their cases in criminal and immigration courts. On all three islands, service providers strongly felt that competent and culturally attuned translation and interpretation had determined the outcomes of legal cases, requests for service, and applications for public assistance by eligible residents. However, state budget cuts have severely limited the resources available for such assistance.

Those who spoke only Spanish or had limited English skills told us they wanted to learn English, but that most of the adult education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs offered through the Department of Education required social security numbers. Only three adult education programs — one on Maui, one in Kona, and one in the immigrant-majority neighborhood of Waipahu, O'ahu — did not require a social security number. The requirement for a social security number as well as the lack of affordable classes run by nonprofits that offer learning opportunities for working-class adult students greatly impairs the ability of LEP Mexican residents to incorporate into the society in which they live and work. Even though Mexicans want to become an integral part of the communities in which they live, language barriers prevent them from doing so.

4. Negative Perceptions about the Mexican Community

Participants who discussed issues of discrimination at work said they felt pushed out by their Filipino and Native Hawaiian co-workers, two groups overrepresented in the service and construction sectors.⁶² While these jobs are concentrated at the lower rungs of the occupational scale, unionization in the hotel and construction industry has secured and maintained better pay and benefits in these sectors compared with many other US cities, making these jobs attractive.

61 Serafin Colmenares, "Who and Where are Hawai'i's LEP Population," (Discussion paper presented at the 3rd Hawaii Annual Conference on Language Access, Honolulu, August 26, 2010).

62 Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i*.



The result, as many survey participants and in-depth interviewees clearly indicated, is that Mexican residents, regardless of their immigration status, are regularly scapegoated for taking away jobs from “local” residents. Mexican workers in the construction trades felt under attack as a group during and after the highly-publicized ICE worksite raids in 2007 and 2008 on O’ahu and Maui. Around the same time, the Pacific Resource Partnership, the lobbying and research arm of the Hawai’i Carpenters Union, sponsored a television ad implying that unauthorized immigrants working in the construction industry were driving down the wages and standards in the industry.⁶³ During this time, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades tried to identify unauthorized workers on construction sites on the basis of whether they spoke English or not.⁶⁴

Adding to these tensions over jobs were tensions between Mexicans and other residents concerning marriage and family relationships. According to several participants, Mexican men were accused of “taking away our women” — a reference to Mexican men who have married local women. Respondents reported that such tensions have been a part of the Mexican community experience in Hawai’i for a long time but the recent recession only aggravated them.

Mexican residents, regardless of their immigration status, are regularly scapegoated for taking away jobs from “local” residents.

Participants reported that speaking Spanish or speaking accented English contributes to their marginalization. They gave many examples of their perception that these markers of difference trigger disrespectful treatment received in government offices, doctor’s offices, police stations, restaurants, and on the street and in stores.

5. Consular Services

Hawai’i does not have a permanent Mexican consulate, and Mexican nationals living in the state fall under the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Consulate. The San Francisco Consulate is tasked with serving Hawai’i, and continues to work around the logistical challenges posed by the insular nature of the state and its distance from the continental United States. As the population of Mexican nationals on the islands has increased, the need for consular support has grown. To respond to the increased demand and to the difficulties, as well as the expense of travel, the San Francisco Consulate initiated mobile consular services in 2002. The mobile consulate, which visits each island at least once a year, allows residents of Hawai’i to locally apply for or renew documents issued by the Mexican government.

The San Francisco Consulate has committed substantial resources toward programs aimed at protecting the rights of its nationals in Hawai’i and raising the general population’s awareness of this population’s presence. As mentioned earlier, the Mexican consulate in San Francisco provides some pro bono services to Mexican nationals who need legal services and representation with the assistance of two Spanish-speaking lawyers. These attorneys help navigating immigration courts as well as resolving disputes that involve child custody and other family-related issues within the family court system. The consulate has also taken steps to establish and maintain channels of communication with ICE regarding custody of Mexican nationals and has conducted regular consular visits to meet with the governor, state legislators, mayors, and community leaders.

The data collected by the authors focused on the extent to which participants use the services offered by

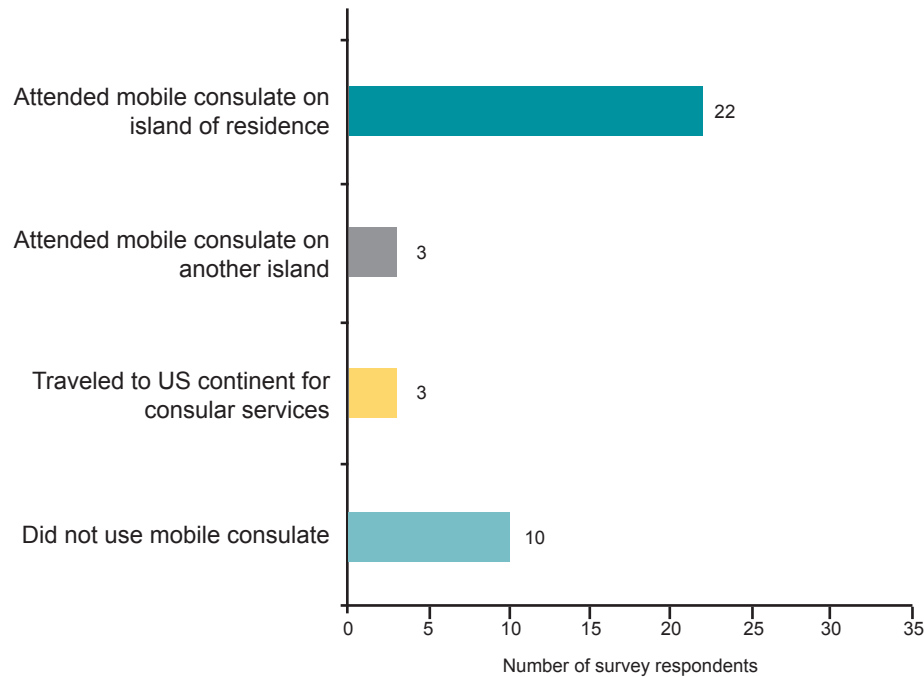
⁶³ Michael Keany, “Undocumented: The State of Illegal Immigration in Hawaii.” *Honolulu Magazine*, April 2009.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*



the mobile consulate (see Figure 6), and whether the annual or biannual visits meet their consular needs. Interviewees were asked whether they saw the need for a permanent consulate in Hawai'i. The authors found that the mobile consulate visits were necessary and well utilized, and that there was a growing need for these services. The increasing caseload of Mexican nationals in need of consular services exceeded the capacity of the voluntary and unpaid services of an honorary consul. Due to the paucity of civil-society organizations rooted in the community, survey participants consider the consulate as one of the strongest advocates of Mexican nationals in the state.

Figure 6. Use of the Mobile Consulate by Survey Respondents, 2010



Source: Authors' analysis of the survey data collected during their qualitative research between September and November 2010.

The authors found that the mobile consulate visits were necessary and well utilized.

More than three-fourths of the 35 participants surveyed said they had used consular services either in Hawai'i or in the consular jurisdiction in which they had lived before moving to Hawai'i. The services were needed to apply for a Mexican passport or matrícula consular, renew passports, register children's births, and apply for dual citizenship. The majority of the participants reported using the mobile consulate on the island on which they lived. Those living in Lahaina or upcountry Maui traveled to the other side of the island to Wailuku, and those on the Hilo side and in Waimea traveled to Kailua-Kona on the Big Island. Of those surveyed, 9 percent traveled to another island to attend a mobile consulate, and another 9 percent traveled to another US state for consular services. The high cost of travel was often mentioned in the context of the convenience of having these services locally available. Altogether, nearly all participants expressed the desire for a permanent consulate in Hawai'i.



VII. Conclusions

Hawai'i is a multi-ethnic state that is often held up as a model of congenial race and ethnic relations captured in the moniker, "the Aloha State." However, the socio-economic status and incorporation of its Mexican-origin residents presents a contradiction. The state's unique status is partly borne out by the fact that Mexicans in Hawai'i have a better socioeconomic profile when compared with their counterparts in the continental United States. At the same time, the increased role of state and county law enforcement agencies in immigration enforcement over recent years parallels the developments in the rest of the United States. In this Asian-majority state, Mexican-origin residents are often perceived as culturally different and, like elsewhere in the United States, associated with illegal immigration.

The Mexican population in Hawai'i differs substantially from the Mexican-origin population nationally in several important ways. The vast majority of Mexicans in Hawai'i are US-born citizens or legally present immigrants. Members of the second- and higher generations have greater levels of formal education and better English skills and, as a result, have more diversified occupations, higher incomes, and lower poverty rates. The one indicator on which Mexicans in Hawai'i fare worse than their counterparts in the rest of the county is home ownership, which is not surprising given the state's high cost of housing.

However, compared to other residents of Hawai'i, Mexicans are often at a disadvantage. Civilian Mexicans are concentrated in blue-collar and service-sector jobs, where they are often underemployed relative to their educational attainment and English-language skills. Although Mexicans are only slightly more likely to live in poverty than state residents on average, they are substantially less likely to own a home. Mexican unemployment has increased compared to prerecession years and is higher than for all residents of Hawai'i. Most interestingly, Mexican residents are not well incorporated into society socially and politically, despite the fact that they live in multiracial neighborhoods and are part of a multiracial workforce. Additionally, the dispersed nature of settlement both within and across islands has posed challenges in terms of building community and civic institutions that are necessary for the Mexican community to develop a strong presence and voice.

Mexican residents are not well incorporated into society socially and politically, despite the fact that they live in multiracial neighborhoods and are part of a multiracial workforce.

The most vulnerable and underserved segment of the Mexican community in Hawai'i is the population of roughly 5,500 Mexican-origin foreign born, most of whom appear to be unauthorized. The Mexican unauthorized population is, according to our best estimates, roughly of the same size as the Chinese unauthorized population and substantially smaller than the top unauthorized immigrant group, Filipinos. Yet, according to interviews for this study with community leaders and detention and deportation data, Mexicans appear to be disproportionately targeted.

Mexicans in Hawai'i, especially first-generation migrants, expressed their interest in integration and learning English. They reported that they are appreciative of the state's unique culture and want to share theirs. Many felt they have assimilated better with the population in Hawai'i than other places they had lived on the US mainland. Despite their marginal position in the ethnic mix in Hawai'i, they asserted their interest in being treated as an integral part of the state, and in that context underlined their contributions



to Hawai'i.⁶⁵

Here the authors identify a number of policy recommendations that stem from the qualitative and quantitative research carried out for this report. The recommendations are directed to the Mexican government and the state of Hawai'i, two entities that can be the most effective in improving the condition of Mexican-origin residents.

A. Mexican Government

In order for the Mexican government to command the attention of the state government and federal agencies based in Hawai'i, it needs a consistent and visible consular presence in Hawai'i. The decision cannot be based solely on the number of Mexican nationals in Hawai'i, because the state will not be able to match the populations of other US states in the Southwest or on the Eastern Seaboard. The decision should be guided by a twin reality. Regulation of US immigration will continue to be driven by a greater emphasis on border, interior, and worksite enforcement combined with an increasing involvement of states and localities in immigration enforcement. And, the Mexican community in Hawai'i is becoming a growing, though still-neglected, part of the state's ethnic landscape, inviting a direct role for the Mexican government. Based on our findings, we recommend the Mexican government:

- Develop short-term and long-term strategies to institutionalize the authority and reach of the Mexican government in Hawai'i through a consulate on the islands. A permanent presence will have to be conceptualized in a way that strengthens and furthers the role that the San Francisco consulate has played long-distance as an advocate for Mexican nationals. It would ease the difficulties that Mexicans face in accessing consular services because of logistical reasons and the regulations governing air travel. Such an institutionalized presence can potentially help moderate locally implemented federal policies as well as those state and local policies that negatively affect Mexican residents. And, it can encourage positive policies that develop the human capital that this community offers.
- Establish a cultural presence through programming, especially because civil-society organizations in the community are still fledgling. While Mexicans in Hawai'i take enormous pride in their culture, they have not been able to develop the infrastructure and resources to consistently showcase it. A permanent consulate through its cultural programming can incubate civil-society organizations and bridge the existing gap between Chicanos and Mexican nationals. Outside of the Mexican community, the consulate, through public diplomacy, can promote an appreciation of Mexico's cultural heritage and its influence in the United States, and can also combat negative stereotypes. In a state that prides itself on its multiculturalism, such a strategy has much potential.
- Create opportunities for Mexican residents to do business with Mexico. A promising step would be to initiate conversations with the Honolulu mayor to identify a sister city in Mexico, and foster trade and cultural exchanges.
- Reach out to the families of youth who are eligible for the DACA initiative. While the number of potentially eligible youth is small (less than 200), with adequate support in assembling the required application materials and covering application and legal fees, the government can create a noticeable impact on the lives of such youth and their families in a community that is strapped for resources.

65 Monisha Das Gupta and Sue P. Haglund, "Mexicans in Hawai'i: Recent Flows, and the Community's Problems and Prospects," (unpublished paper submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexican Government, Mexican Consulate in San Francisco, 2010).



B. State of Hawai'i

We recommend that the state of Hawai'i recognizes that immigrants of Mexican heritage constitute a growing and important newcomer Latino group. The vast majority are US citizens and lawful permanent residents. Neither the group's needs nor prospects have been noticed and addressed at a policy level because its presence is overshadowed by the traditionally Asian character of immigration to Hawai'i. Though immigration is overwhelmingly a federal issue, many scholars and policymakers note that the negative effects of enforcement and the economic and noneconomic costs that result from lack of immigrant integration are borne by the state. While our recommendations focus on improving the integration prospects of Mexican-origin population, they are likely to bring positive spillover benefits for other immigrant and ethnic groups.

We recommend that the state:

- Work with ICE to ensure that the goals of the Secure Communities program are in line with federal immigration policy. This research suggests that the program has not been directed at those who are convicted of major crimes and has discouraged migrants who are victims of crimes from reaching out to local law enforcement. The state needs to systematically assess whether resources for local law enforcement and the criminal justice system that are now involved in civil (immigration) enforcement are being put to good use.
- Investigate the charges of rights violations by police of Mexican-origin residents and take corrective measure to restore the community's confidence in local law enforcement and the state.
- Restore written tests in foreign languages, and include Spanish for driver's license test-taking. California's guidelines for administering the test in languages other than English offer a good model.
- Train state government workers charged with screening a person's immigration status. Because of new state laws requiring identity checks, state government workers need to become familiar with these documents so that they are not denying services and benefits to eligible immigrants and their US-born children.
- Create online opportunities and utilize television programs — strategies used in other states — for LEP residents to learn English.
- Increase funding for the state's Office of Language Access and encourage it to build capacity within the Spanish-speaking community so that it can provide competent and culturally sensitive translation and interpretation services.
- Invest in legal infrastructure and community resources to respond to programs such as DACA or a legalization program if it is passed at the federal level.

C. Prospects

Our research establishes the fact that the Mexican community in Hawai'i is not transient, and the workforce from this ethnic group is not seasonal or temporary. Rather, the community shows settlement patterns that have stretched over two decades. It has grown continuously since the 1990s despite the decline in the agricultural sectors in which the first migrants were recruited to work. Based on these findings, we project that residents of Mexican heritage will be a permanent and evolving part of the state's population. Like other newcomer Mexican communities across the United States, the community will become multi-generational with a marked presence of a second generation born and raised in Hawai'i. This generation



will be coming of age in the next decade.

We expect that the number of children and elderly in the community will grow, necessitating the development of age-appropriate services and organizations. Service providers and community-based organizations have already alerted us to the needs of minors of Mexican heritage. In terms of policymaking, the presence of minor children has implications for their schooling, for the need to respond to their bicultural experience, and for their likelihood of attending college. Similarly, both civil society institutions and state agencies need to prepare for aging members of this community, many of whom would require language access to avail of the services to which they would be entitled.

Similar to other newcomer communities, our report demonstrates that over the past two decades, Mexicans in Hawai'i have been engaged in the difficult task of building community-based institutions to empower themselves culturally and politically in order to become more visible and heard in the state. We predict that these efforts to strengthen the community's presence in civil society will continue, though how quickly this infrastructure will develop depends on the degree to which the community mobilizes itself and forms sustained links with stakeholders inside and outside the community to advocate its interests. Such networks can effectively contest the dispersed nature of the community within and across islands. They will be essential to combat the community's increased sense of disempowerment, particularly amid rising immigration enforcement.

Mexicans in Hawai'i have been engaged in the difficult task of building community-based institutions to empower themselves culturally and politically in order to become more visible and heard in the state.



Appendix: Methods and Data Employed

The data analysis approach is twofold. First, the American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data (from various years) were used to paint a broad-brush picture of the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the Mexican-origin population in Hawai'i (for comparison, similar profiles of Mexicans in the United States and the overall population of Hawai'i were developed).

Secondly, to go beyond what population and administrative surveys can provide, this report is also based on the results of 35 qualitative surveys of Mexicans and 27 in-depth interviews with Latino and non-Latino community leaders, professionals, and service providers.⁶⁶ The survey and interview data were collected between September-November 2010 on three Hawaiian islands — O'ahu, Maui, and the Big Island. Survey participants were recruited on soccer fields and in churches, the main places of community interaction. Community leaders whom the authors had a previous relationship were involved, to build rapport with study participants.

The survey was anonymous, voluntary, and in-person. The survey was designed to collect basic demographic information; participants' migration and occupational histories; their cultural and social practices and needs; experience with accessing health care, social services, translation services, and consular services; and their contributions, problems, and recommendations to address the problems they identified.⁶⁷ Questions about a person's citizenship and immigration status were not included so as to avoid distrust. When that information was shared, it was voluntary and unsolicited. In recruiting participants for the survey, efforts were made to include women (to discern any gender difference in the experiences) and to include participants from a wide variety of occupations. In the qualitative research, persons of Mexican heritage who were in Hawai'i because of military service were left out because they represent a population with very different experiences and needs compared to civilian Mexican immigrant and US-born residents. Sixty percent of the surveys were conducted in Spanish because that was the language participants preferred when offered the choice. Of them, a significant minority did not speak any English.

The in-depth interviews were designed to capture a macro-level view of the community's problems, contributions, and prospects as they have changed over time. Interviewees were translators and interpreters, pastors and priests, self-taught grassroots advocates, and members of a Latin American student organization at Hawai'i Pacific University. Professionals in the fields of law, education, health (including mental health), finance, and those who worked for nonprofits were also included. Eleven of the 27 interviewees self-identified as Mexican, and the rest were Latinos, multiracial locals, Filipinos, and non-Latino whites. The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, and were recorded only if the participant gave permission. Except in one instance, all interviews were conducted in English. These participants were asked to describe their work with Mexican residents on the islands, the shifts they saw over time, their assessment of strategies that were most successful in working with this community, and versions of the same three open-ended questions asked of those surveyed.

66 The authors' survey questionnaires in both Spanish and English and the interview guide for community leaders and service providers are available at www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MexicansinHawaii-surveys.pdf.

67 The survey design drew on Elaine C. Lacy, *Mexicans in South Carolina: A Profile* (Columbia, S.C.: Consortium of Latino Immigration Studies, University of South Carolina, 2007) and Shinseki. Also used was the Mexican Migration Project's *Mexican Ethnosurvey of Migration, Family, and Labor*, <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/databases/ethnosurvey-en.aspx>.



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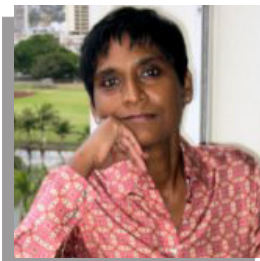
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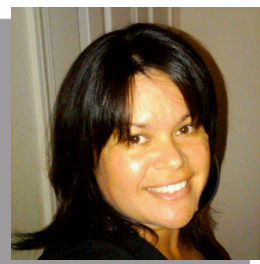
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