



United States
Department
of Agriculture

Rural
Development
Research
Report
Number 99

May 2004



A Report from the Economic Research Service

www.ers.usda.gov

New Patterns of Hispanic Settlement in Rural America

William Kandel and John Cromartie

Abstract

Since 1980, the nonmetro Hispanic population in the United States has doubled and is now the most rapidly growing demographic group in rural and small-town America. By 2000, half of all nonmetro Hispanics lived outside traditional settlement areas of the Southwest. Many Hispanics in counties that have experienced rapid Hispanic growth are recent U.S. arrivals with relatively low education levels, weak English proficiency, and undocumented status. This recent settlement has increased the visibility of Hispanics in many new regions of rural America whose population has long been dominated by non-Hispanic Whites. Yet within smaller geographic areas, the level of residential separation between them increased—i.e., the two groups became less evenly distributed—during the 1990s, especially in rapidly growing counties. Hispanic settlement patterns warrant attention by policymakers because they affect the well-being of both Hispanics and rural communities themselves.

Keywords: Hispanics, Latinos, rural population, nonmetro population, new immigrant destinations, settlement patterns, residential separation, segregation, rural communities, rural diversity

Contents

Summary	iii
Introduction	1
Past Research on Hispanic Settlement Patterns	4
Data and Methods	7
Hispanic Geographic Distribution Since 1980	9
The New Rural Hispanic Population	16
Residential Settlement Patterns of Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites	24
Measuring Residential Separation	24
Residential Separation among Counties Within the Nation	24
Residential Separation in Places Within Counties	27
Residential Separation among Neighborhoods Within Places	28
Conclusions and Implications	31
References	34
Appendix: Rural Hispanics in Metro Counties	41

Cover photos: Back: bottom photo by William Kandel, ERS/USDA; all others by Ken Hammond, USDA. Front, clockwise from top: William Kandel, ERS/USDA; Ken Hammond, USDA; Bob Nichols, USDA.