

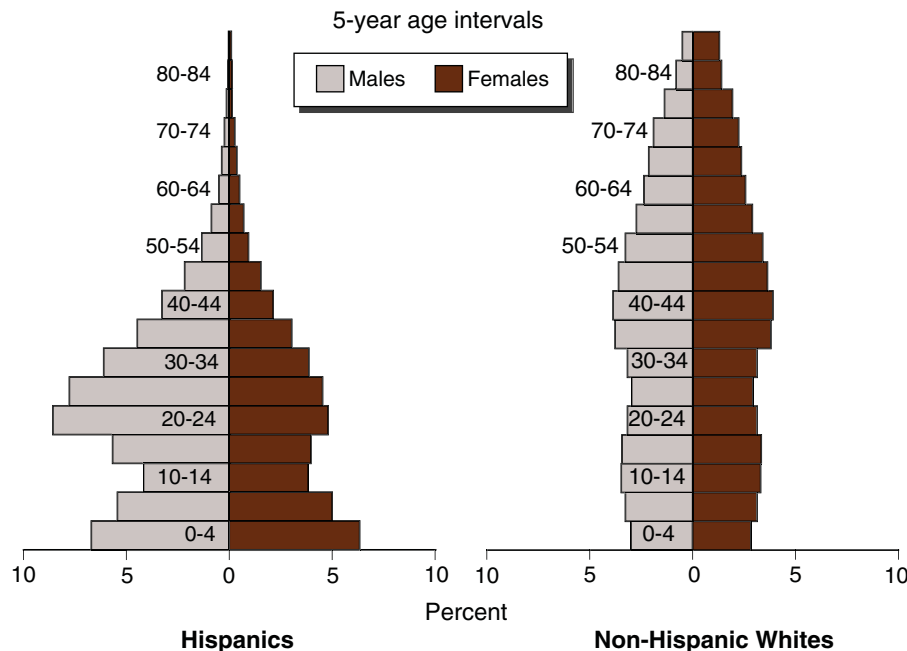
The New Rural Hispanic Population

The most prominent demographic differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites occur in age and sex distributions, particularly in high-growth Hispanic counties. Population pyramids display these differences most effectively (fig. 7). Hispanics in high-growth counties possess a much younger age distribution that is disproportionately male, particularly for ages 15-39, a prime age range for international labor migration (Massey et al., 1987a, p. 124). Higher percentages in the two youngest age categories of the population pyramid reflect both younger, family-forming ages of Hispanic parents and higher Hispanic fertility rates in the United States (Downs, 2003).

These differences become dramatic if percentages for selected age groups are summed. In high-growth counties, for example, males aged 15-35 constitute 18.5 percent of the total non-Hispanic White population; for Hispanics, the figure is almost double, 35.7 percent. Similarly, children under age 10 make up 12.2 percent of the non-Hispanic White population but 23.5 percent of the Hispanic population in these counties. Age and sex data for other county types show patterns comparable to those of high-growth Hispanic counties, although differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites are less extreme.

Age and sex composition have important economic and public policy ramifications. Younger populations attend schools, enter the labor force in relatively greater numbers, vote relatively infrequently, and require sharply

Figure 7
Population pyramids for Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites, high-growth Hispanic counties, 2000



Source: Calculated by ERS using Census 2000 data, SF1 files.

different social services than older populations who, in contrast, require more health care, leave the labor force in relatively greater numbers, and vote more reliably (Jamieson, Shin, and Day, 2002). Populations with high proportions of young males are more likely to have higher rates of high-risk behaviors (Hernandez and Charney, 1998). These differences can create tensions among residents over local budgetary choices and may consequently alter residential settlement patterns over time.

Hispanic households (see box, “Household vs. Family”) reflect a younger age structure and a greater tendency to live in more crowded housing (table 3). For example, despite the gender imbalance, Hispanics in high-growth counties are significantly more likely to live in nuclear families with children than Hispanics in other nonmetro county types and twice as likely as non-Hispanic Whites in all county types. Most Hispanic married couples have children living at home, while most non-Hispanic White married couples do not. This difference reflects both the younger age structure of Hispanic couples who are more likely to have young children living with them, as well as higher average birthrates of Hispanics compared with non-Hispanic Whites. Higher percentages of single-parent and unrelated group households among Hispanics reflect a greater preponderance of labor migration; older children often accompany their parents on U.S. trips, and group housing is an effective household budget strategy. In contrast, higher percentages of single-person households among non-Hispanic Whites for elderly as well as young adults reflect several characteristics, including the economic means and personal preferences for living alone, and a greater proportion of elderly persons.

Two characteristics of Hispanic household structure are worth highlighting. First, despite the fact that most working-age Hispanic migrants are male, data from Census 2000 indicate a greater proportion of married couples with children among Hispanic households in high-growth Hispanic counties than among Hispanic households in all other county types as well as all non-Hispanic White households. Second, the household structure of Hispanics

Table 3—Household structure for Hispanic and non-Hispanic Whites, by county type

County type	Married with children	Married without children	Single parent w/ children	Unrelated group	Single person under age 65	Single person over age 65	Total
<i>Percent</i>							
Hispanics:							
High-growth Hispanic	47	13	15	17	7	1	100
Established Hispanic	37	22	15	11	9	6	100
Other nonmetro	36	19	15	14	12	4	100
Metro	37	18	16	16	10	3	100
Non-Hispanic Whites:							
High-growth Hispanic	24	35	7	10	14	11	100
Established Hispanic	23	35	7	9	14	12	100
Other nonmetro	24	34	7	9	14	12	100
Metro	23	31	7	12	17	10	100

Source: Calculated by ERS using 2000 Census data, SF3 files.

Household vs. Family

Family and household refer to different entities. The Census

defines a family to include “a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family.” Families are classified by type as either a married-couple family or an other family according to the presence of a spouse. The other family category is further broken out according to the sex of the householder.

A household, on the other hand, is defined as “all the people who occupy a housing unit. A household can contain only one family for purposes of Census tabulations. Not all households contain families since a household may be a group of unrelated people or one person living alone” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

living in established Hispanic counties exhibits a slight resemblance to that of non-Hispanic Whites rather than that of other Hispanics.

Length of U.S. residence influences many socioeconomic outcomes, and Hispanic groups vary noticeably in this regard. For example, Census 2000 data indicate that just over 30 percent of nonmetro Hispanics were born in a foreign country compared with 45 percent in metro counties. On the other hand, significant numbers of Hispanics have parents who were born in the United States and whose more mainstream socioeconomic profiles bear little resemblance to those of recent Hispanic arrivals (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Five centuries of Hispanic settlement in the United States have established a distinction between recent Hispanic arrivals and those living in the United States for generations.

Where people lived at a previous point in time reflects the amount of their time spent in the United States, and the 2000 Census long form asks where respondents lived in 1995 (table 4). Hispanics in general were more likely to report living in a different country in 1995 than non-Hispanic Whites, reflecting decades of immigration from Latin America. However, Hispanics residing in high-growth Hispanic counties were more likely than Hispanics elsewhere to have migrated internally or internationally. For every 10 Hispanics in a high-growth Hispanic county in 2000, 2 lived in a different country and 2 more lived in a different State just 5 years earlier. Although data are not available, it is likely that the number of Hispanics reporting a different place of residence in 1990 would have been even higher.

Data on year of arrival to the United States also reflect the relatively limited U.S. experience of Hispanics in high-growth Hispanic counties (fig. 8). Differences among county types are striking. Over 60 percent of all foreign-born residents of high-growth Hispanic counties arrived in the United States between 1990 and 2000, compared with about 40 percent for all other county types. In general, immigration has increased in recent decades, and Latin Americans, who make up the majority of nonmetro foreign-born residents, have dominated this population since the 1960s.

Table 4—Residence in 1995 of Census 2000 respondents, by race and ethnicity

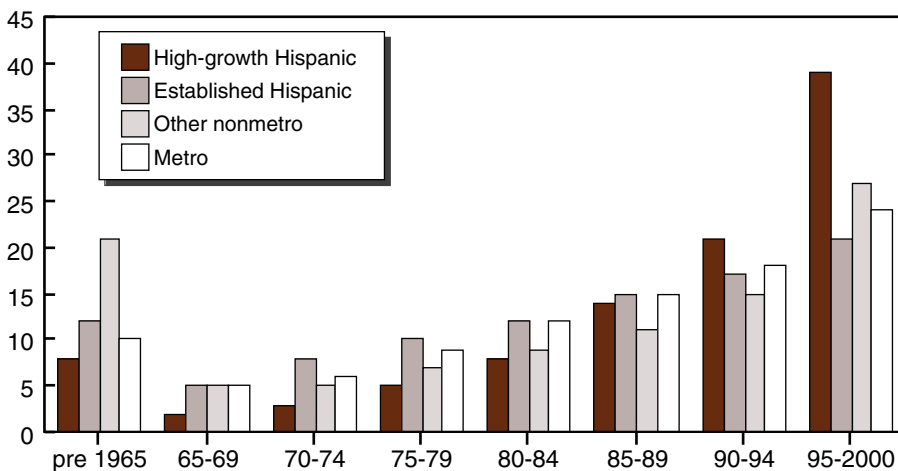
Race/ethnicity	County type	Residence in 1995				Total
		Same county	Same State	Different State	Different country	
<i>Percent</i>						
Hispanic	High-growth Hispanic	49	10	19	22	100
	Established Hispanic	80	11	5	4	100
	Other nonmetro	59	16	15	10	100
	Metro	77	7	6	10	100
Non-Hispanic White	High-growth Hispanic	78	11	10	1	100
	Established Hispanic	74	14	10	1	100
	Other nonmetro	81	11	7	0	100
	Metro	80	10	9	1	100

Source: Calculated by ERS using 2000 Census data, SF3 files.

Figure 8

Year of U.S. arrival for all foreign-born Hispanics

Percent



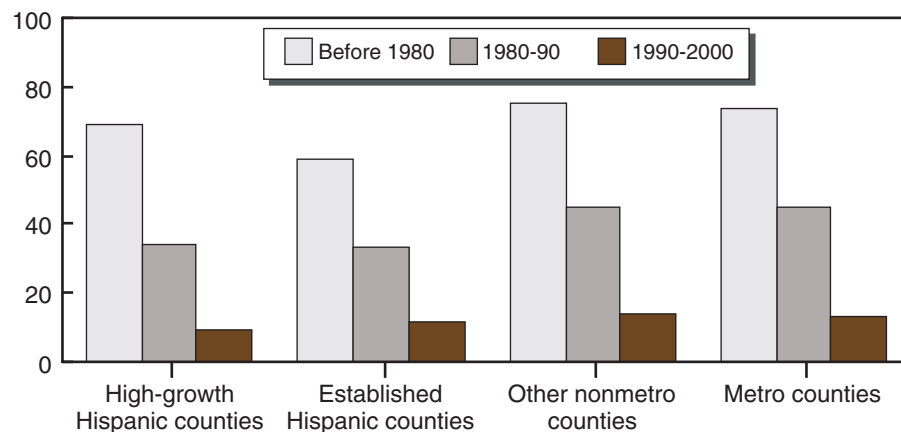
Source: Calculated by ERS using data from Census 2000, SF3 files.

Legal status also heavily influences economic and social well-being through its impact on everything from social service eligibility to employment and residential mobility, and even working conditions and wages (Lieberson, 1961; Ise and Perloff, 1993; Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark, 2002) (fig. 9). Accordingly, Census data on naturalization rates of all foreign-born persons provide some measure of the degree to which foreign-born persons integrate into U.S. society. The Census data are somewhat limited because they are summarized for all foreign born persons regardless of ethnicity, and include only three general legal status categories: undocumented individuals who comprise a substantial portion of the foreign-born, low-skill labor force; documented individuals who possess legal status to work and live in the United States; and naturalized individuals who possess all rights conferred by citizenship. Nevertheless, data exist at the county level and are more precise than most estimates of documented or undocumented legal status.

Figure 9

Percent foreign-born who are naturalized citizens, by decade of arrival in the United States

Percent



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from Census 2000, SF3 files.

Naturalization rates for foreign-born persons do not differ significantly across county types. Yet, because time spent in the United States is strongly correlated with naturalization, foreign-born persons who work and live in the United States longer are more likely to regularize their legal status through sponsorship, work visas, marriage, and other means (Johnson et al., 1999). Foreign-born persons entering the United States between 1980 and 1990, for example, were more than three times as likely to be naturalized as those entering the following decade, although some or most of this difference may be explained by the 5-year residence requirement for naturalization.

Apart from legal status regularization, time spent in the United States provides foreign-born persons with greater opportunity to acquire English language skills, a critical factor for earnings and employment mobility. In high-growth Hispanic counties, roughly half of all working-age Spanish speakers claimed English language proficiency, as measured by whether they indicated on the Census long form they spoke it “well” or “very well.” In established Hispanic and other nonmetro counties, the proportion, at close to three-quarters, is significantly higher. Low English language proficiency in high-growth Hispanic counties is particularly pronounced among working-age residents (fig. 10).

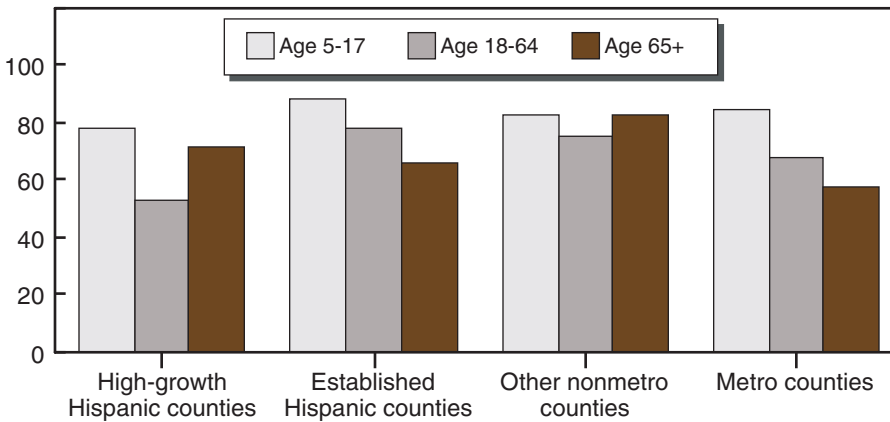
Formal education also heavily influences economic outcomes but is harder to attain for most people than English language skills. On average, educational attainment of Hispanics trails that of non-Hispanic Whites, and among Hispanics, those living in high-growth Hispanic counties have lower educational levels than Hispanics in other county types due to higher proportions of recent U.S. migrants (table 5). Regardless of whether such migrants have more or fewer years of schooling than persons in their countries of origin, they often originate from relatively poor and rural communities with fewer opportunities to acquire and apply schooling (Kandel, 2003b).

In general, more education increases the chances of being employed. However, this fundamental relationship appears to be more flexible for

Figure 10

Percent of Spanish-speaking people (at home) who speak English "very well" or "well," by age group and county type

Percent



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from Census 2000, SF3 files.

Table 5—Educational attainment by race and ethnicity for persons 25 years and older¹

Race/ethnicity and county type	0-8 years of schooling	9-11 years of schooling	High school graduate	College graduate	Total
<i>Percent</i>					
Hispanic:					
High-growth Hispanic	41	22	31	6	100
Established Hispanic	32	19	42	6	100
Other nonmetro	25	20	45	9	100
Metro	27	20	42	11	100
Non-Hispanic White:					
High-growth Hispanic	7	13	61	18	100
Established Hispanic	5	12	63	21	100
Other nonmetro	8	13	63	16	100
Metro	4	9	57	30	100

¹ High school graduation rates are relatively low because the sample of persons examined includes older generations of persons who have less schooling than younger generations. Currently, the high school graduation rate for Hispanic adults age 25-29 is 63 percent; for both non-Hispanic Whites and African Americans, the rate is 88 percent. For persons born in the United States, high school graduation rates are higher: 80 percent for Hispanics and 93 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and African Americans (Council of Economic Advisors, 2000).

Source: Calculated by ERS using 2000 Census data, SF3 files.

Hispanics in high-growth counties, who, despite their lower educational attainment, have employment levels that exceed not only those of non-Hispanic Whites but also those of Hispanics in all other county types (table 6). This unusual pattern is consistent with evidence showing that Hispanics move to these counties to follow employment opportunities through social networks or recruitment efforts (Hernández-León and Zúñiga, 2000; Johnson-Webb, 2002). Migration to other counties may also be employment-based and tied to social networks but more random for specific jobs. Greater employment opportunity in high-growth counties also

Table 6—Employment status for persons 16 and older, by sex, race, ethnicity, and county type, 2000

Race/ethnicity and county type	Males			Females		
	Employed	Inemployed	Out of labor force	Employed	Unemployed	Out of labor force
	<i>Percent</i>					
Hispanics:						
High-growth Hispanic	70	6	24	48	6	46
Established Hispanic	55	7	38	43	6	51
Other nonmetro	60	5	34	50	6	44
Metro	64	6	30	47	6	47
Non-Hispanic Whites:						
High-growth Hispanic	67	3	30	53	3	44
Established Hispanic	62	3	35	50	3	47
Other nonmetro	64	4	32	52	3	45
Metro	71	3	26	56	2	41

Note: Data on employment status from Census 2000 are not restricted by an upper age limit. Consequently, the percentage of each group out of the labor force also includes retirees.

Source: Calculated by ERS using 2000 Census data, SF3 files

accounts for slightly higher employment rates of non-Hispanic Whites compared with those in established Hispanic and other nonmetro counties.

Despite relatively high employment rates, Hispanics' median individual, family, and household incomes trail those of non-Hispanic Whites (table 7). Ratios between the two groups' incomes narrow as the unit of analysis increases from individual to family to household, highlighting the importance of household structure for economic well-being, particularly among recently arrived Hispanics. For example, among non-Hispanic Whites in high-growth Hispanic counties, family income is higher than household income. The opposite is true for Hispanics, reflecting larger average Hispanic household sizes with more income earners among householders. Numerous studies attribute income gaps to differences in education, English language skills, legal status, and U.S. work experience. Despite progress in the acquisition of characteristics that improve income, such as legal status and English skills, it remains unclear if the persistent earnings gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites diminishes after controlling for these factors (Borjas, 1999; Chiswick, 1978; Carliner, 1980; Schoeni et al., 1996).

These income differences are mirrored by poverty rates for Hispanics, which substantially exceed those of non-Hispanic Whites across all county types (fig. 11). To define poverty, the Census Bureau compares income with a threshold that varies by family size and composition; in 2000, that threshold was \$17,463 for a family of two adults and two children. Like income, the gap in poverty rates between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites is lowest in other nonmetro counties, where the Hispanic presence is smallest. Relatively high employment rates of Hispanics in high-growth counties imply other causes for higher poverty rates, such as low education attainment and other individual factors such as English language ability and legal status.

Our county typology highlights new Hispanic population destinations where the average profile of rural Hispanics contrasts sharply with that of non-

Table 7—Median individual, family, and household income in 1999 dollars

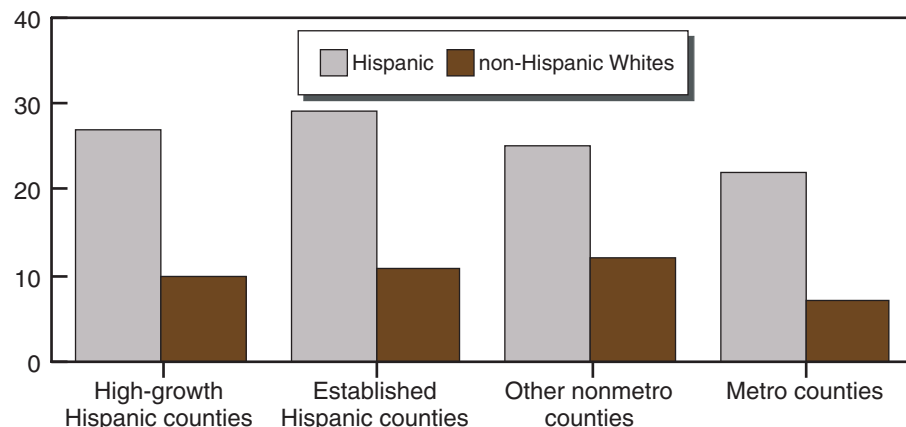
	Individuals			Families			Households		
	Hispanic (a)	Non- Hispanic White (b)	Ratio (a)/(b)	Hispanic (a)	Non- Hispanic White (b)	Ratio (a)/(b)	Hispanic (a)	Non- Hispanic White (b)	Ratio (a)/(b)
		---- Dollars ----			Percent			---- Dollars ----	
High-growth Hispanic	8,989	18,819	48	28,875	44,945	64	29,398	37,199	79
Established Hispanic	9,193	18,859	49	26,559	42,865	62	24,621	34,653	71
Other nonmetro	9,578	17,208	56	29,807	40,663	73	28,594	33,360	86
Metro	12,523	21,896	57	36,596	53,383	69	34,750	44,690	78

Source: Calculated by ERS using Census 2000 data, SF3 files.

Figure 11

Poverty rates for Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites, by county type

Percent



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from Census 2000, SF3 files.

Hispanic Whites. A significant proportion of Hispanic newcomers to nonmetro U.S. counties lacks a high school degree, proficient English language skills, and naturalized immigration status. In counties with rapidly growing Hispanic populations, these differences help explain the stark income and poverty gaps between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites. Nevertheless, Hispanics are likely to continue to arrive in these areas at high rates, attracted by the opportunity to earn enough money to support their families back home and/or in the United States. Areas with rural industries employing significant numbers of Hispanics will invariably confront the policy implications presented by this growing population group.