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The Impact of Hispanic Immigration on The United States and East Tennessee, 1995-2005

**Candace Johnson
Senior Honors Project, 2007
Dr. Greg Kaplan**

Abstract: The impact of Hispanic immigration is ever-present in our society. In the past decade, the number of Hispanics living in the United States has rapidly increased at an overwhelming rate. Not only is American society affected by this influx in immigration but also the societies abandoned by these immigrants. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the number of Hispanics in the United States, what countries these individuals have emigrated from and where they are living now. The problems these immigrants face as they adjust to American society will also be addressed. After successful assimilation into society, many Hispanic immigrants are opening and productively running their own businesses. The influence of these businesses, as well as the affect of immigration on American society and economy will conclude this informative essay.

The Impact of Hispanic Immigration on The United States and East Tennessee, 1995-2005

The term ‘Hispanic’ was developed by government agencies in order to describe persons who were born in a Spanish-speaking community or whose ancestors were born into a Spanish-speaking community.¹ Because this term is based on a language and not on a race or skin color, calculating the exact number of Hispanics in the United States can prove very difficult. ‘Hispanic’ refers to immigrants from Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central America and South America (excluding Portugal and Brazil) as well as those individuals who are of Spanish-speaking descent. ‘Hispanics’ can range in appearance from physically resembling Caucasians from Europe to resembling African Americans from Cuba or Puerto Rico. Therefore, ‘Hispanic,’ encompasses a diverse group of individuals and calculating the exact number of ‘Hispanics’ in the United States can prove to be impossible.²

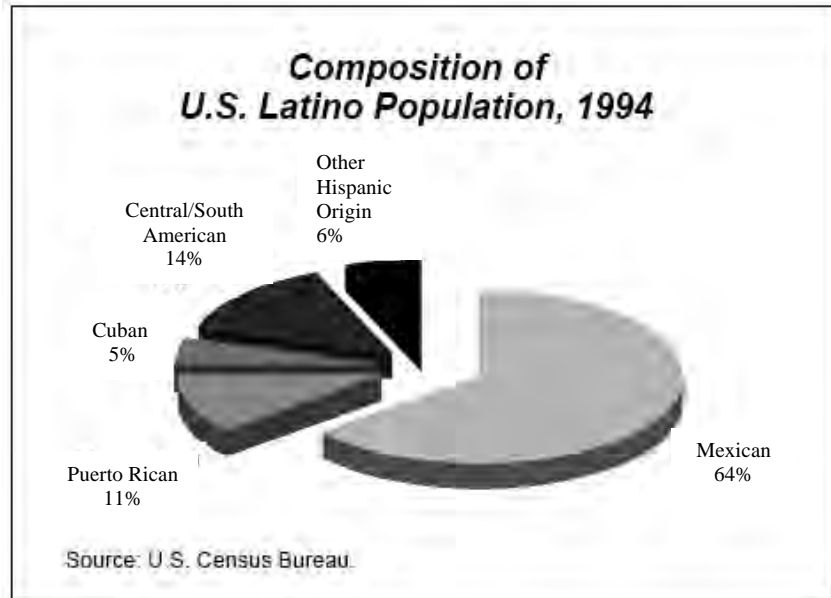
Through this paper, I will discuss the increasing number of immigrants within U.S. borders, as well as in Tennessee, the countries from which these individuals emigrated and where the majority of this population is currently living throughout the United States. Following immigration, these individuals face many more struggles while attempting to assimilate into the American culture: the language crisis, education system and labor market are a few of the struggles encountered by immigrants. In the past decade, many Hispanics have established and successfully run businesses. The success and locations of these Hispanic businesses will also be further explored.

Hispanics in the United States

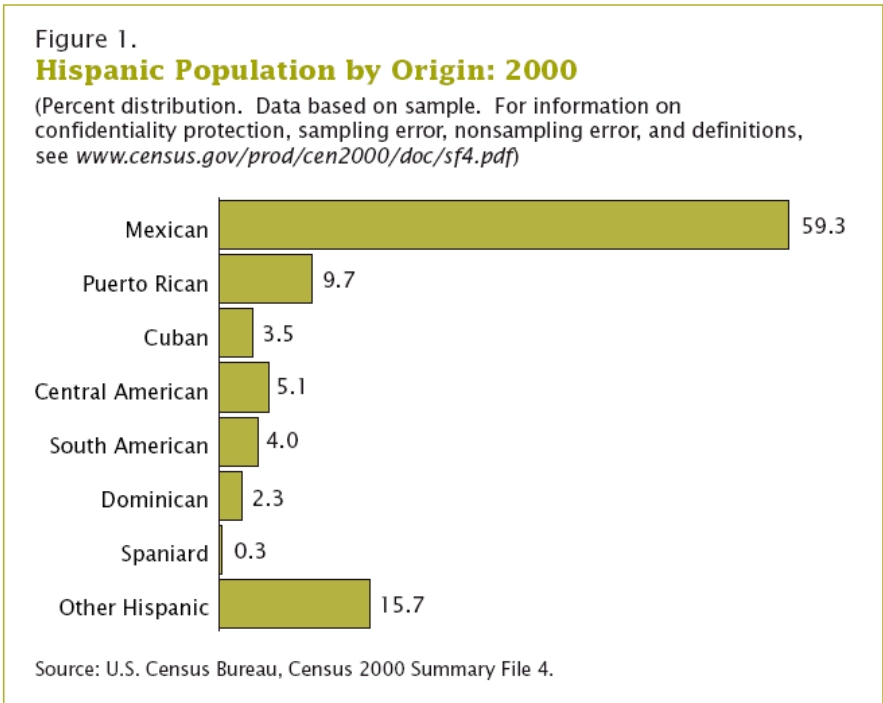
Over the past 10 years, the number of Hispanics in the United States has increased at an astounding rate. In 2005 the US Census estimated the number of Hispanics in the United States at 41.8 million, quite a difference from the 27.5 million Hispanic residents estimated in 1995. The number of Hispanics in the United States in 2005 was nearly 14.5% of the total United States population. Based on the Census data, Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the United States surpassing the African American minority population. Of these 41.8 million Hispanic immigrants in 2005, 27 million were of Mexican origin, nearly 4 million of Puerto Rican origin, 1.6 million of Cuban origin, 5.7 million of Central or South American origin and the remaining percentage were documented as “other” Hispanic origin, including Spaniards or Dominicans.³ The Hispanic population is growing through immigration across national borders as well as through natural increase, the number of births in excess to the number of deaths within the population.⁴ According to the Census Bureau, 1.3 million Hispanic immigrants became American citizens in 2005, being that they were born in the United States.⁵

As the documented number of Hispanic immigrants continues to increase, the number of undocumented residents is increasing as well. Obviously it is impossible to calculate the number of undocumented illegal immigrants in the country; however, it is estimated that there are anywhere from 12 million to as much as 15 million illegal Hispanic immigrants in the United States. From 2000 to 2005, the average growth in undocumented immigrants has been nearly 500,000 a year. It is estimated that approximately 1.5 million undocumented immigrants have entered the United States in these 5 years from Mexico alone.⁶

The Hispanic composition of the United States encompasses several populations from many different countries. When discussing the Hispanic population, four major groups are considered: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Central/South American.⁷



Immigrants from Mexico have the most important influence in the United States with over 60% of the Hispanic population in the mid-90s and over 59% in 2000 being Mexican immigrants.

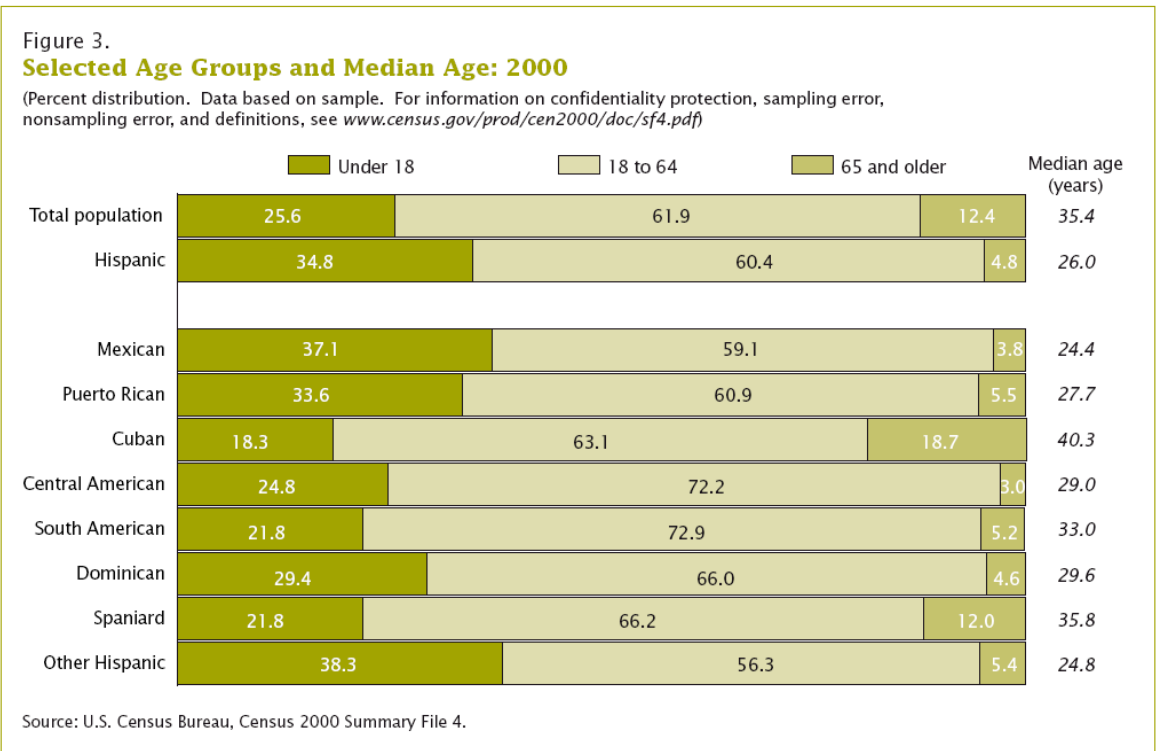


Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States 2000*, p. 3

Within the United States, there are a variety of locations in which Hispanic immigrants reside. Several stereotypes exist in relation to the lifestyles of Hispanic immigrants; one myth in particular is the idea that Hispanic immigrants are primarily a rural group of people working on a farm and performing exclusively manual labor.⁸ However, the truth is that the majority of the Hispanic population is young and living in urban and metropolitan areas.

Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	United States
Total:	35,238,481
Urban:	32,900,962
Inside urbanized areas	29,785,278
Inside urban clusters	3,115,684
Rural:	2,337,519
Farm	72,883
Nonfarm	2,264,636
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4	

According to the 2000 Census, nearly 93% of the total Hispanic population lives in an urbanized or metropolitan area. Also in 2000, the median age for Hispanics was 26 years old, compared to the 35.4 years for the total population.⁹



Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States 2000*, p. 5

According to Teresa Sullivan of the U.S. Census Advisory Committee, the area of residence for many immigrants correlates directly to their country of origin. When Hispanics move within the cities of the United States, many times the groups will move to a metropolitan area within close proximity to another area of Hispanic concentration. For example, Los Angeles is an important destination city for Mexican-Americans and Central Americans. Puerto Ricans on the mainland are more likely to reside in New York City and the New Jersey suburbs; however, the movement of Puerto Ricans between the mainland and the island makes the accuracy of these calculations questionable. Hispanics in Miami are most likely to be Cubans or Central or South Americans.¹⁰

The majority of the Hispanic population is concentrated in large metropolitan cities, such as Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, Austin, San Antonio, San Diego and New York City. Not surprisingly, the states in which these metropolises are located also have the largest Hispanic populations. (See Chart Below)

Hispanic Population by State: 2000 and 2005 – Top 10 States

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2000 Census and 2005 American Community Survey

	2005	2000	Change 2000-2005	Percent change 2000-2005
California	12,534,628	10,741,711	1,792,917	16.7
Texas	7,882,254	6,530,459	1,351,795	20.7
Florida	3,433,355	2,623,787	809,568	30.9
New York	3,026,286	2,782,504	243,782	8.8
Illinois	1,807,908	1,509,763	298,145	19.7
Arizona	1,679,116	1,267,777	411,339	32.4
New Jersey	1,312,326	1,098,209	214,117	19.5
Colorado	895,176	718,956	176,220	24.5
New Mexico	827,940	746,555	81,385	10.9
Georgia	625,382	425,305	200,077	47.0

Although in the past 5 years California and Texas have increased by fewer percentages as other states, these Southwestern states continue to lead the country in Hispanic population. (See Chart)

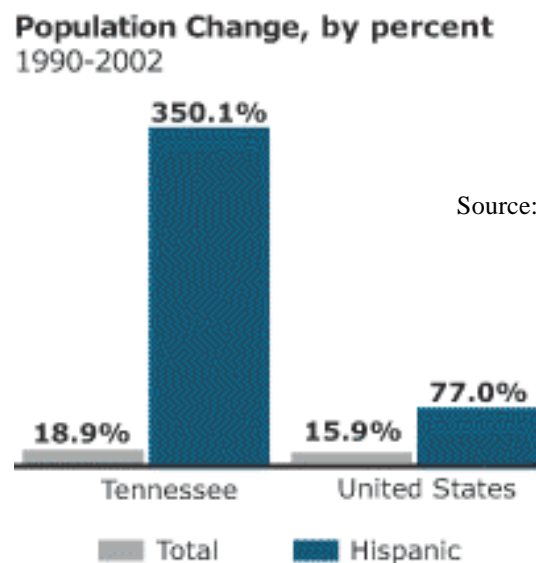


As shown in the above map, the Southern states have increased in the largest increments with growth over 200%. Overall, the entire nation has experienced a significant increase in the number of Hispanic immigrant residents.

Hispanics in Tennessee

While the number of Hispanic immigrants has increased throughout the entire country, Tennessee has experienced one of the highest percentage growth rates of all the 50 states. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of immigrants increased almost 60,000 residents from 113,610 to over 172,704. Even with this 51.3% increase, the Hispanic population in Tennessee still equals a mere 3% of the total Tennessee population.¹¹

However, Tennessee did have the fourth largest percentage increase in the country for this 5 year period.¹²

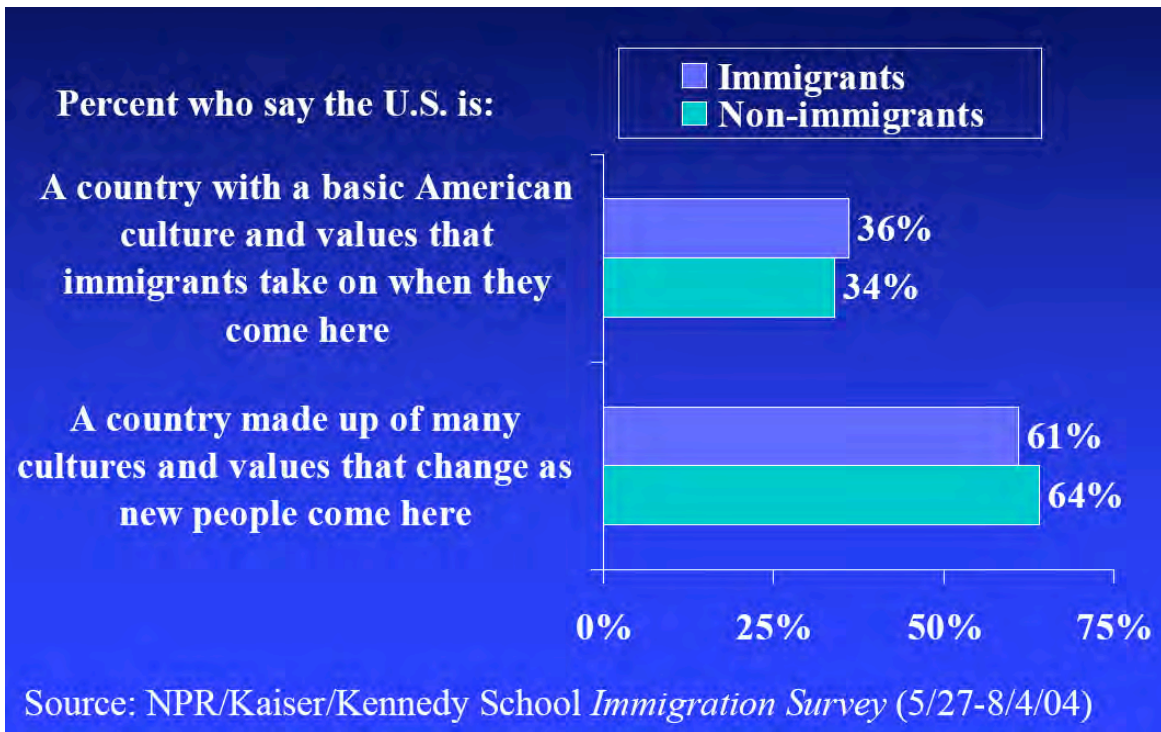


As previously mentioned, the Mexican-born immigrants maintain an overwhelming majority in the number of Hispanic immigrants in the United States and this figure is no different in Tennessee. According to the 2000 Census, the Mexican-born population in Tennessee was 63% of the Hispanic population (123,838 at this time).¹³ With significant increases in the Hispanic population between 2000 and 2005, the Mexican-born population in Tennessee has also increased at an incredible rate.

Life after Immigration

After immigrants arrive in the United States, the struggle to adapt to the culture of American society begins. Two terms frequently associated with immigration and the struggles faced after migration are assimilation and acculturation. Assimilation is defined as “the merging of cultural traits from previously distinct cultural groups” while acculturation is defined as “the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group” and thereby disregarding their native identity.¹⁴ Once Hispanic immigrants have established themselves in the United States there is overwhelming pressure to rapidly adjust to American society. Frequently Hispanic immigrants are forced to adjust to their new culture and language without the opportunity to gradually acquire the traits of American lifestyles. With their need and/or want for acceptance into American culture, immigrants are faced with the decision of retaining their native cultures and risking alienation in the new society or abandoning their native cultures for their new culture (acculturation). In some cases, immigrants are assimilating into American life, losing their Hispanic cultural traits and gradually losing their dependence on their native tongue.¹⁵ However, others are clinging to their native culture and language, to the demise of their acceptance into American society; therefore rejecting the idea of acculturation.

Another similar idea that is causing unease among native-born Americans is with the continuously increasing size of the Hispanic population, the need to adopt American values and abandon Hispanic values will decrease, therefore changing the makeup of American society as it is presently known. In other words, with the continual influx of Hispanics in the United States, the Hispanic culture will eventually be an accepted and expected aspect of American culture. In 2004, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government conducted a survey of immigrant versus non-immigrant views on immigration and life in the United States; according to the graph below from this survey, the majority of immigrants and non-immigrants in America feel that this trend of cultural assimilation within the United States best defines American society. However, the majority of non-immigrants, 62%, are uncomfortable with this trend, compared to the 57% of immigrants who are in accordance with this societal trend and hope for its continuance.¹⁶

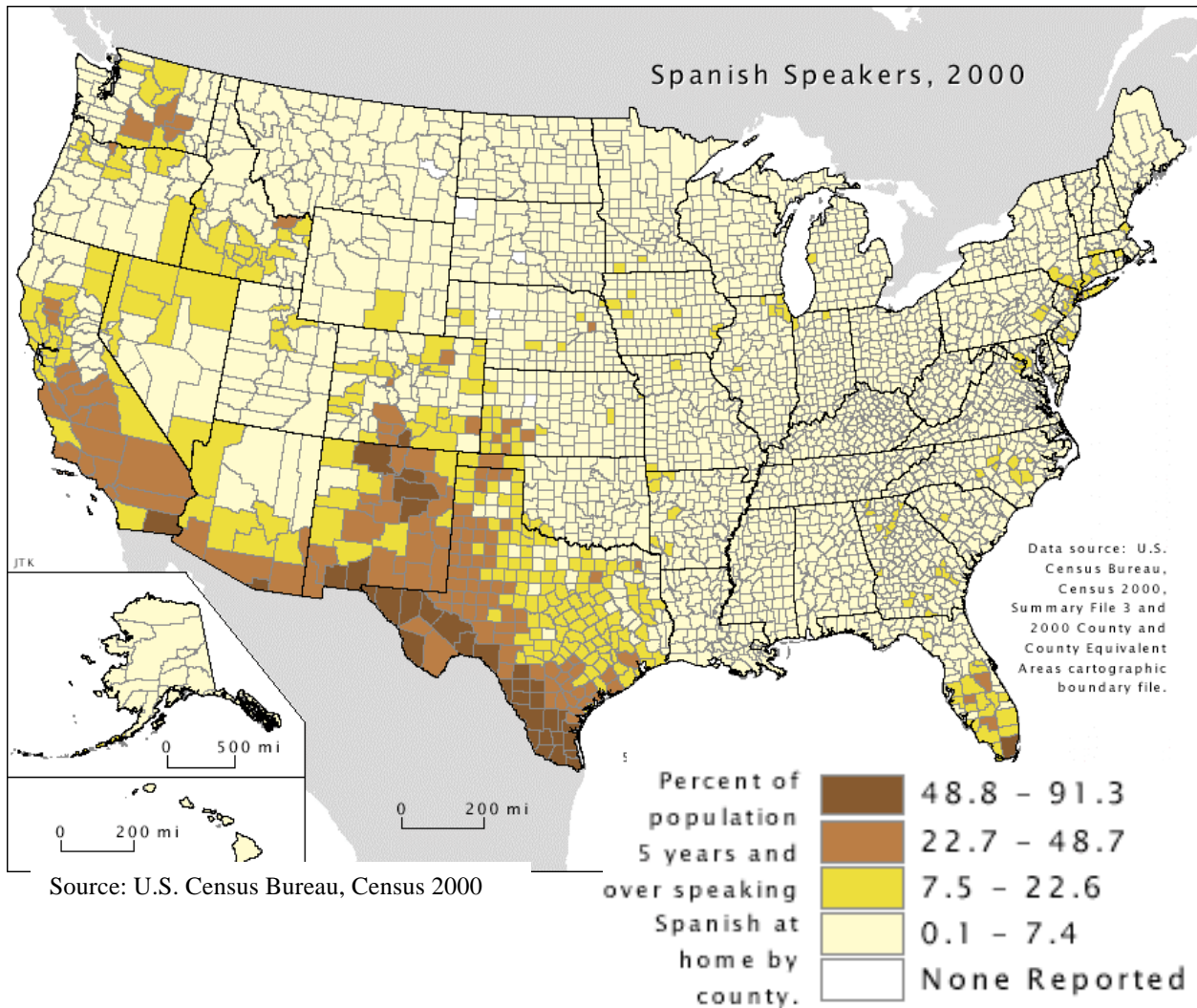


Source: Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, slide 11

This trend of assimilating Hispanic culture into American culture has only grown within the past few years due to the rapid, considerable growth in Hispanic population. In the past, Hispanics were forced to acculturate into American society or be left behind – there was no other option. With this drastic change in lifestyle, the language, education and labor potential of Hispanic immigrants is greatly threatened.

Language

The first obstacle that new immigrants to the United States encounter is the language barrier. As the Census 2000 map demonstrates below, there were several states in the West, including California and Arizona, Southwest, including Texas and New Mexico, and Florida in which up to 91% of the population in specific counties deemed Spanish their native language.



According to the 2000 Census, 17.9% of the total United States population, over 46 million people, spoke a language other than English as a first language. Of this 46 million people, 59.9% or slightly over 28 million people spoke Spanish as their first language. In 2005, 19.4% of the total population, nearly 52 million people, spoke a language other than English in the home. Of this 52 million people, 62% or 32 million people spoke Spanish as their first language.¹⁷ This increase in the number of native Spanish speakers is no surprise considering the influx of Hispanic immigrants into the United States within these past 5 years. However, the interesting fact regarding this immigration is that in 2000 51.1% of the native Spanish speakers claimed to speak English “very well” while in 2005 52.2% claimed to speak English “very well.”¹⁸ These figures demonstrate that although a larger population of Hispanics resides in the United States, the struggle between retaining their native language and adopting English as a second language still exists.

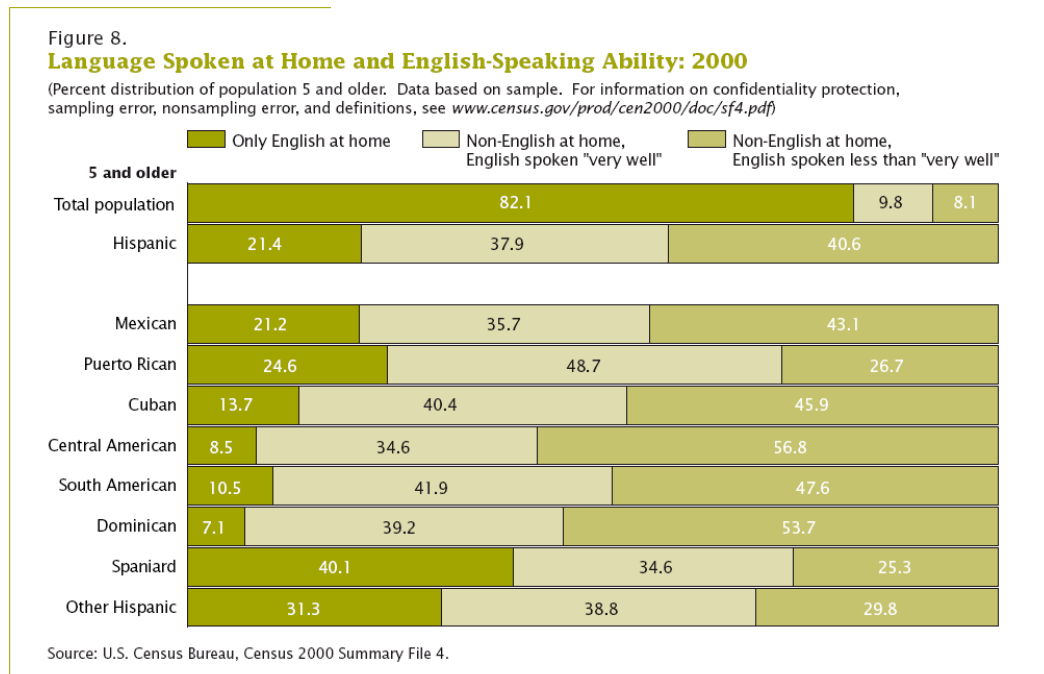
For many Hispanics, the retention of Spanish as a primarily used language shows a dedication to the preservation of their Spanish heritage and culture. Researchers disagree on whether this retention of a native language is intrinsic to the retention of a native culture. In reality, the debate focuses on whether Hispanics should retain their native language, and if so, to what extent it is society’s responsibility to facilitate this retention. In addition to society’s responsibility to aid Hispanics in retaining their native language, the debate emphasizes the responsibility of Hispanic individuals to learn and use the language of majority society.¹⁹ The continued use of a language, such as Spanish in the United States, has much significance.

Use of the ethnic group’s language is viewed by both members and non-members of an ethnic group as a sign of membership and loyalty to the minority group. Language becomes a unifying symbol, providing individuals with a sense of identity and membership, and serves as a symbol of the group’s reality to members of that group as well as to those outside the group...Language both symbolizes and expresses the group’s and the individual’s position in society.”²⁰

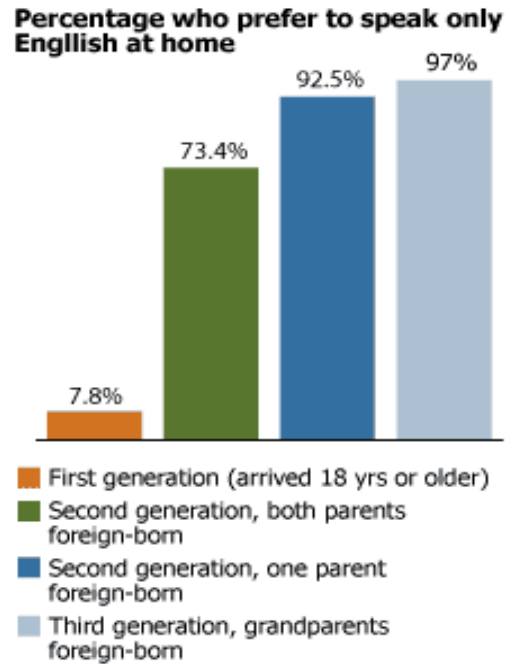
With this quote from Pastora San Juan Cafferty of the University of Chicago, one can understand the importance to the Hispanic community in maintaining their use of the Spanish language; however, once immigrated to the United States, the question shifts to whether or not this retention of heritage supersedes the importance of the assimilating to American society.

Language has been used as an indicator of assimilation since the inception of the United States. Americans realized the importance of language in forging national identity; therefore, speaking English has become recognized as one of the most important attributes of being “an American.”²¹ The term assimilation is used in this section, rather than acculturation, due to the understanding that once Hispanic immigrants learn English, they still speak Spanish and often teach Spanish, as well as English, to their American-born children. According to the following graph, in 2000 over 40% of the 28 million Spanish speaking Hispanic immigrants spoke English “less than very well,” over 11 million people. In 2005, the population of Hispanic immigrants grew to over 41 million people, with 48% speaking English “less than very well,” or almost 20 million people.²²

Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States 2000*, p. 10



Of these Hispanic immigrants, it is predominantly the older members of the population who continue to speak Spanish exclusively.²³ As shown in the accompanying graph, as Hispanics become a more integral part of society, through many generations of immigrants, the strong ties to their native Spanish language are loosened as English is adopted as a second language. First- and second- generation immigrants may continue to speak the native language among themselves, but often find that English is the only means of communicating with majority society.²⁴ Language is the primary means of preserving a culture and history in every society.²⁵ However, without the ability to speak English when it is necessary, the Hispanic population can be easily left behind in other areas of daily life, including the education system and labor market.



Source: Population Reference Bureau
Los Angeles 2006, www.prb.org

Spanish in Tennessee

According to the 2005 Census data, 165,370 Tennesseans speak Spanish as their primary language; this is only 3% of the total Tennessee population. Despite this low percentage of the Tennessee population, a battle ensues in the states capital over an English-only bill. Tennessee has the fourth-fastest growing Hispanic population, with Nashville having the largest Hispanic community.²⁷ In 2000, Nashville’s immigrant population grew immensely to 5% of Nashville’s population being Hispanic and a language other than English being spoken in one of ten Nashville homes.²⁸ In order to attract business to the city, companies have begun promoting

Spanish-speaking employees in advertisements. As a result, a recent motion was proposed by the City Council requiring Nashville to conduct business solely in English; however, this proposal was quickly vetoed by the mayor Bill Purcell.²⁹ Nashville currently conducts all business in English; however, Councilman Eric Crafton states that with the increasing number of Hispanic immigrants in Tennessee, this policy could change and he insists that an English only bill would “force non-English speakers to learn the language faster.”³⁰ Although this bill does not target Spanish-speaking residents specifically, the growing presence of the Hispanic population has triggered cultural change and unease. It is increasingly clear that Hispanic immigration is the real catalyst. With Wal-Mart’s recent decision to add Spanish signs to its stores and the school system recently launching a television advertisement in Spanish describing school programs, the presence of a growing Hispanic population has prompted the city’s desire for an English-only bill.³¹ With this continuing struggle, it is ever apparent the impact the growing Hispanic population is having not only on the United States as a whole, but also on states with smaller Hispanic populations throughout the country.

Education

In America, education is the ultimate means for upward movement in society, for immigrants and non-immigrants alike. It is through education that economic mobility, access to better jobs and the ability to make important cultural and intellectual contributions to society are provided to the population.³² American citizens often take for granted the opportunity to receive a quality education; however, “Hispanic-Americans are currently the most educationally disadvantaged group in America. Whether one looks at student’s skill levels, years of school completed, or performance in school, Hispanic students fare worse than any other racial or ethnic group.”³³ The primary reason for this educational shortcoming is the conflict concerning

language spoken in the school systems. Since the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 established programs in order to teach the language and culture of the minority students in addition to the native culture and language, years of controversy have ensued.³⁴ Those who oppose bilingual education believe that educational systems that provide services in foreign languages, such as Spanish, and not in the native English language will discourage immigrants from learning English as quickly as they would if they were forced to learn English in order to succeed in the educational system.³⁵ However, when students are forced to learn in a foreign language, they are often left behind and shuffled through the education system without the same knowledge obtained by other students.

The poorer educational performance and the lack of progress of Hispanics in comparison with their non-Hispanic white counterparts can be explained partly by the differences in the resources available to Hispanic students in their families and schools, as well as the fact that Hispanic households are often located in the lower-income neighborhoods which are associated with lower standard public schooling.³⁶ The incompetence of the school system begins with the Hispanic immigrants' first interaction with the educational system. Hispanic children are the least likely to participate in early childhood programs,³⁷ whether it is due to lack of understanding by the parents or the child's inability to communicate with his or her teachers in their native language. "The lower preschool participation rate of Hispanic children means that many Hispanic children will enter kindergarten without the behavioral experience of being in formal school and without a chance to develop the skills that lay the basis for early school success;" therefore, even before entering kindergarten the Hispanic children are forced to struggle to achieve comparable results as their classmates.³⁸ As these Hispanic children continue through the education system, they often encounter emotional or psychological conflicts as the

struggle to maintain their Hispanic heritage while learning only English in schools and speaking only Spanish in their homes. The children are pulled in so many different directions culturally that they are often confused and frustrated, eventually becoming overwhelmed.

Households that are able to provide educational resources and support are associated with better school performance. Unfortunately, most Hispanic children are less likely to come from such homes, often due to the fact that the immigrant parents are unable to speak English and/or are unfamiliar with the American school system. Hispanic students are substantially less likely to enter high school with a foundation that enables them to move on to high-school-level work; therefore, they are left to play catch-up in gaining the skills and grades that permit entrance to postsecondary institutions.³⁹ The following chart from the U.S. Census Bureau reemphasizes these ideas of lower achievement by Hispanic immigrants versus their non-Hispanic white counterparts as well as illustrates the lack of educational attainment achieved by this minority group.

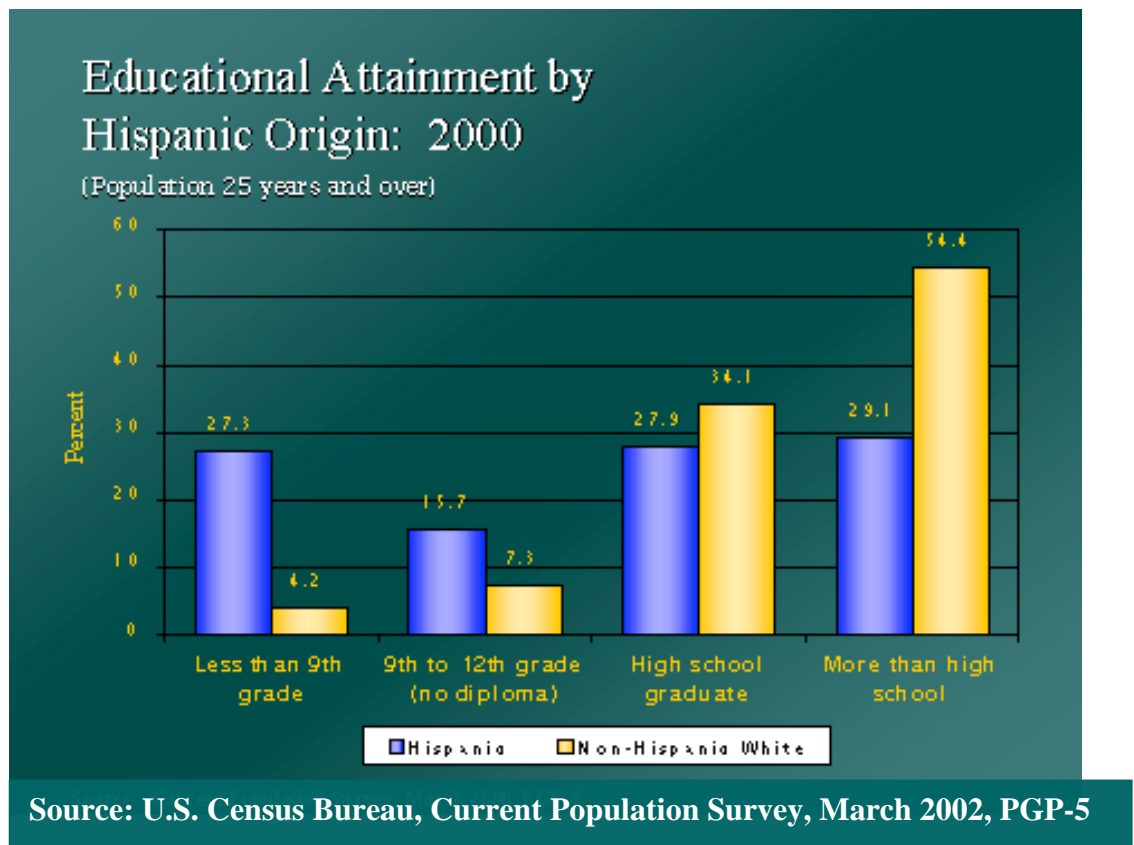
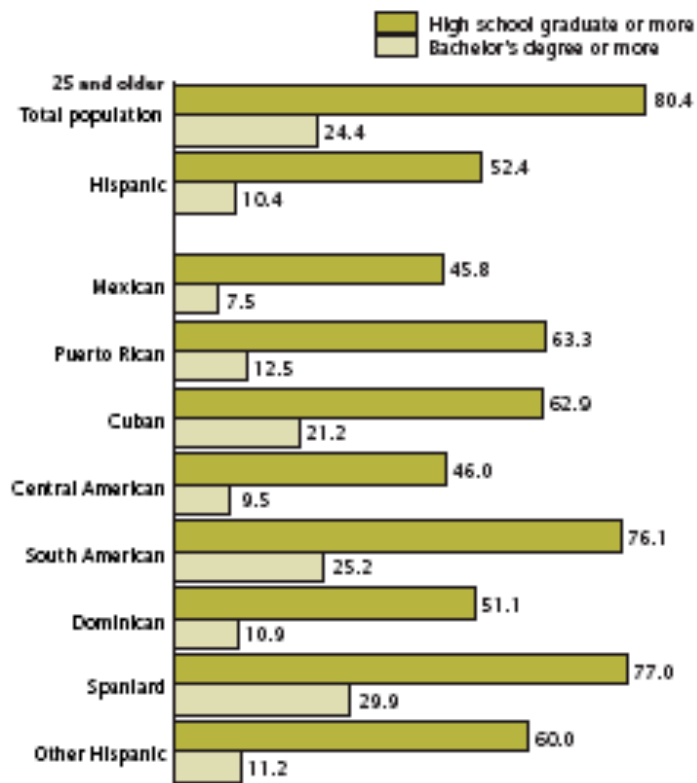


Figure 9.
Educational Attainment: 2000

(Percent of population 25 and older. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/abc/a74.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4.

The educational attainment of Hispanics varies by group. Among Hispanic groups in 2000, Spaniards and South Americans had the highest proportions with at least a high school diploma in 77% and 76%, while Mexicans and Central Americans had the lowest with 46% and 45% respectively. Mexican immigrants actually had the lowest proportion who had attained a Bachelor's degree as well with 7%.⁴⁰

(Chart Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States*, 2000 p. 11)

According to San Juan Cafferty in *Hispanics in the United States*:

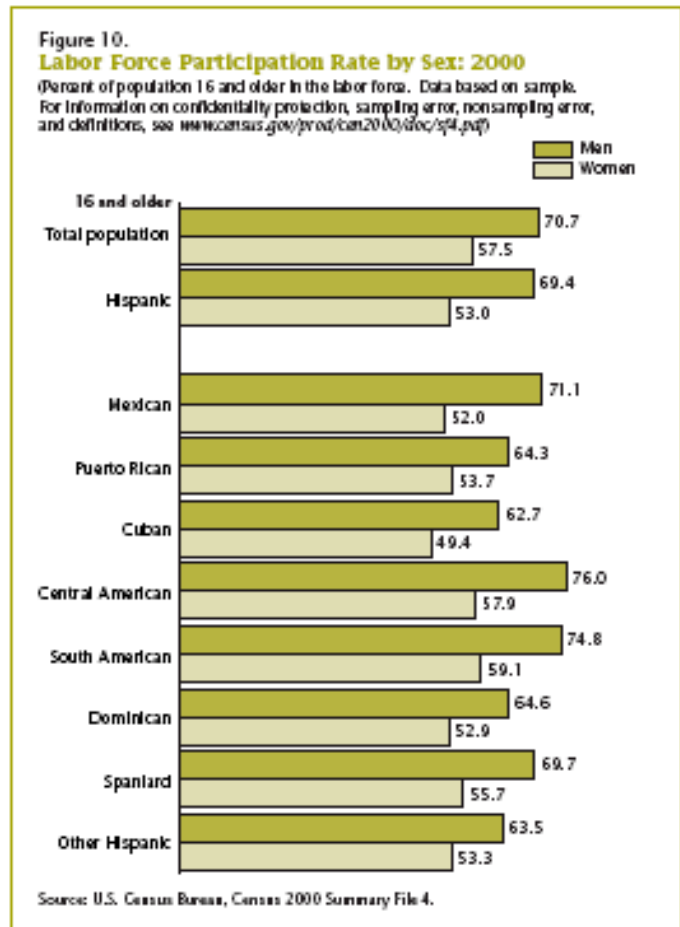
There are three possibilities for the speakers of a minority language in any society: (1) give up the native language and thus reduce, if not eliminate, the ethnic identity it articulates; (2) organize to influence changes in the educational system and mandate adoption of minority language for certain public processes; or (3) abandon the society by emigration or revolution. Thus, bilingualism can be a permanent characteristic of a society, resulting from sustained multilingual contact.⁴¹

Therefore the problem is not due to the unwillingness of Hispanics to adopt American values and culture but rather to the failure of societal institutions, particularly public school, to successfully incorporate these individuals.⁴²

Labor Market

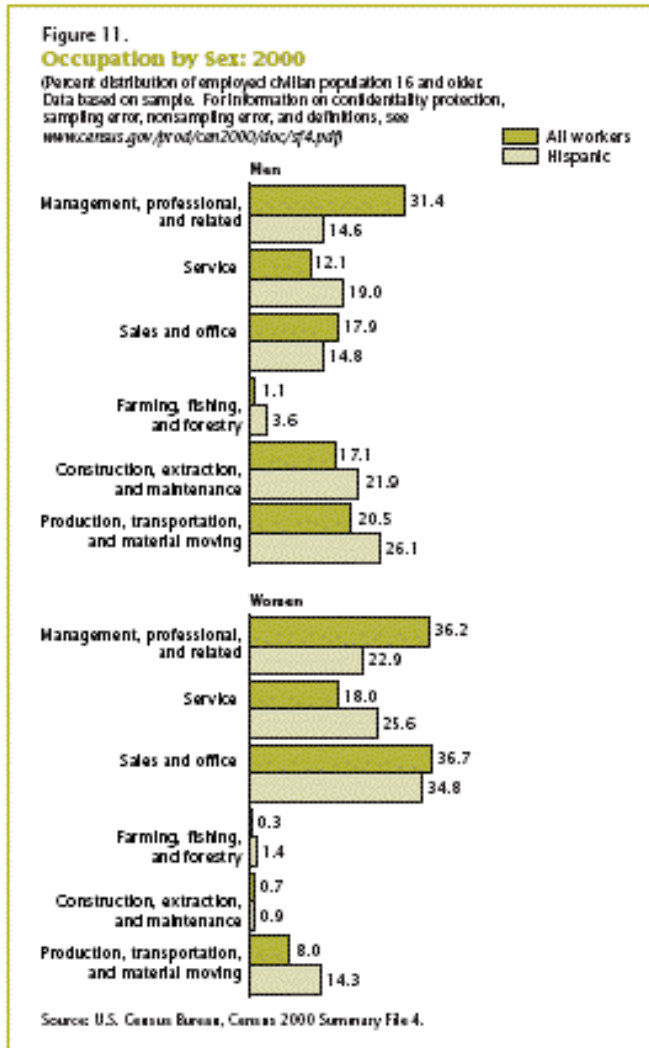
The United States has always been the major magnet of Hispanic immigration. Higher wages, better employment and educational opportunities, as well as regional economic development, political freedom and the allure of the “good life” have all contributed to the appeal of the U.S.⁴³

Educational attainment is an important factor in the determination of labor market status and success.⁴⁴ Since the level of educational attainment of Hispanics is much lower than that of non-Hispanic whites one would expect the participation in the labor market to be equally reflected; however, in 2000 the participation of Hispanics was only slightly less than that of the total population with 69.4% of Hispanics participating in the labor force compared to 70.7% of the total population.⁴⁵



Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States, 2000* p. 12

In 2005, there were 18.6 million Hispanics in the labor market, accounting for 13% of the total employment of 142 million workers.⁴⁶ However, due to lower skill levels and lower levels of English proficiency, Hispanics are often more likely to work in lower-skilled occupations. These lower-skilled occupations are associated with lower earnings, often in the agricultural, service and manufacturing industries.⁴⁷



Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States, 2000* p.13

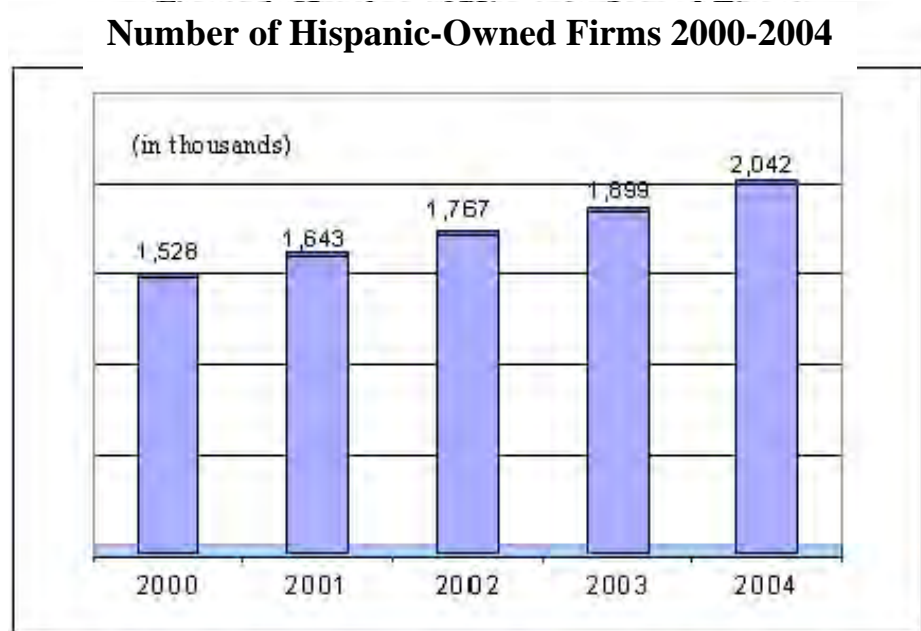
Although the percentage of Hispanics in the labor force only slightly differs from non-Hispanic whites, their distribution by industry has a much larger degree of variation. As shown in the accompanying chart, in 2000 70.6% of Hispanic males worked in the service, agricultural, construction and production sectors of the labor market compared to 50.8% of all men working in the country. The largest variation in participation occurs in the management and professional industries with 14.6% of Hispanic males and 22.9% of Hispanic women participating in this sector compared to 31.4% of all men and

36.2% of all women in this industry. Even with a lower percentage in comparison to the total working women, proportionately more Hispanic women than Hispanic men held managerial or professional jobs. This pattern continues with the sales and office sector of the market. 34.8% of Hispanic women compared to 14.8% of Hispanic men held positions in sales and office settings.⁴⁸

Hispanic-Owned Businesses

In recent years, the increase in the Hispanic population in the United States has amplified the population's economic importance.⁴⁹ In 2004, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce recognized the potential that Hispanics represent in the United States' economy by promoting "the start and growth of Hispanic businesses through networking and technical assistance and also serving as a unique link between these businesses and mainstream businesses."⁵⁰ According to the 2002 United States Census, 1.6 million businesses were owned by Hispanics, a rapid growth of 31% between 1997 and 2002 alone. These 1.6 million businesses generated

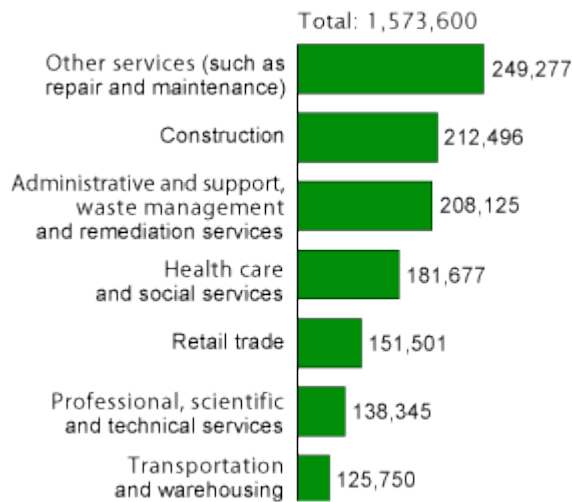
nearly \$222 billion in revenue.⁵¹ According to the accompanying graph, this growth rate among Hispanic-owned businesses has continued to increase, resulting in over 2 million Hispanic-owned businesses in 2004.



Source: HispanTelligence® projections based on U.S. Economic Census SMOBE data for 1982-1997

With the majority of Hispanic workers in the labor force participating in the agricultural, service, and construction industries, it is a reasonable presumption that these workers would then open businesses in these sectors as well. In 2002, 3-in-10 Hispanic-owned firms did in fact operate in construction and services areas such as repair and maintenance, while retail and wholesale trade accounted for 36% of Hispanic businesses' revenue.⁵²

Industries With the Most Hispanic-Owned Businesses

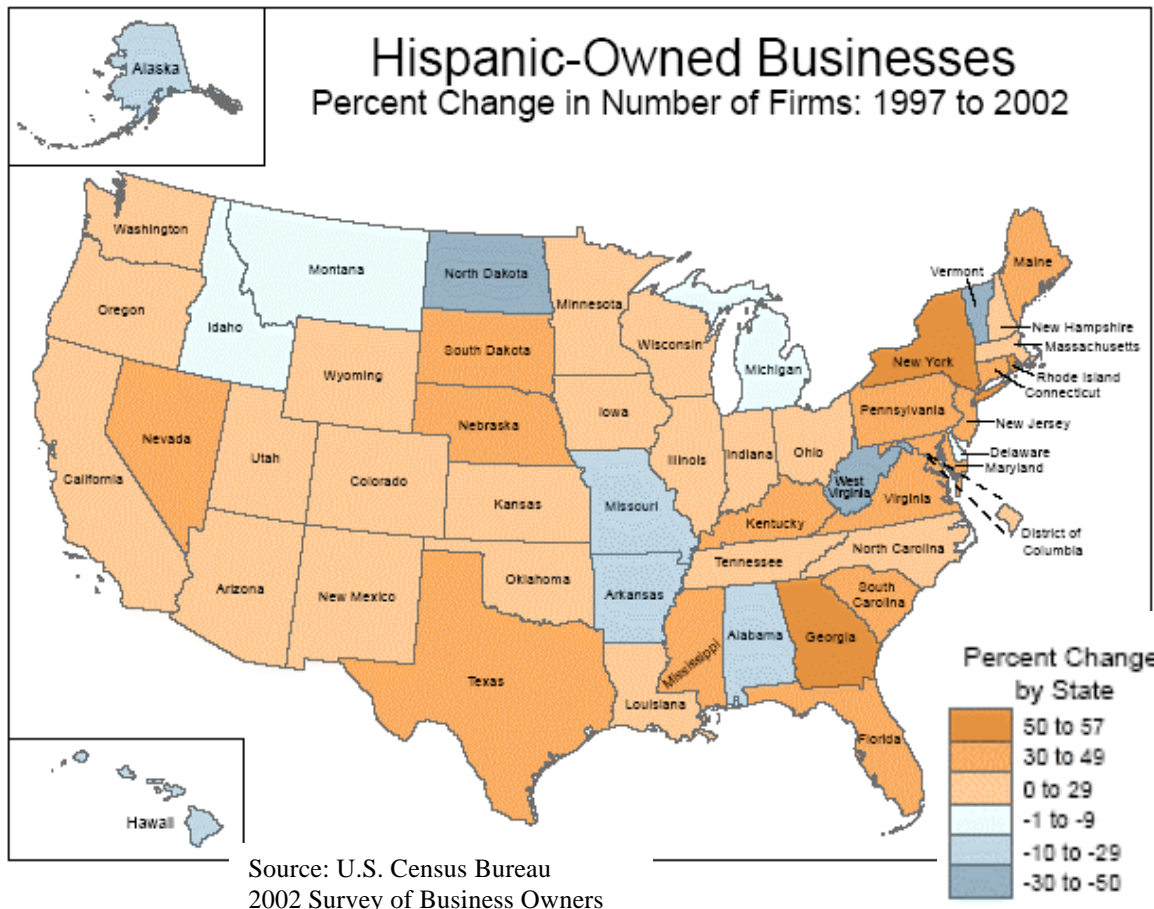


Source: U.S. Census Bureau
2002 Survey of Business Owners: Hispanic-Owned Firms

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

“A growing population, educational strides and entrepreneurial spirit have spurred the number of Hispanic-owned businesses to increase three times faster than the national average”⁵³ The following map demonstrates this increase in the number of Hispanic run businesses between 1997-2002. However, despite the large increase in the Hispanic population in Tennessee since 2000, the state had experienced only a 0%-29% change in the number of Hispanic firms. In fact, in 2002

Hispanic-owned businesses made up less than 1% of the 454,000 businesses in Tennessee.⁵⁴



With a growing population, increasing influence on the economy and flourishing entrepreneurial endeavors, Hispanics will undoubtedly continue to be successful in Hispanic-American businesses as well as in altering the composition of American society.



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