

**Latinos in Indiana:  
Growth, Distribution, and Implications**

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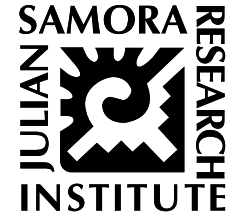


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- *Statistical Briefs/CIFRAS*: for the Institute's dissemination of "facts and figures" on Latino issues and conditions. Also designed to address policy questions and to highlight important topics.
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## About the Author:

Robert Aponte received his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago and has taught at Indiana University and at Michigan State University. He earlier directed a major research project on poverty and employment among the urban disadvantaged at the University of Chicago. Aponte's research interests include poverty, immigration, race and ethnicity, Latinos in the United States, and Contemporary Cuba. Among his recent works are "Informal Work in the U.S." (1997), "Towards the 21st Century: Latinos in the U.S. at Century's End and Beyond" (1999), and "Ethnic Variation in the Family" (1999). He also co-authored "Latinos in the Heartland: The Browning of the Midwest" (1994), a widely publicized JSRI Research Report on the Midwestern Hispanics.

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# Latinos in Indiana: Growth, Distribution, and Implications

The demographic characteristics of Indiana's Latino (Hispanic) population have not been documented in a number of years. In addition, the two most recent and thorough analyses of Hispanics in the state were based on the 1990 Census (Aponte 1999, Gannon, et. al., 1996). Since then, this population has undergone dramatic growth and shifts in residential patterning, owing largely to rapid in-migration. This is evident not only from the partial release of Census 2000 data, but also from numerous reports from around the state that bear witness to these changes. In addition, there are solid indications that the lion's share of the growth occurred in the second half of the 1990's.

The following is a concise overview of those demographic characteristics of Latinos in Indiana that can be documented at the present time. It derives primarily from the preliminary release of Census 2000 data (USBC 2001). A more complete representation must await the release of the detailed returns from Census 2000. What's more, the available data cannot be adjusted for whatever undercounting has occurred. Still, even a cursory treatment of the available data shows the dramatic nature of the transformation.

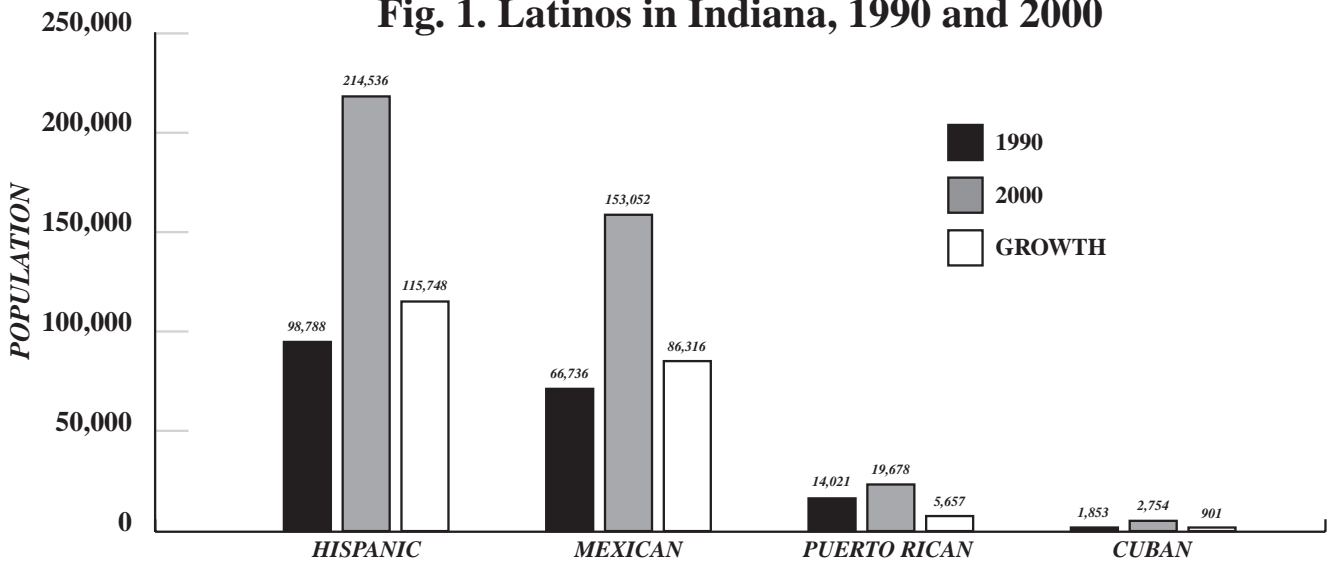
Latinos have not comprised a significant share of Indiana's population until recent years, despite maintaining a presence in the state for most of the 20th Century. They could be found in sizable numbers, for most of this period, primarily in the northwest sector of the state. Their long-standing presence in such areas as the Lake County cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond, can be traced to the pioneering settlements of mostly Mexican-origin workers who were recruited by the areas' steel mills in the

World War I era (Lane and Escobar, 1987). A second long-standing presence consists of migrant farmworkers, also primarily of Mexican origin. However, as only temporary residents, they are often overlooked in statistical reports. In addition, less than 10,000 currently toil in Indiana annually and historical accounts suggest their numbers could not have surpassed 25,000 (Barger and Reza, 1994; Valdes, 1991).

Nevertheless, sizable Latino settlements have been noted in areas of the state outside of Lake County in recent decades. Indeed cities, such as Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Indianapolis, witnessed settlements large enough to sustain the emergence of Latino-oriented, community based organizations by the 1970's and 1980's (Guthrie, et al., 1995; HASS Task Force, 1979; MHRC, 1976). Many of the pioneering settlers in such places were former migrant workers who "settled out" of the migrant stream. That is, they left the migrant cycle and settled in cities or towns, usually near their former places of employment.

Despite this history, as recently as 1990, Indiana's Latino population registered at less than 100,000 people. At the time, they accounted for some 1.8% of the state's overall population. However, by the time of Census 2000, the group's numbers had increased to nearly 215,000, and accounted for a full 3.5% of the state's total. This extraordinary growth is graphically depicted in Figure 1. The data there are also categorized by the three national origins that contribute the largest shares to the overall Latino population, both nationally and within Indiana: Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban.

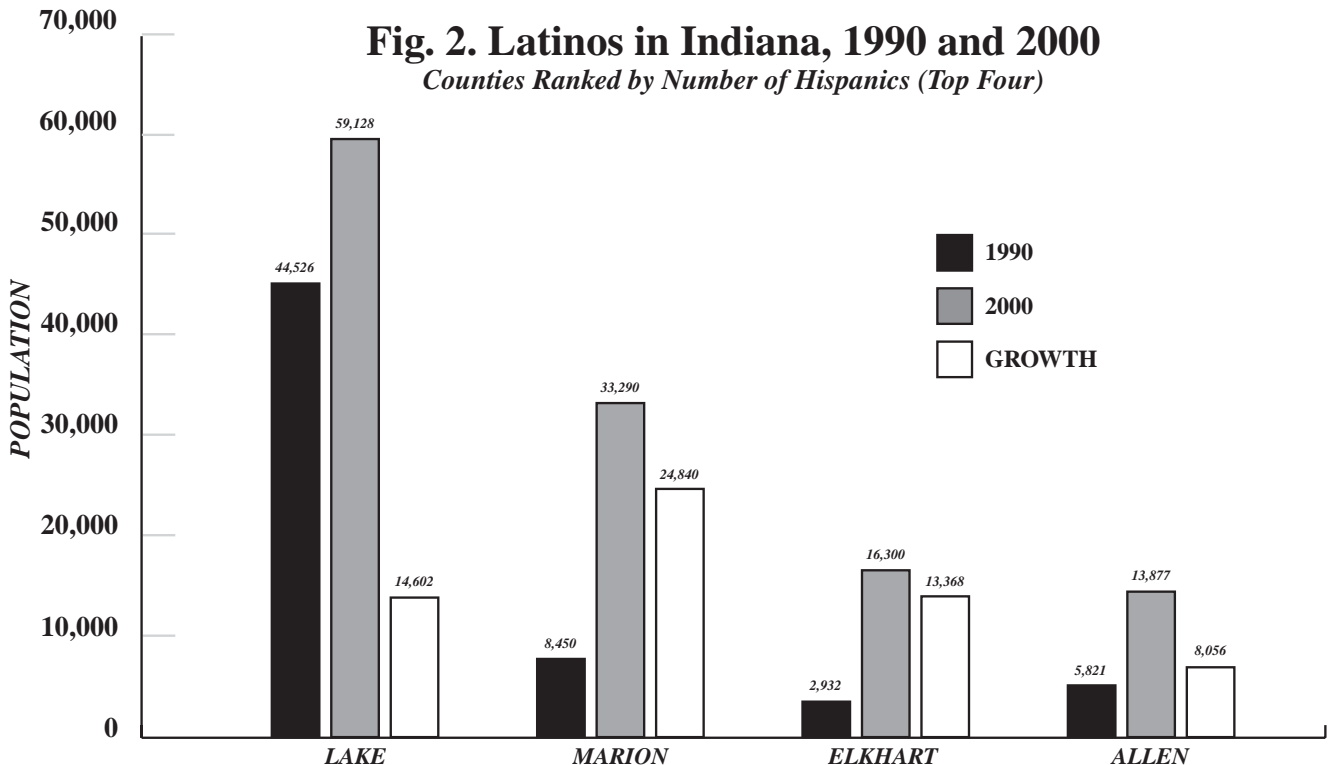
**Fig. 1. Latinos in Indiana, 1990 and 2000**

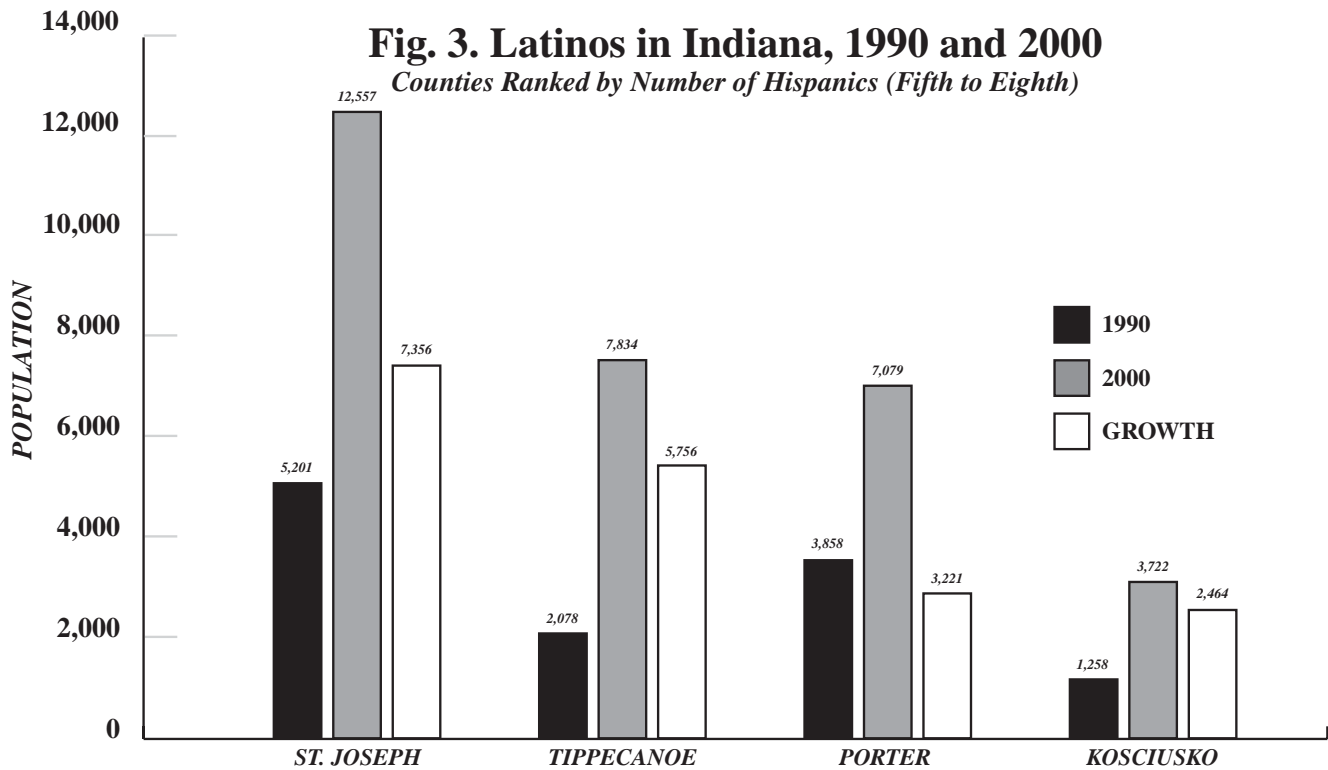


The data in Figure 1 show that whereas the state’s Latino population has long been predominately of Mexican origin, the recent round of Latino growth has strengthened that lead. In fact, the Mexican-origin contingent of the population rose from 67.6% to 71.2% of the total Latino group during the 1990’s. Likewise,

the figures reveal that this contingent accounted for virtually three-quarters of all Latino growth over that period. Indeed, the Mexican origin group added more people [88,316] over the 1990’s than they even had in place at the start of the decade [66,736].

**Fig. 2. Latinos in Indiana, 1990 and 2000**  
*Counties Ranked by Number of Hispanics (Top Four)*





Figures 2 and 3 provide data on the eight Indiana counties with the largest number of Latinos in residence at the time of the 2000 Census. There are a number of important points that can be extracted from analysis of the data. First, whereas Lake County in the northwest sector of the state continues to contain the largest number of Hispanics, it did not sustain the largest such increase. Rather, that distinction goes to Marion County.

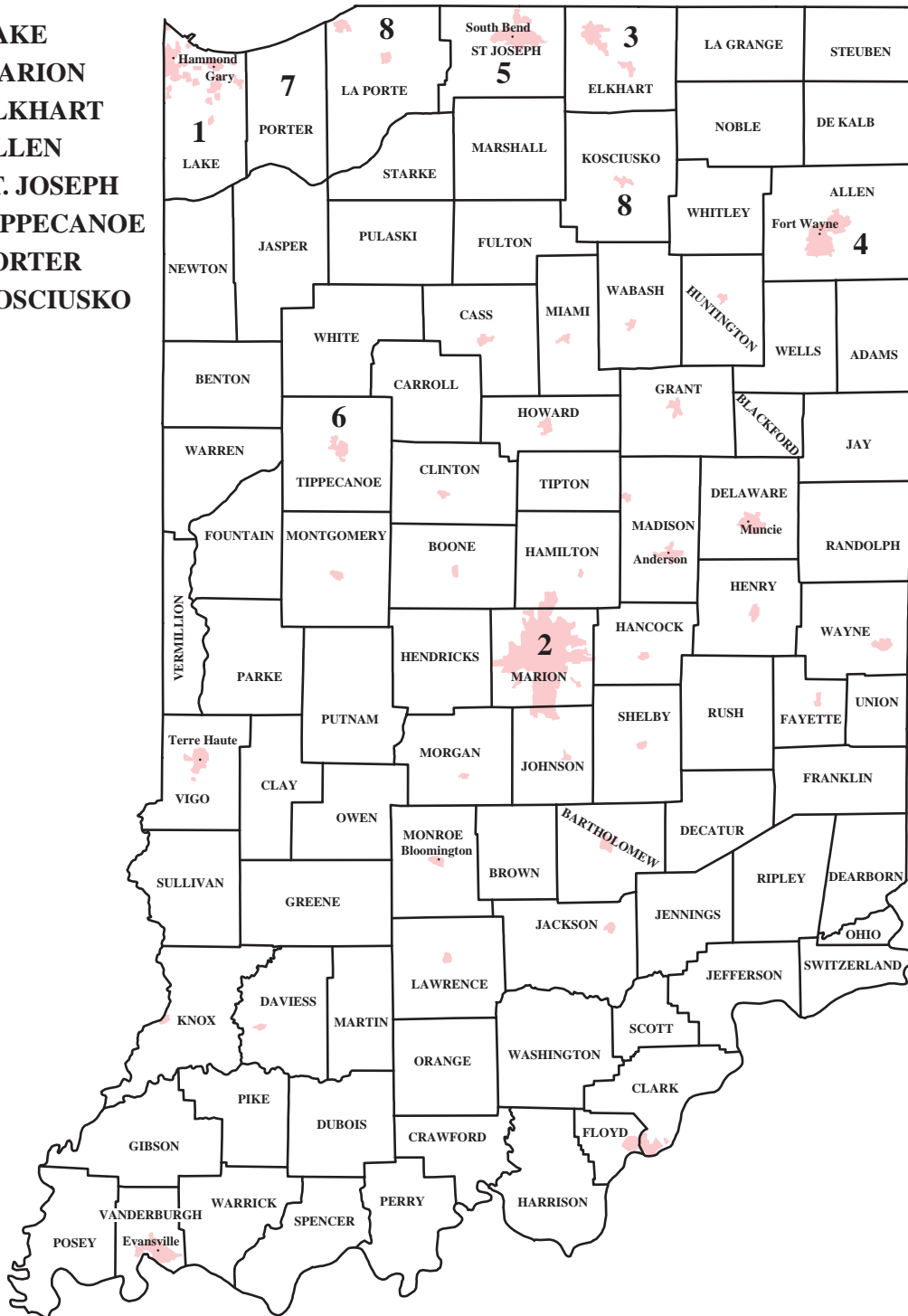
Lake County experienced the second largest increase, followed in order by Elkhart, Allen, St. Joseph, Tippecanoe, Porter, and Kosciusko counties. After Lake and Marion counties, these additional six counties are also home to the highest number of Latinos in the same rank order. In many cases, such as those of Marion, Elkhart, and Kosciusko Counties, the already sizable populations tripled or quadrupled in size

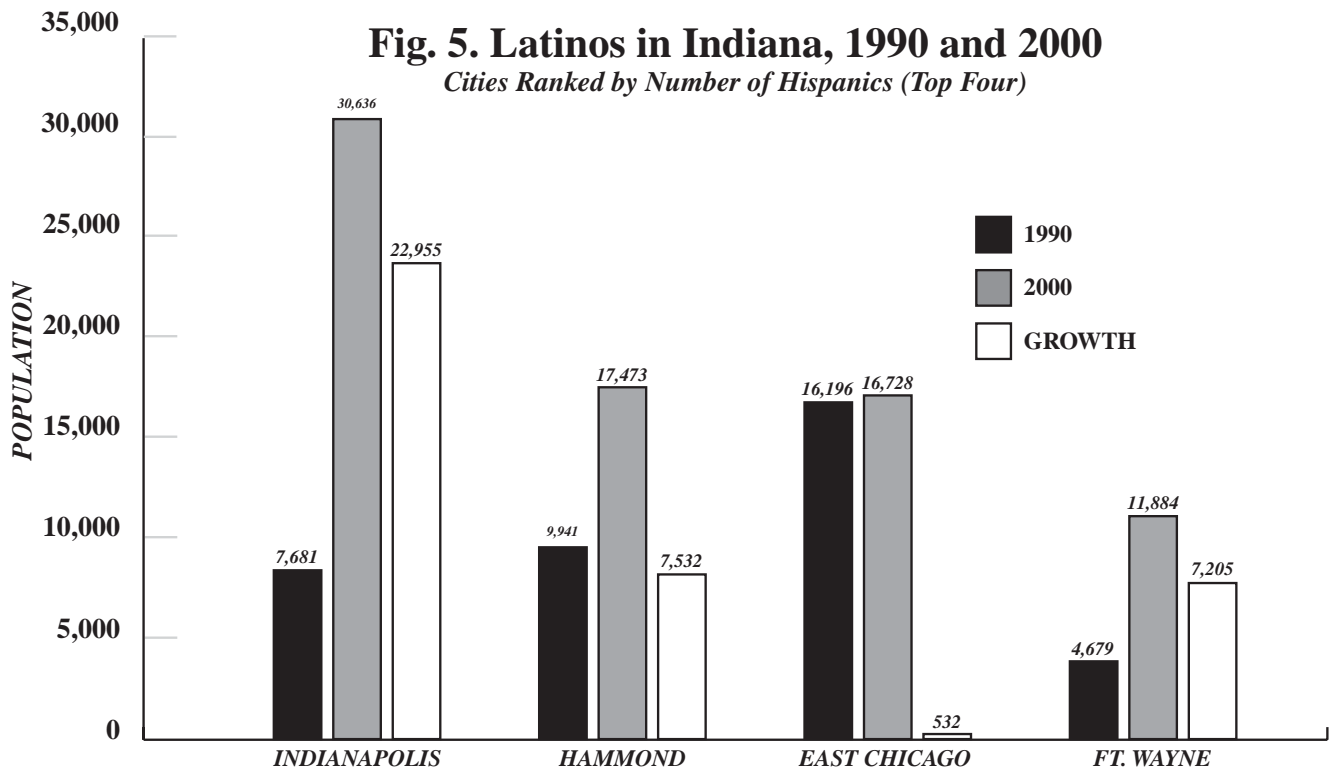
over the 1990's. One of the more striking effects of these dramatic changes is that while Lake County accounted for 45.1% of the state's Latinos in 1990, it only accounted for some 27.6% of the total in 2000.

Figure 4 shows the geographic distribution of Indiana's 90-plus counties with the top eight in Latino population ranks designated as such. As alluded to above, rankings have changed somewhat from the 1990 ordering (not shown here, see Aponte, 1999). Taken as a whole, the patterning seems to reflect a tendency toward settlement in Marion, Tippecanoe, and the state's industrial belt counties along the northcentral and northwestern parts of the state. This patterning warrants further research before a full interpretation can be offered, but it suggests that the newcomers are heading for urban areas and non-agricultural employment.

**Fig. 4. Top 8 Counties in Size of Hispanic Population  
Indiana, 2000**

- 1) LAKE
- 2) MARION
- 3) ELKHART
- 4) ALLEN
- 5) ST. JOSEPH
- 6) TIPPECANOE
- 7) PORTER
- 8) KOSCIUSKO



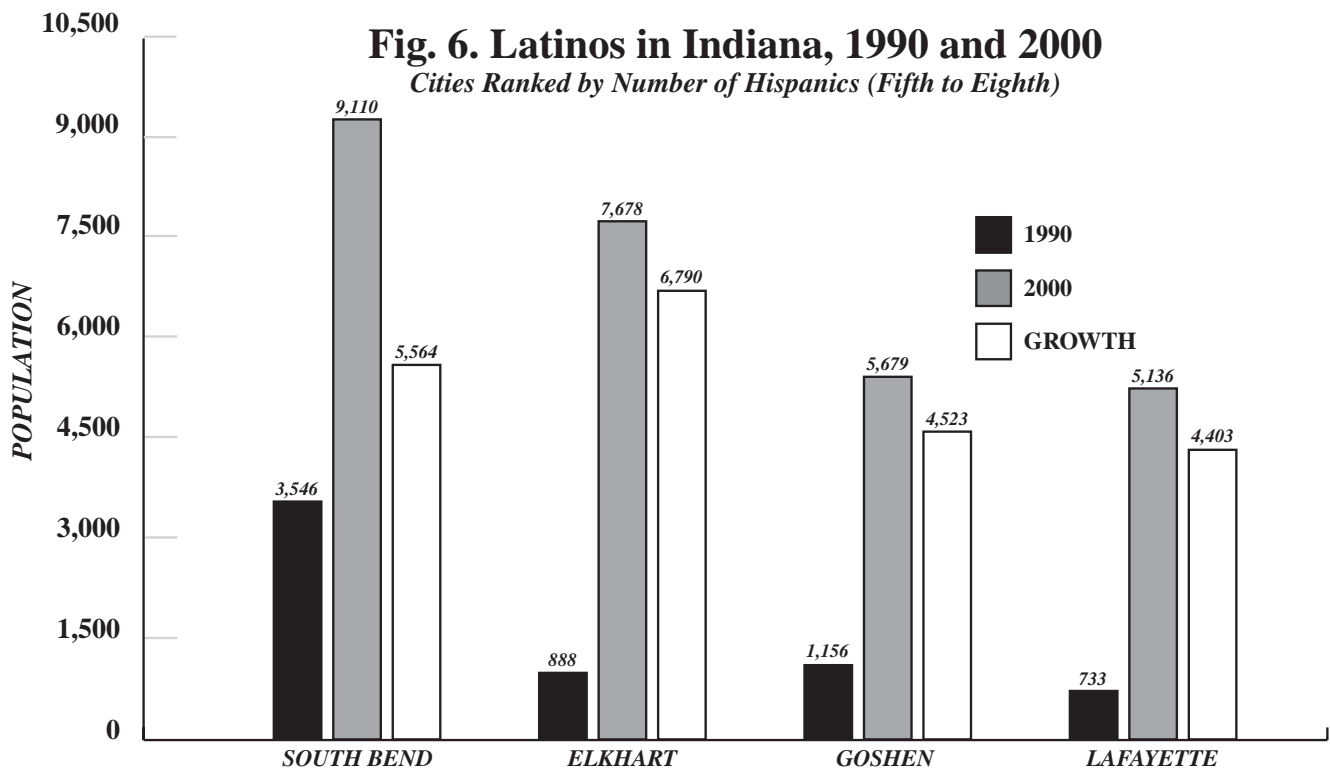


Nevertheless, we can see that these eight counties alone accounted for nearly three-quarters (72%) of the overall Latino growth in the state. One generalization that can be made from the patterns shown thus far is that migration had to play a significant role in this growth. This is clear because “natural increase” (an excess of births over deaths) alone could not have produced such rapid growth.

A second observation is that the Latino population is quickly shifting away from the long-standing pattern of concentration in the northwest sector. Clearly, a second major pole of growth has materialized around Marion County, while additional areas are also experiencing significant growth. Indeed, only three counties experienced declines in their Hispanic populations, while 18 counties experienced growth of at least 1,000 persons, and 47 counties registered between 100 and 1,000 additional persons in their Latino communities. The remaining 24 counties also showed increases, but of less than 100 persons each. Clearly then, the Latino presence is rapidly spreading throughout the state.

An important feature of Latino growth not shown in the county-level charts is the trend by nation-origin group. The overall trend for the state has already been shown, but it’s worth stressing that the increase in representation by Mexican-origin Latinos is especially strong in high-growth areas. For example, whereas Hispanics of Mexican origin accounted for 53.6% of Marion County’s Latino population in 1990, they accounted for 68.5% of the group in 2000, thereby contributing nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of the county’s total increase in Latinos.

Figures 5 and 6 show Latino population trends among the top eight Indiana cities in Hispanic population as of 2000. Not surprisingly, these particular cities are all located in the Latino high growth counties. Still, there are some clearly notable patterns in their growth that are not obvious within the county data. First, Indianapolis is shown to have garnered the most growth of all cities by far, rising from third place among cities in Hispanic population in 1990, to first place in 2000. Its lead over second place Hammond in the Census 2000 count is in excess of 13,000 persons. But, while Hammond at least



showed significant growth, other Lake County cities experienced miniscule (East Chicago) or negative (Gary, not shown because it fell to ninth place) growth. Finally, the growth shown for Elkhart is nothing short of phenomenal. The comparatively small city began the decade with less than 1,000 Hispanics (888), but ended it with nearly 8,000 (7,678) Latinos.

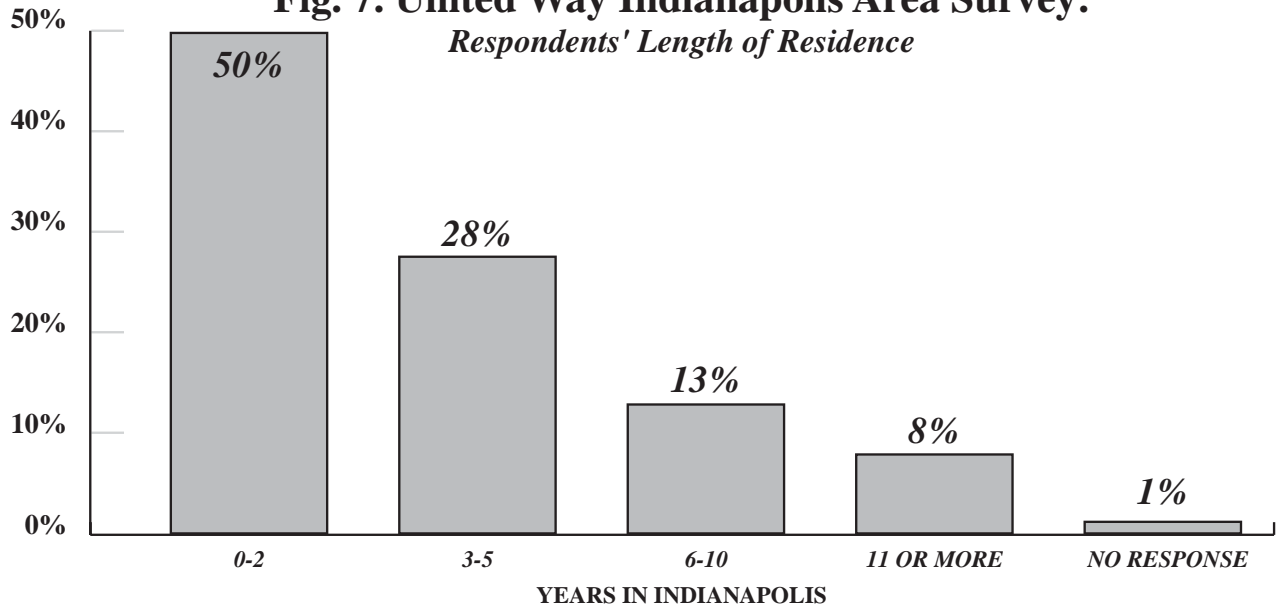
The fact that the gross trend for the state in Latino growth is very similar to that for individual places, like Marion County, can be useful for the purpose of making preliminary assessments about the overall Latino population. Such similarities suggest that the characteristics of those migrants contributing to growth in these places are also similar. The fact that Marion County experienced the most growth among the state's counties is fortunate because we have recent survey findings on that area's Hispanic newcomers. The findings for Marion will almost certainly apply to newly arriving Latinos elsewhere in the state.

A survey conducted by United Way of Central Indiana (2000) provides important information about the Latinos in the Marion County area. As suggested above, because of the similarities in timing-of-arrival and national origins between many of the Latinos surveyed there and Hispanic newcomers elsewhere in the state, it is quite likely much of what we learn from the one will apply to the other. When combined with the information shown here, the survey's findings suggest that state's Latino newcomers are predominately recent immigrants, overwhelmingly of Mexican-origin, hard-working but relatively poor, and handicapped by limited English language proficiency.

Figures 7 and 8 derive from the United Way Indianapolis Area Hispanic Survey (UWCI 2000) fielded in January of 2000. This survey reached over 600 Indianapolis-area adult Latinos and was based on a sample derived from various sources (e.g., phone records). In particular, there was a concerted effort to "sign up" potential



**Fig. 7. United Way Indianapolis Area Survey:**  
*Respondents' Length of Residence*

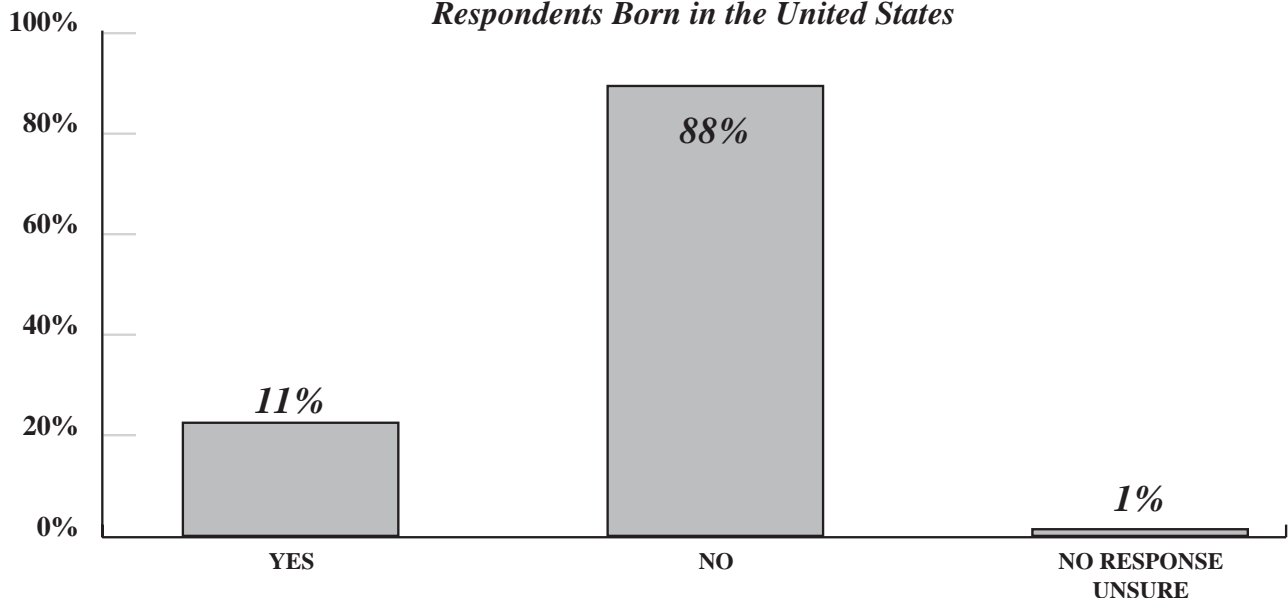


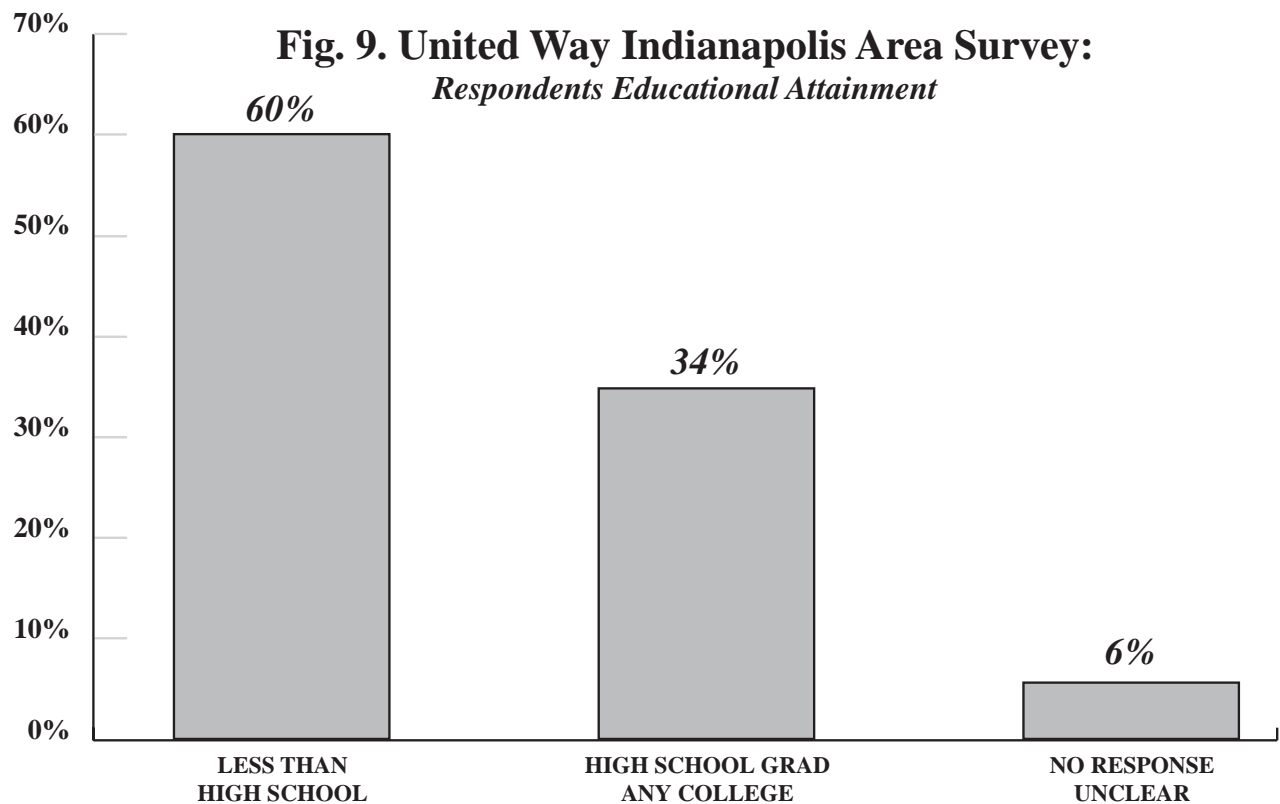
respondents by canvassing various city areas known to contain large numbers of Latinos over several days. While the resulting sample frame cannot truly be considered representative of the entire metro area's Latino population, it is likely that it approaches that goal to a reasonable degree. In addition, the consistency of the findings with what we have all observed in our communities (large numbers of recently arriving

Latinos with modest English skills, etc.) heightens our confidence in the survey's findings.

Figure 7 reveals the approximate time the respondents have resided in the capitol city area by selected length-of-years categories. The results shown are astounding. Fully half of all respondents are shown to have lived in the area

**Fig. 8. United Way Indianapolis Area Survey:**  
*Respondents Born in the United States*



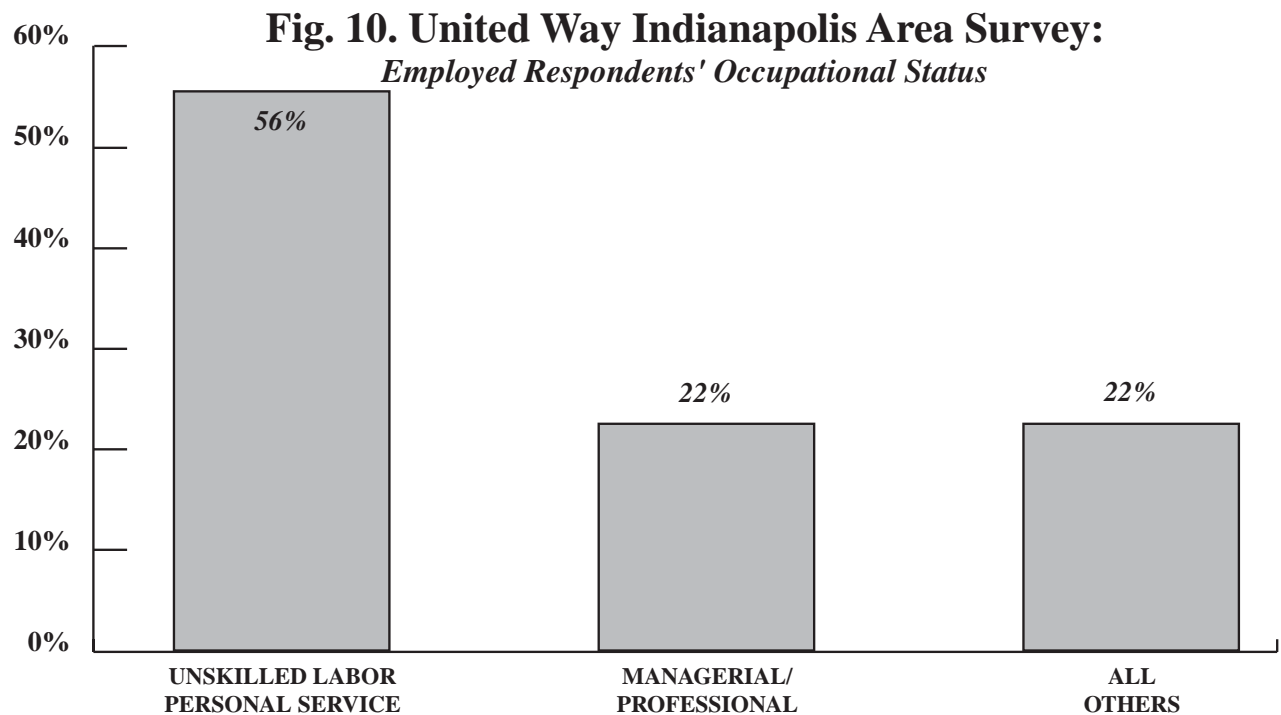


for only two years or less! The second largest contingent, 28% of the total, is shown to only have acquired between three and five years of area residence. Hence, fully three-quarters of the group arrived around mid-decade or later. This is consistent with numerous anecdotal reports on the Latino population explosion around the state (Buchthal, 2001; Horne, 2000; Peck, 2001a, 2001b; Quinn, 2001). In addition, the most resounding of the themes in this literature is the sudden and increasing need for translation services and for bilingual instructors and programs in English language instruction.

Figure 8 depicts nativity data on the survey's respondents. The results are quite remarkable. Nearly 90% of the respondents were born outside of the United States. While the United Way survey did not collect data on national-origin background, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of the newcomers are Mexican heritage Latinos. By contrast, the 1990 Census returns indicated that only about 15% of

the state's Mexican-origin Latinos were born in Mexico (Aponte, 1999). Hence, the survey's findings suggest that an incredibly strong immigrant presence characterizes the state's newest Latinos, in sharp contrast to their counterparts of a decade earlier.

Figures 9 and 10 provide information on the survey respondents' educational attainment and, within broad categories, their occupational status. A full 60% of the respondents had attained less than 12 years of formal schooling. Nearly as high a percentage (56%) of the employed respondents worked at unskilled jobs. And while some 22% of the workers are shown as employed in managerial or professional occupations, many of the managerial positions were blue-collar ones or were within service oriented establishments (e.g., plant foreman, fast food managerial, etc.). Many of those jobs are not as lucrative as their categorical labeling might imply.



It is important to stress that while the data in Figures 9 and 10 are not cross-classified by the respondents' duration of residence, it is almost certain that the newer arrivals hold a disproportionate share of the least lucrative jobs and are disproportionately represented among the least educated respondents.

There are some important additional findings from the survey that are not shown in the charts here. First, most Latinos either want to stay in Indiana, or are unsure about staying; only about one-quarter conceive of their residency here as temporary. Moreover, only the most recent arrivals are unlikely to be sure about staying or believe they will move on. Most of the respondents who have lived in the state for even a few years want to stay. Indeed, many came to join family.

Most of the respondents, however, came for work, and they are hard workers. For example, some 40% of the households reported having three or more employed adults, while one-quarter had at least one worker holding at least

two jobs. Overall, less than 2% of the group's workers were unemployed. However, their wages are undoubtedly quite low; the median household income among those surveyed was between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Further, over one-third of the respondents lived in "shared" quarters and over 90% were renters. High proportions also had limited English-speaking skills, but most were seeking or taking ESL (English as a second language) training.

It is apparent from the data presented that the Latino population in Indiana has undergone sudden and drastic change in the past decade. Today the group is primarily Mexican in origin, most are first-generation immigrants, and they can be found throughout the state to a greater degree than previously. While many of them are handicapped by a lack of English proficiency, low income, and little formal education, they are nevertheless highly work-oriented, eager to learn the language, and striving to achieve self-sufficiency through work, study, and determination.

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