

Winds of Change: Latinos in the Heartland and the Nation

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ABSTRACT

This report is a follow-up to the widely publicized report *Latinos in the Heartland: The Browning of the Midwest*. It provides a synopsis of those findings along with several additional findings based on census data not available at the time of the original report's release. These new findings both elaborate on some of the key issues in the earlier report and provide a point of comparison. As reported in *The Browning of the Midwest*, although Latinos accounted for over half of the total population growth in the Midwest during the 1980s, in absolute terms, the group's growth was modest. The bulk of Latino population growth was centered in Illinois, especially the Chicago metropolitan area, and was overwhelmingly Mexican in origin. In addition, the data strongly suggested that immigration to this area accounted for most of the increase, as against other sources of growth. Finally, the original report showed that Latinos sustained a significant decrease in real income and a significant increase in poverty. This report shows that the Midwest's severe economic setback was not matched at the national level. The median household income for the region in the 1980's was higher than that for the nation, but ended lower. The data elaborated herein also suggest that while Latinos continue to trail Blacks and Whites in educational attainment, there is more catching up going on than is readily apparent. In fact, educational data on Hispanics are almost certainly biased downwardly by the inclusion of large numbers of less educated, recently arrived immigrants. Recent years have witnessed a burgeoning Latino population in the rural areas of some of the region's states, particularly Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. The major "pull" for these newcomers is a string of meat processing plants that have recently shifted to, or expanded in, these Midwestern areas.