

# HEALTH POLICY FACT SHEET

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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### The Population

- ▶ Of the 39 million Latinos in the United States, 67% are of Mexican origin.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ There are 10.2 million Mexican immigrants in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Mexican immigrants account for 38% of the Mexican-origin population.<sup>1</sup>
  - ▶ The female:male ratio in the Mexican immigrant population is 45:55.
  - ▶ Half of all Mexican immigrants are under age 33.
  - ▶ 44% of Mexican immigrants are homeowners.
  - ▶ One-fifth of Mexican immigrants are naturalized citizens.
  - ▶ The average age of Mexican immigrants at entry into the U.S. is 21.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Over half of all Latino children nationally have at least one parent who is an immigrant.<sup>3</sup>
  - ▶ The average Mexican immigrant household has 4.5 members.<sup>2</sup>
  - ▶ Among the almost 2 million families (with children) headed by a Mexican immigrant, 79% are two-parent families.<sup>4</sup>

### Health Insurance Coverage

- ▶ Two-thirds of Mexican immigrant children did not have health insurance at some point in 1998-2001.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Over half of Mexican immigrants 18-64 years of age were uninsured for part or all of 2000.<sup>9</sup>

### Geographic Location

- ▶ The Mexican immigrant population is most heavily concentrated in the West and South, but the Midwest and East Coast also have sizable populations.
- ▶ Thirteen states have 100,000 or more residents who are Mexican immigrants.
- ▶ Florida and Georgia, two states not traditionally associated with Mexican immigrants, have fast-growing Mexican immigrant populations.
- ▶ California is home to 39% of all Mexican immigrants.

**Table 1.** States with 100,000 or More Mexican Immigrants

Rank	States	Size
1	California	4,026,219
2	Texas	2,356,703
3	Illinois	665,237
4	Arizona	618,105
5	Colorado	258,482
6	Florida	223,162
7	Nevada	188,250
8	New York	187,797
9	N. Carolina	164,121
10	Oregon	160,540
11	Georgia	150,061
12	Washington	148,530
13	New Mexico	117,049

Source: U.S. Census, 2004 CPS<sup>1</sup>

### Labor-Force Participation

- ▶ 76% of Mexican immigrant males 18-64 years of age are in the U.S. labor force.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Mexican immigrant workers are heavily represented in the following occupations: 29% in manufacturing, transportation, and material-moving; 25% in service occupations; 19% in construction, extraction, and maintenance; and 13% in sales and office occupations.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Mexican immigrants are a vital part of the U.S. agricultural workforce.
  - ▶ 77% of U.S. farmworkers are Mexican immigrants.<sup>6</sup>
  - ▶ The immigrant Mexican farmworker population is becoming more diverse. More and more Mexican immigrant farmworkers are young members of indigenous ethnic minorities, such as Zapotec, Mixtec, and Mayan, each of which has unique linguistic and cultural needs.<sup>7</sup>



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## Health Status

### Children (Under Age 18)

- ▶ **Health Status:** About 1 in 4 Mexican immigrant children was in fair or poor health, according to their parents (Table 2).
- ▶ **Dental Health:** Over half of Mexican immigrant children over 6 years of age had teeth in fair or poor condition, according to their parents (Table 2).
- ▶ **Mortality:** The top three causes of death for all Latino children ages 1-17 were accidental injuries, cancer, and homicide.<sup>11</sup> (Mortality data are not published for Mexican immigrants.)
  - ▶ **For ages 1-12:** accidental injuries, birth defects, and cancer.
  - ▶ **For ages 13-17:** accidental injuries, homicide, and suicide.

### Adults (18-64)

- ▶ **Health Status:** 9% of Mexican immigrant adults report being in fair or poor health.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ **Chronic Disease:** The two most common chronic conditions Mexican immigrant adults report are hypertension (9%) and diabetes (4%).<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ **Mortality:** Cancer, accidental injuries, and heart disease are the three leading causes of death of *all* Latino adults.<sup>11</sup>

### Older Adults (65 and Older)

- ▶ **Health Status:** 44% of older Mexican immigrants report being in fair or poor health.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ **Chronic Disease:** The top three chronic conditions Mexican immigrant older adults report having are hypertension (48%), diabetes (30%), and heart problems (11%).<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ **Mortality:** The top three leading causes of death among *all* Latino older adults in 2001 were heart disease, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Diabetes was the fourth-leading cause.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2.** Mexican Immigrant Children: Health and Condition of Teeth Reported by Parents

AGE	HEALTH STATUS: FAIR / POOR	CONDITION OF TEETH: FAIR / POOR
<5 yrs.	24%	39%
6-11 yrs.	28%	60%
12-16 yrs.	29%	51%

Source: Institute of Medicine.<sup>10</sup>

## Policy Opportunities

- ▶ Mexican immigrants' health must be recognized as a binational responsibility. Any strategy seeking to address the health needs of the Mexican immigrants in the U.S. can not ignore their social, cultural, political, and economic ties to Mexico. To be effective, programs have to reinforce health-promotion and health-education efforts in both countries.
- ▶ The lack of health insurance and a usual source of care are key obstacles to health care for significant numbers of Mexican immigrants of all ages. Health care policies must be expanded to include those Mexican immigrants who are not currently eligible for public health insurance.

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