



City University of New York (CUNY)
CUNY Academic Works

Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and
Latino Studies

Centers & Institutes

2006

Mexicans in New York City, 1990 - 2005

Laird Bergad

Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/clacsl_pubs/23

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

LATINO DATA PROJECT

Mexicans in New York City,

1990 - 2005

Laird W. Bergad
Director,
Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies



Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies
The Graduate Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10016
(212) 817-8438 - clacls@gc.cuny.edu - <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies>

Mexicans in New York City, 1990 - 2005

Prepared by

Prof. Laird W. Bergad

Director, Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies Graduate Center,

City University of New York

lbergad@gc.cuny.edu

The Mexican-origin population of New York City was the city's fastest-growing Latino national group between 1990 and 2005. From a population of 55,587 in 1990 Mexicans increased to 183,792 in 2000 and 227,842 in 2005.¹ By 2005 Mexicans had become the third largest Latino nationality in NYC behind Puerto Ricans (790,609) and Dominicans (570,641). The yearly growth rate between 1990 and 2000 among Mexicans was 12.7% although this slowed to 4.4% between 2000 and 2005. The Dominican population of NYC increased at 1.4% yearly between 2000 and 2005 and the Puerto Rican population experienced their first decline ever, falling slightly by - 0.2% annually over the same period. If these trends continue, and there are no guarantees that this will be the case, Dominicans will surpass Puerto Ricans in NYC in 2026 and Mexicans will become the largest Latino nationality in the City in 2035. (See Figure 1).

While the number of undocumented persons among Dominicans and Mexicans living in NYC is difficult to ascertain, the Office of Immigration Statistics has estimated

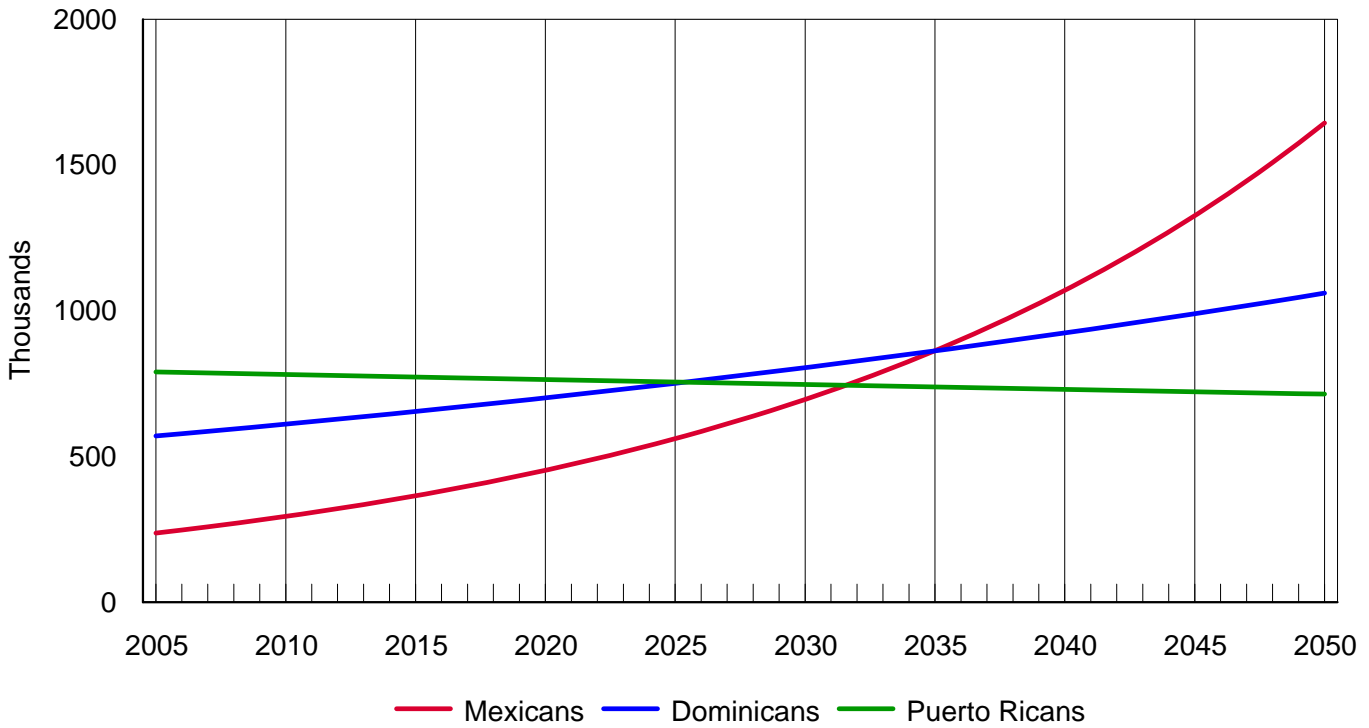
¹ Unless otherwise noted, all data in this article were derived from the Public Use Microdata Series (PUMS) raw data files issued by the Census Bureau and organized by the University of Minnesota Population Center. See IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series) Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2004, available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

that at the national level there were some 10.5 million undocumented persons living in the U.S. in 2005; that 57% were Mexicans; and that 560,000 undocumented persons were living in New York State.² If the national-level estimate of 57% is projected to New York State this means that there were approximately 319,000 undocumented Mexicans in the state. The 2005 American Community Survey PUMS data indicated a population of 325,478 in New York State of whom exactly 70% lived in New York City. Using the undocumented estimates indicated above, this means that there may have been as many as 644,478 Mexicans in the state of New York and some 451,149 Mexicans residing in NYC in 2005. These are estimates which may not be verified statistically at this time, although it is highly likely that the actual number of Mexicans living in NYC in 2005 was substantially greater than official Census Bureau data from the American Community Survey.³

² There are no estimates for the number of Dominicans living in the U.S. who were undocumented. See Michael Hofer, Nancy Rytina, and Christopher Campbell, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2005* (Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2005).

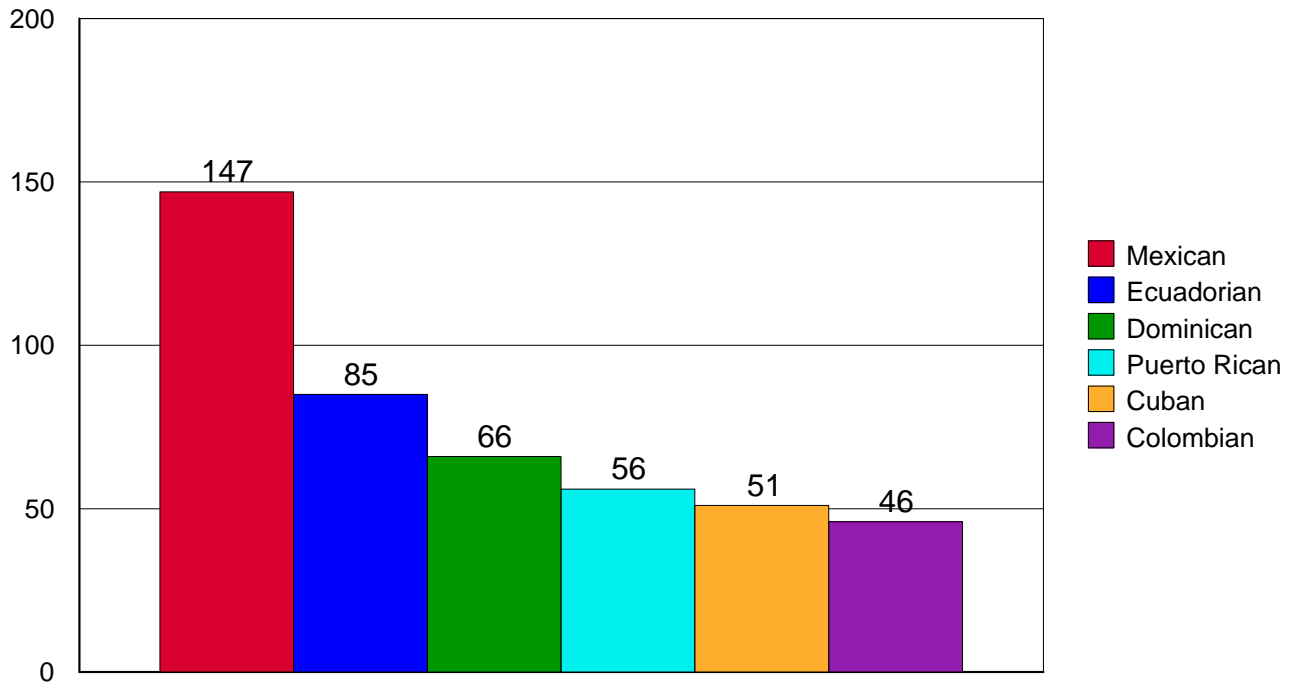
³ The methods for data collection by the ACS 2005 are described in U.S. Census Bureau, *Design and Methodology: American Community Survey* (U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census, Bureau, May 2006) accessible at the following web site: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/index.htm> The ACS data are based on forms which are mailed to a random number of households in each geographical region of the U.S. and follow-up phone call interviews. Although the data collection methods are entirely confidential and anonymous, it is highly probable that there would be a great reluctance among undocumented persons to respond, and that this would be an undercount of many national groups, including Mexicans.

Figure 1
 Projections of Mexican, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Populations of New York City
 Based on Annual Growth Rates 2000 - 2005



Data on comparative fertility rates among the principal Latino nationalities in NYC

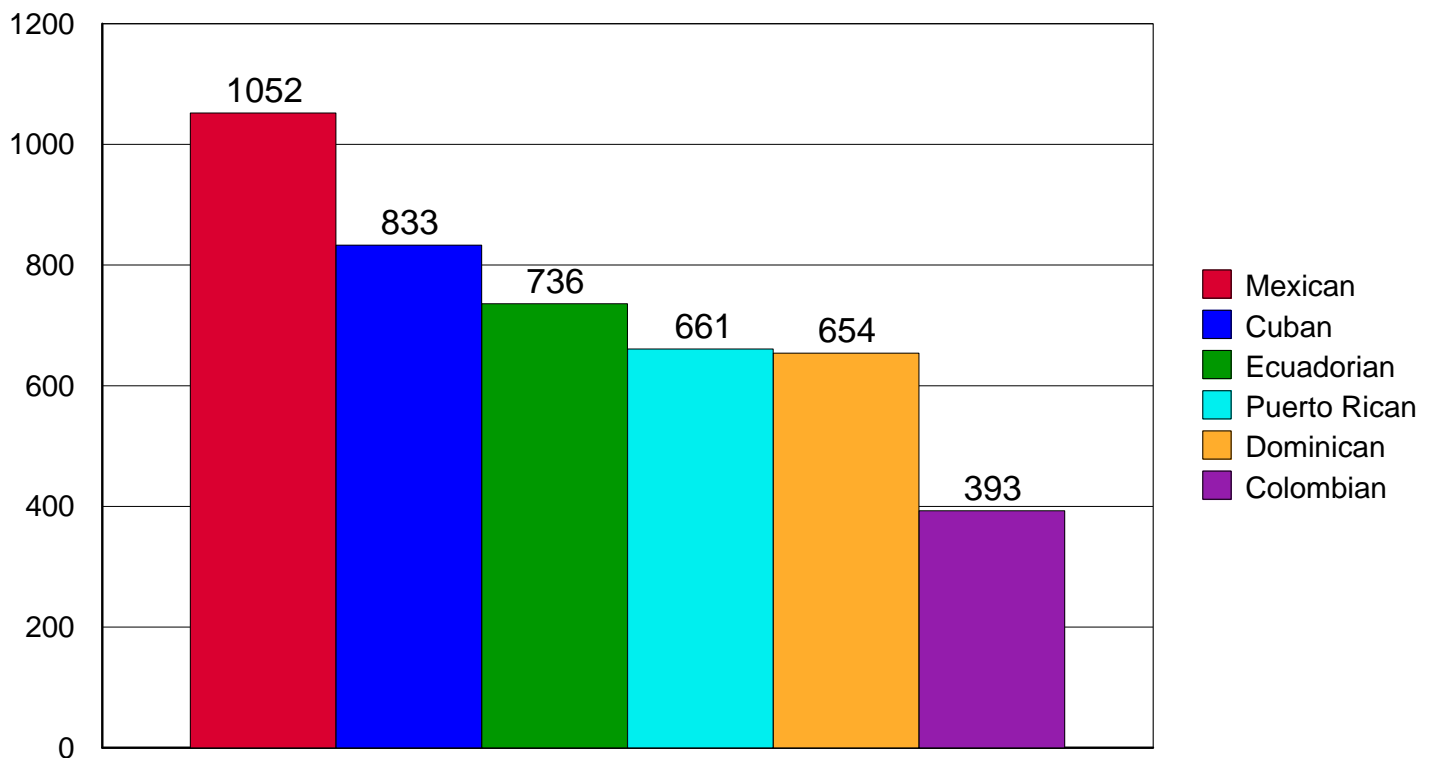
Figure 2
 Fertility Rates Among Selected Hispanic Nationalities in New York City, 2005
 (number of live births per 1,000 women ages 15-44)



suggest that rates of population growth among Mexicans will continue to be high in the near future regardless of migration patterns to the city. In 2005 NYC Mexicans had fertility rates which dwarfed those of the other Hispanic national groups as indicated in Figure 2.

Another indicator of fertility, often used by historical demographers in the absence of vital statistics on births, is the child/woman ratio which measures children ages 0-9 in relation to women ages 15-44. An assumption is that larger numbers of children in comparative perspective indicates greater reproductive rates. In 2005 Mexicans in NYC had the highest child/women ratios as indicated in Figure 3.⁴

Figure 3
Child/Women Ratios Among Selected Hispanic Nationalities in New York City, 2005
(number children ages 0-9 per 1,000 women ages 15-44)



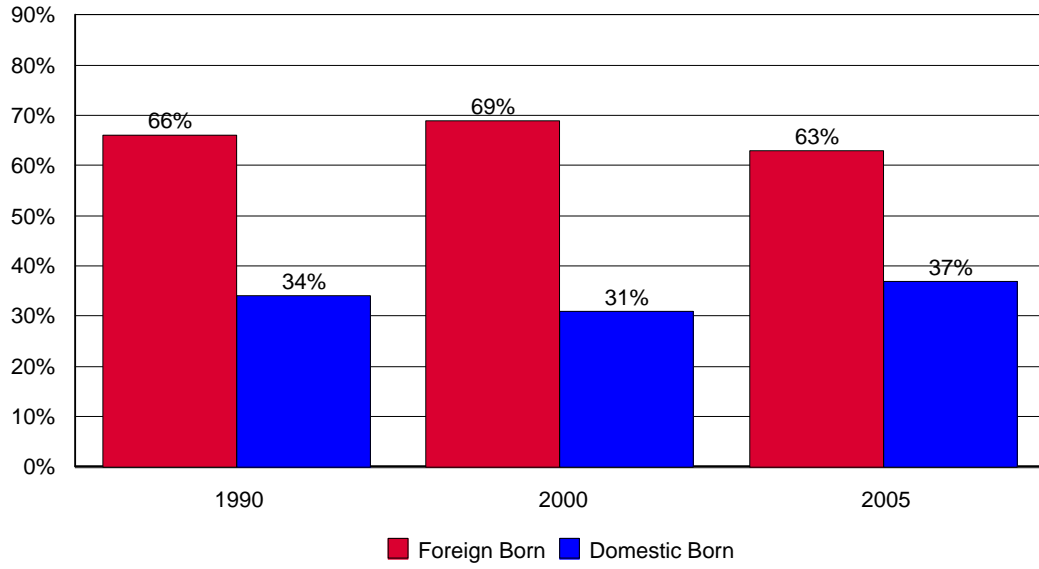
These data on relatively high fertility and child/woman ratios in New York City are consistent with findings on reproductive patterns among Mexicans throughout the United States. One recent study found that there were higher fertility rates among foreign-born Mexicans compared with Mexicans born in the United States, and higher fertility rates among foreign-born Mexicans in the U.S. compared with Mexicans living in Mexico.⁵ High birth rates among Mexican women who were NYC residents led to an increase in the absolute number of domestic-born Mexicans within the City. However, the foreign-born Mexican population increased as well because of the constant arrival of new migrants. Continued migration is revealed by examining the 15 to 44 year old age category separately. Among this age-specific population, where most migrants are generally found, there was a significant increase in the number and percentage of foreign-born Mexicans between 1990 and 2000 and relative stability from 2000 to 2005. (See Figures 4 and 5). Since fertility rates among foreign-born Mexican women are so high, as indicated above, the influx of migrants suggest that birth rates will continue to be much greater among the NYC Mexican population in comparison with other Latino national groups.

⁴ The relatively high child/woman ratios among Cubans, while accurate, is somewhat puzzling in light of the low fertility rates indicated for Cubans in Figure 2.

⁵ Reanne Frank and Patrick Heuveline, "A Crossover in Mexican and Mexican-American Fertility Rates: Evidence and Explanations for an Emerging Paradox" *Demographic Research* Volume 12, Article 4, Pages 77-104 Published 11 March 2005

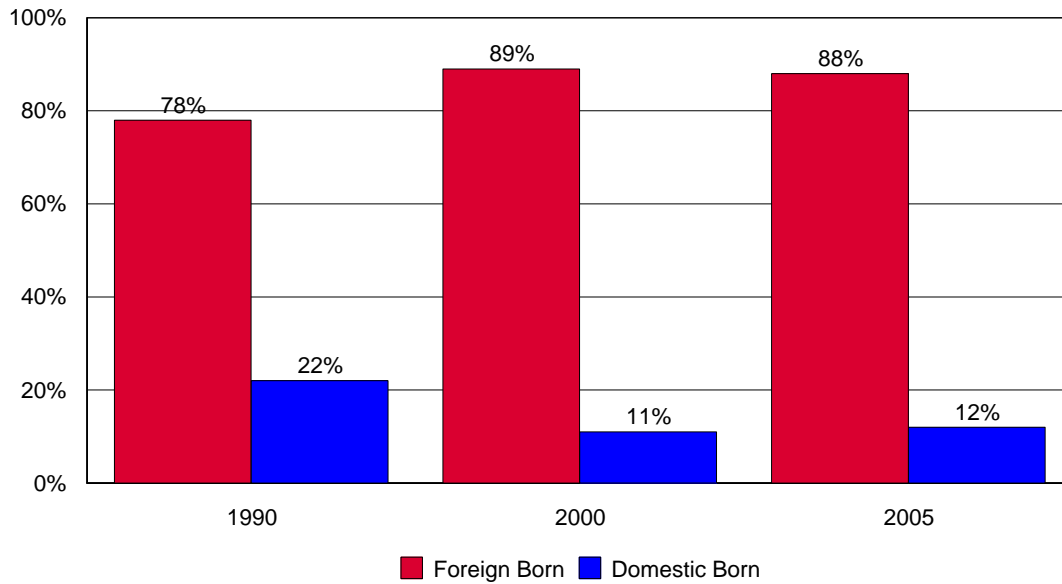
<http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol12/4/>

Figure 4
 Mexicans by Foreign Born and Domestic Born in New York City, 1990 - 2005
 (in percentages)



Source: PUMS data, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000 Censuses; ACS 2005.

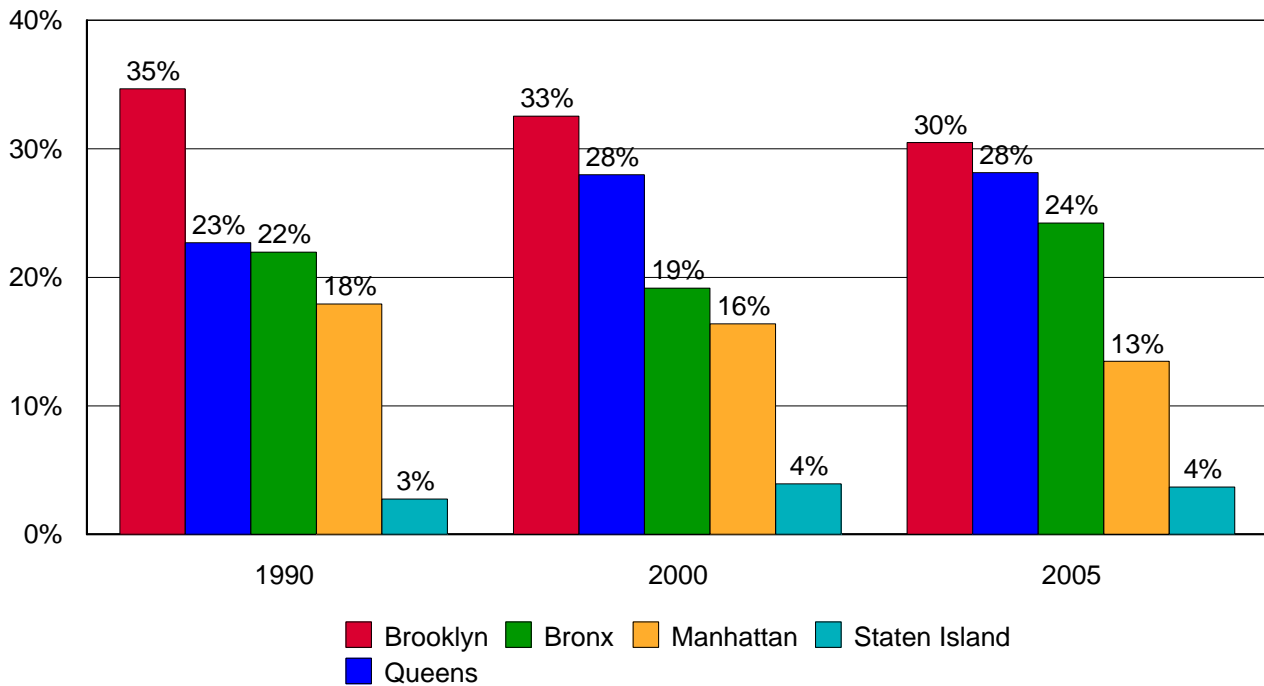
Figure 5
 Mexicans by Foreign Born and Domestic Born Ages 15 - 44 in New York City, 1990 - 2005
 (in percentages)



Source: PUMS data, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000 Censuses; ACS 2005.

Despite the dramatic growth of the Mexican population between 1990 and 2005 there was relative stability in the distribution of Mexicans by New York City borough. Over 80% of all Mexicans resided in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx in each census year, with Brooklyn and Queens accounting for over 58% of the Mexican population from 1990 to 2005. This suggests that migrants from Mexico or elsewhere in the United States were attracted to extant Mexican population nuclei; that these increased in numbers of Mexicans; and that there was little overall spatial mobility among Mexicans in the City. (See Figure 6).

Figure 6
Distribution of Mexican Population by NYC Boro, 1990 - 2005
(in percentages)



Map 1 indicates exactly where in each borough, by community district, the Mexican population of the City was concentrated in 2005.⁶

⁶ This map is organized from data derived from the ACS 2005 PUMS data. The boundaries, however, are New York City community districts. For a complete NYC community district map with the names of all districts see <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/lucds/cdstart.shtml>

Map 1: Mexican Population of New York by Community District, 2005

Bronx Community Districts

- 3 Melrose, Morrisania, Claremont, Crotona Park East
- 6 East Tremont, Bathgate, Belmont, West Farms
- 7 Kingsbridge Heights, Bedford Park, Fordham, University Heights
- 9 Soundview, Castle Hill, Union Port, Parkchester

Queens Community Districts

- 4 Elmhurst, Corona

Brooklyn Community Districts

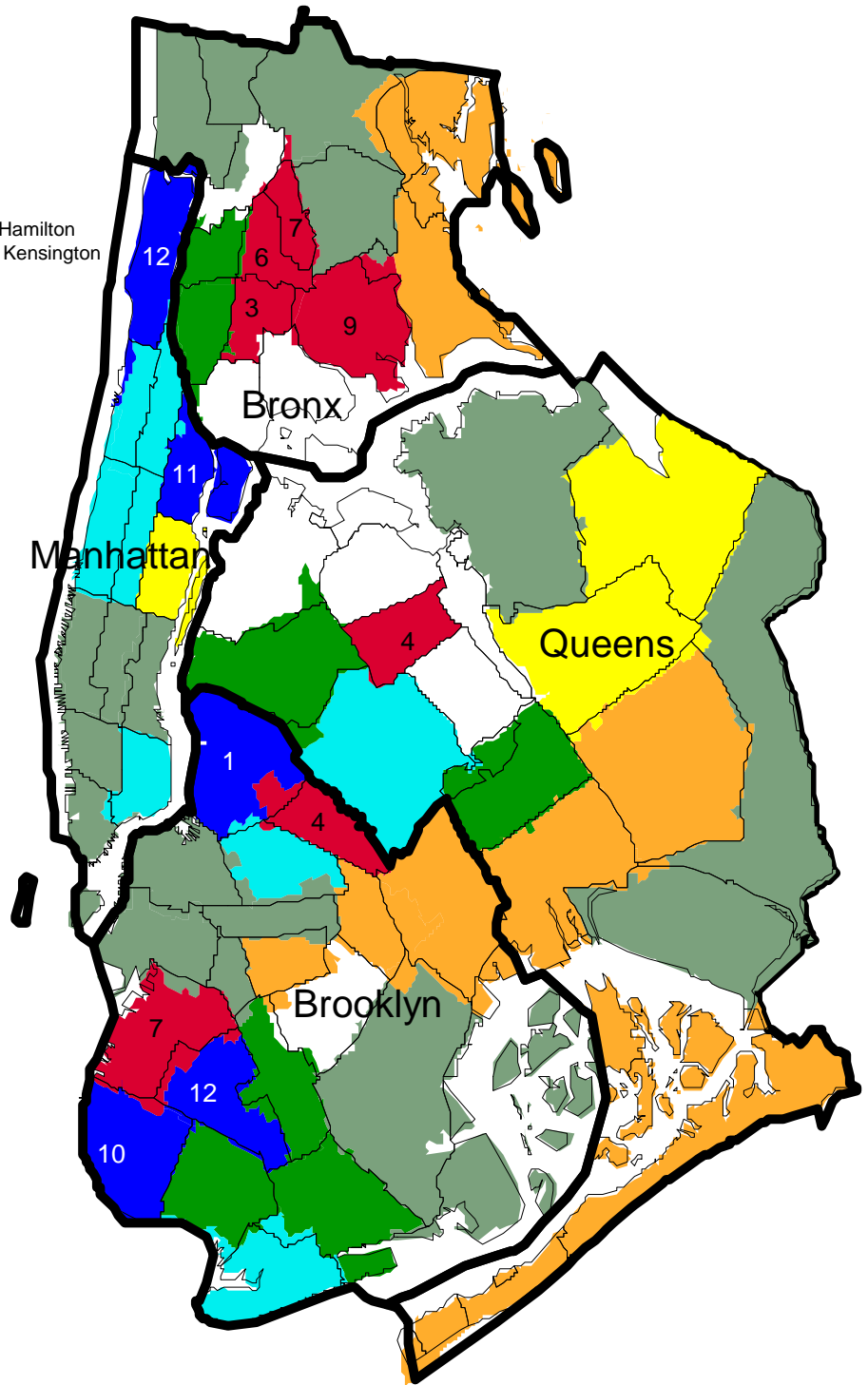
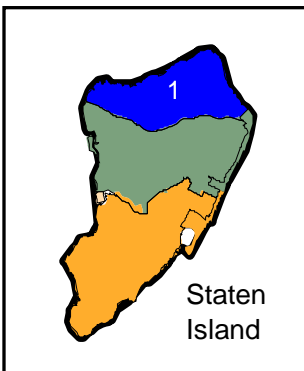
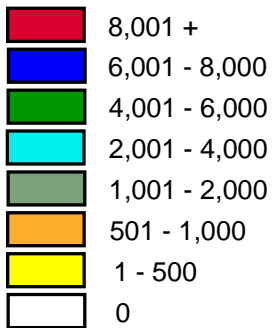
- 1 Greenpoint, Williamsburg
- 4 Bushwick
- 7 Sunset Park, Windsor Terrace
- 10 Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Fort Hamilton
- 12 Borough Park, Ocean Parkway, Kensington

Manhattan Community Districts

- 11 East Harlem
- 12 Washington Heights, Inwood

Staten Island Community Districts

- 1 North Island

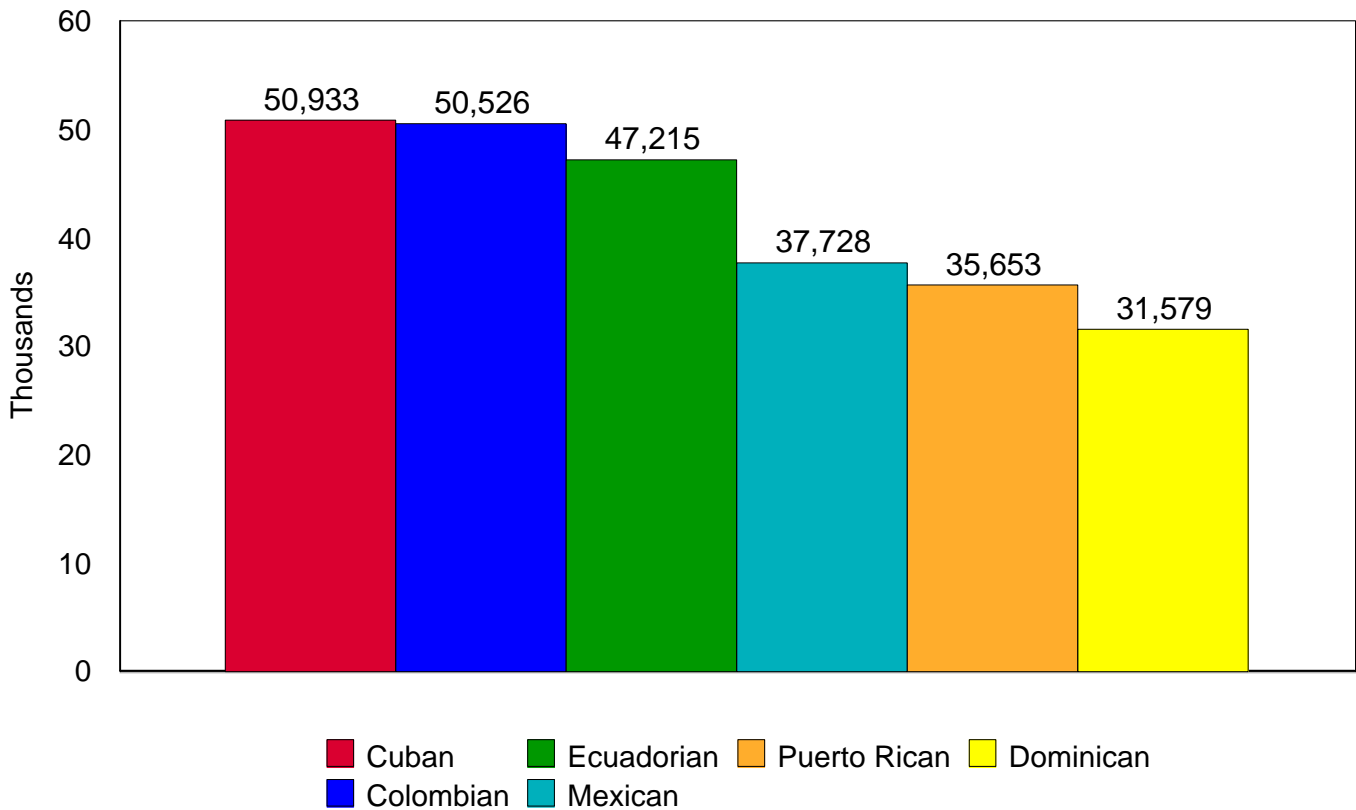


Socio-Economic Indicators

Household Income

The median household income among the Mexican community of New York increased marginally between 1990 and 2005 from \$37,000 to \$37,728 annually, a rise of about 7%. Mexican households earned slightly higher incomes than Puerto Ricans and Dominicans but significantly lower incomes compared with Cubans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians as indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Estimate of Median Household Income Among Largest Latino Nationalities in NYC, 2005



Although median household income data suggest the relative position of Mexicans in comparison with other Hispanic nationalities within the city, it is the structure of household income that indicates important socio-economic dynamics among New York City Mexicans. These data reveal a highly stratified community with large numbers of households at the bottom of the income-earning hierarchy and a growing number of Mexican households at higher household income levels. Table 1 indicates the detailed breakdown of Mexican household income structure from 1990 to 2005. There was little change at the lower end of household income earners over this period. Slightly over 20% of all Mexican households earned less than \$20,000 in each year, but they controlled only about 5% of total income flowing to the Mexican community. This stability over time is contrasted among higher household income earners. Mexican households earning over \$75,000 yearly increased from 12% of the total in 1990; to 18% in 2000; and to 21% in 2005. However, wealth was highly concentrated within these households which controlled about 50% of all the income flowing to NYC Mexican households. By 2005 roughly the same percentage of Mexican households (around 20%) were found at the bottom and top of the Mexican social structure within the City.⁷

⁷ The exact same percentage of foreign and domestic-born Mexican households (21%) earned more than \$75,000 in 2005. Inexplicably, there was a greater percentage of domestic-born Mexican households earning less than \$20,000 yearly in 2005 (26%) compared with their foreign-born counterparts (20%),

Table 1
 Estimate of Household Income Distribution Structure
 Mexicans in New York City, 1990 - 2005

| Income Category | 1990 | | 2000 | | 2005 | |
|-------------------------|------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|----------|
| | Households | % Income | Households | % Income | Households | % Income |
| Less than 10,000 | 6% | 1% | 8% | 1% | 8% | 1% |
| 10,000-19,999 | 14% | 3% | 14% | 4% | 14% | 4% |
| 20,000-29,999 | 17% | 7% | 15% | 7% | 17% | 8% |
| 30,000-39,999 | 17% | 9% | 13% | 8% | 11% | 7% |
| 40,000-49,999 | 9% | 7% | 13% | 10% | 12% | 10% |
| 50,000-74,999 | 24% | 22% | 19% | 22% | 17% | 18% |
| 75,000-99,999 | 6% | 9% | 8% | 13% | 9% | 15% |
| 100,000 - 199,999 | 3% | 6% | 8% | 19% | 10% | 24% |
| 200,000 + | 3% | 36% | 2% | 17% | 2% | 14% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Median Household Income | 37,000 | | 40,000 | | 39,728 | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Less than 20,000 | 21% | 4% | 22% | 5% | 22% | 5% |
| More than 75,000 | 12% | 51% | 18% | 49% | 21% | 52% |

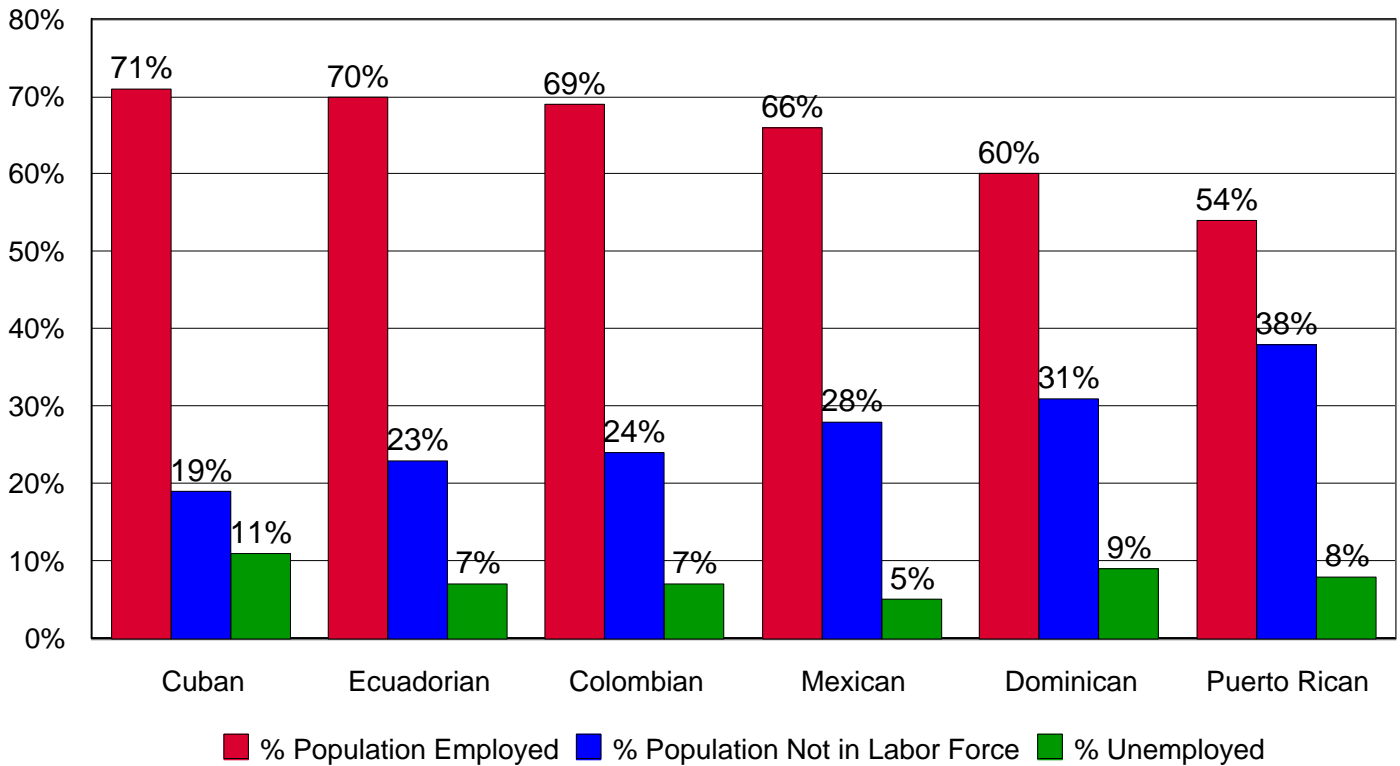
Employment

Among all of the Latino nationalities in New York City, Mexicans had the lowest unemployment rate in 2005 among the population between 16 and 60 years of age at 5.4%. (See figure 8). This was a decline from 1990 (6.8%) and 2000 (6.7%). Over this period there were fluctuations in the percentages of people employed and among those out of the work force as indicated in Table 2. But by 2005 some two-thirds of all Mexicans between 16 and 60 years of age were employed.

Table 2
 Employment and Unemployment Among Mexicans in New York City
 1990 - 2005, Population 16 - 60 Years of Age

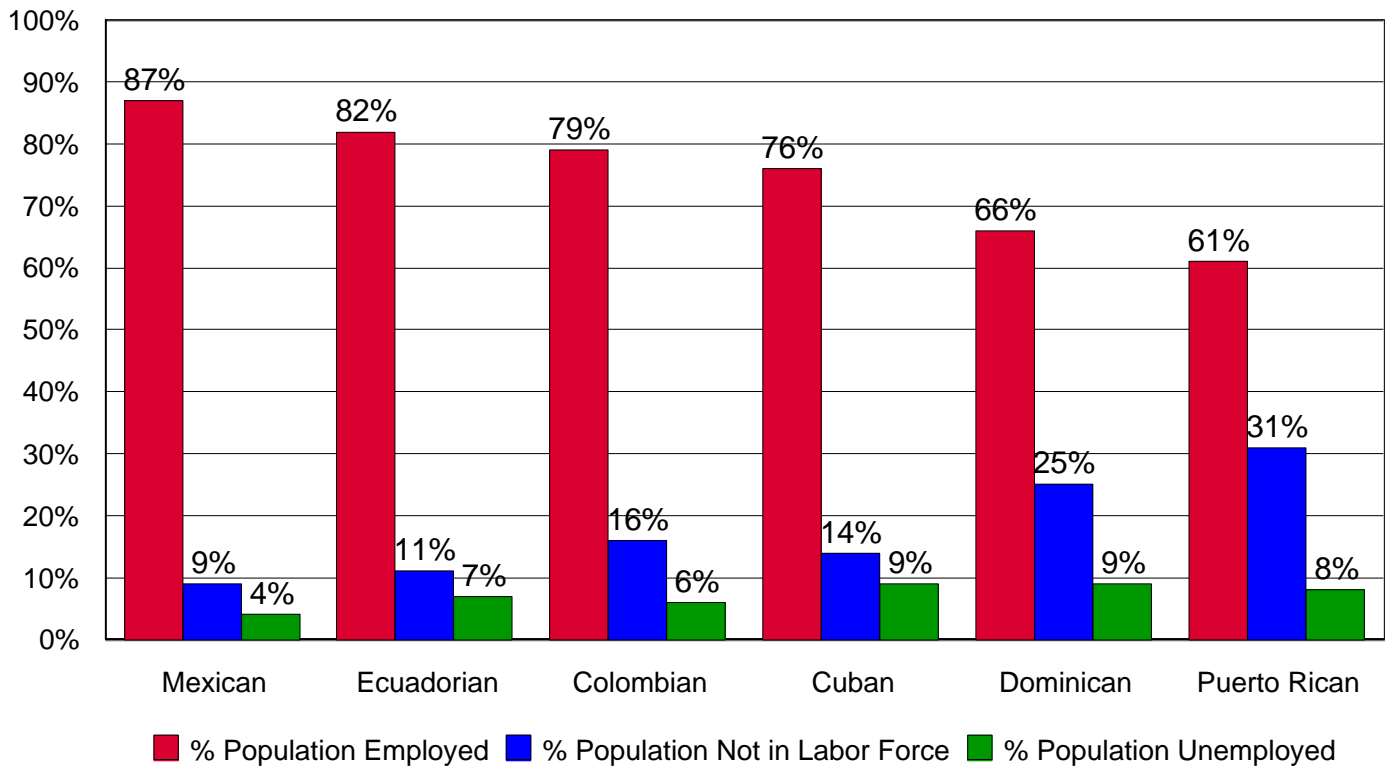
| Mexicans | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | 1990 | % | 2000 | % | 2005 | % |
| Employed | 25,227 | 69.6% | 68,719 | 54.6% | 99,389 | 66.2% |
| Unemployed | 2,463 | 6.8% | 8,474 | 6.7% | 8,176 | 5.4% |
| Not in labor force | 8,581 | 23.7% | 48,673 | 38.7% | 42,607 | 28.4% |
| Total | 36,271 | 100.0% | 125,866 | 100.0% | 150,172 | 100.0% |

Figure 8
 Percent of Population Employed in NYC Ages 16 - 60
 by Latino Nationality, 2005



However, when employment data are examined by sex there were extraordinary disparities among Mexicans compared with other Latino nationalities. Among Mexican men between 16 and 60 years of age, the employment rate was 87% and the unemployment rate was 4% in 2005. Additionally only 9% of all Mexican males in this age category were not in the labor force. These were the highest employment rates, the lowest unemployment rates, and the lowest percentage out of the work force among men for all Latino nationalities. (See figure 9).

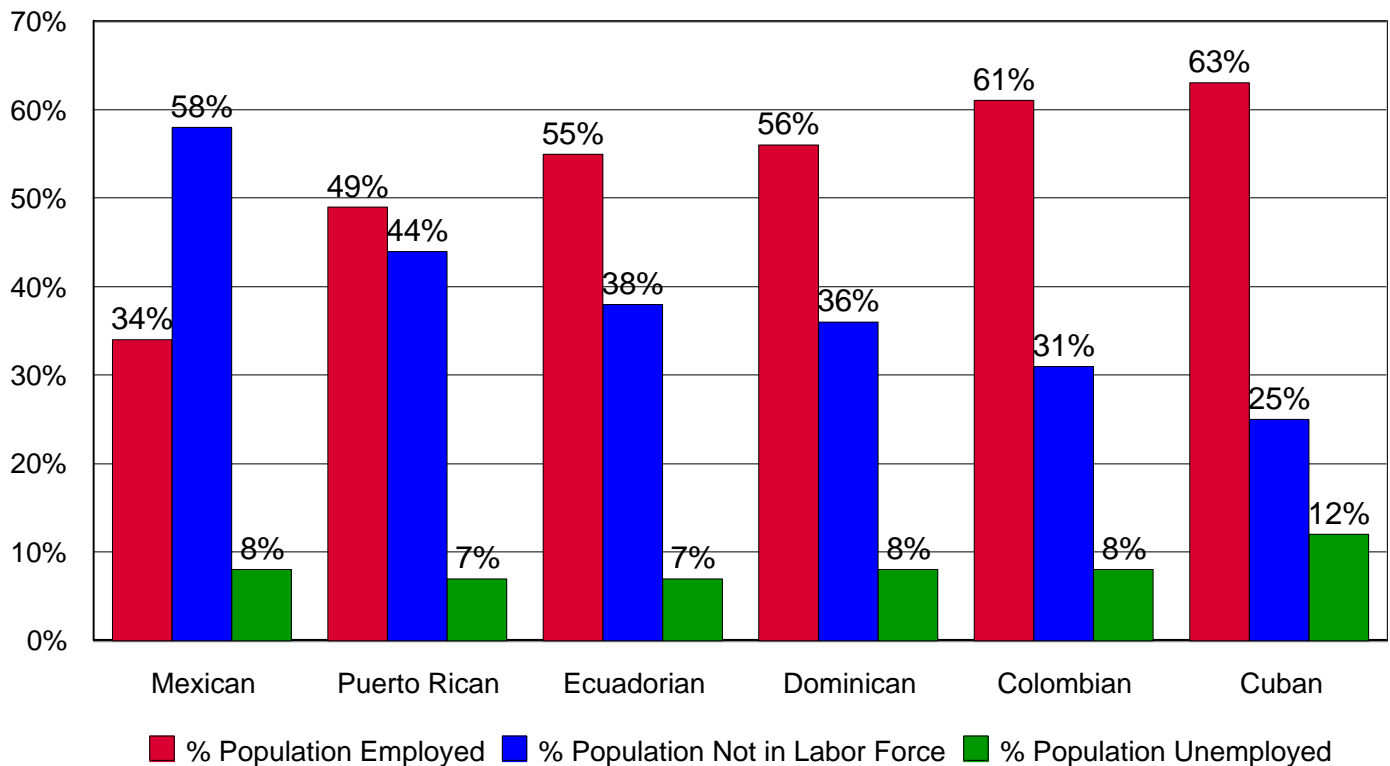
Figure 9
Percent of Male Population Employed in NYC Ages 16 - 60
by Latino Nationality, 2005



Among women between 16 and 60 years of age, Mexicans had the lowest percentage of the population which was employed among Latinos (34%) and the

highest percentage of the female population which was out of the labor force (58%) by an extraordinary margin as indicated in Figure 10. Although the precise reasons for these divergent patterns by sex are not evident from census data, it is likely that the comparatively higher fertility rate found among Mexican women compared with other Latino national groups in NYC, resulted in a greater percentage of women working at home taking care of children as opposed to seeking work outside of the household.

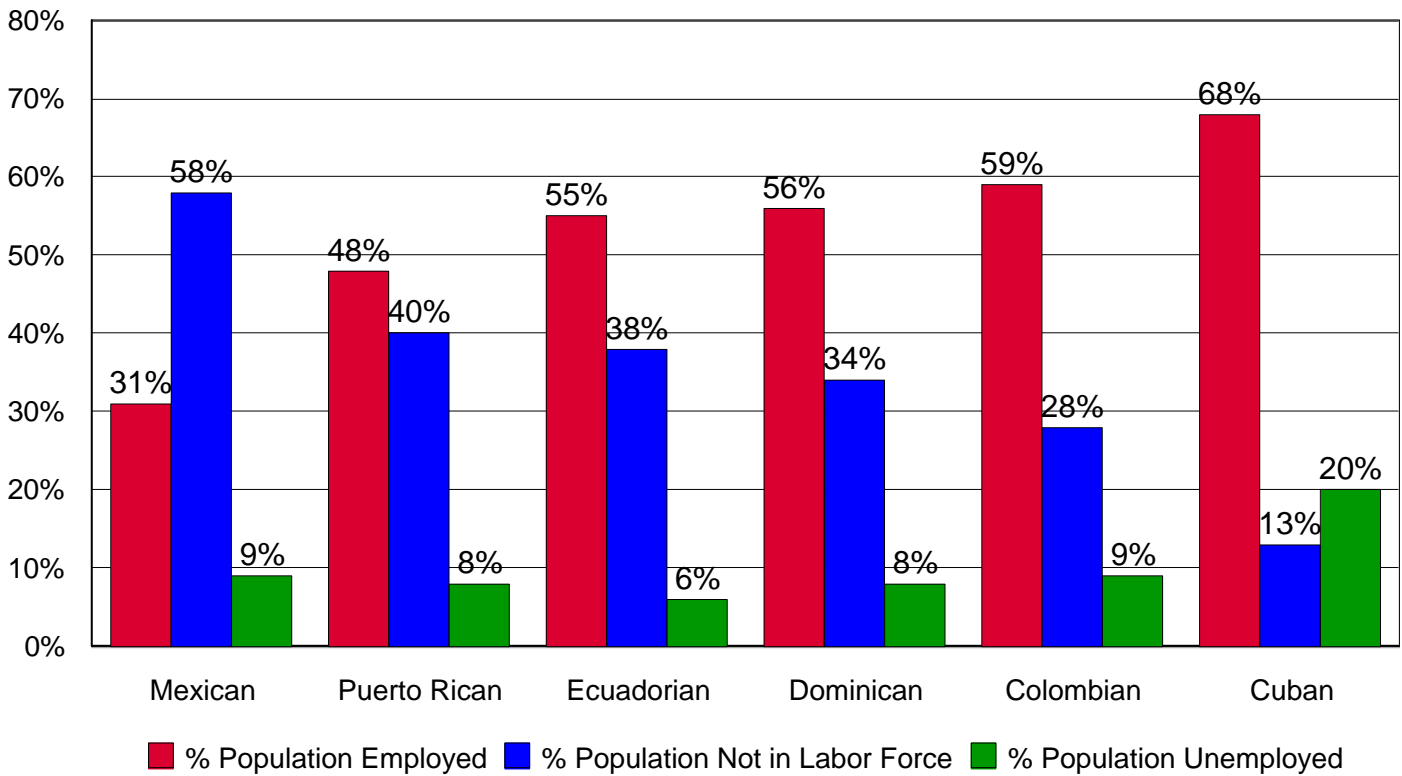
Figure 10
Percent of Female Population Employed in NYC Ages 16 - 60
by Latino Nationality, 2005



This conclusion is supported by focusing upon the female Mexican population between the ages of 15 and 44, or those most likely to have children. Mexican women

in this age category had the lowest percentage employed at only 31% compared with the other Latino nationalities as indicated in Figure 11.

Figure 11
Percent of Female Population Employed in NYC Ages 15 - 44
by Latino Nationality, 2005



Educational Attainment

There was no general improvement in educational attainment above the high school level among New York City Mexicans between 1990 and 2005. About 15% of all Mexicans over the age of 25 had attained an Associates Degree or higher in 1990. This dropped to 11% in 2000 and increased slightly to 12% in 2005. Some 12% of Mexicans

over 25 years of age in NYC had attained a B.A. degree or higher in 1990, falling to 9% in both 2000 and 2005. There was, however, some improvement in high school completion rates with 20% of all Mexicans 25 years of age and older having completed high school in 1990 and 28% in 2005. These data are summarized in table 3.

Table 3
Estimate of Educational Attainment Levels by Sex Among Mexicans 25 Years of Age
and Older in New York City, 1990 - 2005

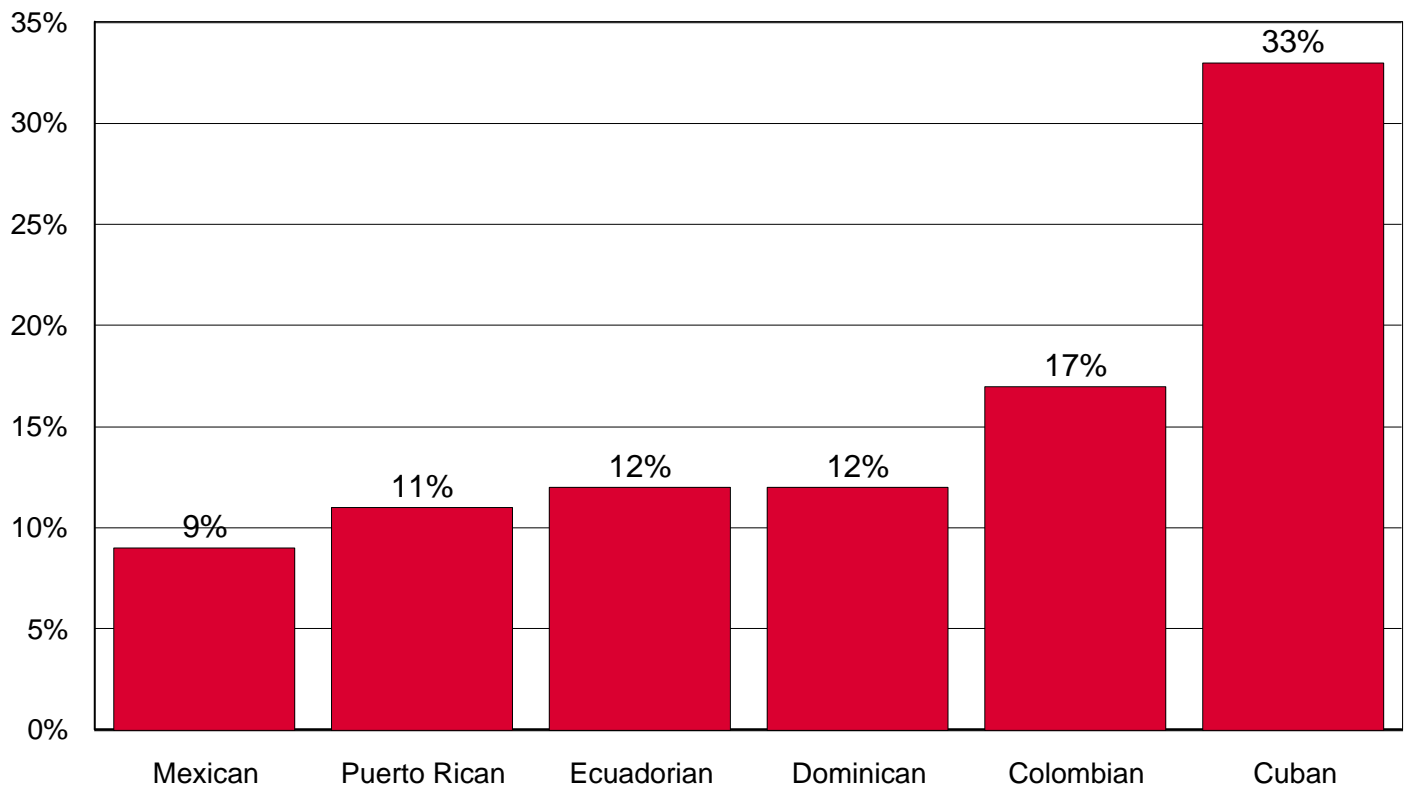
| | 1990 | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------|
| | Males | % of Males | Females | % of Females | Total | % of Total |
| Total Mexicans Age 25 + | 13,385 | 100% | 8,177 | 100% | 21,562 | 100% |
| High School Graduate | 2,458 | 18% | 1,805 | 22% | 4,263 | 20% |
| Associates Degree | 277 | 2% | 328 | 4% | 605 | 3% |
| BA | 773 | 6% | 793 | 10% | 1,566 | 7% |
| MA | 454 | 3% | 232 | 3% | 686 | 3% |
| Professional Degree | 144 | 1% | 118 | 1% | 262 | 1% |
| PhD | 90 | 1% | 54 | 1% | 144 | 1% |

| | 2000 | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------|
| | Males | % of Males | Females | % of Females | Total | % of Total |
| Total Mexicans Age 25 + | 51,308 | 100% | 35,827 | 100% | 87,135 | 100% |
| High School Graduate | 11,434 | 22% | 7,815 | 22% | 19,249 | 22% |
| Associates Degree | 974 | 2% | 637 | 2% | 1,611 | 2% |
| BA | 2,501 | 5% | 2,047 | 6% | 4,548 | 5% |
| MA | 924 | 2% | 1,024 | 3% | 1,948 | 2% |
| Professional Degree | 560 | 1% | 196 | 1% | 756 | 1% |
| PhD | 188 | 0% | 107 | 0% | 295 | 0% |

| | 2005 | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|---------|--------------|---------|------------|
| | Males | % of Males | Females | % of Females | Total | % of Total |
| Total Mexicans Age 25 + | 71,466 | 100% | 44,738 | 100% | 116,204 | 100% |
| High School Graduate | 18,948 | 27% | 13,023 | 29% | 31,971 | 28% |
| Associates Degree | 1,354 | 2% | 1,852 | 4% | 3,206 | 3% |
| BA | 2,755 | 4% | 3,690 | 8% | 6,445 | 6% |
| MA | 1,789 | 3% | 705 | 2% | 2,494 | 2% |
| Professional Degree | 399 | 1% | 529 | 1% | 928 | 1% |
| PhD | 437 | 1% | 180 | 0% | 617 | 1% |

Although there was little improvement in educational attainment above the high school level among Mexicans in NYC, their rates were not significantly different from Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Ecuadorians in 2005, although they lagged behind Cubans and Colombians who had the highest educational attainment levels in NYC among Latino nationalities. These data are indicated in figure 12.

Figure 12
Percentage of Population 25 Years of Age or Older Attaining a
B.A. Degree or Higher by Latino Nationality, 2005



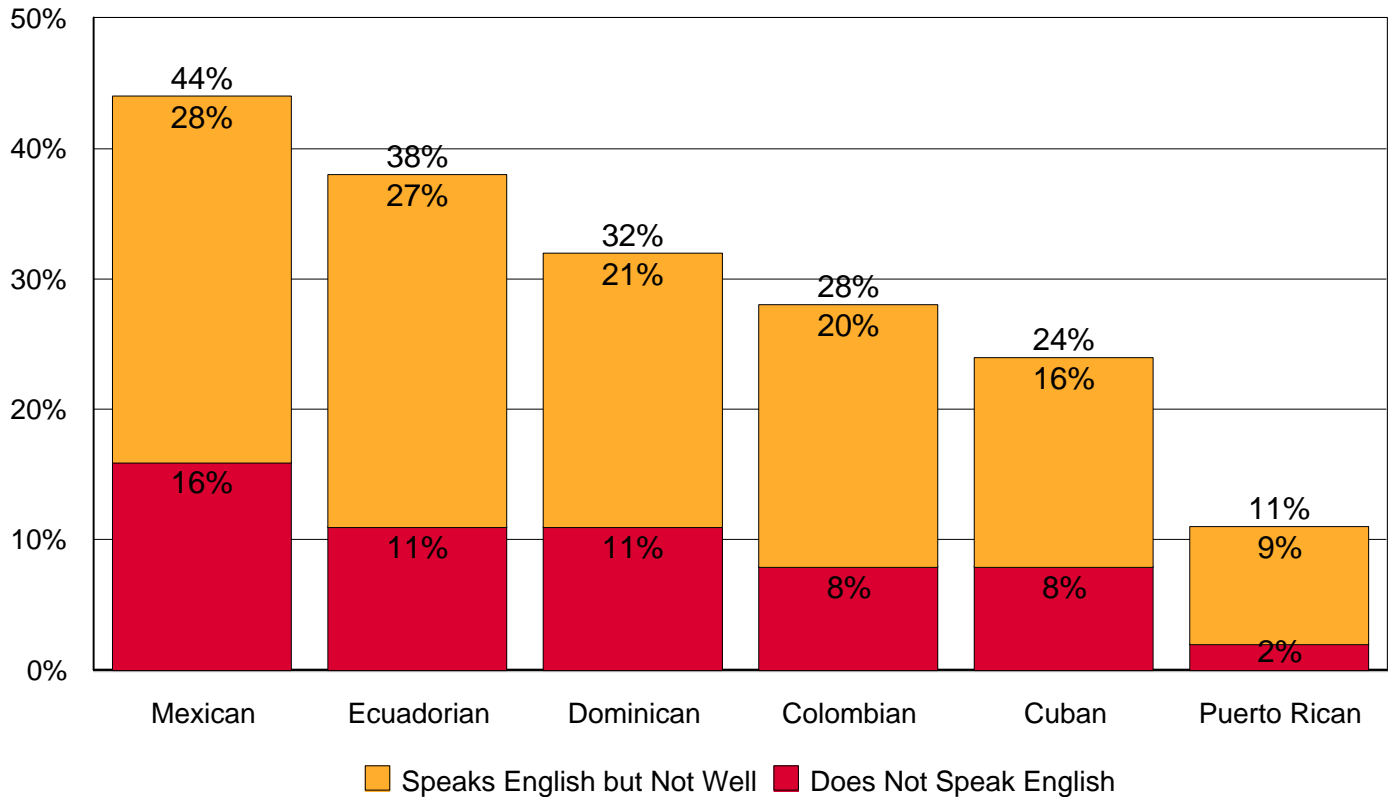
Part of the explanation for lower levels of educational attainment among Mexicans at the B.A. level or above is the fact that they are the most recent of all the Latino migrant groups arriving in NYC and have the highest levels of any Latino population which is foreign born. Improvements in educational attainment may be

anticipated in the future as a greater percentage of the Mexican population is established for longer periods of time and as there is an increase in domestic-born Mexicans. This is already evident in the increased percentage of Mexicans who have completed high school.

Ability to Speak English

As the most recent Latino migrant group to arrive in New York City it was to be anticipated that Mexicans would have a lesser ability to speak English than the other Latino national groups, and this was indicated in the data generated for 2005 as indicated in figure 13. These data measured people 5 years of age and over and the results indicate that 16% of all Mexicans speak no English, while 28% indicated that they did not speak English well. Thus, 44% of all Mexicans over 5 years old had a poor or no command of English and this was greater than the other major Latino nationalities in the City.

Figure 13
Ability to Speak English by Latino Nationality, 2005



Summary

In all likelihood the Mexican population of New York City will continue to expand dynamically. High fertility rates among Mexican women and ongoing migration suggest that there will be continued rapid population growth into the future. Mexican settlement patterns in NYC demonstrate stability in that existing communities in all five boroughs increased significantly between 1990 and 2005. There is little evidence that Mexicans are moving on a significant scale into new neighborhoods, although this may change as the population continues to grow.

Mexicans were a highly stratified Latino national group and in this sense were no different from other Latino nationalities. There was little change between 1990 and

2005 in the portion of Mexicans living in relative poverty since about 20% of all households earned less than \$20,000 annually over the 15 year period measured in this report. At the top of the social hierarchy there was an increase in the percentage of Mexican households earning more than \$75,000 annually and this is indicative of opportunities for upward social mobility within NYC for better educated and better skilled Mexicans.

Nevertheless, educational attainment data indicate no major improvements with the exception of a greater percentage of Mexicans graduating high school. This data may be somewhat misleading because of the constant arrival of newer, less educated, Mexican migrants to the city. It may be that those who have been in the City longer have been able to acquire better educations, but that the overall data do not reflect this because of the large number of newcomers. It can be expected that future census bureau data may indicate better educational attainment.

Work force data suggest two significant differences between Mexicans and other Latino nationalities in the City. The first is an extraordinarily higher percentage of men who were employed in 2005 and a correspondingly low percentage of men who were both unemployed or out of the work force. The second is the comparative low rates of working-age Mexican females who were working in 2005 compared with women in other Latino national groups. As indicated above, this may have been due to child-rearing responsibilities connected to the extraordinarily high birth rates found among Mexican females in comparative perspective.

As new data become available in the future, this report may serve as a benchmark to measure future changes.