

Fuerza Mexicana

**The Past, Present, and Power of Mexicans
in Chicagoland**



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Letter from CEOs

Querida Familia,

Being Mexican in Chicagoland is a paradox. It means existing as a foundational part of Chicago where we build skyscrapers, lift up economies, and create families while those in power often overlook our contributions, talent, and potential. It means we embody resilience, entrepreneurship, and care of community even when faced with systemic neglect and a lack of fair opportunities. For years, we have discussed these contradictions as Mexican leaders of Chicago-based nonprofits.

Convened by Latinos Progresando, we began meeting to support one another as we faced professional barriers and challenges. One frequent challenge was inadequate data on the Mexican population in Chicagoland. How could we help our community if we did not have access to baseline information? We recognized that insufficient information diluted Mexican power and stifled progress.

Mexicans make up over 70% of Chicago's Latino/e population and over 20% of Chicago's population. More and more of us are moving to the suburbs and surrounding counties, yet there are no grand agendas, funding streams, or programs dedicated to addressing our needs let alone a vision of how we advance together. In 2023, after years discussing this need, we recognized that it was time to act. We commissioned the University of Illinois Chicago's Great Cities Institute to provide the data, history, and recommendations we rightfully deserve.

This is the first step in what must be an ongoing, long-term call to action. It underscores our longevity and how we continue to build this city and surrounding communities. It shares data that previews the needs of our youth and how to propel them into leadership roles in the future. We dissect pressure points around health, housing, education, economic development, leadership, and identity.

Identity is the undercurrent theme of this project. It is vital to identify as Mexican. We respect our multifaceted identities and seek to uplift solidarity with other communities, in and out of the Latino/e diaspora. Even so, we cannot be conditioned away from claiming our identity. There is beauty in being Mexican, there is value in lifting up our culture, and there is power in proclaiming proudly who we are. We must feel secure in identifying as Mexicans to acknowledge our struggles and implement solutions on our own terms.

We want this report to raise the consciousness of our community of what it means to be Mexican in terms of collective power, cultural pride, and socioeconomic

needs. We want to amplify the recognition of who we are in a way that advances our self-determination as Mexicans in Chicagoland.

We recognize the work to support our community is not solely on our shoulders. Use this report as a call to action to those in positions of power to demand fair resources for and representation of Mexicans. Bottom line, Chicagoland's community nonprofits, private enterprises, and public sector cannot continue to benefit from Mexican labor, talents, and economic contribution without acknowledging the power gaps and a commitment to address our needs.

Beyond our community, let this report serve as an example that every community deserves to know itself – its history, challenges, and triumphs. Let this inspire others to pursue data-driven studies that highlight their own communities' realities.

As part of this study, we will sponsor ongoing discussions based on this report to encourage deeper understanding of who we are and how we want our community to develop. With immense gratitude to the Mexican leaders who came before us and our colleagues in this lucha, we hope this report makes you even more proud of our community, committed to our growth, and excited for a future where Mexicans can proudly lead, build, and forge Chicagoland's next chapter.

Sincerely,

Luis Gutierrez, Latinos Progresando

Cristina De La Rosa, Erie Neighborhood House

Adrian Soto, Greater Southwest Development Corporation

Jose Muñoz, La Casa Norte

Linda Xóchitl Tortolero, Mujeres Latinas en Accion

Carlos Tortolero, National Museum of Mexican Art, President Emeritus

Acknowledgments

A special note of appreciation for Carlos Tortolero, President Emeritus and Founder of the National Museum of Mexican Art, and stalwart advocate of the Mexican community. His work, pride in culture, and advocacy, laid a foundation and example on how to unapologetically create spaces for our community. During Mr. Tortolero's tenure, the National Museum of Mexican Art provided the seed funding for this report, ensuring its success.

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Additionally, we are grateful to the boards of directors of Erie Neighborhood House, La Casa Norte, Latinos Progresando, Greater Southwest Development Corporation, and Mujeres Latinas en Accion for supporting and believing in the mission of this project. Each nonprofit also provided funding for this report.

Thank you to the participants of each focus group and your willingness to share your time, experience, and vulnerable stories that advanced this work.

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Finally, we want to send gratitude through the cosmos to the first Mexican families that made their way to Chicago over a century ago; to the street vendor who sold tamales at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, and to Mexicans who came back to Chicago after being ripped away from family and community during Operation Wetback. Their fortitude, spirit of endurance, and dedication to building a life in a space unknown is a legacy we are proud of and must all embody as we continue to advance our city and state.

Introduction

What's Wrong with The Bear?

How is it possible to produce a hit TV series about a Chicago restaurant that features no Mexicans in a starring role? That's exactly what has happened the past few years with *The Bear*, the multi-Emmy Award winning series that this year racked up a record 5.4 million viewers for the Hulu streaming network for the premiere of its third season. Amazingly, among the show's major actors, only one is Latine – Liza Colón Zayas in the role of Tina Marrero – and she plays a Puerto Rican from New York. Given that U.S. Census data estimate 44% of all cooks in Chicago are of Mexican origin, *The Bear* continues to reflect a persistent problem when it comes to public perception of the city's Mexican community and Mexican labor. Both remain largely invisible and unrecognized, and not just to mass media.

Why This Report?

Numerous academic studies in recent years have examined the state of Chicago's Latino community, but the specific contributions and particular conditions of the city's Mexican residents have received little attention, even though recent Census data show Mexicans make up 21.5% of the city's population and nearly 74% of all Chicago Latinos.¹ The social and economic status of Mexicans invariably gets subsumed under statistics on Latinos in general, an approach that can mask significant disparities – in education, employment, health and housing – between Mexicans and other Hispanic or Latino groups, i.e., Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Ecuadorians, Colombians, or those from Central America.

Without more differentiated Latino or Hispanic ethnic data, government and social service agencies too often end up pursuing policies that do not adequately address the needs and reality of the Mexican-American community.

This report seeks to close that yawning gap in data by providing in one place an up-to-date and comprehensive portrait of the specific condition of Mexicans in Chicago and Cook County in comparison to other groups. In addition, we have provided some information about the collar counties, given that those areas currently represent the fastest-growing portion of the Mexican community in Illinois.

Our Approach

We collected and sought to analyze whatever Mexican-specific data already exists on Chicago at the federal level, especially from the 2020 Census and the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, as well as from state and local governments. Sadly, there is shockingly little data available that disaggregates the various Latino ethnic groups, especially at the city and county level. That is why one of our main policy recommendations is that, in the future, local government agencies should dramatically expand the collection of specific Latino-ethnic data. Given the absence of that data, we opted on occasion for less

¹ U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2018-2022).

exact methods. In some cases, we used federal statistics on Mexicans nationally as reference points to offer a likely picture of the Chicago situation. In other cases, we used city and public school district data from selected Chicago neighborhoods where the population is overwhelmingly Mexican to help us deduce what was the most likely reality among Mexican students. We also provide some data on Chicago's Mexican community in comparison to that of other major cities throughout the United States, to determine if there are any conditions that are unique to this city's Mexicans.

We then supplemented the data by conducting a series of six audio-recorded focus groups over a three-month period with some 60 Mexican activists, non-profit service providers, business and labor leaders, elected and appointed officials from Chicago and the suburban counties. In each of these sessions, we collected their personal experiences, recollections and opinions about life in Chicago's Mexican community and sought to gauge the importance they attach to their Mexican heritage and identity. The observations of those participants, all volunteered anonymously, are included throughout the report as a way to give life to the statistics.

The Historical Context

Besides collecting and interpreting current data, we provide a brief history of the immense and often neglected contributions of Mexican immigrants to Chicago's economic and cultural progress. We do so to dispel the myth that Mexicans are recent arrivals to this city, or newcomers of the past three or four decades, or that as a group they are draining local resources. The facts show just the opposite: that



Mexican workers cutting weeds in Willow Springs, Cook County, in 1917. DN-0068516, *Chicago Daily News* collection, Chicago History Museum.

some Mexicans settled in Chicago as far back as the early 1850s, that the city's first vibrant Mexican neighborhoods were established here more than 100 years ago, and that the growth of the city's Mexican community and of Mexican labor and small businesses were a pivotal factor in reviving Chicago's economy during the city's post-industrial period of population decline.

Summary of Findings

The rapid growth of Chicago's Mexican population has been a remarkable bright spot in this city for the past 50 years, at first as a counterpoint to its post-industrial decline and population loss, then as an unheralded force of low-wage workers and business owners who quietly buttressed the city's economic revival in the 21st century.

This report begins to fill in some of the blanks in that untold story. Policy makers, scholars and members of the public will find many surprising revelations, especially when it comes to little-examined distinctions between Mexicans and other Latinos or Hispanics. This executive summary touches only on the most remarkable of our findings. It is followed by a list of our Policy Recommendations that government and city leaders should use to address issues that arise from the findings.

The Mexican-origin population has a significant presence in Chicagoland.

The Mexican-origin population of Chicago was 581,376, 21.5% of residents, according to 2018-2022 US Census estimates. Overall, Latinos were 29.0% of the city's population, with Mexicans representing by far the greatest share, 73.9% – or nearly three of every four Latinos. Our city has slipped in recent years from second to fifth in total Mexican population among major cities, mostly because of even faster growth in places like Houston, Phoenix and San Antonio, but Chicago still boasts the largest Mexican population of any major city outside the Southwest.

While historic Mexican neighborhoods have experienced decline in population, a mostly Mexican “Brown Belt” has formed on the city’s Southwest Side.

The Mexican population of the city's two historic Mexican neighborhoods, Pilsen and Little Village, dropped significantly since 2000 but increased sharply in many other neighborhoods. Only six neighborhoods had more than 50% Mexican populations in 2000, but that number more than doubled to 15 community areas by 2018-2022, most of them on the Southwest Side in a contiguous swath of neighborhoods that could be dubbed the city's mostly-Mexican “Brown Belt.”

Mexican population growth in the suburbs has reached the point that nearly two-thirds of all Mexicans in Cook County and the Collar counties now live outside the city of Chicago.

Even more impressive has been Mexican and Latino population growth in suburban Cook County and the five Collar counties of Will, McHenry, Kane, DuPage and Lake. According to 2018-2022 US Census estimates, close to two-thirds of area Mexicans resided outside the city, 452,662 in suburban Cook County, and another 514,233 in the collar counties. Few people realize that Kane County had the highest percentage of Mexicans in Chicagoland; they made up 27.2% of Kane's total population.

Chicago's Mexican population is younger than all other racial and Latino groups and comprises nearly 25% of city residents under 40.

The city's Mexicans are disproportionately young. Their median age was 30, considerably lower than for other Latinos, 34, or for the city's White and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) populations, 37.

Mexicans made up 24.0% of Chicago residents under the age of 40, and together with other Hispanics or Latinos, made up 32.3% of those under 40.

The Mexican-origin population lives in larger households than any other racial and Latino group.

The mean household size for Mexicans was 4.2, significantly larger than for (non-Hispanic) White or Black households, 2.6 and 3.0, respectively, and it is even larger than the 3.4 household size of other Hispanics or Latinos.

Latinos make a sizeable contribution to the economy of the metropolitan area.

Latinos contributed \$97.5 billion to the Gross Annual Domestic Product of the Chicago Metropolitan Area (MSA) in 2018 (specific data for Mexicans is not available). For the U.S. as a whole, Latino GDP was estimated at \$3.2 trillion in 2021, bigger than all but four nations, the United States, China, Japan and Germany.

While revenues from the 26th Street Commercial Corridor are significant, the overall percentage of business ownership is far below Mexican-origin share of population.

Numerous media reports have spotlighted the thriving 26th Street business strip of mostly Mexican-owned businesses in Little Village for generating annual revenues second only to Chicago's Magnificent Mile. Overall data on business ownership, however, is far less rosy. *Only 13.6% of businesses in the Chicago MSA were owned by Hispanics or Latinos in 2021, and that number shrinks to just 8.1% when you include only businesses that have employees (again, no data exists for Mexican ownership).*

Among Latinos, Mexicans were one of three groups that had the lowest median income.

There was significant variation in income levels among various Latino ethnic groups. *Ecuadorians and Guatemalans had the lowest median annual individual income among full-time workers— \$39,924 and \$40,000, respectively – followed by Mexicans at \$43,236.* Cubans had the highest income at \$62,756, followed by Colombians and Puerto Ricans. In addition, Cubans and Colombians had far higher mean incomes – \$93,480 and \$71,577, respectively – an indication that these two groups contain a significant portion of high-income earners who approximate the levels of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and non-Hispanic or Latino Others.

Poverty rates declined significantly for Mexican, other Latino, and Black Populations.

In a positive finding, poverty rates for Mexican, other Hispanic or Latino, and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) families declined significantly between 2000 and 2018-2022, while they remained almost unchanged for Whites and improved only slightly for non-Hispanic or Latino Others

Homeownership Rates among Chicago Mexicans have increased significantly, although many of the neighborhoods with large Mexican populations have among the lowest median home values.

Homeownership is a major unheralded achievement among Chicago Mexicans. The rate has increased significantly the past two decades – from 41.2% in 2000 to 49.9% in 2018-2022 – even as it remained static for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and declined for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders. In fact, Mexican home-ownership rates are only slightly below the 52.7% rate among the city's White (non-Hispanic or Latino) residents.

The median home values in predominantly Mexican neighborhoods such as East Side, Little Village, New City and Gage Park, however, were among the lowest in the city, only slightly above home values in the predominantly Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) neighborhoods of the South and West Sides.

Mexicans comprised the main workforce of some of Chicago's most labor-intensive and dangerous industries, while being severely underrepresented in higher paying, less dangerous industries.

Mexicans were the main workforce of some of Chicago's most labor-intensive and dangerous industries. In 2018-2022, for example they made up 41.7% of city construction workers, 36.4% of manufacturing employees, and 32.2% of the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, and Mining Industry workforce. White (non-Hispanic or Latino) workers, on the other hand, were concentrated in the higher-paying industries. They made up 61.5% of information industry employees, 53.6% of those in finance, insurance and real estate, and 53.3% of those in professional, scientific and management industries.

Mexicans and other Latinos are systematically concentrated in the city's low-wage jobs.

Mexicans and other Latinos are systematically concentrated in the city's low-wage jobs. We can glean a better picture by focusing on specific occupational categories where Mexicans predominate. *For example, Mexicans make up 53.2% of all construction laborers, 44.3% of all cooks, 41.6% of all laborers in transportation and material moving, 38.6% of all janitors and building cleaners, and an astounding 70.8% of all landscapers in Chicago.*

Mexicans rely on personal motor vehicles as a primary means of transportation to work.

Mexicans also had the highest percentage of people whose primary means of transportation to work was by personal motor vehicle, and the lowest share that used subways or elevated lines. Nearly 69% of Mexicans commuted to work by motor vehicle, far less than the 48% of non-Hispanic or Latino Chicagoans who did so, and significantly higher than other Hispanics or Latinos.

86% of Mexican children attend Chicago public schools.

In education, Mexicans had the highest percentage of children attending Chicago public schools of any ethnic or racial group – 86.0%. That’s nearly 10 percentage points higher than other Latinos and nearly five percentage points higher than Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) children. In fact, more Mexican children were enrolled in Chicago public schools in 2022, 131,597, than there were Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) children, 130,402.

Mexican children in CPS appear to exhibit lower academic proficiency than other Latino groups.

Children in the city’s mostly Mexican public schools appeared to exhibit lower academic proficiency in English and Math than do Latino students citywide, despite registering less chronic absenteeism than the citywide Latino average.²

Mexican and Latino youth have emerged as a growing and pivotal proportion of higher education students.

One of our most surprising findings is that Mexican and other Latino youth have emerged as a growing and pivotal portion of higher education students. An estimated 30,412 Chicago Latinos ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in undergraduate/graduate colleges or professional schools in 2018-2022, amounting to 32% of all college students in the city. *Notably, Latino college enrollment in that age group approached the size of the 32,987 White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicagoans attending college.* Of those Latino college students, 22,705 were of Mexican-origin.

Despite increases, the proportion of Mexican or other Latinos in elected office in Illinois remains low.

While the number of Mexican and Other Hispanics or Latinos in elected office in Chicago and Illinois has improved in recent years, their proportion in the state legislature – 10% – remains significantly below the nearly 18% share that Hispanics or Latinos make up of Illinois’ population. A major reason for this disparity is the shockingly low voter registration and voter turnout rates among Hispanics and Latinos in both Chicago and the rest of the state. We found, for example, that *only 2 of every 10 voter eligible Hispanics or Latinos cast ballots in the 2023 Chicago mayoral race.* *In addition, Hispanics or Latinos in Illinois had one of the lowest voter registration and voter turnout rates among all U.S. states with large Hispanic or Latino voter-eligible populations in the 2020 Presidential election.*

² Given the absence of pupil test results by ethnic origin, we opted for an alternative to approximate Mexican student proficiency in Math, English and Science, as well as chronic absenteeism rates among Mexican students. We collected and averaged out proficiency levels from all public elementary schools in the four most densely Mexican neighborhoods of the city. We then compare those combined results to published performance and attendance data for both Latino students and other racial groups citywide.

Mexicans experience what is referred to as an “Hispanic Paradox” with better health outcomes than other groups, although there is variation among Latino groups.

Environmental factors from industrial pollution may explain higher rates of cancer and lung cancer in two of Chicago’s Mexican neighborhoods.

In the area of health, Mexicans along with other Latinos have long benefitted from what many public health experts describe as the Hispanic Paradox – data which indicate that *Hispanics in the U.S., despite having lower economic levels and less access to quality health care, generally exhibit better health outcomes than White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Americans in many areas, e.g., longer life expectancy, lower rates of heart disease, cancer and other chronic physical and mental illnesses.* The causes of this paradox, or even the extent to which it exists, has been the subject of much debate among health professionals for decades.³ But recently compiled data from the Centers for Disease Control have confirmed not only better outcomes among Latinos on many health indicators, but also significant differences between Hispanic/Latino ethnic groups.⁴ *From 2019-2021, for example, Mexicans had far lower rates among all Latino groups when it came to coronary heart disease, heart attacks, cancer, asthma, and “feelings of worry, anxiety or depression,” while Puerto Ricans and Cubans generally registered the highest rates. Mexicans, however, had the second-highest rates of adult obesity and diabetes among Latinos, after only Puerto Ricans.*

No health data exists by ethnic group for Chicago, but as an alternative we analyzed a subset of selected health indicators for four neighborhoods with the highest Mexican concentration. Our calculations indicate the four Mexican neighborhoods we selected were generally far below citywide rates for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) residents when it came to all cancers and lung cancer, but significantly above the citywide Hispanic rates. While the first finding appears to conform to the Hispanic Paradox theory, the higher Mexican rates over other Latinos is not consistent with national trends. Given that East Side and Little Village, the two neighborhoods that registered higher rates of all cancers and lung cancer, both border historic manufacturing corridors, one possible explanation could be that environmental factors from industrial pollution on those communities have been in part the cause.

- 3 Medrano, Lourdes. (2023). “The ‘Hispanic Paradox’: Does a decades-old finding still hold up?” *American Heart Association News*. May 11, 2023. <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2023/05/11/the-hispanic-paradox-does-a-decades-old-finding-still-hold-up>; Fernández, Jose, García Pérez, Mónica, and Orozco Aleman, Sandra. (2023). “Unraveling the Hispanic Health Paradox.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 37 (1): 145. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.37.1.145>.
- 4 Dominguez, Kenneth, Penman-Aguilar, Ana, Chang, Man-Huei, Moonesinghe, Ramal, Castellanos, Ted, Rodriguez-Lainz, Alfonso, Schieber, Richard. (2015). “Vital Signs: Leading Causes of Death, Prevalence of Diseases and Risk Factors, and Use of Health Services Among Hispanics in the United States – 2009-2013.” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 8, 2015. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6417a5.htm?s_cid=mm6417a5_w; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Interactive Summary Health Statistics for Adults, by Detailed Race and Ethnicity.” National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed August 25, 2024. https://wwwn.cdc.gov/NHISDataQueryTool/SHS_adult3yr/index.html.

Policy Recommendations

It is essential that detailed Hispanic or Latino data by national origin groups be regularly collected, disaggregated, and analyzed by local and state governments.

Our first and most important policy recommendation is that government leaders start moving beyond simply collecting and tracking data for Latinos in general. Given the substantial differences between Mexican and other Latino populations that we document in this report, it is essential that detailed Hispanic or Latino data by national origin groups be regularly collected, disaggregated, and analyzed by local and state governments. This is especially true when it comes to tracking local health outcomes, business and economic statistics. Simply put, if knowledge is power, then Mexicans, the city's largest Latino group, must have access to more accurate data so they can better influence our city's future in a manner commensurate with their size and economic contribution. Such detailed collection of information should encompass data on Mexicans of Indigenous descent. Current U.S. Census data on Indigenous ancestry among the nation's Hispanic population is wholly inadequate and unreliable, in our opinion. Yet up to 15% of Mexico's population is classified as Indigenous, and Mexicans of Indigenous ancestry in the Chicago area are virtually invisible to the broader society.

Future housing development plans should include a greater percentage of 3- and 4-bedroom affordable units, rather than the historic emphasis on 1- and 2-bedroom units.

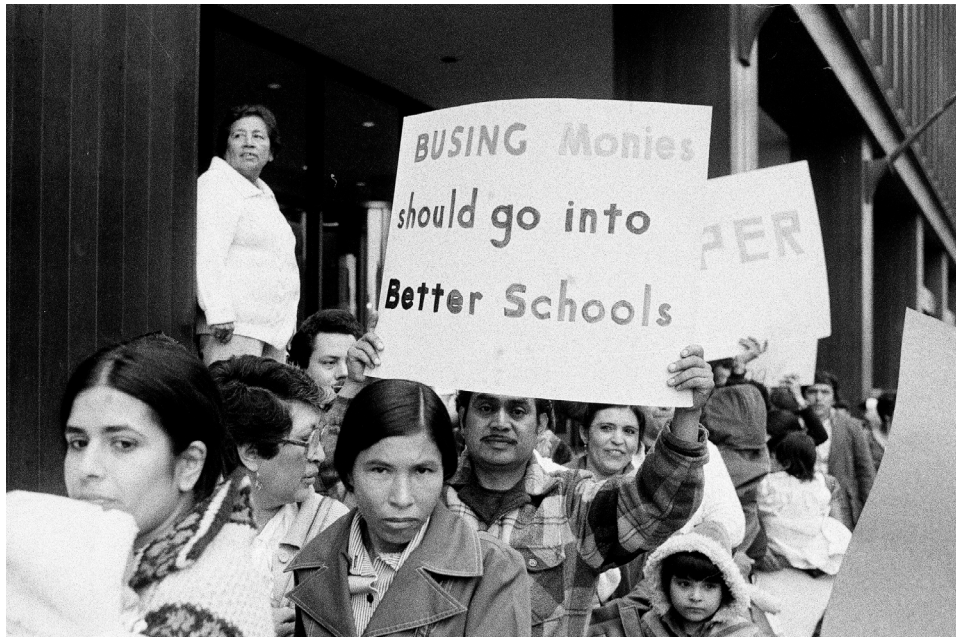
In the area of housing, with a larger household size and lower median income than most other groups, Chicago's Mexican population has a pressing need for large and affordable housing units. We recommend city officials include in future housing development plans a greater percentage of 3- and 4-bedroom affordable units, rather than the historic emphasis on 1- and 2-bedroom units.

New initiatives should be created by the City to ensure an increase in business ownership.

In the area of business ownership, we recommend a new initiative in the city's largely Mexican neighborhoods that encourages medium-size loans by major banks, that streamlines and better promotes the application process for Mexican-owned businesses to contract with government agencies, and that provides financial literacy and training for business owners.

City leaders should target schools in Mexican-majority neighborhoods for additional academic resources, counseling, and after-school programs.

In education, given that Mexican children make up the largest ethnic or racial group in Chicago Public Schools, and that children in Mexican-majority neighborhoods appear to be falling behind even other Latino pupils in English and Math proficiency, we recommend city leaders target schools in those neighborhoods for additional academic resources, counseling, and after-school programs. They should greatly expand parent engagement through culturally competent neighborhood outreach in both English and Spanish, and they should seek to increase the percentage of Mexican and other Latino teachers and principals employed by CPS to better reflect the students served by the system.



Protestors at the 1979 school busing protest in Pilsen, where one sign reads "Busing Monies should go into Better Schools." ST-10103838-0037, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum.

University executives should invest in targeted programs for retention.

In addition, Mexican and other Latino youth have become the economic mainstay of Chicago's colleges and universities, but a disproportionate number drop out before achieving their degrees, and this is especially true for Mexican students. We recommend university executives devise and support targeted intervention programs that help those students stay in school and achieve undergraduate and advanced degrees.

Transportation officials should factor in the racial and ethnic effects of transit policy and reconfigure future transportation investment to better serve the city's Mexican-majority neighborhoods.

Given that the city's Mexican population has the highest percentage by far of workers who commute by motor vehicle each day to work, and the lowest percentage who commute by subway and elevated transit system, we recommend city officials begin to factor in the racial and ethnic effects of transit policy and reconfigure future transportation investment to better serve the city's Mexican-majority neighborhoods. For example, implementing policies that eliminate parking requirements for new developments may have negative consequences on workers who commute by car because of a lack of public transportation options between their area of residence and work. Any plans for eliminating parking requirements should be carefully examined for their impacts.

Increase voter registration and turnout.

In the area of civic engagement and voter participation, the drastically low level of voter registration and voter turnout by adult citizen Latinos in Chicago and the entire state that we document here should prompt the launching of a systematic effort by city and state leaders to dramatically increase voter registration and turnout in the Mexican and Latino community, through targeted campaigns on social media, Spanish-language radio and television and in our public schools.

Create new programs to expand health insurance coverage.

In health care, given that Mexicans represent the largest group of Chicago residents with no health insurance, we recommend increased efforts by officials to create new programs to expand coverage for those who are not eligible for existing programs while expanding outreach to those who are eligible but are unenrolled.

Replicate or expand promotoras de salud programs.

In addition, as we note, Mexicans generally enjoy lower rates than Black and White (non-Hispanic or Latino) individuals – and even than other Hispanics or Latinos – for a variety of major chronic diseases, yet they suffer from some of the highest rates of obesity and diabetes in the city. To address this problem, we recommend officials consider replicating or expanding *promotoras de salud* (promoters of health), the successful community health education program pioneered by the non-profit Mujeres Latinas En Acción.

A History of Mexicans in Chicago

The more than 100 year presence of Mexicans in Chicago is not a matter of coincidence, but the direct result of employers' strategic recruitment, government policies, and political economic forces. While there was evidence in the 1850 census of a few Mexicans living in Chicago, and the 1910 Census counts 972 in Illinois, it was not until 1916 that Mexicans arrived and settled in the Chicago region in significant numbers. When, why, and how large numbers of Mexicans settled in Chicago comes from understanding the processes by which they became incorporated into this country's economy generally and the Chicago economy in particular, creating "a distinct category within the U.S. labor market and an essential reason for the growth of key industries in the region."⁵

Those early Mexican workers were met with fierce discrimination and racial violence, comparable to that experienced by African Americans who were arriving in larger numbers to the area at the same time and for the same reasons. Both groups were targeted for recruitment by employers, who saw them as sources of low-wage, exploitable labor. During World War I, U.S. immigration policies changed to restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe, which had supplied much of the labor that fueled the economic growth in Chicago since the 1880s. Meanwhile, Jim Crow laws in the American South and the aftermath of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, when there was a surplus of labor in Mexico, became factors that influenced the movement of African Americans and Mexicans into the Chicago region. It was the targeted recruitment by employers, however, that provides the key to understanding the presence of large numbers of Mexicans in the Chicago region. Along with this presence, was the formation of settlements and the simultaneous creation of mutual aid and cultural associations.

1850 Census

The earliest documented Mexicans in Chicago, as identified in census records, consisted of a group of eight individuals dispersed amongst the Third, Fifth, and Sixth Ward.⁶

The biggest household of the eight was headed by one "Adam Murray," a 40-year-old Scottish immigrant who, due to his marriage to a Mexican woman, was categorized as Hispanic in census records.⁷ Murray worked as a manager in the retail trade, a position that provided him with a stable income and allowed him to support his 25-year-old wife, who identified herself solely as "Mrs. Murray" in the census records. She was born in California, and was classified as Mexican either due to Mexican parentage or to California being a part of Mexico until it was ceded to the U.S. by Mexico in 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Murrys also had three additional, unrelated boarders who were of Mexican descent: "Jane Kuthman," "J. McWike," and "E. Mason" — all young unemployed women who had also been born in California. This household, while not bound by familial ties, represented a microcosm of early Mexican life in Chicago, one characterized by a mixture of immigrant backgrounds.

5 Betancur, John J., Córdova, Teresa and Torres, Maria de los Angeles. (1993). Economic Restructuring and the Incorporation of Latinos into the Chicago Economy" from Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla, *Latinos in the Changing U.S. Economy*. Sage Press: Acosta-Córdova, José M. (2019). *Lower Wages and Continued Occupational and Industrial Segmentation of Latinos in the Chicago Economy*, Retrieved from https://indigo.uic.edu/articles/thesis/Lower_Wages_and_Continued_Occupational_and_Industrial_Segmentation_of_Latinos_in_the_Chicago_Economy/10840649?file=19347512. University of Illinois at Chicago.

6 IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (1850 Decennial Census). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

7 "United States Census, 1850", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M85K-RZB : Sun Mar 10 03:30:07 UTC 2024>), Entry for Adam Murray, Jane Kuthman, J McWike, E Mason, and Mrs. Murray, 1850.

Finally, there was “Silus Parblen,” a 16-year-old laborer who was born in Mexico and resided in a group quarters setting, likely a rooming house or barracks.¹⁰

CARNegie-ILLINOIS STEEL CORPORATION - SOUTH WORKS

Height 5' 17 1/4
 Weight 174
 Eyes BROWN
 Date 5-1-00

P. MARTINEZ.

30 516

During the 1919 steel workers' strike, companies, such as Inland Steel, Illinois Steel, Wisconsin Steel, and U.S. Steel actively recruited both Black and Mexican workers to the mills in the Calumet Region. That recruitment continued so that by 1926, 14% of steel workers in Chicago were Mexican.¹⁵ Concurrently, beef and hog producers contracted Mexican labor for the meat-packing industry, and by 1928, they comprised 11% of the workforce of 15 meatpacking

- 8 "United States Census, 1850", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M85K-JCX>: Sat Jul 13 14:54:06 UTC 2024), Entry for Levi Wadenhouse and Wadenhouse, 1850.
- 9 For more information about Hispanic classification estimates prior to the 1980 census, see https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/HISPRULE#description_section.
- 10 "United States Census, 1850", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M852-M7R>: Sun Mar 10 21:55:19 UTC 2024), Entry for Silus Parlsen, 1850.
- 11 Taylor, Paul S. (1932). *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region*. University of California Publications in Economics, vol. 7, no. 2., p. 28-32 cited in Reisler, Mark. (1976), *By the Sweat of their Brow*, Westport, Cn: Greenwood Press, p. 99.
- 12 Mohl, Raymond A. and Betten, Neil. (1987). "Discrimination and Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary" in Escobar, E.J. and J.B. Lane, eds. *Forging a Community: the Latino Experience in Northwest Indiana*. Indiana University Press. p. 162, cited in Betancur, Córdova, and Torres (1993), p. 111.
- 13 See the film *Boxcar People*.
- 14 Edson, George. (1976) "Mexicans in the North Central States," Mexican American Studies & Research Center, The University of Arizona, p. 5 cited in Reisler (1976), p. 100.
- 15 Rosales, Francisco A. and Simon, Daniel T. (1978). "Los trabajadores Chicanos en la industria siderúrgica y el sindicalismo en el Medio Oeste: 1919-1945" in J.G. Quiñones and I.I. Arroyo. (1978). *Orígenes del movimiento obrero Chicano*, Mexico. Serie Popular Era, D.F. Ediciones Era. January. p. 147, cited in Betancur, Córdova, and Torres (1993), p. 111.

companies.¹⁶ Employment in these three industries was the impetus for a growing Mexican population in Chicago, which reached 19,362 by 1930.¹⁷ Over 70% of the workers who came from Mexico came from the central plateau states while another sizable percentage came from states in northeastern Mexico.¹⁸



A gathering in 1948 of the Latin American Society of South Chicago, which was formed by workers at Wisconsin Steel. Southeast Chicago Historical Society, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The First Major Settlements

Three major Mexican settlements formed around these three industries: the Near West Side (railroad), South Chicago (steel), and Back of the Yards (meatpacking).¹⁹ While nearly every historical account of Mexicans in the Chicago region describes instances of discrimination and violence, including many by police, those same histories describe the formation of culturally vibrant communities built upon transborder and family networks. By the late 1920s, in the Near West Side near Hull House, there were 7,000 Mexicans living among Italians, Russians, Greeks, and Poles.²⁰ Rents were higher in the Near West Side neighborhood than other settlements, although according to tenement housing assessments of the era, higher rents did not result in better living conditions. In fact, for Mexicans and African Americans, rents were often double or sometimes triple the rent for European groups in all three neighborhoods.²¹ Higher rents, crowded conditions, inadequate plumbing, etc., were characteristic of the housing conditions. Wages were low for the men in these heavy industries and women supplemented family income by taking in lodgers, doing laundry and working outside the home as babysitters, laundresses, lampshade makers, and waitresses.²² Nonetheless, Mexican residents in these neighborhoods built settlements that fostered mutual aid societies and gatherings such as cultural celebrations and sports events.²³

16 Moht and Betten. (1987). "From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, during the Great Depression" *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 42, No.3. University of California Press., p. 162 cited in Betancur, Córdova, and Torres (1993), p. 111.

17 Reisler (1976), p. 99.

18 Taylor (1932).

19 Año Nuevo-Kerr, Louise. (1976). *The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

20 Año Nuevo-Kerr (1976), p. 28.

21 Ibid. p. 30.

22 Ibid. p. 26.

23 Año Nuevo-Kerr (1976); Innis-Jiménez, Michael. (2013) *Steel Barrio and The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago: 1915-1940*.

Political Awareness and Activism

Cultural and political dynamics of Mexican settlements in Chicago also reflected the politics of Mexico. The Mexican Revolution that overthrew the dictator, Porfirio Díaz, engendered a consciousness of “revolution and rebellion” that accompanied many who immigrated to Chicago in the 1920s.²⁴ The goal of these well-educated “liberals,” most of whom settled in the Back of the Yards neighborhood, was to promote reform, democracy, and upward mobility. They advocated that education was an important pathway to achieve these goals while struggling against police brutality and criminal injustice. Simultaneously, they remained committed to the nation state of Mexico and encouraged Mexican immigrants to retain their Mexican citizenship. Mirroring the political conflicts in Mexico, there were those in Chicago who resisted the anti-clerical positions that emerged in the Mexican revolution and instead embraced the Catholic Church. These views were more largely seen in the South Chicago neighborhood, where bonds were formed around Catholicism.²⁵

Historian Xóchitl Bada identified nearly 20 Mexican organizations that existed in the 1920s and ‘30s, including the Cuauhtémoc Society, whose membership was mostly made up of Indigenous migrants from Michoacán — “from the less educated members of the colony.” These Hometown Associations often began informally as soccer clubs or prayer groups, but became, as Bada reveals, “a powerful force for change, advocating for Mexican immigrants in the United States while also working to improve living conditions in their communities of origin.”²⁶ The members of these Hometown Associations engaged in an activism connecting their rural roots in Mexico with the sphere of a large urbanized area.²⁷

Population Shifts and Periods of Deportation and Repatriation

Ebbs and flows of population numbers, however, were very much a function of economic and political shifts. For example, the 1921 recession and the end of WWI led to a decrease in the demand for labor, which in turn resulted in the deportation of Mexicans from Chicago and the U.S. more generally — regardless of citizenship status. Yet, there were still industries wanting Mexican labor to remain and fought to reverse restrictionist policies.²⁸ Once the economy rebounded, Mexicans were again recruited as laborers, as evidenced by the growth of their population in the 1920s. However, once the boom of the 1920s was over and the Great Depression hit, over 20,000 Mexicans were deported between 1930-1932 from the Calumet region to northeastern and central plateau states in Mexico.²⁹

A decade later, Mexicans were once again sought to fill U.S. labor needs in manufacturing during World War II, as part of the Bracero guest worker program. Soon, however, another recession, this one following the end of the Korean War, sparked nationwide anti-Mexican sentiment, and a new wave of brutal mass deportation ensued. In the summer of 1954, Operation Wetback deported approximately 500,000 Mexicans nationally, primarily in the Southwest. On September 16, 1954, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) unleashed its terror on Chicago’s Near West Side Mexicans as they prepared to celebrate Mexican Independence Day with parades and bailes. Those detained were thrown in Cook County Jail for 2 days and then deported. The immigration sweep persisted for several months. Though the numbers of deportees were not as high as the INS estimates of 20,000 and 40,000, the more verifiable number of 2,500 still added to a climate of fear and voluntary departures.³⁰

24 Flores, John. H. (2018). *The Mexican Revolution in Chicago: Immigration Politics from the Early Twentieth Century to the Cold War (Latinos in Chicago and Midwest)*. University of Illinois Press, p. 16; Arredondo, Gabriela. (2008). *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity and Nation, 1916-1939*. University of Illinois Press.

25 Flores (2018).

26 Bada, Xochitl. (2014). *Mexican Hometown Associations in Chicagoacán: From Local to Translocal Civic Engagement*. Rutgers University Press.

27 Ibid.

28 Betancur, Córdova, and Torres (1993), p. 111-113.

29 Taylor (1932).

30 Goodman, Adam. (2020) *The Deportation Machine: America’s Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Amezcua, Mike. (2022). *Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification*, University of Chicago Press, p. 36 - 41.

The “deportation regime” included the conversion of once bustling factories (e.g. the Studebaker plant) into “warehousing” facilities for the deportees. Local newspapers created the messaging that stirred up the racial hatred. The Sun Times, for example, described a Mexican neighborhoods as a “hotbed of filth, criminal activity, illiteracy, and ‘wetbacks.’”³¹ Additionally tragic was the disregard for the vibrant communities that Mexicans had built.



A group of Mexican immigrants waits to board a U.S. Border Patrol plane at Midway Airport in 1954 in the midst of what, at the time, was called “a drive to clear Chicago of ‘wetbacks.’” The group was to fly to Brownsville, Texas, and then board a boat for Veracruz, Mexico. *Chicago Tribune* historical photo.

The Changing U.S. Economy

As the deindustrialization process began in the 1950s with the increasingly widespread loss of manufacturing jobs, so did the process of destroying long standing communities. Federal Urban Renewal policies allowed local governments to declare neighborhoods as “blighted” and provided the justification to tear them down. Such was the case with the Near West Side, where Mexicans had established commercial districts and generations of family ties. While there was some deteriorated housing, Mexicans were systematically dislocated from their community to make way for the building of The University of Illinois Circle Campus (now the University of Illinois Chicago).³² Many of the Mexicans that were displaced from this area moved to Pilsen and created what became one of the most vibrant Mexican neighborhoods in the U.S. with a strong small business sector and a politicized community of muralists, artists, artisans, poets, service providers, and activists.³³

By the mid-1970s, capital flight was well underway for most of Chicago’s manufacturing sector, which had reached its peak employment in 1947. Many factories initially moved to the Chicagoland suburbs, and eventually to the U.S./Mexico border and Southeast Asia. Despite the steady decline in industrial jobs, a

31 Ibid. p. 97.

32 Fernandez, Lilia. (2012). *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Post War Chicago*. The University of Chicago Press.

33 Mora-Torres, Juan. (2005). Pilsen: A Mexican Global City in the Midwest. *Diálogo*, 9(1), 2. DePaul University.

large percentage of the city's Mexican workers remained in manufacturing.³⁴ Similarly, Mexican workers remained vital to the factories of Waukegan, Aurora, Elgin, and Blue Island. They helped sustain, even today, the manufacturing labor force in both Chicago and the surrounding suburban communities, largely accounting for the growth of Mexicans in Chicago's collar counties.

This widespread loss of manufacturing employment and disinvestment coincided with "white-flight" to the suburbs, and a significant influx of African Americans from the South, and migrants from Latin America, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba in particular. In 1960, the census counted 51,035 Mexicans, 32,271 Puerto Ricans, and 11,623 from other Latin Americans, for a total of 94,929.³⁵ By 1970, the number of Latinos increased to 247,857 and Chicago was credited as having the most diverse Latino population in the country with 117,093 Mexicans and 78,963 Puerto Ricans.³⁶

During the 1970s, migration to the U.S. from Latin America increased significantly and Chicago was a key port of entry. By 1980, the Latino population in Cook County increased to 499,538, (61.6% were Mexican) with 84.7% of those Latinos still living within city limits. In 1990, those numbers increased to 694,194 in Cook County, with the proportion of Latinos that were Mexican continuing to grow to 67.0% (465,765) of the total. The percentage of Latinos living in the city of Chicago, however, declined to 78.6% with Latinos continuing to move to the suburbs.³⁷ As Mexicans were increasingly drawn to the suburbs, they worked in large numbers in factories that had moved from the central city.

The 1980s again saw increased migration from Latin America due largely to neoliberal economic policies and destabilization efforts by the U.S. which often caused military conflicts or economic distress.³⁸ For Mexico, it was an international trade policy in 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that created economic conditions that dislocated a large segment of its rural population. For example, U.S. corn flooded the Mexican corn market, to the detriment of rural communities. These economic impacts along with the rise of cartels spurred many Mexicans to follow migratory paths formed over decades and come to Chicago and its surrounding suburbs just as Chicago's economy was shifting.³⁹ (See Appendix 1 for more figures on the growth of Latinos in the collar counties.)

While the continuing impact of NAFTA during the 1990s and 2000s led to further out migration, the shifting economic structures of the region created a demand for the labor that Mexicans provided. The large increase in the population of Mexicans into Chicagoland, paralleled a loss of population by other groups. By 2000, 20 percent or 1.1 million persons in Cook County were Latino. Mexicans accounted for 73.0% (786,423) of that total. In the city of Chicago Mexicans comprised 18.3% (530,462) of the total population and Latinos as a whole comprised 26.0% of the city's population.



In Chicago, a protester at a 2017 rally in support of immigrants holds sign that reads "We Are Workers, Not Criminals." Courtesy of Charles Miller.

34 Betancur, Córdoba, and Torres (1993); Acosta-Córdova (2019).

35 US Census Bureau, 1960 Census: Population Data [US, States, Counties].

36 Año Nuevo-Kerr (1976); US Census Bureau, 1970 Census: Count 4Pb - Sample-Based Population Data with Race/Ethnicity Breakdown.

37 US Census Bureau, 1980 & 1990: Hispanic Origin.

38 Galeano, Eduardo. (1997)(orig. 1973). *Open veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent*. NYU Press; Gonzalez, Juan. (2022). *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America: second revised and updated edition*. Penguin.

39 Acosta-Córdova (2019).

With a regional economy that benefited from their presence, by 2010, the number of Latinos in Cook County further increased to 1,244,762 (24.0% of total pop.) while Mexicans alone were 18.5% (961,963) of the county's population. In Chicago, 28.9% (778,862) of the population was Latino, with 21.5% (578,100) of the city's population being Mexican. Meanwhile, widespread Mexican migration into the collar counties brought the total Latino population to roughly 2 million in the metropolitan area, with over 1.5 million of those being Mexican.⁴⁰ (See Appendix 1 for data on five-collar counties.)



The Little Village Arch in 2024. Courtesy of Olivia Abeyta, GCI

The large numbers of Latinos coming into Chicago during this time, again, is no coincidence. During the post-deindustrialization period, the service economy replaced manufacturing as the region's leading sector. Corporate headquarters in banking, real estate, insurance, etc. gave rise to high end jobs, most of which were not available to the workers that were displaced by the loss of manufacturing jobs. Necessary to its functioning, however, was low wage service sector employment. Once again, Mexican labor provides a critical source of low wage labor and in many regards, can be seen as "saving the Chicago economy."⁴¹ While there has been some improvement in educational levels and movement into professional jobs, the persistent ascriptive assignment of Mexican labor into certain industries and occupations at the lowest wages remains today.⁴²

Though often undervalued, Mexicans remain essential to the Chicago region's economy as workers, consumers, and small business owners. Mixed immigration status families is not uncommon and many live with the threats of detentions and deportations. Nonetheless, Mexican families in the Chicago area have built strong networks, both within the region and between Chicago and their rural communities of origin. Mexicans in Chicago add a cultural richness to the region, including a commitment to family and community. Consistent with the mutual aid societies and the political struggles of the 1920s, Mexicans today continue to serve one another through various Hometown Associations, promotores, non-profit service agencies, and cultural and recreational organizations.



A woman holds a photo of Cesar Chavez during a 1993 march in support of the United Farm Workers grape boycott. Behind her, people march in Harrison Park. ST-30002500-0077, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum

40 US Census Bureau, 1980 & 1990: Hispanic Origin.

41 Betancur, Córdova, and Torres (1993); Acosta-Córdova (2019).

42 Acosta-Córdova (2019).

Identity

A systematic examination of Chicago's Mexican community is long overdue: that was the overwhelming sentiment of 60 Mexican community and business leaders from throughout Chicagoland who participated in six separate focus groups as part of this report. The participants voiced overwhelming concern that the extensive contributions of Mexicans to our city have been overlooked over the past several decades at multiple levels, including subsuming data on the Mexican population under the general rubric of data on Hispanics or Latinos.

Many said their discussions in these focus groups were the first time they had ever been asked to reflect on the contributions of their parents, grandparents, and community to the city. Others shared personal memories about how they as Mexicans had been treated in the past and of the importance they attach to preserving Mexican identity and culture even as they are proud of being U.S. citizens.

All participants shared knowledge of their expertise, desires, and strategies to open the door for others, whether it was access to commercial banking, succession planning, dual language access, quality education, health services, affordable housing, or civic participation.

A recurring theme in the focus groups was the need for increased advocacy and mobilization within the Mexican community. Participants expressed a desire for the community members in business, public service, and legal work to help in addressing their needs. The sentiment is clear: if there were more organized efforts within these sectors, the Mexican community's contributions and needs would be more effectively vocalized and recognized at a broader, legislative level.



A mural featuring workers, students and the Virgin of Guadalupe on a building behind a local laundromat. Photo by Natalia Wilson, licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/).

A deep sense of collectivism and the importance of family were central to the participant's reflections on their Mexican identity. The Mexican community's collectivist values, in tandem with family and community, were seen as essential tools for progress. Participants emphasized that these cultural values should be

leveraged in such a fashion so that they may achieve their collective goals, whether in business or civic participation. The belief that 'Mexicans are not an individualistic society' underscores the potential for using these strengths to advance the community's interests more effectively.

Some Focus Group Comments About the Importance of Mexican Identity and Heritage

"I'm very Mexican, right? So that's my identity. That's what I love. I had to learn to fit into a label in the United States, because then we encountered that, oh we are Hispanic, and later on, oh we are Latinos, and later on, Latinx. But nobody asked me, or anybody, to see what would make us, what will reflect us better or represent us better. To me, there's a lack of respect that we were just given labels because we live in the United States."

"We've done our own damage to ourselves by watering, diluting the Mexican brand and joining forces with the Latino and I think that might be a cultural thing. It's because we want to help. We don't want to be divisive."

"Not being acknowledged for our contributions to the economy, is what...we should really hone in on here, because at the end of the day...understanding our impact in that space is huge."

"...we are, I think, a little more humble in that way...and so now that we are subsumed in this 'Latino movement', I think we lose a little bit more of that identity of the Mexican community."

"There is a lot of misunderstanding and misconception of the majority culture and the Mexican culture, the Latino culture, a lot of learning that has to happen, and there is no intention to learn about the good things, or acknowledge the contributions of Mexicans to building those communities."

"But I think the reason we're not getting that credit right now is there seems to still be this sense that we are [only] in those corridors of 18th street. But the reality is [we] are everywhere."

"Mexicans are not an individualistic society, we're a collectivist society, right?"

"A lot of Mexicans still feel like guests, lacking that sense of ownership."

"We are very family oriented. Because of the conversations we are not having, that they're not hearing, we're not having the kind of legislation we need."

"We don't get our fair share for anything."

"It is in our sangre to work more."

"We are the backbone – our men, our builders."

"We helped build Chicago."



The painted steps leading up to the platform at 18th St. station. Photo by Richie Diesterheft, licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/).



A window of the Cementerio del Arte, an antique store in Pilsen. Courtesy of Olivia Abeyta, GCI

Key Demographic Patterns of Mexican Population in Chicago and Cook County, and the Chicago MSA Over Time

Due to its geography and distance from the U.S.-Mexico border, Chicago is often overlooked as a historical hub of Mexican migration and culture. Yet, from 1967 until 2016, Chicago had the second-largest Mexican population in the country after Los Angeles. That ranking has declined in recent years, according to our comparison of 2018-2022⁴³ American Community Survey (ACS 5-year estimates) figures for the 10 cities, counties and Metropolitan Statistical Area with the largest Mexican population (see Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1: Mexican Population for 10 Cities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

City Name	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	% Hispanic or Latino of Total Population	Total Mexican Population	% Mexicans of Total Population	% Mexicans of Hispanic or Latino Population
Los Angeles	3,881,041	1,865,763	48.1%	1,196,186	30.8%	64.1%
San Antonio	1,445,662	951,823	65.8%	808,918	56.0%	85.0%
Houston	2,296,253	1,029,429	44.8%	686,373	29.9%	66.7%
Phoenix	1,609,456	691,205	43.0%	607,389	37.7%	87.9%
Chicago	2,710,105	787,050	29.0%	581,376	21.5%	73.9%
El Paso	677,181	552,434	81.6%	519,100	76.7%	94.0%
Dallas	1,300,642	551,447	42.4%	449,290	34.5%	81.5%
San Diego	1,383,987	416,630	30.1%	353,790	25.6%	84.9%
New York City	8,622,467	2,503,005	29.0%	338,119	3.9%	13.5%
Fort Worth	924,663	325,185	35.2%	271,493	29.4%	83.5%

Data Sources: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov/>.

- Over the last decade or so, rapid Hispanic or Latino population growth in the Southwest, combined with a plateauing of Chicago and Cook County's Mexican population, dropped Chicago to fifth in total Mexican-origin population, behind Los Angeles, Houston, San Antonio, and Phoenix.

⁴³ The U.S. Census Bureau advises 5-year ACS data users to include the entire 5-year ranges (e.g. 2018-2022) when reporting and writing about numbers since the data was collected over a 5-year period and does not represent a single year within the 5-year span. It would be inaccurate to refer to this data as a single year such as 2022.

Key Demographic Patterns of Mexican Population

- The Los Angeles metropolitan statistical area had the largest Mexican population in the country by far, while the Inland Empire (Riverside/San Bernardino/Ontario), which many argue is an extension of the LA metropolitan area, is second. These are followed by the metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas, Chicago, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, McAllen, and El Paso.
- There were more than a million Mexicans in 7 out of the 10 metro areas we studied, with five having more than 1.5 million.
- Although the Chicago metro is fifth for its total number of Mexicans, it was 10th in the Mexican percentage of its overall population, at 17.7%. It also has the lowest total percentage of Latinos, at 29.0%, but it remains the home to the country's largest Mexican-origin population outside the Southwest.
- In terms of the share of Latinos that were Mexican, Chicago has the fourth lowest percentage at 73.9%, which indicates the greater diversity of Chicago Latinos compared to the metro areas we studied. County level data tell a similar story as metro level data.

Table 2: Mexican Population, Income, and Mexican Homeownership Rate for 10 Metropolitan Areas with the Largest Share of Mexican Population, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Metro Name	Total Population	Total Mexican Population	% Mexicans of Total Population	Mean Income	Median Income	Mexican Home Ownership Rate
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area	13,111,917	4,488,186	34.2%	\$44,800	\$34,447	43.2%
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA Metro Area	4,610,050	2,086,735	45.3%	\$45,104	\$35,072	62.0%
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX Metro Area	7,142,603	1,925,395	27.0%	\$46,129	\$35,072	62.2%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area	7,673,379	1,795,650	23.4%	\$43,669	\$35,000	62.2%
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area	9,566,955	1,696,231	17.7%	\$44,024	\$35,072	63.0%
Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ Metro Area	4,864,209	1,310,430	26.9%	\$43,295	\$35,824	59.1%
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX Metro Area	2,570,862	1,220,362	47.5%	\$44,964	\$35,670	63.4%
San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA Metro Area	3,289,701	983,086	29.9%	\$47,261	\$35,072	43.2%
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	873,167	771,024	88.3%	\$39,783	\$29,226	70.0%
El Paso, TX Metro Area	867,161	677,323	78.1%	\$40,855	\$30,500	67.1%

Note: The data includes all employed individuals, regardless of whether they work full-time or part-time.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 3: Mexican Population, Income, and Mexican Homeownership Rate for 10 Counties with the Largest Share of Mexican Population, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

County Name	Total Population	Total Mexican Population	% Mexicans of Total Population	Mean Income	Median Income	Mexican Home Ownership Rate
Los Angeles County, California	9,936,690	3,586,953	36.1%	\$44,286	\$34,447	44.2%
Harris County, Texas	4,726,177	1,452,364	30.7%	\$44,571	\$34,589	58.9%
Maricopa County, Arizona	4,430,871	1,191,488	26.9%	\$43,204	\$35,400	57.8%
Riverside County, California	2,429,487	1,074,125	44.2%	\$45,047	\$35,072	64.8%
Bexar County, Texas	2,014,059	1,039,250	51.6%	\$44,801	\$35,595	62.2%
Cook County, Illinois	5,225,367	1,034,038	19.8%	\$44,090	\$35,072	60.2%
San Bernardino County, California	2,180,563	1,012,610	46.4%	\$45,164	\$35,072	59.1%
San Diego County, California	3,289,701	983,086	29.9%	\$47,261	\$35,072	43.2%
Orange County, California	3,175,227	901,233	28.4%	\$46,716	\$35,072	39.1%
Dallas County, Texas	2,604,053	858,197	33.0%	\$40,705	\$33,994	59.0%

Note: The data includes all employed individuals, regardless of whether they work full-time or part-time.
 Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

According to the 2018-2022 ACS, close to two thirds of Chicagoland Mexicans resided outside of the city, either in the suburbs of Cook County (452,662) or in the five collar counties (514,133), and in both of those areas Mexicans represent a larger percentage of Latino residents – roughly 80% – than in Chicago itself (see Tables 4 and 5, Map 1, and Figure 1).

Table 4: Mexican and Hispanic or Latino Population in Chicago, Cook County, and Collar Counties, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

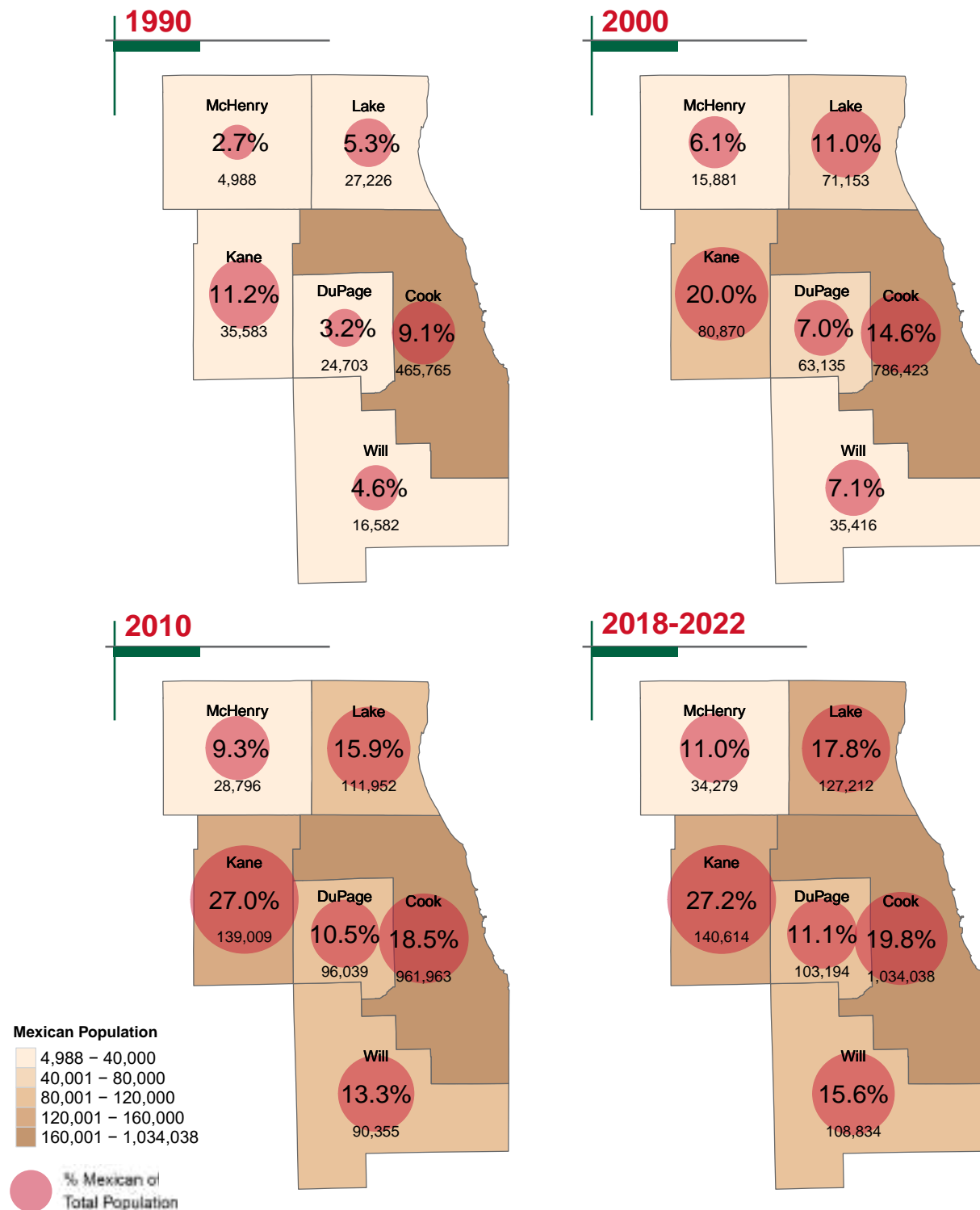
Area	Mexican Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	Total Population	% Mexican of Hispanic or Latino	% Mexican of Total Population
Chicago	581,376	787,050	2,710,105	73.9%	21.5%
Cook County Outside of Chicago	452,662	565,432	2,515,262	80.1%	18.0%
Collar Counties	514,133	643,183	3,168,879	79.9%	16.2%

Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The Mexican-origin population of Chicago was 581,376 or 21.5% of all Chicago residents.
- Hispanics or Latinos as a whole made up 29% of Chicago's population, with Mexicans representing by far the greatest share – 73.9% – nearly three of every four Latinos.
- The Mexican portion of Chicago's Hispanic or Latino population (73.9%) was far greater than in the U.S. as a whole, where Mexicans made up 60.1% of all U.S. Hispanic or Latinos.⁴⁴

44 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov/>.

Map 1: Mexican Population in Cook County, and Collar Counties, 1990, 2000, 2010
(Decennial Censuses), and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Censuses, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

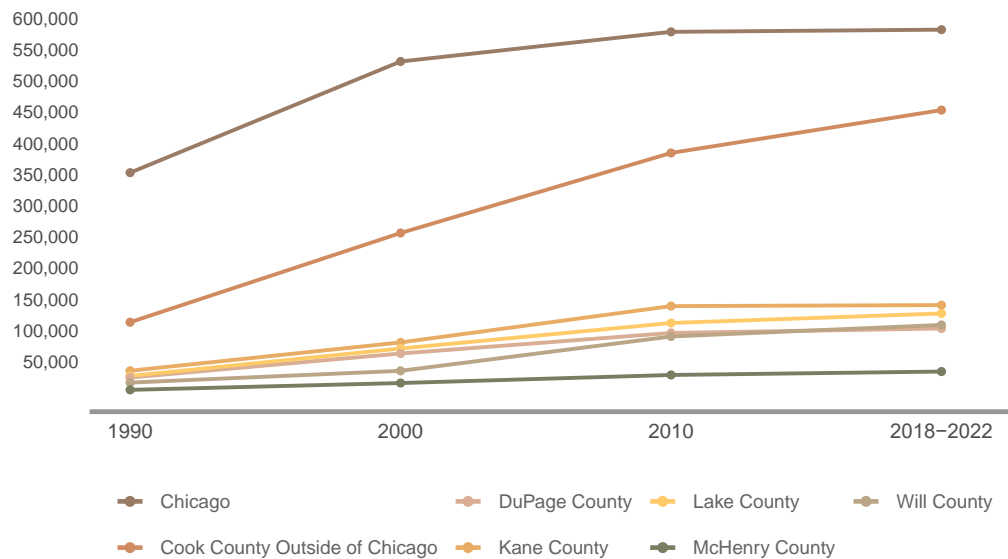
- More importantly, since 1990, the Mexican populations of Kane County and suburban Cook have each more than tripled in sheer numbers, dwarfing the rate of Mexican increase in Chicago.
- In Cook County's collar counties, the greatest percentage increase in the Mexican population since 1990 has been in Will and McHenry County, more than 500% each.
- Surprisingly, the highest percentage of Mexicans of any county was not in Cook but in Kane County, where the cities of Aurora and Elgin are located, Kane County was 27.2% Mexican.

Table 5: Mexican Population in Chicago, Cook County, and Collar Counties, 1990, 2000, 2010 (Decennial Censuses), and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Area	1990		2000		2010		2018-2022		Change from 1990 to 2018-2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent Change
Chicago	352,543	12.7%	530,452	18.3%	577,894	21.5%	581,376	21.5%	228,833	64.9%
Cook County Outside of Chicago	113,222	4.9%	255,971	10.3%	384,069	15.3%	452,662	18.0%	339,440	299.8%
Kane County	35,583	11.2%	80,870	20.0%	139,009	27.0%	140,614	27.2%	105,031	295.2%
Lake County	27,226	5.3%	71,153	11.0%	111,952	15.9%	127,212	17.8%	99,986	367.2%
DuPage County	24,703	3.2%	63,135	7.0%	96,039	10.5%	103,194	11.1%	78,491	317.7%
Will County	16,582	4.6%	35,416	7.1%	90,355	13.3%	108,834	15.6%	92,252	556.3%
McHenry County	4,988	2.7%	15,881	6.1%	28,796	9.3%	34,279	11.0%	29,291	587.2%

Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (1990, 2000, 2010 Decennial Censuses, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Figure 1: Mexican Population in Chicago, Cook County, and Collar Counties, 1990, 2000, 2010 (Decennial Censuses), and 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (1990, 2000, 2010 Decennial Censuses, and 2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Since 2000, Chicago's Mexican population has spread dramatically throughout the 77 community areas, while at the same time a solid concentration of majority-Mexican neighborhoods has emerged throughout the city's Southwest area, which has effectively become a Mexican "Brown Belt." (see Maps 2-8).

- At the same time, the two best-known Mexican neighborhoods, the Lower West Side (Pilsen) and South Lawndale (Little Village), underwent significant decline in their Mexican population between 2000 and 2018-2022. Pilsen dropped from 35,909 Mexicans to 21,524, and Little Village from 69,191 to 53,315, most likely as long-time residents were displaced by gentrification and rising home prices (see maps 1,2,3).⁴⁵
- Nonetheless, the geographic concentration of Mexican residents expanded. While only six neighborhoods had more than 50% Mexican populations in 2000 – Lower West Side (Pilsen), South Lawndale (Little Village), Brighton Park, Gage Park, McKinley Park and the East Side along Lake Michigan – that number more than doubled to 16 community areas that were over 50% Mexican by 2018-2022. Virtually all of the increase came in the city's Southwest area, though it also included two northwest neighborhoods, Belmont-Cragin (51.4%) and Hermosa (52.0%)

⁴⁵ Betancur, John, and Alexander Linares (2022) *Who Lives in Pilsen: The Trajectory of Gentrification from 2000-2020*. Great Cities Institute.

- Since 2000, the Mexican population has grown across the Northwest and West Sides of Chicago in Community Areas including Austin, Belmont Cragin, and Portage Park. From 2000 to 2018-2022, the Mexican population increased 8,250 in Austin, 8,266 in Belmont Cragin, and 8,618 in Portage Park.
- More than 40% of Chicago's Mexicans were concentrated in just 10 of the city's 77 community areas, largely in the Southwest sections and the East Side. In those 10 neighborhoods, they made up an average of 71.7% of the total population and 91.4% of the Latino residents.

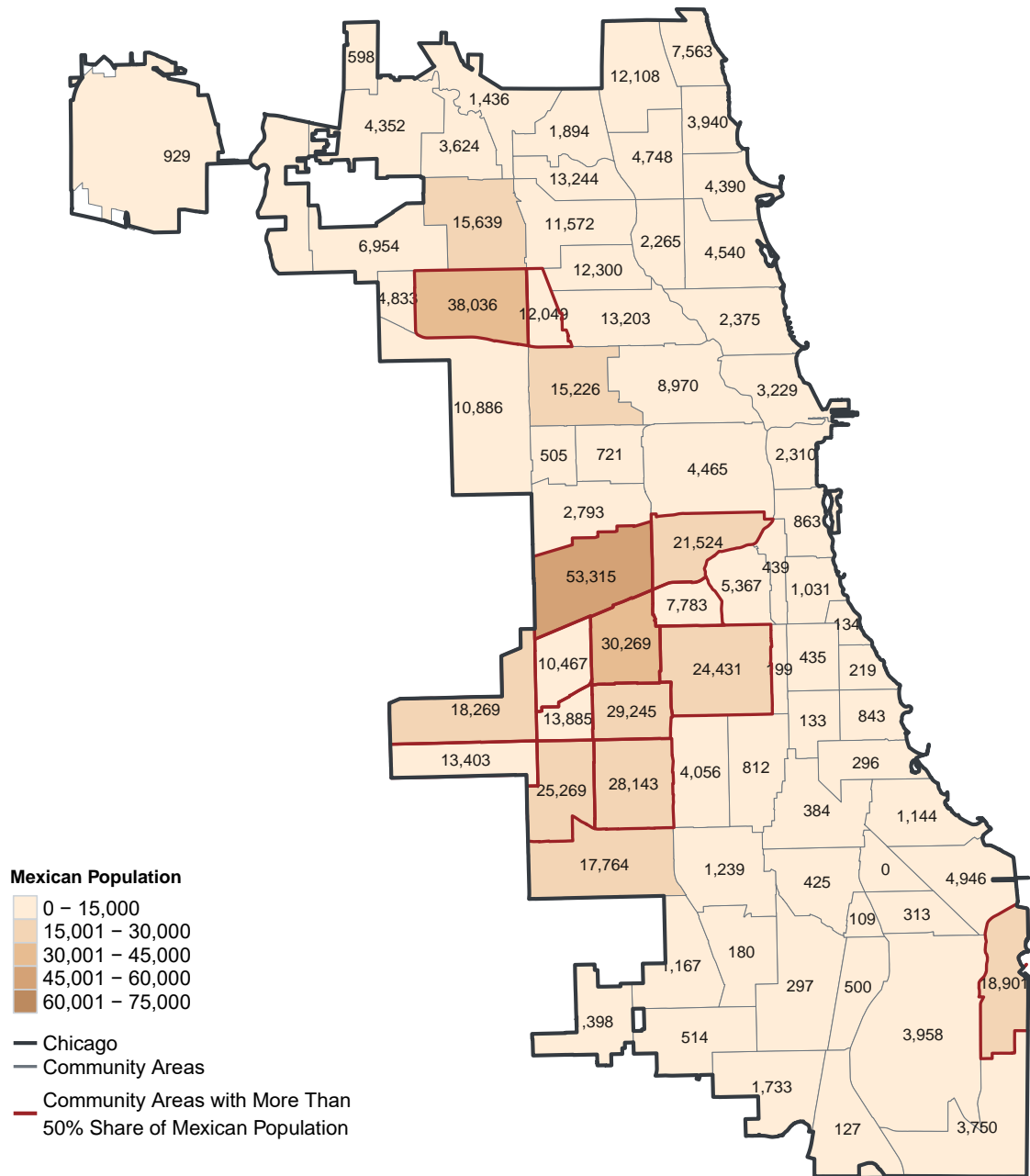
Table 6: Total, Hispanic or Latino, and Mexican Population by 10 Community Areas with the Largest Share of Mexican Population, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Total of 10 Community Areas	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	Mexican Population	% Mexicans of Hispanic or Latino	% Mexicans of Total Population
Gage Park	34,788	32,117	29,245	91.1%	84.1%
East Side	23,942	20,791	18,901	90.9%	78.9%
West Lawn	32,594	27,397	25,269	92.2%	77.5%
South Lawndale	69,708	57,024	53,315	93.5%	76.5%
West Elsdon	18,366	14,917	13,885	93.1%	75.6%
Archer Heights	13,867	11,089	10,467	94.4%	75.5%
Brighton Park	42,243	33,789	30,269	89.6%	71.7%
Lower West Side	34,237	23,826	21,524	90.3%	62.9%
New City	41,048	27,426	24,431	89.1%	59.5%
Clearing	24,728	14,882	13,403	90.1%	54.2%
10 Community Areas with the Largest Share of Mexican Population	335,521	263,258	240,709	91.4%	71.7%
Other Community Areas	2,374,584	523,792	340,667	65.0%	14.3%
Chicago	2,710,105	787,050	581,376	73.9%	21.5%

Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

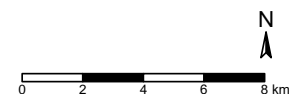


**Map 3: Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago,
2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)**

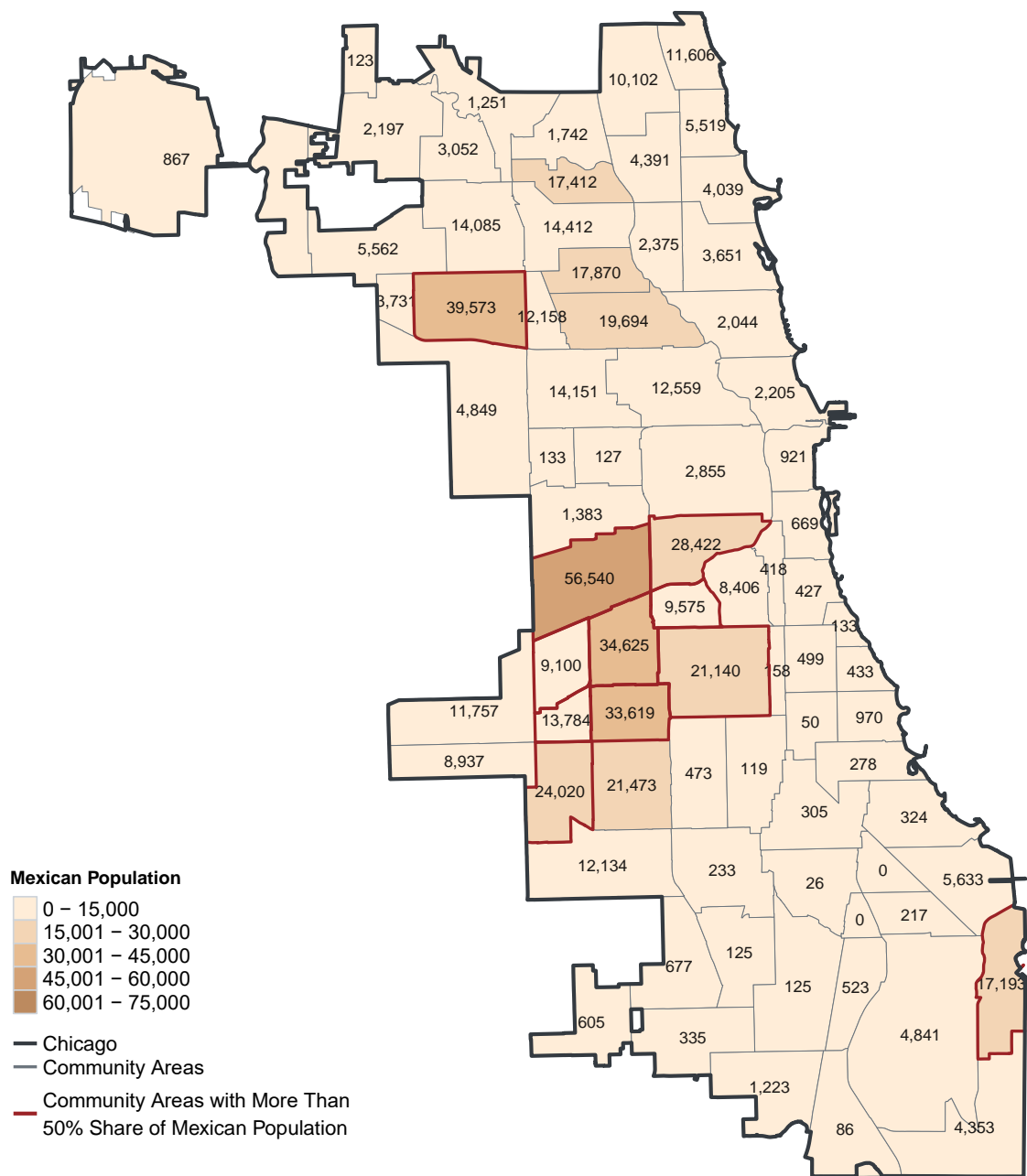


Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org
(2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).

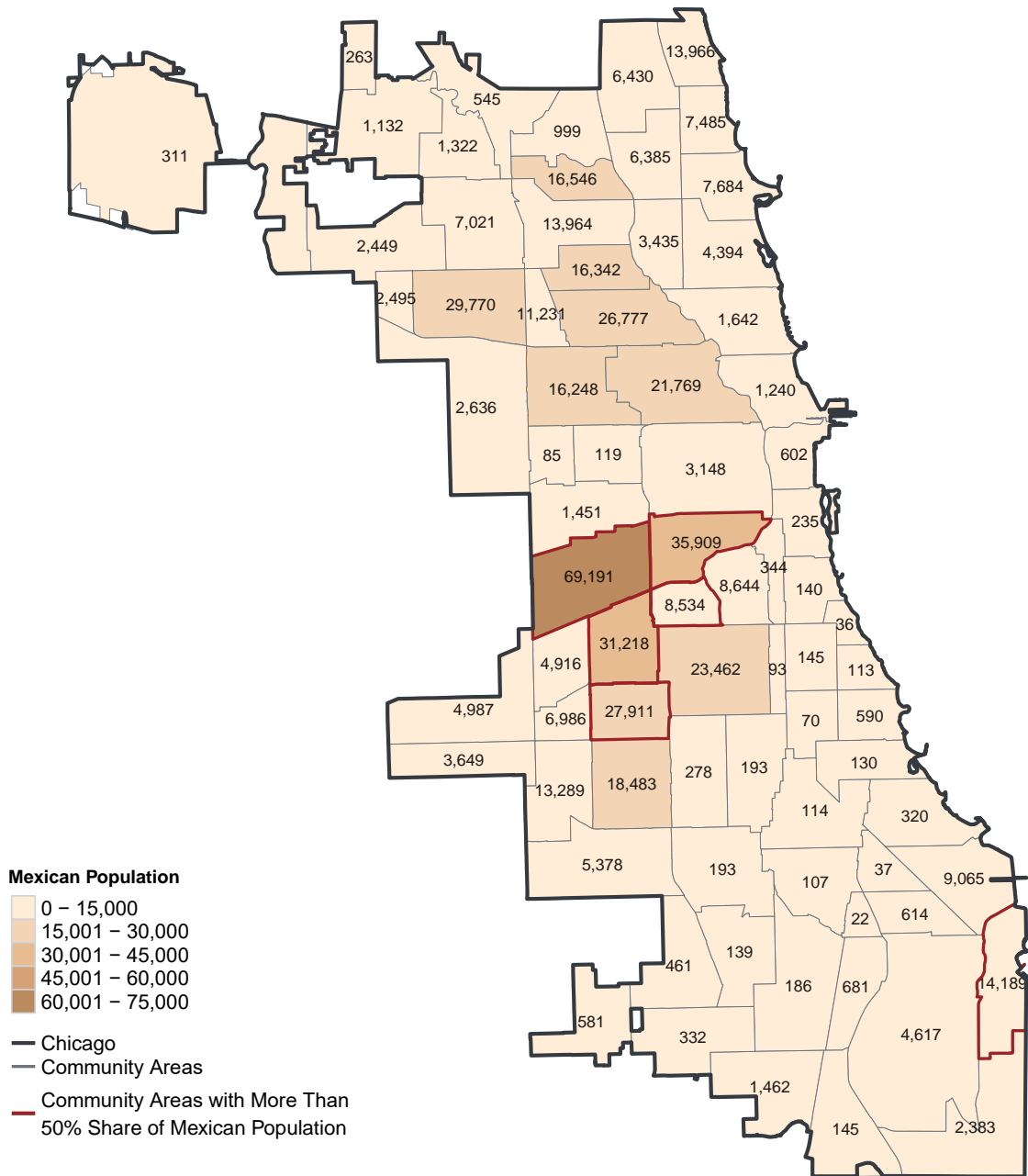
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.



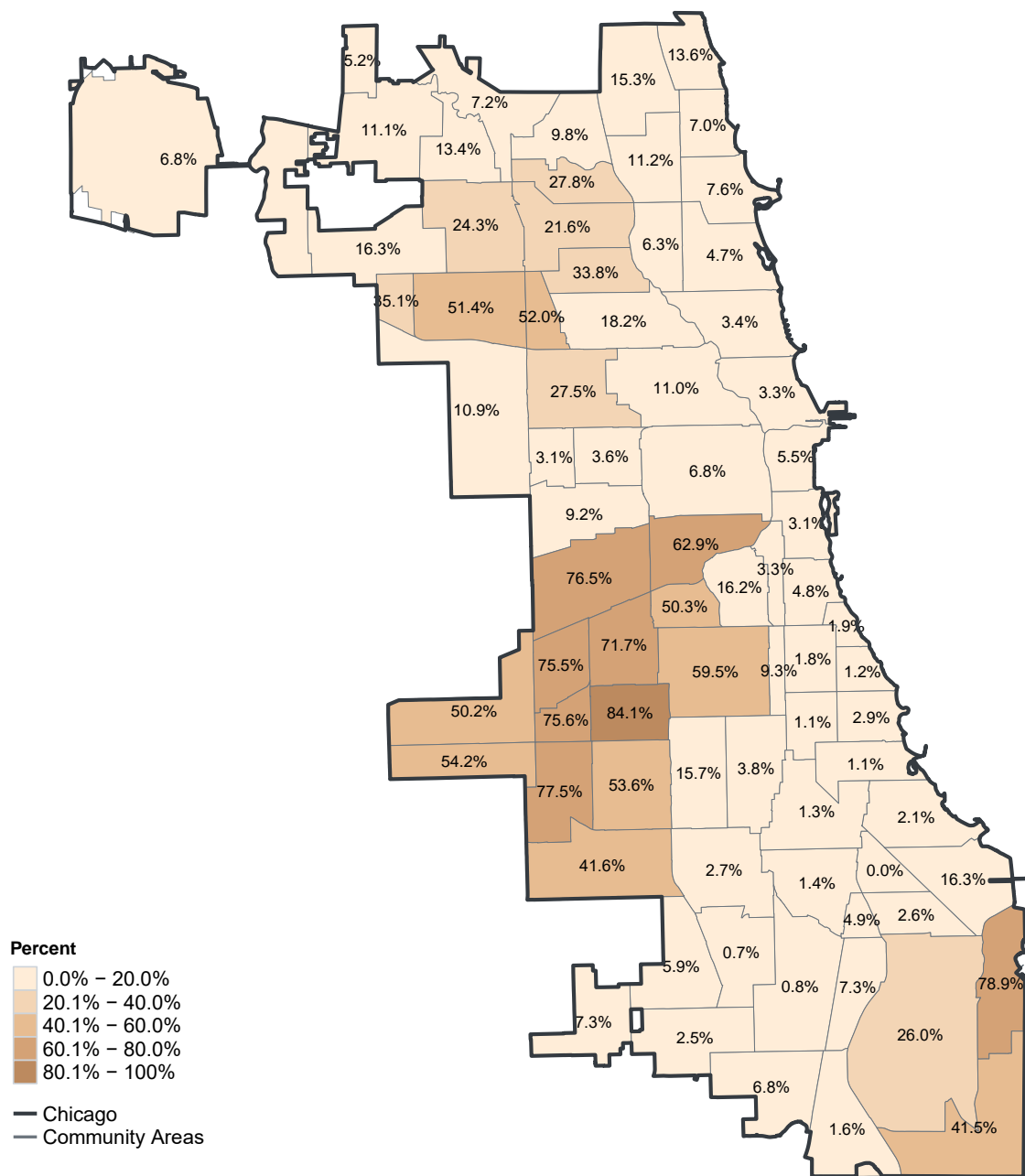
**Map 4: Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago,
2010 (Decennial Census)**



**Map 5: Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago,
2000 (Decennial Census)**

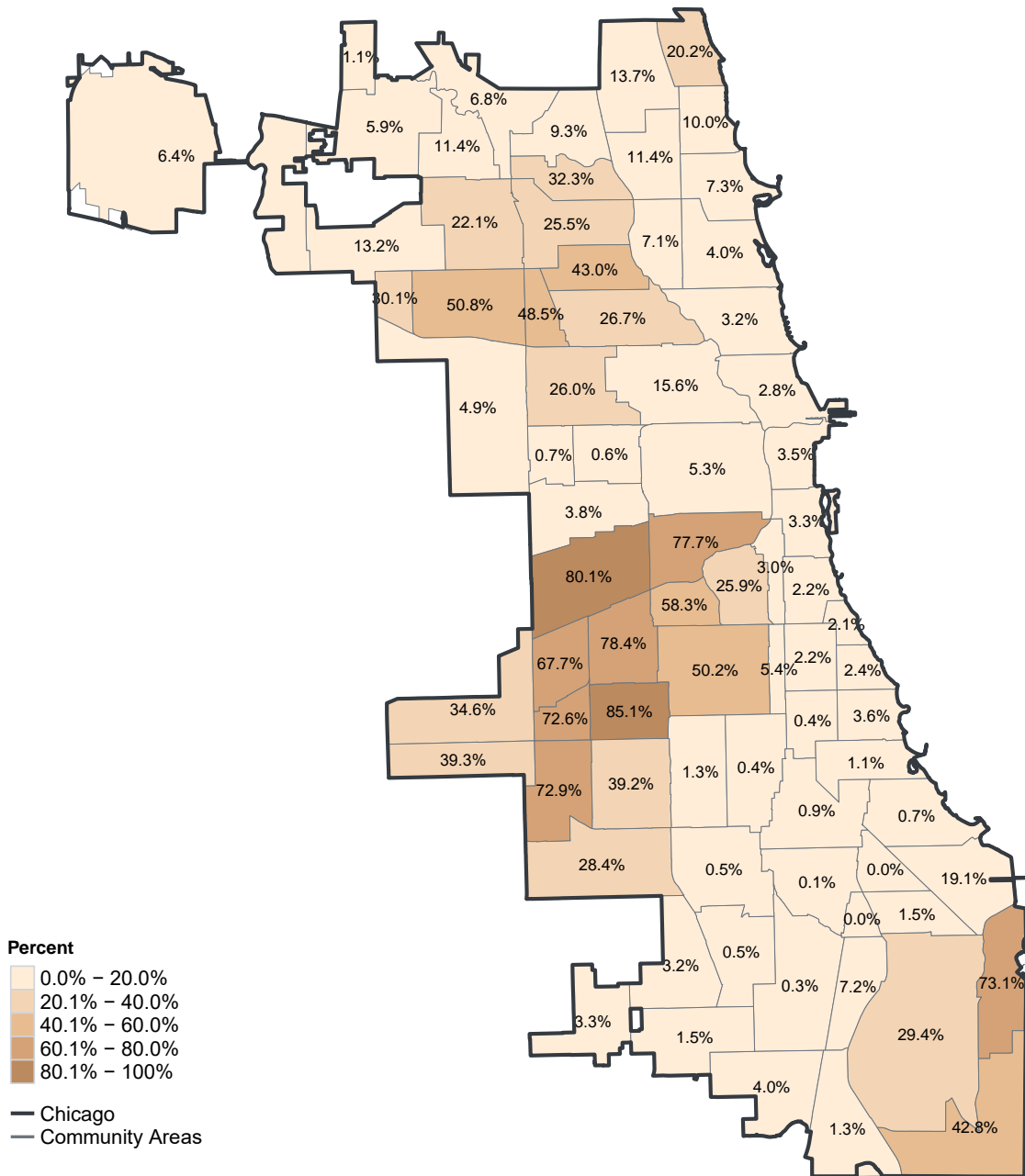


**Map 6: Percent Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago,
2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)**



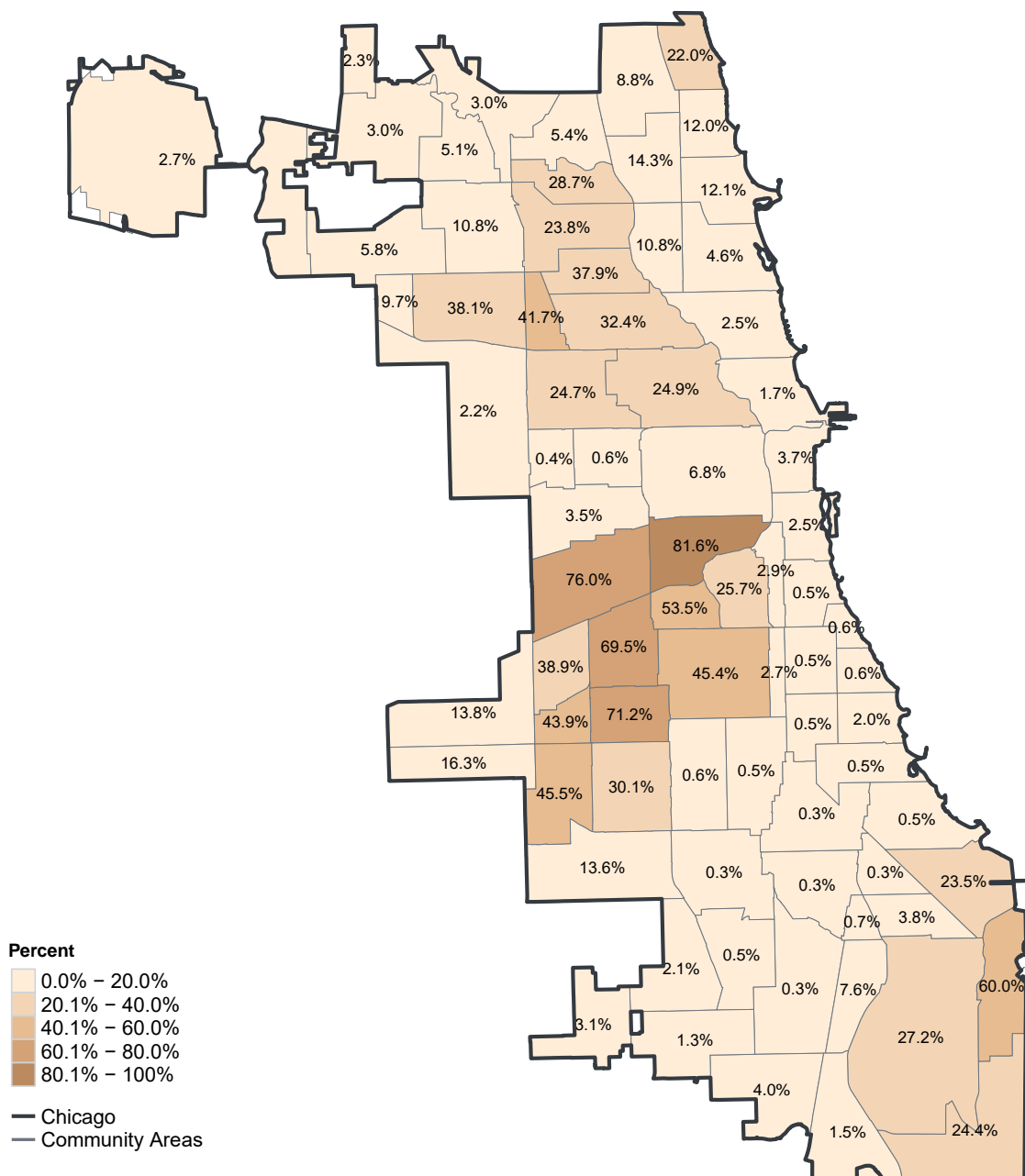
Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org
(2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Map 7: Percent Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago, 2010 (Decennial Census)



Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org
(2010 Decennial Census),
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Map 8: Percent Mexican Population by Community Area in Chicago, 2000 (Decennial Census)



Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org
(2000 Decennial Census),
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Mexicans had the lowest median age (30) of any ethnic or racial group in Chicago, even younger than other Hispanics or Latinos (34) in 2018-2022 (see Tables 7-9 and Figures 2 and 3).

Table 7: Median Age for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Median Age
Mexican	30
Other Hispanics or Latinos	34
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	37
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	37
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	33

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).

Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

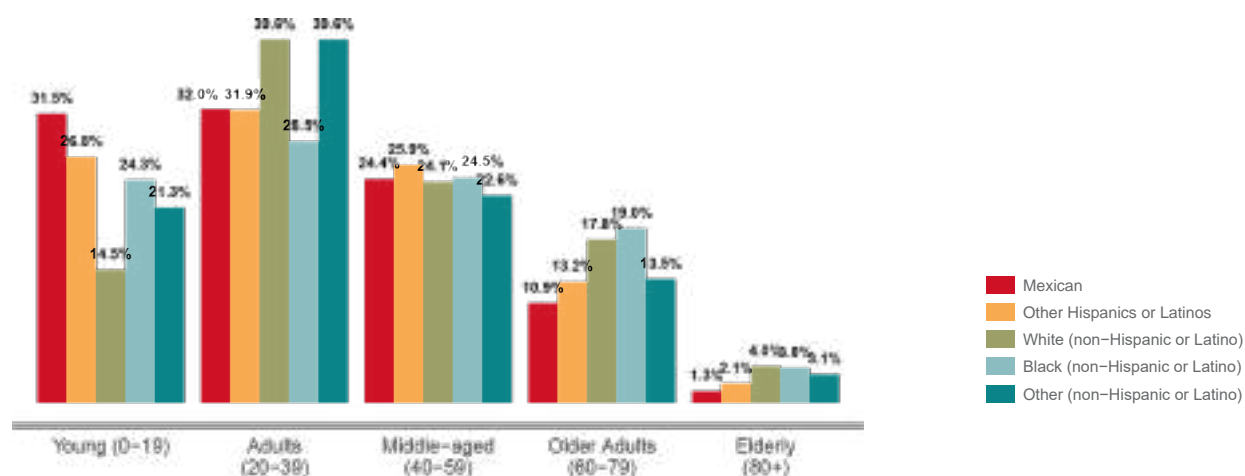
- Mexicans also had the highest percentage under age 40 (63.5%), followed by Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) (60.9%), Other Hispanics or Latinos (58.7%), White (non-Hispanic or Latino) (54.1%), and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) (52.8%) Chicagoans.
- Hispanic or Latino residents made up 32.3% of Chicago's population under age 40 – the largest of any racial or ethnic group – with Mexicans alone representing 24.0% of under-40 residents.
- Ecuadorians and Mexicans had the largest percentages of under-40 population, 64.1% and 63.5% respectively, followed by Cubans (61.4%), Guatemalans (58.0%), and Colombians (56.3%). Puerto Ricans had the lowest percentage of population under 40 (54.5%).
- Mexicans had a considerably larger household size (4.2) than Other Hispanics or Latinos (3.4) or Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) (3.0) and White (non-Hispanic or Latino) (2.6) Chicagoans.

Table 8: Population by Age for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Age Group	Mexican		Other Hispanics or Latinos		White (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Young (0-19)	163,048	31.5%	51,591	26.8%	112,854	14.5%	166,419	24.3%	50,607	21.3%
Adults (20-39)	165,753	32.0%	61,525	31.9%	308,923	39.6%	195,130	28.5%	93,821	39.6%
Middle-aged (40-59)	126,500	24.4%	49,939	25.9%	187,649	24.1%	167,834	24.5%	53,549	22.6%
Older Adults (60-79)	56,446	10.9%	25,476	13.2%	138,641	17.8%	129,827	19.0%	31,963	13.5%
Elderly (80+)	6,498	1.3%	4,109	2.1%	31,139	4.0%	25,832	3.8%	7,256	3.1%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Figure 2: Population by Age for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



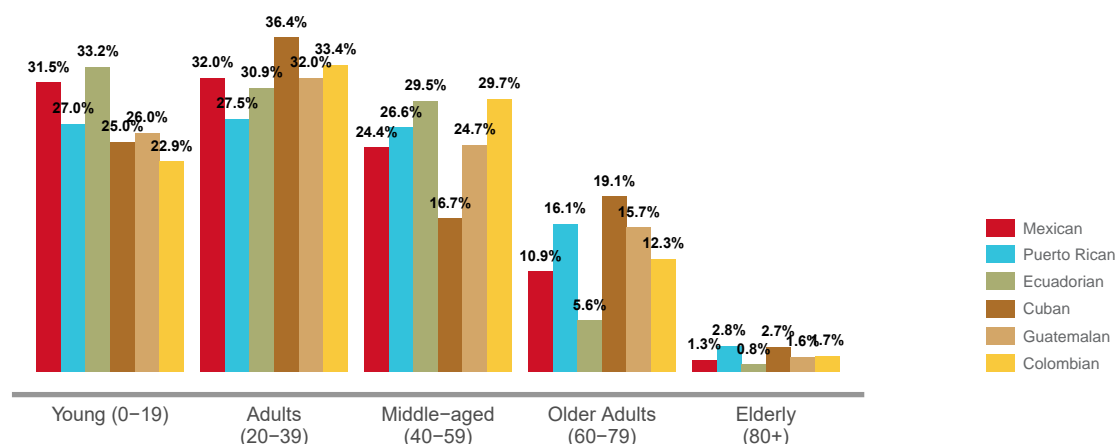
Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 9: Population by Age for Hispanic or Latino Groups in Chicago, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Age Group	Mexican		Puerto Rican		Ecuadorian		Cuban		Guatemalan		Colombian	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Young (0–19)	163,048	31.5%	23,231	27.0%	6,812	33.2%	2,097	25.0%	4,622	26.0%	2,330	22.9%
Adults (20–39)	165,753	32.0%	23,604	27.5%	6,335	30.9%	3,053	36.4%	5,691	32.0%	3,397	33.4%
Middle-aged (40–59)	126,500	24.4%	22,838	26.6%	6,059	29.5%	1,399	16.7%	4,389	24.7%	3,027	29.7%
Older Adults (60–79)	56,446	10.9%	13,842	16.1%	1,149	5.6%	1,602	19.1%	2,787	15.7%	1,255	12.3%
Elderly (80+)	6,498	1.3%	2,393	2.8%	174	0.8%	230	2.7%	279	1.6%	175	1.7%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Figure 3: Population by Age for Hispanic or Latino Groups in Chicago, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 10: Mean Household Size for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Mean Household Size
Mexican	4.2
Other Hispanics or Latinos	3.4
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	2.6
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	3.0
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	3.1

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Mexican and Other Hispanic or Latino households had roughly the same annual median income, \$63,129 and \$62,693 respectively in 2018-2022, and both were considerably higher than the median for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) households, \$45,326, while median income for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) households was the highest by far at \$105,215 (see Tables 10-12).

Table 11: Mean and Median Household Income for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Mean Household Income	Median Household Income
Mexican	\$ 77,711	\$ 63,129
Other Hispanics or Latinos	\$ 83,857	\$ 62,693
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$146,895	\$105,215
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$ 61,498	\$ 45,326
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$123,052	\$ 84,986

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- Other Hispanic or Latino households, however, had a far higher mean income (\$83,857) than Mexican households (\$77,711), which suggests a greater proportion of high-income households among Other Hispanics or Latinos.

Table 12: Mean and Median Income of Full-time Workers for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Mean Income	Median Income
Mexican	\$ 52,325	\$43,236
Other Hispanics or Latinos	\$ 65,758	\$50,000
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$114,314	\$82,672
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$ 60,763	\$48,136
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	\$102,800	\$74,863

Note: Data covers full-time employees working a minimum of 35 hours per week for at least 48 weeks each year.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- When it comes to individual income levels, however, we see a different picture. Here, Mexicans had the lowest median income for individuals at \$43,236, followed by Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) at \$48,136, then by Other Hispanic or Latinos, at \$50,000. The variation from the prior table likely indicates that although individual Mexican workers have the lowest income of any group, the larger average household size among Mexicans often means more than one household member is employed, thus boosting total household income for Mexicans.

There was considerable variation in median income among Chicago's Latino ethnic groups (see Tables 13-15).

- Ecuadorians and Guatemalans had the lowest median income – \$39,924 and \$40,000, respectively – followed by Mexicans, at \$43,236.

Table 13: Mean and Median Income of Full-time Workers for Hispanic or Latino Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Mean Income	Median Income
Mexican	\$52,325	\$43,236
Puerto Rican	\$62,228	\$50,000
Ecuadorian	\$46,107	\$39,924
Cuban	\$93,480	\$62,757
Guatemalan	\$48,215	\$40,000
Colombian	\$71,578	\$54,046

Note: Data covers full-time employees working a minimum of 35 hours per week for at least 48 weeks each year.
Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 14: Mean and Median Income of Full-time Workers for Mexico Born and U.S. Born Mexicans in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Mexican Nativity	Mean Income	Median Income
Mexico Born	\$47,238	\$39,994
U.S. Born	\$56,928	\$45,929

Note: Data covers full-time employees working a minimum of 35 hours per week for at least 48 weeks each year.
Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 15: Population in Poverty and Poverty Rate for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2000 (Decennial Census), 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Poverty in 2000		Poverty in 2008-2012		Poverty in 2018-2022		Changes from 2000 to 2018-2022
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Difference
Mexican	102,180	18.8%	115,240	22.6%	80,224	15.5%	-3.4%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	45,249	21.4%	30,839	20.0%	30,103	15.6%	-5.7%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	90,160	9.9%	92,174	12.1%	78,923	10.1%	0.2%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	325,923	30.4%	276,940	33.0%	186,352	27.2%	-3.2%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	34,278	18.9%	36,859	20.7%	41,455	17.5%	-1.4%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2000 Decennial Census, 2018-2022, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- Those with the highest median income were Cubans at \$62,757, followed by Colombians at \$54,046 and Puerto Ricans at \$50,000.
- Cubans and Colombians had much higher mean incomes – \$93,480 and \$71,578, respectively. This suggests the latter two Latino groups contain a significant portion of high income earners who approximate the levels of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) workers.
- Annual median income for U.S.-born Mexican workers was \$5,935 more than for those born in Mexico.
- Between 2000 and 2018-22 poverty rates dropped for all ethnic and racial groups in Chicago except for the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) population, which saw a slight increase in poverty from 9.9% to 10.1%. The biggest percentage drop came among Other Hispanic or Latinos, followed by Mexicans, and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicagoans. However, the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) population still had nearly double the poverty level of Mexicans and Other Hispanic or Latinos, and nearly triple that of the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) population.

Some Focus Group Comments from Suburban Mexican Residents

"I have worked for years in the Waukegan area, in Lake County. The government there was always majority white although they are minority, because Waukegan is over 60% Hispanic. It is very popular with Mexican immigrants, but there's a big gap between the government and the people who live in any of those communities."

"Woodstock in McHenry County was the hub for a lot of Latino farm workers who came for the harvesting season. We were highly discriminated against, highly harassed, and we had to endure a lot of things. In school, we used to take our lunch, our burritos and our tacos, and we would sit in the lunchroom, and the other students would come and knock our food off the table, and then they would tell us, 'all you want to eat!' The teachers would sit there and watch and laugh. We took it in a very humble way. We didn't create any issues. We just walked away and started to eat our lunch on the bus on the way to the school, so we wouldn't go hungry throughout the day."



A rodeo in Plaza Garibaldi in Little Village in 1992. ST-19040889-0077, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum

"When I arrived in Aurora, I was amazed, because I found many people speaking Spanish. I fell in love with the city, and moved there because it was a small piece of Mexico. Buying Mexican things was even easier there than in San Antonio, Texas, where I had lived before. So I love Aurora, it's awesome."

"The Mexican community has grown significantly in Berwyn and in Cicero over the last 20 years. I saw more efforts in Berwyn schools for our representation. They have a dual language program, they have culture nights, they provide communication to parents in Spanish, they have bilingual teachers. Berwyn has definitely grown in comparison to where we live now, in LaGrange Park, where the percentage of Latinos and Mexican students is way up, but less than in Berwyn. The only representation we get in LaGrange is multicultural night once or twice a year and no communication in Spanish."

Education

Mexicans had the highest percentage of children – 86.0% – attending Chicago public schools of any ethnic or racial group in 2018-2022 (see Table 16).

Table 16: Number and Percent in Public and Private Schools for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Age Group	Mexican		Other Hispanics or Latinos		White (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public	131,597	86.0%	40,463	76.8%	65,331	47.4%	130,402	81.9%	36,563	58.3%
Private	21,366	14.0%	12,189	23.2%	72,490	52.6%	28,883	18.1%	26,199	41.7%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The share of Mexicans in Chicago public schools was nearly 10 percentage points higher than Other Hispanics Latinos and nearly five percentage points higher than for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) students.
- There were more Mexican children enrolled in public schools, 131,597, than there were Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) children, 130,402. As for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) children, less than half (47.4%) attended Chicago public schools, while 52.6% attended private schools.

A lower percentage of children in Mexican majority public schools scored at proficiency level in English and Math than Hispanic or Latino students citywide in 2023 (see Table 17).

Table 17: Performance in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Elementary Schools in Four Community Areas with Largest Share of Mexican Population and Performance Citywide by Race/Ethnicity, 2023

Aggregation	Mean English Language Arts Proficiency	Mean Math Proficiency	Mean Science Proficiency
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Mean Metrics for Hispanic or Latino Students in Four Community Areas with Largest Share of Mexican Population	19.4%	11.9%	36.7%
Total CPS Hispanic or Latino Students	21.2%	13.6%	35.6%
Total CPS White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	54.3%	48.4%	65.0%
Total CPS Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	16.5%	8.1%	24.4%
Total CPS Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	47.7%	41.0%	57.0%

Sample size: 31 Chicago Public Schools Elementary Schools in Gage Park, East Side, West Lawn, and South Lawndale.

Data Source: Illinois Report Card (2023). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- No Chicago public school data currently exists for student performance levels for specific Hispanic or Latino ethnic origins. In an effort to gauge performance of Mexican-origin students, we compared student proficiency levels for 31 elementary schools located in four neighborhoods that had 70% or more Mexican population to performance levels of Hispanic or Latino students citywide.

Table 18: Chronic Absenteeism in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Elementary Schools in Four Community Areas with Largest Share of Mexican Population, 2023

Aggregation	Mean Chronic Absenteeism
	Percent
Mean Metrics for Hispanic or Latino Students in Four Community Areas with Largest Share of Mexican Population	36.2%
Total CPS Hispanic or Latino Students	40.3%
Total CPS White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	27.1%
Total CPS Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	45.8%
Total CPS Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) Students	31.9%

Note: Sample size: 31 Chicago Public Schools Elementary Schools in Gage Park, East Side, West Lawn, and South Lawndale.

Chronic Absenteeism is defined as students who miss 10 percent or more of school days per year.

Data Source: Illinois Report Card (2023). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- Our analysis indicates that students in the predominantly Mexican communities registered approximately two percentage points lower in ELA proficiency levels than the citywide average for Hispanic or Latino students and were slightly higher than citywide average for science among Hispanics or Latinos.
- Our analysis also showed, however, that students in the largely Mexican neighborhoods had lower rates of chronic absenteeism (36.2%) than did Hispanic or Latino pupils citywide (40.3%) (see Table 18).

Table 19: Number and Percent of Population with Limited English Proficiency for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Mexican	89,859	17.3%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	23,729	12.3%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	18,629	2.4%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	1,788	0.3%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	26,249	11.1%

Note: English Proficiency is defined as respondents who does not speak English or speaks English poorly.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Mexicans had the highest percentage (17.3%) of their population with limited English proficiency, more than among other Hispanics or Latinos (12.3%) in 2018-2022 (see Table 19).

- Mexicans comprised 79.1% of Hispanics or Latinos and 56.1% of the total population that had limited English proficiency.

Table 20: Number and Percent of Non-citizens enrolled in Public Schools for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Mexican	5,566	3.6%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	3,112	5.9%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	2,844	2.1%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	2,399	1.5%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	5,871	9.4%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

A higher percentage of Hispanics and Other Latinos (5.9%) were non-citizen public school students than Mexicans (3.6%) in 2018-2022 (see Table 20).

- However, the Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) population had the highest percentage of non-citizens in public school (9.4%) of any group in the city and a slightly larger number (5,871) than Mexicans (5,566).

One of our most surprising findings was that Hispanic or Latino youth were a pivotal portion of higher education enrollment in Chicago in 2018-2022. Total Hispanic or Latino enrollment, approached the number of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) for 18- to 34-year-olds who were attending college in Chicago (see Table 21).

Table 21: Number and Percent of Population Attending Undergraduate or Graduate Colleges or Professional Schools for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Ages 18-24		Ages 25-34	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mexican	22,705	35.7%	6,449	7.7%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	7,707	39.1%	4,435	13.8%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	32,987	49.3%	21,242	11.3%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	16,458	25.9%	9,301	8.8%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	15,004	59.9%	11,042	20.7%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- An estimated 30,412 Hispanics or Latinos ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in undergraduate or professional schools, and they made up 32% of all college students.
- Of those, 22,705 were Mexican, representing 35.7% of Mexicans in that age group.

As for college degrees in Chicago, Mexican adults registered alarmingly low rates in 2018-2022. Only 15.6% had a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to 66.5% for the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) population, 29% for Other Hispanics or Latinos, and 24.3% for the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) population (see Tables 22 and 23, and Figure 4).

- The education picture was very different for Mexican adults (aged 25 and over). An estimated 31.1% of Mexicans aged 25 and over had less than a high school diploma. That's far higher than the 20.1% among Other Hispanics or Latinos.

Table 22: Educational Attainment of Population Aged 25 and over for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Educational Level	Mexican		Other Hispanics or Latinos		White (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Schooling Completed	18,404	5.9%	4,218	3.3%	4,533	0.7%	5,511	1.2%	5,939	3.6%
Less than High School	78,226	25.2%	21,246	16.8%	19,874	3.2%	55,257	11.7%	14,180	8.5%
Regular High School Diploma, GED or Alternative Credential	101,055	32.6%	31,877	25.2%	82,167	13.4%	133,418	28.3%	20,228	12.2%
Some College, No Degree	46,070	14.9%	22,554	17.8%	73,901	12.0%	124,818	26.5%	16,749	10.1%
Associate's Degree	17,726	5.7%	9,969	7.9%	25,436	4.1%	38,312	8.1%	8,721	5.2%
Bachelor's Degree	34,239	11.0%	22,432	17.7%	229,365	37.4%	65,976	14.0%	54,042	32.5%
Master's Degree or Higher	14,420	4.6%	14,261	11.3%	178,724	29.1%	48,449	10.3%	46,394	27.9%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 23: Educational Attainment of Population Aged 25 and over for Mexico Born and U.S. Born Mexicans in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Educational Level	Mexicans Born in Mexico		Mexicans Born in the U.S.	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Schooling Completed	15,862	8.8%	2,288	1.8%
Less than High School	63,683	35.5%	13,410	10.6%
Regular High School Diploma, GED or Alternative Credential	61,816	34.4%	38,117	30.1%
Some College, No Degree	17,996	10.0%	27,380	21.6%
Associate's Degree	6,252	3.5%	11,135	8.8%
Bachelor's Degree	9,525	5.3%	24,404	19.3%
Master's Degree or Higher	4,353	2.4%	9,849	7.8%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The percentage of Mexican adults with bachelor's degrees or higher was substantially better for those born in the U.S. – 27.1% – than for those born in Mexico – 7.7%.
- 78.7% of U.S. Mexicans aged 25 and over that were born in Mexico had a high school diploma or lower level of education completed compared to 42.5% of Mexicans born in the U.S.

Some Focus Group Comments on Education

"I went to Prosser Career Academy. They shut down our library my freshman year, so we had no library. We got computer time maybe once a week, but they were borrowed laptops. And when it came to applying to colleges, there weren't enough counselors to help us with applications, so the easier route was just to go to community college."

"We have a larger population in Chicago Public Schools than any other group, but everything we're learning has nothing to do about our history. It's not like our Mexican history."



Entering students at UIC's First-Year Convocation at Harrison Field in fall 2024. Latino students made up an estimated 32% of all Chicago undergraduate and graduate students in 2018-2022. *Courtesy of Elena Oliveira, GCI.*

"The high school that I went to, it had a poor curriculum, and I remember people would look at me crazy when I told them my school required us to walk through metal detectors every day and have our bags searched. Every single day. They don't do that to the White students, they only do that to Latino students and African Americans. Why?"

"My parents spent 20 plus years in factories working night shifts, and it was hard for them. I couldn't pull my mom to a PTA meeting, or to volleyball games or basketball games at school. I couldn't have my dad participating at school. I was by myself for those things. It sucks when you don't realize as a kid that not all parents have the extra time [to be involved]."

"We have kids that are graduating who are not college ready, and then they're essentially coming out of college with a lot of debt and no degree."

"There's a lack of education and knowledge of the higher education system for a lot of our families. They don't understand how to compare information on different schools and their costs, how to fill out a college application and the FAFSA, how they can get fees waived if they meet certain criteria, the difference between student loans and grants, or the scholarships that are available."

Housing and Community Development

Increasing rates of homeownership is a major bright spot among Chicago Mexicans. In 2000, the homeownership rate for Chicago Mexicans was 41.2% and increased to 49.9% by 2018-2022 (see Table 24).

- During this same period, the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) homeownership rate remained relatively flat, going from 52.2 to 52.7% while the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) rate decreased from 37.0 to 34.6% – even as homeownership remained static for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders.⁴⁶
- Homeownership rates also increased for Other Hispanics or Latinos, but the rate still trailed Mexicans who were second among all groups in their rate, nearly achieving parity with White (non-Hispanic or Latino) homeownership (49.9% for Mexicans to 52.7% for White (non-Hispanic or Latino)).
- When compared to the U.S., the share of homeownership for Mexicans was lower in Chicago, but only slightly - 52.5% in the U.S. compared to 49.9% in Chicago - but that is to be expected in a city like Chicago with a high percentage of rental housing.
- The high rental rate in the city was most evident for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders, where homeownership was 52.7% in Chicago and 72.7% in the U.S.

Table 24: Homeownership for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago and the U.S., 2000 (Decennial Census), 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	2000		2008-2012		2018-2022		Change from 2000 to 2018-2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Chicago								
Mexican	53,008	41.2%	59,920	47.5%	74,970	49.9%	21,962	8.8%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	22,685	34.5%	19,494	39.5%	28,701	41.7%	6,016	7.2%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	232,907	52.2%	210,995	56.3%	206,780	52.7%	-26,127	0.5%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	133,828	37.0%	111,882	35.8%	99,876	34.6%	-33,952	-2.4%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	24,087	36.7%	28,551	42.4%	44,240	45.5%	20,153	8.8%
U.S.								
Mexican	2,427,031	48.4%	3,978,209	49.2%	5,235,249	52.5%	2,808,218	4.1%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	1,765,890	42.3%	2,380,084	44.2%	3,575,520	45.9%	1,809,630	3.6%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	57,289,023	72.4%	58,845,290	72.6%	59,628,210	72.7%	2,339,187	0.2%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	5,496,423	46.6%	6,045,479	44.5%	6,490,005	43.0%	993,582	-3.6%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	2,832,626	52.3%	3,990,167	56.5%	6,395,041	59.1%	3,562,415	6.8%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2000 Decennial Census, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

⁴⁶ Homeownership and household characteristic data for groups refers to the characteristics of the “householder.” The U.S. Census Bureau definition of householder is “the person (or one of the people) in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented or, if there is no such person, any adult member, excluding roomers, boarders, or paid employees. If the house is owned or rented jointly by a married couple, the householder may be either the husband or the wife. The person designated as the householder is the “reference person” to whom the relationship of all other household members, if any, is recorded. The number of householders is equal to the number of households.”

Mexican households had a high percent of crowded housing in 2018-2022 at 8.3%. However, more people per household also results in fewer Mexican households being rental cost burdened (see Table 25).

Table 25: Number and Percent of Households Living in Crowded Housing for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Mexican	12,862	8.3%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	2,343	3.3%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	4,790	1.2%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	7,402	2.4%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	6,056	6.0%

Note: Housing is defined as overcrowded if more than one person in the room.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The rate of crowded housing for Mexican householders of 8.3% was far higher than for Other Hispanics or Latinos at 3.3%, and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) at 2.4% and White (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders at 1.2%. These figures reflect, as shown earlier, that Mexicans had the largest household size.
- In Chicago, there were 12,862 crowded households with Mexican householders which was more than other racial/ethnic groups in 2018-2022.

50.8% of households with Mexican householders were burdened by rental costs, meaning the household paid more than 30% of household income on rental housing costs in 2018-2022 (see Table 26).

Table 26: Number and Percent of Rent Burdened Households for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	More than 30% of Household Income Spent on Rental Costs		More than 50% of Household Income Spent on Rental Costs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mexican	38,258	50.8%	17,361	23.1%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	21,655	54.0%	11,512	28.7%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	69,290	37.3%	33,296	17.9%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	108,343	57.4%	67,686	35.9%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	22,851	43.1%	13,816	26.1%

Note: Rent cost burdened households defined as households paying 30 percent or more of household income on rental housing costs.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The rate of cost burdened renters for Mexican householders was 13.5 percentage points higher than White (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders, and 7.7 percentage points higher than Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders, yet 3.2 percentage points lower than Other Hispanic or Latino householders and 6.6 percentage points lower than Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) householders.
- While Mexican householders were in the middle when compared to other racial/ethnic groups, they had the second lowest rate for extremely rent burdened households, meaning the household paid more than 50% of income on rental costs. This rate was 23.1% and only trailed White (non-Hispanic or Latino households) householders by 5.2 percentage points.

There was a comparatively smaller share of owner cost burdened households across all racial/ethnic groups for both cost burdened and extremely cost burdened households in Chicago in 2018-2022 (see Table 27).

Table 27: Number and Percent of Owner Cost Burdened Households for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

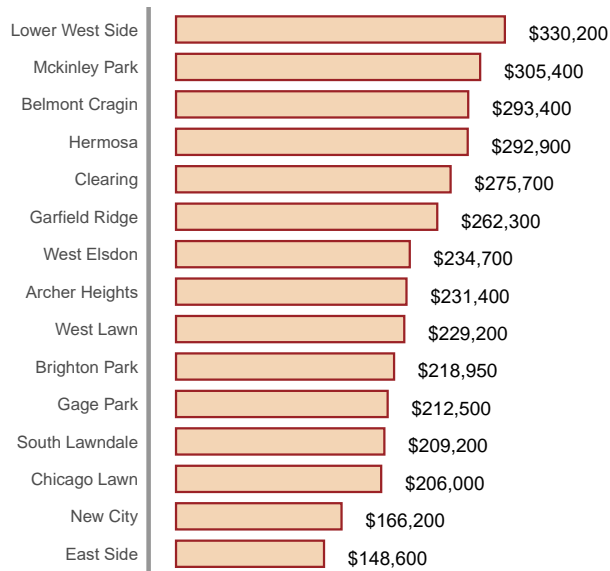
Race/Ethnicity	More than 30% of Household Income Spent on Owner Housing Costs		More than 50% of Household Income Spent on Owner Housing Costs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mexican	25,606	34.2%	11,937	15.9%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	11,304	39.4%	5,145	17.9%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	53,554	25.9%	25,670	12.4%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	34,448	34.5%	18,838	18.9%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	13,771	31.1%	7,388	16.7%

Note: Owner cost burdened households defined as households paying 30 percent or more of household income on owner housing costs.

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- 34.2% of Mexican householders were in cost burdened households, slightly lower than for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) (34.5%) and Other Hispanic or Latino householders (39.4%).
- For Mexicans in Chicago, the rate of cost burdened ownership was 16.6 percentage points lower than cost burdened renters, meaning that homeownership was more affordable to owning households than rental costs for renting households.
- 15.9% of Mexican households were in households that were severely cost burdened and there were smaller gaps between racial/ethnic groups than for rental households.

Figure 4: Median House Value for Chicago Community Areas with More Than 50% Share of Mexican Population, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

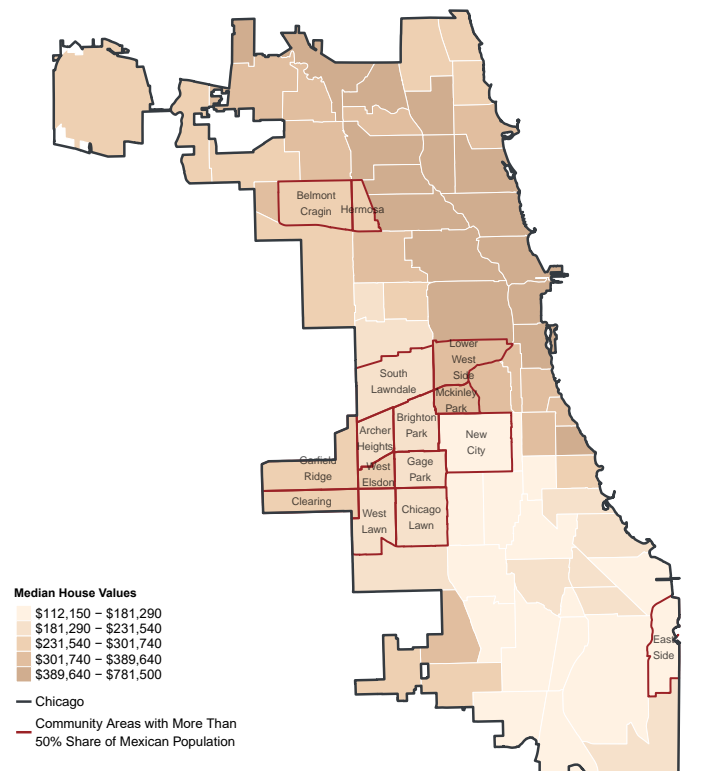


For Chicago Community Areas with more than a 50% share of the Mexican population, median housing values varied from \$330,200 in Lower West Side to \$148,600 in East Side in 2018–2022 (see Map 9 and Figure 4).

Data source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute

- McKinley Park, just south of Lower West Side, had the second highest median house value of \$305,400 in 2018–2022.
- Belmont Cragin and Hermosa were two of the only three community areas that were not clustered together in the Southwest Side of Chicago that had a 50% or more share of Mexican population. These two areas had the third and fourth highest median house values of \$293,400 and \$292,900 and are located just west of the community areas in Chicago with the highest median house values.
- The other area not clustered on the Southwest side of the city was East Side, which had amongst the lower median house values of all community areas in Chicago of \$148,600.

Map 9: Median House Value by Community Area in Chicago, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data source: Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates).
 Map Generated by Great Cities Institute



Some Focus Group Comments On Housing and Community Development

“The home ownership aspect makes a difference. I got here in 1978. There were 10 of us Mexicans in the building, all renters. Now, all own their own homes and at least two of them own a business. I think that’s our story, but we’re too humble [to tell it], we want to be accommodating, we want to just get along.”

“Most Mexican families live intergenerationally. Gage Park is like the bungalow belt; most of the housing is two bedrooms and some of my neighbors have like, eight, nine people living in a bungalow. There just isn’t any housing development there that would offer more spacious accommodations. For Latino folks, there definitely is a cultural component of wanting to have space for mom in the future.”



A row of Gage Park bungalows built in the 1920s as affordable housing. Photo by Eric Allix Rogers, licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/).

“We need to dismantle the lie of the American dream. Wealthy White people also get assistance from banks and the government in order to build generational wealth. There needs to be honest conversations about this – whether parents can co-sign or help you with half of down payment.”

“We woke up to the news that Amazon bought 73 acres in Gage Park for \$80 million for a warehouse in the middle of our neighborhood. But by the time we found out in the Tribune, it was too late. How do we organize against the richest corporation in America, and what does that do to our property values and quality of life? I think that people are so used to Latinos just kind of keeping their head down, like we don’t have time to do planning. That’s a skill that I didn’t learn in my life until adulthood.”

“With many low income Mexicans living in places with low rents, it is a big challenge for the family to buy a house. And what is happening is that they are buying houses in places where there were a lot of factories or there are still a lot of factories and there is still a lot of pollution in the land that they still can’t [eliminate] after so many years.”

Health

In the area of health, Mexicans along with other Hispanics and Latinos have long benefitted from what many public health experts describe as the Hispanic Paradox – where Hispanics in the U.S., despite having lower economic levels and less access to quality health care, paradoxically exhibit better health outcomes than non-Hispanic White or Black Americans in many areas, e.g., longer life expectancy, lower rates of heart disease, cancer and other chronic physical and mental illnesses. The causes of this paradox, or even the extent to which it exists, has been the subject of much debate among health professionals for decades.⁴⁷ Recently compiled data from the Centers for Disease Control have confirmed not only better outcomes among Hispanics and Latinos on many health indicators, but also significant differences between Hispanic and Latino ethnic groups. From 2019-2021, for example, Mexicans had far lower rates among all Hispanic and Latino groups for coronary heart disease, heart attacks, cancer, asthma, and “feelings of worry, anxiety or depression,” while Puerto Ricans and Cubans generally registered the highest rates. Mexicans, however, had the second-highest rates of adult obesity and diabetes among Latinos, after only Puerto Ricans.⁴⁸

No health data exists for detailed ethnic groups for Chicago, but as an alternative we analyzed a subset of selected health indicators for four community areas (Gage Park, East Side, West Lawn, South Lawndale) with the highest share of Mexican population. We then compared data for those four areas to the citywide mean for the Hispanic or Latino, White and Black population.

Mexicans had the highest uninsured rate in Chicago at 18.2% and represented 40.2% of the uninsured population, indicating a significant and disproportionate coverage gap in 2018-2022 (see Table 28).

Table 28: No Health Insurance for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Number Without Health Insurance	No Insurance Rate	Percent Share of the Uninsured Population
Mexican	94,541	18.2%	40.2%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	24,171	12.5%	10.3%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	36,207	4.6%	15.4%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	60,337	8.8%	25.7%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	19,656	8.3%	8.4%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

47 See Medrano, Lourdes. (2023). “The ‘Hispanic Paradox’: Does a decades-old finding still hold up?” American Heart Association News. May 11, 2023. <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2023/05/11/the-hispanic-paradox-does-a-decades-old-finding-still-hold-up>; also Fernández, Jose, García Pérez, Mónica, and Orozco Aleman, Sandra. (2023). “Unraveling the Hispanic Health Paradox.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 37 (1): 145. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.37.1.145>.

48 See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Interactive Summary Health Statistics for Adults, by Detailed Race and Ethnicity.” National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed August 25, 2024. https://wwwn.cdc.gov/NHISDataQueryTool/SHS_adult3yr/index.html.

- Mexicans had the highest number of individuals without health insurance in Chicago, totaling 94,541 and the highest uninsured rate at 18.2%, suggesting that nearly one in five Mexicans in Chicago lacks health insurance.
- Mexicans constitute the largest share of the uninsured population at 40.2% in 2018-2022.

Mexico-born Mexicans experienced a greater coverage gap in job-provided health insurance, where 61.8% lacked coverage compared to 52.8% for U.S.-born Mexicans in 2018-2022 (see Table 29).

Table 29: Number and Percent of Mexico Born and U.S. Born Mexicans Without Job Provided Health Insurance in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Mexican Nativity	Number Without Job Provided Health Insurance	No Job Provided Health Insurance
Mexico Born	119,608	61.8%
U.S. Born	168,385	52.8%

Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- A higher percentage of Mexico-born Mexicans (61.8%) lacked job-provided health insurance compared to U.S.-born Mexicans (52.8%) in 2018-2022.
- Despite a lower percentage, U.S.-born Mexicans had a larger absolute number without job-provided health insurance (168,385) compared to Mexico-born Mexicans (119,608).

The four communities with the largest Mexican populations in Chicago — Gage Park, East Side, West Lawn, and South Lawndale — showed higher obesity and diabetes rates compared to the city averages for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Hispanic or Latino populations, with East Side surpassing the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) citywide average for obesity (see Table 30).

- Obesity Rates in Gage Park (44.2%), East Side (52.6%), West Lawn (38.4%), and South Lawndale (41.9%) all exceed the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (24.5%), with East Side having the highest rate, surpassing even the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (47.6%) in 2022-2023.
- Diabetes Rates in Gage Park (18.9%), East Side (15.2%), West Lawn (22.2%), and South Lawndale (25.7%) were significantly higher than the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (6.9%) and the Hispanic or Latino Chicago mean (13.9%) in 2022-2023.
- Asthma Rates in East Side were 12.1%, higher than the White (9.1%) and Hispanic or Latino Chicago means (9.7%) but lower than the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (14.9%). Gage Park had a notably low asthma rate of 1.9%, the lowest among all racial/ethnic groups in Chicago in 2022-2023.

- East Side reported a higher asthma rate than the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Hispanic or Latino averages, while Gage Park has a notably lower asthma rate compared to all racial/ethnic groups in Chicago. Low birthweight rates in these communities are similar to the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Hispanic/Latino averages, indicating relatively favorable infant health outcomes but underscoring the need for continued health support and resources in Mexican communities. One likely factor contributing to the higher asthma rates in East Side is the significant number of trucks passing through the community. Diesel exhaust from these trucks is a hazardous pollution source containing over 40 known carcinogens, which can contribute to respiratory issues and lung cancer. Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, such as East Side, often bear a disproportionate burden of this pollution because industrial facilities, truck-intensive operations, rail yards, and highways are commonly situated in these areas. An environmental justice project by the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO), Fish Transportation Group, Inc., and the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) documented approximately 1,215 diesel-powered trucks and buses passing through an intersection in East Side over a 24-hour period on August 1, 2023, underscoring the heavy pollution load in the area.⁴⁹

Table 30: Health Outcomes for Four Communities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population and by Race/Ethnicity in Chicago, 2017-2021, and 2022-2023

Four Communities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population	Adult Obesity Rate(2022-2023)	Adult Diabetes Rate(2022-2023)	Adult Asthma Rate(2022-2023)	Low Birthweight Rate(2017-2021)
Gage Park	44.2%	18.9%	1.9%	7.1%
East Side	52.6%	15.2%	12.1%	6.9%
West Lawn	38.4%	22.2%	-	7.1%
South Lawndale	41.9%	25.7%	6.0%	8.0%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	24.5%	6.9%	9.1%	6.2%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	47.6%	19.6%	14.9%	14.6%
Hispanic or Latino Chicago Mean	39.9%	13.9%	9.7%	8.0%

Note: Obesity is defined as percent of adults who reported a height and weight that yield a body mass index of 30 or greater.

Diabetes is defined as percent of adults who reported that a doctor, nurse or other health professional has diagnosed them with diabetes.

Asthma is defined as percent of adults who reported that a doctor, nurse or other health professional has diagnosed them with asthma.

Low birthweight is defined as percent of births with a birthweight less than 2500 grams (5.5 pounds).

Data Source: Chicago Health Atlas, Chicago Department of Public Health (2022–2023) and Illinois Department of Public Health (2017-2021). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute

- Low Birthweight Rates in Gage Park (7.1%), East Side (6.9%), and West Lawn (7.1%) were similar to the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (6.2%) but lower than the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (14.6%) in 2017-2021. South Lawndale's rate of 8.0% aligned with the Hispanic or Latino Chicago mean.

⁴⁹ Data from the truck data portal, a project by Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Fish Transportation Group, Inc., and CNT, as part of the Delivering Zero Emissions Communities program funded by the Zero Now Fund.

Mexican-majority communities in Chicago faced notably higher rates of serious psychological distress, unmet mental health needs, and loneliness compared to other racial/ethnic groups in 2022-2023. These findings highlight significant mental health challenges and access issues in these areas (see Table 31).

- Of the four communities with the highest share of Mexican population, Gage Park (13.4%) and East Side (10.7%), experienced higher rates of serious psychological distress compared to the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (7.5%) and the Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (9.9%) in 2022-2023.
- Unmet mental health needs are notably high in these Mexican-majority communities, with South Lawndale at 78.3% and West Lawn at 78.9%, compared to the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (57.2%) and approaching or exceeding the Hispanic or Latino mean (80.0%) in 2022-2023.

Table 31: Mental Health Outcomes for Four Communities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population and by Race/Ethnicity in Chicago, 2022-2023

Four Communities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population	Adult Serious Psych Distress Rate(2022-2023)	Adult Unmet Mental Health Need Rate(2022-2023)	Adult Loneliness Rate(2022-2023)
Gage Park	13.4%	77.4%	33.4%
East Side	10.7%	77.1%	34.2%
West Lawn	7.3%	78.9%	15.6%
South Lawndale	11.9%	78.3%	41.5%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	7.5%	57.2%	26.5%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	9.9%	81.4%	30.2%
Hispanic or Latino Chicago Mean	14.9%	80.0%	29.9%

Note: Serious Psychological Distress is the percent of adults who experienced feelings of nervousness, hopelessness, and depression, in the past 30 days.

Unmet mental health need is the percent of adults with psychological distress who are not receiving treatment or medication.

Loneliness rate is defined as the percent of adults who reported feeling left out or felt alone.

Data Source: Chicago Health Atlas, Chicago Department of Public Health (2022–2023) and Illinois Department of Public Health (2017-2021). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- Loneliness rates are particularly high in South Lawndale (41.5%) and East Side (34.2%), higher than the Hispanic or Latino Chicago mean (29.9%), White Chicago (non-Hispanic or Latino) mean (26.5%) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (30.2%) in 2022-2023.

While Mexican-majority communities in Chicago experienced lower cancer and lung cancer rates in 2017-2021 compared to White and Black populations, they still have higher rates than the Hispanic or Latino average. Their hypertension rates are comparable to the Hispanic or Latino city mean in 2017-2021, highlighting specific health challenges and variations within these communities (see Table 32).

Table 32: Chronic Health Indicators for Four Communities with the Largest Share of Mexican Population and by Race/Ethnicity in Chicago, (2017-2021, and 2022-2023)

Top 4 Community Areas with the Largest Mexican Population Share	Adult Cancer Diagnosis Rate per 100,000 (2017-2021)	Adult Hypertension Rate (2022-2023)	Adult Lung Cancer Diagnosis Rate per 100,000 (2017-2021)
Gage Park	340.0	29.5%	26.3
East Side	461.8	37.2%	41.3
West Lawn	416.5	30.2%	44.7
South Lawndale	342.7	25.7%	31.4
White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	676.2	29.8%	83.4
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago Mean	529.9	43.9%	77.4
Hispanic or Latino Chicago Mean	253.3	25.7%	13.9

Note: Cancer diagnosis is defined as the annual diagnosis rate for all invasive cancers, excluding pre-cancerous conditions. All ages, risk-adjusted.
Hypertension is the percentage of adults diagnosed with high blood pressure, excluding borderline or pregnancy-related cases.
Lung cancer is defined as lung and bronchus cancer for ages 15 and over, risk-adjusted.
Data Source: Chicago Health Atlas, Chicago Department of Public Health (2022–2023) and Illinois Department of Public Health (2017-2021). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The Mexican-majority communities of East Side (461.8 per 100,000) and West Lawn (416.5 per 100,000) had lower cancer diagnosis rates compared to the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (676.2 per 100,000) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (529.9 per 100,000), but was higher than the Hispanic or Latino city mean (253.3 per 100,000) in 2017-2021.
- The hypertension rates in East Side (37.2%) and West Lawn (30.2%) were higher than the Hispanic or Latino city mean (25.7%) and the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (29.8%) but were lower than the mean Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) rate (43.9%) in 2022-2023. This indicates that hypertension prevalence in these communities is higher than city-wide averages for Hispanic/Latino and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) citywide trends.
- The lung cancer diagnosis rates in East Side (41.3 per 100,000) and West Lawn (44.7 per 100,000), were considerably lower than the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (83.4 per 100,000) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) Chicago mean (77.4 per 100,000), but were higher than the Hispanic or Latino Chicago mean (13.9 per 100,000) in 2017-2021. While these communities experience lower rates of lung cancer compared to White and Black populations, they still face higher rates compared to the Hispanic or Latino average.

Some Focus Group Comments on Health

“Coverage doesn’t equate to access. Even though you have coverage, you don’t necessarily have access, right? For different reasons: doctors who don’t speak your language or aren’t open at the times you need to see a doctor.”



Manufacturing plants behind the soccer field at Benito Juarez Community Academy in the Lower West Side. *Courtesy of Jack Rocha, GCI*

“My mom and dad, in Mexico they learned only to go to the doctor when they felt very sick, so it is important to learn that the medical care is different here, it is more preventive care and we need to understand why that is done.”

“When my grandmother goes to Mexico, we notice a big difference in her health, her mood, if she wants to walk or not. In her town they help the elderly a lot. With educational activities, they go to the beach, they sing.”

“For Mexicans and Hispanics, especially for Mexican men, there’s a stigma about mental health issues, so advocating for people to reach out and have access to mental health is important.”

“Especially the older generation doesn’t believe in talking to therapists. There is a big stigma about anxiety and depression. When I was interpreting for one of the victims at the Highland Park shooting, he was extremely hurt by his peers at work who didn’t understand the trauma he went through. He would relive the incidents and he would really have panic attacks, but his peers would make fun of him. He was completely destroyed by that, that these people he considered family would make fun of him, saw him as not man enough, or as weak.”



An Access Pilsen Family Health Center in Pilsen, located next to the Rudy Lozano Branch of the Chicago Public Library. *Courtesy of Olivia Abeyta, GCI*

Employment and Business

Mexicans in Chicago had an increase in labor force participation from 60.6% in 2000 to 69.6% during 2008-2012 before decreasing slightly to 67.2% in 2018-2022 (see Table 33 and Figure 5).

- Among Mexicans in the labor force in Chicago, the unemployment rate was 7.8%, higher than the White (non-Hispanic or Latino) (4.3%), and Other (non-Hispanic or Latino) (5.3%) labor force, slightly higher than the Other Hispanic or Latinos (7.2%) labor force, and about half the rate of the Black (Non-Hispanic or Latino) (15.0%) labor force.

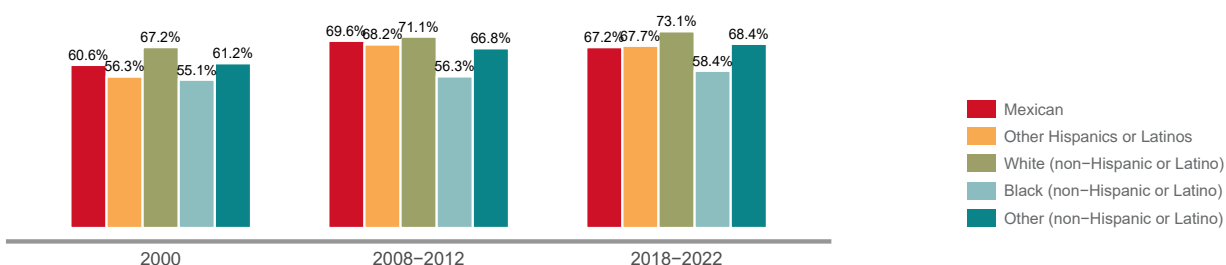
Table 33: Labor Force Status for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	In the Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Mexican	263,068	242,677	20,391	7.8%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	102,569	95,189	7,380	7.2%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	504,107	482,183	21,924	4.3%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	322,796	274,277	48,519	15.0%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	133,767	126,707	7,060	5.3%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- Other Hispanic or Latinos showed a similar trend to Mexicans but had a larger increase, going from 56.3% in 2000 to 68.2% in 2008-2012, and then stabilizing at 67.7% by 2018-2022.
- White (non-Hispanic or Latino) labor force participation decreased the least but was the highest from 2000 to 2018-2022, starting at 67.2% in 2000 and increasing to 73.1% by 2018-2022. Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) participation rates were consistently lower compared to other groups, going from 55.1% in 2000 and increasing slightly to 58.4% by 2018-2022.

Figure 5: Labor Force Participation Rate for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2000 (Decennial Census), 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2000 Decennial Census, 2018-2012, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Compared to other racial/ethnic groups, Mexicans made up the largest share of employment in the industries of Construction (41.8%) and Manufacturing (36.4%) in 2018-2022 (see Table 34).

- The industries where Mexicans have their highest numbers of employment were Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services; Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative, and Waste Management Services; Retail Trade, and Construction.
- Although Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry for Mexicans, there are significantly more White (non-Hispanic or Latino) (113,756) Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) (80,668) workers in that industry.
- In the Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing industry, which typically has the highest wages, there were significantly fewer Mexican than White (non-Hispanic or Latino) (54,983) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) (18,204) workers.
- Together, Mexicans and Other Hispanics or Latinos made up the largest percentage of industry employment in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, and Mining; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services; Construction; Manufacturing; Military; and Retail Trade.

The three sub-industries where Mexicans made up more than 50% of the workforce were Landscaping services (70.8%), Automotive repair and maintenance (61%), and Not specified manufacturing industries (52.3%) in 2018-2022. The sub-industry with the largest number of Mexican workers was Restaurants and other food services, which is also the largest sub-industry for Other Hispanics or Latinos, who together made up 48.1% of the total workforce in 2018-2022 (see Table 35).

- The sub-industry of Construction was the next highest for Mexican workers, and is the third highest for Other Hispanics or Latinos, who together made up 52.3% of the total workforce.
- The sub-industry with the third highest share of Mexican workers was Elementary and secondary schools, which was second highest for Other Hispanics or Latinos. Together they made up 23.3% of the total workforce. This is somewhat concerning given the percentage of Hispanic and Latino students within Chicago Public Schools is 46.9%.
- Mexicans and Other Hispanics or Latinos have seven of the same top 10 sub-industries, with Other Hispanics or Latinos not having Automotive repair and maintenance; Landscaping services; and Not specified manufacturing industries; and Mexicans not having Computer systems design and related services; Justice, public order, and safety activities; and Child day care services.

Table 34: Employment by Industry and Percent Share of Industry Employment for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022
(ACS 5-year Estimates)

Industry	Mexican			Other Hispanics or Latinos			White (non-Hispanic or Latino)			Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)			Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)		
	Number	% Share of Industry Employment		Number	% Share of Industry Employment		Number	% Share of Industry Employment		Number	% Share of Industry Employment		Number	% Share of Industry Employment	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, and Mining	790	32.2%		279	11.4%		825	33.7%		406	16.6%		151	6.2%	
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	34,953	30.6%		10,864	9.5%		36,015	31.5%		21,864	19.1%		10,630	9.3%	
Construction	19,912	41.8%		5,011	10.5%		16,452	34.5%		4,676	9.8%		1,614	3.4%	
Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	38,856	13.3%		21,313	7.3%		113,756	38.8%		80,668	27.5%		38,409	13.1%	
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing	12,055	11.7%		6,208	6.0%		54,983	53.5%		18,204	17.7%		11,227	10.9%	
Information	2,042	8.0%		910	3.5%		15,798	61.5%		3,905	15.2%		3,042	11.8%	
Manufacturing	35,039	36.4%		9,972	10.4%		27,629	28.7%		15,110	15.7%		8,461	8.8%	
Military	115	14.9%		173	22.4%		139	18.0%		234	30.3%		110	14.3%	
Other Services, Except Public Administration	13,696	23.0%		5,333	9.0%		21,290	35.8%		12,343	20.8%		6,815	11.5%	
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative, and Waste Management Services	29,970	13.8%		12,926	6.0%		115,576	53.3%		33,261	15.3%		25,098	11.6%	
Public Administration	6,369	13.4%		3,836	8.0%		16,659	34.9%		18,283	38.3%		2,535	5.3%	
Retail Trade	26,380	26.1%		10,036	9.9%		29,995	29.7%		25,341	25.1%		9,202	9.1%	
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	16,549	18.6%		6,486	7.3%		22,081	24.9%		36,420	41.0%		7,229	8.1%	
Wholesale Trade	5,951	24.3%		1,842	7.5%		10,985	44.8%		3,562	14.5%		2,184	8.9%	

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Table 35: Employment by Industry and Percent Share of Industry Employment for 10 Sub-industries Where Hispanics or Latinos Have the Highest Number of Employees for Mexicans and Other Hispanics or Latinos in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Group	Sub-industries	Number	% Share of Industry Employment
Mexican			
Accommodation and Food Services	Restaurants and other food services	27,844	38.1%
Construction	Construction	19,912	41.8%
Educational Services	Elementary and secondary schools	9,645	15.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	General medical and surgical hospitals, and specialty (except psychiatric and substance abuse) hospitals	7,891	13.1%
Administrative and support and waste management services	Services to buildings and dwellings (except cleaning during construction and immediately after construction)	6,590	43.1%
Retail Trade	Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	5,869	31.5%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	Automotive repair and maintenance	4,554	61.0%
Educational Services	Colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges	4,128	8.3%
Administrative and support and waste management services	Landscaping services	3,927	70.8%
Manufacturing	Not specified manufacturing industries	3,636	52.3%
Other Hispanics or Latinos			
Accommodation and Food Services	Restaurants and other food services	7,334	10.0%
Educational Services	Elementary and secondary schools	5,064	8.0%
Construction	Construction	5,011	10.5%
Educational Services	Colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges	3,513	7.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	General medical and surgical hospitals, and specialty (except psychiatric and substance abuse) hospitals	3,383	5.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Computer systems design and related services	2,374	7.0%
Administrative and support and waste management services	Services to buildings and dwellings (except cleaning during construction and immediately after construction)	2,289	15.0%
Retail Trade	Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	2,182	11.7%
Public Administration	Justice, public order, and safety activities	1,951	8.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	Child day care services	1,553	11.9%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Mexicans had the highest shares of employment in Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations and Production (46.8%), Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations (36.5%), and combined with other Latinos made up 57.7% and 46.3% respectively in 2018-2022 (see Table 36 and Figure 6).

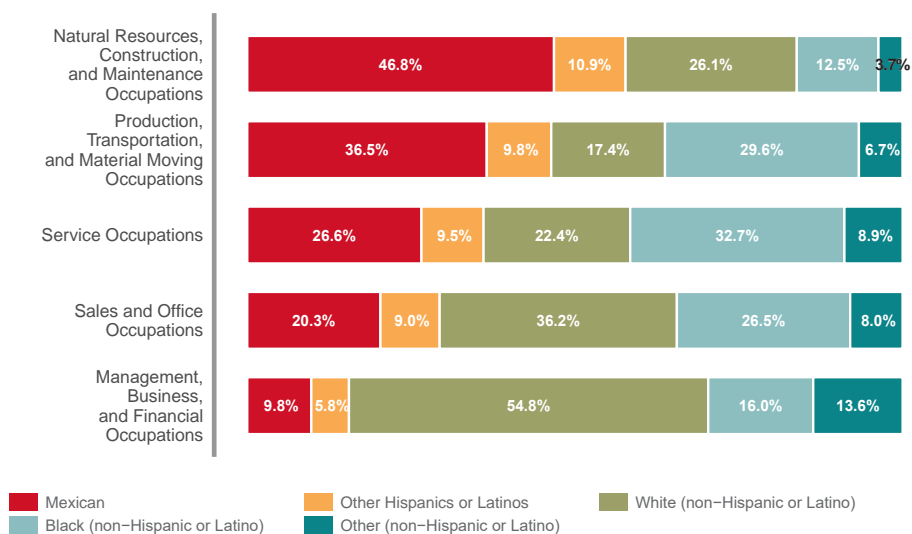
- Mexicans had the second largest share in Service occupations (26.6%), and combined with Other Hispanics or Latinos made up the largest share of the workforce at 36.1%.
- Mexicans were third for Sales and Office Occupations, after White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) workers, and fourth in Management, Business, and Financial Occupations, which are generally the highest paying occupations.

Table 36: Employment by Occupation and Percent Share of Occupation Employment for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Occupation	Mexican		Other Hispanics or Latinos		White (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)		Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	
	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment
Management, Business, and Financial Occupations	55,088	9.8%	32,402	5.8%	309,194	54.8%	90,361	16.0%	76,902	13.6%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	27,822	46.8%	6,491	10.9%	15,534	26.1%	7,415	12.5%	2,179	3.7%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	55,691	36.5%	14,999	9.8%	26,457	17.4%	45,088	29.6%	10,129	6.7%
Sales and Office Occupations	46,080	20.3%	20,492	9.0%	82,098	36.2%	59,969	26.5%	18,128	8.0%
Service Occupations	57,966	26.6%	20,685	9.5%	48,802	22.4%	71,291	32.7%	19,365	8.9%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Figure 6: Percent Share of Occupation Employment for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018–2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

The largest sub-occupation was the same for both Mexicans and Other Hispanics Latinos, who together made up 51% of the share of the workforce in Janitors and building cleaners in 2018–2022 (see Table 37).

- The top five sub-occupations for Mexican workers were within Service Occupations, Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, Service Occupations, Sales and Related Occupations, and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, which tend to be the occupations with the lowest wages.
- The sub-occupations with the largest percentages of Mexican workers were Construction laborers (53.2%); Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders (46.8%); Cooks (44.3%); and Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand (41.6%).
- Mexicans and Other Hispanic or Latinos predominated in 8 of the same 10 sub-occupation categories, and most notably made up 68.9% of Construction laborers; 55.2% of Cooks; 51.8% of Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand; and 51% of Janitors and building cleaners.
- The two sub-occupations that were not in the top 10 for Mexicans but that were in for Other Latinos were Other managers, and First-line supervisors of retail sales workers. The two that were not in the top 10 for Other Latinos were Waiters and waitresses, and Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders.

Table 37: Employment by Sub-occupation and Percent Share of Occupation Employment for 10 Sub-occupations Where Hispanics or Latinos Have the Highest Number of Employees for Mexicans and Other Hispanics or Latinos in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Occupation Group	Sub-occupation	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment
Mexican			
Service Occupations	Janitors and building cleaners	8,854	38.6%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	8,688	41.6%
Service Occupations	Cooks	7,652	44.3%
Sales and Related Occupations	Cashiers	7,608	33.3%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	7,309	29.7%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	Customer service representatives	5,960	21.3%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	Construction laborers	5,664	53.2%
Sales and Related Occupations	Retail salespersons	4,749	24.7%
Service Occupations	Waiters and waitresses	4,705	36.2%
Production Occupations	Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders	4,375	46.8%
Other Hispanics or Latinos			
Service Occupations	Janitors and building cleaners	2,842	12.4%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	Customer service representatives	2,546	9.1%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	2,132	10.2%
Sales and Related Occupations	Retail salespersons	2,065	10.7%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	2,042	8.3%
Management, Business, and Financial Occupations	Other managers	1,911	5.5%
Sales and Related Occupations	First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	1,896	12.4%
Service Occupations	Cooks	1,882	10.9%
Sales and Related Occupations	Cashiers	1,799	7.9%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	Construction laborers	1,670	15.7%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

The top three sub-occupations in which Mexican males were the largest share of total sub-occupation employment were in Landscaping and groundskeeping workers (71.8%), Painters and paperhangers (59.8%), and Automotive service technicians and mechanics (56.6%) (see Table 38).

- For sub-occupations containing the largest numbers of Mexican males, the top three were Driver/sales workers and truck drivers (7,053), Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand (6,853), and Cooks (5,714).

The top three sub-occupations in which Mexican females were the largest share of total sub-occupation employment were as maids and housekeeping cleaners (25.4%), Cashiers (25.3%), and Waitresses (22.3%) (see Table 38).

- For sub-occupations containing the largest numbers of Mexican females, the top three were Cashiers (5,771), Janitors and building cleaners (3,728), and Customer service representatives (3,588).

Table 38: Employment by Industry and Percent Share of Occupation Employment for 10 Sub-occupations Where Mexican Males and Females Have the Highest Number of Employees in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Occupation Group	Sub-occupation	Number	% Share of Occupation Employment
Mexican Males			
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	7,053	28.7%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	6,853	32.8%
Service Occupations	Cooks	5,714	33.1%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	Construction laborers	5,454	51.2%
Service Occupations	Janitors and building cleaners	5,126	22.4%
Service Occupations	Landscaping and groundskeeping workers	3,666	71.8%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	Automotive service technicians and mechanics	3,296	56.6%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	Carpenters	3,254	49.1%
Production Occupations	Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders	2,773	29.7%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	Painters and paperhangers	2,455	59.8%
Mexican Females			
Sales and Related Occupations	Cashiers	5,771	25.3%
Service Occupations	Janitors and building cleaners	3,728	16.3%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	Customer service representatives	3,588	12.8%
Service Occupations	Waiters and waitresses	2,894	22.3%
Sales and Related Occupations	Retail salespersons	2,858	14.8%
Service Occupations	Maids and housekeeping cleaners	2,509	25.4%
Service Occupations	Childcare workers	2,389	21.4%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive	2,028	16.7%
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media Occupations	Elementary and middle school teachers	1,954	9.3%
Service Occupations	Cooks	1,938	11.2%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Nationwide, Mexican workers are less likely than Other Hispanics or Latinos, and White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) workers to be a member of a labor union, at 7.8% compared to 9.1%, 9.5%, and 9.3% respectively; but are slightly more likely than Other (non-Hispanics or Latinos) who are at 7.2% (see Table 39).

- Mexicans are also less likely than every other group to be covered by a union but not be a member.

Table 39: Union Membership and Coverage for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in the U.S., 2022

Race/Ethnicity	Total Employed	Member of Labor Union		Covered by Union but Not a Member	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mexican	18,101,402	1,405,940	7.8%	66,294	0.4%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	11,031,515	1,001,838	9.1%	118,350	1.1%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	96,265,453	9,171,730	9.5%	1,049,954	1.1%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	18,553,017	1,727,357	9.3%	242,419	1.3%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	14,154,300	1,024,372	7.2%	207,312	1.5%

Data Source: IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org. (2022 Current Population Survey).
Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

Predominantly Mexican communities on the Southwest and Southeast Sides are surrounded by the city's largest industrial corridors, which leads to some of the worst air pollution in Illinois (see Map 10).

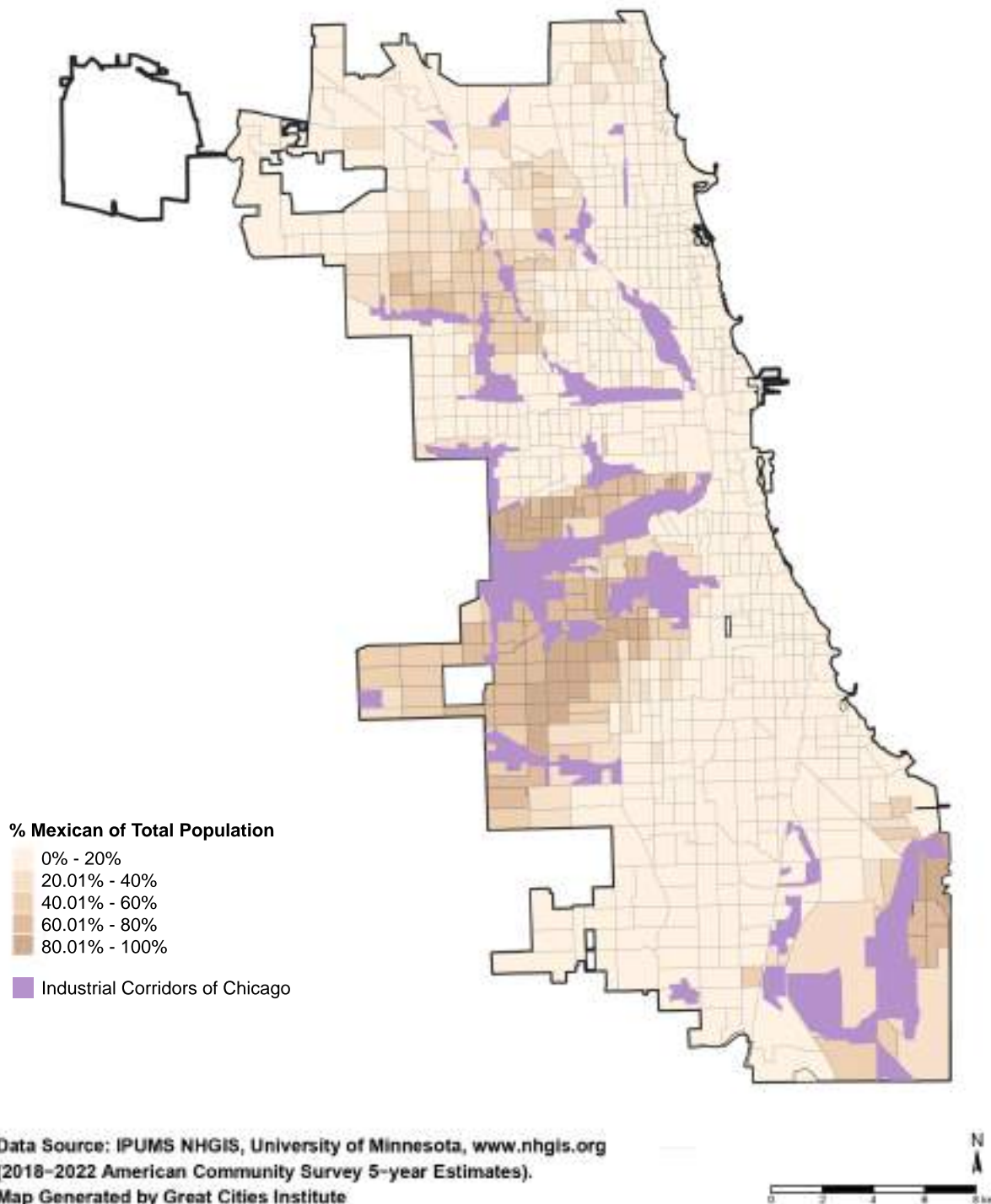
- Historically industrial neighborhoods that were once working-class White ethnic enclaves experienced a "second white-flight" during the 1980's and 1990's as Mexicans and other Latinos moved in.
- Of the 24 industrial corridors, the 6 largest are on the Southwest and Southeast Sides, and contain the majority of the city's heavy industry such as manufacturing; asphalt plants; transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL) facilities like rail yards and warehouses; rock and metal crushing; among many others.⁵⁰
- Chicago's Industrial Corridors are indeed major job centers that provide tens of thousands of jobs to people from throughout the metropolitan area, however, there is still a question of just how much these jobs are benefiting local communities. In 2019, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) produced a Draft Framework Plan for the Little Village Industrial Corridor, the third largest in the city, and found that approximately 13% of all jobs in the corridor were held by residents from surrounding zip codes.⁵¹
- These industrial corridors have a tremendous impact on the everyday lives of these communities, including but not limited to, air and noise pollution, medium and heavy-duty truck traffic, limiting the potential for bicycle network connectivity, reduced home values, among many other negative externalities.⁵²

⁵⁰ City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, "Chicago and its Industrial Corridor System"

⁵¹ City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, "Little Village Draft Framework Plan"

⁵² Chicago Environmental Justice Network

Map 10: The Proximity of Industrial Corridors to Mexican Neighborhoods in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)



Mexicans were by far the population that uses Auto, truck, or van to get to work (68.9%), especially compared to Non-Hispanics or Latinos (48.1%) in 2018-2022 (see Table 40).

- Mexicans were less likely to use public transit to get to work than Other Hispanics or Latinos and Non-Hispanics or Latinos.
- To travel to work 9% of Mexicans used the Bus, compared to 9.2% of Other Hispanics or Latinos, and 10.3% of Non-Hispanics or Latinos; 0.6% used the Long-distance train or commuter train compared to 0.9% and 1.4%; and 5.9% used the Subway or elevated compared to 6.7% and 10.2%.

Table 40: Primary Means of Transportation to Work for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Means of Transportation	Mexican		Other Hispanics or Latinos		Non-Hispanic or Latino	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Auto, truck, or van	167,218	68.9%	57,961	60.9%	424,893	48.1%
Bicycle	1,954	0.8%	696	0.7%	12,418	1.4%
Bus	21,894	9.0%	8,714	9.2%	90,905	10.3%
Light rail, streetcar, or trolley (Carro público in PR)	252	0.1%	192	0.2%	1,353	0.1%
Long-distance train or commuter train	1,475	0.6%	896	0.9%	12,148	1.4%
Motorcycle	58	0.0%	96	0.1%	362	0.0%
Other	2,820	1.2%	1,323	1.4%	10,580	1.2%
Subway or elevated	14,417	5.9%	6,344	6.7%	90,438	10.2%
Taxicab	1,477	0.6%	645	0.7%	6,624	0.8%
Walked only	8,195	3.4%	4,101	4.3%	51,523	5.8%
Worked at home	16,508	6.8%	11,990	12.6%	163,431	18.5%
Ferryboat	-	-	-	-	74	0.0%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The two most environmentally friendly methods, Biking and Walking, were also much lower for Mexicans. 0.8% of Mexicans used a Bicycle to get to work, compared to 0.7% of Other Latinos, and 1.4% of Non-Hispanics or Latinos; and 3.4% of Mexicans walked to work, compared to 4.3% of Other Latinos, and 5.8% of Non-Hispanics or Latinos.
- Only 6.8% of Mexicans worked from home, compared to 12.6% of Other Latinos, and 18.5% of Non-Hispanics or Latinos.

Table 41: Illinois and Chicago Metro Area Latino GDP, 2018

	Latino GDP (billions of dollars)
Illinois Latino GDP (5th highest state)	100.1
Chicago Metro Area (IL, IN, WI) Latino GDP (5th highest metro area)	97.5

Data Source: 2023 U.S. Latino GDP Report, www.LatinoGDP.us (CLU-CERF, Bank of America State and Metro Latino GDP Reports).

Table 42: 2021 Latino GDP with 10 Largest Countries

Country	GDP (billions of dollars)
United States	23,315.1
China	17,759.3
Japan	5,005.5
Germany	4,262.8
U.S. Latinos	3,159.7
India	3,150.3
United Kingdom	3,123.2
France	2,957.4
Italy	2,115.8
Canada	2,001.5
Russia	1,836.6

Data Source: 2023 U.S. Latino GDP Report, www.LatinoGDP.us (International Monetary Fund and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).

Table 43: Median Household Net Worth by Detailed Hispanic Origin, 2020

Hispanic Origin Group	Median Household Net Worth	Standard Error
Mexican	\$52,440	\$3,640
<i>Native-born Mexican</i>	\$52,650	\$3,088
<i>Foreign-born Mexican</i>	\$47,530	\$5,403
Puerto Rican	\$35,770	\$20,280
Cuban	\$92,700	\$31,780
Salvadoran	\$30,600	\$7,468
Dominican	\$9,430	\$7,428
Colombian	\$141,200	\$72,690
Other Hispanic	\$58,490	\$14,130
Not Hispanic	\$195,600	\$5,202
Hispanic	\$52,190	\$3,260

Note: Use caution with estimates having coefficients of variation (defined as the standard error divided by the estimate) larger than 0.3 as they may suffer from data quality issues. Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 Survey of Income and Program Participation, public-use data. Reproduced from a table by: Zachary Scherer and Yeris H. Mayol-García, statisticians in the Census Bureau's Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division.

The size of the economy of Hispanics and Latinos in the United States is very significant, especially in Illinois. The GDP of Hispanics and Latinos in Illinois was 100.1 billion dollars in 2018, which was the fifth highest for any state in the country (see Tables 41 and 42).

- Latinos in the Chicago Metro Area accounted for the majority of this with 97.5 billions of dollars in 2018, which was the fifth highest of any metro area in the country.
- U.S. Latinos alone had the fifth largest economy in the world in 2021, ahead of traditionally large economies such as India, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

Median household net worth for Mexican householders was \$52,400 in 2020, \$143,160 lower than for non-Hispanic householders (see Table 43).

- U.S.-born Mexicans had a slightly higher median household net worth compared to foreign-born Mexicans, \$52,650 to \$47,530 respectively.
- Colombian householders had a median household net worth of 141,200, the highest among Hispanic or Latino origins, followed by Cubans at \$92,700.

Comparing the share of the population with the share of businesses owned with employees, Hispanics were 22.9% of the population yet owned just 8.2% of businesses (see Table 44 and Figure 7).

Table 44: Share of Business Ownership (2021) and Population by Race/Ethnicity (2018-2022 ACS 5-year Estimates) in Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL–IN–WI Metro Area

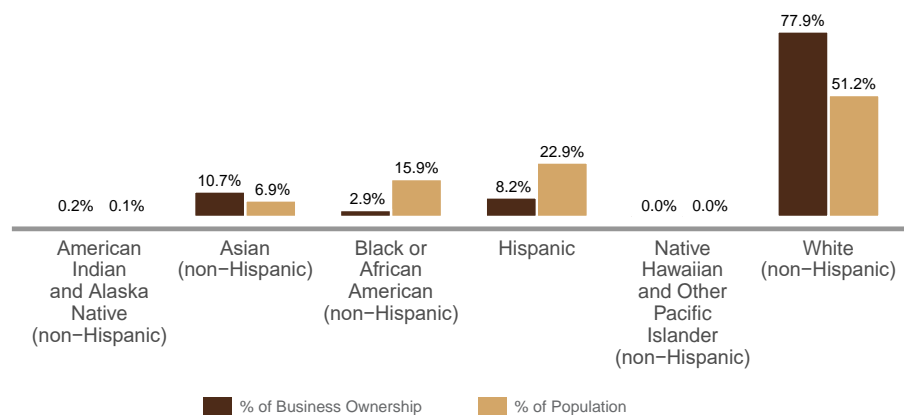
Ownership	Without Employees	With Employees	Total Businesses
Hispanic	124,000	15,499	139,499
Not Hispanic	708,000	173,587	881,587
Owned equally by both groups	1,200	1,216	2,416
American Indian and Alaska Native (non-Hispanic)	3,000	441	3,441
Asian (non-Hispanic)	80,000	20,290	100,290
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)	146,000	5,541	151,541
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic)	700	71	771
White (non-Hispanic)	488,000	147,353	635,353

Note: Counts include only businesses classifiable by owner demographic group

Data Sources: Annual Business Survey, 2021(Census); Nonemployer Statistics by Demographics, 2021 (Census)

- For businesses with employees, Hispanics owned 8.2% of businesses in the Chicago Metro Area, compared to 77.9% for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) and 2.9% for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino), and 10.7% of Asians (non-Hispanic or Latino).
- For context, Latinos made up 22.9% of the metro area in 2018-2022, compared to 51.2% for Whites (non-Hispanic or Latino), 15.9% Black (non-Hispanic or Latino), and 6.9% Asian (non-Hispanic or Latino), meaning Hispanics and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) both owned fewer businesses than they should based on their share of the total population, while Asians (non-Hispanic or Latino) and especially Whites (non-Hispanic or Latino) own far more than their share of the total population.

Figure 7: Share of Business Ownership (2021) and Population by Race/Ethnicity (2018–2022 ACS 5–year Estimates) in Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL–IN–WI Metro Area



Data Sources: Annual Business Survey, 2021 (Census); Nonemployer Statistics by Demographics, 2021(Census). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

From the top 50 highest revenue companies in Chicago, in 2022, just 2.5% of C-Suite Executives were Hispanic compared to 79.5% for Caucasians, 8.3% for African Americans, and 9.7% for Asians (see Table 45).

- There was just a 1.5 percentage point increase in the share of Hispanics in C-Suite Executive positions between 2012 and 2022, going from 1.0% to 2.5%.
- During the same period, there was a 6.4 percentage point increase in the share of African Americans in C-Suite Executive positions between 2012 and 2022, going from 1.9% to 8.3%.

Table 45: Race/Ethnicity Status of C-Suite Executives for Top 50 Companies in Chicago, 2012-2022

Race/Ethnicity	2012		2014		2016		2018		2020		2022		2012-2022 Percentage Point Dif- ference
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Caucasian	166	80.2%	163	81.5%	174	85.3%	184	85.2%	210	82.7%	221	79.5%	-0.7%
African-American	4	1.9%	8	4.0%	7	3.4%	11	5.1%	16	6.3%	23	8.3%	6.3%
Hispanic	2	1.0%	3	1.5%	4	2.0%	6	2.8%	12	4.7%	7	2.5%	1.6%
Asian	8	3.9%	6	3.0%	6	2.9%	5	2.3%	15	5.9%	27	9.7%	5.8%
Unable to Verify Ethnicity	27	13.0%	20	10.0%	13	6.4%	10	4.6%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	-13.0%
Total	207	100.0%	200	100.0%	204	100.0%	216	100.0%	254	100.0%	278	100.0%	0.0%

Data Source: Chicago United Inside Inclusion. Data compiled by Great Cities Institute.

From the top 50 highest revenue companies in Chicago, in 2022, just 4.1% of members of Boards of Directors were Hispanic compared to 76.7% for Caucasians, 13.7% for African Americans, and 4.7% for Asians (see Table 46).

- There was just a 1.1 percentage point increase in the share of Hispanics as members of Boards of Directors between 2012 and 2022, going from 3.0% to 4.1%.
- During the same period, there was a 7.3 percentage point increase in the share of African Americans in C-Suite Executive positions between 2012 and 2022, going from 6.4% to 13.7%.

Table 46: Race/Ethnicity of Boards of Directors for Top 50 Companies in Chicago, 2012-2022

Race/Ethnicity	2012		2014		2016		2018		2020		2022		2012-2022 Percentage Point Dif- ference
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Caucasian	540	84.2%	466	84.6%	463	83.1%	461	83.1%	461	83.4%	375	76.7%	-7.6%
African-American	41	6.4%	34	6.2%	44	7.9%	42	7.6%	50	9.0%	67	13.7%	7.3%
Hispanic	19	3.0%	19	3.4%	19	3.4%	22	4.0%	23	4.2%	20	4.1%	1.1%
Asian	15	2.3%	16	2.9%	14	2.5%	14	2.5%	16	2.9%	23	4.7%	2.4%
Unable to Verify Ethnicity	26	4.1%	16	2.9%	17	3.1%	16	2.9%	3	0.5%	4	0.8%	-3.2%
Total	641	100.0%	551	100.0%	557	100.0%	555	100.0%	553	100.0%	489	100.0%	0.0%

Data Source: Chicago United Inside Inclusion. Data compiled by Great Cities Institute.

Some Focus Group Comments on Employment and Business

"In the construction industry you see a lot of Mexicanos working but you don't see them as supervisors; there's a threshold that they can't make it higher."

"I like seeing through one of our workforce programs that Latinos are being more demanding about wages. They're not willing to work for just \$14- or \$15-hour jobs. They also are more demanding about work schedules that are conducive towards their family life, more cognizant of what they're willing and not willing to do."

"The agencies or organizations that receive funding to help small business owners don't do a great job reaching out to the Mexican business owners, which is really sad, because in some suburbs like here in Waukegan and Lake County, they thrive from those businesses. Some of these towns wouldn't even exist if it wasn't for the [Mexican] businesses."

"There needs to be more funding for technical financial training for Mexican businesses to secure MBE [minority business enterprise] status. Unless you have an accountant, a good banker and an attorney, it makes it difficult to enter into those kinds of programs."

"The lens of my superpower is understanding what we [Mexicans] can do to get access to capital for small and middle market companies, because it's that capital that's going to create jobs, sustainability, and growth for Mexican-owned businesses," said a lending officer at a major Chicago bank.



A restaurant worker in Pilsen in 1999. ST-30003348-0003, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum.



The exterior of El Milagro Tortillería in Little Village, a business which reports annual revenues of more than \$500 million. Courtesy of Elena Oliveira, GCI



The window of Pilsen business Panadería Nuevo León. Courtesy of Olivia Abeyta, GCI

Citizenship and Civic Participation

The number of Mexicans who were non-citizens dropped significantly from 2000 to 2018-2022, but they still made up a higher percentage of Chicago's non-citizen population when compared to other groups in 2018-2022 (see Table 47).

Table 47: U.S. Citizenship for Mexicans and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in Chicago, 2000 (Decennial Census), 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

Race/Ethnicity	Citizen Rate			
	2000	2008-2012	2018-2022	Change from 2000 to 2018-2022
Mexican	60.7%	67.4%	77.5%	16.8%
Other Hispanics or Latinos	81.7%	84.1%	85.5%	3.8%
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	90.1%	93.2%	95.1%	5.0%
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	98.9%	98.3%	98.2%	-0.7%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	67.1%	72.2%	76.2%	9.1%

Data Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org (2000 Decennial Census, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

- The non-citizen rate for Mexicans has dropped from 39.3% in 2000 to 22.5% in 2018-2022, reflecting a decrease of 16.8 percentage points over the period, the largest among other racial/ethnic groups.
- Despite this decrease, Mexicans still had a higher non-citizen rate than other racial/ethnic groups. In comparison, the non-citizen rate for other Hispanics or Latinos was 14.5%, for White (non-Hispanic or Latino) was 4.9%, and for Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) was 1.8% during the same period.

While the number of Mexican and other Hispanics or Latinos elected to the Illinois legislature has improved in recent years, the total remains significantly below the Hispanic or Latino percentage of the state population.

Table 48: Mexican and Hispanic/Latino Representation in the Illinois Legislature, 2024

Body	Members	Mexicans	Other Hispanic or Latino	Percent Hispanic or Latino
Senate	59	4	2	10.2%
House	118	8	4	10.2%

Data Source: Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation. Tabulation by Great Cities Institute

- In 2024, there were 18 Hispanic or Latino members in the Illinois legislature, making up just over 10% of the combined membership of the House and Senate.
- Of those 18 Hispanics or Latinos, 12 were of Mexican heritage and 6 were of other Hispanic or Latino heritage.
- The total number is substantially below the 17.8% of the Illinois population that is Hispanic or Latino, and even lower than the 13% that Hispanics or Latinos make up of the state's total voting eligible population.⁵³

Only 52.4% of Hispanic U.S. citizens eligible to vote in Illinois were registered and only 46.8% voted in the 2020 presidential election, among the lowest rates for any state in the country with more than 300,000 eligible Hispanics. Increasing these rates is essential for ensuring that the voices of Illinois' large Hispanic community are heard and represented in future elections (see Table 49).

Table 49: Population, Percent Registered to Vote, and Percent Voted for Hispanics by State for the 2020 Presidential Election

State	Citizens Aged 18 and Older				
	Number	% Registered to Vote	% Voted	Rank for % Registered	Rank for % Voted
New Jersey	996,000	82.0	72.1	1	1
Connecticut	347,000	67.8	56.4	2	3
Arizona	1,340,000	66.8	60.8	3	2
Virginia	425,000	63.8	51.3	4	12
Texas	5,599,000	63.2	53.1	5	10
New York	1,608,000	61.6	54.9	6	4
Pennsylvania	497,000	61.4	54.3	7	7
Washington	485,000	61.0	53.7	8	9
Colorado	618,000	60.5	51.1	9	13
California	8,305,000	60.4	54.6	10	6
Massachusetts	449,000	60.4	50.7	10	14
New Mexico	539,000	59.9	53.8	12	8
Michigan	302,000	58.9	54.7	13	5
Florida	3,394,000	58.7	52.7	14	11
North Carolina	492,000	54.3	48.8	15	15
Illinois	1,016,000	52.4	46.8	16	16
Nevada	515,000	52.0	46.4	17	17
Georgia	403,000	47.6	44.2	18	18

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, 'Voting and Registration in Election of November 2020,' Table 4a 'Voting and Registration By States,' GCI tabulation of states with more than 300,000 Latino citizens over age 18.

- In Illinois, only 52.4% of Hispanics were registered to vote and 46.8% participated in the 2020 presidential election. This contrasts sharply with the top performing state, New Jersey, where 82.0% of Hispanics were registered, and 72.1% voted.

⁵³ See "Key facts about Hispanic eligible voters in 2024," Pew Research Center, January 10, 2024, at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/10/key-facts-about-hispanic-eligible-voters-in-2024/>

- Illinois ranked 16th for Hispanic voter registration out of 18 states with the largest Hispanic voter eligible population that we analyzed, and 16th among them for voter participation. The disparity underscores a vast difference in voter engagement among states.
- Illinois had a relatively large Hispanic population of 1,016,000 citizens aged 18 and older, which was the fifth highest among the states listed. Despite this, the registration and voting rates were low.

The same lack of voter engagement was evident in the 2023 Chicago mayoral race, where a significant portion of both Hispanic or Latino and Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) voters showed notably low turnout (see Table 50).

Table 50: Estimates of Voter Turnout and Percent of Adult Population that Voted in 2023 Chicago Mayoral Runoff

	Hispanic or Latino	Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	Total
Percent registered voter turnout	20.5%	29.0%	61.1%	38.7%
Percent of population aged 18 and over that voted	11.3%	24.5%	52.7%	28.0%

Data Source: Chicago's 2023 Mayoral Race: A Progressive Victory Amidst Shocking Low Turnout by Black and Latino Voters (Calculations from Chicago Board of Election Commissioners 2023 Municipal Runoff Election Results and 2020 U.S. Census.)

- Of those registered to vote, 20.5% of Hispanic or Latino adults, 29.0% of Black (non-Hispanic or Latino) adults, and 61.1% of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) adults voted.
- Only 11.3% of Hispanic or Latino and 24.5% of Black adults voted, compared to 52.7% of White adults, indicating a stark gulf in civic participation.

Some Focus Group Comments on Civic Participation

"In Mexico, we do not have a history of good relationships with politicians because they always promise things and do not deliver. So, many people do not believe that voting solves things. But what works, I think, is seeing the facts, knowing the work that is being done, and knowing that the candidate knows their community."

"My mom didn't talk to me about elections. That type of civic engagement education was not passed down to me. I came to it on my own. And even then, my family and friends would say, that's not for me. They just want to be focused on their families."



Illinois Representative Jesús "Chuy" Garcia, the first Mexican-American elected to the U.S. Congress from Illinois, speaks at a Chicago anti-deportation rally in 2016. Courtesy of Charles Miller. All rights reserved.

“In McHenry County, things got so bad that we had to bring in the Department of Justice... so they came out to help us create different things within the government to bring more cultural understanding. And to this day we still have cultural diversity commissions in two of our cities, and Woodstock is one of them. We even became a sister city with Zacatecas.”



Senator Tammy Duckworth, other veterans, and families honor the 12 parishioners of South Chicago's Our Lady of Guadalupe Mexican Catholic Church (El Doce) who died while serving in the Vietnam War. November 11, 2023. *Courtesy of Jack Rocha, GCI*

“Government for the city of North Chicago, for example, is majority Black. The city doesn't recognize the increased growth of the Mexicans, who are its biggest group. There's a lot of mistrust between [older residents] and the new arrivals. It's bad, to be honest with you. There is a lot of work to do, even within our Mexican culture. We're very racist, right? It's just going to take a lot of work, not only to look internally, but to look externally.”

“What we're trying to do is work with other Black organizations to let our communities know that our issues are the same, that the systems have pitted us against each other and [promoted] this mindset of lack of resources. Even among Mexicans, with the new arrivals from Venezuela, there's a lot of a lot of anger, because some, including my mother, have been undocumented for 30 years in this country, and they still have no work permits, still have no way to citizenship, and yet, we have the new arrivals coming here and they're getting those permits within months.”

“To me it is unfathomable that in Cicero or in Berwyn, where the towns are highly Mexican, there isn't a Mexican mayor. In both of them, there is a serious problem.”⁵⁴

“I want to mention the sacrifices it took for the Mexican community to get Little Village Lawndale High School built. There was a hunger strike and protest. If we go back to Benito Juarez being built in Pilsen, the Mexican-American community had to work to be heard by the board of education. When the district was closing down Dyett High School in Englewood, it was the Mexican-Americans from Little Village who talked to the Dyett parents and said, this is how we did it, this is how you should do it too to make sure your school doesn't close, and they actually were successful.”

⁵⁴ According to the 2018-2022 ACS 5-year estimates, the Mexican population of Berwyn was 27,521 or 48.7% of Berwyn's total population, and the Mexican population of Cicero was 66,382 or 78.9% of Cicero's total population.

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Data Sources and Methodology

Microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS), Decennial Censuses, and Current Population Survey were used to create tabulations for Mexican individuals and Mexican householders. Microdata from these sources was compiled from IPUMS.org and tabulated based on race and detailed ethnicity codes.

Chicago data from IPUMS was aggregated by matching Public Use Microdata Areas to Chicago's boundary rather than relying on the IPUMS city variable because the city variable after PUMAs were redrawn in 2022 includes two PUMAs that are mostly outside of Chicago's boundary. For more information, see https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/CITYERR#description_section.

5-year ACS data was used for the periods of 2008-2012 and 2018-2022 rather than 1-year ACS to increase the sample size and reliability of estimates. This was especially important for the data by Hispanic or Latino origin where sample sizes were small for some indicators published in this report.

The Census Bureau advises 5-year ACS data users to include the entire 5-year ranges when reporting and writing about numbers since the data was collected over a 5-year period and does not represent a single year within the 5-year span.

Data availability was a challenge for this report because many data sources aggregate data for Hispanics, or Hispanics or Latinos but do not disaggregate by country of origin. In some instances, such as business ownership, data is presented for Hispanics which is the category the Annual Business Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau uses. In instances where data was available at smaller geographies such as census tracts and was not available for Mexicans, we compare numbers for predominantly Mexican community areas to other community areas. This strategy was used for health and housing cost data.

For additional details on GDP calculations, see 2023 U.S. Latino GDP Report, www.LatinoGDP.us.

For information about how Hispanic or Latino populations were identified in the 1850 U.S. Census, see https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/HISPRULE#description_section.

We refer to racial and ethnic groups in the text according to how they were referred to from the data source. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey has tabulations for the "Hispanic" population opposed to the American Community Survey's tabulations for the "Hispanic or Latino" population.

Appendix 1:

Detailed Tables for Mexicans in Cook County and Collar Counties

Table 51: Mexican Population in Chicago, Cook County, and Collar Counties, 1990, 2000, 2010 (Decennial Censuses), and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates)

	2000		2010		2018-2022		Change from 2000 to 2018-2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent Change
Cook County								
Mexican	786,423	14.6%	961,963	18.5%	1,034,038	19.8%	247,615	31.5%
Puerto Rican	130,414	2.4%	133,882	2.6%	139,918	2.7%	9,504	7.3%
Cuban	12,752	0.2%	13,679	0.3%	16,571	0.3%	3,819	29.9%
Guatemalan	16,795	0.3%	24,931	0.5%	28,091	0.5%	11,296	67.3%
Colombian	8,380	0.2%	12,114	0.2%	18,355	0.3%	9,975	119.0%
Ecuadorian	10,791	0.2%	19,450	0.4%	26,550	0.5%	15,759	146.0%
Total Hispanic or Latino	1,071,740	19.9%	1,244,762	24.0%	1,352,482	25.9%	280,742	26.2%
Total Population	5,376,741	100.0%	5,194,675	100.0%	5,225,367	100.0%	-151,374	-2.8%
DuPage County								
Mexican	63,135	7.0%	96,039	10.5%	103,194	11.1%	40,059	63.4%
Puerto Rican	4,752	0.5%	7,736	0.8%	10,639	1.1%	5,887	123.9%
Cuban	1,834	0.2%	2,345	0.3%	3,174	0.3%	1,340	73.1%
Guatemalan	1,149	0.1%	3,322	0.4%	5,288	0.6%	4,139	360.2%
Colombian	934	0.1%	1,629	0.2%	2,646	0.3%	1,712	183.3%
Ecuadorian	445	0.0%	993	0.1%	1,201	0.1%	756	169.9%
Total Hispanic or Latino	81,366	9.0%	121,506	13.2%	137,806	14.8%	56,440	69.4%
Total Population	904,161	100.0%	916,924	100.0%	930,559	100.0%	26,398	2.9%
Kane County								
Mexican	80,870	20.0%	139,009	27.0%	140,614	27.2%	59,744	73.9%
Puerto Rican	5,630	1.4%	8,540	1.7%	11,262	2.2%	5,632	100.0%
Cuban	435	0.1%	843	0.2%	1,130	0.2%	695	159.8%
Guatemalan	351	0.1%	1,094	0.2%	1,640	0.3%	1,289	367.2%
Colombian	267	0.1%	692	0.1%	1,364	0.3%	1,097	410.9%
Ecuadorian	71	0.0%	397	0.1%	653	0.1%	582	819.7%
Total Hispanic or Latino	95,924	23.7%	158,390	30.7%	168,609	32.6%	72,685	75.8%
Total Population	404,119	100.0%	515,269	100.0%	517,254	100.0%	113,135	28.0%
Lake County								
Mexican	71,153	11.0%	111,952	15.9%	127,212	17.8%	56,059	78.8%
Puerto Rican	7,066	1.1%	9,510	1.4%	12,659	1.8%	5,593	79.2%
Cuban	831	0.1%	1,324	0.2%	1,738	0.2%	907	109.1%
Guatemalan	545	0.1%	1,647	0.2%	1,909	0.3%	1,364	250.3%
Colombian	1,005	0.2%	1,793	0.2%	1,812	0.2%	807	80.3%
Ecuadorian	327	0.0%	546	0.1%	1,311	0.2%	984	300.9%
Total Hispanic or Latino	92,716	14.4%	139,987	19.9%	162,456	22.8%	69,740	75.2%
Total Population	644,356	100.0%	703,462	100.0%	713,159	100.0%	68,803	10.7%

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Table 52: Mexican Population in Chicago, Cook County, and Collar Counties, 1990, 2000, 2010 (Decennial Censuses), and 2018-2022 (ACS 5-year Estimates) (continued)

	2000		2010		2018-2022		Change from 2000 to 2018-2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent Change
McHenry County								
Mexican	15,881	6.1%	28,796	9.3%	34,279	11.0%	18,398	115.8%
Puerto Rican	1,009	0.4%	2,156	0.7%	3,706	1.2%	2,697	267.3%
Cuban	283	0.1%	439	0.1%	731	0.2%	448	158.3%
Guatemalan	106	0.0%	415	0.1%	280	0.1%	174	164.2%
Colombian	149	0.1%	395	0.1%	540	0.2%	391	262.4%
Ecuadorian	82	0.0%	223	0.1%	496	0.2%	414	504.9%
Total Hispanic or Latino	19,602	7.5%	35,249	11.4%	44,625	14.3%	25,023	127.7%
Total Population	260,077	100.0%	308,760	100.0%	311,133	100.0%	51,056	19.6%
Will County								
Mexican	35,416	7.0%	90,355	13.3%	108,834	15.6%	73,418	207.3%
Puerto Rican	2,480	0.5%	6,842	1.0%	7,841	1.1%	5,361	216.2%
Cuban	419	0.1%	844	0.1%	1,253	0.2%	834	199.0%
Guatemalan	165	0.0%	1,079	0.2%	1,487	0.2%	1,322	801.2%
Colombian	206	0.0%	761	0.1%	1,037	0.1%	831	403.4%
Ecuadorian	95	0.0%	428	0.1%	724	0.1%	629	662.1%
Total Hispanic or Latino	43,768	8.7%	105,817	15.6%	129,687	18.6%	85,919	196.3%
Total Population	502,266	100.0%	677,560	100.0%	696,774	100.0%	194,508	38.7%

Data Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org (2000, 2010 Decennial Censuses, and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates). Tabulations by Great Cities Institute.

