

# ***NEWYORKTITLAN: A SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF MEXICAN NEW YORKERS***

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**M**exicans had the highest rate of population growth of all the major racial and ethnic groups in New York in the 1990s. According to the U.S. Census of Population, between 1990 and 2000, the number of Mexicans residing in New York tripled, reaching close to 200,000 in the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> By comparison, the overall population of New York City rose by 9.4 percent during this same time period. Mexicans now compose the third largest Hispanic group in the City (only Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have a greater presence).

Despite the spiraling visibility of Mexicans in New York, relatively little systematic information is available about their current social and economic situation. There is an

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immigrants residing in New York City in 2000. This accounts for close to 80 percent of the resident Mexican population in the City. Most of these immigrants moved to the country in the nineties: 97,023 (or about half) of all Mexicans residing in New York in 2000 moved to the U.S. between 1990 and 2000. Although Census data cannot be used to determine the proportion of the Mexican population in New York that is undocumented, other demographic studies suggest that between 20 to 40 percent of the Mexican immigrant population in the City may be undocumented.<sup>7</sup>

The great majority of Mexican immigrants in New York were born in Puebla.<sup>8</sup> Located on East Central Mexico, the state of Puebla has approximately 5 million people. Although not amongst the poorest states in that country, Puebla has a per-capita income which is less than one-third that of the Mexican Capital District (Mexico D.F.) and substantially lower than the overall average for the country.<sup>9</sup>

The reason for the concentration of Pueblanos in New York City is the same that links so many other specific towns and cities in the U.S. and Mexico: network migration. Most Mexican migration to the U.S. is the result of a process that has developed



men, the unemployment rate in 2000 was 4.8 percent while for women the rate was more than twice, equal to 10.2 percent. Note also that, by comparison with other Hispanic/Latino workers, Mexican men have a much lower unemployment rate, but Mexican women have about the same unemployment rate as the overall Hispanic/Latino female workforce.

The low unemployment among Mexican men in New York is closely aligned with the fact that they fill a niche among the unskilled labor force that other workers do not fill. This labor market niche, which facilitates their employment, is connected to the already-discussed migration networks that make New York City the destination of migrants from specific parts of Mexico. It is a social and economic networking that characterizes other recent immigrant movements to urban areas as well. As sociologists Roger Waldinger and Claudia Der-Martirosian describe it: “Immigrants tend to cluster in activities in which others of their own kind are already established. Initial placements...may be affected by any range of factors –prior experience, cultural preferences or historical accident. But once the initial settlers have established a beachhead, subsequent arrivals tend to follow behind, preferring an environment in which at least some faces are familiar and discovering that personal contacts prove the most efficient means of finding a job. More important, the predilections of immigrants match the preferences of employers, who try to reproduce the characteristics of the workers they already have. Managers appreciate network recruitment for its ability to attract applicants quickly and at low cost; they value it even more for its efficiency. Hiring through connections upgrades the quality of information, reducing the risks entailed in acquiring new personnel; since sponsor usually have a stake in their job, they can also be relied on to keep the referrals in line.”<sup>16</sup>

In New York City, labor market networking has led Mexican men to fill some highly unskilled job niches left open over the last fifteen years by the rest of the population, whose educational attainment has risen through time, qualifying them for higher-skilled employment. In 2000, only four percent of the New York City labor force had received six years of schooling or less. The great majority of these unskilled laborers were born outside the United States. Indeed, as much as 85.4 percent of the New York City labor force with six or less years of schooling was born outside the country. A significant number of these workers were Mexican.

### **Industries and Occupations**

Mexican men are employed in a wide array of occupations and industries in New York. However, there are several niches that present clusters of employment. Table 5 presents the industrial composition of the labor force, for the overall City workforce as well as for Mexican New Yorkers. The data reflect the sector of employment of persons in the labor force in 2000. For persons employed, this is their actual employment at the time they filled out their Census questionnaires in 2000. For unemployed persons, it represents the industry of their last job.

There are three sectors that stand out in terms of the male Mexican labor force: construction, manufacturing, and the food/entertainment sector. Over 60 percent of Mexic





with the overall New York City student population. For Mexican children aged 14-17 years, the school e







## Table 1

**Table 4**  
**Unemployment Rates in New York City, 2000**  
 Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Unemployment Rate (%)		
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Mexican Population</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
New York City overall	6.0	5.5	6.5
Non-Hispanic White	3.3	3.2	3.4
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	8.9	9.4	8.6
Non-Hispanic Asian	4.3	3.8	4.9
Hispanic/Latino	9.0	7.5	10.9

*Source:* Author's tabulations, 2000 U.S. Census of Population 5% Public Use Microdata Sample.

**Table 5**

**Table 6**  
**Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force in New York City, 2000**  
 Persons 16 years of age or older

Occupation	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	All Workers	Mexican	All Workers	Mexican
Managerial and Professional	33.9%	9.0%	40.0%	16.5%
Technical, Sales and Administrative Support	21.4	15.1	20.0	33.6
Service Workers	17.3	37.9	33.7	24.8
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1
Construction, Extraction and Maintenance	11.8	13.4	0.4	0.7
Production, Transport and Material Moving	15.5	24.3	5.8	24.3

*Source:*

**Table 8**  
**The Educational Status of the Population in New York City, 2000**  
 Persons 25 years of age or older

Population Group	Percentage of the Population with:		
	Less than High School	High School Diploma	More Than High School
<b>Mexican</b>	<b>59.4%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>
New York City: Total	27.7	24.4	47.9
Non-Hispanic White	15.3	23.9	60.8
Non-Hispanic Black/ African American	28.7	28.6	42.7
Non-Hispanic Asian	30.5	18.5	50.9
Hispanic	46.6	23.4	30.0

*Source:* 2000 U.S. Census of Population, 5% Public Use Microdata Sample.

**Table 9**