Hispanics (Latinos)

The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” apply to most people who migrated with family roots in Spain or in a Spanish-speaking country in Middle or South America. Either of these two labels is useful as a generalizing umbrella label, especially in cultural and political contexts. Thus, the labels include a great many Spanish-speaking nationalities, for example, Cuban, Mexican, Salvadoran, Argentinian, and Peruvian.

Nevertheless, most Hispanics or Latinos in the U.S. identify more strongly with their country or nationality of origin than the more general term. To some degree each of these nationalities has its own social networks and locations of concentration. This is why we have provided maps for quite a few specific national-origin groups. (Scroll down to see the three maps covering all Hispanics.)

People of Mexican origin comprise 79 percent of the 8 million Hispanics in the five counties. The next largest Hispanic nationalities are Salvadoran and Guatemalan, which make up 5 percent and 3 percent respectively of all Hispanics. In the Greater Los Angeles area Mexicans, including both immigrants and those born in the U.S., are by far the most important group of Hispanics, In contrast to *The Ethnic Quilt*, in which we combined nationalities to produce maps and texts on Central Americans and South Americans, in this online publication we have added change and distribution maps of four nationality groups -- Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Colombians, and Peruvians.

**Change.** Although in 1960 Whites in Greater Los Angeles (the five counties) outnumbered Hispanics eight to one, since then Hispanics have been growing much faster than Whites. Immigration, especially from Mexico, was the major reason behind this growth in the period up to about 1990, though White out-migration and Hispanic growth from children born in this country have also been important. By the year 2000 Hispanics outnumbered Whites very slightly, but by 2010 Hispanics totaled over 8 million compared to but 6.4 million Whites. The Hispanic population in Southern California increased by 60 percent during the two decades 1990-2010. During these last two decades, Hispanic growth was fueled more by births in the U.S. of children of immigrant parents and grandparents than from the immigrants themselves.

Because the increase of Hispanics has been so dramatic, the dominance of blue dots is of no surprise. These dots are widely located over the map, but are found...
less frequently in the areas of most expensive housing, such as Pacific Palisades, Brentwood, Beverly Hills, and the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

More interesting are the places showing decreases in Hispanic populations because they are so exceptional. Ideally, we would know what happened in terms of housing price and other changes in each of the areas, but this is impossible. Based on our previous research, we do suggest what we think it happening in some of the localities with reduced Hispanic numbers.

The decline in Hispanic numbers in and near Downtown LA is probably the result of increasing housing prices following remodeling that put homes and apartments beyond the reach of many Hispanics. Since 1990 developers have expanded greatly the apartments and condos, shops, restaurants, and clubs in the Downtown area, with the result that the whole area has become increasingly attractive for many people who can afford the upgraded housing. Living in the general Downtown area is advantageous for people who work Downtown because they can avoid commuting in from the suburbs, but artists and others like the social connections and ambience of parts of the Downtown area. What is also significant is that most of these people are Whites. This process of remodeling and upgrading is often called gentrification.

We suspect that most of the red dots of Hispanic decline in the greater Downtown area are related to gentrification. The neighborhoods of Hispanic decline that probably have been gentrifying include the area of much new construction stretching from Downtown through 12th Street and the Staples Center, Echo Park, Silver Lake, Pico Union, Koreatown, and Hollywood. Surprising to us is the Hispanic decrease in Boyle Heights, which has been a well-known Mexican enclave. That may reflect the fact of less overcrowding in houses and apartments in recent years. This resulted from the move of many Mexicans to other areas, including other states, where housing was less expensive and jobs perhaps more available. But the proximity to Downtown and easy bus access would suggest that gentrification is also an important factor in Hispanic declines in Boyle Heights. Gentrification was also the likely factor in reduced Hispanic numbers in certain parts of Santa Monica and Venice, just to the south.

In some areas new construction of shopping centers or office complexes may have resulted in the demolition of homes leading to Hispanic declines in those areas. Another situation that led to decreased Hispanic numbers is the closure of military bases when the Cold War was ending about 1990. That can be seen most easily in Orange County where a cluster of red dots north of Laguna Hills represents marines and others at the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station.
Hispanic declines in the San Gabriel Valley (between Boyle Heights and Walnut) were probably also related to gentrification, but in this case the growing numbers of Chinese and other Asians was also significant. The San Gabriel Valley’s large numbers of Chinese and Chinese-oriented markets and shopping centers has made that area especially attractive so that Chinese developers and owners of apartment buildings have been especially motivated to improve housing and attract Asians who can afford the increased prices.

**Percentage and income.** The map shows a large number of Hispanic enclaves, nearly all of which reflect their predominantly Mexican populations. A few of these enclaves have origins in the early twentieth century as agricultural settlements, where Mexicans provided farm labor for irrigated agriculture. This is the origin of the Mexican enclaves of San Fernando and Pacoima in the east San Fernando Valley, of Oxnard and Santa Paula in the Santa Clara Valley of Ventura County, and of Santa Ana in Orange County. In San Bernardino and Riverside County were also Mexican farm worker villages, often tied to work in orange groves and packing sheds. Some of today’s enclaves probably have such origins.

Just east of Downtown LA are the very high percent Hispanic areas of Boyle Heights and East LA, which begin on the east side of the Los Angeles River. These form the core of what has been widely known as Mexican Eastside. Boyle Heights was one of the early suburbs of Los Angeles, having been first developed in the early years of the twentieth century with Whites and Japanese the most common residents. Mexicans also settled in East Los Angeles, where both urban and farm labor jobs were opening up. But by the 1920s, as newer suburbs were opened up and more Angelenos owned cars, people began to leave Boyle Heights, which increasingly became an immigrant reception center, particularly for Eastern European Jews. But over time many of younger members of these Jewish families moved to Hollywood, the Fairfax area, and farther west. In the 1950s the area became increasingly Mexican, as the housing was affordable and factory work could be found nearby.

Some Mexicans in the Eastside had successful businesses or earned enough to rent or buy houses in the new suburbs of the San Gabriel Valley and Pico Rivera. Continued eastward suburban movement led to increased Mexican settlement in El Monte and areas farther east, as White departures opened up much housing.

A newer Mexican enclave appeared in Huntington Park and other small cities southeast of Downtown. Modest housing in these communities had been first been built in the 1930s for White workers at the large factories nearby, and for a few decades these White working-class communities thrived. But by the 1970s the
decline of manufacturing in Los Angeles led to the loss of many good jobs. As Whites steadily moved away, they sold or rented their homes to newer Mexican immigrants or the sons and daughters of earlier immigrants. Demand for housing meant that the Mexican population also moved into many parts of Los Angeles, including the formerly mostly Black area of South Los Angeles, west of Huntington Park.

The largest enclave for Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and other Central Americans is just west of Downtown LA. Since the 1960s this Pico-Union and MacArthur Park area has grown as a reception center for poor immigrants and refugees. Although not evident on this Hispanic map, it is a striking feature on the maps of those two nationality groups.

All the preceding paragraphs focus on Hispanics of low or moderate income. In contrast, the map of median Hispanic income calls attention by its darker colors to the dispersal of Hispanics with moderate and high incomes. This map provides a different and valuable perspective from the notion, based on average incomes, that Hispanics all have low or moderate incomes. Past research has shown that, on average, U.S.-born Hispanics and those from South America tend to have higher levels of education and higher incomes than Hispanics with origins in Mexico and Central America. Places like Malibu, Oak Park, Rancho Palos Verdes, La Cañada-Flintridge, San Clemente, and Claremont have expensive homes, and some of these have been affordable for some Hispanics. Moreover, the fact that not many tracts contain fewer than 100 Hispanics (shown in gray) accentuates the widespread distribution of Hispanics.

See maps below.
Five-county 2010 population of persons of Hispanic origin is 8,028,831 and change in that population between 1990 and 2010 is an increase of 3,251,713.

Census 2010 race data are from SF1. 1990 estimates of race population in 2010 tracts are based on the 1990 Fullcount table created by John R. Logan, Zengwang Xu, and Brian Stults. http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Researcher/Bridging.htm
Five-county population of persons of Hispanic origin is 8,028,831.
Bar length indicates proportion of all valid tracts included in a category.
In most cases a category includes 2, 3, 5, 10, 30, 40, or 50 percent of the included tracts.
The bar length of the excluded tracts is not related to its tract count.