

*Occupational safety and health*

## Fatal work injuries among foreign-born Hispanic workers

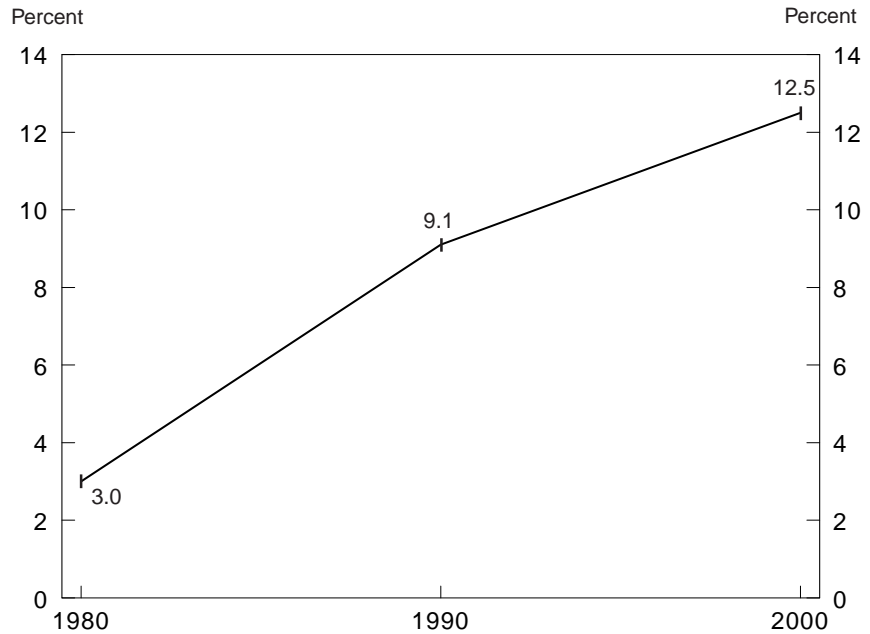
Scott Richardson

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- Immigration of Latin Americans to the United States has had a major impact on the makeup of the U.S. population over the past 25 years. Hispanics accounted for only 3 percent of the U.S. population in 1980. By 1990, that percentage had risen to 9.1 percent, and in 2000, Hispanics represented about 12.5 percent of the U.S. population, or about one in eight Americans.
- By 2050 or earlier, the Census Bureau projects that the Hispanic population will account for one out of every four Americans.

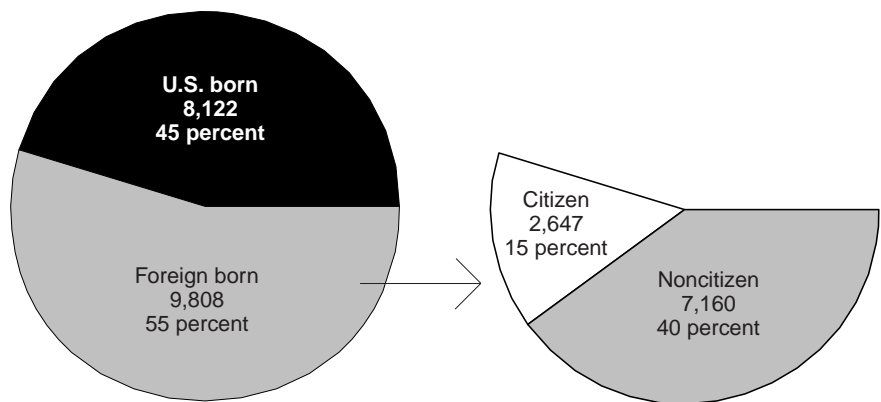
**1. Hispanic population as a percentage of the U.S. population, 1980–2000**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau.

- There were 17.9 million Hispanics in the employed labor force in 2004. The majority of those workers (55 percent) were born in a country other than the United States, and about two in five employed Hispanics in the United States were not citizens of the United States in 2004.
- Also, Hispanic workers tend to be disproportionately represented in higher-risk, lower-wage jobs. Lower educational attainment, fewer job skills, and in some cases, lack of proficiency in the English language may contribute to this trend, especially among the foreign born. For example, according to the Census Bureau, only about 11 percent of Hispanics in the United States have a college degree, as compared with nearly 30 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.

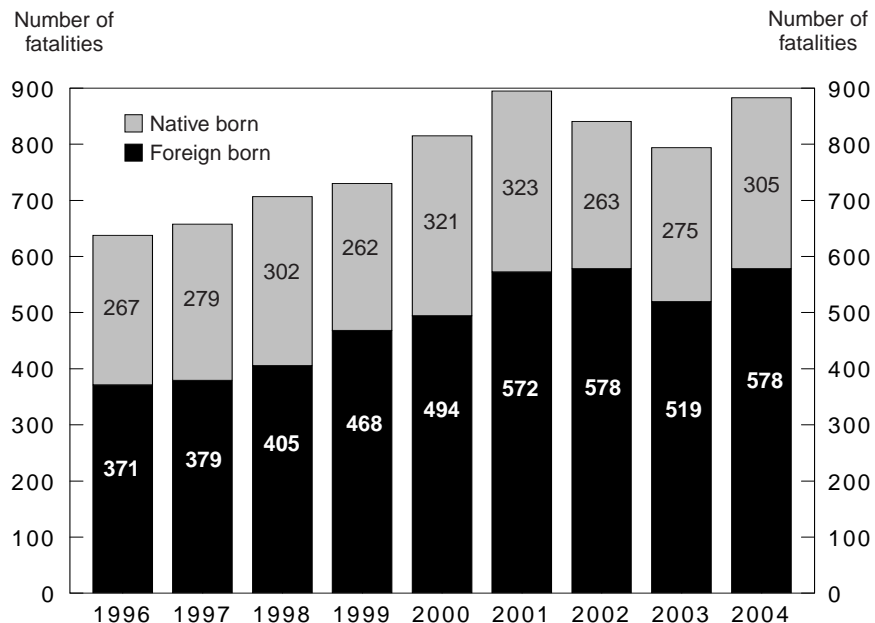
**2. Hispanic employment by number (in thousands) and percent aged 16 and older, 2004**



NOTE: Employment is civilian noninstitutional employment.  
SOURCE: BLS Current Population Survey.

- Disproportionate representation in higher-risk jobs has led to higher numbers and rates of fatal occupational injury among Hispanic workers.
- The number of fatal injuries to Hispanic workers rose from 533 in 1992, when the fatality census was first conducted, to a high of 895 in 2001. At a time when fatalities were declining for workers in general, both the number and rate of fatal injury to Hispanic workers were rising. While fatal injuries among Hispanic workers declined in 2002 and 2003, the number and rate were again higher in 2004.
- Nearly two-thirds of the fatalities among Hispanic workers from 1996 to 2004 involved foreign-born workers.

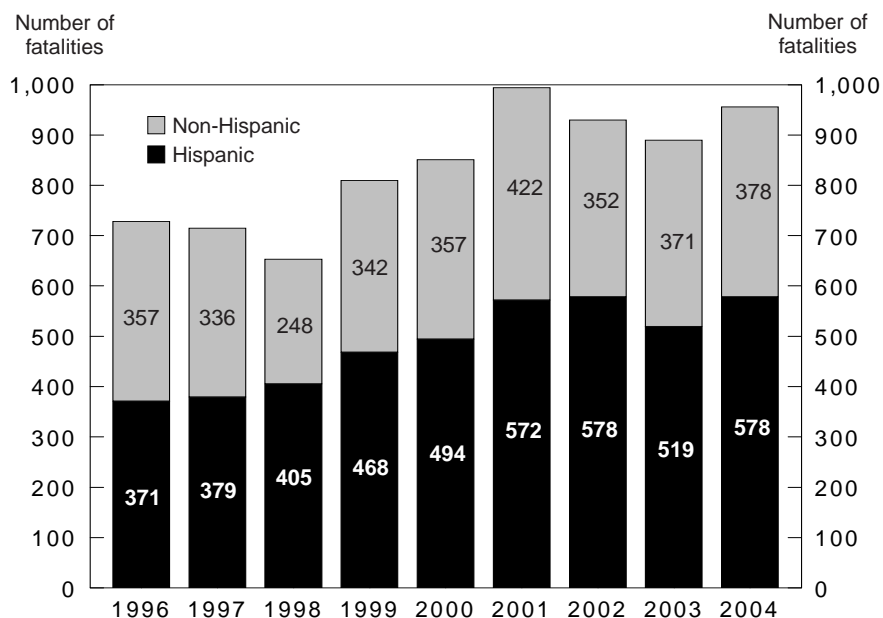
### 3. Fatal work injuries involving Hispanic workers, 1996–2004



NOTE: Data from 2001 exclude fatalities resulting from September 11 terrorist attacks.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

- Fatalities among foreign-born workers overall have trended higher since 1996, especially among foreign-born Hispanics. While the number of fatal work injuries among foreign-born workers in 2004 was 31 percent higher than the number in 1996, the number among foreign-born Hispanic workers was 56 percent higher. Overall, 6 in 10 of the fatalities among foreign-born workers involved Hispanic workers, higher than their share of the employed foreign-born population (48 percent).

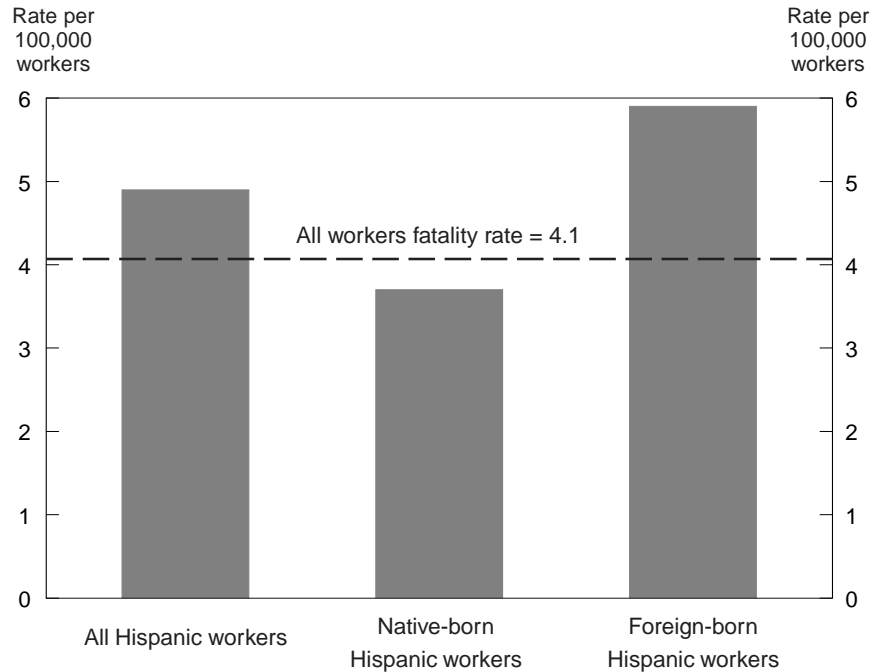
### 4. Fatal work injuries involving foreign-born workers, 1996–2004



NOTE: Data from 2001 exclude fatalities resulting from September 11 terrorist attacks.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

- Rates of fatal injury are higher for Hispanic workers. The fatal work injury rate for all U. S. workers in 2004 was 4.1 fatalities per 100,000 workers, as compared with a rate of 4.9 fatalities for Hispanic workers. However, while the fatality rate for Hispanic workers was higher in 2004 than in 2003, the rate in 2004 was down from a series high of 6.0 fatalities per 100,000 workers recorded in 2001.
- The difference in rates between native-born and foreign-born Hispanic workers is instructive. Native-born Hispanic workers actually recorded a rate below that of the overall national rate, but the rate for foreign-born workers was 5.9 fatalities per 100,000 workers, or 44 percent higher than the national rate.

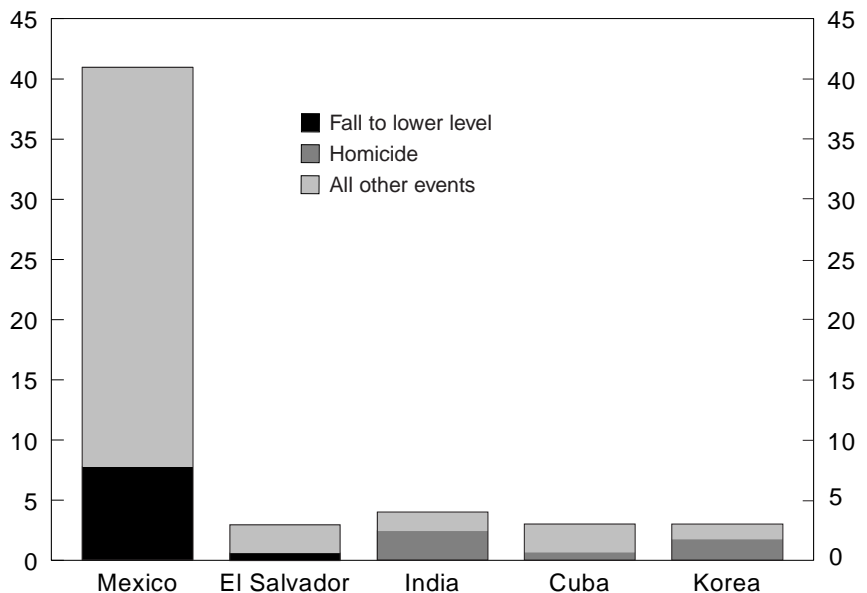
### 5. Fatal work injury rates for Hispanic workers, 2004



NOTE: Employees are civilian Hispanic workers.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

- Fatalities to workers born in Mexico accounted for two out of every five fatally-injured, foreign-born workers (41 percent), by far the most of any single country. The primary fatal event for Mexican-born workers was “fall to lower level.”
- The birth country with the second highest number was India with 4 percent of the foreign-born fatality total, followed by Cuba, Korea, and El Salvador, each with 3 percent.
- While the primary fatal event for workers born in Mexico and El Salvador was falls to a lower level, the primary fatal event for foreign-born workers overall was workplace homicide.

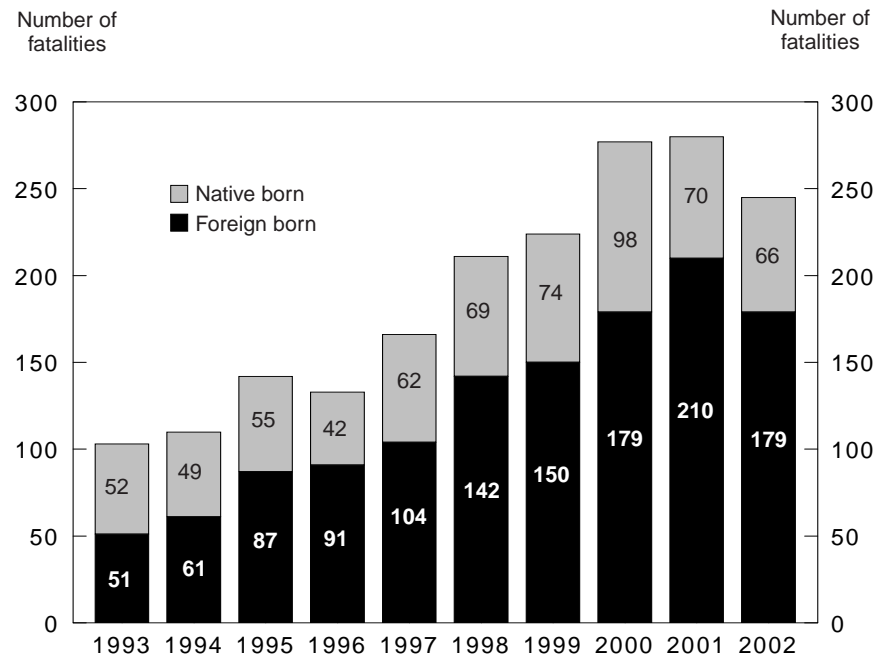
### 6. Percent of total fatal work injuries occurring to foreign-born workers by country of birth and primary fatal event, 1996–2004



NOTE: Data from 2001 exclude fatalities resulting from September 11 terrorist attacks.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

- In 1992, when the fatality census was first conducted, fatally injured Hispanic workers accounted for about 1 in 10 private construction fatalities. In 2002, that fraction rose to about one in five. Overall, about a fourth of the fatal work injuries among Hispanic workers occurred in construction over this period.
- The number of fatal work injuries involving foreign-born Hispanic workers has risen substantially in construction and was about 3½ times higher in 2002 than it was in 1992.
- Note also that in 1993, foreign-born workers accounted for about half of the fatalities involving Hispanic construction workers. In 2002, foreign-born workers accounted for nearly three out of every four construction fatalities involving Hispanic workers.

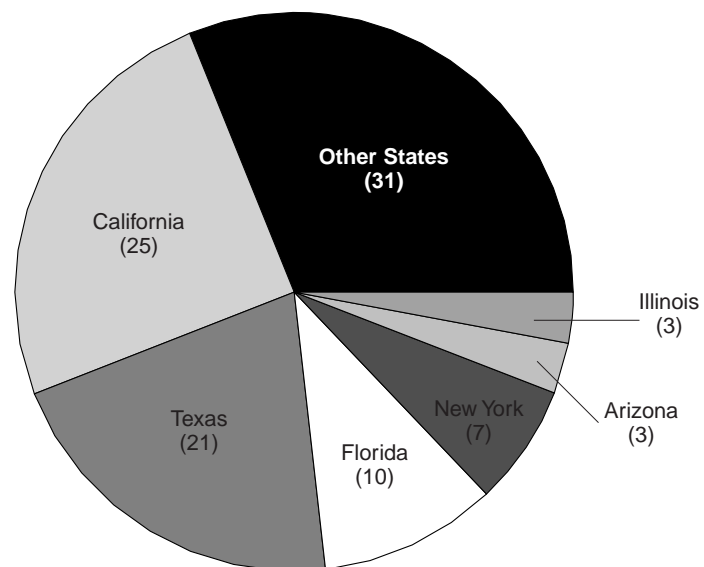
### 7. Fatal work injuries involving Hispanic workers in private construction by nativity, 1993–2002



NOTE: Data from 2001 exclude fatalities resulting from September 11 terrorist attacks.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

- Most of the fatal work injuries involving Hispanic workers from 1992 to 2004 occurred in States traditionally associated with large Hispanic populations—California, Texas, Florida, and New York. However, Hispanic populations are growing in many States not traditionally known for large Hispanic populations. For example, the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the 1990s on a percentage basis were in North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, and Tennessee, according to the Census Bureau.
- It is important to note that the type of fatal and nonfatal injury events among Hispanic workers varies from State to State based on the types of industries in those States. Therefore, interventions will need to focus more at a local level to be successful.

### 8. Percent of fatal work injuries involving Hispanics by State, 1992–2004



NOTE: Data from 2001 exclude fatalities resulting from September 11 terrorist attacks.  
SOURCE: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.