

Labor force



The labor force is the number of people aged 16 or older who are either working or looking for work. The labor force does not include active-duty military personnel or institutionalized workers, such as prison inmates.

The size of the labor force depends on two factors. The first factor is the size of the total population, which is determined by rates of birth, immigration, and death. The second factor is the labor force participation rate, which is the percent of the population that is working or is actively seeking employment.

These measures vary significantly by sex and by age, racial, and ethnic groups. Each group has varying birth and immigration rates, age distributions, and labor-force

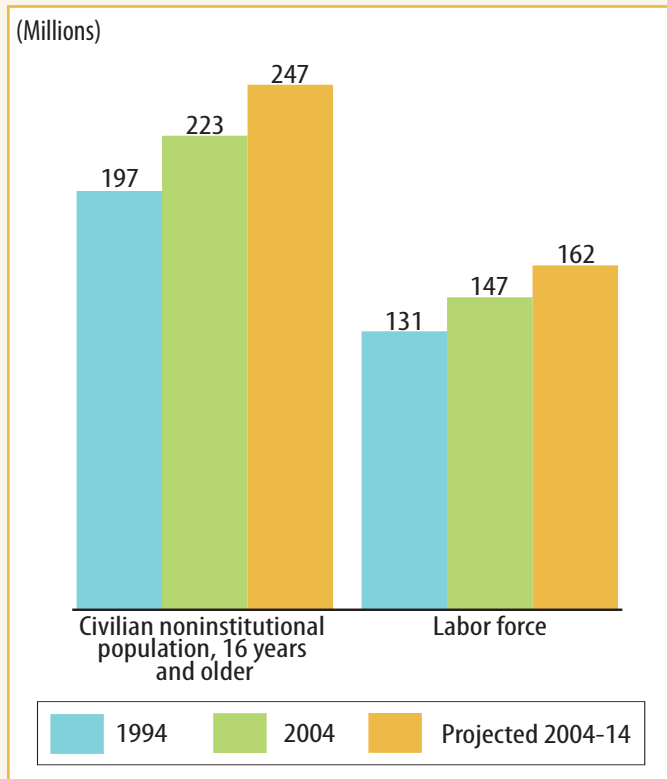
participation rates, and these variations change the composition of the labor force over time.

The charts that follow show how the labor force is projected to change among age groups, among men and women, among racial groups—Asians, blacks, whites, and others—and among ethnic groups—Hispanics and non-Hispanics of any race. These are the categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau, which produces the demographic data on which BLS projections are based.

As in previous years, the labor force is projected to be smaller than the number of jobs, in part because some workers have more than one job.

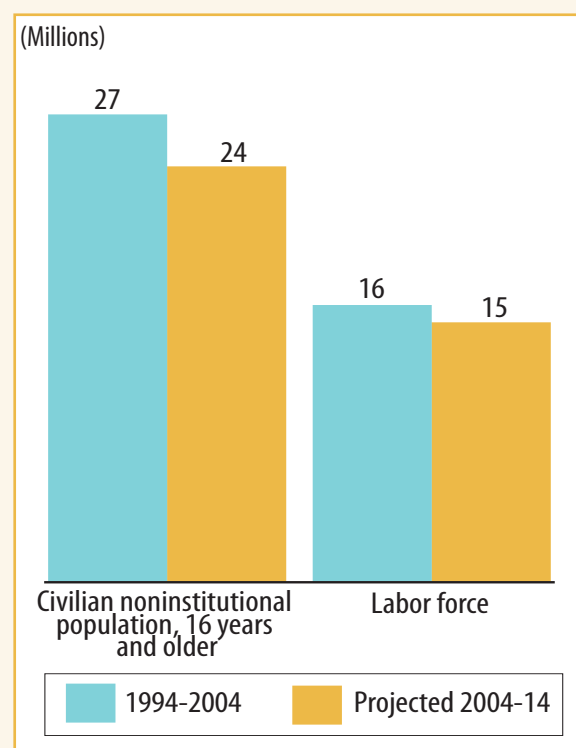
Some of the charts that show a distribution do not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

Population and labor force, 1994, 2004, and projected 2014



Both the population and the labor force are projected to continue growing steadily. By 2014, the number of people working or looking for work is expected to reach 162 million. That number excludes people who are active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces, are institutionalized, or are younger than 16 years of age.

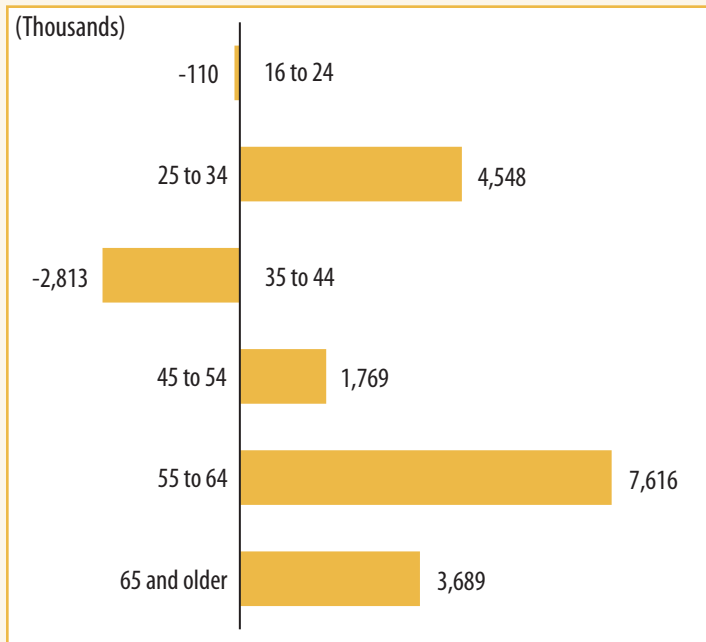
Numeric growth in population and labor force, 1994-2004 and projected 2004-14



Both the population and the labor force are expected to increase somewhat less than they did during the previous decade.

Labor force

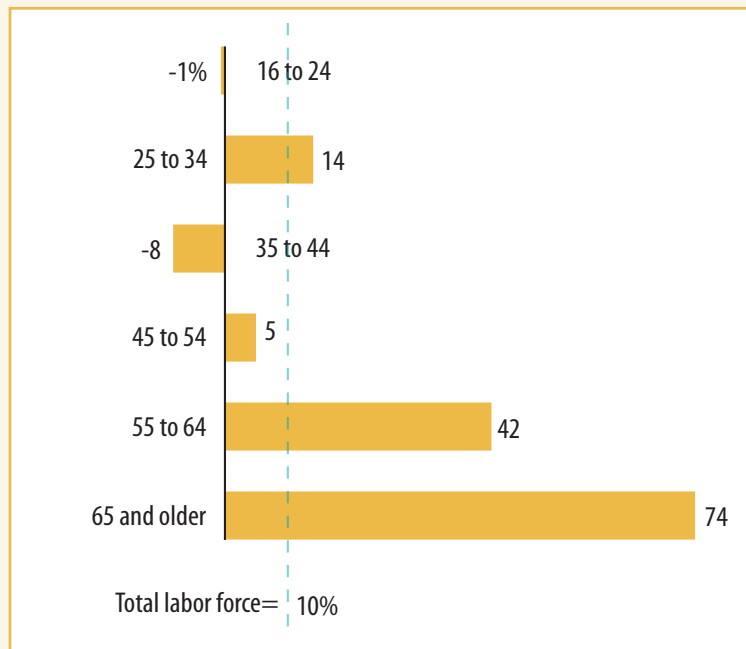
Numeric change in labor force by age, projected 2004-14



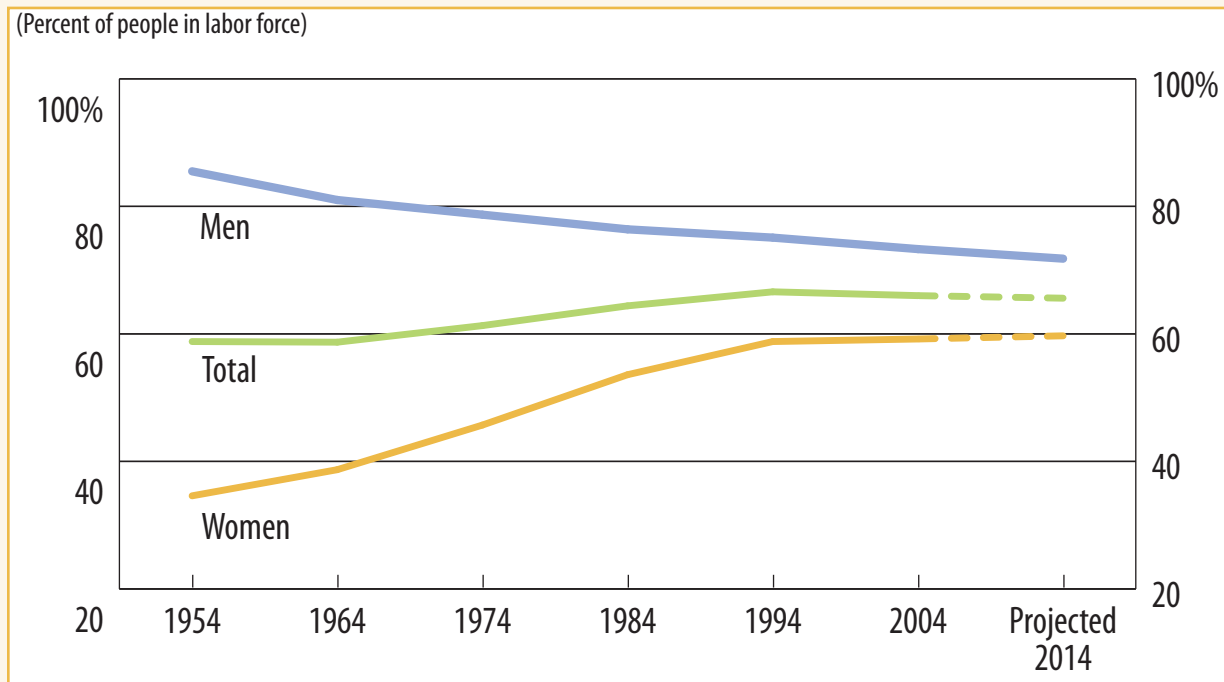
As the baby-boom generation ages, the number of people in the labor force aged 55 to 64 is expected to increase by more than 7 million during the projections decade. The number of 35- to 44-year-olds is expected to shrink as the baby boomers shift to older groups.

Percent change in labor force by age, projected 2004-14

The number of people in the labor force aged 65 and older is expected to increase more than 7 times as fast as the total labor force—due, in part, to workers postponing retirement.

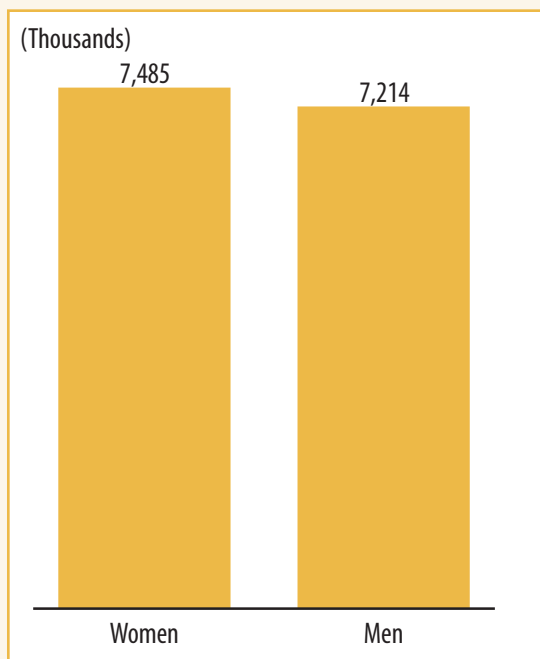


Labor force participation rates of women and men, 1954-2004 and projected 2014



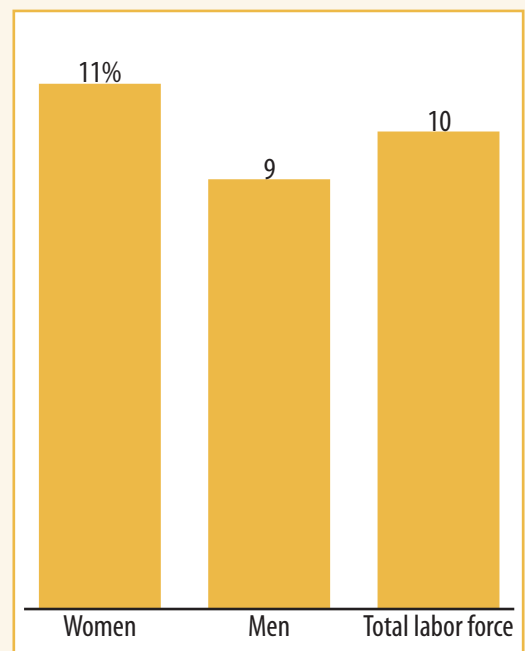
The labor force participation rate for women is expected to continue to edge upward as the men's rate declines, narrowing the labor force participation gap between the sexes. By 2014, about 60 percent of women and 72 percent of men are expected to be in the labor force.

Numeric growth in labor force by women and men, projected 2004-14



Slightly more women than men are projected to join the labor force between 2004 and 2014.

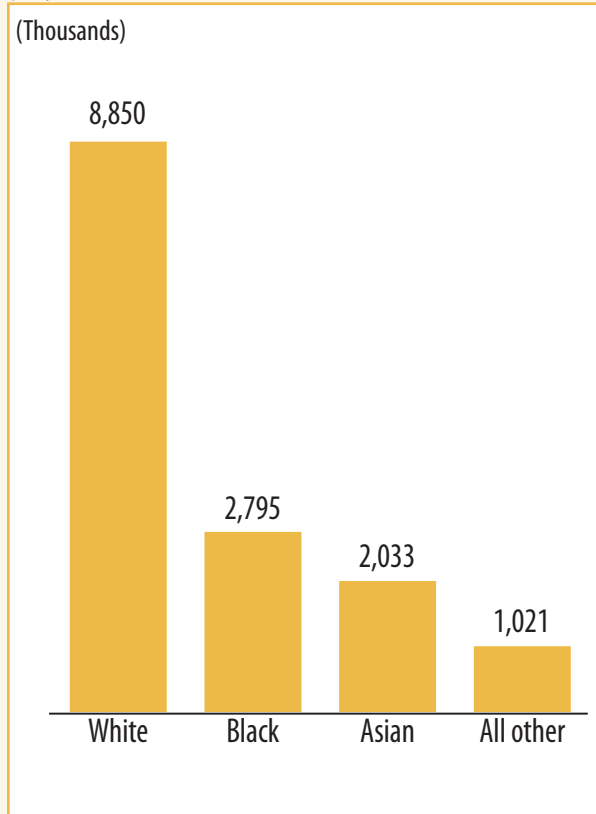
Percent growth in labor force by women and men, projected 2004-14



The number of women in the labor force is expected to grow faster than the number of men.

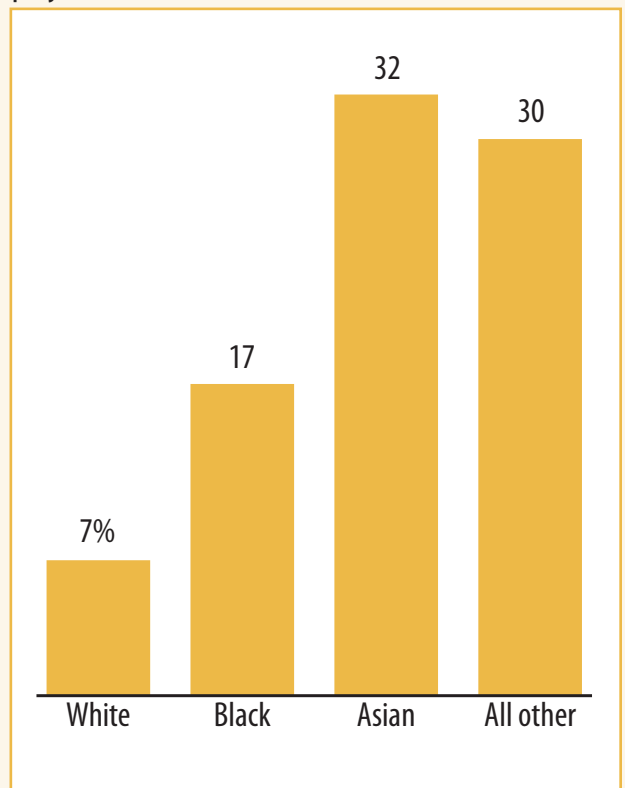
Labor force

Numeric growth in labor force by race, projected 2004-14



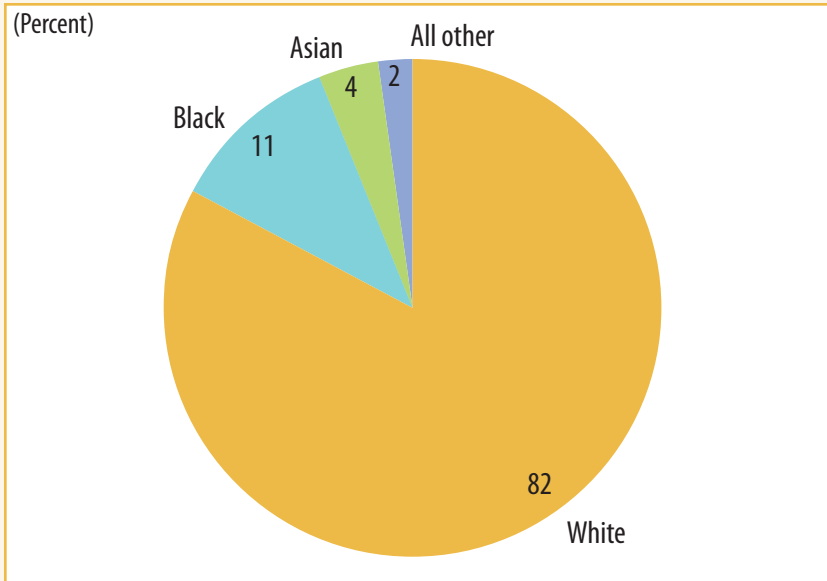
Despite slower growth rates, whites are projected to account for more than half of all labor force growth over the 2004-14 decade. The “all other races” category includes people of American Indian and Alaska Native descent, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, multiracial individuals, and any other persons who do not identify themselves as white, black, or Asian.

Percent growth in labor force by race, projected 2004-14



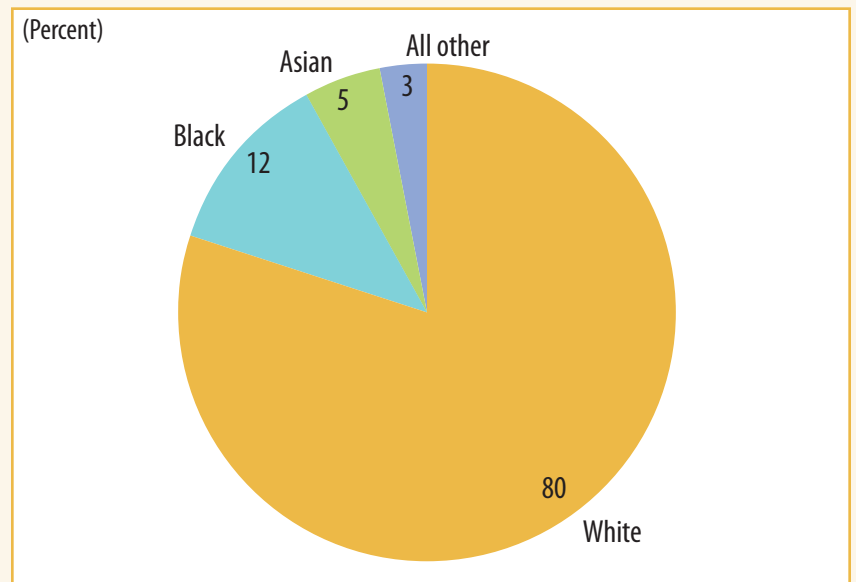
Asians are expected to join the labor force at a faster rate than any other racial group. Immigration is a major reason for the increase.

Labor force share by race, 2004



Whites made up more than 80 percent of the labor force in 2004.

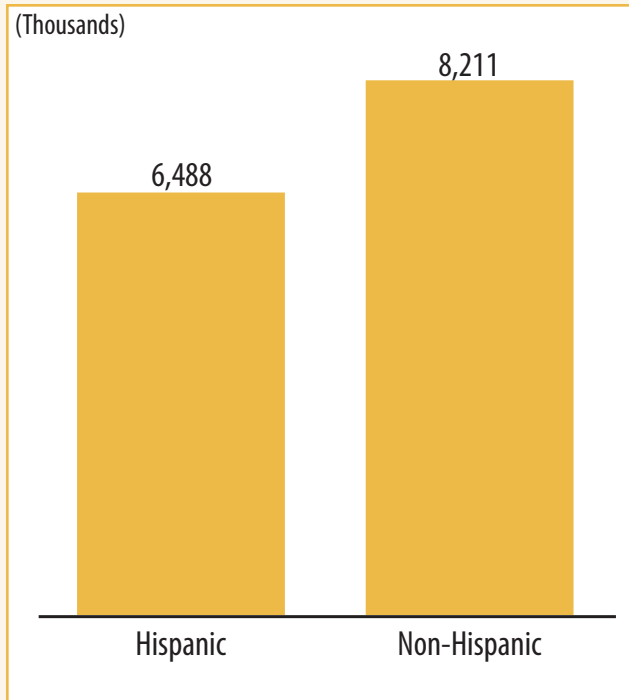
Labor force share by race, projected 2014



Although whites will continue to be the largest racial category in the labor force, black workers are projected to reach 12 percent of the labor force by 2014.

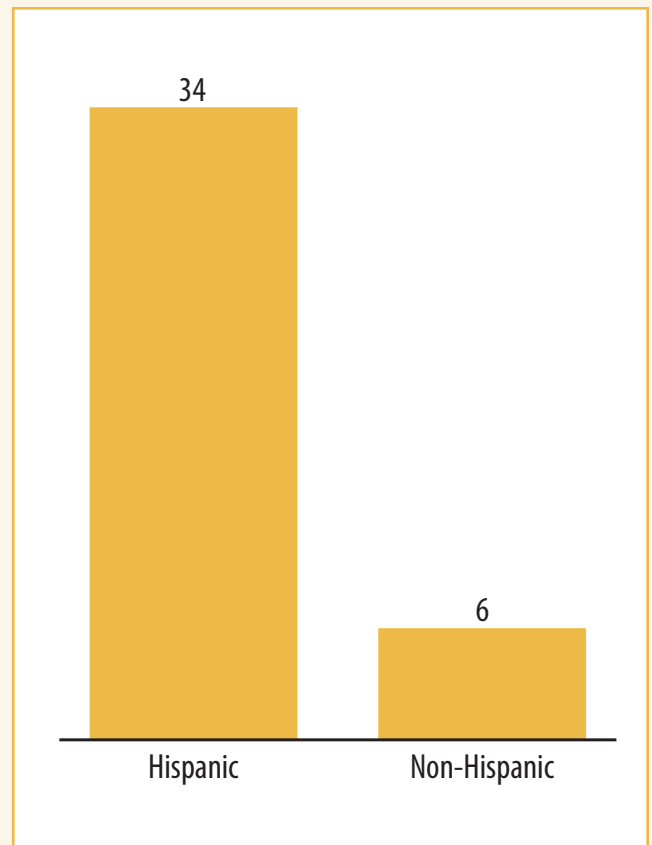
Labor force

Numeric growth in labor force by ethnic origin, projected 2004-14



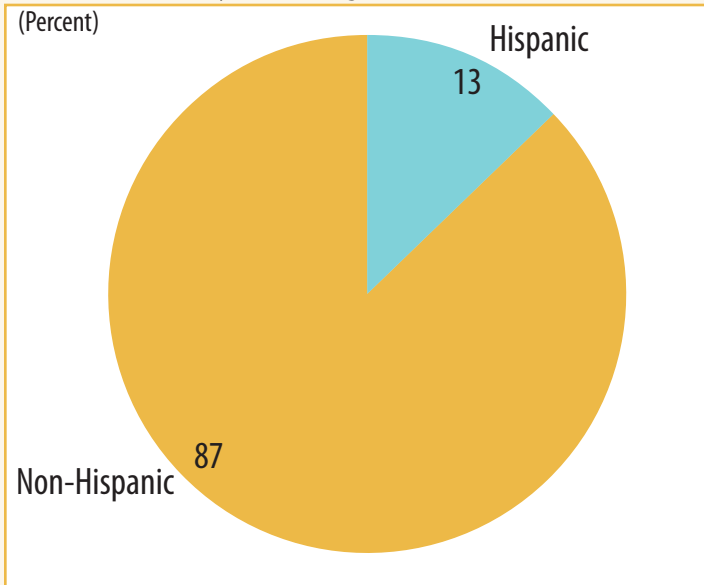
The number of Hispanic workers is projected to increase by more than 6 million between 2004 and 2014, accounting for almost 45 percent of total labor force growth.

Percent growth in labor force by ethnic origin, projected 2004-14



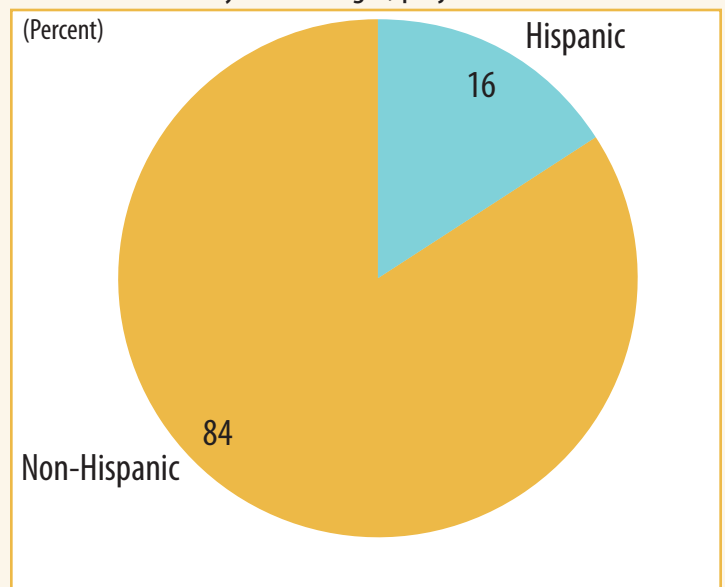
The Hispanic labor force is expected to increase by 34 percent—a growth rate more than 5 times as fast as that of non-Hispanic workers over the projections decade...

Labor force share by ethnic origin, 2004



...increasing the Hispanic share of the labor force from 13 percent in 2004...

Labor force share by ethnic origin, projected 2014



...to 16 percent in 2014.