[EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)[ajc.com](#) > [Metro](#)

Study: Construction, service workers drive Hispanic population boom

By [BRIAN FEAGANS](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 11/14/06

Mexican immigrants working in construction and service jobs are driving metro Atlanta's Hispanic population boom, according to Census Bureau estimates released today.

Mexicans and Mexican-Americans accounted for roughly 270,000 — or 65 percent — of the region's 420,000 Hispanics in 2005. Nearly half the people of Mexican descent worked in construction. Another 21 percent had jobs in restaurants, retail stores and other service occupations.

Mexicans were the fastest-growing part of a Latino population that continues to soar in metro Atlanta. The number of Hispanics increased 150,000, or more than 50 percent, from 2000 to 2005.

The snapshot of metro Atlanta's fastest-growing immigrant population comes courtesy of the most detailed data release since the 2000 Census. As part of its new American Community Survey, the Census Bureau provides yearly estimates of the population. The latest release is the most thorough yet, detailing everything from commute times to ancestry for states, counties and cities with at least 65,000 people.

William Frey, a University of Michigan demographer, said that although he was still digesting the data, Georgia's Mexican community clearly stands out in one way. About 27 percent of the population has arrived since 2000, trailing only South Carolina, Tennessee and North Carolina, Frey said.

"In Atlanta and a lot of the Southeast destinations, they're coming directly for the jobs that require less skills," Frey said. "They're not stopping off as much in Texas and other places."

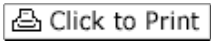
The large share of new arrivals means metro Atlanta's Mexican population is probably less assimilated than others around the country, Frey said. That can challenge schools, social service organizations and police.

Indeed, the data show that nine out of 10 metro Atlantans of Mexican descent speak a language other than English at home. Two-thirds speak English less than "very well." More than 60 percent were not U.S. citizens last year (the U.S. Census does not ask if someone is in country legally or not).

Household income for Mexicans and Mexican Americans was nearly \$36,000, or about two-thirds the regional median. About 20 percent of families lived in poverty, double the poverty rate for metro Atlanta in general.

Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2006/11/14/1114hispanic.html>



[EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.