



Center for Latin American, Caribbean & Latino Studies

Fertility Rates among Mexicans in Traditional And New States of Settlement, 2006

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Between 1980 and 2006 the Mexican population of the U.S. not only increased substantially, but also began to settle in states where there had traditionally been a marginal or almost no presence of Mexicans previously. This growth was linked to both a surge in immigration and because of a fairly significant increase in fertility rates among Mexican women of child-bearing age in all regions of the nation, but particularly in these new states of settlement. This increase in child-bearing among Mexicans was most extreme among foreign-born women between the ages of 15 and 44 who demonstrated significantly higher birth rates than their U.S., or domestic-born, counterparts.

Foreign-born Mexicans were the largest immigrant group in the U.S. in 1980 and they were heavily concentrated in the southwestern states. These states had been traditional destinations for Mexican immigrants since absorption into the U.S. in 1848 at the close of the Mexican-American war. There were also significant numbers of Mexicans in Illinois as a result of a large migrant community which had developed in Chicago from the early 20th century.¹

However, from 1980 on the Mexican population, foreign and domestic-born, began to migrate to other regions of the nation, particularly to southern states such as Georgia where labor markets created employment opportunities in low-paying unskilled jobs. Oregon was another state which experienced a fairly substantial increase in its Mexican population, in large part because it was contiguous to California, the state with the largest Mexican-origin population in the nation.

It is difficult to calculate precisely what portion of the Mexican population resulted from immigration or natural reproduction from a regional point of view. However, some insights into the role of birth rates in Mexican population growth are provided by examining the comparative fertility rates of domestic and foreign-born Mexican women of child-bearing age in different areas of the nation.

It is appropriate to examine the differences found in states which were 'traditional' areas of Mexican settlement – California, Texas, Arizona, and Illinois – and to compare them with what will be labeled as non-traditional destinations for Mexican migrants – the states of Georgia, North Carolina, New York, and Oregon. This second grouping of states was characterized heavy concentrations of foreign-born men and women, and demonstrated fertility rates which were usually higher than those found in the traditional states.

Mexicans have always been the largest national group within the nation's Hispanic population and today roughly two-thirds of all Latinos in the U.S. are of Mexican origin. According to U.S. census data between 1980 and 2006 the total Mexican-origin population more than tripled from 9,020,359 in 1980 to 28,785,732 in 2006. The four states with the largest Mexican populations in 1980 were California, Texas, Illinois and Arizona which accounted for about 82% of all Mexicans in the nation. By 2006 there had been a slight decline: 73% of the total U.S. Mexican-origin population lived in these traditional states of settlement. Yet, in Arizona 90% of all Hispanics were Mexicans and nearly 80% or over of all Latinos in Texas, California, and Illinois were of Mexican origin.² (See table 1).

¹ Batalova, Jeanne. (2008). "Mexican Immigrants in the United States" Migration Policy Institute. April 23; www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/print.cfm?ID=679.

² In this report the terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably. All data in this report were derived from the 2006 American Community Survey data released by the U.S. Census Bureau and made available by Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2008, <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>. Fertility rates were calculated from these data by using the data on births divided by the number of women between the ages of 15 and 44.

Table 1
States with the Largest Mexican Populations, 1980 - 2006

State	1980				2006				Mexican Annual Population Growth Rate 1980 - 2006
	Total Population	Total Hispanics including Brazilians	Total Mexicans	% Hispanics who are Mexicans	Total Population	Total Hispanics including Brazilians	Total Mexicans	% Hispanics who are Mexicans	
California	23,741,184	4,587,311	3,734,411	81.4%	36,457,549	13,408,355	11,140,099	83.1%	4.3%
Texas	14,280,753	3,018,857	2,846,335	94.3%	23,507,783	8,534,962	7,406,451	86.8%	3.7%
Illinois	11,462,157	650,772	421,633	64.8%	12,831,970	1,935,276	1,547,152	79.9%	5.1%
Arizona	2,725,654	449,238	414,364	92.2%	6,166,318	1,828,270	1,638,856	89.6%	5.4%
Total Population U.S.	227,021,768	14,832,229	9,020,359	60.8%	299,398,485	45,973,379	29,572,605	64.3%	4.7%

However, after 1980 the non-traditional regions of Mexican settlement experienced the fastest rates of population expansion, largely because of the fact that their Mexican-origin populations were fairly small in 1980. Between 1980 and 2006 the annual rates of population growth in the traditional states ranged between 3.7% and 5.4% while in non-traditional states Mexican-origin population increased over 10% yearly. (See Table 2).

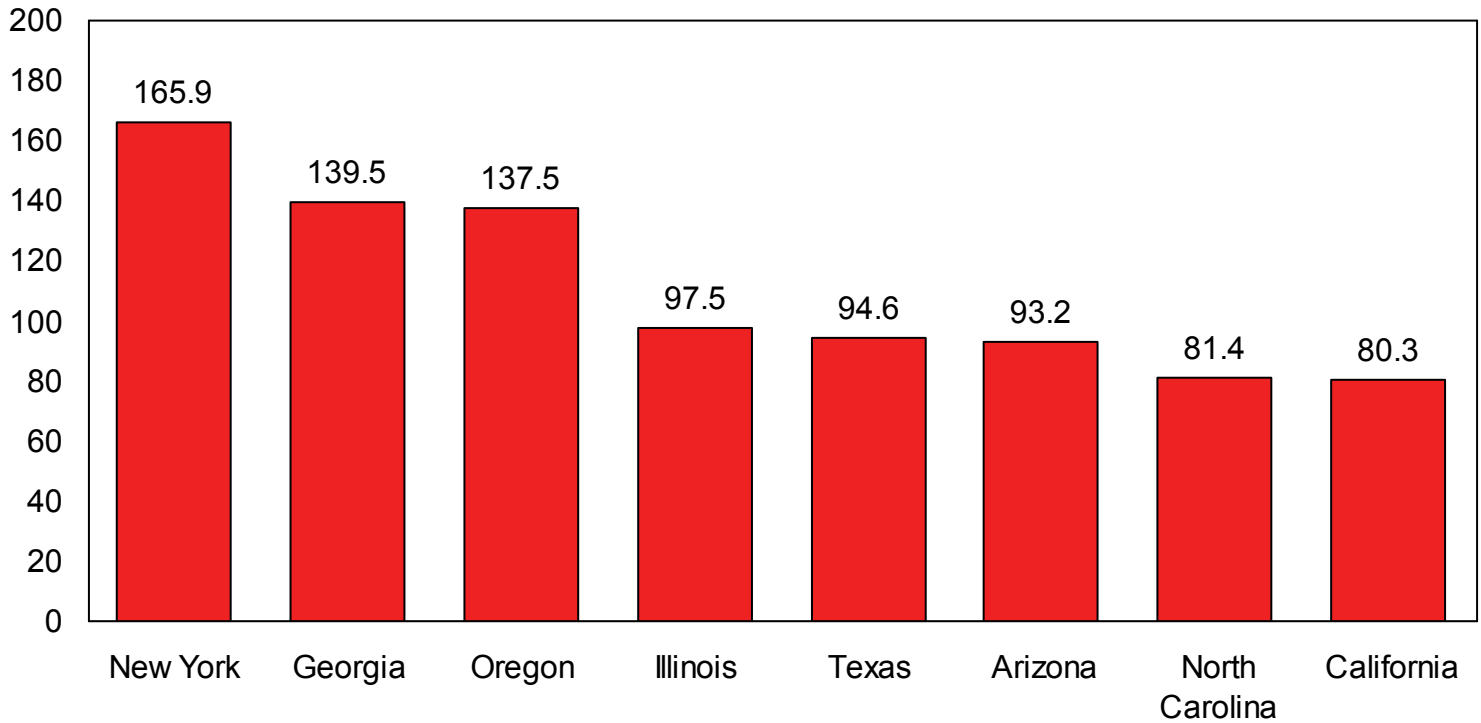
Table 2
Non-Traditional States with the Largest Mexican Populations, 1980 - 2006

State	1980				2006				Mexican Annual Population Growth Rate 1980 - 2006
	Total Population	Total Hispanics including Brazilians	Total Mexicans	% Hispanics who are Mexicans	Total Population	Total Hispanics including Brazilians	Total Mexicans	% Hispanics who are Mexicans	
Georgia	5,468,434	63,319	27,900	44.1%	9,363,941	743,431	467,649	62.9%	11.5%
North Carolina	5,905,948	58,562	28,687	49.0%	8,856,505	628,180	401,382	63.9%	10.7%
New York	17,575,172	1,697,109	43,426	2.6%	19,306,183	3,271,729	380,302	11.6%	8.7%
Oregon	2,641,476	66,546	44,912	67.5%	3,700,758	387,539	325,827	84.1%	7.9%
Total Population U.S.	227,021,768	14,832,229	9,020,359	60.8%	299,398,485	45,973,379	29,572,605	64.3%	4.7%

Fertility Rates of Mexican Women in Traditional and Non-Traditional States

A fundamental difference in fertility among Mexican women by state helps explain the contrasting patterns in overall population growth rates found in the traditional and non-traditional states of Mexican population settlement. With the exception of North Carolina, fertility rates in the non-traditional states of New York, Georgia, and Oregon were significantly higher than in the traditional states of Mexican settlement as indicated in Figure 1. It has been impossible to determine the reasons for North Carolina's comparatively lower fertility rates.

Figure 1
 Fertility Rates among Mexicans in Traditional and Non-Traditional States, 2006
 (in births per thousand women ages 15 - 44)



The most important factor which may explain these differences is the ratio of the foreign-born to domestic-born women resident in each state. A fundamental assumption is that foreign-born Mexican-origin women tend to have more children than their domestic-born counterparts. It has been assumed that this is because domestic-born Mexican women of child-bearing age tend to emulate the birth-control usage patterns found among the other racial/ethnic sectors of the domestic-born population. It has also been assumed that foreign-born Mexican women do not use birth control measures as extensively, at least in their early years of residence in the United States. Figures 2 and 3 indicate with clarity the great differences in the distribution of foreign versus domestic-born Mexican women in the traditional versus the non-traditional states. In New York, North Carolina, and Georgia nearly 80% of Mexican women in the child-bearing ages were foreign-born, while Oregon had a majority of foreign-born Mexican women (61%).

Figure 2
 Percentage of Foreign and Domestic-Born Mexican-Origin Women
 Ages 15 - 44 Residing in Traditional States, 2006

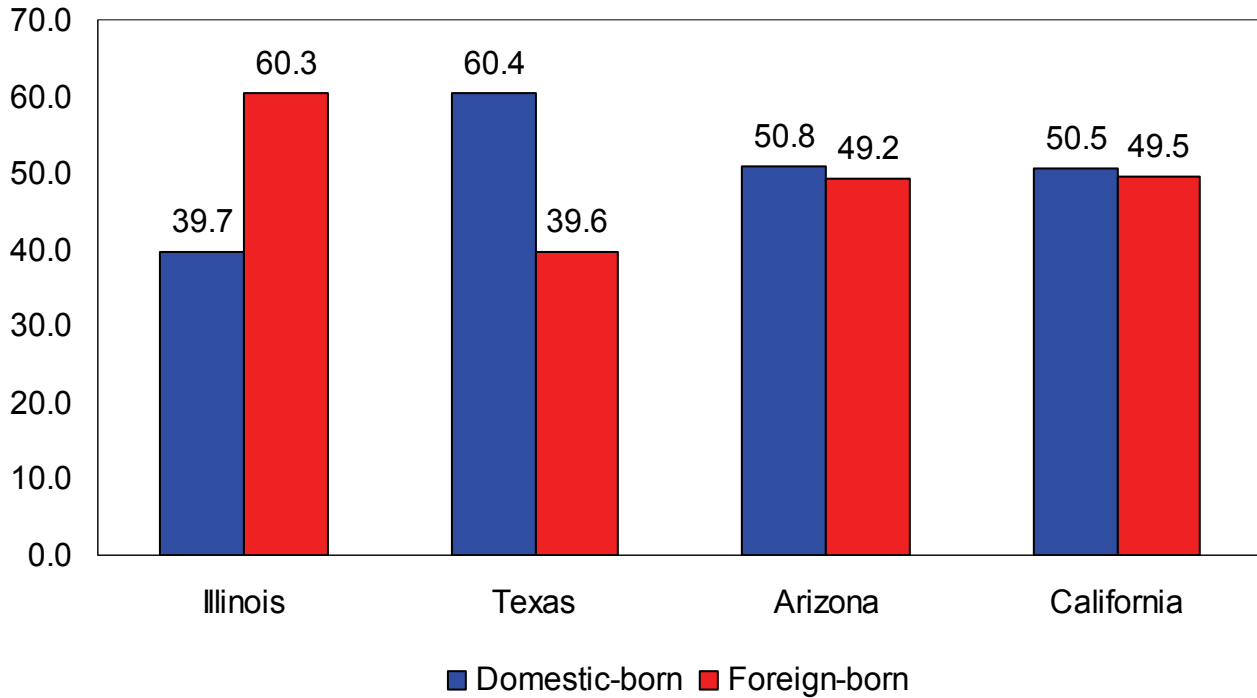
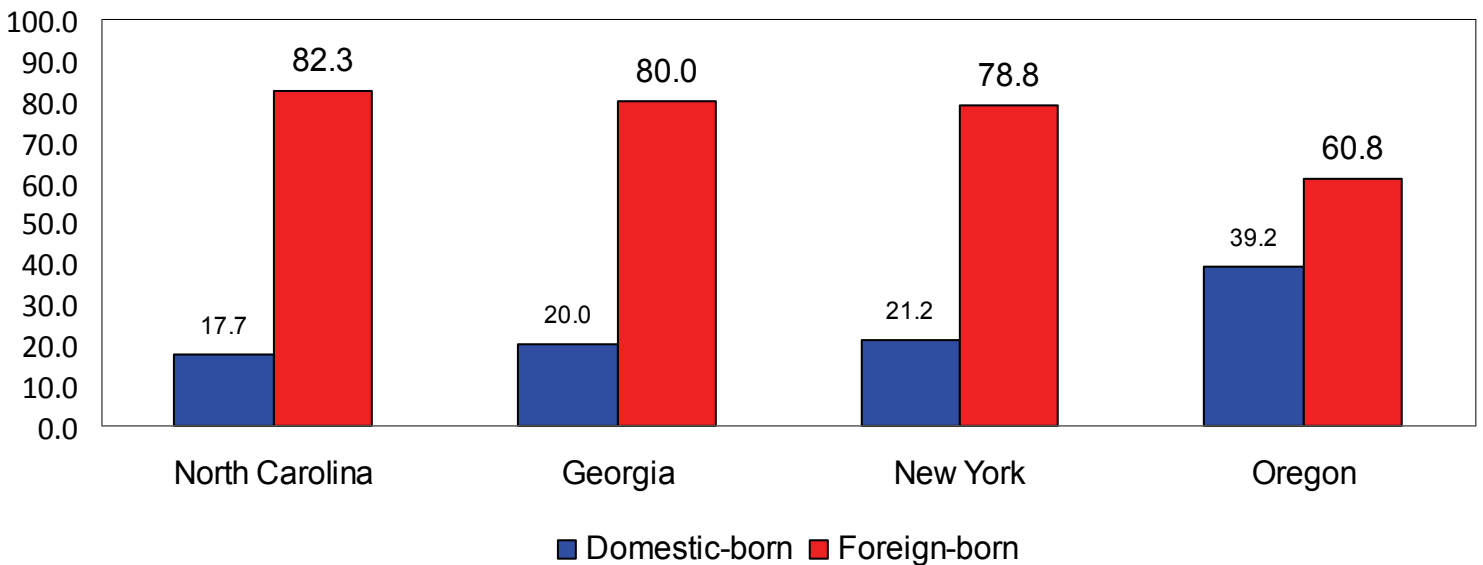


Figure 3
 Percentage of Foreign and Domestic-Born Mexican-Origin Women
 Ages 15 - 44 Residing in Non-Traditional States, 2006



Fertility Rates for Domestic-born and Foreign-Born Mexican Women in the Major Metropolitan Areas of Traditional States

To further illustrate comparative fertility rates of Mexican women in traditional states, large metropolitan areas from within these states were selected for examination -- Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, Riverside, CA., and Los Angeles. Two metro areas from the state of California were included since they have some of the largest concentrations of Mexicans nationwide and because it will be interesting to observe any potential differences in the fertility rates of Mexican women living in Los Angeles a mainly urban area, and Riverside, a suburban area.³

In each of these metropolitan areas the fertility rates of foreign-born Mexican women ages 15-44 were higher than their domestic-born counterparts, although the differences varied in each. (See figure 4). Chicago had the greatest differentiation as well as the highest fertility rates among foreign-born Mexican women. At the other extreme Los Angeles had the lowest fertility rate among foreign-born Mexican women (83.1), although it was still significantly greater than among the domestic-born (60.9). It is difficult to determine the reasons for these divergent patterns in the traditional states. It may be that the presence of large contingents of domestic-born Mexican women in Riverside and Los Angeles, had an impact on the birth-control practices of the foreign-born, since it may be noted that the fertility rates among domestic-born Mexican women in these two metro areas in California were the lowest compared with Chicago, Phoenix, and Houston.

Fertility Rates for Domestic-born and Foreign-Born Mexican Women in Non-Traditional States

It has been stressed that there were significantly higher percentages of foreign-born Mexican women of child-bearing age in the non-traditional states compared with domestic-born women. However, it was only in Oregon and New York where these foreign-born women demonstrated significantly higher fertility rates in comparative perspective. Oregon was the most extreme case. In Oregon foreign-born Mexican women gave birth to 167 children for every thousand women, compared with 92 per thousand among the domestic born in 2006. This rate dwarfed that of foreign-born women in every other state and metropolitan area, and there is no exact reason to explain this. The disparity in New York was also significant as the fertility rate was 101 among the foreign-born and 82 among domestic-born Mexican women of child-bearing age. In Georgia and North Carolina there was near parity in fertility rates among Mexican women by birthplace. (See figure 5). But again, it must be reiterated that the percentage of foreign-born Mexican women of child-bearing age was so much higher in the non-traditional states that these higher birth rates contributed more significantly to population expansion than in the traditional states of Mexican settlement.

Destination (traditional vs. non-traditional states) and place of origin (foreign-born and domestic-born) are not always determining factors which help explain differences in fertility rates of Mexican-origin women. Therefore other important factors, such as educational attainment levels were analyzed to determine if and how they may have influenced fertility rates of domestic-born and foreign-born Mexican women in the U.S.

³ I have chosen to compare the metropolitan areas of traditional states with the total Mexican populations of the non-traditional states, because of two factors. First, the total Mexican populations of the non-traditional states were fairly small compared with the traditional states. Second, the population sizes of the selected metro areas in the traditional states were compatible with the sizes of the Mexican populations in the non-traditional states.

Figure 4
 Fertility Rates of Foreign and Domestic-Born Mexican-Origin Women
 Ages 15 - 44 Residing in Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, Riverside, and Los
 Angeles 2006
 (in births per 1,000 women ages 15 - 44)

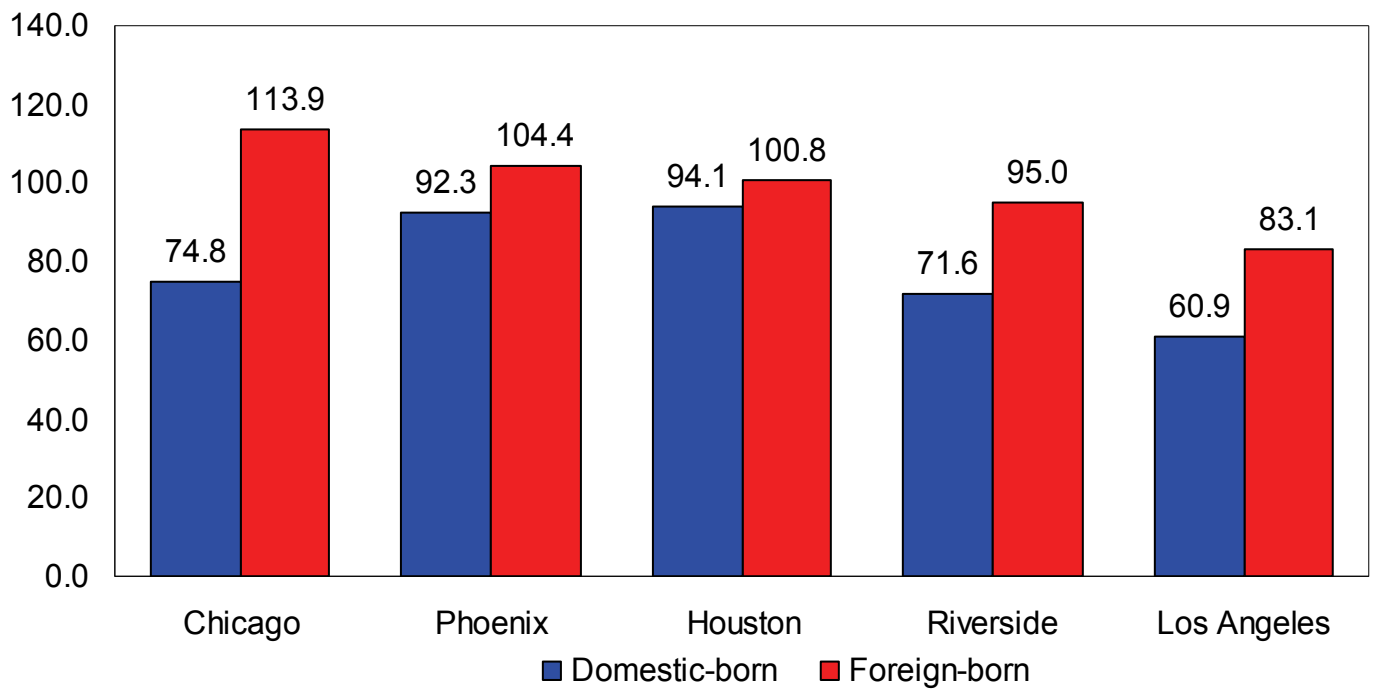
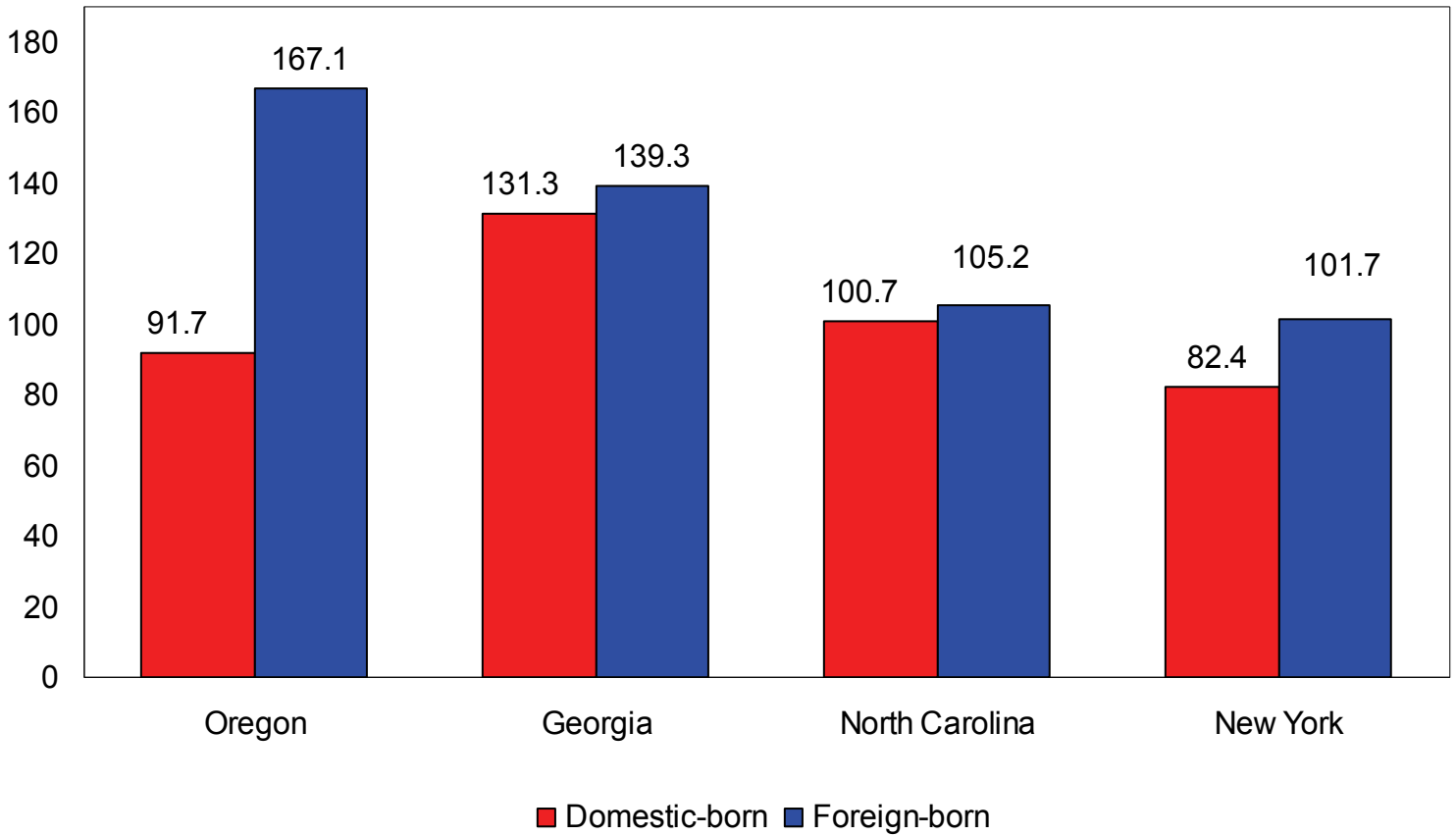


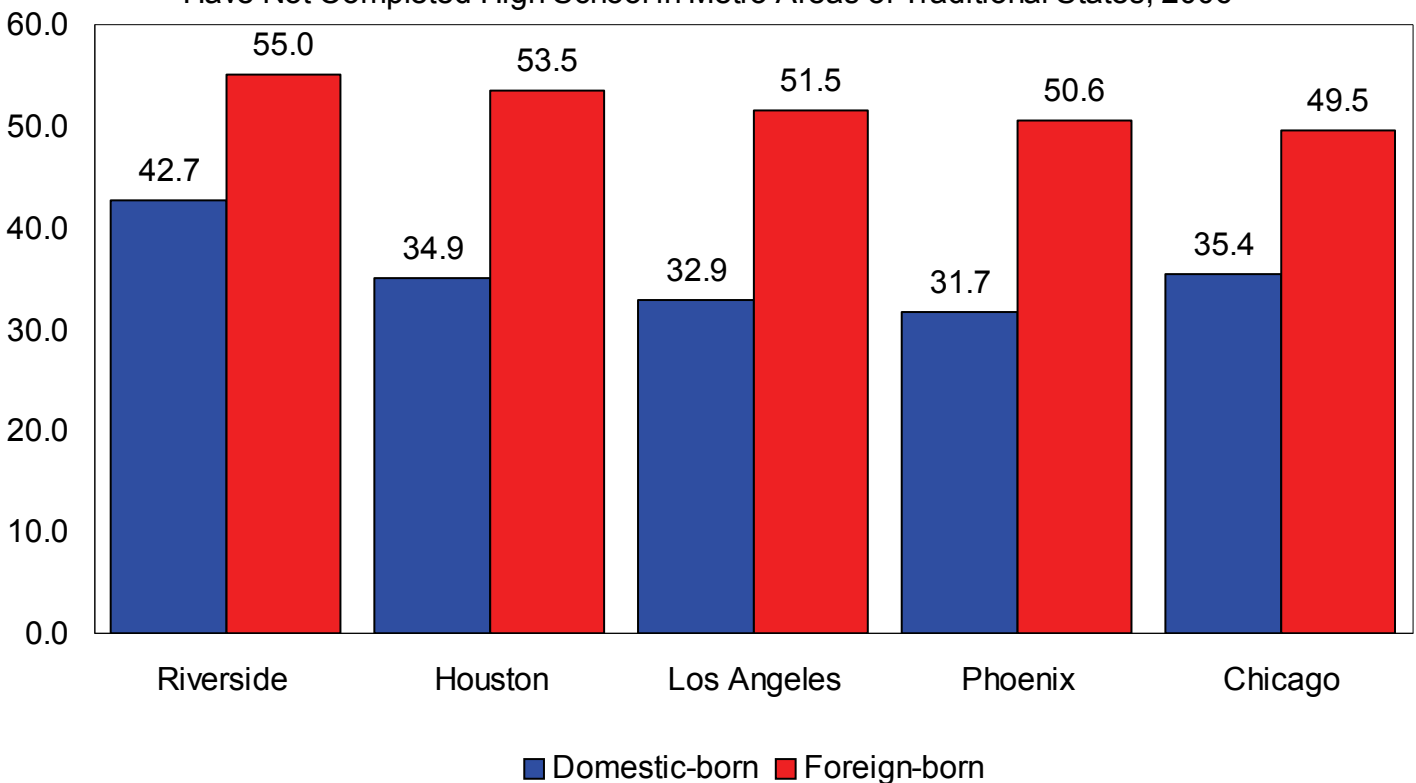
Figure 5
 Fertility Rates of Foreign and Domestic-Born Mexican-Origin Women Ages 15 - 44
 Residing in Non-Traditional States
 (in births per 1,000 women ages 15 - 44)



Educational attainment of foreign-born and domestic-born Mexican women (ages 15-44) in Metro areas in Traditional States

Demographers and other scholars have theorized that less education may be indicative of more restrictive use of birth control and, thus, higher fertility rates. An examination of educational attainment patterns indicate that the percentage of Mexican women who did not complete high-school across all five metro areas in the traditional states of Mexican settlement was higher among foreign-born residents. This was a pattern which could have been anticipated. (See figure 6). On average, 52% of foreign-born women did not complete high-school versus 36% of domestic-born Mexican women. Foreign-born and domestic-born Mexican women in Riverside, a semi-urban metropolitan area, were the least educated of all. However, in Riverside there was not a positive correlation between education and fertility. The fertility rates of Riverside Mexican women were the second lowest among all metro areas in traditional states despite the high levels of women who did not graduate high school. Foreign-born Mexican women in Chicago had the highest fertility rates but the percentage which did not finish high-school was smaller than in other metro areas. Thus, the association of poor levels of educational attainment and high fertility rates can not be established within the Mexican population.

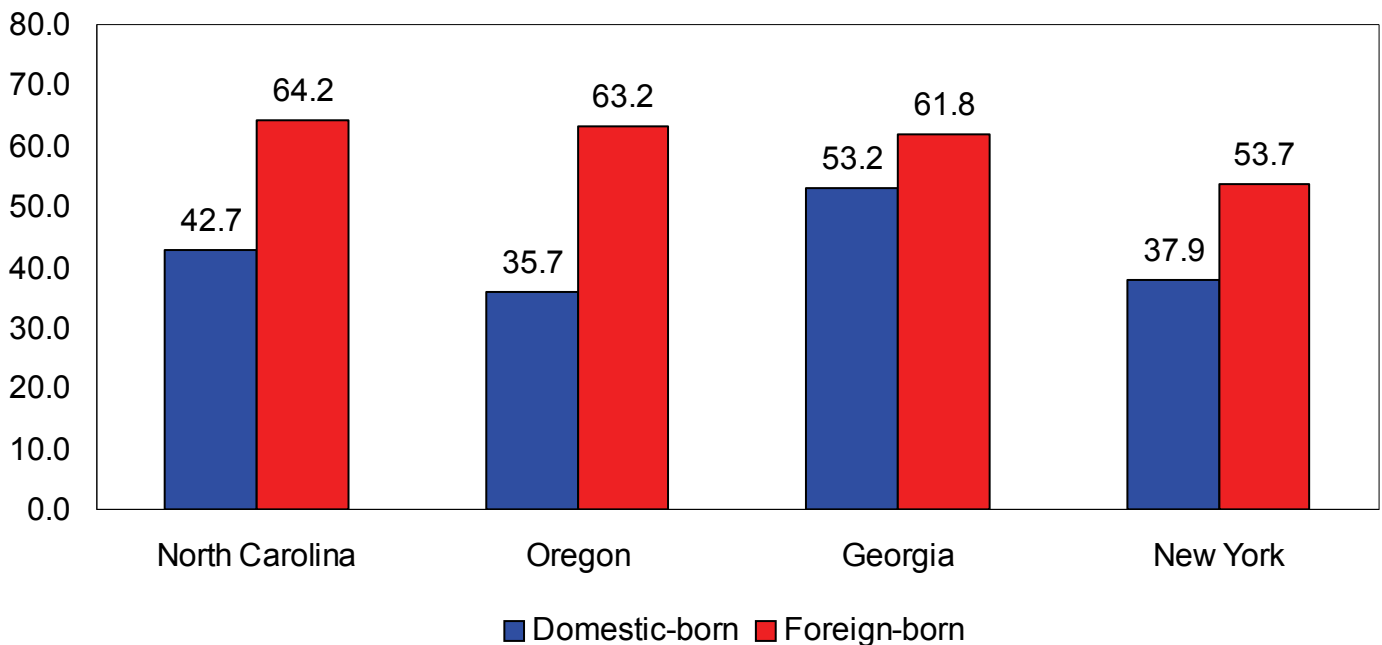
Figure 6
 Percentage of Mexican Women Ages 15-44 by Domestic and Foreign-Born Who Have Not Completed High School in Metro Areas of Traditional States, 2006



Educational attainment of foreign-born and domestic-born Mexican women (ages 15-44) in Non-traditional States

As was the case in the traditional states a higher percentage of foreign-born Mexican women did not finish high-school. On average, 59% of foreign-born Mexican women of child-bearing age did not finish high-school, compared with an average of 39% among domestic-born women who were not high school graduates. (See figure 7). In this case the rates of non-high school graduation among the domestic born were significantly lower. North Carolina, Oregon, and Georgia each had over 60% of foreign-born Mexican women of child-bearing age who did not finish high-school while in New York there were over 50%. These results suggest that there was a positive correlation between fertility rates and education in these non-traditional states. Where foreign-born women had high fertility rates there was also a greater percentage of them who did not complete high-school.

Figure 7
 Percentage of Mexican Women Ages 15-44 by Domestic and Foreign-Born Who Have Not Completed High School in Non-Traditional States, 2006



Conclusion

The growing Mexican population in the U.S. seems to be a result of both the arrival of new immigrants and the increase in fertility rates. Population growth from 1980 to 2006 averaged 4.6 % in traditional states and 9.7% in non-traditional states (see tables 1 and 2). To further explore population growth in traditional states we examined how nativity and education shaped fertility rates in five metro areas with the largest numbers of Mexicans. Foreign-born women in Chicago had the highest fertility rates but the percentage of those who did not complete high school was about equal to women in other urban metro areas. In the semi-urban area of Riverside, CA, Mexican women were the least educated and yet had the second lowest fertility rates. In non-traditional states, the fertility rates of foreign-born women in Oregon well surpassed all women, even when their percentages were similar to those of other non-traditional states (see figures 5 and 7). Overall, our results suggest that neither place of origin (foreign-born vs. domestic-born) nor educational attainment appear as absolute predictors of fertility among women of Mexican origin in the U.S. In non-traditional states, except for North Carolina, fertility rates seem to be a more important contributor to population growth than it is in traditional states. It will be important to consider how other indicators such as generation (1st, 1.5 or 2nd generation) and time of arrival (childhood, adolescence or adulthood) might contribute to emulating the habits and fertility behavior of non-Mexican domestic or foreign-born women.