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Births Are Outpacing Immigration for Mexican-Americans, Report Says

By JULIA PRESTON

The fast-growing population in the United States of people of Mexican origin increased far more in the last decade from births here than from [immigration](#) from Mexico, according to a report on Thursday by the [Pew Hispanic Center](#).

After “one of the largest mass migrations in modern history” brought more than 10 million Mexicans to live in the United States from 1970 to 2007, [the Pew report](#) found, the number of immigrants arriving fell off sharply in recent years.

At the same time, Mexican immigrants who settled here were a young group more likely to be in their child-bearing years than Americans over all, and with somewhat higher fertility rates than Americans, the center reported. From 2000 to 2010, about 7.2 million babies of Mexican origin were born in this country, the report found, while 4.2 million new immigrants arrived from Mexico.

About 31.8 million people of Mexican origin now make up 10 percent of the United States population, according to the report, and nearly two-thirds of all Hispanics in the country.

“The immigration of the last decades built up a relatively young population that is having births,” said Jeffrey S. Passel, senior demographer at the Pew Hispanic Center, an author of the report. The figures,

which are based on recent census data from the United States and Mexico, include Mexican-born immigrants living in this country and Hispanic Americans who trace their ancestry to Mexico. The Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization in Washington.

According to the report, about 39 percent of people of Mexican origin here, or 12.4 million people, are immigrants. No other country in the world has as many of its citizens living abroad as Mexico, the Pew report found.

Of those immigrants, about 6.5 million — or nearly 6 in 10 — are here illegally, according to Pew center research. About 227,500 children who were born in this country last year had at least one parent who was an illegal Mexican immigrant, the Pew center estimated.

In the decade from 1990 to 2000, Pew reported, the Mexican-origin population grew about equally from 4.7 million new immigrants and 4.7 million births in this country. But since 2006, as the [recession](#) took hold, the number of Mexicans coming in dropped by 60 percent, to about 404,000 new immigrants in 2010. Strong economic growth in Mexico recently may have reduced Mexicans' need to seek work in the United States, the Pew report suggests.

The surging numbers of Mexican-Americans born in this country could shift the focus of the acrimonious debate over immigration. Many illegal Mexican immigrants are part of families that include American citizens.

“The key to what kind of citizens those children will become is how they are being educated and incorporated now,” said Robert C. Smith, professor of public affairs at Baruch College, part of the City University of New York.

If the new generation integrates successfully, Dr. Smith said, they will do the work and pay taxes to support a large generation of baby-boomer Americans who are retiring.

Along with economic stagnation, the last three years brought a far-reaching immigration crackdown here, with federal authorities deporting nearly 400,000 immigrants a year and some states adopting

laws to punish illegal immigrants and force them to leave. Yet the Pew report finds that the number of Mexican immigrants leaving the United States declined, to 319,000 in 2010, from 450,000 in 2007.

These findings were confirmed by [a study this week](#) by the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization. It found that fewer Mexicans returned home in 2008 and 2009 than in the two years before the recession.



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