

When Cumulative Causation Conflicts with Saturation of Economic Opportunity: Recent Change in the Hispanic Population of the United States by State

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ABSTRACT

The theory of cumulative causation, originated by Gunnar Myrdal and elaborated by Douglas Massey, implies that a given migration stream normally increases over time. Nevertheless, job opportunities at a particular place of destination may become saturated particularly for immigrants, such as Hispanic immigrants to the United States, with little education and poor ability to speak English.

In this poster I examine the percentage change in the Hispanic population of each State in the United States from 1990-2000 as a function of whether the percentage of the 1990 population in the State which was of Hispanic origin was above or below the average percentage for the United States.

The results imply that saturation of job opportunities may have had a major effect counteracting the effects associated with the theory of cumulative causation. More definite evidence will be forthcoming after the release of more detailed data from the 2000 Census.

Evidence of Saturation of Job Opportunities in Los Angeles:

From the *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 2001:

State's Allure for Immigrants Wanes

Jobs: Hearing Word of More Work and Better Pay Elsewhere, Some Recent Arrivals are Leaving, Study Finds

By Patrick J. McDonnell

It's no surprise to Rene Castillo that many immigrants are eschewing California for places like North Carolina, Massachusetts and the Pacific Northwest. He's thinking about going to Indiana himself in a few months.

"There's already so many people here looking for work, it's hard to find steady jobs that pay much above the minimum," said Castillo, tape measure in his pocket, as he and other day laborers trolled languidly for jobs Tuesday among motorists in the HomeBase parking lot on Slauson Avenue in Ladera Heights. "People say life is better elsewhere."

Although California remains the No. 1 destination for foreign immigrants, the state is not quite the magnet that it was a decade ago.

"California is no longer the promised land that it was for immigrants," said Dowell Myers, a demographer and urban planner at USC. Myers is the coauthor of a study released Tuesday that finds that the pace of foreign immigration to California has finally slowed after three decades of rapid growth.

The attitudes of people like Castillo help explain why. Word of saturated job markets in California, and of opportunities in other states, has traveled rapidly to the towns and cities of Mexico and Central America, which generate the bulk of immigrants to California.

Pioneering immigrants have set up beachheads in such far-flung locales as Seattle and Minneapolis and New York, informing their compatriots and urging others to join them. Networks have developed among villages in Mexico and neighborhoods in Brooklyn, small towns in Pennsylvania and rural enclaves in Georgia. Drive-by hiring centers, long a flash point for controversy in California, have popped up in suburbs on the East Coast, and in the South and Midwest.

Many low-wage immigrants have left California and relocated elsewhere in the country after becoming fed up with the often rough-and-tumble job market, even amid an economic boom.

"Sure, a lot of the young people go to the two Carolinas, to Washington, to Virginia," said Jose de Jesus Lopez, a 52-year-old native of Mexico who was seeking day jobs in the parking lot on Slauson. "They hear there's more jobs, that the patrones [bosses] pay better."

The problem is not a lack of jobs here, the immigrants say – indeed, the region’s unemployment rate remains very low. And low-wage employment in construction, restaurants, hotels and elsewhere is relatively plentiful, even for those here illegally.

But the glut of low-skilled workers drives wages down. “There are so many of us here that the work we do has no value,” complained Hector Tome, a father of four who says he refuses to work for less than \$10 an hour. Others in the parking lot take a similar stand, rejecting jobs that pay less

Table A. Demographic change in Los Angeles County, California, 1990-2000

Year	Total Population	Hispanic Population	Percent Hispanic Population
2000	9,519,338	4,242,213	44.6
1990	8,863,164	3,163,343	35.7
1990-2000 Percentage Increase	7.4	34.1	

Source: www.census.gov

Job Opportunities in a Place that Previously had no Immigrants

From the Greensboro, N.C. *News and Record*, April 16, 2000

A Changing Town

Immigration: A Small Town Struggles to Cope with Change

By Tom Steadman

Siler City – The trill of Mexican guitars and the collective murmur of Spanish-sung hymns float down the narrow aisles of St. Julia Catholic Church, where as many as 200 Latino parishioners jam the pews and spill into the vestibule..

Outside the tiny church, the aging downtown sports a new cluster of small tiendas, stores catering to the area’s burgeoning Hispanic populace. A decade ago, downtown was mostly empty storefronts and vacant sidewalks in this Chatham County town of 5,000...

For more than a century after Reconstruction, little seemed to change here. In the 1990’s, however, upheaval arrived quickly with a Spanish accent. Thousands of new Hispanic immigrants have swollen the population and changed the town forever...

Three thousand or more immigrants, mostly from Mexico but also from Nicaragua and other Central and South American countries, have arrived in recent years to work at the chicken-processing plants and factories that make up much of local industry. Often they were recruited for hard-labor jobs that plant owners had trouble filling, or they followed a friend or relative who had come here to work....

Table B. Demographic Change in Siler City, North Carolina, 1990 to 2000

Year	Total Population	Hispanic Population	Percent Hispanic Population
2000	6,966	2,740	39.3
1990	4,808	184	3.8
1990-2000 Percentage Increase	44.9	1,389.1	

Source: www.census.gov

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. The Percentage of Total Population in 1990 of Hispanic Origin, the 1990-2000 Percentage Increase in Hispanic Population, and the 1990-2000 Percentage Increase in Total Population for each State and for the United States.

Area	1990 Percent of Total Population Of Hispanic Origin	1990-2000 Percent Change in Hispanic Population	1990-2000 Percent Change in Total Population
Alabama	0.6	207.9	10.1
Alaska	3.2	45.2	14.0
Arizona	18.8	88.2	40.0
Arkansas	0.8	337.0	13.7
California	25.8	42.6	13.8
Colorado	12.9	73.4	30.6
Conn.	6.5	50.3	3.6
Delaware	2.4	135.6	17.6
D.C.	5.4	37.4	-5.7
Florida	12.2	70.4	23.5
Georgia	1.7	299.6	26.4
Hawaii	7.3	7.8	9.3
Idaho	5.3	92.1	28.5
Illinois	7.9	69.2	8.6
Indiana	1.8	117.2	9.7
Iowa	1.2	152.6	5.4
Kansas	3.8	101.0	8.5
Kentucky	0.6	172.6	9.7
Louisiana	2.2	15.8	5.9
Maine	0.6	37.1	3.8
Maryland	2.6	82.2	10.8
Mass.	4.8	49.1	5.5
Michigan	2.2	60.7	6.9
Minnesota	1.2	166.1	12.4
Mississippi	0.6	148.4	10.5
Missouri	1.2	92.2	9.3
Montana	1.5	48.5	12.9
Nebraska	2.3	155.4	8.4
Nevada	10.4	216.6	66.3
New Hampshire	1.0	80.8	11.4
New Jersey	9.6	51.0	8.9
New Mexico	38.2	32.1	20.1
New York	12.3	29.5	5.5
North Carolina	1.2	393.9	21.4

Area	1990 Percent of Total Population Of Hispanic Origin	1990-2000 Percent Change in Hispanic Population	1990-2000 Percent Change in Total Population
North Dakota	0.7	66.9	0.5
Ohio	1.3	55.4	4.7
Oklahoma	2.7	108.1	9.7
Oregon	4.0	144.3	20.4
Penna.	2.0	69.7	3.4
Rhode Island	4.6	98.5	4.5
South Carolina	0.9	211.2	15.1
South Dakota	0.8	107.6	8.5
Tennessee	0.7	278.2	16.7
Texas	25.5	53.7	22.8
Utah	4.9	138.3	29.6
Vermont	0.7	50.3	8.2
Virginia	2.6	105.6	14.4
Washington	4.4	105.8	21.1
West Virginia	0.5	44.6	0.8
Wisconsin	1.9	107.0	9.6
Wyoming	5.7	23.0	8.9
USA	9.0	57.9	13.2

Source: www.census.gov

Chart 1. Percentage Change in Hispanic Population 1990-2000 by Percent Hispanic Population in 1990

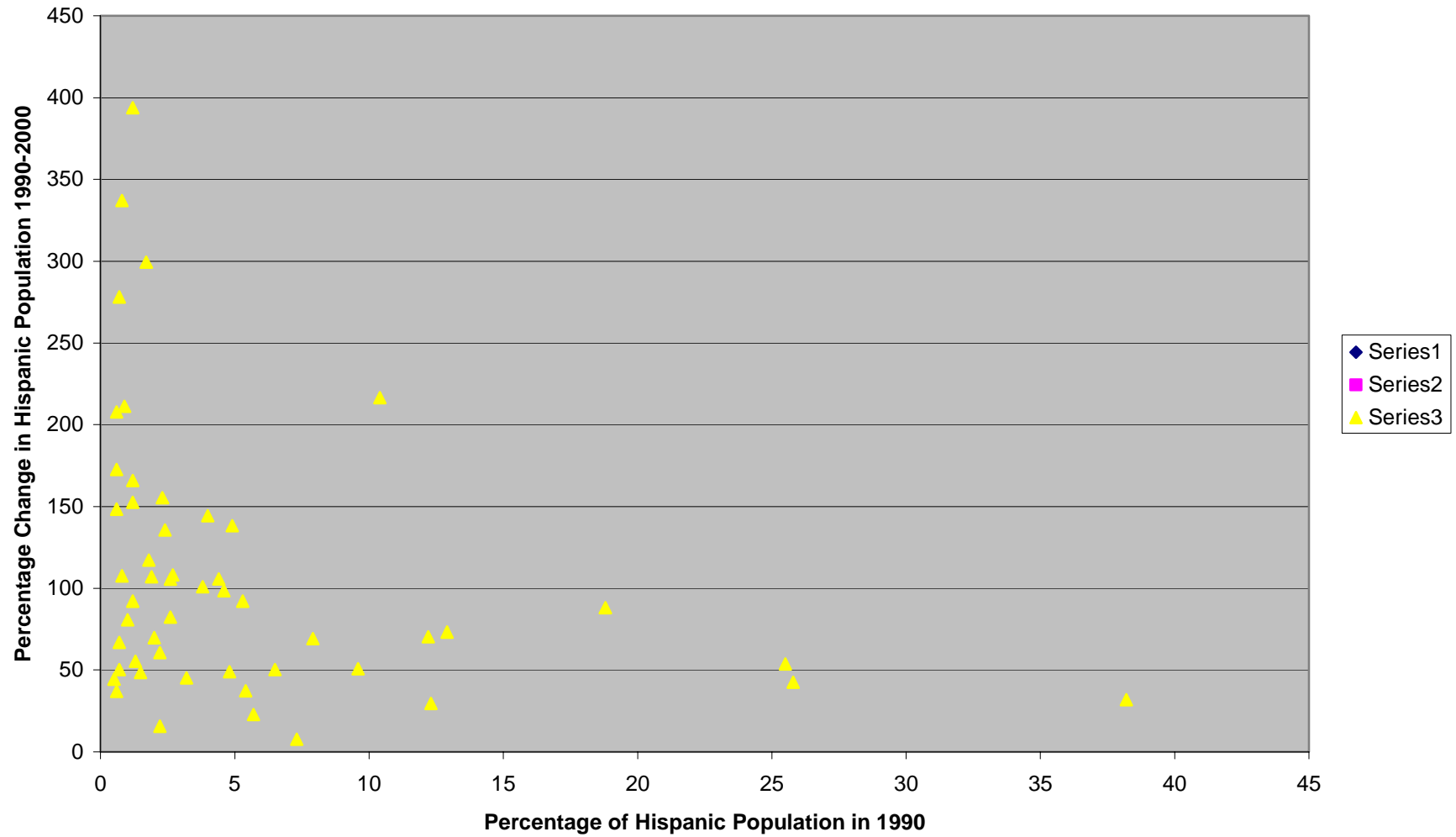


Chart 2. Percentage Change in Hispanic Population in 1990-2000 by Percent Hispanic Population in 1990 for 19 States for Which the 1990-2000 Percent Population Change was Above the United States Average

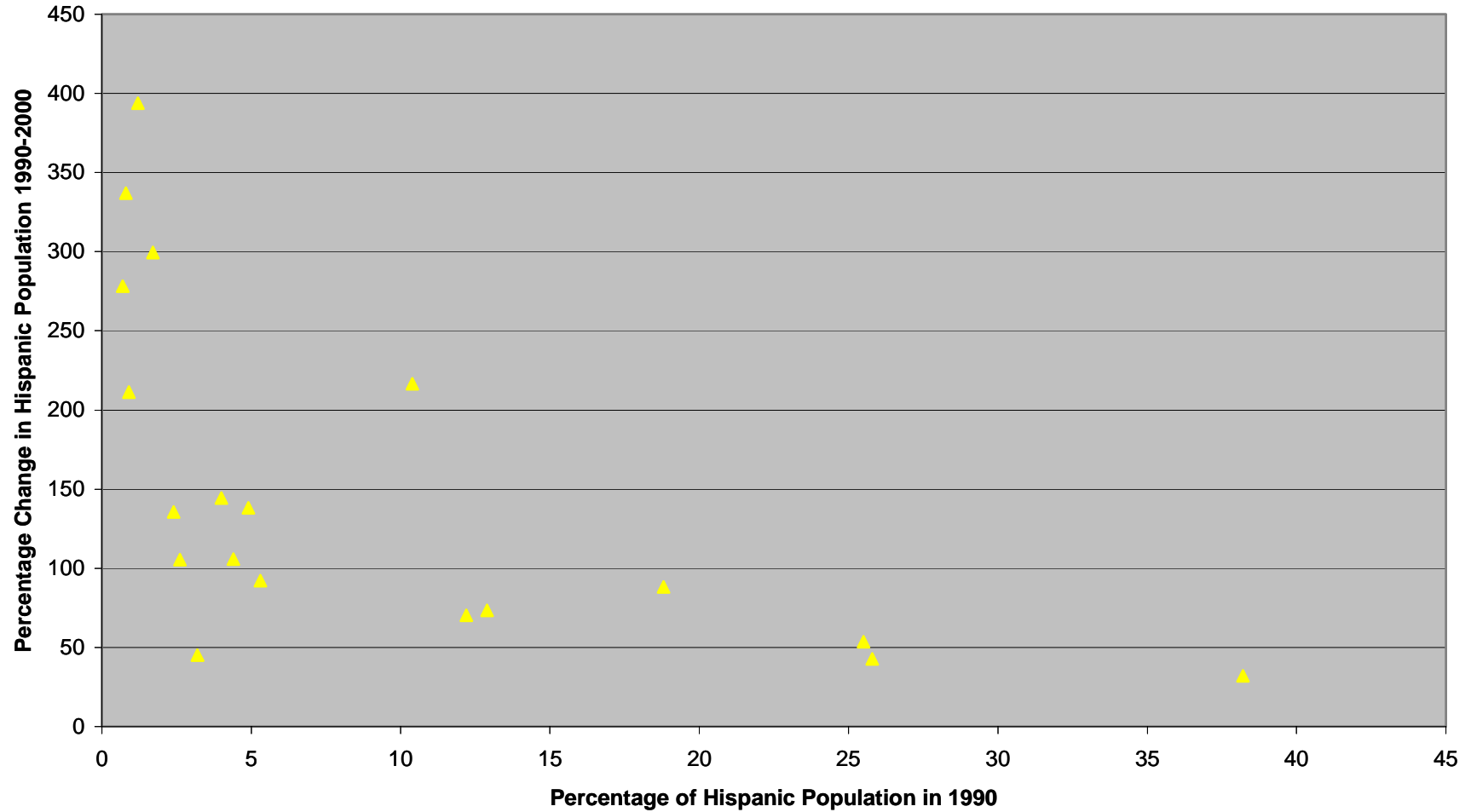


Chart 3. Percentage Change in Hispanic Population 1990-2000 by Percent Hispanic Population in 1990 for 32 States for Which the 1990-2000 Percent Population Change was Below the United States Average

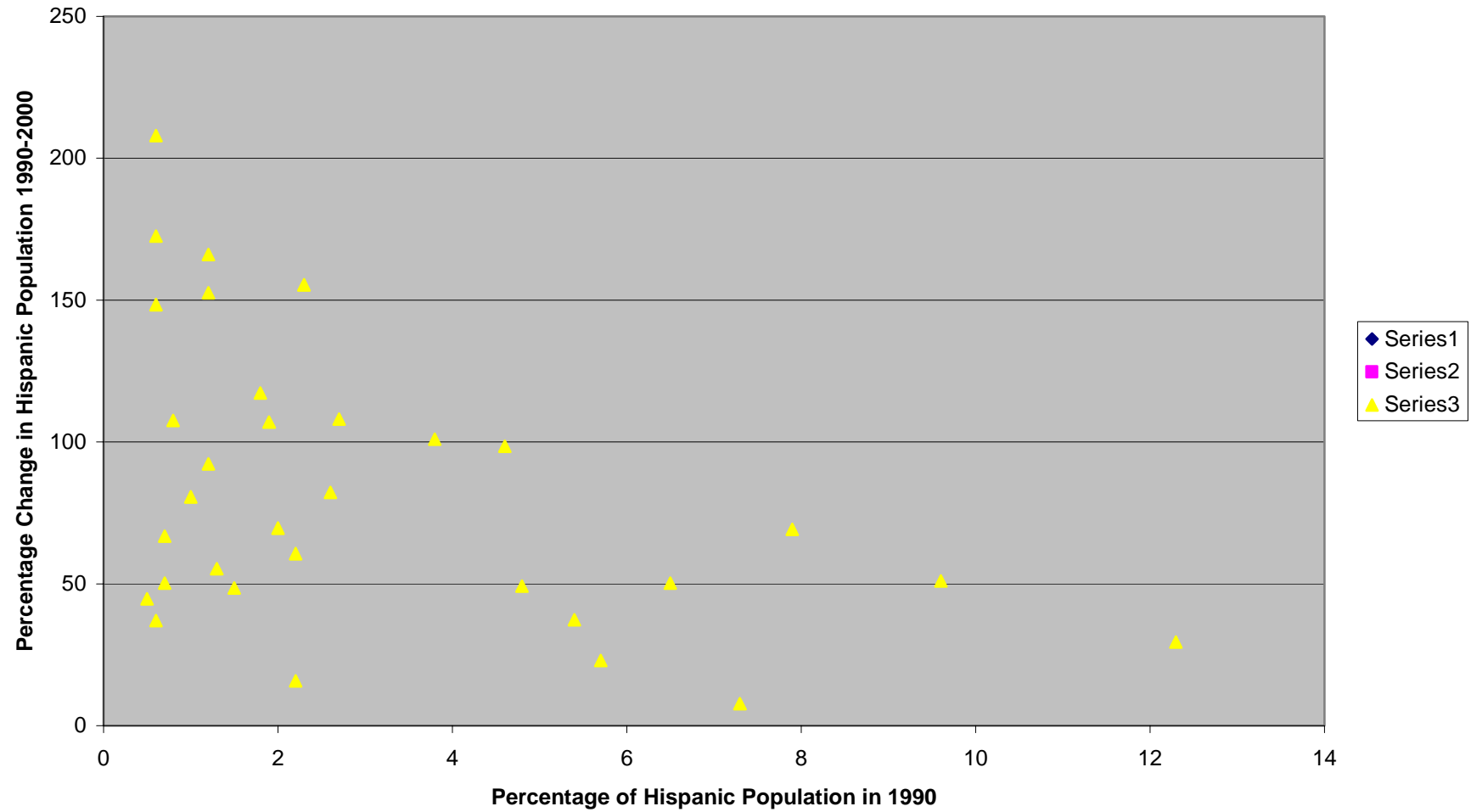


Table 2. The Relationship between the 1990 Percentage of Population which was Hispanic in each State and the 1990-2000 Percentage Change in the State's Hispanic Population.

	1990-2000 % Change in Hispanic Population:		No. of Cases
	Above U.S. Mean	Below U.S. Mean	
1990 % Hispanic:			
Above U.S. Mean	4 (44.4%)	5 (55.6%)	9
Below U.S. Mean	30 (71.4%)	12 (28.6%)	42

Table 3. The Relationship between the 1990 Percentage of Population which was Hispanic in each State and the 1990-2000 Percentage Change in Hispanic Population for States Subdivided by whether the 1990-2000 Percentage Change in total Population was Above or Below the United States Average.

A. For 19 States whose 1990-2000 Percentage change in total Population was Above the U.S. Average.

	1990-2000 % Change in Hispanic Population:		No. of Cases
	Above U.S. Mean	Below U.S. Mean	
1990 % Hispanic:			
Above U.S. Mean	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	7
Below U.S. Mean	11 (91.7%)	1 (8.3%)	12

B. For 32 States whose 1990-2000 Percentage change in total Population was Below the U.S. Average.

	1990-2000 % Change in Hispanic Population:		No. of Cases
	Above U.S. Mean	Below U.S. Mean	
1990 % Hispanic:			
Above U.S. Mean	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2
Below U.S. Mean	19 (63.3%)	11 (36.7%)	30