



# Negotiating the Policy Web in Providing Care to the Immigrant Population

**Sr. Rosemary Donley, PhD, APRN-BC,  
ANP, FAAN**

**Eileen Sarsfield, MSN, APRN, BC**

**Sr. Mary Jean Flaherty, PhD, RN, FAAN**

**Agnes Burkhard, MSN, RN**

**The Catholic University of America**

**Washington, DC**

**November 5, 2007**

**APHA**

# Objectives

- Describe the characteristics of your immigrant population in light of national trends.
- Describe emergent policy questions/issues at your state and federal levels that affect the provision of population based care to legal and illegal (unauthorized) immigrants.
- Name at least 3 policy databases that provide information about immigrants access to health care.

# Immigration is a Global Issue

- Internal Immigration- within the country
- External Immigration-to other countries

## Common Reasons People Migrate:

- A.) To have economic opportunity i.e. jobs
- B.) To follow family (chaining)
- C.) To have freedom and safety
- D.) To be able to follow their religion

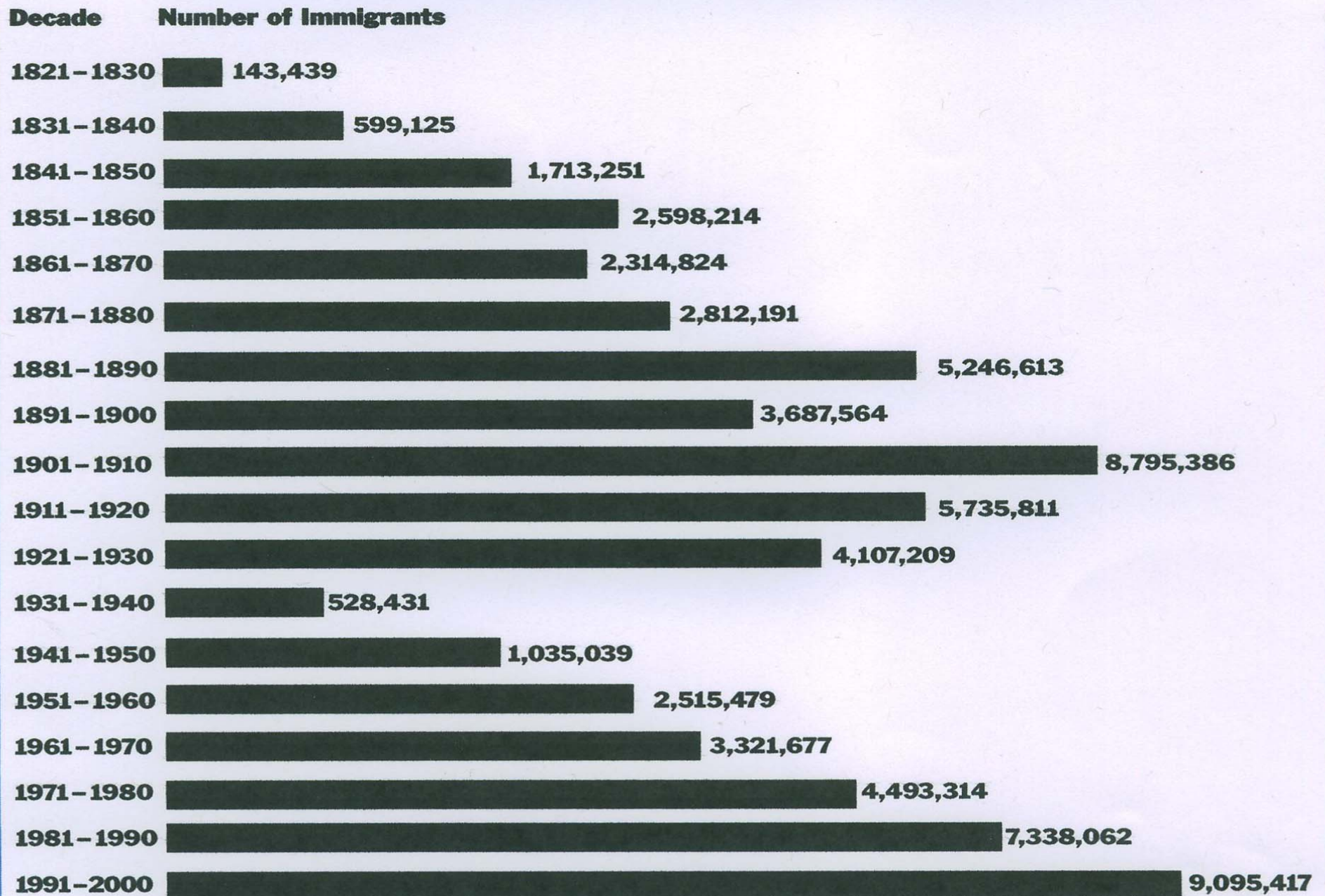
From the beginning – the US has been a nation of immigrants

**“ The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions.”**



1783, President George Washington

## IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES BY DECADE—FROM 1821–2001



Source: 2001 *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*

# Numbers and Types of Immigrant Populations:

- Immigration status: naturalized citizens; legal permanent residents and undocumented (illegal or unauthorized) immigrants
- Rapidly growing – approximately 36 million or 12 % of the US population
- 300,000-500,000 undocumented immigrants enter the US each year
- About 1/3 of immigrants are in each of the 3 categories- approximately 11.5 to 12 million are illegal immigrants as of March 2006

# Top 6 Countries for Legal Immigration to the US (2005)

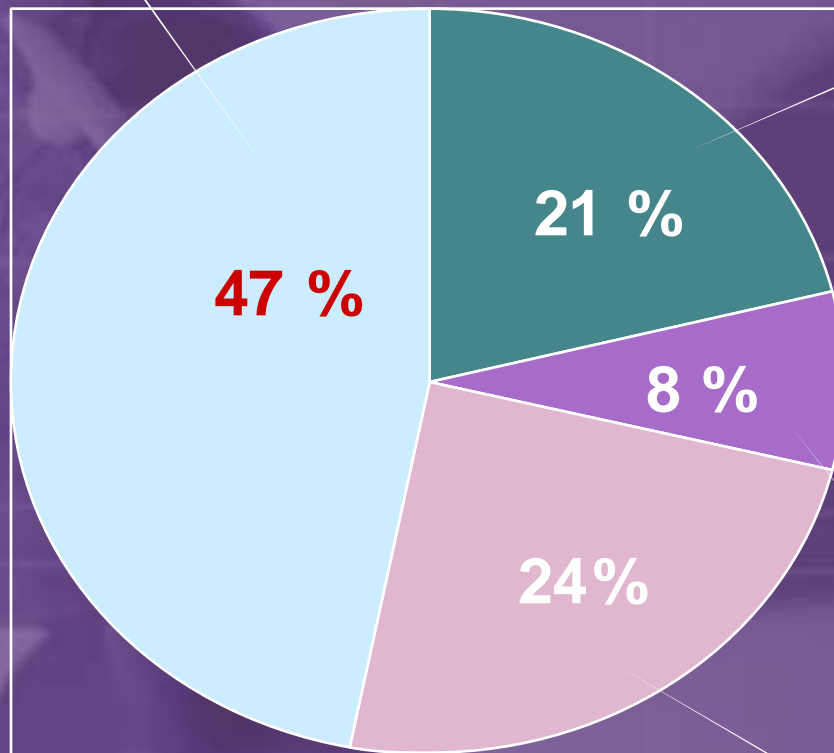
• Mexico	161,445
• India	84,681
• People's Rep . of China	69,967
• Philippines	60,748
• Cuba	36,361
• Vietnam	32,784

2005 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics

# Distribution of 4 Major Immigrant Groups

Hispanic

White

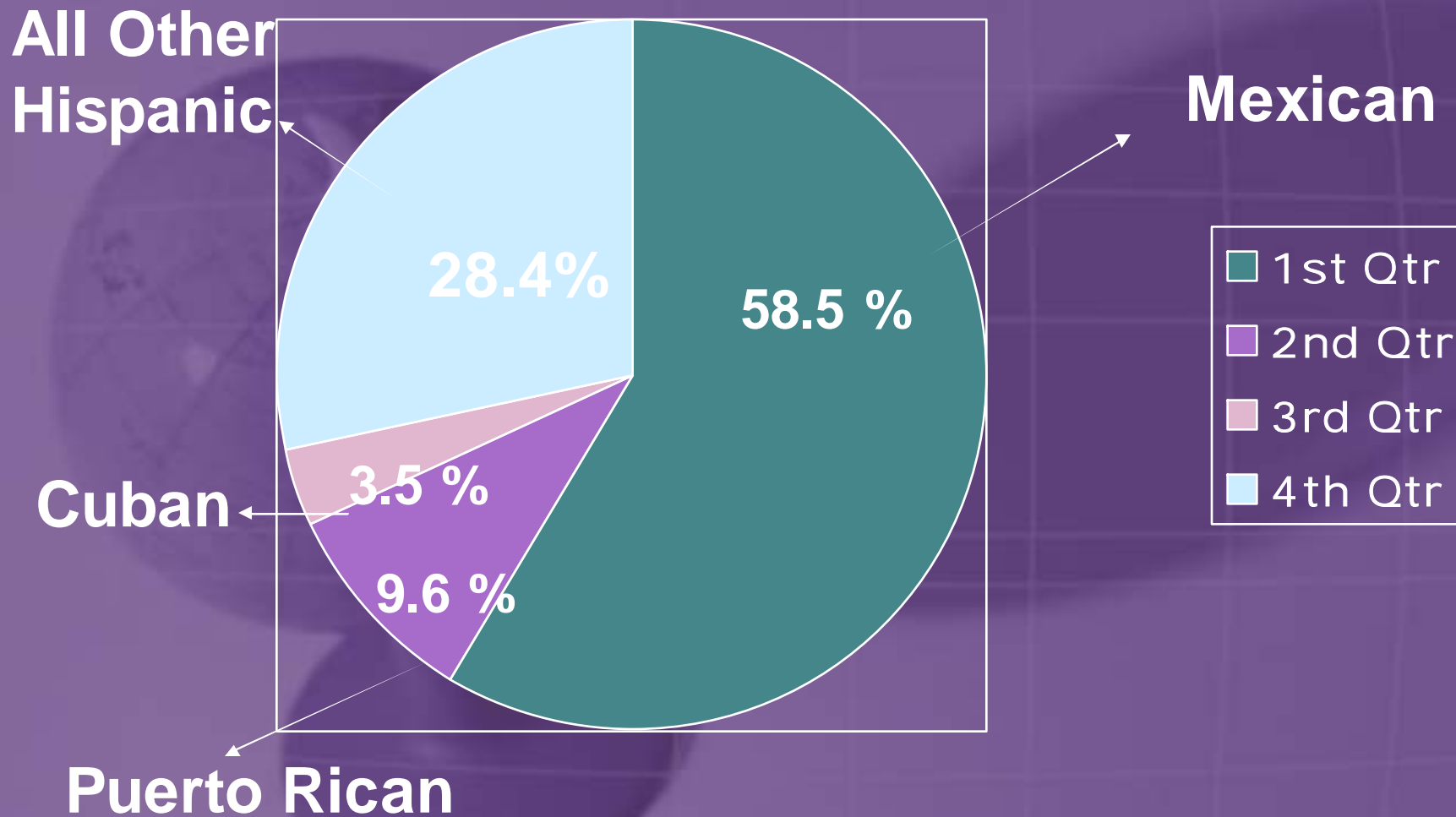


Non- Hispanic Black

Asian



# Distribution of the Hispanic Immigrant Population



US Census Bureau, 2000

# Sociodemographic Characteristics

- Age: Immigrant adults are younger than US counterparts
- Sex: Significantly more women than men in every group except Hispanic adults
- Education: More than 1/3 of immigrant adults have not received a high school diploma (compared to 15% of US adults)

## Educational Level of Immigrants: US Census 2000

Area	US Pop.	All Imm.	<b>African Immigrants</b>	Asian Amer.	Eur., Russia, Canada	Latin, So. Amer. Carribbean
Not Fluent Eng.	0.6%	30.5%	<b>7.6%</b>	23.4%	11.5%	44.0%
< HS	17.1%	39.1%	<b>12.1%</b>	21.2%	23.5%	57.4%
College Degree	23.1%	23.3%	<b>43.8%</b>	42.5%	28.9%	9.1%
Advance Degree	2.6%	4.2%	<b>8.2%</b>	6.8%	5.8%	1.9%

# Sociodemographic Characteristics

- Hispanic immigrants fare worse – 57% have less than a high school diploma
- 76% of Hispanics live in 7 states: CA, TX, NY, FLA, ILL, ARIZ, NJ
- Immigrants are more likely to live in poverty, be uninsured and work in a service industry
- Over 80% of immigrants have a FT worker in the family

**Kaiser Commission, 2004**

# Important differences exist...

- (1) Among Asian and African immigrants – the percent of HS graduates equals the percent for US born population (87%).
- (2) The percent of immigrants in management is highest among Asians (47%) and lowest among Latin Americans (13%)
- (3) The proportion of Asian immigrants living below the FPL is similar to US born (11%) but the percent of Latin Americans living below the FPL is twice as high (22%)<sup>13</sup>

Health Affairs, 2007)

# Immigrants Health Affected by:

- Location whether settled in a familiar or new community
- Immigration Status
- English Proficiency
- Socioeconomic Background
- Immigration laws and practices in their state/locality
- Stigmatization

# Recent Key Immigration Reform Legislation

- Immigration Act of 1965
- Immigration Reform and Control Act 1986
- Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PROWRA)

Divided legal immigrants into 2 categories:

Qualified: Non citizens who immigrated to the US prior to 8/22/ 1996 were eligible for Medicaid

Unqualified :Those entering the US after 8/22/ 1996

These immigrants were barred from Medicaid for 5 years after entry

- USA Patriot Act of 2001

# Immigration Reform Act 2007: Key Points

- Z visa: Provided legal status and a path to legal citizenship for 12 million unauthorized immigrants
- Funding for 300 miles of new barriers, increased camera and radar towers; 20,000 more Border Patrol agents
- Restructured visa criteria to favor skilled workers rather than “chain immigration”
- Replaced employer sponsored immigration program with merit – based system.
- **FAILED TO PASS THE 110<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS**



# Merit -based System

- Changes focus from family preference to socioeconomic emphasis.
- Point System: Points awarded for : education, English proficiency, family connections; job status

# Patchwork Immigration Policies

## Debate on a policy level:

- Tougher immigration laws MAY decrease the number of unauthorized immigrants.
  - VERSUS
- Tougher approach has already failed; Many undocumented workers are already in the US; Penalizing them will harm children and families and force illegal immigrants underground
- State and local laws will continue to increase – causing different rules in different places

# Responses to Eligibility Restrictions

Nearly half the states (23) used state funds to provide health coverage to legal immigrants who are ineligible for Medicaid or SCHIP.

In absence of federal immigration reform, the states have assumed policy leadership introducing almost 2 ½ times more bills in 2007 than in 2006

# Policy Issues That Affect the Provision of Care to Immigrants

- Should employers be prevented from hiring unauthorized immigrants ?
- Should unauthorized immigrants receive non-emergency government benefits ?
- Should there be a pathway to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants ?
- Should the US construct a guest-worker program ?
- Should the current legal immigration process be revamped ?

# Sources for Updated Information R/T Immigration Policies

(1). Homeland Security web site

<http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/benefits/>

(2). National Conference of State Legislatures  
Chart of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/eligibilitychart04.htm>

(3). American Immigration Lawyers Association

<http://www.aila.org/> Under Legislation

(4) <http://thomas.loc.gov> Website of US Congress