

# Debunking fears: Latino growth does not boost crime

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Rural industries, such as meat-packing and textile manufacturing, create job opportunities that have brought significant numbers of Latino workers and their families to small- and medium-sized towns. This influx of Latino migrants is often met with resistance from other residents, who fear increases in crime and poverty rates. But a new study from North Carolina State University debunks those fears, showing that the introduction of Latinos contributes to positive changes, not negative ones.

"When large numbers of Latinos move into an area, some longtime residents worry that there will be a huge influx of needy people who will burden local communities by increasing crime rates and costs for local government," says Dr. Martha Crowley, assistant professor of sociology at NC State and co-author of the study. "We've found that these concerns are unfounded."

New Latino destinations saw larger declines in crime rates than other comparable areas during the 1990s. "It's clear that the fear of crime associated with an increasing Latino [population](#) does not match the reality of declining and comparatively low crime rates found in areas that had large influxes of Latinos," Crowley says.

The study examined the effects of significant Latino population growth between 1990 and 2000 in nonmetropolitan "boomtowns," which emerged as Latinos arrived to fill new jobs in low-wage industries, especially meat processing. The researchers used data on

nonmetropolitan counties without a big city from the U.S. Census and other sources, such as the FBI's [crime](#) statistics. Crowley co-authored the study with Dr. Daniel Lichter of Cornell University.

The researchers also found that [poverty rates](#) and unemployment declined in areas that had an increase in Latino population. "Increasing Latino population does not drag down economic progress," Crowley says. Furthermore, Crowley says, "there was no difference between counties that saw an influx of Latinos and counties that did not in terms of tax increases or other economic costs to local citizens."

However, Crowley notes that the study did find that an increased Latino population put a strain on local schools. "We did find increased pressure on local school systems due to rapid growth in the number of students who did not speak English well," Crowley says. "This created a need for additional instructors or programs to serve those students."

More information: The study, "Social Disorganization in New Latino Destinations?", is published in the December issue of the journal *Rural Sociology*.

Source: North Carolina State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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