

Report: U.S. Hispanic entrepreneurial growth dramatic

By Nancy Dahlberg

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The number of Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States has grown exponentially over the past two decades and Hispanic immigrants in particular have a higher rate of entrepreneurship than the U.S. population at large, according to a report released Tuesday by The Partnership for a New American Economy and the Latino Donor Collaborative.

The study, “Better Business: How Hispanic Entrepreneurs Are Beating Expectations and Bolstering the U.S. Economy,” released in Miami during a panel discussion and press conference, showed that between 2010-2012 the entrepreneurial rate declined overall in the U.S., but among Hispanics the rate shot up, said Jeremy Robbins, executive director of the partnership, an organization of 500 government and business leaders who support immigration reform. “The thing we need more than anything else is young entrepreneurs. This is where the new energy and growth comes from,” he said.

Based on U.S. Census and American Community Survey data, the report found that between 1990 and 2012, the number of Hispanic entrepreneurs in the U.S. more than tripled, rising from 577,000 to 2 million. During the same period, the number of non-Hispanic entrepreneurs grew by just 14 percent.

Since 2000, which included the recession, the number of Hispanic entrepreneurs grew by 71.5 percent, and among Hispanic immigrants, that number was 81.3 percent, the study said. Yet growth among non-Hispanics was just 3.1 percent. And while Hispanic immigrants were less likely than the U.S. population overall to start new businesses in the 1990-2000 period, that trend has reversed in the most recent decade.

That Hispanics are more likely to take risks and start businesses doesn’t surprise Mike Fernandez, the billionaire serial entrepreneur from Miami, who shared his story about arriving with his family from Cuba at age 12, working nights and weekends throughout high school, and being inspired by his father who “had a sixth-grade education but an incredible work ethic.” Though he never finished college, Fernandez — now chairman of MBF Healthcare Partners — went on to found or run 24 businesses. “Many of us are not afraid of failure because we can’t go back to where we came from or we don’t want to,” Fernandez said. “This is our new home.”

Still, the report noted, Hispanic-owned firms are also more likely to be small, with fewer employees than companies founded by non-Hispanic entrepreneurs.

The report did not break out statistics for South Florida, but recent reports by the Kauffman Foundation, for instance, found the ethnically diverse Miami metro area to be No. 1 for entrepreneurial activity. [Kauffman’s report released last week](#) also said the Miami and Fort

Lauderdale areas had the highest growth rates for immigrant technology entrepreneurs over the past decade.

The organizations released their report with a call for immigration reform, suggesting that with reform more Hispanic immigrants could and would make a long-term commitment to the U.S. as business owners. Unlike in countries such as the United Kingdom and Singapore, the U.S. also currently lacks a workable entrepreneurship visa, the report said.

Noting that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates one in three American will be Hispanic by 2060, Fernandez said: "We are 50 million strong and growing. We are risk-takers. ... We are the future."