

FACT SHEET ON LATINO YOUTH: POPULATION

NOVEMBER 2002



HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of US Latinos increased 58% in the last decade, from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000.
- More than one-third of US Latinos are 18 years old or younger and half are under the age of 26.
- Two-thirds of US Latinos are of Mexican descent.
- Over 80% of Latino youth are US-born.
- A majority of US Latino students report English as their primary language.
- Over half of Latino teens live in California or Texas.
- Two-thirds of Latino youth live in two-parent families.

Background

Latinos are rapidly changing the face and culture of the United States. The growth of the Latino population represents both challenges and opportunities for policy makers, program planners, and service providers. The youthfulness of the Latino population suggests that many important issues will involve children, youth and families.

Population Size

The US Latino population is growing rapidly, increasing from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000.¹ These numbers represent a 58% increase, over four times the growth of the total US population which increased by 13% during the same period.

Age

By 2050, Latino youth are expected to comprise 29% of the youth population (See Figure 1).² Fifty percent of US Latinos are under the age of 26 (See Figure 2)¹ and 35% are younger than 18, compared to 32% of African Americans, and 23% of non-Latino whites.¹

National Origin

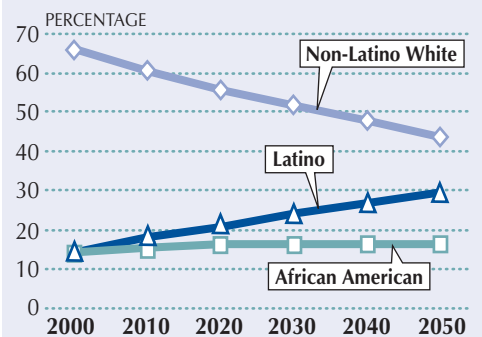
The majority of US Latinos are of Mexican origin or descent (66%). The next largest groups are of Central and South American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin - 15%, 9%, and 4%, respectively.³ Across groups, Latinos of Mexican origin have the youngest median age; 50% are under 24 whereas the median age for Cuban-origin Latinos is 41 (See Figure 2).¹

Immigrant Generation

Most Latinos living in the US are US-born, and this is especially true for Latino youth. Thirty-nine percent of all US Latinos are foreign-born³, compared to 18% of Latino youth (See Figure 3).⁴ Half (48%) of US Latino students were born in the US to at least one foreign-born parent, and one-third (35%) are the US-born offspring of US-born parents.⁴

FIGURE 1

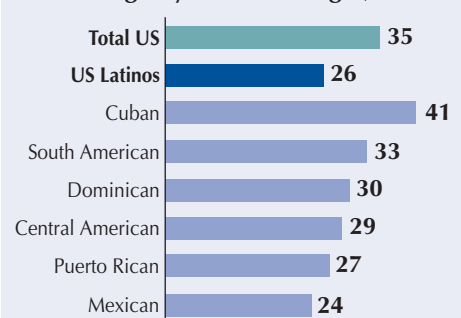
Changing ethnic composition of the US youth population (ages 10-19), 2000-2050



SOURCE: US Census Bureau. 2000. Population Estimates and Projections.

FIGURE 2

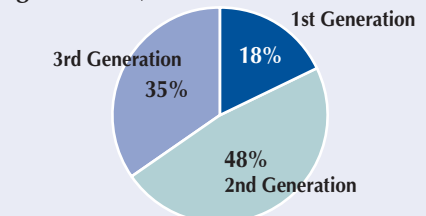
Median age by national origin, 2000



SOURCE: Guzman B. 2001. The Hispanic Population. Census 2000 Brief. US Census Bureau. C2KBR/01-3.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of Latino students (grades 1-12) by immigrant generation, 1999



SOURCE: Jamieson A, Curry A, Martinez G. 2001. School Enrollment in the United States - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October, 1999. Current Population Reports, P20-533, US Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

NOTE: Percents may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Center for Reproductive Health
Research and Policy, Department of
Obstetrics, Gynecology and
Reproductive Sciences
and
The Institute for Health Policy Studies,
University of California,
San Francisco

NOTE: 1st Generation: Foreign-born child who immigrated to the US. 2nd Generation: US-born child with at least 1 foreign-born parent. 3rd Generation: US-born child of US-born parents.

Language

A majority of US Latino students in grades K-12 report that English is their primary language. Fifty-seven percent speak mostly English at home, 25% speak mostly Spanish, and 17% report speaking both English and Spanish equally.⁵

Geographic Distribution

Although US Latinos have traditionally lived in cities, just over half (54%) of Latinos now reside in suburbs.⁶ In 2000, 45% of Latinos lived in the West, 33% lived in the South, 14% lived in the Northeast and 8% lived in the Midwest.³ The last decade has brought significant increases in the number of Latinos in states where until recently Latinos accounted for a small proportion of the overall population. In states such as Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee, the numbers of Latinos have more than tripled in the 1990s.⁷ Distinct Latino communities tend to reside in different regions of the country. Latinos of Mexican descent are most likely to live in the West (57%), those of Puerto Rican descent are more likely to live in the Northeast (64%), and those of Cuban origin are most likely to live in the South (80%).³

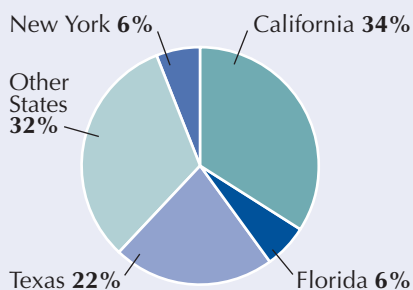
In 1999, over half of all Latino teens lived in California (34%) and Texas (22%) (See Figure 4).⁷ Latino teens comprise nearly half (44%) of all teens in New Mexico, over a third of teens in California (37%) and Texas (35%), and over a quarter of Arizona teens (27%).⁷

Family Structure

The proportion of all children in the US living with two parents has declined in the past two decades. In 1980, 75% of Latino children lived with two parents; this figure declined in the early 1980s and has leveled off somewhat since at 65% (See Figure 5).⁸ In 1980, 22% of Latinos lived with a single parent; this figure rose to 29% by 1985 and has remained fairly stable for the past fifteen years.

FIGURE 4

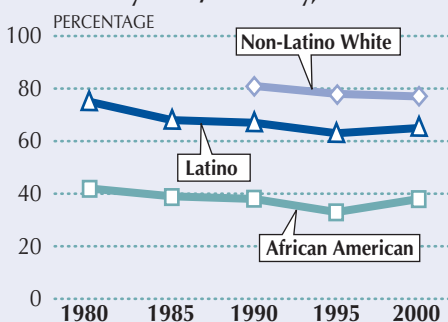
Distribution of US Latino teens (ages 15-19) by state, 1999



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program. 2000. Population Estimates for States by Age, Race, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: July 1, 1999. ST-99-43.

FIGURE 5

Proportion of children in two-parent families by race/ethnicity, 1980-2000



SOURCE: Federal Agency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

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Fact Sheet on Latino Youth: Population

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University of California, San Francisco
3333 California Street, Suite 265
San Francisco, CA 94118
Phone: 415.476.9813
Fax: 415.476.0705
<http://reprohealth.ucsf.edu/>