

## Twenty of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Hispanics in the U.S.

### 1 Who makes up the U.S. Hispanic population?

Hispanics are an ethnically and racially diverse population. In 2005, the Latino population on the U.S. mainland was composed of Mexican Americans (64%), Puerto Ricans (10%), Cubans (3%), Salvadorans (3%), and Dominicans (3%). The remainder are of some other Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origins (17%).

### 2 What terms are used to describe the U.S. Hispanic population?

The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. Some segments of the population also use the term “*La Raza*” which has its origins in early 20th century Latin American literature and translates into English most closely as “the people,” or, according to some scholars, “the Hispanic people of the New World.” The term was coined by Mexican scholar José Vasconcelos to reflect the fact that the people of Latin America are a mixture of many of the world’s races, cultures, and religions. Some people have mistranslated “*La Raza*” to mean “The Race,” implying that it is a term meant to exclude others. In fact, the full term coined by Vasconcelos, “*La Raza Cósmica*,” meaning the “cosmic people,” was developed to reflect not purity but the mixture inherent in the Hispanic people. This is an inclusive concept, meaning that Hispanics share with all other peoples of the world a common heritage and destiny.

### 3 How large is the Latino population?

The Hispanic population is the largest minority group in the country. In 2005, the estimated Hispanic population in the U.S. was 41.3 million, constituting 14% of the nation’s total population. (This estimate does not include the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico.)

### 4 Are most Latinos immigrants?

In 2004, approximately 40% of Hispanics were foreign-born. The majority of Latinos in the U.S. are native-born; about seven out of every ten Hispanics residing in the U.S. were either native or naturalized citizens, compared to more than nine out of every ten people in the total population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2005, 88% of Hispanics under age 18 were born in the U.S.

### 5 What percentage of the foreign-born population comes from Latin America?

More than half (53%) of the foreign-born population residing in the United States comes from Latin America, equaling 18.3 million people. Of those, ten million were born in Mexico. Other countries of birth that contribute large numbers of Hispanics are El Salvador (937,000), Cuba (925,000), the Dominican Republic (688,000), Guatemala (590,000), and Colombia (500,000).

## 6 What do Hispanic population projections show?

Since 1990, the Hispanic population has grown much faster than the U.S. population as a whole, a trend projected to continue in future decades. Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population grew by 57.9%, compared to a nationwide rate of growth of 13.2%. The most recent population projections indicate that by 2050, the Latino population will total roughly 102.6 million people.

## 7 Where do most Latinos in the U.S. live?

Nearly half of the U.S. Hispanic population lives in California or Texas (49%); California is home to 12.4 million Hispanics, and Texas is home to 7.8 million. Thirteen states have at least half a million Hispanic residents: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington.

## 8 Do Spanish-speaking Latinos also speak English?

The majority of Hispanics who speak Spanish are also proficient in English. According to Census data, 31 million U.S. residents age five and older speak Spanish at home. Among all of those who speak Spanish at home, more than one-half say they speak English “very well.”

## 9 What is the age breakdown of the Latino population?

In 2000, the median age for Hispanics was 26 years, compared to 35.4 years for the total population. More than one-third of the Hispanic population was younger than 18, compared to approximately one-fourth of the total population. Additionally, 4.8% of the Hispanic population was 65 and older, compared to 12% of the total population.

## 10 What is the educational status of Hispanics?

Hispanics make up 18% of the nation’s elementary and high school students, triple the proportion in 1970 at the crest of the baby boom’s school enrollment. In 2004, 58% of Hispanics age 25 and older had at least a high school education, and 12% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Furthermore, 714,000 Hispanics 25 years and older had advanced degrees in 2004 (e.g., master’s, professional, and doctorate).

## 11 Do most Hispanics work?

A large portion of the Hispanic population participates in the labor force. In April 2004, 67.9% of the Hispanic population 16 years old and over, or almost 19 million persons, were in the labor force, which was slightly higher than the levels of participation for the total U.S. population (65.6%). Despite comparable rates of labor force participation among these groups, Hispanics experienced an unemployment rate in 2004 (7.6%) that was higher than that for the total U.S. population (6.1%).

## 12 What types of jobs do Latinos hold?

The Hispanic population is represented in a wide variety of occupations. For instance, there are 38,500 Hispanic physicians and surgeons; 50,400 Hispanic postsecondary teachers; 53,400 chief executives of businesses; 38,100 lawyers; and 5,000 news analysts, reporters, and correspondents. Less than one in five (18%) Hispanics work in managerial, professional, and related occupations. However, Hispanics are disproportionately employed in service and support occupations. One in four (24%) work in service occupations; 22% in sales and office jobs; 15% in construction, extraction, and maintenance jobs; and 19% in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations.

## 13 What is the economic status of Latinos?

The real median income of Hispanic households in 2004, unchanged from the previous year, was \$34,241. In 2004, the poverty rate among Latinos was 21.9%, unchanged from 2003.

## 14 In what ways do Hispanic businesses contribute to the U.S. economy?

The number of Hispanic-owned businesses is rising dramatically. There were 1.6 million Hispanic-owned businesses in 2002, up 31% from 1997. Their receipts were \$226.5 billion, up 22% from 1997. A total of 199,725 such firms had paid employees, with receipts of \$184 billion, or about \$921,090 per firm. About 40% of Hispanic-owned firms were in administrative support and waste management, health care, and other service industries, with another 13% in construction. Hispanic-owned firms claimed between 15% and 22% of businesses in New Mexico, Texas, Florida, and California.

## 15 What is the make up of Hispanic households?

The majority of Hispanic households are married-couple families (67%). Of those families, 44% have children under the age of 18. As of July 1, 2004, 11% of the Hispanic population was under the age of five. Hispanics had a higher concentration of preschoolers among their population than any other race or ethnic group.

## 16 Are Hispanics primarily homeowners or renters?

Most Latinos are renters, and Hispanics have relatively low homeownership rates overall. In 2005, approximately 49.5% of Hispanics were homeowners, compared to 75.8% of Whites and 48.2% of Blacks.

## 17 Do Hispanics participate in civic engagement activities?

The 2004 elections were historic for the Hispanic community in the U.S. At least 7.5 million Latinos voted in 2004 - an increase of approximately 27% over the 2000 elections - more than doubling the Latino electorate since 1988.

## 18 What is the health status of Latinos?

The Latino community faces a number of significant health challenges and disparities. Hispanic health is often shaped by factors such as the lack of health insurance, language/cultural barriers, and lack of access to preventive care. Data indicate that, as of 2002, heart disease is the leading cause of death for all Latinos (24%), followed by cancer (20%), unintentional injuries (8%), cerebrovascular disease (6%), and diabetes (5%). Other health conditions and risk factors that significantly affect Hispanics are asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, HIV/AIDS, obesity, suicide, and liver disease. *The 2005 National Healthcare Disparities Report* (NHDR), a comprehensive overview of disparities in health care in the U.S. among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, found that while disparities in access were becoming smaller for other racial and ethnic groups, Hispanics had worse access to care than non-Hispanic Whites for 88% of the core measures used in the report. By virtually any standard, U.S. Latinos experience severe disparities in comparison to their White counterparts.

## 19 What percentage of the Latino population is covered by health insurance?

Across all age groups, Latinos are substantially more likely than non-Hispanic Whites or African Americans to lack health insurance. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that the uninsured rate for Latinos was 32.7% in 2004, compared to 11.3% for non-Hispanic Whites and 19.7% for African Americans.

## Do U.S. Hispanic data include residents of Puerto Rico?

Most data and other statistics reported on the U.S. Hispanic population do not include residents of Puerto Rico. However, the available data show that socioeconomic trends among Puerto Ricans on the Island are somewhat similar to those of Latinos on the U.S. mainland. In 2005, the Puerto Rican population was estimated to be 3.9 million people, representing a 9.6% increase since 1990. With regard to educational status, 60% of Puerto Ricans 25 years old and over have a high school diploma, and 18.3% have earned a bachelor's degree, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. These rates are well below those for the total U.S. population but slightly higher than the mainland Latino population. Poverty rates in Puerto Rico are quite high, relative to those of both mainland Latinos and the U.S. in general; nearly one-half (44.6%) of the island Latino population lived below the poverty level in 2000. Finally, the rate of unemployment has declined from one-fifth (20.4%) of island residents in 1990 to approximately 9.2% in 2006.

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