

NCLR

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. The Latino population on the U.S. mainland is composed of Mexican Americans (64%), Puerto Ricans (9%), Cubans (3.4%), Salvadorans (3.1%), and Dominicans (2.8%). The remainder is composed of Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origins (17.7%).

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 ethnic minority in the country. As of July 1, 2007, the estimated Hispanic population in the U.S. was 45.5 million, constituting 15% 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 2006, approximately 61% of Hispanics were foreign-born. While nearly two-thirds of Latinos are foreign-born, the second generation is growing faster than the first. More Latinos are being born in the United States than immigrating to this country. 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?

In 2007, more than half (53.6%) of the foreign-born population residing in the United States came from Latin America, equaling 20 million people. Of those, 57.5% were born in Mexico. Other regions of birth that contribute large numbers of Hispanics are Central America (13.3%), the Caribbean (16.6%), and South America (12.6%).

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 132.8 million people, or 30% of the total population.

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

Nearly half (48%) of the U.S. Hispanic population lives in California or Texas; California is home to 13.2 million Hispanics and Texas is home to 8.6 million. Sixteen states have at least half a million Hispanic residents: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, 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, 34 million U.S. residents age five and older speak Spanish at home. Spanish speakers constitute 12% of U.S. residents.

9
What is the age
breakdown of the
Latino population?

In 2007, the median age for Hispanics was 27.6 years, compared to 36.6 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. In addition, approximately 5.5% of the Hispanic population in 2007 was 65 and older, compared to 12% of the total population.

10
What is the
educational status
of Hispanics?

In 2007, nearly one in five (19%) of the nation's elementary and high school students and 11% of U.S. college students were Hispanic. In 2007, 60% of Hispanics age 25 and older had at least a high school education and 13% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, 811,000 Hispanics age 25 and older had advanced degrees in 2007 (e.g., master's, professional, and doctorate).

11
What percentage of
Hispanics are in the labor
force?

A significant portion of the Hispanic population participates in the labor force. In 2007, 69% of the Hispanic population age 16 and older were in the labor force, which was slightly higher than the level of participation for the total U.S. population. Despite comparable rates of labor force participation, Hispanics experienced an unemployment rate in 2007 (5.6%) which was higher than that of the total U.S. population (4.6%).

12
What types
of jobs do
Latinos hold?

The Hispanic population is represented in a wide variety of occupations. For instance, there are 42,600 Hispanic physicians and surgeons; 53,600 postsecondary teachers; 82,500 chief executives of businesses; 43,000 lawyers; and 5,700 news analysts, reporters, and correspondents. Less than one in five (17%) Hispanics work in managerial, professional, and related occupations. However, Hispanics are disproportionately employed in service and support occupations. Nearly one in four (24%) work in service occupations; 22% in sales and office jobs; 17% in construction, extraction, and maintenance jobs; 18% in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations; and 2% in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations.

13
What is the economic
status of Latinos?

The median income of Hispanic households in 2007, statistically unchanged from the previous year after adjusting for inflation, was \$38,679. That year, the poverty rate among Latinos was 21.5%, up from 20.6% in 2006.

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. The revenue generated by these businesses was \$222 billion in 2002, up 19% from 1997. Approximately 29,168 Hispanics owned firms with receipts of \$1 million or more. About 43% of Hispanic-owned firms operated in construction, administrative support, waste management and remediation services, and other areas such as personal services and repair and maintenance. Retail and wholesale trade accounted for 36% of Hispanic-owned business revenue.

15
What is the makeup of Hispanic households?

The majority (67%) of Hispanic households are married-couple families. Of those families, 44% have children under the age of 18. As of July 1, 2007, nearly one in four (24%) Hispanics were under the age of five.

16
Are Hispanics primarily homeowners or renters?

Hispanics have relatively low homeownership rates overall. In 2007, slightly more than half (50.1%) of Hispanics lived in renter-occupied units, while 49.9% lived in owner-occupied units, compared to a nationwide rate of 67.2%.

17
What is the level of Hispanic participation in civic engagement activities?

Exit polls from the 2008 presidential election suggest that at least ten million Latinos voted, representing an increase of 32% from the 2004 election, in which 7.6 million people turned out to vote.

18
What percentage of Hispanics lack health insurance?

In 2007, the percentage of Latinos without health insurance was 32.1%, down from 34.1% in 2006. Although the percentage of uninsured Latino children decreased to 20% from 22.1% in 2006, Latinos continue to be the most uninsured ethnic youth group in the country.

19
What is the level of Hispanic participation in the U.S. military?

Latinos have served with distinction in the U.S. military for generations. Forty-three Latinos have won our nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. As of 2007, 1.1 million Hispanics were veterans of the U.S. armed forces. According to a spokesperson from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, approximately 45,000 noncitizen immigrants are now serving in the U.S. military, and hundreds of thousands have served throughout the country's history.

20
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 2007, Puerto Rico's population was estimated to be 3.9 million people, unchanged from 2006. Two-thirds of Hispanic Puerto Ricans age 25 and older have a high school diploma, a rate that is well below that of the total U.S. population (84.5%) but slightly higher than the rate for mainland Latinos (60.6%). More than one-fifth (21.1%) of Hispanic Puerto Ricans have earned a bachelor's degree or higher, a rate that is lower than the total U.S. population (27.5%) but higher than the rate for the mainland Latino population (12.5%). Poverty rates in Puerto Rico are substantially higher than the rates for both mainland Latinos and the U.S. in general; nearly one-half (45.5%) of the island's Latino population lived below the poverty line in 2007. Finally, as of August 2008, the unemployment rate of island residents was 11.8%.

Sources, by Question

1. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month 2008: Sept. 15 – Oct. 15," news release, http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/012245.html (accessed November 5, 2008).
2. José Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cósmica* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
3. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
4. U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*, S0201, "Selected Population Profile in the United States, Hispanic or Latino (of any race)," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-geo_id=NBS&ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_®=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201:400;ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201P:400;ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201T:400;ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201TPR:400;&-_lang=en&-caller=geoselect&-redoLog=true&-format (accessed November 5, 2008); U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*, C05003I, "Sex by Age by Nativity (Hispanic or Latino)," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&SubjectID=15233518&-_lang=en&mt_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_C05003I&-format=&-CONTEXT=dt (accessed November 5, 2008).
5. U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*, S0506, "Selected Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth: Latin America," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0506&-ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-format=&-CONTEXT=st (accessed November 5, 2008).
6. Betsy Guzmán, *The Hispanic Population*. Conducted by the Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC, 2001, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2008); U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
7. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
8. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
9. U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*, S0201.
10. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
11. U.S. Department of Labor, *Current Population Survey*, Table 3, "Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by age, sex, and race," and Table 4, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by age and sex." Conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington, DC, 2007.
12. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
13. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
14. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
15. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month."
16. U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*, S0201.
17. National Council of La Raza, "Latino Voters Turn Out in Record Numbers," news release, November 5, 2008.
18. U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month"; U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, "2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement," Table HI01. Conducted by Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington, DC, 2008, http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032008/health/h01_009.htm (accessed November 5, 2008); U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, "2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement," Table HI01. Conducted by Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington, DC, 2007, http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032007/health/h01_009.htm (accessed November 5, 2008).
19. Sean Bowlin, "Team Randolph celebrates 'Hispanic Heritage Month,'" *Randolph Air Force Base*, September 26, 2008, <http://www.randolph.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123116383> (accessed November 5, 2008); U.S. Census Bureau, "Facts for Features, Hispanic Heritage Month"; U.S. Department of Defense, "Servicemembers Receive 'Outstanding Americans by Choice' Award," *American Forces Press Service*, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47576> (accessed November 5, 2008).
20. U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 Puerto Rico Community Survey*, S0201-PR, "Selected Population Profile in Puerto Rico," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IPTable?_bm=y&-context=ip®=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201:400;ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201P:400;ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S0201TPR:400;&ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&-tree_id=306&-redoLog=true&-_caller=geoselect&-geo_id=04000US72&-geo_id=NBS&-search_results=01000US&-format=&-_lang=en (accessed November 5, 2008); Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economy at a Glance, Puerto Rico," U.S. Department of Labor, <http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.pr.htm#Fnote2> (accessed November 5, 2008).