



## 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 (3.5%), Salvadorans (3%), and Dominicans (2.7%). The remainder are of some other Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origins (17.8%).

### 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, 2006, the estimated Hispanic population in the U.S. was 44.3 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 are 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?

More than half (54%) of the foreign-born population residing in the United States comes from Latin America, equaling 20 million people. Of those, 63.9% were born in Mexico. Other countries of birth that contribute large numbers of Hispanics are Cuba (3.5%), El Salvador (2.9%), Dominican Republic (2.7%), Colombia (1.8%), and Guatemala (1.7%).

## 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, or 24% of the total population.

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

Nearly half of the U.S. Hispanic population lives in California or Texas (48%); California is home to 13.1 million Hispanics, and Texas is home to 8.4 million. Fifteen 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, 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, 32.2 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 2006, the median age for Hispanics was 27.4 years, compared to 36.4 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, in 2006, approximately 5.4% of the Hispanic population was 65 and older, compared to 12% of the total population.

## 10 What is the educational status of Hispanics?

In 2005, Hispanics made up 19% of the nation’s elementary and high school students. In 2006, 59% of Hispanics age 25 and older had at least a high school education, and 12% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Furthermore, 839,000 Hispanics 25 years and older had advanced degrees in 2006 (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 2005, 68% of the Hispanic population 16 years old and over were in the labor force, which was slightly higher than the levels of participation for the total U.S. population. Despite comparable rates of labor force participation, Hispanics experienced an unemployment rate (5.9%) in July 2007 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 49,200 Hispanic physicians and surgeons; 53,700 Hispanic postsecondary teachers; 77,700 chief executives of businesses; 29,000 lawyers; and 3,300 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. One in four (24%) work in service occupations; 22% in sales and office jobs; 16% in construction, extraction, and maintenance jobs; 19% in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations; and 2% in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations.

## **13** What is the economic status of Latinos?

The real median income of Hispanic households in 2005, statistically unchanged from the previous year, was \$35,967. In 2005, the poverty rate among Latinos was 21.8%, statistically unchanged from 2004, compared to 8.3% for Whites.

## **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 29,000 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 services such as personal services and repair and maintenance. Retail and wholesale trade accounted for 36% of Hispanic-owned business revenue. States with the fastest rates of growth for Hispanic-owned firms between 1997 and 2002 included New York (57%), Georgia and Rhode Island (56% each), and Nevada and South Carolina (48% each).

## **15** What is the makeup 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, 2006, 23% of the Hispanic population was under the age of five.

## **16** Are Hispanics primarily homeowners or renters?

Most are renters, and Hispanics have relatively low homeownership rates overall. In 2007, approximately 49.7% of Hispanics were homeowners, compared to 72.6% of Whites and 47.9% of Blacks.

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

Approximately 7.6 million Latinos reported voting in the 2004 presidential election. The percentage of Hispanic citizens voting – about 47% – did not change statistically from 2000.

## **18** What percentage of Hispanics lack health insurance?

In 2006, the percentage of Latinos without health insurance increased to 34.1%, after remaining statistically unchanged at 32.7% for the previous three years. The percentage of uninsured Latino children increased from 21.5% to 22.1%, which continues to make them the highest 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 since our nation's inception – including nearly 500,000 in World War II – and nearly 41 Latinos have won our nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. As of 2005, 1.1 million Hispanics were veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Approximately 45,000 noncitizen immigrants are now serving in the U.S. military, and hundreds of thousands have served throughout the country's history.

## 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 2006, Puerto Rico's population was estimated to be 3.9 million people, unchanged from 2005. With regard to educational status, 66.1% of Puerto Ricans 25 years old and over have a high school diploma, and 26.1% have earned a bachelor's degree, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These rates are well below those for the total U.S. population but slightly higher than those for 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 (45.5%) of the island Latino population lived below the poverty level in 2005. Finally, as of April 2006, the unemployment rate of island residents was 9.7%.

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