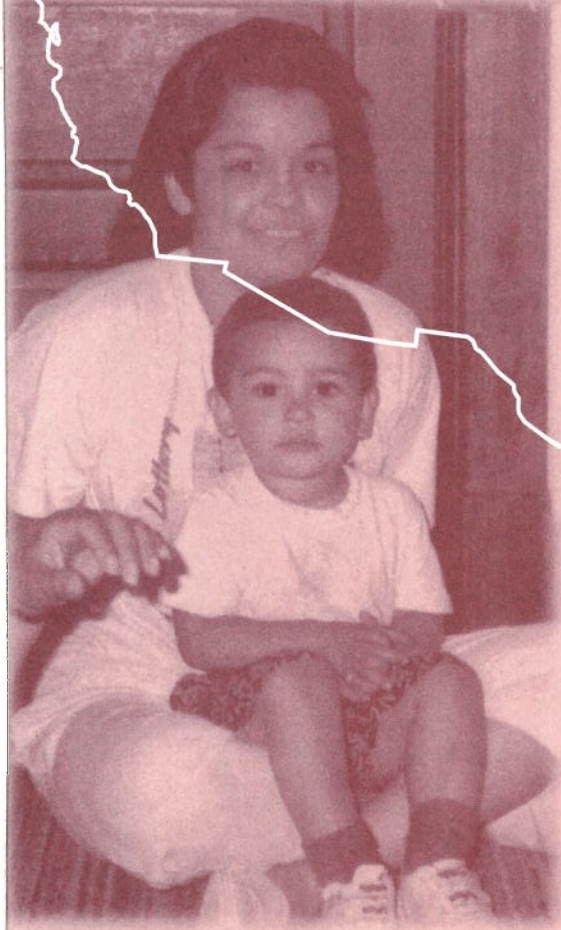


# NCLR

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA



## UNTAPPED POTENTIAL: A Look at Hispanic Women in the U.S.



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# **Untapped Potential:**

## **A Look at Hispanic Women in the U.S.**

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## A Note From the Author:

I would like to dedicate this report to my mother, Luz María Pérez, and to my mother-in-law, Mirtha Blanco Duany, two women who have taught me about the strength, resourcefulness, and potential of Latinas.





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# Foreword

Of the numerous studies and analyses that NCLR's Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation has produced, this report is the first to compile, document and analyze information exclusively on U.S. Latina women. It is important and timely for several reasons.

First, in part because of media coverage and attention surrounding the Fourth International Women's Conference in China, the world community has recently had an opportunity to focus on the key issues affecting the status of women. Most of us would agree that while women have made much progress in several arenas, we also still have many obstacles before us. Based on the findings in this report, the barriers for many Hispanic women in the U.S. are formidable.

Second, because Hispanics as a group are often overlooked in mainstream policy debates, the strengths and concerns of women in our community have not received the attention they deserve. Latinas in the U.S. face many of the same challenges as women globally but also confront distinct issues, including an increased likelihood of raising children alone, rising poverty, poor educational status and, compared to other women, a disproportionate threat from domestic violence and the AIDS virus.

Third, recent public policy debates, both nationally and at the state level, signal dramatic — and potentially harmful — changes for Latinas. The opportunity to make meaningful and needed changes to the welfare system, for example, evolved into an assault on the alleged behavior of poor women and legal immigrants, and a disregard for the well-being of their children. As a nation, we have allowed ourselves to forget our collective responsibility to each other; instead, we have been seduced by dangerously simple solutions that may ultimately reduce the number of families receiving welfare — but actually increase the number of Americans in poverty. For the Latino community whose poverty rate has increased steadily since 1980, the implications of persistent poverty are profound. The economic status of Hispanic women, already fragile because of poor skills, insufficient education and training, and lack of child care, will be greatly affected by this "reform." Similar concerns arise with proposed changes to immigration policy. Proposals aimed at responding to concerns about immigration are increasingly hostile and extremely harsh, and are based more on blame and xenophobia, and less on the principles on which our nation was founded. Partly as a result, many Latinos and others who look or sound "foreign" are subject to discrimination in schools and places of employment. For some Latinas, this means that gender bias may also be compounded by discrimination based on national origin.

These very themes surfaced during a session at the 1995 NCLR Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas, at which a preliminary copy of this report was released. Over 200 workshop participants (both female and male) packed a room to hear about and discuss the issues facing Latinas. Against a backdrop of sobering statistics from this report, a distinguished panel of women presenters shared a range of their personal and professional experiences as Latinas. These testimonies and stories reflected common threads, including the need for more serious research on Latinas, a lack of thoughtful strategies to respond to the educational and economic problems they face, especially as these relate to current policy proposals, and a call for both Latino and non-Latino advocates to broaden the scope of their agendas to include three issues in particular that threaten the health, well-being, and status of Latinas: adolescent pregnancy, domestic violence, and AIDS.





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As a community, and as women, we know we still have a long way to go. But I believe this report is a signal to Latino research, policy, and advocacy organizations that we must all share the responsibility for promoting the well-being of women. It also gives us a foundation to vigorously pursue the documentation of and response to problems that have been ignored for too long, such as domestic violence against Latinas. And it supplements the work of mainstream women's organizations by presenting a special focus on Hispanic women.

Now, more than ever, we must understand that the statistics outlined here represent individual women's lives. These data are a tool for our advocacy efforts, as well as for community-based program development. And, for those who shape policy and make decisions about women's lives, this report underscores the serious work that remains to be done regarding education and training, health and social status, and child care. I am hopeful that this information, coupled with the energy and enthusiasm I saw in Dallas, will move us to unite our leadership, our political power, and our efforts to change the current status of Latinas — and to make an impact on the future opportunities for our daughters.

Irma Flores Gonzales  
Chair, NCLR Board of Directors



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# Executive Summary

This report represents an effort to synthesize existing data and information on the status of Latina women, as well as to highlight the areas of concern that researchers, policy makers, and advocates should address. In the context of the nation's rapidly changing demographics, a review of the status of Latinas is long overdue, since the well-being of both Latino families and the cities and states in which they live is inextricably linked to the opportunities and improved status of Hispanic women. In addition, the projected increases in the Latino population as a whole will fuel the growth in the numbers of Hispanic female workers. The ability of those workers to enter and contribute to the U.S. economy underscores the need to pay attention to the well-being of Latinas.

The report's findings show that:

**Both education levels, and quality and transferability of skills, are essential to changing the socioeconomic outlook of Latinas.** In terms of educational status, Hispanics are the least educated of all major U.S. ethnic and racial groups, and tend to be underserved by federal education and training programs. Because education is central to determining a worker's future prospects and position, the poor educational experiences and status of Latinas affect their work options, salaries, and overall socioeconomic profile.

**Low earnings, occupational segregation, and employment discrimination must be addressed in order to improve the status and prospects of Hispanic women workers.** Partly because of their low educational attainment levels, Latinas who are employed are overrepresented in jobs at the low end of the pay scale and are severely underrepresented in professional positions. In fact, Latina workers earn the lowest wages of any major worker group. Jobs which pay low earnings also tend not to provide important benefits, like health insurance or pension coverage. Furthermore, low-paying employment is often unstable employment, vulnerable to changes in the economy and worker displacement. It is also the least likely segment of the work force to allow for flexible work schedules. Moreover, projections regarding jobs in which Latinas currently work indicate that these fields will experience little or no growth — an issue which raises serious concerns about the future economic stability of Hispanic women and their families. Latinas are also especially likely to be employed in jobs traditionally considered "women's work." The continued segmentation of the labor market has acted to keep Hispanic and other women out of higher-paying as well as more challenging jobs. Employment discrimination is another serious obstacle to the entry of Hispanic women into certain areas of the labor force and their upward mobility.

**Hispanic women's poverty must become a priority issue for policy makers and advocates and the lens through which it is viewed must be broadened.** Because Latino poverty overall has remained largely invisible to advocates and policy makers, Hispanic women's poverty has generally been ignored. Yet, the data and trends suggest that poverty is a serious concern for Latinas and requires more public policy attention. For a variety of reasons, poverty among Hispanic women has increased over the last decade. Yet, during this time, few efforts were made by legislators to shape policies that would help to improve the poor economic status of women. An analysis of Latina representation in the current welfare debate underscores several problems which impede the amelioration of Latino poverty, including: the narrow framing of poverty as a Black/White issue; the ignorance about Latinos — a significant segment of the U.S. population which is disproportionately represented among the poor; and the grouping of Hispanics within a broader "minority" category.



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In addition to both educational status and economic position, three other issues critically influence the overall well-being of Latina women. First, the increases in **Hispanic teenage pregnancy** over the past decade have serious implications for Latinas and their children. Unmarried, unplanned births among Latinos often result in lack of school completion, poor work opportunities because of low skills, long-lasting poverty, and health consequences.

A second troubling issue for Latinas is **domestic violence**. As this report describes, violence against Hispanic women — and immigrant women in particular — is manifested in distinct ways relative to other women. Often, inadequate resources in the form of shelters, bilingual/bicultural services, legal assistance, and information have compounded the problem. A third major concern in the review of Hispanic women's socioeconomic status is the overrepresentation of Latinas among women infected with the virus that causes **Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome (AIDS)**. Several principal issues — including lack of health insurance, poor health care education and options, and insufficient prevention programs — need to be explored for their relationship to the especially high risk that Latinas face in contracting AIDS.

This report's analysis suggests that:

- ❖ **Latino advocates and researchers should appropriately continue to focus attention on education and civil rights policies to increase opportunities for Hispanic females.** Because education and discrimination remain serious barriers to the social and economic advancement of Latinas, policy-relevant research and advocacy in these areas are critical. In particular, two challenges exist to raising the education levels of Latinas: understanding why their dropout rates are not declining; and determining how to increase not just high school completion, but also assure the development of “higher order” skills through education and training.
- ❖ **Schools and Latino parents must ensure that Hispanic girls are participating in and taking courses that are rigorous, including advanced math, science, and college preparatory classes.** Specific efforts at the school level are needed to improve the quality and quantity of education of Hispanic females. The discussion demonstrates that higher educational attainment is key to improving the participation, placement, and overall earnings of Latinas in the labor market.
- ❖ **Major changes in the design, outreach, and implementation of training programs are needed to ensure the proportionate participation of Hispanic women.** Training programs have not met their goals for Latinas or served them well. Those under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Labor have done a poor job at ensuring the adequate participation of unemployed Latinas and their re-integration into stable, lasting employment that pays at least above poverty-level wages. Programs for welfare recipients, like JOBS, have not served the “hardest-to-employ.” Inadequate funding, the channeling of Latinas into training components that are not effective at moving them into the job market, and the inadequate provision of basic skills and English literacy in order to prepare them for jobs, have worked to keep Latinas poor and/or on welfare.
- ❖ **Comprehensive strategies are needed to increase the labor force participation rate and earnings of Hispanic women.** The rising labor force participation rate of U.S. Hispanic women is a hopeful sign that Latinas who choose to do so will continue to secure their place in the paid labor force. Researchers and policy makers should increase efforts to identify whether and the extent to which the presence or absence of children, geographic location, or other elements affect the em-



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ployment activity of Latinas. Additionally, because Latina women seem to have been relegated to a niche in low-wage work, the challenge for both the Hispanic community and policy makers is to facilitate their entry into other levels of the labor force. Without an increase in both labor force participation and in earnings, Hispanic married-couple and single-mother families will increasingly lose the modest gains they have made in the past decade and slip further below the poverty level.

- ❖ **Policy makers must increase resources and options for child care, health care, and child support to ensure both the full integration of Latinas into the labor force and their overall economic stability.** Affordable, quality child care is scarce, and the mainstream child care system may not be responsive to Latina preferences and interests. Health care reform is a crucial issue for Latinas, given their low rates of health care coverage. The child support system does not work well for anyone, but works least well for Hispanic women. The combination of these “supports” must be available for both single and married Hispanic mothers to facilitate and ensure their participation in the workforce.
- ❖ **Researchers and Latino advocates should devote serious attention and resources to understanding changes in Hispanic family structure.** Data show that Latino two-parent families, while still overrepresented among the working poor, are faring better economically than their single-parent counterparts. Additionally, research on the increases in African American female-headed households has documented profound effects of such growth on the Black community and provides lessons for other populations to consider. The rise in Hispanic single-mother families and the formation of such families among young women, in particular, pose a serious threat to their overall well-being and to the socioeconomic prospects of the Latino community; these changes deserve an equally serious focus.
- ❖ **Both national and community-based Latino organizations need to increase their emphasis of teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and AIDS on their advocacy agendas.** Too often, issues related to Hispanic women’s education and employment status are included in broader economic agendas, but issues such as teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and AIDS rarely get the attention that the data suggest they merit. Moreover, these issues need both a research and policy focus; research to document the scope and seriousness of the problems, and advocacy to ensure that they are on the nation’s public policy “radar screen.”

This report echoes the need for increased attention to the needs and strengths of Latina women. It helps to document the serious challenges that cities, states, and the nation as a whole must consider to improve the socioeconomic status and prospects of Latinas, but it also confirms the untapped potential that lies among women in the Latino community. Hispanic women have a strong role to play in contributing to the nation’s future growth and economic and social development. With increased opportunities and participation in education and employment, greater support for Hispanic women who are mothers, and protection against violence and discrimination, the futures of Latinas will be promising and hopeful.





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# Introduction

Women's lives have changed dramatically over the past few decades. In the last ten to 15 years, especially, the social, economic, and political status of women has substantially improved. More women are entering and completing college and graduate school; greater numbers of women are in the workforce and are slowly breaking through traditionally male domains; and the representation of women at all levels of elected and appointed office, from school boards to Congress, is higher than it has ever been. In addition, a recent study showed that more than half of employed women earn at least half of their household income. Taken together, these facts suggest that women have attained a permanent place in the paid labor force.

Despite these gains, large disparities still remain between women and men, as well as between White women and minority women. In particular, the portrait that can be painted of U.S. Hispanic\* women differs greatly from that of non-Hispanic White women. Latinas have experienced increases in educational levels and are more likely to be in the workforce, both as employees and employers, compared to a decade ago. But a significant proportion of Hispanic women have not been lifted by these rising tides of progress. Their strides have been slow and uneven, and their economic status remains fragile. In fact, the mixed picture that is generally presented of Hispanic socioeconomic status — with its notable advancements and disappointing setbacks — is also reflected in the status of Hispanic women.

Several trends underscore the need to pay attention to the well-being of Latinas. First, the projected increases in the Latino population as a whole will fuel the growth in the numbers of Hispanic female workers. As a result of these demographic changes, Hispanic women will constitute a sizeable share of the workers entering and contributing to the U.S. economy. Between 1980 and 1990, for example, Hispanic women accounted for 13% of the increase in total female employment. Moreover, such growth is not expected to be limited to selected states, like California or New York. Rather, other areas of the country like the Midwest, that have traditionally not been considered Latino enclaves, will also experience increases in their Hispanic workforces.

A second trend which merits further attention concerns the social and economic status of Hispanic women. Latinas overall have had a consistently poor socioeconomic status reflected in low levels of education and job skills, and sluggish earnings. In addition, high poverty rates, especially among female-headed households, have been a principal contributor to the persistent poverty of Latinos overall. The combination of these characteristics suggests a poor economic outlook for Latinas; consequently, their roles as breadwinners, household heads, mothers, and workers may be compromised.

Third, the proportion of Latino, as well as other female-headed families, has been steadily rising over the years; researchers and policy makers do not know nearly enough about why this is happening or how to prevent it. For Latinos, the continued growth of families headed by women alone will mean higher rates of poverty; it may also portend lower rates of labor force participation and poor educa-

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\* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino"/"Latina" are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer collectively to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, South American, Dominican, and other Spanish or Latin American descent.



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tional outcomes for Latino children. For the nation as a whole, the consequences of increasing numbers of poor Latino children are serious and will be felt by every sector of society, particularly in the form of greater demands on the educational and social service arenas, and lost productivity of a growing segment of the U.S. labor force.

Because Latinos as a group have been largely ignored by those who design and implement public policy, the status, needs, and concerns of Hispanic women are barely acknowledged or understood. Recent policy debates bear this out. State and federal policy makers, public officials, and policy researchers have spent the past two years examining, criticizing, and trying to "reform" not simply the welfare system, but welfare recipients and their children. Despite high Hispanic child and family poverty rates, the extent to which proposed changes in the distribution of public benefits will affect Latinas — and their children — has received little attention. In fact, Latinas have largely been absent from the process which will yield major changes in the nation's economic "safety net."

Moreover, changes in the social and economic characteristics of Hispanic women, as well as the implications of these trends, have been inadequately documented and publicized. Broadly disseminated women-focused policy research has often overlooked or ignored the status and needs of Hispanic women. As a result, policy makers know little about how their actions will help — or harm — Hispanic women, and Latino advocates are armed with few facts or resources to shape their agendas and substantiate their claims.

Latinas have also been overlooked too frequently by traditional women's rights organizations. These organizations have done much to advance the status of women in the U.S. as a whole, but have often failed to adequately address or represent the specific concerns of Latinas and other minority and disadvantaged women. Consequently, many of the successes of the women's movement have not been reflected in the status of Latinas; in some cases, the problems that they were intended to address are different from those faced by Hispanic women. In other cases, efforts have not been targeted directly at, or designed to address the needs of, Hispanic women.

Latino and other social science researchers have helped to address this knowledge gap, but data and information needs still exist. In addition, the important work that has been done to date<sup>1</sup> should be expanded to include concrete, action-oriented policy recommendations to address major concerns. National Latino organizations have also contributed to filling this Latina information gap, but their work typically has been carried out in response to imminent policy debates, or has tended to place Latinas within the rather narrow context of "family" issues. National Latina women's organizations, like the Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA) and the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women (NACOPRW), have begun to lay the foundation for serious attention to the concerns of Hispanic women. As a whole, however, most organizations have not secured or devoted sufficient resources to the examination of and advocacy related to a broader array of issues affecting Latinas as individuals and as a group; these issues include employment discrimination, earning differentials, worker displacement, teenage pregnancy, and AIDS.



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This report begins to address some of these concerns. Using the most current data on Latinas, it compiles, analyzes, and presents information in three principal areas: education and training, work, and economic status. In addition, it touches on other often-overlooked issues, such as domestic violence, that affect the position and prospects of Hispanic women, and offers a discussion about the implications of such concerns for policy makers and the general public. This information is presented here in the hope that it can serve as a catalyst for further critical research, as well as for public policy analysis and advocacy, to ensure that the opportunities for action that would improve the lives of Hispanic women are not missed.

#### Note Regarding Data

The statistics presented in this report are the most recent data on Hispanic women in the U.S. The principal sources of these data are the 1990 Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Subgroup data were generally obtained from the published reports based on the Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey*. Generally, an attempt was made to compare Hispanic women to both non-Hispanic White and Black women. In some instances, Hispanic data are compared to non-Hispanic data when more specific Black and White data were not available.





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# Endnotes

1. See for example, Segura, Denise, "Walking on Eggshells: Chicanas in the Labor Force," in Stephen B. Knouse, Paul Rosenfeld, and Amy L. Culbertson, eds., *Hispanics in the Workplace*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1992; Ortiz, Vilma, *Women of Color: A Demographic Overview*. New York, New York: Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation, 1988; Cooney, Rosemary S. and Alice Colón, "Work and Family: The Recent Struggle of Puerto Rican Females," in Llara Rodríguez, Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, and J.O. Alers, eds. *The Puerto Rican Struggle: Essays on Survival in the U.S.*, Maplewood, New Jersey: Waterfront Press, 1980.



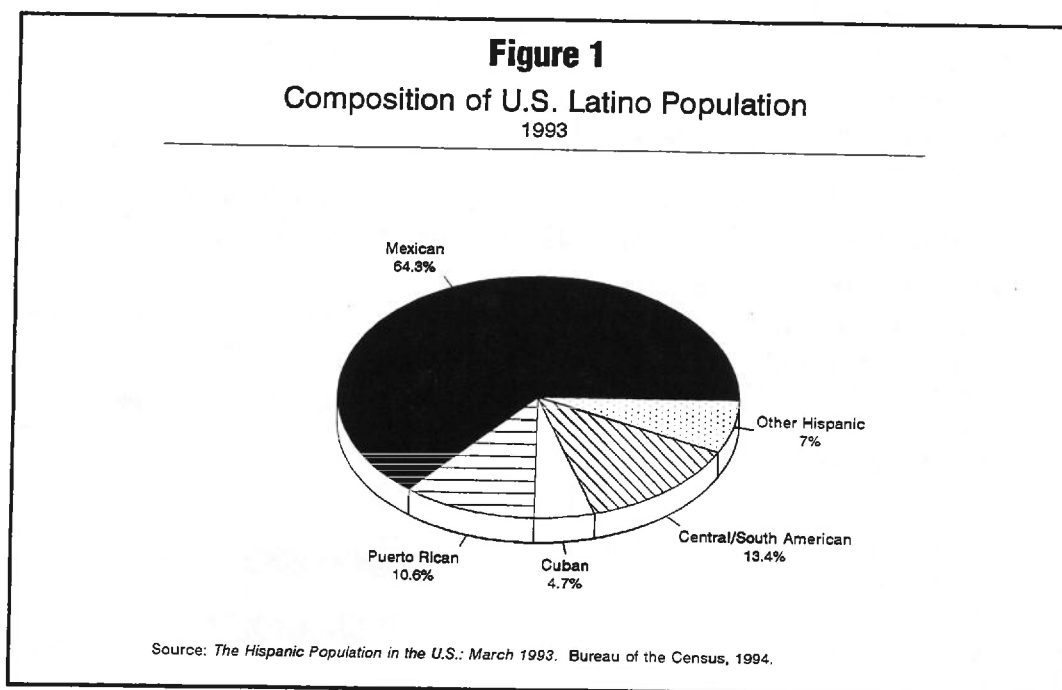
# The U.S. Latino Population

## Overview

In order to recognize and respond to the factors that contribute to the status of Hispanic women, it is essential to understand the Latino population as a whole.

While Latinos share many commonalities, like culture and language, the diverse composition of the U.S. Hispanic community, illustrated in Figure 1, suggests that the differences between some Hispanic subgroups are greater than those found between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. In addition, while much of the information that exists about Hispanics is related to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, not enough is known about more recent immigrant groups, like Salvadorans and Dominicans.

Recent data show that Hispanics constitute the second largest minority group in the U.S.; currently, about one in 11 Americans is Hispanic (9.0%).\* Hispanics are more than one-third (36%) of the U.S. minority population and, as one of the fastest-growing and youngest population groups, are projected to become the nation's largest minority within the next ten years. ( See Figures 2 and 3).



A summary of Census data show that Hispanics:

- Are, on the whole, native-born. While it continues to be the public perception that most Latinos are immigrants, data show that about two-thirds (64.2%) of U.S. Hispanics are native-born.

\* The data presented in this section are taken from *The Hispanic Population in the U.S.: March 1993*, and *Hispanic Americans Today, 1993*, unless otherwise noted.



- **Are a young population.** The median age of Hispanics is 26.7 years compared to 35.5 years for non-Hispanic Whites. Youthfulness has implications for socioeconomic status, since younger populations tend to not have as much economic stability as older populations. Also, younger populations will play a bigger role in the future economy as workers and taxpayers.

- **Live in every part of the U.S.** While traditional Latino enclaves include the Northeast and Southwest, recent analyses show that Latinos are increasing their numbers in other parts of the country, including the Midwest.<sup>1</sup>

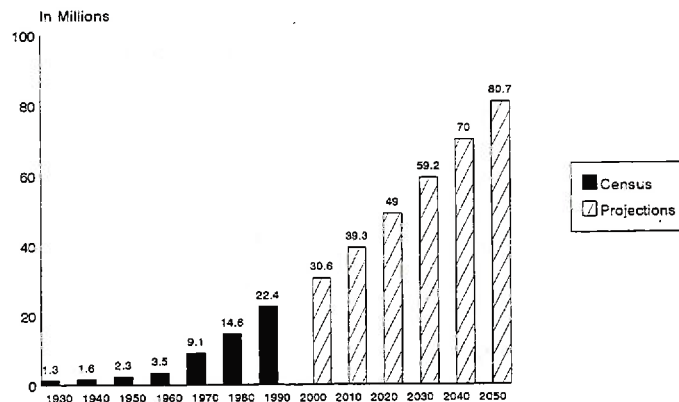
- **Are an urban population.** As a group, Latinos are overwhelmingly concentrated in urban centers of the U.S. Recent statistics show that 92.4% of Latinos compared to 76.2% of non-Latinos live in metropolitan areas. Latinos were also more likely than non-Latinos to live in central cities (52.9%, 27.1%, respectively).

- **Are more likely than non-Hispanics to live in households with other family members.** Census Bureau research indicates that, in 1993, 80.3% of Hispanic households, compared to 69.6% of non-Hispanic households, were family households.

- **Have low levels of education relative to other groups.** Slightly more than half of Latinos 25 years and older are high school graduates (53.1%) compared to seven in ten African Americans (70.4%) and four-fifths (84.1%) of White non-Hispanics over 25. Moreover, college educational attainment levels are lowest among Latinos; in 1993, about one-tenth of Hispanics had college degrees (9.0%), compared to 23.8% of Whites and 12.2% of Blacks. In fact, at every level of the education pipeline, Latinos register the smallest proportion of completions.

**Figure 2**

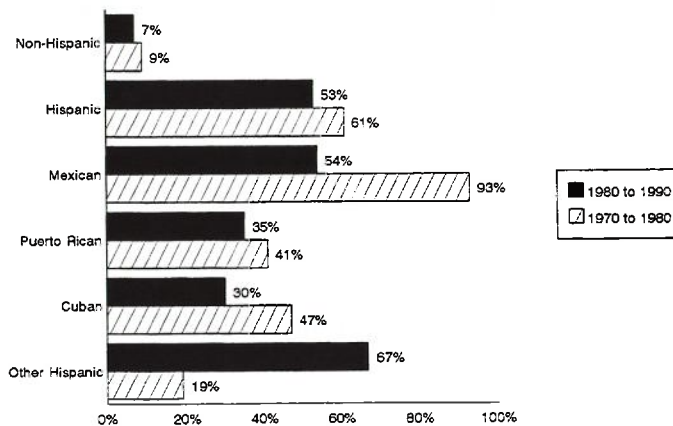
Hispanic Population: 1930 to 2050



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hispanic Americans Today*, 1993. Data for 1930 include only "Mexicans;" data for 1940 include only persons of "Spanish mother tongue," and data for 1950 and 1960 include only persons of "Spanish surname."

**Figure 3**

Hispanic Population Growth: 1970 to 1990



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Hispanic Americans Today*, 1993.



- **Are especially likely to be working or looking for work.** Data show that, among all major racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic men have the highest rates of labor force participation. In 1993, 79.2% of Latino men, 68.6% of Black and 75.2% of White men were in the labor force.
- **Are especially likely to be found among the working poor.** In 1993, 9.9% of Latino married-couple families with at least one year-round, full-time worker did not earn enough to lift their family above the poverty line; this is more than three times the rate for comparable White families. Additionally, both Hispanic males and females are most often employed in low-paying jobs with limited opportunities for advancement and few benefits; for example, of all groups, Hispanics are the least likely to have any form of health insurance.

## Hispanic Women

The demographic data presented above paint only part of the picture of U.S. Latinas. Data related to their concentration in the U.S., age, fertility, and language help to provide a more complete portrait. Population data show that the number of Hispanic women in the U.S. has risen significantly over the past decade. In 1980, there were 4.9 million Latinas age 16 and over; by 1991, that figure had risen to 7.4 million — a 52% increase.<sup>2</sup> Regional population data show that Hispanic women account for more than one-third of the women in New Mexico, one-fourth of the women in Texas and California, and at least one-tenth of women in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and New York. Tracking — and influencing — the socioeconomic status of Hispanic women is critical to the futures of these states and the nation as a whole.

Compared to the total population, Hispanic women tend to be younger. Age is an important indicator because older populations tend to have greater economic stability; the youth of the Latino population suggests that they will constitute a significant portion of both the future workforce and of individuals who need education and training. According to the 1990 Census, the median age of Latinas in the U.S. is 26.1, compared to 31.2 for Whites and 28.5 for Blacks. Data show that three in ten women under age 25 are Hispanic, Black, or Asian; and of all women in this age group 12% are Hispanic.<sup>3</sup> Unlike all other major racial/ethnic groups, women do not constitute a majority of the total Hispanic population. Currently, 49% of Latinos are women.

Hispanic population growth in the U.S. overall has been fueled by both high fertility and immigration. Census data show that the fertility rate of Hispanic women is higher than that of non-Hispanic women; in 1990, there were 93 births per 1,000 Latinas aged 15-44, compared with 64 births per 1,000 non-Hispanic women. Additionally, one-third of Hispanic women are foreign born. Among working-age women 18-64 years old, however, nearly half of Hispanic women are immigrants — a factor which has implications for education, language training, and overall socioeconomic status.<sup>4</sup> Partly due to the increase in Hispanic women immigrants, data show that 7.3% of Hispanic women speak Spanish and do not speak English at home. For Latinas, all of these factors — fertility, immigration status, and English-language fluency — affect earnings and economic stability. As the following sections show, combined with education and other characteristics, they have important implications for the ability of Latinas to compete and succeed in the U.S. labor force.



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# Endnotes

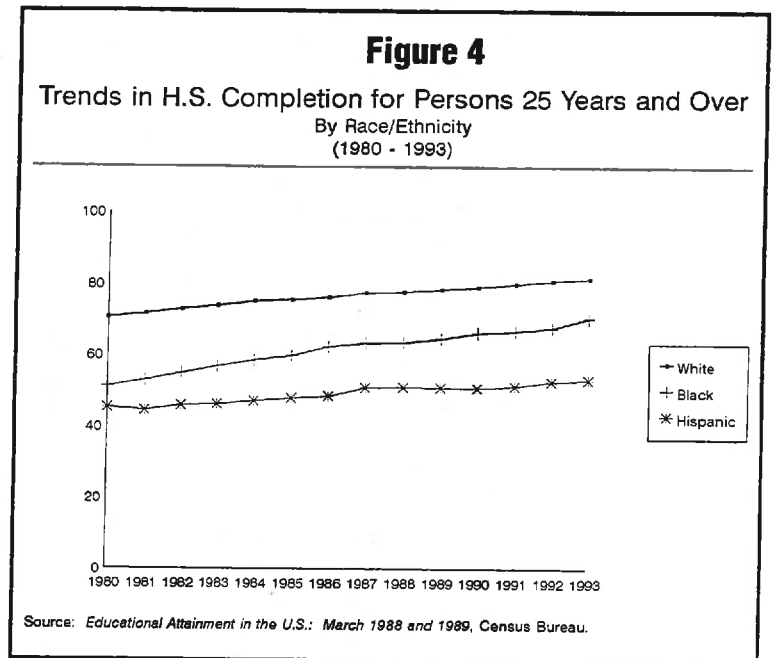
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# Education and Training: Trends and Status

## Overview

Education continues to be the single most significant factor in predicting an individual's future social and economic status. It is well documented that more years of schooling lead to a more stable position in the world of work; higher levels of education also tend to translate into higher earnings. In addition to number of years of workforce preparation, quality of education and training affect a worker's status. Specifically, high-quality, rigorous education and/or skill training for a sufficient period of time translates into higher earnings. While the educational attainment rates of Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites have been converging over the past decade, a wide gap continues to exist between Latinos and non-Latinos. By any measure, and at every education level, Hispanics are the least educated of all major U.S. ethnic and racial groups. They have the highest high school dropout rates and are the least likely of all groups to enter and complete college. Furthermore, they have historically been underrepresented in federal training programs designed to improve the job skills of workers. Among Latino subgroups, Mexican Americans have the lowest rates of high school completion. Barriers such as language difficulties impede the completion of training and schooling. For Hispanic women, the combination of these factors and poor educational experiences affect work options, salaries, and overall socioeconomic status.



## School Enrollment and Coursework

A review of educational issues of importance to Latinos shows that Latino students will experience a substantial increase in public school enrollment between 1985 and 2000<sup>1</sup>. During this time, it is estimated that 2.4 million Hispanic children will enter public school. The impact of this growth will be felt immediately by the U.S. educational system, but longer-term effects will occur in the workforce; to improve future outcomes, Latinas in particular will need to receive educational training that will allow them to successfully make the transition from students to workers.

Research on Latinas and education has shown that they are especially likely to be enrolled in less rigorous academic courses and over-enrolled, in proportion to their population levels, in vocational education tracks.<sup>2</sup> Both current and future job growth projections show that areas where jobs are expected to be created require advanced skill levels and high levels of literacy and numeracy<sup>3</sup> — skills which are not highly stressed or developed in these tracks. Moreover, educational studies related to girls show that female students have different classroom experiences from their male counterparts because teachers tend to treat them differently. Achievement expectations are usually lower for



female, minority, and poor students.<sup>4</sup> Nonacademic tracking and poor school preparation leave Latina students ready for neither the workforce nor college. Therefore, if education is a critical ingredient for future economic stability and success, Latinas are disadvantaged from the start.

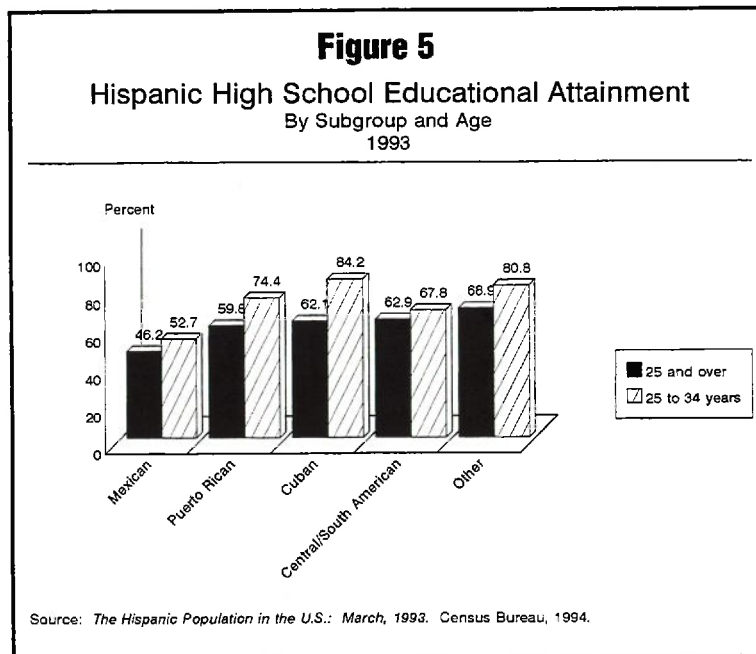
## High School and College Educational Attainment

The most recent data continue to show poor high school attainment levels for Latino students. Although more Latinos are completing high school now than a decade ago, Hispanics continue to lag behind Whites and Blacks, as shown in Figure 4.

Hispanic subgroup data indicate that Mexican Americans are the group with the lowest high school completion levels. As Figure 5 shows, 46.2% of Mexican Americans 25 and older have completed high school or more, compared to 59.8% of Puerto Ricans, 62.1% of Cubans, and 62.9% of Central/South Americans, as of 1993.

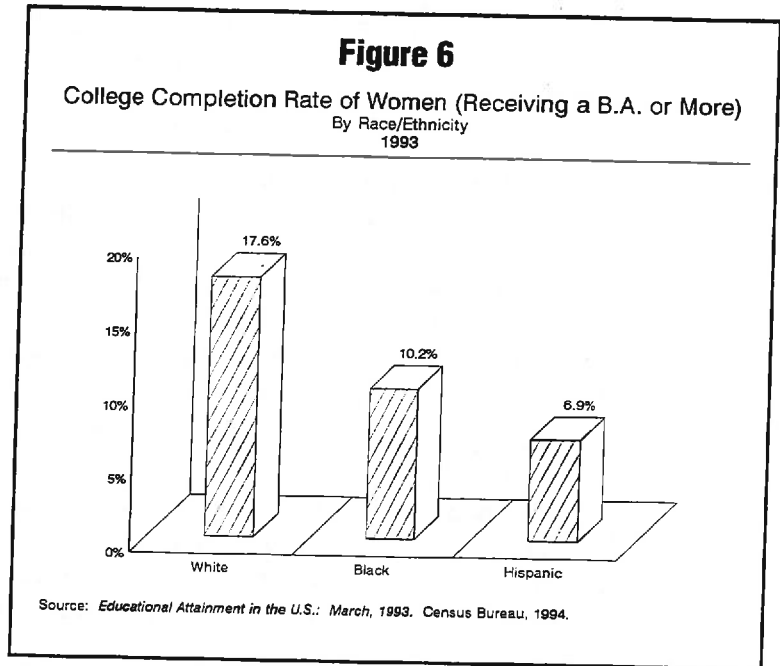
Data for young adult Latinos, aged 25-34, indicate that while Mexicans are still the least likely to have high school diplomas, Cubans are the most likely to have graduated from high school (84.1%). For some Latino subgroups, educational status at time of immigration helps to explain this disparity; Cuban immigrants are more likely than their Mexican counterparts to have entered the U.S. with high levels of educational training. However, even among Latinos aged 25-34 and among native-born Mexicans, education levels are lower compared to their Black and White counterparts, this strongly suggests that immigration alone does not explain the poor educational status of Latinos.<sup>5</sup>

Latinos have low levels of high school completion in part because they continue to have the highest dropout rates of any group. Data released by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992 show that Hispanics 16-24 are three times as likely as non-Hispanics to leave high school.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, data on young adults give some indication of the upcoming demographic changes in the educational achievement levels of Latinos. While nine in ten Asian American girls aged 16 to 19 are in school, only seven in ten Hispanic girls of this age group are in school.<sup>7</sup> Research has shown that several elements are associated with dropping out of school for Latinos, including poverty and poor family socioeconomic



status, inadequate grades and school performance, and limited English proficiency and illiteracy.<sup>8</sup> For girls, in particular, pregnancy has also been linked to dropping out of high school.<sup>9</sup>

Latinos also continue to lag behind their non-Latino counterparts in terms of college enrollment and college completion. As Figure 6 illustrates, while nearly one-sixth of White women have completed college (17.6%), only one in twelve Latinas (6.9%) and one in ten African American women (10.2%) have college degrees.<sup>10</sup> The disproportionately small number of Latinos enrolled in and completing college is worrisome given their rate of population growth and the industry's increasing reliance on highly educated workers.



## Participation and Experience in Federal Training Programs

Because of their low rates of enrollment and completion of higher education, poor economic status, and strong attachment to the labor force, Latinos are good candidates for training programs that facilitate employment. A brief summary of research, however, indicates that federal training programs have not proportionately served out-of-school and unemployed Latino youth and adults. In addition, several studies raise concerns for those Hispanics who do participate in federal training programs, suggesting that they are not involved in the most effective training components.

While there are limited Hispanic-focused evaluation data related to federal training programs, information on the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) — which was intended to provide training for economically disadvantaged Americans — indicates that Hispanics are underserved relative to their need. According to the research, Hispanics constitute a smaller proportion of the participant population than they do of the eligible population.<sup>11</sup> For example, an analysis of 1986 participants shows that Hispanic women constituted 13.2% of the eligible population, but accounted for only 10.1% of participants in JTPA.<sup>12</sup>

Additional research shows that the quality of training received by Latinos is a concern. In JTPA specifically, Hispanics tend to be enrolled in “program activities geared toward finding jobs and obtaining income quickly.”<sup>13</sup> Immediate employment, however, may not be long-lasting employment. While not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, a recent analysis of gender-based differences in JTPA program participation indicates that women were more likely to be enrolled in classroom training activities, while men were often participating in on-the-job training.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, program data prior





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to 1989 showed that female participants were enrolled for shorter periods of time, although their profiles suggested the need for intense services. More recent research suggests that this pattern is changing at the national level.<sup>15</sup> For example, in 1989, the average length of stay for Hispanics in JTPA was 97 days, compared to 101 days for all adult participants.

Outcome information shows that Hispanics were slightly more likely to be placed in jobs than other participants after completing the training program, yet they have generally received lower wages. A 1993 JTPA evaluation found that Hispanic female participants were found to have significantly lower earnings than their counterparts of other races/ethnicities.<sup>16</sup> Additional evaluation data show that Hispanic females in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program who participated in basic/remedial education activities were more likely to become employed than their counterparts who were involved in job search assistance and/or support services.<sup>17</sup>

Recent NCLR research on women receiving AFDC and participating in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program shows that Latina welfare recipients in the ten states with the largest Hispanic populations are underrepresented in the JOBS program, based on both their levels of poverty and welfare use. Moreover, within specific education and training components, Latinas were least likely to be involved in on-the-job training or higher education, which have been shown to be more effective in long-term job placement than other types of activities.<sup>18</sup>

## Training Needs and Concerns

In addition to their general need for increases in education and meaningful skills training, Hispanic women often face additional barriers to their participation in and successful completion of training programs. Although two-thirds of Hispanics are U.S.-born, some Latinas have language difficulties that prevent them from participating in available job training activities. For example, a study of Puerto Rican women receiving AFDC suggested that language barriers prevent many Puerto Rican women from entering and completing available skills training.<sup>19</sup>

A complementary problem of particular concern among Latinos is English literacy — the ability to use and understand written information. Literacy is critical for both training and work. It affects a woman's ability to gain entry and placement in a training program, and also influences her job eligibility and earnings. A recent federal class action lawsuit filed by the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund on behalf of Latina welfare recipients (*Quintana, et al. v. Dowling, et al.*) alleges that New York City and state welfare officials have violated federal and civil rights laws by failing to offer literacy classes to limited-English-proficient participants in the JOBS program. Some Latina AFDC recipients were constructively excluded, the plaintiffs suggested, from job training, because they were not first offered literacy training which would enable them to successfully participate in skills training. In addition, because job growth is expected to continue to be concentrated in the service/sales industries, lack of English literacy will affect Latinas' chances of gaining employment in a market which relies on written and oral communications, and customer interaction. A recent study showed that "among Hispanic females, English reading proficiency is the critical skill that is rewarded through higher wages."<sup>20</sup> Without a solid command of English literacy skills, some Latina workers will both remain at a disadvantage in the workforce and be ill-served by employment and training programs.



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Furthermore, the type of training offered to Latinas is often problematic. An NCLR study found that Mexican American single mothers receiving AFDC had been offered or given training for jobs that were menial and low-paying (e.g., dishwashing) and which would not positively influence their ability to get off welfare; in other cases, they were offered training for which existing jobs were not available.<sup>21</sup>

Another obstacle to the equitable participation of Latinas in training programs is related to both outreach about and accessibility of such programs. Studies suggest that many Latinas are not aware of available training opportunities, or that these are available in areas which are inaccessible to Hispanic women. Similarly, if programs are not community-based and offered in a "known" environment, some Hispanic women will be less inclined to participate. In addition, availability of child care is important for Latina single mothers in order to participate in such programs; research reveals some Latina preference for family-based child care.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of on-the-job training provided by employers, research has suggested that because women are more likely than men to leave employment for family reasons (e.g., to have children or take care of a sick family member), employers may be less willing to invest in them through job training.<sup>23</sup> The May 1994 Working Women Count! survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau shows that 60.7% of Hispanic women, compared to 59.3% of Black women, and 50.0% of White women, see "on-the-job training" as a high priority. Given the lack of critical job skills of many Hispanic women, it is not surprising that such a high proportion of Latinas recognize the need to acquire increased skills through on-the-job training.

Although more research is needed about the training needs and experiences of Latina workers in different sectors of the workforce, the data reviewed here permit some tentative conclusions. For example, although Hispanic women need and would benefit greatly from lengthier training programs, it appears that they are "steered" to shorter ones. Overall, it appears that existing public and private skills training programs are not designed to help Hispanic women overcome their specific employment barriers, nor to accommodate Latinas' preferences; this may account in part for the low level of success such programs have had with this population.



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# Hispanic Women Workers

## Overview

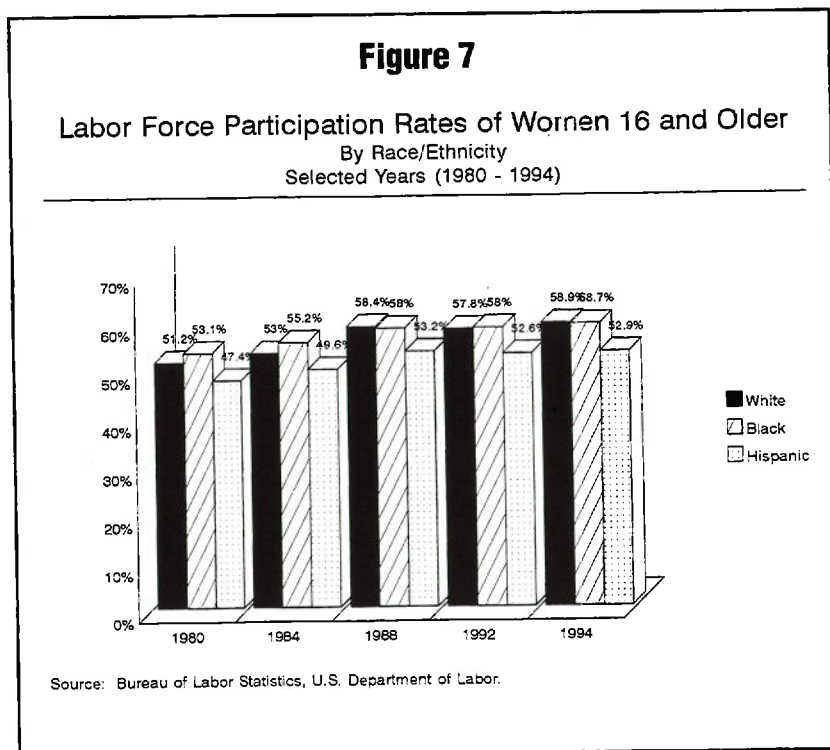
Hispanic women have made important gains in the paid labor force over the past 15 years. Their labor force participation rate has increased slowly but steadily, and Bureau of Labor Statistics projections indicate that by the year 2000, 58% of Hispanic women will be working or looking for work, up from 52% currently. Yet, of all major population groups, Hispanic women are the least likely to be working or looking for work. Within the Latino population, Puerto Rican women have the lowest labor force participation rates.

Latinas who are employed are overrepresented in jobs at the low end of the pay scale and are severely underrepresented in professional positions. Moreover, future projections for the jobs in which Latinas currently work indicate that these fields will experience little or no growth — an issue which raises serious concerns about the future economic stability of Hispanic women and their families. Hispanic women's earnings are 89% of those of Hispanic men, and 75% of those of White women workers. Additionally, due to the instability of their jobs, they face high rates of job displacement and unemployment. Finally, several factors affect their labor force status, including their education and skill levels, the presence of children, their place of residence, and employment discrimination.

## Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation rates are one indicator of a group's economic stability and mobility. Aggregate Latino group data, illustrated in Figure 7, show that less than half (47.4%) of Hispanic women were working or looking for work in 1980, compared to slightly more than half of White and Black women workers (53.1% and 51.2%, respectively).

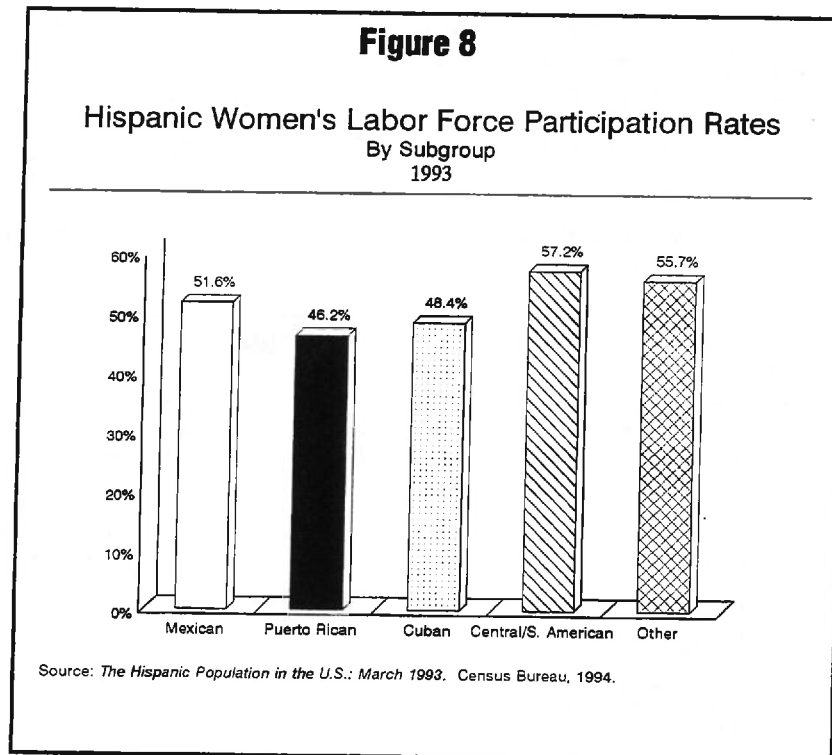
This increase is due to both a growing Hispanic female population and an increase in the proportion of women entering the paid workforce.<sup>1</sup> Projections indicate that this trend will continue in the future. Specifically, by the year 2005, overall Hispanic repre-



sentation in the labor force is expected to increase by 44%, due in part to the projected increases in the labor force participation of Hispanic women.<sup>2</sup>

Information on Hispanic subgroups shows that over the last 40 to 50 years the experience of Latinas in the workforce has been mixed. For example, when large numbers of migrants from Puerto Rico moved to New York City and other parts of the Northeast in the 1950s, these Puerto Rican women had among the highest labor

force participation rates of any group.<sup>3</sup> Although that rate had declined sharply by 1980, since then Puerto Rican women have increased their activity in the labor force; as a result, their rates have reflected the fastest growth in recent years. However, at 46.2% in 1993, Puerto Rican women still have the lowest labor force participation rate of all Latinas. Mexican American women have shown a consistency in their labor force participation rates, with a modest increase over the past decade. As Figure 8 shows, the most recent data indicate that Central and South American women have the highest rates of labor force activity; 57.2% are working or looking for work.



## Occupations, Job Placement, and Outlook

Partly because of low education levels and either low skills or the possession of skills not valued in the job market, Latinas historically have been concentrated in low-wage jobs. Recent data show that occupations continue to be segregated by gender and ethnicity. Of the 4.2 million Hispanic women who held jobs in 1994, two-fifths (39.1%) were concentrated in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations — a proportion which mirrors that of non-Hispanic White women, among whom 42.4% are in these fields.

Those Latinas who work are disproportionately likely to work in service occupations; one in four (25.6%) held jobs in the service industry. In these jobs, they are most frequently employed as maids, private household cleaners and servants, janitors, nursing aides and orderlies, cooks, and child care



workers.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Hispanic women are half as likely as White women to be working in typically high-paying jobs. Almost one in seven (13.4%) Latinas, compared to three in eleven White women (27.5%), held managerial and professional specialty jobs.

Figure 9 shows the occupational distribution of Hispanic and non-Hispanic female workers.

One of the chief concerns about the position of Hispanic women in the labor market relates to their future employment prospects. Data from both the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau indicate that the jobs in which Latinas are most likely to be concentrated are the industries which will

**Figure 9**

Table 1

Occupational Distribution and Median Weekly Earnings of Full-time Employed Female Civilians and Annual Unemployment by Occupation, 1994 (Percent Distribution)

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	1994 Median Weekly Earnings (\$)	1994 Annual Unemployment (%)
TOTAL 16 years and over (in thousands)	56,610	47,738	6,595	4,258	\$399	6.0%
PERCENT	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
<u>OCCUPATION</u>						
Managerial/Professional Specialty	28.7	29.8	21.3	16.7	592	2.8
Executive/administrative/managerial	12.4	12.9	8.7	8.3	541	3.1
Professional Specialty	16.3	16.9	12.6	8.4	623	2.6
Technical, Sales/Admin. Support	42.4	43.1	38.4	39.1	376	5.4
Technicians and related support	3.6	3.6	3.4	2.5	466	3.1
Sales occupations	12.8	13.4	9.6	12.4	324	7.3
Administrative support/clerical	26.0	26.2	25.4	24.2	374	4.7
Service Occupations	17.8	16.6	25.7	25.6	257	7.7
Private household	1.4	1.3	2.0	5.1	177	9.6
Protective Service	0.7	0.5	1.4	0.5	430	4.8
Service other than private household or protective service	15.7	14.8	22.3	20.0	256	7.7
Precision Production, Craft/Repair	2.2	2.1	2.6	3.4	370	8.0
Operators, Fabricators, and Laborers	7.7	7.0	11.7	13.3	293	9.9
Machine operators, assemblers	5.2	4.7	8.2	9.9	292	9.6
Transportation, material moving	0.9	0.8	1.2	0.8	361	6.1
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers	1.6	1.5	2.3	2.6	279	12.2
Farming, Forestry and Fishing*	1.2	1.4	0.3	1.9	234	9.0

\* In 1988, 949,000 individuals were employed as farmworkers. Of this figure, 23.0% were Hispanic, 8.6% were Black, and 23.3% were women.

SOURCE: *Employment and Earnings*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (January 1995)

experience either slow to minimal growth or significant decline. For example, while certain types of service jobs are expected to increase in number, such as health service occupations, Hispanic women are primarily concentrated in food preparation and service, or cleaning and building service jobs — occupations which are not projected to experience significant growth.<sup>5</sup>



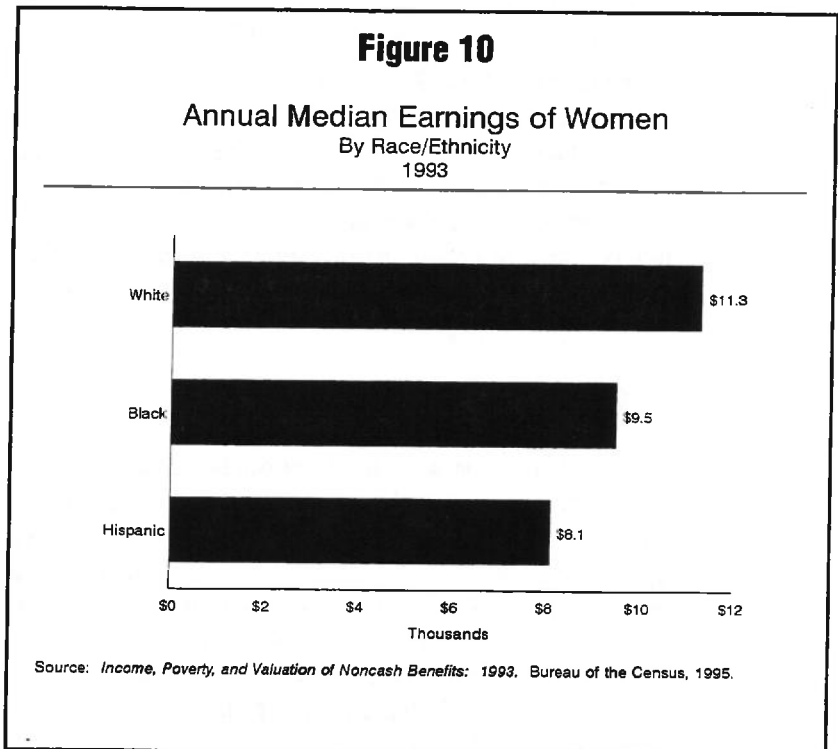
## Earnings

Given their occupational concentration, a review of Hispanic women's earnings since 1980 predictably shows that Hispanic women have consistently had the lowest earnings of the three major female worker groups. According to the data, while the wages of all female minority workers rose over the past decade, relative to White women, Hispanic women experienced a deterioration in their wages during the 1980s. By 1988, Hispanic women's median earnings were only 83% of Whites' and 84% of Blacks'.<sup>6</sup>

Currently, median weekly earnings for Hispanic women are \$305, compared to \$408 for White, and \$346 for Black women, respectively. As a result, as Figure 10 shows, Hispanic women had the lowest annual median earnings of all women in 1993. Furthermore, earnings distribution data show that Hispanic women are twice as likely as White women to be in the lowest-paying jobs; 16.5% of Hispanic and 8.3% of non-Hispanic White females had earnings of less than \$10,000. While only one-quarter of Latinas (26.9%) had earnings of \$25,000 or more in 1992, fully two-fifths of non-Hispanic White women (41.4%) earned that amount or more. Comparative data show that Hispanic women earn \$0.54 for each dollar a White man earns.<sup>7</sup>

Earnings data by Hispanic subgroup show that in 1993, Puerto Rican women had the highest median earnings (\$14,200), probably as a result of their concentration in the Northeast, which has high wages relative to other parts of the country. Cuban women workers follow closely with median earnings of \$14,117. Mexican women had the lowest earnings (\$10,098), due in part to the areas of the country in which they are concentrated. In addition, Mexican women's earnings may be adversely affected by their relatively large proportion of new immigrants and related factors like limited English proficiency. These same factors may also influence the low median earnings of Central and South American women (\$10,249).

These data highlight disturbing disparities between earnings of Latinas and other women workers, as well as between them and their male counterparts, and underscore the need for further research to determine what accounts for existing earning differentials. Existing studies on Latino workers suggests that several factors contribute to these wide gaps.<sup>8</sup> First, education levels account for a significant proportion of the gap in earnings between Hispanic and non-Hispanic women. Because Latinas





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as a group are undereducated, they are limited to low-skilled work with poor compensation in industries that are declining. Research has documented the close association between low educational attainment and low income, particularly among Hispanics.<sup>9</sup>

Second, occupational status is key. The data above show that Hispanic women are overrepresented in low-end services and in jobs that do not pay very well. This may, in turn, influence labor force participation rates since, for Hispanic women, the economic incentive to work may be lower than the costs of paying for child care and commuting. Third, as later sections will show, discrimination is a factor that affects both the occupational status and earnings of Hispanic female workers.

Additionally, the deterioration of earnings of specific groups of workers is a serious problem for Latinas. A recent study found, "the worst effects on wages have been felt by entry-level workers, those without a college degree, young workers, and blue collar workers." Latinas constitute a sizeable share of each of these worker groups.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau confirmed that pay equity issues are of serious concern to most women. In its 1993 survey, women of color were especially likely to believe that it was a "serious problem" that they "don't get paid what [the] job is worth." More than half of Hispanic women (52.5%) and three-fifths of African American women (60.2%) cited this issue, compared to less than half of White women (47.5%), suggesting that employment discrimination may also be a factor in determining their salaries. Additionally, about two-thirds of all women respondents (64.1% of White, 67.8% of Black, and 65.6% of Hispanic) noted that "improving pay scales" was a "high priority."<sup>11</sup>

## Unemployment

In addition to its effect on wages, economic restructuring has also had an impact on the displacement and unemployment rates of Latina workers. Recently, analysts have begun to more closely examine unemployment trends among Hispanic workers because Latino unemployment rates appear to have increased substantially since the late 1980s, relative to both Whites and Blacks. Traditionally, overall Hispanic unemployment rates have been about 1.5 times that of the White unemployment rate; in recent years, they have fluctuated between 1.8 and 2.0 times that of Whites.<sup>12</sup> Hispanic women have had disturbingly high unemployment rates over the past two decades; since 1976, research suggests, the Latina unemployment rate "had been 1.6-1.8 times that for White women, with no visible cyclical pattern."<sup>13</sup>

During the 1982 recession, Hispanic unemployment reached 16.5% compared to 10.6% for non-Hispanics. Unemployment declined for all worker groups between 1983 and 1987; at that point, 10.6% of Latinos and 7.3% of non-Latinos were without jobs. Although unemployment levels were falling for all groups by the end of the 1980s, there was still a notable gap in the rates between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. By 1993, 11.3% of Hispanic workers were unemployed, compared to 7.5% of their non-Hispanic counterparts. Among Latinas, unemployment rates vary sharply by subgroup. Data from March 1993 show that rates range from 7.3% for Cuban workers to 14.4% for Central and South American female workers.



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The concentration of Hispanic women in low-wage, low-skill work often means that they face a high risk of unemployment because this work tends to be unstable during times of economic recession or restructuring. For example, as Figure 9 shows, unemployment rates are higher for service, sales, and management jobs—precisely those areas in which a significant proportion of Latina women work. In addition, a lack of skills that are transferable from one industry to another, coupled with low levels of education or specific job training, prevent Latinas from qualifying for work that may be available in other, high-skill industries. Furthermore, notwithstanding the fact that the current Hispanic unemployment rate is quite high, it may not fully account for two groups of Latinas: those who may work part-time jobs because they cannot find full-time jobs and those who are discouraged from looking for work.

## Latina Worker Profiles

Research and disaggregated data according to different worker categories, as provided in the following brief worker profiles, provide a clearer picture of the conditions experienced by specific groups of Latina workers.

### ❖ Teenagers

Research has shown that young workers and their families have been profoundly affected by rising unemployment and declining wages in recent years.<sup>14</sup> This important group of workers are in a “trial period” in terms of acquiring work-related skills, experiencing different jobs, and attaching themselves to the world of work. Without a good salary or potential job future, for many young Latinas, the option of motherhood may be perceived as the most realistic or attractive alternative. As a result of the lack of positive options and a path that leads from school to work, many Hispanic young women withdraw from the labor force into child-rearing responsibilities—a separation that eventually makes it harder for them to become reincorporated into the labor force, especially since they may have “lost” years in which they have not attained increased education, work-related skills, or experience in the labor market.<sup>15</sup>

### ❖ Working Mothers

Recent data show that, compared to Blacks and Whites, Hispanic children were least likely to have their mother working full-time, year-round, regardless of whether they lived in a married-couple or single-mother-only family.<sup>16</sup> Figure 11 shows that, in 1992, 26% of Hispanic, 33% of White, and 37% of Black children who lived in married-couple families had mothers who worked full-time. Among the major racial/ethnic groups, Black mothers are most likely to work in two-parent families, while White mothers are most likely to work in single-mother families. Almost half of Black children living in married-couple families (46%) had a mother who worked full-time, year-round, compared to slightly over a quarter of Hispanic children (26%) and about one-third of White children (32%). Data on children living with their mothers only show that about two in five White children in such families (39%) had a mother who worked year-round, full-time, compared to about three in ten Black children (29%) and a little more than one in four Hispanic children (26%).

Low education and skill levels and poor job opportunities may help to explain the lower levels of work among Latina mothers. Hispanic working mothers, especially if they support their children



alone, are disproportionately likely to have to make a choice between a low-paying job with no benefits and public assistance, a particular problem for Latinas since one in three Hispanics does not have health insurance. Like other women, most Latina mothers work out of economic need, either to supplement earnings in a married-couple family, or because they are the sole provider in a single-mother household. In addition to their poor economic prospects, they must balance work and family, make ends meet on low salaries, and find day care support for their children. An additional factor that merits further research is the role that culture plays in determining whether Latina mothers work. Preliminary studies have suggested that some Hispanic women choose not to work in the paid labor force, in order to care for their children at home.<sup>17</sup>

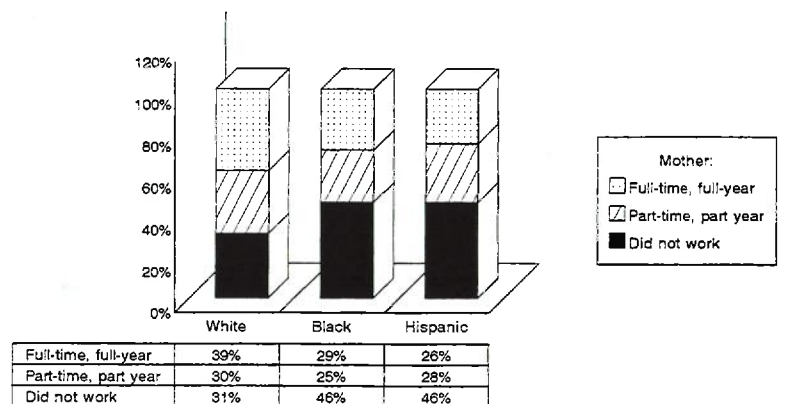
❖ **Full-Part-Time Workers and Multiple Job-Holders**

The majority of Latinas who have a job in the paid labor force work 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, defined by the Census Bureau as “full-time, year-round” workers. In 1989, Hispanic women were slightly more likely than their White counterparts to work full-time (74% vs. 68%). That year, 51% of Hispanic, 50% of White, and 55% of Black women workers had full-time, year-round jobs.<sup>18</sup>

While the median earnings of Hispanic women who worked full-time, year-round increased 68% between 1980 and 1991, such work does not always ensure adequate earnings — or even above-poverty-level wages.<sup>19</sup> In 1990, more than one-third (37.0%) of Latinas who worked full-time, year-round had

**Figure 11**

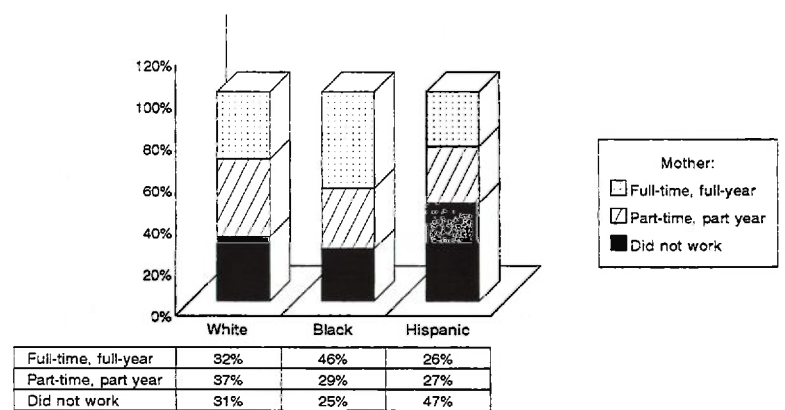
**Proportion of Children Under 18**  
By Mother's Work Experience for Single-Mother Families, and Race/Ethnicity  
1992



Source: Zill, Nicholas, *Running in Place*, Child Trends Inc., 1994.

**Figure 12**

**Proportion of Children Under 18**  
By Mother's Work Experience for Married-Couple Families, and Race/Ethnicity  
1992



Source: Zill, Nicholas, *Running in Place*, Child Trends Inc., 1994.



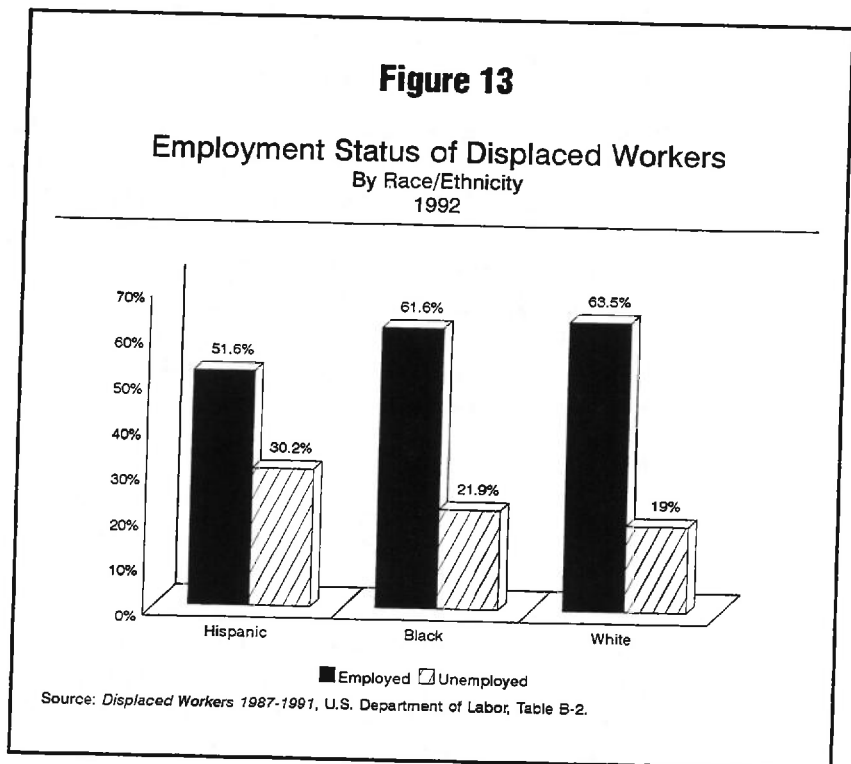
earnings below the poverty level which for that year was \$12,195 for a family of four, or \$6.10 per hour. Data on Latino married-couple families show that, in 1993, 32.5% of such families with one year-round full-time worker were poor.

Information on part-time Latina workers is scarce, but some data are available on the growing number of American workers who hold several jobs throughout the year, including a combination of part-time work and full-time jobs. The increase in the cost of benefits, like health care, make such an arrangement an attractive one for employers, but a costly one for workers. Holding multiple jobs might help a worker to reach or stay above the poverty line, but it is often a stressful and financially unsteady way to make ends meet. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 3.2% of Hispanic women held multiple jobs during 1991, compared to 6.1% of White and 4.6% of Black women. More than half of Hispanic women (55.7%) — a proportion greater than that of either their Black (45.6%) or White (33.5%) counterparts — said that they work multiple jobs “to meet regular household expenses.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, a relatively large percentage of Hispanic women workers who held multiple jobs in 1991 noted that they hoped “to get experience or build up a business” (11.2%) or wanted to “save for the future” (8.7%). Comparable figures for Whites were 8.3% and 7.1%, and for Blacks, 2.6% and 5.6%, respectively.

#### ❖ Displaced Workers

Displaced workers are “those who lost or left a job due to plant or company closings or moves, slack work, or the abolishment of their positions or shifts.”<sup>21</sup> The most common reason for worker displacement is a plant or company closing or move.

Because of the large proportion of Hispanic workers in slow- or declining-growth industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and construction, government surveys from the early 1980s found that Hispanic workers have a higher rate of job displacement than other worker groups. Early 1990s worker displacement figures, from layoffs and job loss have resulted in similar findings. A report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) showed that, even when age, education, gender, industry, and occupation were taken into account, Latinos had a greater chance of losing their jobs during the last recession than other work



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groups. Hispanic workers faced a 6.8% risk of job layoff, compared to a 6.6% and 5.7% probability for Black and White workers, respectively.<sup>22</sup>

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) support these findings. BLS indicates that among racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic workers had the highest likelihood of job displacement; between 1987 and 1992, 11.8% of Latinos were displaced from their jobs. By contrast, displacement rates for Black and White workers were 8.8% and 7.9%, respectively. Additionally, an increased share of Hispanic displaced workers are women, in part because they are an expanding share of the workforce and because they are especially likely to be concentrated in industries where job loss is occurring.

Among Latina women, 11.2% were displaced from their jobs between 1987 and 1992; the median number of years during which Hispanic displaced women employees worked was 5.5, with the majority of these workers working at full-time jobs. Moreover, Hispanic and Black workers were less likely to be re-employed after displacement, as illustrated in Figure 12. Among all women who experience job displacement and are subsequently re-employed, Latinas are slightly more likely than men to switch occupational industries, but are likely to stay within the service sector of the economy. Almost one-third of Hispanic women (30.2%) who lost jobs during the 1987-1992 period were unemployed in 1992, compared to about one-fifth of Black (21.9%) and White (19.0%) women. The Northeast experienced the highest rates of job displacement of any region of the country, suggesting that Puerto Rican women — who constitute the majority of Latinas in the Northeast — were especially likely to be affected.

High levels of education are an important factor in protecting against jobs loss. Over 90% of displaced Hispanic workers had only a high school diploma or less, according to GAO. Additionally, while ability to easily transfer skills from one industry to another, based on education and training experience, is a buffer against worker displacement, age is also a factor. Layoffs tend to affect younger workers — a concern among Hispanics who are a comparatively youthful work population. The GAO report found that the average age of displaced Hispanic workers was 35, compared to 36 for Black, 38 for White, and 40 for Asian workers. Less tenure in a job also increases the risk of job displacement rates; in the GAO study, Latinos and Blacks had less tenure on average than their White counterparts.

#### ❖ Immigrant Women

Immigrants are a vital part of the U.S. economy. In fact, the vast majority of all immigrants and refugees eventually become integrated into the labor force,<sup>23</sup> especially because they tend to be young and of working age. According to data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), females — not males — comprised the majority of immigrants from all countries between 1930 and 1979. Between 1984 and 1987, women comprised 49.8%, and males 50.2%, of all immigrants. Among Latino immigrants in 1992, females dominated among the following groups entering the U.S.: Colombians (57.8%), Dominicans (51.0%), Salvadorans (50.4%), and Peruvians (54.4%). By contrast, about two-thirds of Mexican immigrants (62.8%) that year were male.

One important difference between male and female immigrants is that only slightly more than one-third of immigrant women report having an occupation at time of entry compared to two-thirds of men. Nevertheless, this does not seem to adversely affect their incorporation into the U.S. economy.<sup>24</sup> In terms of occupational distribution, research shows that immigrants tend to



cluster at each end of the job spectrum. About half work in semi-skilled and low-skilled industries, including manufacturing and services. Among Mexican immigrants, for example, females are overrepresented in manufacturing, relative to their male counterparts. In addition, they are more likely than men to work in business, repair, and personal and professional services, although it is probable that they are working in low-status, low-paying jobs within these categories.<sup>25</sup> Recent studies have noted that the decline of manufacturing and other industries where Latinos are concentrated has had an effect on their status in the labor market. Recent immigrants and Hispanics with few marketable skills are especially likely to be "absorbed into low-paying jobs as busboys and dishwashers in restaurants, as maids and cleaners in hotels, as security guards, messengers, maintenance workers, gardeners, and similar low-end jobs in the service industry."<sup>26</sup>

#### ❖ Business Owners

Some mildly encouraging data are found in an examination of business owners. According to the Census Bureau's 1987 survey of minority-owned and women's businesses, 3.1% of businesses are owned and operated by Hispanics,\* with the majority of Hispanic-owned firms concentrated in the service industries. Among all minority women businesses, 29.4% are owned by Latinas, 40.4% are owned by Blacks, 28.6% by Asians, and 1.2% by American Indian and Alaska Natives. Hispanic women owned 115,025 firms with sales and receipts of \$4,328,409 in 1987. Hispanic women's businesses ranged from eating and drinking establishments, to miscellaneous retail stores, to personal services firms. Their average receipts totaled \$38,000.

## Explaining Latina Labor Force Status

A number of factors help to explain the position of Hispanic working women in the labor force. First, as noted in the previous section, Latinas' relative lack of education and skills is critical. Because they are especially likely to have neither finished high school nor have participated in higher education or skills training programs, Latinas are disadvantaged as soon as they enter the paid labor force. With few skills — and sometimes a lack of English-language fluency and literacy — they qualify only for the lowest paying jobs, those with the least opportunities for training or mobility, and jobs which are vulnerable to structural economic changes. Furthermore, given that occupational segmentation by gender continues, the options and possibilities that low-skilled Latinas have are limited.

Second, labor market opportunities, wages, and benefits are key. For single mothers with few skills, the jobs available often pay minimum wage and do not provide important benefits such as flexible work schedules and health care. Studies have documented the costs to low-skilled Latinas of working versus receiving welfare.<sup>27</sup> The slow increase in the labor force participation rate of Latinas suggests that some women may be getting discouraged as they look for work; similarly, high unemployment rates, especially in central cities where Latinas live, are one sign that the opportunities for work are limited.

\* The Census Bureau surveys minority-owned firms every five years; the results of the 1992 Survey of Minority and Women-Owned Businesses has not been released at time of printing. The data presented here are from the 1987 survey, the most recent data available.



A third factor that contributes to an Hispanic woman's position in the labor force is availability of "supports." Mothers need child care in order to be able to work outside of the home. Yet, the cost of high-quality child care is high and the availability of child care options for poor women is minimal.<sup>28</sup> In addition, for many poor Latinas, transportation is another important "support" that often presents a barrier to their consistent ability to work. Interviews with Puerto Rican and Mexican American women participating in the AFDC program show that lack of transportation for women in rural or suburban areas, or lack of money to use public transportation for women in urban areas, impede their ability to participate in training and to accept jobs that are not within their neighborhoods.<sup>29</sup>

Employment discrimination is a fourth important variable in the likelihood-to-work equation for Hispanic women. Several labor market studies have demonstrated that Latinos in general and Hispanic women in particular experience substantial levels of employment discrimination. In a recent study of the economic status of Latinos, analysts determined that the percentage of the Hispanic female-non-Hispanic White male income gap attributable to discrimination falls within a 30%-40% range.<sup>30</sup> This same study indicated that "discrimination has actually increased for Latino women compared to White women" over the last 20 years. Other research findings confirm that employment discrimination is a major factor in the status of Hispanic female workers. For example, an analysis of women workers in New York City found that discrimination represents between one-fifth and one-half of the wage gap for Hispanic women.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, other research has found that "if Hispanic women had the same characteristics as their non-Hispanic white counterparts, only between 27%, and 57% of the gap in occupational status would be closed," suggesting that a substantial part of these disparities may be attributable to discrimination.<sup>32</sup>

A fifth variable which contributes to the chances that a Hispanic woman will work — and how much she will be paid — is geographic location. In areas of the country which have experienced economic downturns and a shortage of jobs, the unemployment rates of Latinas are higher and the labor force participation rates are lower. For example, the Northeast U.S. has both high levels of unemployment and jobs that pay high wages; data have shown that Latinas in this part of the country are likely to have both higher median earnings and higher unemployment rates than their counterparts in other areas of the nation.

Finally, one issue that merits additional research for the role that it plays with respect to Latina labor force outcomes is childbearing. Preliminary research has shown that Hispanic women who delay childbearing are more likely than those who have early pregnancies to have a more stable economic status.<sup>31</sup> Research on the relationship between teenage pregnancy and school desertion shows

### HISPANIC WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Hispanic women represent a small fraction of all women in the military and their numbers have been growing slowly. In 1990, they constituted 0.4% of the total active-duty forces, compared to 6.7% of White women, and 3.4% of Black women. The Navy is the military branch with the largest proportion of Hispanic women. In all of the armed services, Latinas are more likely to be in the enlisted ranks than in the officer ranks. Within enlisted ranks, Hispanic women tend to be working in traditionally female occupations, such as support and administration, medical and dental, and nonoccupational. Information about Latina officers reflects a similar tendency; medical and administrative occupations accounted for three-fifths of Hispanic women officer positions (61%). Currently, about 4% of all women veterans are Hispanic.

SOURCE: Rosenfeld and Culbertson, "Hispanics in the Military," in *Hispanics in the Workplace*, 1993.



that Hispanic female dropouts frequently cite pregnancy as a reason for leaving school. Because they are less likely than their Black or White counterparts to return to school, Hispanic teenage mothers are poorly equipped to enter a labor market where education is critical to economic success.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, some research has shown that the presence of children alone decreases the likelihood that a woman will work.<sup>35</sup> The striking findings from these studies suggest that this is an issue that deserves greater attention.

### WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO

According to the 1990 Census, women constituted 48.4% of the population in Puerto Rico. With a median age of 29.6 years, they are slightly older than men in Puerto Rico who have a median age of 27.6 years. Almost half (45.7%) of females in Puerto Rico are working age, between 15 and 44 years old. Data show that one in three Puerto Rican women (37.1%) are actively participating in the labor force. Having small children tend to make women in Puerto Rico more likely to have a job; while 32% of women without children under 18 work, 41% of women with children under 18 work as do 48% of women with children under six. More than one in five (22.5%) women in Puerto Rico are unemployed. In addition, more than one-quarter of households (27.9%) are maintained by a woman only. Women in Puerto Rico tend to live in urban areas (72.9%); more than one-quarter (27.9%) live in rural areas. More than half of women on the island are married (52.9%); one-quarter have not been married (24.4%). Rates of divorce and widowhood are similar, 9.4% and 9.8%, respectively. More than one-half of all women (54.7%) live below the poverty level. One particularly serious issue facing women in Puerto Rico at disproportionate levels is domestic violence. In July 1995, the San Juan Star reported that between 1987 and 1990, more than 250 women died at the hands of their abusive spouses. Through June 1995, 18 women have died, and through the end of February 1995, 2,706 incidents of domestic abuse have required police intervention.

Source: Puerto Rican Commission on Women's Affairs.





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# Economic Status

## Overview

The economic status of Hispanic women is an important measure of their overall well-being. It also has implications for their children, families, and communities. As the previous discussion showed, information related to earnings is one sign of the tenuous economic position of Latinas in the U.S. Two other indicators provide a sense of how well — or how poorly — Latinas are faring economically. First, household income and the sources of such income reflect the extent to which Latinas have access to means of support (other than their own wages) for themselves and their families, and the

**Figure 14**

**MEDIAN MONTHLY INCOME BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION  
AND RACE/ETHNICITY, 1990**

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
Some high school	\$760	\$909	\$652
High school	\$1092	\$1405	\$1009
Some college	\$1298	\$1595	\$1204
Bachelor degree	\$1835	\$2552	\$2002
Master degree	\$2840	\$3248	\$2786

Source: *Statistical Record of Hispanic Americans, 1993.*

extent to which they are relying on public benefits. The data suggest that Hispanic women have a weak foundation on which to rely for such additional resources. Second, an examination of poverty among Latinas highlights some disturbing trends and indicates that Latina poverty is increasingly persistent, deep, and concentrated.

## Household Income

For most families in the U.S., the earnings of workers constitute the primary source of household income. In addition to such earnings, however, other sources contribute to overall household income including AFDC, Food Stamps, child support, unemployment insurance, social security payments, and interest and dividend payments.

Using household income as a measurement, Hispanics as a group lag behind Whites but lead Blacks. The most current data show that the median income of Hispanic households is \$22,886, compared to \$32,960 for Whites and \$19,532 for Blacks. Among families with a female householder with no husband present, median income of Hispanics was \$13,223 in 1993; comparative data show that similar Black and White families had median incomes of \$12,423 and \$21,583, respectively. In house-



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holds with two or more earners, Latinos have the lowest median income among all groups, \$34,737, compared to \$39,815 for Blacks and \$50,439 for Whites.

As with other workforce characteristics, median household income is tied to educational attainment; but even at higher education levels, Latinos do not have an income equivalent to that of Whites. Figure 14 shows median monthly income by level of education and race/ethnicity. In 1990, Hispanics with high school diplomas had higher monthly incomes than Blacks but lower than that of Whites. At the college level, however, Hispanics with a bachelor's degree had lower monthly incomes than both Whites and Blacks.

Data disaggregated by gender show that Hispanic women have the lowest median income of any group. In 1993, Hispanic women's median income (\$8,100) was 72% of White women's median income (\$11,266) and 85% of Black women's income (\$9,508).

In addition to earnings, employee benefits constitute another variable to be considered in assessing overall income. Data show that Latinos are less likely than Whites and Blacks to receive benefits such as health insurance and pension coverage. One in three Hispanic workers does not have medical coverage provided by their employer. Data on retirement plans show that slightly more than one-quarter of Hispanic women workers under age 65 (27.8%) have pension plan coverage, compared to more than one-third of White women (36.2%), and two-fifths of Black women workers (40.3%).<sup>1</sup> In fact, in every age category, Hispanic women are the least likely of all worker groups to have pension plan coverage.

For Latinas maintaining families alone, household income is, on the whole, quite low. Hispanic single mothers are typically undereducated and low-skilled, and do not have substantial work experience. In addition, they often cannot rely on other sources of family support and have difficulty finding and keeping a job, in part because of the lack of child care and the poor benefits that their jobs offer.<sup>2</sup> Many of these women rely on a combination of AFDC, Food Stamps, and child support to help them raise their children; often, however, this mix of resources does not even reach the poverty level.\*

Data show that about 12.3% of all Hispanics receive AFDC and that 17.4% of all AFDC recipients are Hispanic. The typical monthly benefit averages \$370; in states where Latinas are most concentrated, the highest benefit is in California (\$663 per month) and the lowest benefit is in Texas (\$184 per month) for a three-person family. While these benefits do not automatically include Food Stamp payments, most AFDC recipients do receive them. Hispanics constituted 14.5% of all households receiving Food Stamps in 1991. By contrast, housing assistance is not tied to the receipt of AFDC, and most families that receive AFDC do not receive housing subsidies. While data are not available for the proportion of Hispanic AFDC recipients that live in assisted housing, in 1990, 9.5% of all AFDC families were in publicly subsidized housing. In that same year, according to the *American Housing Survey*, only 7.3% of all Hispanic households received any form of housing assistance.

Another contributing factor to household income for women maintaining families alone is child support. A recent compilation of data by NCLR shows that Hispanic and Black women were less likely to be awarded child support payments than White women. Child support payments were awarded

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\* In 1993, the poverty threshold for a family of three was \$11,522, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census.



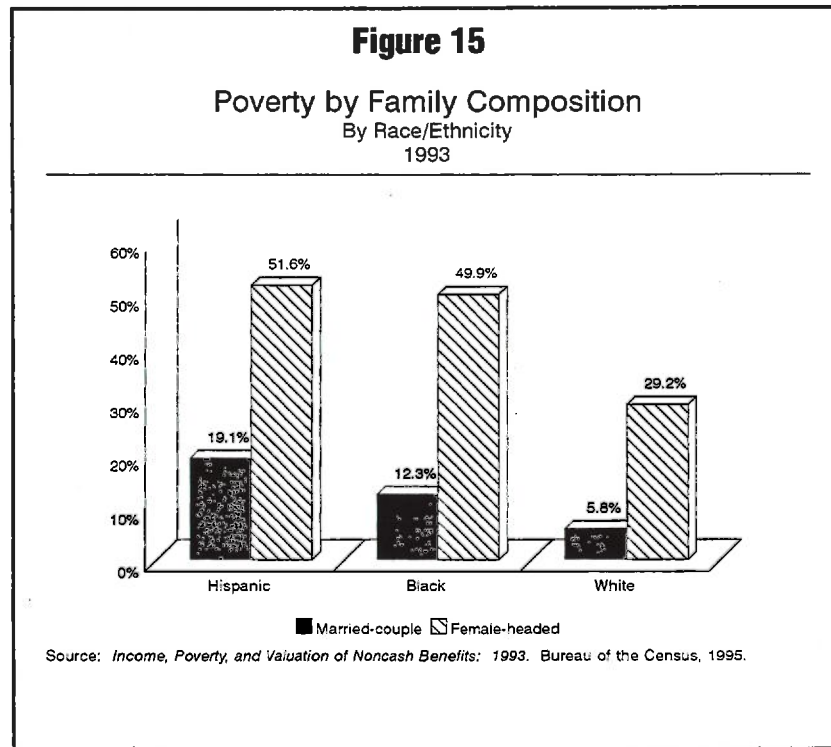
to 67.5% of White single mothers, 34.5% of Black single mothers, and 40.6% of Hispanic single mothers. Even fewer actually received any support; in 1989, 30.2% of Hispanic women, 30.3% of Black women, and 23.5% of White women should have but did not receive any support payments.<sup>3</sup>

## Poverty

As a group, the Latino poor have been virtually “invisible” and are frequently ignored by policy makers. Despite the fact that a significant segment of poor Hispanic families is maintained by a woman and that more than half (53.2%) of Hispanic single mothers live below the poverty level, Latinas are generally off the policy-making “radar screen.” While most discussions about women and poverty focus on welfare, research and data show that the factors associated with Hispanic women’s poverty are multi-faceted and have implications far beyond welfare.

As detailed in the previous discussion, poverty affecting Latinas is strongly associated with low levels of education. This variable, combined with limited work experience, in turn influences whether, the extent to which, and where Hispanic women work, as well as how much they earn. As described by Pearce women’s economic status like that of their male counterparts — is determined, in large part, by their employment status. But as the data presented thus far indicate, Latinas are overrepresented both in low-paying occupations and among the working poor. They are likely to have insufficient earnings and high unemployment rates.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, employment discrimination plays a role in shaping their prospects, outcomes, and wages. As research has documented, women’s poverty involves workplace problems such as “pay inequity, occupational segregation, the lack of unemployment insurance coverage for women workers, and sex discrimination.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, issues related to education and employment merit both attention and further analysis in order to understand and design appropriate and responsive strategies to reduce Latina poverty. Similarly, changes in the economy, such as industry shifts, recessions, and changes in skill requirements adversely affect Latina workers.



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Another issue related to poverty among Latinas is the combination of children and family supports. The likelihood that a young Hispanic women will complete school and work or seek higher education increases if she is not a parent — or if she has a support structure in place that allows her to work outside the home. In fact, family composition is a principal determinant of poverty status.

As Figure 15 illustrates, Hispanic women who are raising their children without a husband present are about two and one-half times as likely as Latino married-couple families to be poor (53.2% vs. 22.5%). Comparative racial and ethnic group data indicate that both Latina and African American female heads of household have equally severe rates of poverty.



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# Endnotes

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3. *Welfare Reform Issue Brief*, National Council of La Raza, March 1994.
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5. Ibid.



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# Additional Concerns

## Overview

The previous discussion shows that the status of Hispanic women is in large part tied to their educational characteristics and their economic options. Yet, both researchers and policy makers often overlook other critical issues that affect the prospects and condition of Latinas. The recognition and resolution of the three problems addressed below are key to maximizing opportunities for Latinas; no doubt there exist many other concerns that should be addressed to improve the status of Hispanic women. But emerging research suggests that three important concerns — teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome (AIDS) — and the scope and degree of their impact on Latinas and their families, merit greater attention.

## Teenage Pregnancy

From a policy perspective, teenage pregnancy is often considered primarily a public health issue. For the Latino population, however, the problems associated with unplanned, unprepared, and out-of-wedlock adolescent pregnancies encompass a broad range of social and economic issues that threaten the well-being and futures of both young women and their children.

Recent data cited below demonstrate that teenage birth rates have increased among Latinos in the past decade. Data released in 1993 by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) showed that rapid increases in adolescent birth rates in the second half of the 1980s occurred among Hispanics, teenagers under 18, and unmarried women.<sup>1</sup> Hispanic teenage births increased 25% during the last half of the 1980s, compared to 17% for non-Hispanic Black and 16% for non-Hispanic White adolescents. By 1990, for every 1,000 Hispanic teenagers there were 100 births; comparable figures are 116 per 1,000 for non-Hispanic Blacks and 43 per 1,000 for non-Hispanic Whites. In 1990, 100,031 babies were born to Latinas under 20 years of age.

One of the most serious concerns related to the increase in births to adolescents is that a growing proportion of these births are to unmarried women. Comparative data show that births to unmarried women vary by age and Latino subgroup. Among Latina women of childbearing age in 1990, one-third (33%) of Mexican births were to women who were not married, compared to more than one-half (56%) of Puerto Rican, less than one in five (18%) Cuban, and more than two in five (41%) Central and South American births. Among teenagers, about 60% of Latina births occurred outside marriage, compared to 56% of White and 92% of Black teenage births.

Several factors are associated with Latino teenage pregnancy as well as with the increase in Hispanic out-of-wedlock birth rates over the last several years. In addition to lack of knowledge about and access to reproductive health services, the most critical factors which help to explain Latino teenage pregnancy rates are low basic skills and educational attainment, low socioeconomic status, and low self-esteem and expectations of the future. Among some Latino groups, particularly recent immigrants, early childbearing may be more acceptable. Moreover, in some disadvantaged communities, when jobs are scarce and higher education is not considered accessible, early parenthood is not discouraged, and young people tend to model the behavior common to their environments.





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Hispanic teenage pregnancy and births, especially those that are unplanned and occur outside of marriage, have serious consequences for young women, their partners, and their babies. These include:

- **Lack of prenatal care.** Research shows that pregnant teenagers are less likely than the general population of pregnant women to receive adequate prenatal care. In particular, pregnant adolescents are at risk of receiving no prenatal care at all or beginning care very late. According to NCHS, Hispanic women as a group are more likely than non-Hispanic women to have had late or no prenatal care.
- **Low birthweight.** Women who receive late or no prenatal care are especially likely to have babies that are born at low birthweight, and these babies are at increased risk of illness. Despite socioeconomic disadvantage, Hispanic young women as a group tend not have a high incidence of low birthweight babies, compared to their Black counterparts. However, subgroup data show that Puerto Ricans do have a disproportionately high likelihood of having low birthweight infants.
- **Dropping out of high school.** Research shows that one of the main reasons cited by Hispanic female teenagers for leaving high school before completion is pregnancy. Moreover, once they do leave school, young Hispanic women are less likely than their Black or White peers to return to school or to obtain a GED. Youth without high school diplomas face extreme difficulties in the job market and, for the young women who also become mothers, the likelihood of long-term economic self-sufficiency is minimal.
- **Family poverty.** Latino youth who have children before they are emotionally and financially prepared are very likely to live in poverty. In 1991, one-third (32.8%) of Latinos between the ages of 16-24 with at least one child was poor. The challenges of parenthood for young adults are exacerbated by limited education and employment skills. In 1991, about two in five Hispanics 25-34 years old (38.2%) without a high school diploma were poor, compared to less than one in five Hispanics (18.8%) of the same age group with a high school degree.

## Domestic Violence

One issue that policy makers have often ignored — and which few advocates take up on behalf of Latinas — is domestic violence. An examination of three aspects of domestic violence and its impact on Latinas deserves review. First, data indicate that domestic violence is one of the most serious issues affecting Hispanic women, although domestic violence obviously affects all types of families and households regardless of income, race, or ethnicity. For example, between 1979 and 1987, at least 6.5% of Hispanic women were victims of domestic violence at the hands of their spouse or ex-spouse (3.1%), boyfriend (1.7%), or other family member (1.7%). Violent victimizations include rape, robbery, and both aggravated and simple assault.<sup>2</sup>

Data discussed in the previous section related to the demographic, social, and economic status of Latinas is also relevant in this context. Research suggests that “Latinas’ comparatively poor economic and political position places them at a distinct disadvantage, thus causing Latinas to experience and respond to domestic violence differently than other women.”<sup>3</sup> For example, because Hispanic women as a group have the lowest median earnings and are overrepresented in low-paying jobs, their scant economic resources may deter them from trying to escape an abusive situation.



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Second, several factors help to explain why violence against Latinas is especially difficult to identify, document, and address. Inadequate resources in the form of shelters, financial support, legal assistance, and information has made efforts to assist all battered women, regardless of ethnicity, extremely difficult. For some Latinas, these limitations are complicated by language and cultural barriers and immigration status.

Immigration status is a critical issue in the discussion of domestic violence in the Latino community. Immigrant women who are victims of violence are perhaps the most isolated of all women who experience abuse; some may not have legal status, may not know their rights, may not be aware that services exist to help them, may be afraid to seek help in an unfamiliar environment, may not speak English, and may — depending on their recency of arrival, country of origin, and education level — believe that abuse is “acceptable.” Because of their limited access to information, services, and legal protection, women immigrants are especially vulnerable to abuse.<sup>4</sup> Undocumented women, especially those who must rely on their spouses to obtain legal status or work authorization, are unusually vulnerable and have limited options for addressing abuse.<sup>5</sup> Recent legislation, “The Violence Against Women Act,” signed into law in September 1994 permits newly arrived immigrant spouses to file their own requests for residency, rather than depend on an abusive spouse. In addition, the law gives added protections against deportation for women who prove that they were abused and would suffer “extreme hardship” if they were deported.

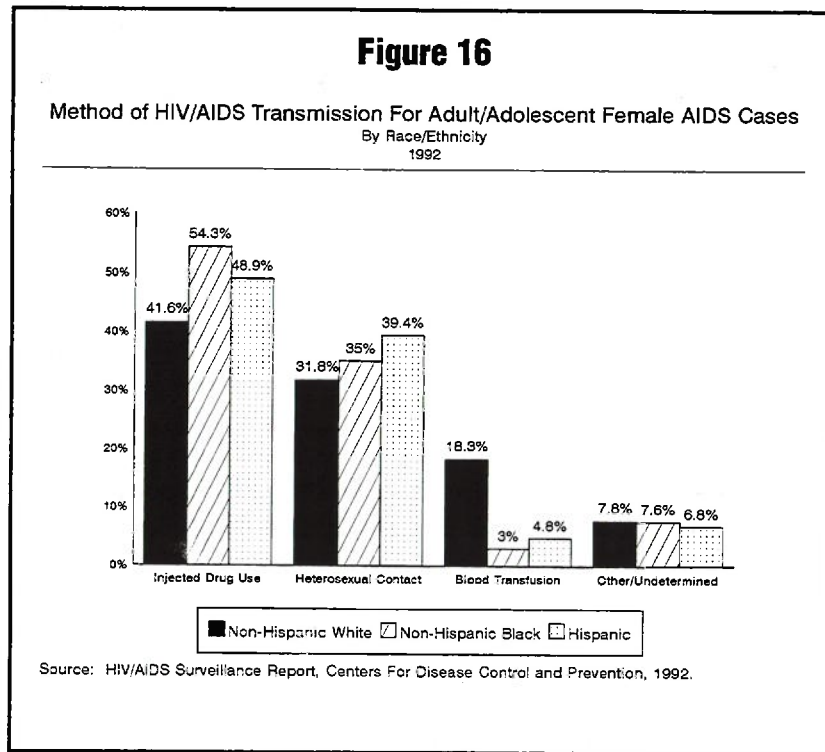
A third aspect of this issue that requires consideration relates to the effectiveness of both the social and legal service systems for Latinas. Mainstream services for women who have been abused by their partners are often inaccessible to Hispanic women for whom English is not their first language. For example, hotlines and shelters may not have Spanish-speaking counselors, so Hispanic women who overcome the difficulty associated with seeking help may feel unwelcome, ignored, or dismissed. For some Hispanic women who experience abuse, these feelings are likely to deter them from reaching out for assistance. Moreover, the diversity of the Latino population warrants an understanding of culturally specific issues; what may be relevant for a fourth-generation Mexican American may not be for a Dominican immigrant who arrived a short time ago. Both social and legal service providers may not understand or respond to these subtle nuances. Hispanic community-based programs and services have worked to fill these gaps but often experience inadequate funding and understaffing.

## **HIV/AIDS**

Women are a small but rapidly growing proportion of the population reported to have AIDS. Nationally, HIV infection was the fourth leading cause of death in 1993 among women 25-44 years of age. Women of color are especially being affected by this disease. In 1994, 77% of AIDS cases were reported among minority women. In fact, in 1993, HIV infection was the leading cause of death among Hispanic women 25-44 years of age, making Hispanic women disproportionately likely to contract AIDS. Overall, while Hispanic women comprise 8.7% of all females in the U.S., through June 1994 Latinas made up 20.5% of all reported female adult/adolescent AIDS cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Midyear 1994 HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report. Altogether, for Hispanic women, the risk of contracting AIDS is eight times that of White women.<sup>6</sup>



By 1995, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had received reports of more than 58,000 AIDS cases among adults and adolescent women. Approximately one half of all AIDS cases among women have been attributed to injecting-drug use and one third to heterosexual contact. However, in 1994, the leading mode of transmission was heterosexual contact. As illustrated in figure 16 injected-drug use and heterosexual contact are the primary modes of contraction for Hispanic women.



Moreover, for all methods of transmission, 48.9% of Hispanic female AIDS cases were transmitted through their own injecting-drug use, compared to 41.6% of non-Hispanic White and 54.3% of non-Hispanic Black female cases. Hispanic and non-Hispanic White females with AIDS each comprised approximately 23% of all female AIDS cases contracted through heterosexual contact, compared to 50.5% of Blacks. A serious concern of AIDS among women is the increased risks of their children contracting the disease. As of 1994, 1,480 AIDS cases among Hispanic children were reported to CDC.<sup>7</sup>

A number of factors are associated with high incidents of HIV/AIDS in the Hispanic community. These factors include:

- ❖ A false perception by many Hispanics, including community leaders, that AIDS is a “gay, White, male disease”;
- ❖ Cultural considerations, including the social stigma associated with high-risk behavior such as homosexual/bisexual activity, IV drug use, prostitution, and “promiscuous” sexual behavior;
- ❖ The traditional opposition of the Catholic Church — to which about 90% of Hispanics belong, at least nominally — to sex outside of marriage, homosexual acts, and artificial birth control; this has complicated prevention efforts which stress the use of condoms;
- ❖ Language, class and cultural barriers, including difficulty in reaching at-risk Hispanics through mass media, especially mainstream media;



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- ❖ Lack of culturally-sensitive and appropriate prevention materials targeting the Hispanic community and particular Hispanic subgroups;
  - ❖ Insufficient education and prevention programs targeted to Hispanic opinion leaders or to community educators, such as mothers, health workers, and outreach workers;
  - ❖ Limited access to health care and to health education and prevention programs on the part of many Hispanics;
  - ❖ Limited research on sexual attitudes and behavior among Hispanics;
  - ❖ Limited access on the part of community groups to funding, information, and other resources needed to combat AIDS; and
  - ❖ Limited research on IV-drug use behavior among Hispanics.<sup>8</sup>

In addition with HIV/AIDS, early diagnosis is critical to the treatment of the disease and the patient's prognosis, but poor, working-poor, and other uninsured Latinos may forego health care needs because of limited financial resources.



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# Endnotes

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# Analysis and Implications

Given the rapidly changing demographics of the United States, greater attention to the status of Latinas is overdue. The well-being of both Latino families and the cities and states in which they live is inextricably linked to the opportunities and improved status of Hispanic women. The compilation of information presented in this report suggests several arenas for researchers and policy makers to pursue in order to broaden the array of choices and opportunities available to Latinas, and to help improve their disturbingly poor economic conditions. The data and research continue to underscore that several issues must remain a priority of policy makers and Latino advocates.

**Strategies to increase not only education levels, but quality and transferability of skills, are essential to changing the socioeconomic outlook of Latinas.** Education is the most significant predictor of future earnings potential. It also strongly determines stability and success in the labor force. High levels of education facilitate entry into different sectors of the economy and, equally important, increase a worker's ability to move between different job fields. Yet, Hispanic female educational attainment levels continue to be distressingly low and the education gaps between Latinas and non-Latinas remain wide. While high educational attainment is not in and of itself a predictor of workforce activity, it is a major determinant of labor market success. In particular, women who do not complete high school, college, or advanced skills training are especially likely to experience severe and persistent poverty. Moreover, because they are often responsible for their children's well-being, the poverty of Latinas has implications beyond their own status.

These findings suggest that within the educational advocacy arena, two issues are especially relevant for Hispanic women. The first involves increasing the actual number of years of schooling among Latinas. Basic education skills and even a high school diploma are no longer adequate tools for employment. Low-wage jobs are expected to decrease, and the majority of jobs in which Latinas currently work will grow slowly or decline over the next decade. Without adequate preparation, Latinas will continue to compete for dwindling numbers of low-wage jobs, remain concentrated in female-segregated occupations, and face rising unemployment and dislocation rates.

A second area that should be targeted is the quality of education and skills. Quality is of particular importance with respect to training. Over the next few years, the job market will become even more fluid and will require its workers to be more flexible and versatile. In order to meet these demands, Latinas will need to have a broad base of skills, including English-language fluency and literacy. The potential capacity of Hispanic women as future workers to help sustain and develop the U.S. economy — and support themselves — is greatly dependent upon their improved skill status and their ability to move between available positions in different areas of the economy. Therefore, the participation of Latinas in rigorous academic high school programs and their enrollment in and completion of college or advanced high-quality training are critical to their future well-being.

**Low earnings, occupational segregation, and employment discrimination must be addressed in order to improve the status and prospects of Hispanic women workers.** The socioeconomic status of Hispanic women has been shaped by an interplay of several factors. First, Latina workers earn the lowest wages of any major worker group. Because they are overrepresented in low-wage employment, many Hispanic women who work full-time, year-round jobs cannot earn enough to support themselves or their children — a factor which greatly influences their likelihood of poverty. Additionally, jobs which pay low earnings also tend to be jobs that do not provide important benefits, like health insurance or pension coverage. Latino workers are especially likely to be uninsured,



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which means that they and their families often forego important preventive health measures. Moreover, lack of access to and information about physical and mental well-being translates into greater risk of illness and loss of time from work. The absence of retirement planning and coverage suggests that the high poverty which affects Latino workers and their families now may also increase for elderly Latinos in the future. Furthermore, low-paying employment is often unstable employment, vulnerable to changes in the economy and worker displacement. It is also the least likely segment of the economy to allow flexible work schedules, a factor that has an impact on Hispanic women workers who are also single mothers and must have secure child care arrangements to avoid missing work. Taken together, jobs with low earnings have serious ramifications for Latinas, from high poverty to lack of benefits to unemployment.

A second work-related issue for Latinas is occupational segregation; more than other women, Latinas are especially likely to be employed in jobs traditionally considered “women’s work,” such as secretarial or sales positions. Such jobs are often low-paying, unless a worker has many years of tenure. In addition, many of these types of jobs do not offer opportunities for advancement or for high-level skills training, which works to keep the women employed in these positions without much labor market mobility. Beyond that, the continued segmentation of the labor market has acted to keep Hispanic and other women out of higher-paying as well as more challenging jobs, not only in the private sector, but also in other arenas, like politics and the sciences. Measures are needed to insure that they will gain entry into these and other areas of the economy as a step toward economic parity and adequate representation in different fields. Specifically, it is essential to their increased economic stability that Latinas move into both low-skilled, high-paying, non-traditional jobs, such as the armed services and skills, trades, and crafts, as well as into managerial and professional positions.

A third area of serious concern is the role that employment discrimination plays in determining where Hispanic women work and how much they get paid. Low educational attainment rates and related factors play an important role in the labor market position of Latina workers, but so does employment discrimination — a fact that is neither widely understood nor accepted. The extent to which discrimination influences the earnings and occupational distribution of Latinas has not precisely been determined; nevertheless, it is clear that Hispanic women experience discrimination both because they are Hispanic and because they are women. The empirical evidence as well as independent research discussed in the previous sections, indicates that inequality and lower returns to education are extremely serious obstacles to the entry of Hispanic women into certain areas of the labor force and their subsequent prospects for upward mobility.

**Job market prospects and opportunities are another important factor in the employment status of Hispanic women.** The current labor market does not provide enough jobs for everyone who wants to work. Jobs for unskilled women are declining but, even for Latinas who continue to improve their education and skill levels, jobs are not always plentiful. The employment status of Latina women, therefore, does not only depend on what they bring to the market, but also on what is available in the market. Similarly, the future status of Hispanic women as workers will be shaped by the jobs that are created in the future, the preparation needed for those positions, and the extent to which job growth occurs in areas of the country where Latinas live.

**Hispanic women’s poverty must become a priority for policy makers and advocates and the lens through which it is viewed must be broadened.** Because Latino poverty overall has remained



largely invisible to advocates and policy makers, Hispanic women's poverty has generally been ignored. Yet, the data and trends suggest that poverty is a serious concern for Latinas and requires more committed public policy attention. For a variety of reasons, poverty among Hispanic women has increased over the last decade. Yet, during this time, few efforts were made by legislators to shape policies that would help to improve the poor economic status of women. An analysis of Latina representation in the current welfare debate underscores three problems that continue to sidetrack and taint the limited discussion of poverty in the U.S. and which impede the amelioration of Latino poverty, in particular. First, the poor economic position of Hispanic women is often lost in the narrow framing of poverty as a Black/White issue. Policy makers, advocates, and the media continue to ignore Latinos — a significant segment of the U.S. population which is disproportionately represented among the poor. Or, Hispanics are grouped within a broader "minority" category, which often obscures rather than illuminates the issues associated with Latinos' socioeconomic position. The result is that the few measures considered and enacted have not had a significant impact on Latino poverty.

A second concern is the way that women's poverty is viewed. For the most part, policy makers and legislators have failed to understand that the issues that are associated with poverty among Hispanic women cannot be addressed by sweeping, "one-size-fits-all" reforms. In terms of gender, policy makers often think about women's poverty only in terms of welfare; therefore, it is not surprising that many of the "hard" issues that affect the economic position of Hispanic women have been overlooked or ignored.

A third issue which has dominated most discussions of the economic position and prospects of Hispanic women is immigration. Many researchers and policy makers continue to attribute the poverty of Latinos and their families to immigration status. Yet, about two-thirds of Latinos are native-born U.S. citizens. By pushing immigration into the Latino poverty policy debate, policy makers and the press conveniently ignore the need to explain why a significant segment of Americans are not benefiting from labor market opportunities.

This report also highlights the need for increased social awareness and policy attention on:

- ❖ **Teenage pregnancy.** The implications of unmarried, unplanned pregnancy and births among Latino youth are enormous, and include poor health consequences, lack of school completion, unemployment, and long-lasting poverty; unfortunately, the issue is rarely addressed by either Hispanic policy makers and organizations or their mainstream counterparts.
- ❖ **Domestic violence.** The extent to which violence against Latina women has been disregarded by both advocates and policy makers is worrisome. This report has shown that physical and emotional abuse among Hispanic women deserves greater attention and has implications for their physical well-being, their ability to lead normal, productive lives, and the safety of their children. Domestic violence is a troubling issue among immigrant women, in particular.
- ❖ **AIDS.** The rate at which AIDS has spread among Hispanic women is alarming. Because Latinas are disproportionately counted among HIV-infected persons, their children face an increased risk in contracting the fatal disease; clearly, this is an issue that cries out for greater attention.

Furthermore, to improve the prospects for Hispanic women and secure the economic role that many Latinas play as breadwinners, single mothers, and/or sole financial providers, as well as en-





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hance their ability to compete in the workforce, keep up with changes in the economy, and improve their overall well-being, this report suggests:

- ❖ **Latino advocates and researchers should appropriately continue to focus attention on education to increase opportunities for Hispanic females.** Because education remains a serious barrier to the social and economic advancement of Latinas, policy-relevant research and advocacy in this area is critical. In particular, two challenges exist to raising the education levels of Latinas: understanding why their dropout rates are not declining; and determining how to increase not just high school completion, but also assure the development of “higher order” skills through education and training.
- ❖ **Schools and Latino parents must ensure that Hispanic girls are participating in and taking courses that are rigorous, including advanced math, science, and college preparatory classes.** Specific efforts at the school level are needed to improve the quality and quantity of education of Hispanic females. The discussion above has demonstrated that higher educational attainment is key to improving the participation, placement, and overall earnings of Latinas in the labor market.
- ❖ **Major changes in the design, outreach, and implementation of training programs are needed to ensure the proportionate participation of Hispanic women.** Training programs have not met their goals for Latinas or served them well. Those under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Labor have done a poor job at ensuring the adequate participation of unemployed Latinas and their re-integration into stable, lasting employment that pays at least above poverty-level wages. Programs for welfare recipients, like JOBS, have not sufficiently served the “hardest to employ.” Inadequate funding, the channeling of Latinas into training components that are not effective at moving them into the job market, and the inadequate provision of basic skills and English literacy in order to prepare them for jobs, have worked to keep Latinas poor and/or on welfare.
- ❖ **Training opportunities for non-traditional jobs should be made available to Hispanic women.** Because Hispanic women, as a group, have few workforce skills and earn low wages, non-traditional sectors of the economy should be explored to see how Latinas can move into those positions, including, for example, jobs such as computer-related design and construction, which require relatively little initial training, but may lead to opportunities at the upper end of the pay scale. Moreover, training opportunities or programs geared to this goal can help to break up the segmented labor force and gender-specific jobs.
- ❖ **Policy makers, funders, and community-based organizations should design local training programs based on occupational outlooks and projections.** One of the biggest concerns facing Hispanic women workers is that a significant portion of the jobs in which they are working is expected to grow slowly over the next decade or decline in number. In addition, women who have participated in training programs have often complained that when they complete training, jobs are not available. Those who design and operate training programs locally should use both data on industries that are expected to increase, and on jobs that will be in demand, to train women specifically for those positions.
- ❖ **Advocates and policy makers should expand efforts to reduce employment discrimination against Latinas, including improved outreach and enforcement.** Education and skill levels



together do not completely explain the position of Hispanic women in the workforce; discrimination plays a persistent, and possibly increasing, role. One welcome development would be for traditional women's organizations to focus greater attention on discrimination and pay equity issues affecting Hispanic women. Similarly, Latino civil rights organizations can and should do more to address the impact of discrimination on Latinas, the single lowest-paid group of workers in the United States.

- ❖ **Comprehensive strategies are needed to increase the labor force participation rate and earnings of Hispanic women.** The rising labor force participation rate of U.S. Hispanic women is a hopeful sign that Latinas who choose to do so will continue to secure their place in the paid labor force. Researchers and policy makers should increase efforts to identify whether and the extent to which the presence or absence of children, geographic location, or other elements affect the employment activity of Latinas. Additionally, because Latina women have been relegated to a niche in low-wage work, the challenge for both the Hispanic community and policy makers is to facilitate their entry into other levels of the labor force. Without an increase in both labor force participation and in earnings, Hispanic married-couple and single-mother families will increasingly lose the modest gains they have made in recent years and slip further below the poverty level.
- ❖ **Policy makers must increase resources and options for child care, health care, and child support to ensure both the full integration of Latinas into the labor force and their overall economic stability.** Affordable, quality child care is scarce, and the mainstream child care system may not be responsive to Latina preferences and interests. Health care reform is a crucial issue for Latinas, given their low rates of health care coverage. The child support system does not work well, but works least well for Hispanic women. The combination of these "supports" must be available for both single and married Hispanic mothers to facilitate and ensure their participation in the workforce.
- ❖ **Researchers and Latino advocates should devote serious attention and resources to understanding changes in Hispanic family structure.** Data show that Latino two-parent families, while still overrepresented among the working poor, are faring better economically than their single-parent counterparts. Additionally, research on the increases in African American female-headed households has documented its profound effects on the Black community and provides lessons for other populations to consider. The rise in Hispanic single-mother families and the formation of such families among young women, in particular, pose a serious threat to their overall well-being and to the socioeconomic prospects of the Latino community; it deserves an equally serious focus.
- ❖ **Both national and community-based Latino organizations need to increase their emphasis of teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and AIDS on their advocacy agendas.** Too often, issues related to Hispanic women's education and employment status are included in broader economic agendas, but issues such as teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and AIDS rarely get the attention that the data suggest they merit. Moreover, these issues need both a research and policy focus; research to document the scope and seriousness of the problems, and advocacy to ensure that they are on the nation's public policy "radar screen."

This report represents a modest effort to synthesize existing information about the status of Latina women and highlight the areas of concern for researchers, policy makers, and advocates. It echoes the



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increased need for greater Latina participation in helping to assess and shape the impact of public policies on their lives. Similarly, it underscores the importance for low-income and women's advocates in all communities to better incorporate into their agendas the distinct issues that affect Hispanic women. While this report focuses principally on the serious challenges that cities, states, and the nation as a whole must consider to improve the socioeconomic status and prospects of Latinas, it also serves to confirm the untapped potential that lies among women in the Latina community. Hispanic women have a strong role to play in contributing to the nation's future growth and economic and social development. The future of Latinas in the U.S. can be both promising and hopeful; with increased opportunities in education and employment, greater support for Hispanic women who are mothers, and better protection against violence and discrimination, it will be.



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## **SELECTED NCLR AFFILIATES WHICH PROVIDE SPECIFIC, WOMEN-FOCUSED SERVICES**

### **Ayuda, Inc.**

Yvonne Martinez Vega, Executive Director  
Project Contact: Rose Rivas  
1736 Columbia Road, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-2870

Ayuda, Inc. is a nonprofit legal services organization serving Hispanic and foreign-born populations in the Washington, D.C. area. It provides legal assistance in the areas of immigration, domestic relations, and housing.

### **Cabot Westside Clinic**

David Reese, Executive Director  
Project Contact: Patricia Gonzales-Stagg  
1810 Summit  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
(816) 471-0900

Cabot Westside Clinic is a nonprofit, public health clinic that provides low-cost health services, including obstetrics and gynecological care services. It also offers a referral program to assist in the areas of domestic violence, housing, financial aid, and teenage pregnancy.

### **Comisión Femenil Mexicana**

Desiree de Portillo, President  
2001 Tylor Avenue, Suite 204  
South El Monte, CA 91733  
(213) 244-6448

Comisión Femenil Mexicana is a grassroots group which involves Latinas in the country's social,

political, and economic arenas, and is committed to ensuring that Latinas assume leadership positions.

### **Eastmont Community Center**

Manny Martinez, Executive Director  
Project Contact: Jorge Torres or Marisa Torres  
701 S. Hoefner Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90022  
(213) 726-7998

The Eastmont Community Center serves the needs of women by providing low-cost health services, such as a mobile unit for obstetrics and gynecological services. In conjunction with Planned Parenthood, it promotes education and outreach on fertility, pregnancy, and domestic violence.

### **El Centro de Servicios Sociales**

Nelson Ramirez, Executive Director  
Project Contact: Crystell Llado  
1888 East 31st Street  
Lorain, OH 44055-1892  
(216) 277-8235

El Centro de Servicios Sociales provides a range of services including education and prevention information related to domestic violence, as well as age-related health services, such as breast cancer education.



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**El Centro Human Services Corporation**

Xavier Aguilera, President/CEO  
972 S. Goodrich Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90022  
(213) 725-1337

El Centro Human Services Corporation's primary focus is the provision of mental health services to the Hispanic residents of East Los Angeles. The agency also provides counseling and therapy in the areas of child abuse and substance abuse, and has been a leader in the development of HIV/AIDS prevention programs, particularly focusing on women.

**Hispanic Health Council**

Merrill Singer, Acting Executive Director  
96-98 Cedars Street, 3A  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(203) 527-0856

The Hispanic Health Council was founded to address the critical health, mental health, and educational needs of Hartford's fast-growing Puerto Rican community. It provides services and advocacy in the areas of AIDS prevention, child abuse prevention, maternal health, substance abuse, and women's health and development. It has also developed a model program for young Hispanic girls entitled Los Jóvenes.

**Hispanic Women's Council**

Sofia Garcia-Conde Zuckerman, President  
Project Contact: Mary George  
3509 W. Beverly Boulevard  
Montebello, CA 90640-1540  
(213) 725-1657

The Hispanic Women's Council promotes the welfare of women by offering and coordinating educational, cultural, civic, and community service activities.

**La Casa de Esperanza**

Anselmo Villareal, Executive Director  
Project Contact: Milly Rivera  
410 Arcadian Avenue  
Waukesha, WI 53186  
(414) 547-0887

La Casa de Esperanza developed its own program, "Above and Beyond", which assists women who are displaced homemakers, single mothers, and AFDC recipients, who have little or no employment history. The program focuses on developing women's self-esteem through career development and career planning classes.

**Latin American Professional Women's Association (LAPWA)**

Alicia Fuentes-Unger, Executive Director  
767 Divina Vista  
Monterey Park, CA 91754  
(213) 227-9060

The LAPWA provides a mutual support group for Latinas working to enrich themselves. Among its services, it provides a scholarship fund for Latinas who are heads of household, over 25 years of age, and in college.

**MANA de Albuquerque**

Cristine Trujillo-Kavanaugh, President  
P.O. Box 40580  
Albuquerque, NM 87106  
(505) 265-4208

MANA de Albuquerque strives to improve the economic, social, and political conditions of Hispanic women through a range of educational and other activities.



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**Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care**

Mary S. Gomez, Executive Director  
2333 Ontario Road, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 483-8196

Mary's Center is dedicated to increasing access to comprehensive bilingual care for low-income, uninsured, pregnant women. The Center offers prenatal care, home visits, extensive social services, and family planning. It also assists pregnant teenagers.

**Mi Casa Resource Center for Women**

Barbara DesMartau, Executive Director  
571 Galapago Street  
Denver, CO 80204-5032  
(303) 573-1302

Mi Casa provides quality employment and education services which promote economic independence for low-income Latina women. It also operates a Business Center for Women.

**Mujeres Latinas En Acción**

Virginia Martinez, Executive Director  
1823 W. 17th Street  
Chicago, IL 60608  
(312) 226-1544

Mujeres Latinas en Acción provides social services to Latinas to enable them to become more self-reliant, and to enhance the quality of their lives. These services include assistance, and leadership development activities. Domestic violence prevention, counseling, emergency, and other social services.



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# NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS\*

## **Business and Professional Women's Foundation**

Julianne O'Gara, Executive Director  
2012 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 293-1200

## **Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc.**

Desiree P. Rabinov, President  
379 S. Loma Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
(213) 484-1515

## **Girl Scouts of America**

B. Larae Orullian, National President  
420 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10018  
Phone: (800) 247-8319  
Fax: (212) 852-6517

## **Housing Opportunities for Women**

Elaine Stein, President  
8300 Colesville Road, Suite 310  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 588-8112

## **Inter-American Commission of Women c/o Organization of American States**

Maizie Barker Welch, President  
1889 F Street, N.W., Suite 880  
Washington, DC 20006  
Phone: (202) 458-6084  
Fax: (202) 458-6094

## **Mexican American Women's National Association**

Elvira Valenzuela Crocker, President  
1101 17th Street, N.W., Suite 803  
Washington, DC 20036-4704  
(202) 833-0060

## **National Association for Female Executives**

Wendy Reid Crisp  
127 W. 24th Street  
New York, NY 10011

## **National Association of Cuban-American Women**

Graciela Beecher, President  
2119 S. Webster Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
(219) 745-5421

## **National Association of Colored Women's Clubs**

Carol Early  
5808 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20011  
Phone: (202) 726-2044  
Fax: (202) 726-0023

## **National Association of Commissions for Women**

Camille Failla Murphy, President  
2000 14th Street, N.W., Suite 354  
Washington, DC 20009  
Phone: (202) 628-5030  
Fax: (202) 939-8763



\* This representative listing was compiled by NCLR staff and presents organizations who provide specific, women-focused services on a national level.

**National Association of Hispanic Nurses**

Dr. Sarah Torres  
1501 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036

**National Association of Minority Women  
in Science**

Ana Roble  
1313 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005

**National Association of Puerto Rican/Hispanic  
Social Workers**

P.O. Box 651  
Brentwood, NY 11717

**National Association of Women Business  
Owners**

Patty DeDominic, Chair  
1413 K Street, N.W., Suite 637  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (301) 608-2590  
Fax: (301) 608-2596

**National Association of Women in  
Construction**

Sharon Bangs  
100 N. Barrancam 11th Floor  
West Covina, CA 91791  
(818) 915-1641

**National Association of Women Lawyers**

Peggy Golden, Executive Director  
750 N. Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, IL 60611  
(312) 988-6186

**National Center for Lesbian Rights**

Stephanie Smith  
870 Marjet Street, #570  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 392-6257  
Fax: (415) 392-8442

**National Center on Women & Family Law**

Joan Zorza  
799 Broadway, #402  
New York, NY 10003  
(212) 674-8200

**National Clearinghouse for the Defense of  
Battered Women**

Sue Osthoff  
125 S. 9th Street, #302  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: (215) 357-0010  
Fax: (215) 357-0779

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Rita Smith, National Coordinator  
P.O. Box 18749  
Denver, CO 80218  
Phone: (303) 839-1852  
Fax: (303) 831-9251

**National Commission on Women's Equality**

Fern Winston  
235 West 23rd Street  
New York, NY 10011

**National Commission on Working Women  
c/o Wider Opportunities for Women**

Irene Natividad, National Chair  
815 15th Street, N.W., Suite 916  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 638-3143

**National Conference of Puerto Rican Women**

Edna Laverdi, Executive Director  
5 Thomas Circle, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 387-4716





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**National Council of Hispanic Women**

Margarita Gurri Glass, President  
8415 Bellona Lane, Suite 214  
Towson, MD 21204  
Phone: (410) 337-0193  
Fax: (410) 337-0290

**National Council for Research on Women**

Mary Ellen Capek, Executive Director  
530 Broadway, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10012  
Phone: (212) 274-0730  
Fax: (212) 274-0821

**National Hispana Leadership Institute**

Nancy Leon, Executive Director  
1901 N. Moore Street, Suite 206  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Phone: (703) 527-6007  
Fax: (703) 527-6009

**National Latina Health Organization**

Luz Alvarez-Martinez  
P.O. Box 7567  
Oakland, CA 94601

**National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health**

Aracely Panameno, Director  
1420 16th Street, N.W., Suite B  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 452-8750

**National Latinas Caucus, Inc.**

Yolanda Sanchez  
853 Broadway, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10003  
Phone: (212) 673-7320  
Fax: (212) 529-8917

**National League of Women Voters**

Susan Lederman  
1730 M Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036

**National Organization for Women**

Patricia Ireland, President  
1000 18th Street, N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 331-0066  
Fax: (202) 785-8576

**National Organization for Women Legal Defense Fund**

Pat Reuss, President  
120 Maryland Ave., NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 544-4470  
Fax: (202) 546-8605

**National Women & HIV/AIDS Project**

Toni Young, Executive Director  
710 Eye Street, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20003  
(202) 547-1155  
(202) 547-5080

**National Women's Conference Center**

Ms. Gene Boyer  
16100 Golf Club Road, #201  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33326  
(414) 887-1078

**National Women's Health Network**

Beverly Baker  
514 10th Street, N.W., Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 347-1168



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**National Women's Law Center**  
Linda Cooper  
1616 P Street, N.W., Suite 100  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 328-5160  
Fax: (202) 328-5137

**National Women's Political Caucus**  
Anita Perez-Ferguson, President  
1275 K Street, N.W., Suite 750  
Washington, DC 20077  
(202) 898-1100

**The Pan American Liaison Committee  
of Women's Organizations**  
Mackenzie Gordon, President  
2905 Q Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 338-0176

**Women's Legal Defense Fund**  
Judith Lichtman, President  
1875 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suit 710  
Washington, DC 20009  
Phone: (202) 986-2600  
Fax: (202) 986-2539

**Women for Human Rights International, Inc.**  
Mariví Prado, President  
1390 Brickell Avenue, Suite 230  
Miami, FL 33131  
Phone: (305) 381-7790  
Fax: (305) 381-7794





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