

# The Hispanic Population

## OVERVIEW

The Hispanic\* population is now the largest racial and ethnic minority in the United States. According to recent estimates, Hispanic Americans compose 13% of the total population, or 38.8 million people.\*\* Latinos are also a young population, showing the promise of continued growth in the near future. More than a third (35%) of Latinos in the U.S. are younger than 18, and Hispanic children compose approximately 18% of the total U.S. child population, up from 9% in 1980. Projections indicate that by the year 2020, more than one in every five children in the U.S. will be of Hispanic origin.

The growth of the Latino demographic in the U.S. translates to a burgeoning scope of social, political, and economic influence that permeates nearly every facet of American society. Unfortunately, while Latinos exhibit many strengths at home and in the workplace, they face a myriad of social and economic challenges that limit their ability to secure better opportunities for themselves and their families, and to maximize their positive impact on society.

## General Population Characteristics

*Latinos represent a diverse population that is rapidly expanding in new parts of the country.*

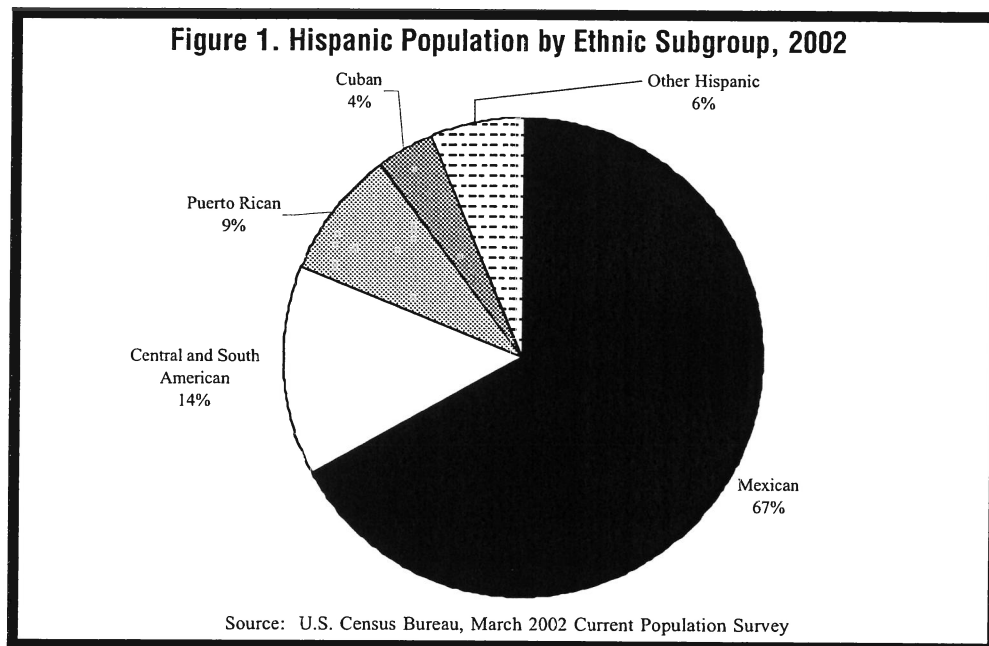
- **The Latino population is characterized by a wide diversity of ethnic subgroups.** Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans, as shown in **Figure 1**, constitute the major Hispanic subgroups.
- **The bulk of the Latino population lives in one of five states.** More than two-thirds of the Hispanic population (70%) live in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois (**Table 1**).

\* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably to refer to persons who identify themselves as Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Dominican, Spanish, or other Hispanic origin.

\*\* This does not include the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico.

■ **The Latino population is growing fastest in areas of the country that have not historically counted substantial numbers of Latinos.** Of the five states with the greatest number of Hispanics, only the Latino populations in Florida and Illinois grew at a higher rate in the 1990s (70.4%

and 69.2%, respectively) than the national average rate of growth (57.9%). The most dramatic increases in state-level Latino populations over the last ten years have occurred primarily in areas where Latinos have not traditionally resided, such as states across the Southeast and Midwest (**Table 2**).



**Table 1. States with the Largest Latino Populations: 2000**

Ranking	State	Population
1.	California	10,966,556
2.	Texas	6,669,666
3.	New York	2,867,583
4.	Florida	2,682,715
5.	Illinois	1,530,262
6.	Arizona	1,295,617
7.	New Jersey	1,117,191
8.	New Mexico	765,386
9.	Colorado	735,601
10.	Washington	441,509
	<b>United States</b>	<b>35,305,818</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

**Table 2. States with the Fastest Growing Latino Populations: 1990-2000**

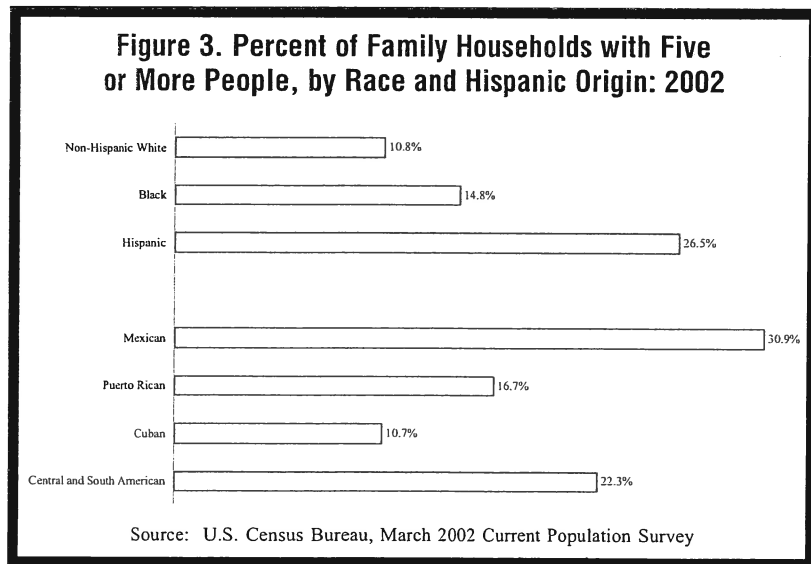
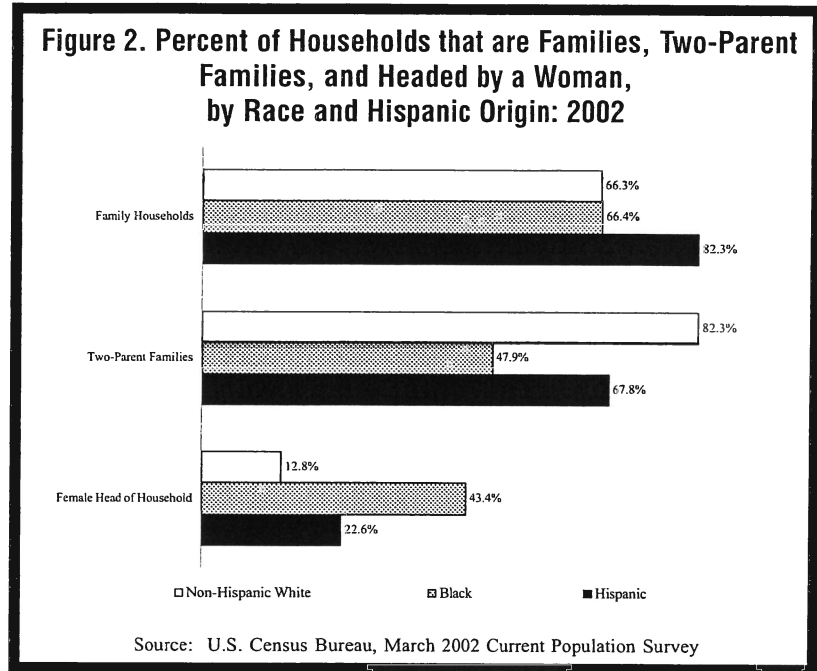
Ranking	State	Percent Growth
1.	North Carolina	393.9
2.	Arkansas	337.0
3.	Georgia	299.6
4.	Tennessee	278.2
5.	Nevada	216.6
6.	South Carolina	211.2
7.	Alabama	207.9
8.	Kentucky	172.6
9.	Minnesota	166.1
10.	Nebraska	155.4
	<b>United States</b>	<b>57.9</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

## Household Composition

*An analysis of Latino households reveals a strong commitment to family.*

- **More Latinos live in families compared to their non-Hispanic peers.** Trends in household composition reveal that 82.3% of Hispanic households are families, a higher portion than for non-Hispanic households (Figure 2).
- **The large majority (67.8%) of Latinos live in two-parent married families.** Latino households are less likely than those of non-Hispanic Whites, but more likely than those of Blacks, to be headed by two parents. They are also more likely than non-Hispanic White and less likely than Black families to be headed by a woman (Figure 2).
- **Latinos live in large families.** Hispanics, especially those of Mexican and Central and South American origin, have a greater tendency to live in family households of five or more people compared to other groups (Figure 3).

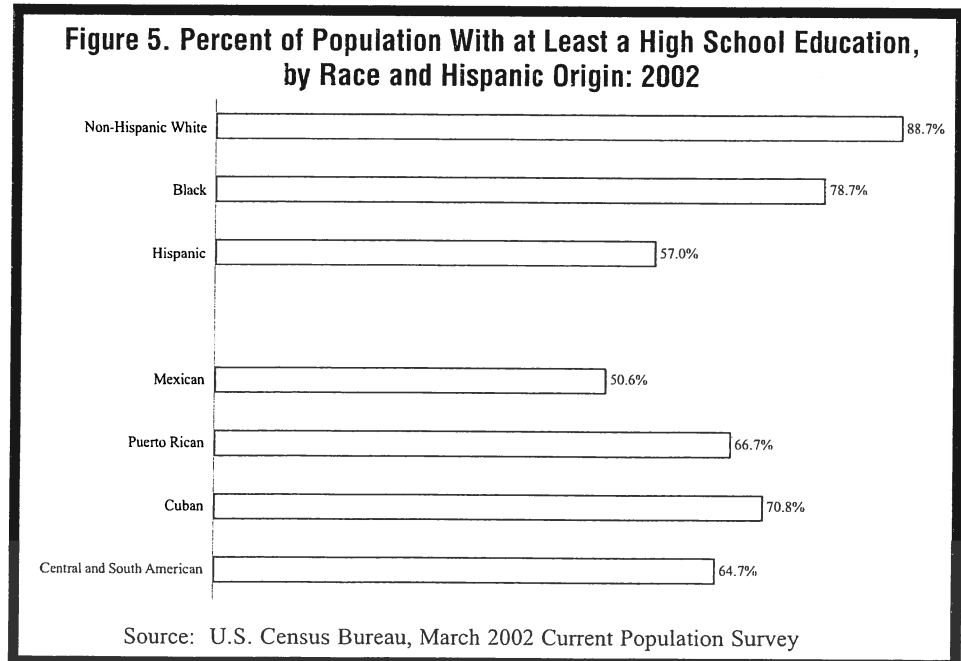
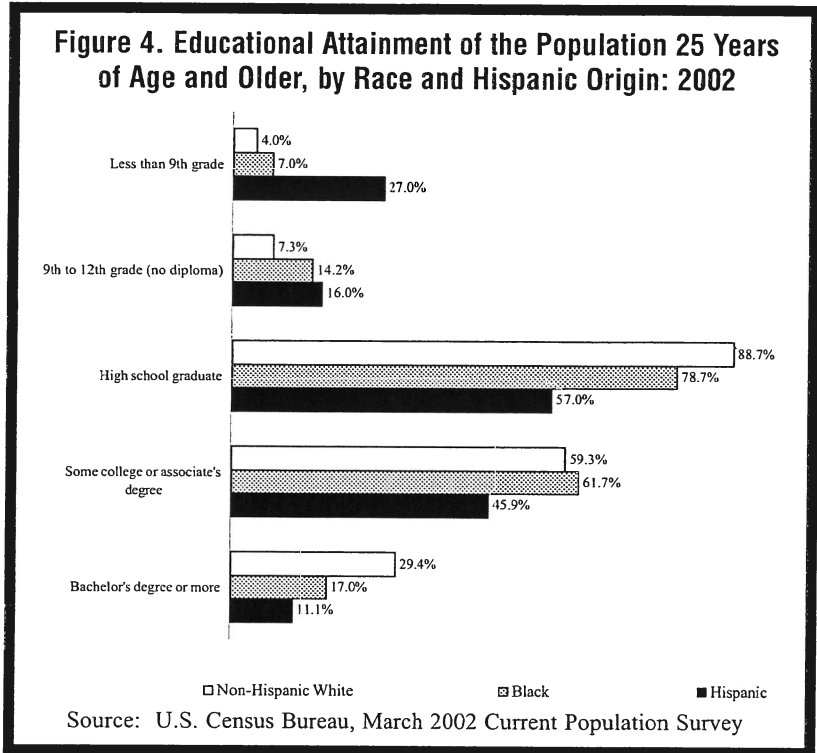


## Educational Attainment

Although educational attainment varies among Latino subgroups, in general, Latinos face barriers to the completion of secondary and higher education.

■ **Hispanics lag behind their non-Hispanic peers in attaining both high school and higher educations.** More than a quarter of Hispanics (27.3%) have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, a higher rate than for any other race or ethnic group. Hispanics are also less likely to graduate from high school, or have a college or advanced degree, than their non-Hispanic peers (Figure 4).

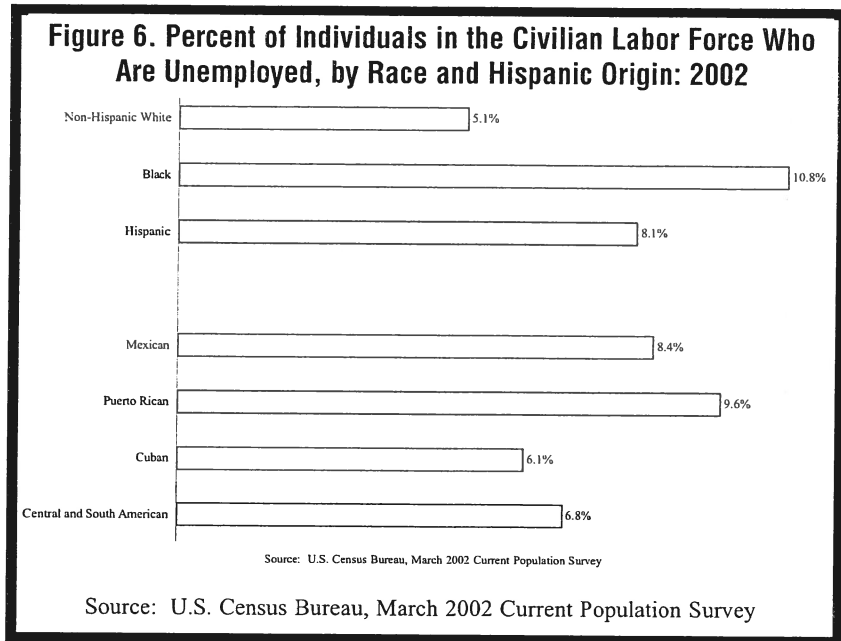
■ **Educational attainment varies among Latinos.** Of all Latino subgroups, Cubans are the most likely to have graduated from high school, and Mexicans are the least likely (Figure 5).



## Economic Characteristics

Latinos face a number of economic disparities, including high rates of unemployment and poverty. They are also much more likely to work low-wage jobs and have low incomes.

■ **Despite high participation in the workforce, Hispanics experience a high rate of unemployment.** Most Hispanics (68.6%) participate in the civilian labor force, as do most of their Black and non-Hispanic White peers (64.9% and 66.4%, respectively). However, Hispanics in the labor force are one and a half times more likely to be unemployed compared to non-Hispanic Whites, while Blacks and Hispanics are unemployed at comparable rates. Puerto Ricans have the highest unemployment rate of all Other Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups (Figure 6).



■ **Hispanics and non-Hispanics have different occupational distributions.** Proportionately fewer Hispanics hold

managerial or professional positions compared to other groups. Instead, Latinos are more likely to be employed in precision production, as operators and laborers, or in the farming and forestry industries, than any other group (Table 3).

**Table 3. Occupational Distribution of Population 16 Years Old and Older, by Race and Ethnicity: 2002**

Occupation	Managerial or Professional	Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	Service	Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	Operators and Laborers	Farming and Forestry
Hispanic	14.2%	23.6%	22.1%	14.7%	20.5%	4.6%
Non-Hispanic White	35.1%	29.6%	11.6%	10.7%	10.9%	2.2%
Black	22.5%	28.3%	23.3%	7.2%	17.6%	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, March 2002 Current Population Survey

■ **Hispanic workers earn less than non-Hispanic workers.** Just over a quarter (26.4%) of Latinos who worked full-time, year-round in 2001 earned more than \$35,000. Of all ethnic groups, Mexican Americans have proportionately the fewest number of individuals who earn at least \$35,000 annually (**Figure 7**).

■ **Hispanics are significantly more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be poor.** Both Blacks and Latinos are roughly three times as likely to live below the poverty level than non-Hispanic Whites. Among Latinos, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans are the most likely to live in poverty (**Figure 8**).

