

Heterogeneity of the Latino Population: A Fact Sheet

Country of Origin

- Latinos in the United States represent all 21 Spanish-speaking countries of the world.
- Of the 35.3 million Latinos in 2000, 20.6 million were of Mexican origin, the largest Latino sub-population. They comprised 58 percent of the nation's Latinos and represent an increase of 7.1 million since 1990. The remaining Latinos were: Puerto Rican (3.4 million); Cuban (1.2 million); Central American (1.7 million); South American (1.4 million); Dominican (765,000); Spanish (100,000); and other Latino origins (6.1 million).

Language

- The 28 million Spanish-speakers in the US constitute more than 10% of the US population. Among those who spoke Spanish, slightly more than half also reported speaking fluent English.
- The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey found that 12.5% of the population aged 5-17 spoke Spanish at home, of which 86% reported being able to speak English "very well" or "well". Fifty-seven percent of Latinos in grades K-12 speak mostly English at home, 25% speak mostly Spanish, and 17% speak English and Spanish equally.

Age

- Over one in every three Latinos in the US is 18 years old or younger, and one in two is under the age of 26. The high birthrate among Latinos will have a major impact on OB/GYN and pediatric specialties, and in time will affect the educational system and workforce.
- By 2050, Latino youth (age 10-19) are expected to comprise 29% of the country's youth population.

Gender

- Latino males (51%) slightly outnumber females (49%). This 2% difference represents about 1 million people.

Geographic Distribution

- US Latinos are concentrated in the western US and in urban areas, however population growth is higher in suburban areas.
- 45% of Latinos in 2000 lived in the West, compared to 33% in the South, 14% in the Northeast, and 8% in the Midwest.
- The rate and location on population growth varies widely. New Latino destinations like Atlanta and Orlando charted the fastest growth rates. 54% of all US Latinos now reside in suburbs, a 71% increase in the 1990s.

Immigrant Generation

- Most Latinos (61%) living in the US are US-born.
- 16.1 million, or slightly more than half, of the nation's 31.1 million foreign-born residents were born in Latin America. This represents substantial growth from 1990 census when foreign-born Latin Americans numbered 8.4 million.
- Within this group of foreign-born residents, the median length of residence was highest for those from the Caribbean (17.6 years), while the median lengths of residence of the population from Central America (about four-fifths of whom are from Mexico) and South America were 12.9 years and 13.0 years, respectively.

Latino Families

- 4.8 million, or 64%, of Latino families have children under 18. About 5 million, or 67%, of Latino families consisted of married couples; and 3.3 million, or 45 percent, consisted of "traditional families," i.e., a married couple with their own children under 18.
- Between 1970 and 1998, the number of Latinos married to non-Latinos rose from 600,000 to 1.7 million.