

LATINOS CLIMB ECONOMIC LADDER IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, LATINOS ARE STEADILY BREAKING INTO THE MIDDLE CLASS.

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Body

Southern California's **Latinos** are **steadily breaking into** the **middle class**, drawing incomes comparable to those of other groups and buying houses at similar rates, a study found.

Four times more U.S.-born Latino households in the region are part of the **middle class** than are in poverty, according to the report sponsored by Pepperdine University's Institute for Public Policy.

Education is not necessarily the key to **Latinos**' success, the study released Wednesday found.

Instead, **Latinos** typically pool resources among family members working in blue-collar and service-industry jobs, said Gregory Rodriguez, a research fellow at Pepperdine who wrote the report. More than among other populations, Rodriguez said, Latino households typically include several wage earners, often from different generations.

"It is generally assumed, in the academia and in the media, that **Latinos** are not going anywhere," he said. "In fact, there is considerable **economic** movement and progress over time."

U.S. natives generally fare better than foreign-born.

"The longer immigrant families reside in the U.S., the more likely they are to become **middle class**," the study said. "U.S.-born children and grandchildren of Latino immigrants fare considerably better than the immigrant generation."

The study is good news for **Southern California**, with its large numbers of **Latinos**, researchers said.

"The future of L.A. has a lot to do with how **Latinos** do," said Joel Kotkin, a writer who is also a senior fellow at Pepperdine and edited the study's results.

Latinos, who in 1990 constituted about a third of **Southern California**'s population, only account for about a quarter of all residents identified as **middle class**.

But the study calls the rate of upward mobility remarkable considering that two-thirds of Latino households in the region are headed by immigrants, many of whom arrived virtually penniless, not speaking English and with only primary school educations.

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