

## **Report adds to debate on Hispanic progress**

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### **Body**

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By almost any measure, from education to poverty to jobs, the USA's 22 million Hispanics are less well off than non-Hispanics. And they are especially disadvantaged compared with non-Hispanic whites.

But today's Census Bureau report on Hispanics is sure to fuel the growing debate over whether they lag behind because so many are recent immigrants, or because U.S.-born Hispanics aren't catching up. Hispanics are expected to outnumber blacks and become the nation's largest minority group by 2010.

Some social scientists say the evidence suggests Hispanics are becoming entrenched among the disadvantaged, permanently behind non-Hispanics in the USA. Others say Hispanics - about 40% of whom are immigrants, and almost 30% of whom are children of immigrants - simply haven't had enough time to close the gap.

"There's some conflicting evidence," says Jeffrey Passel, a demographer with the Urban Institute. "The second generation appears to be improving, but there are some hints that the third generation isn't making gains above that."

This murkiness stems from more than differences of opinion. Research has not kept pace with the rapid growth of the Hispanic population, which rose by 53% during the 1980s, driven largely by immigration.

In fact, most of the debate over Hispanic progress has revolved around studies of Mexican-Americans, who account for almost two of every three Hispanics in the USA. The Census Bureau's report, based on a survey of more than 57,000 Hispanic households, doesn't distinguish between immigrants and U.S.-born Hispanics.

The report examines five Hispanic groups: Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans and "Other Hispanic," a catch-all category including Hispanics from Spain and those who don't fit into other categories.

How groups of Hispanic immigrants do in the USA closely reflects the resources immigrants bring with them, says Michigan State University sociologist Ruben Rumbaut.

Newcomers from many countries that have contributed heavily to recent immigration - including Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala - tend to be less educated and less affluent than most Americans.

Smaller numbers of recent arrivals from countries like Bolivia, Chile and Venezuela tend to be highly educated professionals. But the Census Bureau counts them under the broad category of South and Central Americans, masking those groups' achievements.

So to answer the question of how well different Hispanic groups are doing in the USA, Rumbaut says, it is necessary to consider where they started.

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Salvador Lazaro, a Mexican immigrant who came to Los Angeles 13 years ago, says his story is "one in a million." But it illustrates just how well some immigrants have done.

Lazaro, 42, who has a sixth-grade education, started as a busboy at Frank's Charbroiler diner. After working for two owners, he was able to save enough to buy the restaurant.

Today, he and his wife, Gloria, put in 14-hour days. Gloria says her goal is to make sure her children don't have to work as hard as she and Salvador. "I tell them all the time that if they go to school and get college degrees, they won't have to struggle like we did."

Rumbaut says there is evidence that second-generation Mexicans make significant progress, compared with their immigrant parents. Many European-immigrant groups now considered part of the "mainstream" lived in this country for four generations before doing as well as the average American, he says.

But Rumbaut says he is disturbed by recent studies that suggest some second- and third-generation Hispanics do less well in school than Hispanic children who came to this country as immigrants. Whether Mexicans and Central and South Americans will catch up, as many Cubans have, Rumbaut says: "It's unclear."

Author and researcher Linda Chavez has no such hesitation. Her studies show that young, U.S.-born Mexican-American men are almost as likely to complete high school as their non-Hispanic, white counterparts. Although they lag behind in college education, Chavez says she believes they are catching up.

The problem with the Census Bureau's report, she says, is its failure to distinguish between immigrants and U.S.-born Hispanics.

"Because there's this constant flow" of new immigrants, Chavez says, "the snapshot looks the same every year. As every group does move up the ladder, a new group moves in to take their place."

University of Arizona political scientist John Garcia disagrees, saying there is "a legacy of Mexican-origin kids doing poorly in school regardless of whether they're foreign-born or native (U.S.) born."

He blames, in part, the growing segregation of Mexican-American students in predominately Hispanic schools, where low expectations reinforce poor performance.

If the socioeconomic gap between Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanics has been closing at all, he says, "it's been very slow."

Jorge del Pinal, head of the Census Bureau's Ethnic and Hispanic Branch, says the debate over Hispanic progress is emerging as the central controversy in Hispanic scholarship.

While the view that Hispanics are not closing the gap is probably more prevalent than the belief that they are, del Pinal says, "Probably, the truth is somewhere in between." Contributing: Jonathan T. Lovitt

Hispanics in the USA Hispanics lag behind non-Hispanics, particularly white non-Hispanics, in education, income, employment and home ownership, a new Census Bureau report shows. About 40% of the 22.1 million Hispanics in the USA are immigrants. Hispanics can be of any race. How Hispanics are faring:

Mexicans largest Hispanic group Percentage of Hispanics who say they are:

Mexican	63.6%
Central, South American	14.0%
Puerto Rican	10.6%
Cuban	4.7%
Other <u>Hispanic</u>	7.0%

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## Puerto Ricans poorest group Those under the poverty level:

White non-Hispanics	9.4%
Non Hispanics	12.8%
All Hispanics	28.7%
Puerto Rican	39.4%
Mexican	29.5%
Central, South Amer.	24.6%
Cuban	18.0%
Other <b><u>Hispanic</u></b>	20.6%

## Puerto Rican households earning the least

White non-Hispanics	\$ 32,311
Non Hispanics	\$ 30,706
All Hispanics	\$ 22,688
Cuban	\$ 26,593
Central, South Amer.	\$ 24,157
Mexican	\$ 22,477
Puerto Rican	\$ 17,967
Other <b><u>Hispanic</u></b>	\$ 27,110

## Mexicans least educated group Education level of adults 25 and older:

	Less than 5th grade	High school, some college	Bachelor's or more
White non-Hispanics	.9%	83.4%	23.2%
Non Hispanics	1.4%	81.5%	22.3%
All Hispanics	11.8%	52.6%	9.3%
Central, South Amer.	8.1%	61.7%	16.0%
Cuban	6.5%	62.0%	18.4%
Mexican	15.2%	45.2%	6.1%
Puerto Rican	6.6%	60.5%	8.4%
Other <b><u>Hispanic</u></b>	5.2%	70.9%	14.2%

## More Hispanics unemployed People 16 and older unemployed and looking for work:

White non-Hispanics	6.5%
All Hispanics	11.3%
Non Hispanics	7.5%
Puerto Rican	12.3%
Mexican	11.7%
Central, South American	10.8%
Cuban	9.4%
Other <b><u>Hispanic</u></b>	9.1%

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## More Hispanics live in single-parent households

	Married	Female-headed	Male-headed
White non-Hispanics	83.6%	12.5%	3.8%
Non Hispanics	78.9%	16.8%	4.3%
All Hispanics	68.2%	24.4%	7.4%

## Fewer Hispanics own homes Households that own their home:

White non-Hispanics	69.7%
Non Hispanics	65.8%
All Hispanics	39.9%
Cuban	50.4%
Mexican	43.7%
Central or South American	26.5%
Puerto Rican	24.1%
Other <u>Hispanic</u>	52.7%

## Notes

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## Graphic

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