

The Hispanic Population in the United States

Population Characteristics

March
1998

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Introduction

This report describes the characteristics of people of Hispanic or Latino origin in the United States. The findings are based on data collected by the Census Bureau in the March 1998 Current Population Survey (CPS).¹ People of Hispanic or Latino origin are those individuals who reported that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some Other Hispanic origin.²

The Census Bureau and other federal agencies recognize people of Hispanic origin as members of an ethnic group, and thus, they may be of any race. People of Hispanic origin in the United States are a heterogeneous group, differing in socioeconomic characteristics, culture, place of birth, and recency of immigration.

Data are presented not only for the total Hispanic population and its subgroups but also for the non-Hispanic White population. The social and economic characteristics presented in this report include, but are not limited to, age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, occupation, unemployment status, family composition, income, and poverty status.³

¹The population universe in the March 1998 CPS is the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States and members of the armed forces in the United States living off post or with their families on post, but excludes all other members of the armed forces.

²The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably in this report to reflect the new terminology in the standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget in 1997 that are to be implemented by Jan. 1, 2003. (For more information, please refer to "Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity," Federal Register, Vol. 62, No. 280, October 30, 1997, pp. 58782-58790).

³Data on earnings, income, and poverty in this report refer to the calendar year before the survey. For example, income information collected in March 1998 refers to calendar year 1997.

In March 1998, Hispanics in the United States numbered about 30.8 million and accounted for 11.4 percent of the country's total population (269 million).⁴ The total number of Hispanics rose by 48 percent from 20.8 million in March 1990 to 30.8 million in 1998. During the same time period, the total U.S. population grew at a much slower rate, increasing by only 9.3 percent from 246 million to 269 million. As a result, about 1 in 9 people in the United States today are of Hispanic origin.

People of Mexican origin represented the largest Hispanic subgroup in the United States, accounting for 64.5 percent of the total Hispanic population. People of Puerto Rican origin accounted for 10.1 percent, while people of Cuban origin, Central and South American origin, and Other Hispanic origins accounted for 4.2 percent, 14.4 percent, and 6.8 percent of the total Hispanic population, respectively (see Figure 1).

Characteristics of People

The Latino population has more people under the age of 18 and fewer elderly people than the non-Hispanic White population.

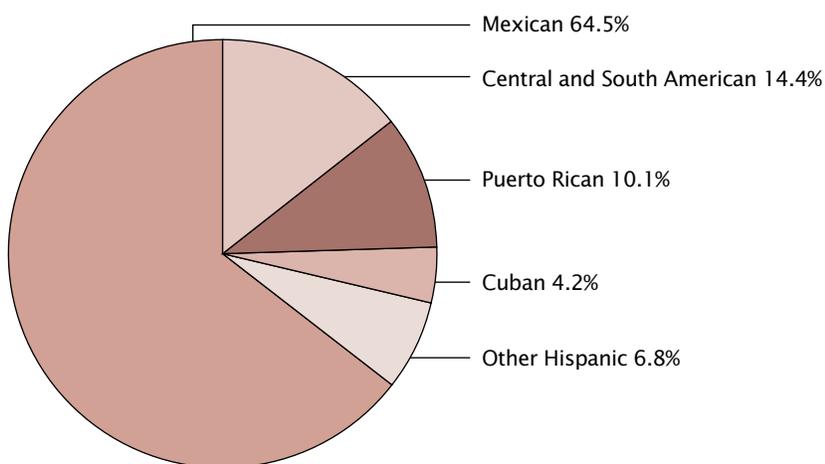
The Hispanic population is relatively young with a substantially larger proportion of people at younger ages than the non-Hispanic White population. In March 1998, over one-third (35.5 percent) of all Hispanics were under the age of 18 compared with 23.8 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. Conversely, only 5.3 percent of Hispanics were ages 65 and over compared with 14.0 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.

⁴Puerto Rico is not included in the Current Population Survey.

Current Population Reports

By
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Figure 1.
Hispanics, by Type of Origin: 1998



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998.

Figure 2.
Educational Attainment: 1990 to 1998
(Percent of Hispanics 25 years and over)



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1990 and 1998.

Among the Latino subgroups, over one-third of Mexican origin people were under the age of 18 (38.6 percent) compared with only 21.2 percent of people of Cuban origin. The proportion of elderly people (ages 65 and over) ranged from about 4.0 percent for people of Central and South American origin and Mexican origin to 19.5 percent for people of Cuban origin.⁵

⁵The proportion of elderly people of Mexican origin and the proportion of elderly people of Central and South American origin were not significantly different.

Latinos are less likely to be married than non-Hispanic Whites.

The marital status of Hispanics who were 15 years of age and older in March 1998 differed from that of non-Hispanic Whites.⁶ Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be never married (34.7 percent compared with 24.2 percent, respectively).

⁶Marital status includes both "spouse absent" and "separated."

Hispanics were less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be married (54.6 percent compared with 59.3 percent), widowed (3.5 percent compared with 7.0 percent), or divorced (7.2 percent compared with 9.5 percent).

Latinos lag behind non-Hispanic Whites in educational attainment.

The proportion of Hispanics 25 years of age and older with less than a 9th grade education continues to decline from about 35.1 percent in March 1990 to 28.6 percent in March 1998. Despite this improvement, however, the educational attainment of Hispanics in the United States remains well below that of the rest of the population. In March 1998, for example, Hispanics 25 years of age and older were six times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have less than a 9th grade education (28.6 percent compared with 4.7 percent).

The proportion of Hispanics with a high school diploma or more has steadily increased since the beginning of the decade from 50.8 percent in March 1990 to 55.5 percent in March 1998. In addition, the proportion of Hispanics with a bachelor's degree or more has risen modestly from 9.2 percent in 1990 to 11.0 percent in 1998 (see Figure 2).

Hispanics are more likely to be unemployed than non-Hispanic Whites.

In March 1998, the unemployment rate for Hispanics 16 years and over in the civilian labor force was 7.6 percent compared with 4.0 percent for non-Hispanic

Whites.⁷ The unemployment rates for both men and women were higher for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Whites. For example, the unemployment rate of Hispanic men was 7.4 percent compared with 4.4 percent for non-Hispanic White men. Hispanic women had an unemployment rate of 8.0 percent compared with 3.6 percent for non-Hispanic White women.

Hispanics are more likely to be employed in low paying occupations than non-Hispanic Whites.

In March 1998, Hispanic men 15 years of age and older in the civilian labor force continued to be over-represented in low paying, less-stable, and more hazardous occupations.⁸ Over one-fourth (27.0 percent) of Hispanic men were employed as machine operators, transportation workers, or handlers, compared with only 16.9 percent of non-Hispanic White men. In contrast, Hispanic men were less likely to be employed as executives or professionals than non-Hispanic White men (12.9 percent compared with 31.1 percent).

Among employed women, the proportion of Hispanics who held positions as machine operators, transportation workers, or handlers was about twice that of non-Hispanic Whites (14.2 percent com-

pared with 5.9 percent). Additionally, only about 18.3 percent of Hispanic women 15 years of age and older in the civilian labor force were employed in executive or professional occupations compared with 34.2 percent of non-Hispanic White women.

Hispanics earn less than non-Hispanic Whites.

The income distribution in 1997 for Hispanics ages 15 and over differed from the income distribution for non-Hispanic Whites. For instance, 26.7 percent of Hispanic men earned less than \$10,000 in 1997 compared with 16.8 percent of non-Hispanic White men. Moreover, only 7.7 percent of Hispanic men earned \$50,000 or more, compared with 22.5 percent of non-Hispanic White men.

Among women, 48.9 percent of Hispanics and 37.1 percent of non-Hispanic Whites had incomes of less than \$10,000. In addition, 2.6 percent of Hispanic women earned \$50,000 or more, compared

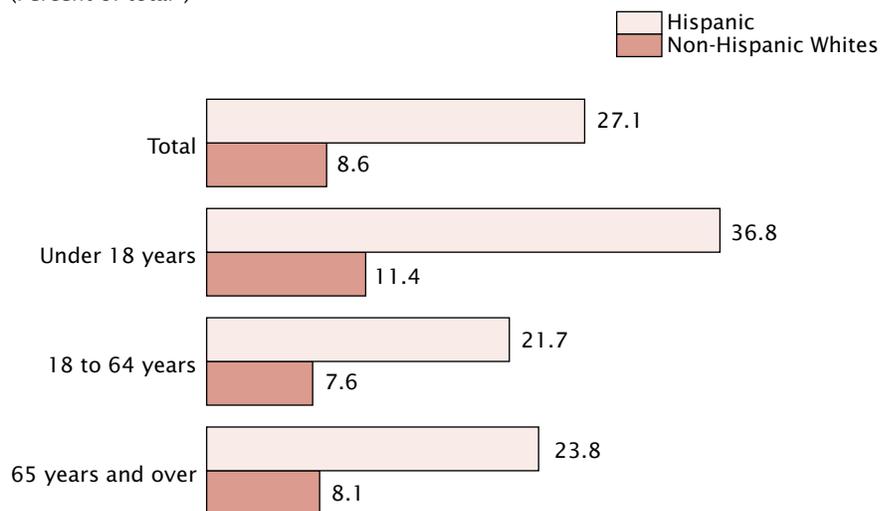
with 7.1 percent of non-Hispanic White women.

The poverty rate of Hispanics is more than three times that of non-Hispanic Whites.

Poverty continues to affect a substantial portion of the total Hispanic population in the United States. Based on 1997 income figures, for example, people of Hispanic origin were more than three times as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to be living below the poverty level (27.1 percent compared with 8.6 percent, respectively, see Figure 3). People of Hispanic origin represented about 11.4 percent of the total population but constituted 23.4 percent of all people living in poverty.

Among Latino subgroups, the poverty rate ranged from 34.2 percent among Puerto Ricans to 19.6 percent among Cubans. Although the Cubans and Central and South Americans had the lowest poverty rates among all the

Figure 3.
People Below the Poverty Level: 1997
(Percent of total*)



*Excludes unrelated individuals under 15 years.
Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998.

⁷Civilian labor force data shown in this report reflect characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population for March 1998 and are not adjusted for seasonal changes. Data released by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, may not agree entirely with data shown in this report due to differences in methodological procedures and seasonal adjustment of the data.

⁸Occupation data shown in this report reflect characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population for March 1998 and are not adjusted for seasonal changes. Data released by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, may not agree entirely with data shown in this report due to difference in methodological procedures and seasonal adjustment of the data.

Hispanic subgroups (19.6 percent and 21.5 percent, respectively), their poverty rates were still about twice as high as the poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites (8.6 percent).⁹

Hispanic children were more likely to be poor than non-Hispanic White children. Based on 1997 income figures, 36.8 percent of Hispanics under 18 years of age were living in poverty, compared with only 11.4 percent of non-Hispanic White children. Hispanic children represented 15.2 percent of all children in the United States but constituted over one-fourth (28.1 percent) of all children in poverty (see Figure 4).

Characteristics of Families

Hispanic families were more likely than non-Hispanic White families to have a female householder with no spouse present.

About 7.0 million families had a Hispanic householder, out of a total of 70.9 million families in the United States in March 1998. The number of Hispanic families is significantly higher than 10 years ago when 4.6 million families had a Hispanic householder.

The composition of Hispanic families differed from non-Hispanic White families in 1998. About 69.0 percent of Hispanic families were married-couple families, compared with 82.1 percent of non-Hispanic White families. Families maintained by a female householder with no spouse present represented 23.2 percent of all Hispanic families, compared with 12.9 percent of non-Hispanic White families. Families maintained by a male householder

⁹The percentages of Cubans and Central and South Americans in poverty were not significantly different from each other.

with no spouse present represented about 7.8 percent of Hispanic families, compared with 5.0 percent of non-Hispanic White families.

Among the Hispanic subgroups, Cuban families had the largest proportion of families maintained by married couples (80.8 percent). Conversely, Puerto Rican families and families of other Hispanic origin were the least likely to be maintained by a married couple (53.9 percent and 59.8 percent, respectively).¹⁰

Hispanic families earn less than non-Hispanic White families.

The proportion of Hispanic families with 1997 incomes over \$25,000 was about 55.3 percent, slightly greater than 5 years ago when 48.0 percent of Hispanic families earned that amount. Despite the improvement, the proportion of families

¹⁰The percentages of Puerto Rican families and families of Other Hispanic origin maintained by a married couple were not significantly different from each other.

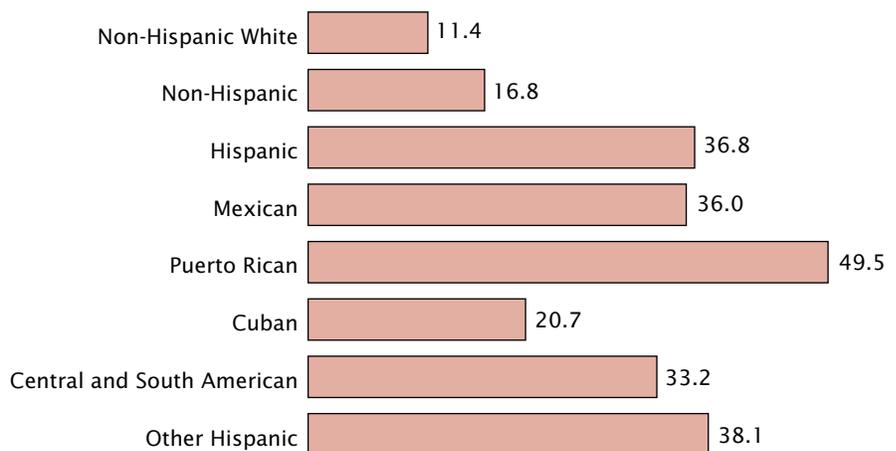
with incomes less than \$10,000 a year continues to be higher for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Whites. For instance, 13.7 percent of Hispanic families earned less than \$10,000 in 1997, compared with only 4.3 percent of non-Hispanic White families.

Hispanic families are more likely than non-Hispanic White families to be living below the poverty level.

Based on 1997 income figures, Hispanic families were more likely to be living below the poverty level than non-Hispanic White families (24.7 percent compared with 6.3 percent; see Figure 5).

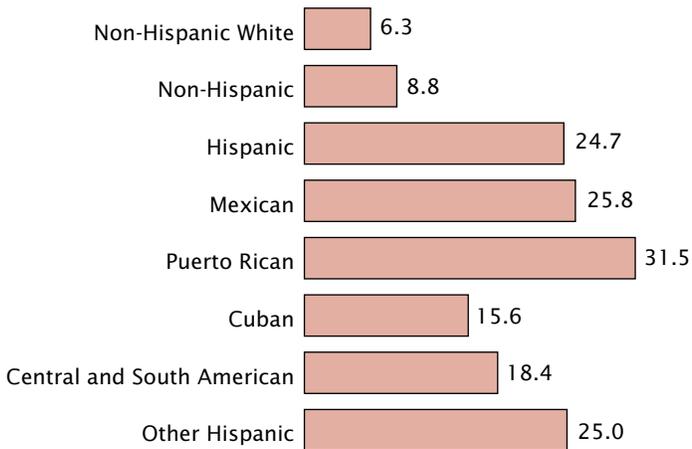
Among Latino subgroups, the poverty rate ranged from 31.5 percent among Puerto Rican families to 15.6 percent among Cuban families. Although Cuban families and Central and South American families had the lowest poverty rates

Figure 4.
Children Below the Poverty Level: 1997
(Percent of people under age 18*)



*Excludes unrelated individuals under 15 years.
Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998.

Figure 5.
Families Below the Poverty Level: 1997
 (Percent of families*)



*Includes families in group quarters.
 Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998.

among all the Hispanic subgroups (15.6 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively), their poverty rates were still twice as high as the poverty rate for non-Hispanic White families (6.3 percent).¹¹

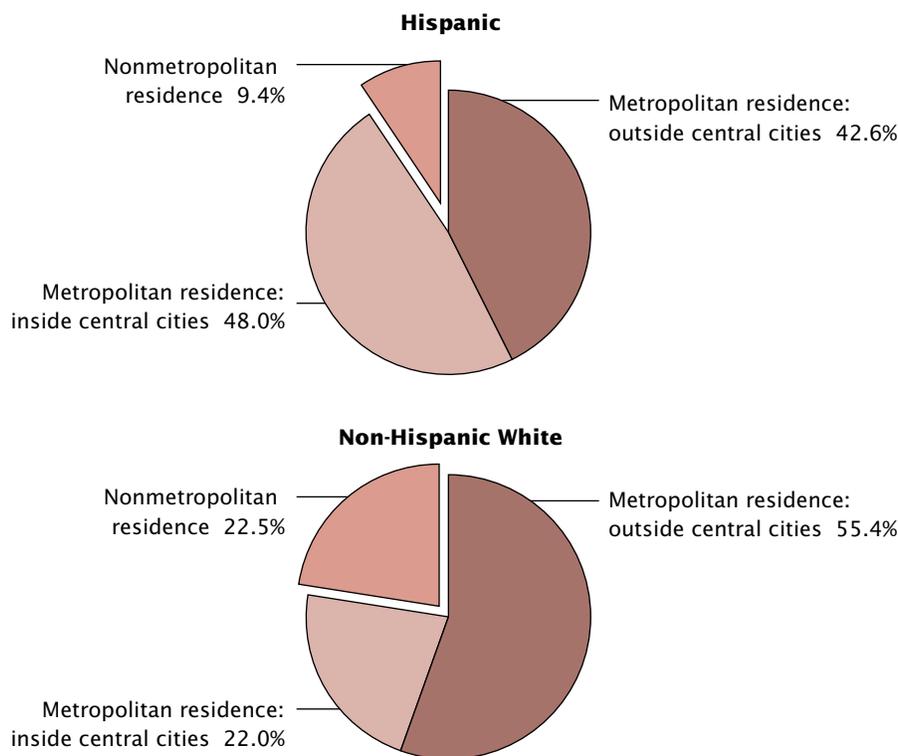
Hispanic householders are more likely to rent their homes than non-Hispanic White householders.

In March 1998, Hispanic householders were more likely than non-Hispanic White householders to rent rather than own a home. In particular, over one-half of all Hispanic households (55.1 percent) were renter-occupied compared with only 27.8 percent of non-Hispanic White households.¹²

Among Latino subgroups, Cuban households (55.9 percent) were more likely to be owner-occupied than any other Hispanic subgroup. On the other hand, Central and South American and Puerto Rican households were more likely to be renter-occupied (68.2 percent and 66.3 percent) than any other Latino subgroup.¹³

¹¹The poverty rates for Cuban families and Central and South American families were not significantly different from each other.
¹²Renter-occupied households include occupiers who paid no cash rent.
¹³The percentages of Cuban households and Central and South American households that are renter occupied were not significantly different from each other.

Figure 6.
Metropolitan-Nonmetropolitan Residence: 1998



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998.

Hispanics are more likely to reside in central cities of metropolitan areas than non-Hispanic Whites.

According to estimates from the March 1998 CPS, about 48.0 percent of all Hispanics resided inside central cities of metropolitan areas compared with 22.0 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. Alternatively, non-Hispanic Whites were more likely to reside outside central cities of metropolitan areas (55.4 percent) and in nonmetropolitan areas (22.5 percent) than Hispanics (42.6 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively; Figure 6).

Source of the Data

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in March 1998 from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained from the CPS in earlier years. The Census Bureau conducts the CPS every month, although this report uses only data from the March survey.

Accuracy of the Estimates

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet Census Bureau standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing

respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process—including the overall design of surveys, testing the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The CPS employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, please contact John M. Finamore via Internet e-mail at (dsmd_s&a@cmail.census.gov).

More Information

Sixteen detailed tables from the 1998 March (CPS) are available on the Internet, at the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site (<http://www.census.gov>). Once on the site, click on Subjects A-Z, select 'H,' then select 'Hispanic Origin.' From the Hispanic origin page, select '1998 March CPS,' then choose from the list of options.

A paper version of these tables is available as PPL-122 for \$24.30. To receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-122, The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1998," along with a check or money order in the amount of \$24.30 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422. A copy of these tables will be made available to any existing Current Population Report P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report.

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User Comments

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