

## 2. Demography

Hispanics are not only the largest minority population in the United States, they are also the youngest. Consequently, they account for especially large shares of the young adult and child populations in the U.S. While growth in the Latino population in the recent past has been driven by the flow of immigrants (the first generation), the children of those immigrants now account for the plurality of the Latino youth population. This trend is projected to intensify in the coming years as the first-generation share continues to shrink and the second and higher generations of Latino youths come to the forefront.

The second generation of Latinos is still very young. Within the 16- to 25- age cohort that is the focus of this report, the majority of second-generation Latino youths are ages 16 to 19. They are much younger than the first generation, the majority of whom in this cohort are ages 22 and older. The Pew Hispanic Center also estimates that the majority of foreign-born youths lack legal status. The relative ages of the two generations and the high share of unauthorized immigrants in the first generation have a bearing on their relative educational and economic status.

Persons who self-identify as being of Mexican origin account for about two-thirds of the Latino youth population in all generations. In terms of family heritage, the most notable difference across the generations is that relatively more youths in the first generation trace their origin to Central and South American countries and relatively fewer are of Puerto Rican or other Spanish origins.

### The U.S. Population

The United States was home to 300.5 million residents in March 2009.<sup>4</sup> Hispanics, 47.4 million strong, are the largest minority, accounting for 15.8% of the total. Of other racial and ethnic groups, whites total 196.5 million, or 65.4% of the population; blacks, 36.5 million, or 12.1%; Asians and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, 13.7 million, or 4.6%.

Hispanics, by a wide margin, are the youngest of the major racial and ethnic groups. Their median age (27) makes them younger than blacks (31), Asians and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (36) and whites (41).

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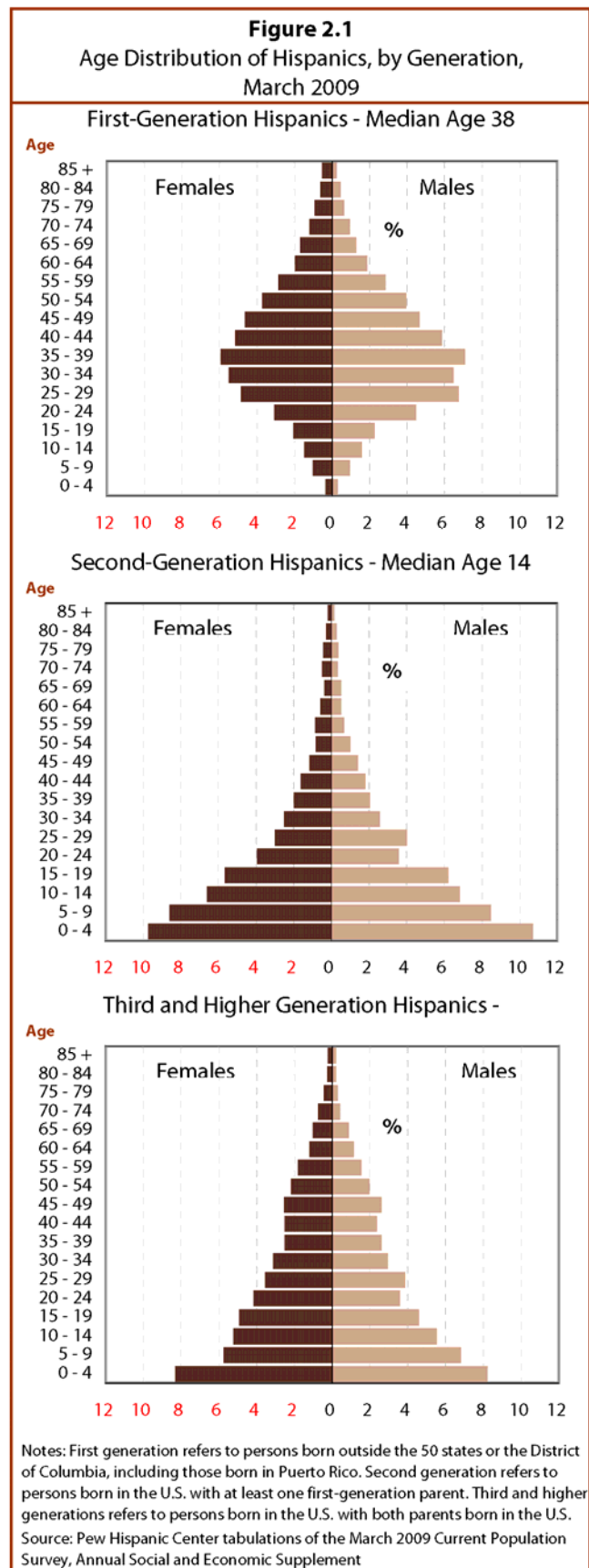
<sup>4</sup> This estimate, from the March 2009 Current Population Survey, is for the civilian, noninstitutional population.

The relative youth of the Hispanic population is driven by the emergence of the second generation. That is evident from the age and gender structures of different generations of Hispanics. The age structure of the first generation shows a marked bulge in the middle, a clear sign that most Latino immigrants arriving in the U.S. are older than 20. The median age of the first generation of Hispanics is 38, approaching the median age of the white population.

However, the age structure of the second generation of Latinos shows a striking concentration at the bottom. The median age of this generation is only 14, indicating that almost half of this population has yet to enter the teenage years. Some 37.5% of the Latino second generation is younger than 10.

The third generation of Hispanics is older than the second generation but, with a median age of 20, still relatively young. The relative concentration at the bottom of the distribution—29.0% are younger than 10—most likely reflects the growing presence of the grandchildren of the modern wave of Latino immigrants.

Because minorities are relatively young, the youth population in the U.S.—ages 16 to 25—skews toward Hispanics and blacks. Hispanics account for 7.5 million, or 18.1%, of the 41.7 million young adults in the U.S. Blacks account for 5.9 million, or 14.3%. Whites have a smaller share (60.9%) in the youth population than in the overall population.



|   | All     | Hispanics | Whites  | Blacks | Asians | Others |
|---|---------|-----------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Population (thousands)</b>                 | 300,544 | 47,395    | 196,506 | 36,467 | 13,708 | 6,468  |
| <b>Median Age (years)</b>                     | 36      | 27        | 41      | 31     | 36     | 23     |
| <b>Population, by Age (thousands)</b>         |         |           |         |        |        |        |
| 0 - 15  | 65,459  | 14,810    | 36,198  | 9,285  | 2,768  | 2,397  |
| 16 - 25                                       | 41,709  | 7,544     | 25,388  | 5,948  | 1,743  | 1,086  |
| 26 and older                                  | 193,377 | 25,041    | 134,920 | 21,234 | 9,198  | 2,985  |
| <b>Population Distribution, by Age (%)</b>    |         |           |         |        |        |        |
| 0 - 15  | 21.8    | 31.2      | 18.4    | 25.5   | 20.2   | 37.1   |
| 16 - 25                                       | 13.9    | 15.9      | 12.9    | 16.3   | 12.7   | 16.8   |
| 26 and older                                  | 64.3    | 52.8      | 68.7    | 58.2   | 67.1   | 46.1   |
| <b>Population, by Gender (thousands)</b>      |         |           |         |        |        |        |
| Male  | 147,231 | 24,306    | 96,269  | 16,921 | 6,522  | 3,213  |
| Female  | 153,313 | 23,089    | 100,236 | 19,546 | 7,187  | 3,255  |
| <b>Population Distribution, by Gender (%)</b> |         |           |         |        |        |        |
| Male  | 49.0    | 51.3      | 49.0    | 46.4   | 47.6   | 49.7   |
| Female  | 51.0    | 48.7      | 51.0    | 53.6   | 52.4   | 50.3   |

Notes: Asians includes Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Numbers may not total due to rounding.  
Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the March 2009 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

Overall, youths ages 16 to 25 account for 13.9% of the U.S. population. The share of youths is higher among Latinos (15.9%) and blacks (16.3%). Hispanics and blacks also have more young children “in waiting.” Almost one-third (31.2%) of the Hispanic population and 25.5% of the black population is younger than 16, compared with 21.8% of the U.S. population. And when it comes to newborns, fully 25% in 2007 were born to Hispanic mothers ([Hamilton, Martin, and Ventura, 2009](#)).

There is another key demographic difference between Latinos and other groups: Latinos are the only majority male population. Among Latinos, males had a 51.3% share of the population. The share of males in the overall population is 49.0%. This divergence may be attributed to the relative youth and foreign-born status of the Hispanic population.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Females, because of their greater longevity, comprise greater shares of older populations. Also, the incoming stream of Hispanic migrants is predominantly male.

## The Young Adult Population

The young adult population in the U.S. consists of 17.1 million teens ages 16 to 19, a share of 41.0%; 8.1 million young adults ages 20 to 21, comprising 19.3%; and 16.6 million young adults ages 22 to 25, accounting for 39.7%. The distribution of the young adult Hispanic population is virtually identical. The nation's 7.5 million Hispanic young people include 3.1 million teens (41.1%); 1.3 million ages 20 to 21 (17.7%); and 3.1 million ages 22 to 25 (41.3%).

**Table 2.2**  
Age and Gender Characteristics of the Youth Population, March 2009

|   | All Youths | All Hispanics | Native-born Hispanics | HISPANICS BY GENERATION |        |                  |
|---|------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------|------------------|
|   |            |               |                       | First                   | Second | Third and Higher |
| <b>Population (thousands)</b>                 | 41,709     | 7,544         | 4,995                 | 2,549                   | 2,786  | 2,209            |
| <b>Population, by Age (thousands)</b>         |            |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| 16 - 19                                       | 17,083     | 3,099         | 2,406                 | 693                     | 1,427  | 980              |
| 20 - 21                                       | 8,057      | 1,333         | 855                   | 478                     | 460    | 396              |
| 22 - 25                                       | 16,569     | 3,113         | 1,734                 | 1,379                   | 900    | 834              |
| <b>Population Distribution, by Age (%)</b>    |            |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| 16 - 19                                       | 41.0       | 41.1          | 48.2                  | 27.2                    | 51.2   | 44.3             |
| 20 - 21                                       | 19.3       | 17.7          | 17.1                  | 18.7                    | 16.5   | 17.9             |
| 22 - 25                                       | 39.7       | 41.3          | 34.7                  | 54.1                    | 32.3   | 37.7             |
| <b>Population, by Gender (thousands)</b>      |            |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| Male  | 21,100     | 3,942         | 2,477                 | 1,464                   | 1,426  | 1,051            |
| Female  | 20,609     | 3,603         | 2,518                 | 1,085                   | 1,360  | 1,158            |
| <b>Population Distribution, by Gender (%)</b> |            |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| Male  | 50.6       | 52.3          | 49.6                  | 57.4                    | 51.2   | 47.6             |
| Female  | 49.4       | 47.8          | 50.4                  | 42.6                    | 48.8   | 52.4             |

Notes: Youth refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. First generation refers to persons born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including those born in Puerto Rico. Second generation refers to persons born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent. Third and higher generations refers to persons born in the U.S. with both parents born in the U.S. Numbers may not total due to rounding.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the March 2009 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

However, there are major differences in the age and gender structure of the native-born and foreign-born Hispanic young adult populations. Foreign-born Latinos are older—54.1% are ages 22 to 25, compared with 34.7% of native-born Latinos. Conversely, only 27.2% of foreign-born Latinos are ages 16 to 19, compared with 48.2% of native-born Latino youths. Within the native born, the second generation is younger still. Most second-generation Latino youths (51.2%) are still in their teenage years.

With regard to gender, a sizable majority (57.4%) of foreign-born Latino youths are male. That is much higher than the male share in the second generation of Hispanic youths (51.2%) or third and higher generations of Hispanic youths

(47.6%). The relatively high share of males in the foreign-born Latino young adult population reflects the fact that in many cases, male immigrants come first, followed by their families.

### Countries of Origin of Hispanic Youths

More than two-thirds of Hispanic youths, regardless of nativity or generation, self-identify as being of Mexican origin.<sup>6</sup> That share is similar to how all Hispanics in the U.S. identify their origin. There is, however, one notable difference across generations of Hispanic youths. The share of youths who identify Central or South America as their origin increases sharply from the third and higher generations (3.9%) to the second generation (18.3%) and then to the first generation (23.8%).

|  | All Hispanics | Native-born Hispanics | HISPANICS BY GENERATION |        |                  |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------|------------------|
|  |               |                       | First                   | Second | Third and Higher |
| <b>Population (thousands)</b>                            | 7,544         | 4,995                 | 2,549                   | 2,786  | 2,209            |
| <b>Population, by Country of Origin (thousands)</b>      |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| Mexican  | 5,135         | 3,446                 | 1,689                   | 1,864  | 1,582            |
| Puerto Rican   | 710           | 552                   | 158                     | 241    | 311              |
| Cuban  | 212           | 133                   | 78                      | 94     | 39               |
| Central or South American                                | 1,200         | 595                   | 606                     | 509    | 86               |
| Other Spanish origin                                     | 287           | 268                   | 19                      | 78     | 190              |
| <b>Population Distribution, by Country of Origin (%)</b> |               |                       |                         |        |                  |
| Mexican  | 68.1          | 69.0                  | 66.3                    | 66.9   | 71.6             |
| Puerto Rican   | 9.4           | 11.1                  | 6.2                     | 8.7    | 14.1             |
| Cuban  | 2.8           | 2.7                   | 3.1                     | 3.4    | 1.8              |
| Central or South American                                | 15.9          | 11.9                  | 23.8                    | 18.3   | 3.9              |
| Other Spanish origin                                     | 3.8           | 5.4                   | 0.7                     | 2.8    | 8.6              |

Notes: "Youth" refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. First generation refers to persons born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including those born in Puerto Rico. Second generation refers to persons born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent. Third and higher generations refers to persons born in the U.S. with both parents born in the U.S. Numbers may not total due to rounding. Country of origin is based on self-described family ancestry or place of birth in response to questions in the CPS. It is not necessarily the same as place of birth.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the March 2009 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

<sup>6</sup> Country of origin is based on self-described family ancestry or place of birth in response to questions in the Current Population Survey. It is not necessarily the same as place of birth. For example, a person born in Los Angeles may identify his or her country of origin as Mexico. Likewise, some people born in Mexico may identify another country as their origin depending on the place of birth of their ancestors.

### Legal Status of Foreign-born Hispanic Youths

The modern wave of Hispanic immigration has included large numbers of unauthorized migrants. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that 7.9 million unauthorized Hispanic migrants were in the U.S. in March 2008. They accounted for 41% of all foreign-born Hispanics in the country.<sup>7</sup> But the share of unauthorized migrants in the foreign-born Latino youth population is even higher. One reason is that the journey across the border is more likely to be made by those relatively young. Another reason is that older foreign-born Hispanics include those who have acquired legal status through amnesty or other means. Thus, 58% of foreign-born Latino youths were estimated to be unauthorized migrants in March 2008. A similar share of foreign-born Latinos younger than 16 is unauthorized. By contrast, 37% of foreign-born Latinos ages 26 and older are unauthorized.

### Generations of Latino Youths

The second generation of Latino youths—the children of immigrants—outnumbers the other generations. In March 2009, there were 2.8 million second-generation Hispanic youths, followed by 2.5 million first-generation (foreign-born) youths and 2.2 million third and higher generations of youths (see Table 2.2).

The share of the second generation in the Latino youth population has grown steadily over time. In 1995, nearly half (47.3%) of Latino youths were foreign born and the second generation accounted for less than a third (31.2%).

**Table 2.4**  
Legal Status of the Foreign-born Hispanic Population, March 2008  
(numbers in thousands)

|               | All Foreign Born | IMMIGRATION STATUS |              | Percent Unauthorized |
|---------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|
|               |                  | Legal              | Unauthorized |                      |
| <b>Total</b>  | 19,289           | 11,344             | 7,945        | 41.2                 |
| <b>By Age</b> |                  |                    |              |                      |
| 0 - 15        | 1,340            | 567                | 773          | 57.7                 |
| 16 - 25       | 2,849            | 1,207              | 1,642        | 57.6                 |
| 26 and older  | 15,100           | 9,570              | 5,529        | 36.6                 |

Note: Numbers may not total due to rounding.  
Source: Pew Hispanic Center estimates from the March 2008 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

**Table 2.5**  
The Hispanic Youth Population, by Generation, 1995 to 2009

|                                    | All   | HISPANICS BY GENERATION |        |                  |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|--------|------------------|
|                                    |       | First                   | Second | Third and Higher |
| <b>Population (thousands)</b>      |       |                         |        |                  |
| 2009                               | 7,544 | 2,549                   | 2,786  | 2,209            |
| 2005                               | 7,132 | 3,081                   | 2,295  | 1,756            |
| 2000                               | 6,463 | 2,897                   | 1,970  | 1,596            |
| 1995                               | 4,776 | 2,261                   | 1,490  | 1,025            |
| <b>Population Distribution (%)</b> |       |                         |        |                  |
| 2009                               | 100.0 | 33.8                    | 36.9   | 29.3             |
| 2005                               | 100.0 | 43.2                    | 32.2   | 24.6             |
| 2000                               | 100.0 | 44.8                    | 30.5   | 24.7             |
| 1995                               | 100.0 | 47.3                    | 31.2   | 21.5             |

Notes: "Youth" refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. First generation refers to persons born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including those born in Puerto Rico. Second generation refers to persons born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent. Third and higher generations refers to persons born in the U.S. with both parents born in the U.S. Numbers may not total due to rounding.  
Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of March 1995 to 2009 Current Population Surveys, Annual Social and Economic Supplements

<sup>7</sup> This share would be higher if persons born in Puerto Rico were not included as part of the foreign born population.

However, the share of the foreign born has diminished steadily, partly because the earlier wave of migrants are now having children and partly because the wave of migration itself has abated. Thus, in March 2009, it is estimated that 33.8% of Latino youths were foreign born, compared with 36.9% of Latino youths who were members of the second generation.

The share of the second generation in the Hispanic youth population is expected to peak in 2025. The Pew Hispanic Center projects that the second

generation will comprise 42.8% of the Hispanic youth population in 2025.

However, the second generation will yield to the third and higher generations over time, and its share is expected to drop to 35.7% in 2050. The third and higher generations are projected to boost their share from 29.3% in 2009 to 37.4% in 2050, with most of this increase coming after 2025. The share of foreign-born Latino youths, the first generation, is projected to slip from 33.8% in 2009 to 26.9% in 2050.

