



HIGHLIGHTS

- Latino families are larger than those of non-Latino whites and African Americans.
- 31% of Latino households consist of at least 5 people.
- Half of Latino teens live with both biological parents.
- Latino youth are more likely than non-Latino white and African American youth to marry young.
- Divorce rates among Latino adults are lower than those among non-Latino whites or African Americans.
- The percentage of Latino youth with a mother who has graduated from high school has nearly doubled in recent decades.
- Over two-thirds of Latino preschoolers of working mothers are cared for by a relative.

Background

Latino culture has traditionally stressed the importance of family, placing a high value on marriage and children, and on economic and social support among extended family members.¹ Some of these traits have been found to have protective influences, and along with adherence to Catholicism and high fertility rates, they also contribute to the propensity of larger households among Latinos.

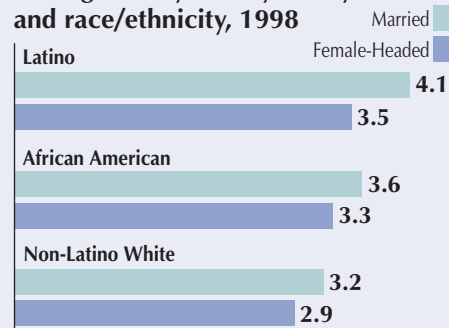
Size and Structure of the Latino Family

Latino households are larger than those of African American and non-Latino whites. This is true for both married-couple and single female-headed households (See Figure 1).² One-third (31%) of Latino households contain 5 or more people, compared to 21% of African American and 11% of non-Latino white households.³ This pattern results largely from the greater average number of children in Latino families. Latino youth have more siblings than non-Latino white and African American youth, but, as is true of all groups, the proportion of Latino teens with many siblings has declined since the early 1970s (See Figure 2). In 1972, about four in ten Latino (37%) and African American (39%) 15-18 year olds had four or more siblings, compared to 17% of non-Latino white teens. By 1997, only 10% of Latinos and 8% of African American teens lived in such large families, as did 4% of non-Latino white teens.⁴

Teens who live with both parents tend to have better outcomes than those from other family types, including less poverty, better school success, and delayed initiation of sexual activity and childbearing.^{5,6} Latino teens are less likely than non-Latino white teens, but twice as likely as African American teens, to live with both parents. Half (49%) of Latinos live with both biological parents, another 14% live in blended or cohabiting families and one-third (35%) live with a single parent (See Figure 3).⁷

FIGURE 1

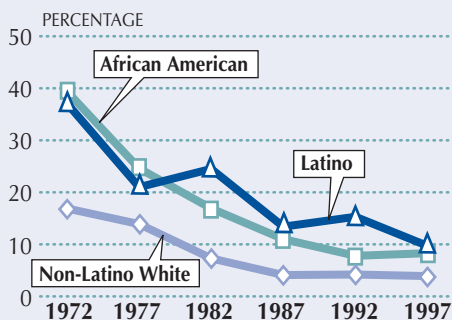
Average family size by family structure and race/ethnicity, 1998



SOURCE: US Census Bureau. 1998. Current Population Survey.

FIGURE 2

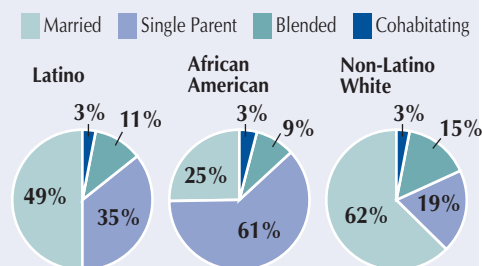
Proportion of 15-18 year olds with 4 or more siblings, by race/ethnicity, 1972-1997



SOURCE: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 1998. The Condition of Education, 1998, NCES 98-013. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. <http://nces.ed.gov/pub98/condition98/>

FIGURE 3

Family structure (ages 12-17) by race/ethnicity, 1997



NOTE: Married=living with both biological parents; Blended=mother married to non-biological parent; Cohabiting=mother living with boyfriend.

SOURCE: Nelson S, Clark RL, Acs G. 2001. Beyond the Two-Parent Family: How Teenagers Fare in Cohabiting Couple and Blended Families. National Survey of America's Families, The Urban Institute. Series B, No. B-31.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage is more common among Latino teens than among teens of other racial and ethnic groups (See Figure 4).⁸ Young women of all races and ethnicities are more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to be married. One-eighth (13%) of Latina 18 and 19 year olds are married. Latino adults are less likely to be divorced than those of other groups. Six percent of Latino adults are divorced compared to 12% of African Americans and 10% of non-Latino whites.⁸

Parental Education and Employment

The parents of Latino youth are less likely to be high school or college graduates than the parents of African American or non-Latino white youth, although the educational attainment of Latino teens' parents has increased in recent decades (See Figure 5).⁴ In 1972, one-quarter (24%) of Latino 15-18 year olds had a mother who was a high school graduate; that proportion increased to 45% in 1997. In comparison, about 78% of mothers of African American teens and 92% of mothers of non-Latino whites were high school graduates in 1997. The patterns and levels for the education of adolescents' fathers are similar.

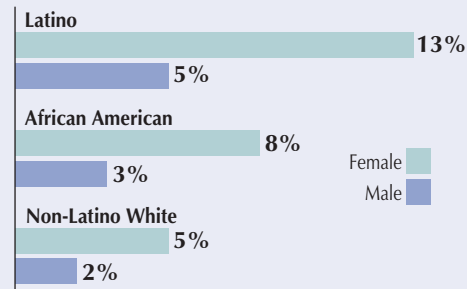
Mothers of Latino teens are less likely to be employed or seeking work than mothers of African American and non-Latino white youth. Nevertheless, by 1997 just over half (56%) of Latino teens had mothers who worked, up from one-third (32%) in 1972.⁴ In 1997, about three-quarters (78%) of non-Latino white teens' mothers worked as did 69% of the mothers of African American teens.

Child Care Arrangements

Latino children (ages 0-3) of working mothers are less likely to be cared for in child care centers or by a babysitter or nanny (15%) than are African American (33%) and non-Latino white (32%) children.⁹ Latino working mothers rely on family members (71%) more often than non-Latino white (52%) and African American (49%) mothers (See Figure 6).⁹

FIGURE 4

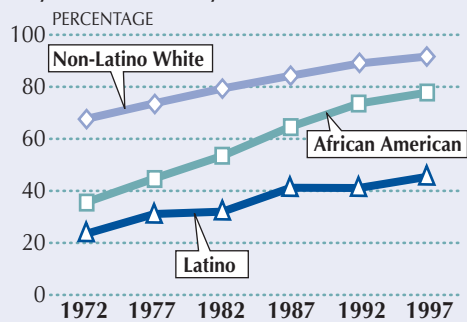
Percentage of 18 and 19 year olds ever married by race/ethnicity and sex, 1998



SOURCE: US Census Bureau. 1998. Current Population Survey. Unpublished Tables—Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update).

FIGURE 5

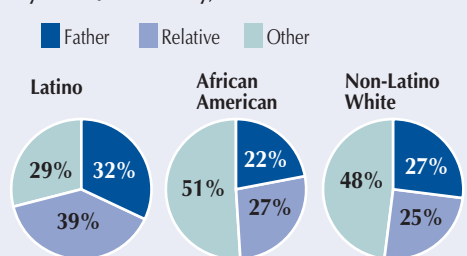
Proportion of 15-18 year olds whose mothers completed high school, by race/ethnicity, 1972-1997



SOURCE: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 1998. The Condition of Education, 1998, NCES 98-013. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/condition98/>

FIGURE 6

Child care arrangements for children (ages 0-3) of employed mothers, by race/ethnicity, 1997



SOURCE: Ehrle J, Adams G, Tout K. 2001. Who's Caring for Our Youngest Children? Child Care Patterns of Infants and Toddlers. The Urban Institute. Occasional Paper No. 42.

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Fact Sheet on Latino Youth: Families

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