



HIGHLIGHTS

- Most Latino youth are US-born; most also have immigrant parents.
- Parental education and family income increase with generation.
- Family size decreases with generation.
- English use and proficiency increases with each generation.
- High school graduation rates increase with generation, rates of college graduation do not.
- Teen sexual behavior varies by generation.
- Immigrant Latina teens have markedly higher birth rates than US-born Latinas.

Background

Each generation of Latino youth encounters different experiences and challenges. Some protective and risk factors show steady improvement across generations, some show decline, and for others, no linear pattern exists. The absence of consistent generational patterns makes it difficult to construct a clear picture of the impact of generational status on Latino youth. More research about the effects of acculturation – both positive and negative – would yield important information about how best to serve US Latino youth by maximizing the positive influences of both their native and adoptive cultures.

Latino Youth and Families

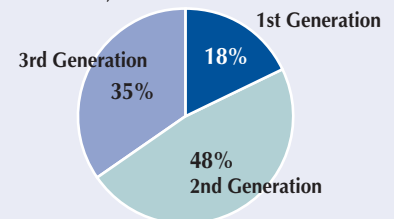
Thirty-nine percent of Latinos in the US are immigrants.¹ Eighteen percent of Latino youth are immigrants, half (48%) were born in the US to at least one foreign-born parent, and one-third (35%) are the US-born offspring of US-born parents (See Figure 1).² Among Latino families, parental educational attainment increases with generation as does mean family income. Still, even third generation Latino parents have less education and lower incomes than third generation non-Latino whites.³ As family income and parental education rise with each generation, family size decreases. While 14% of Latino immigrant youth have five or more siblings, only 9% of second generation and 8% of third generation youth have this number of siblings.⁴

English Language

The fraction of Latino youth who live in linguistically isolated households (i.e. in which no one over age 13 speaks English either “exclusively” or “very well”) declines with generation (See Figure 2).⁴ Almost half (44%) of immigrant youth live in such households, as do 31% of second generation and only 9% of third generation youth.⁴ Similarly, 55% of immigrant Latino youth do not speak English either exclusively or very well. This declines to 29% of second generation and to virtually zero among third generation youth.

FIGURE 1

Proportion of Latino students (grades 1-12) by immigrant generation, 1999

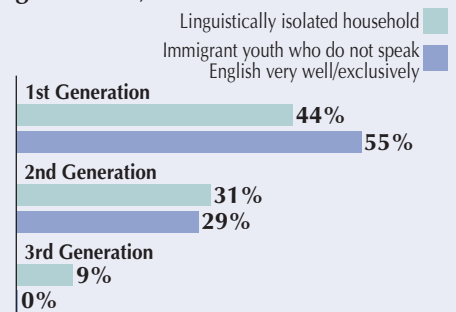


SOURCE: Jamieson A, Curry A, Martinez G. 2001. School Enrollment in the United States – Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October, 1999. Current Population Reports, P20-533, US Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

NOTE: Percents may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 2

Language use by immigrant generation, 1990



SOURCE: Hernandez DJ, Charney E (Eds.). 1998. Generation to Generation: The Health and Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families. National Research Council, Institute of Medicine. Washington, DC.

NOTE: 1st Generation: Foreign-born child who immigrated to the US. 2nd Generation: US-born child with at least 1 foreign-born parent. 3rd Generation: US-born child of US-born parents.

Education

High school completion rates improve with each generation. Just over half (56%) of 16-24 year old immigrant Latinos are either in school or have finished high school; this figure increases sharply to 80% of second generation youth and to 84% of third generation young Latino adults.⁵ However, the generational pattern of college completion is not one of continuous improvement. Nine percent of foreign-born Latino adults (ages 25-44) have a college degree. This increases to 18% of second generation Latinos, but dips to 11% of third generation Latino adults.⁶

Adolescent Sexual Behavior

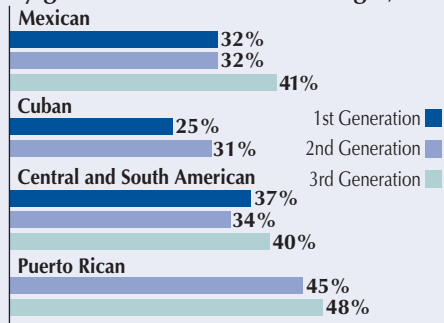
Adolescent sexual behavior varies by generation and national origin (See Figure 3).⁷ Among Mexican-origin youth (the majority of US Latino youth¹), the proportion that has had sex rises from one-third (32%) of first and second generation youth to 41% of third generation teens. Other national origin groups exhibit somewhat different generational trends.⁷ The proportion of Mexican-origin youth who use contraception at first sex rises with generation, from 43% of immigrant youth to 57% of third generation teens. Generational patterns for other national origin groups vary (See Figure 4).⁸

Adolescent Birth Rates

The most detailed information on Latino birthrates by mothers' place of birth comes from California.⁹ Immigrant Latina teens have markedly higher birth rates than US-born Latinas. In 1982, the birth rate among foreign-born 15-19 year old Latinas in California was 115/1,000. That number dipped in the mid-1980s, and rose to a high of 177/1,000 in 1992 before declining in the mid-1990s. Still, the 1998 birth rate among immigrant Latinas was higher than the 1982 birth rate (See Figure 5).⁹

FIGURE 3

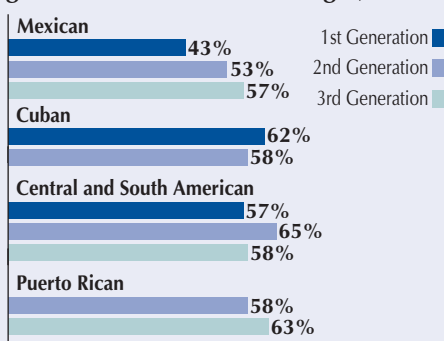
Percentage of teens who have had sex by generation and national origin, 1995



SOURCE: Harris KM. 2000. Family Processes and Health Risk Behavior Among Adolescents in Immigrant Families. Unpublished paper.
NOTE: Data not available for 3rd generation Cuban and 1st generation Puerto Rican

FIGURE 4

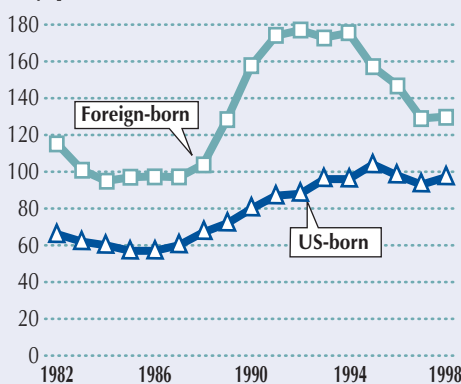
Percentage of teens who used contraception at first sex by generation and national origin, 1995



SOURCE: Harris KM. 2000. The Health Status and Risk Behaviors of Adolescents in Immigrant Families. Children of Immigrants: Health Adjustment and Public Assistance. Hernandez DJ (Ed.) Committee on the Health and Adjustment of Immigrant Children and Families, National Research Council.
NOTE: Data not available for 3rd generation Cuban and 1st generation Puerto Rican

FIGURE 5

Latino teen birth rates in California by place of birth, 1982-1998



SOURCE: Johnson HP, Hill L, Heim M. 2001. New Trends in Newborns: Fertility Rates and Patterns in California. California Counts, 3(1):1-11.

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Fact Sheet on Latino Youth: Immigrant Generation

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