



HIGHLIGHTS

- The math scores of Latino 9 year olds rose by 4% between 1982 and 1999, while reading scores have remained fairly steady.
- 63% of young Latino adults are high school graduates.
- One in ten young Latino adults has a college degree.
- Among Latinos, Cubans are the most likely to have high school diplomas and college degrees.
- High school graduation rates increase with immigrant generation, rates of college graduation do not.
- Latino high school graduates are less likely to go to college than others.
- Latinos are more likely than African Americans and non-Latino whites to attend two-year colleges and go to school part-time.

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Background

Education is a primary route to rewarding employment and economic security. It is particularly significant for the future prospects of children who are ethnic minorities, born into disadvantaged economic circumstances and/or dealing with language barriers. Although Latinos have made some progress in their educational achievements, families, schools and policy makers must continue to focus on increasing and improving educational opportunities for this growing segment of the US population.

School Progress and Achievement

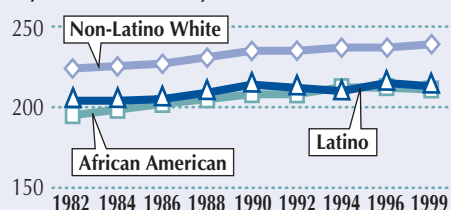
Math scores of young students in all racial and ethnic groups have improved since the early 1980s. Between 1982 and 1999, the math scores of 9 year old Latinos rose by 4%, those of African Americans rose by 8% and scores of non-Latino whites rose by 7%.¹ Still, the scores of African Americans and Latinos continue to lag behind those of non-Latino whites; in fact, the gap between Latinos and non-Latino whites increased slightly during this period (See Figure 1).¹ Meanwhile, the reading test scores of 9 year-olds have remained fairly consistent. The scores of Latinos increased by less than 2% during this time, while the scores of non-Latino whites were the same in 1999 as they were in 1980 and African Americans' reading scores decreased by less than 2% (See Figure 2).¹ These trends hold not just among younger students but for middle and high school students as well.

Educational Attainment Patterns

In 2000, 63% of 25-29 year old Latinos were high school graduates, compared to 87% of African Americans and 94% of non-Latino whites (See Figure 3).² These figures represent improvement in the past 25 years for both African Americans and Latinos. One in ten young Latino adults (ages 25-29) had a college degree in 2000, a proportion that has remained stable since 1975. In comparison, college graduation rates increased from 11% to 18% for African Americans and from 23% to 34% for non-Latino whites during this period.²

FIGURE 1

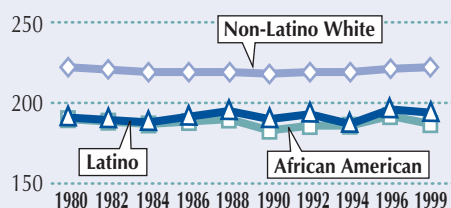
Math scores at age 9, by race/ethnicity, 1982-1999



SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

FIGURE 2

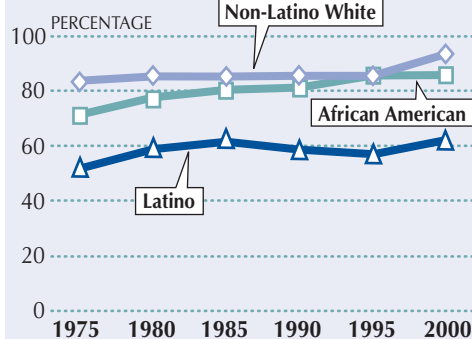
Reading scores at age 9, by race/ethnicity, 1980-1999



SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

FIGURE 3

High school completion rates by race/ethnicity, 25-29 year olds, 1975-2000



SOURCE: US Census. 2000. Table A-2. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/tableA-2.txt>

Among Latinos, educational attainment patterns vary by national origin. Half (51%) of Mexican-origin adults (ages 25 and older), almost two-thirds of Puerto Rican and Central and South Americans (64%) and three-quarters (73%) of Cuban adults have a high school diploma.³ One-quarter of Cubans have a college degree compared to 18% of Central and South Americans, 11% of Puerto Ricans and 7% of Mexicans.⁴

High school completion rates improve with each immigrant generation (See Figure 4). Just over half (56%) of 16-24 year old foreign-born Latinos are in school or have finished high school; this figure increases sharply to 80% for second generation youth and to 84% for third generation Latino youth.⁵ The generational pattern of college completion among adults, however, is not linear (See Figure 4). About one in ten (9%) foreign-born Latino adults (ages 25-44) has a college degree, increasing to 18% of second-generation Latinos. For third generation Latino adults, however, this figure falls to 11%.⁶

College Enrollment

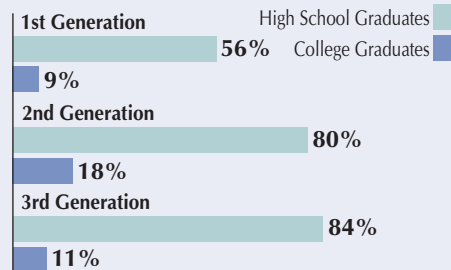
Latino high school graduates are less likely to go to college than non-Latino white or African American graduates. Almost half (46%) of non-Latino whites and two-fifths (39%) of African Americans who graduated from high school attend college. In comparison, one-third (33%) of Latino high school graduates go on to college (See Figure 5).⁷ One-fifth (19%) of Latino young adults, ages 18-24, are enrolled in college, as opposed to 30% of African Americans and four in ten (39%) non-Latino whites.⁷

Latinos who attend college are more likely than either non-Latino whites or African Americans to enroll in a two-year school than a four-year institution. Of all 15-19 year old Latinos enrolled in college in 1999, half (51%) were in two-year schools, while 30% of non-Latino whites and 36% of African American college students attended two-year institutions.⁷

Latinos were more likely to attend college part-time than either non-Latino whites or African Americans. Four-fifths (81%) of Latino college students, 91% non-Latino whites and 93% of African Americans attended school full-time. Latinos (84%) are more likely than non-Latino whites (75%) and African Americans (79%) to attend public colleges.⁷

FIGURE 4

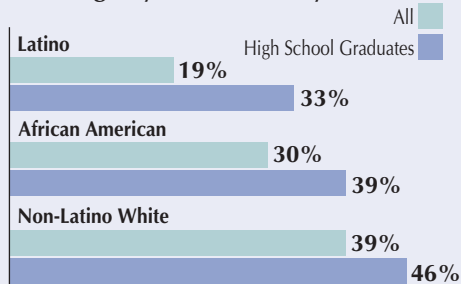
High school & college graduation rates by immigrant generation, 2000



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.
SOURCE: Newburger ER, Curry AE. 2000. Educational Attainment in the United States (Update). Table 10. Current Population Reports, P20-536, US Census Bureau.

FIGURE 5

Percent of 18-24 year-olds enrolled in college by race/ethnicity, 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.

REFERENCES

- 1 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- 2 US Census. 2000. Table A-2. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/tableA-2.txt>
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- 6 Newburger ER, Curry AE. 2000. Educational Attainment in the United States (Update). Table 10. Current Population Reports, P20-536, US Census Bureau.
- 7 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.

Fact Sheet on Latino Youth: Education

One in a series of fact sheets on Latino youth, 2002.

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