



Center for Latin American, Caribbean & Latino Studies

Peruvians in the United States

1980—2008

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The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

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The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

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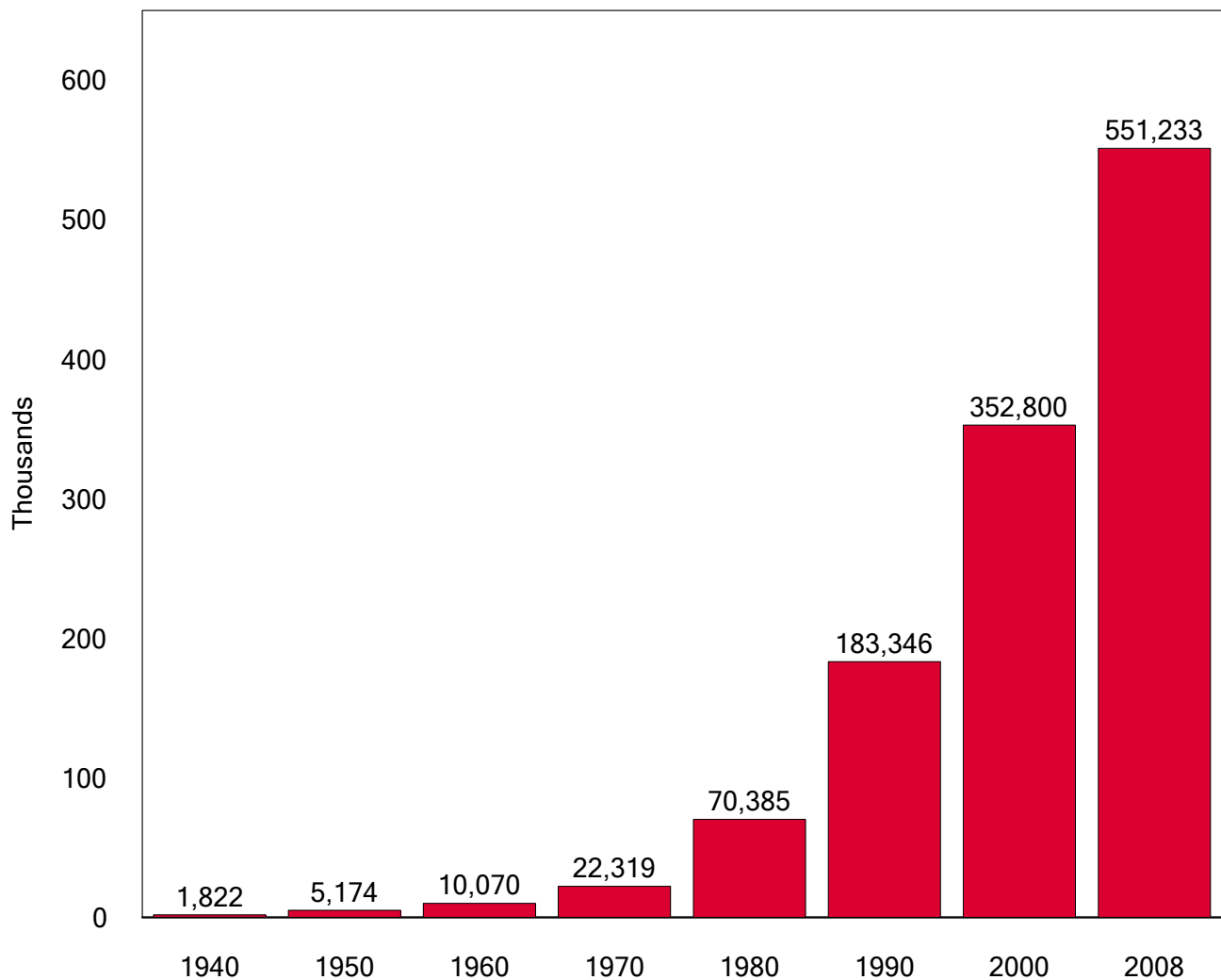
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Demography

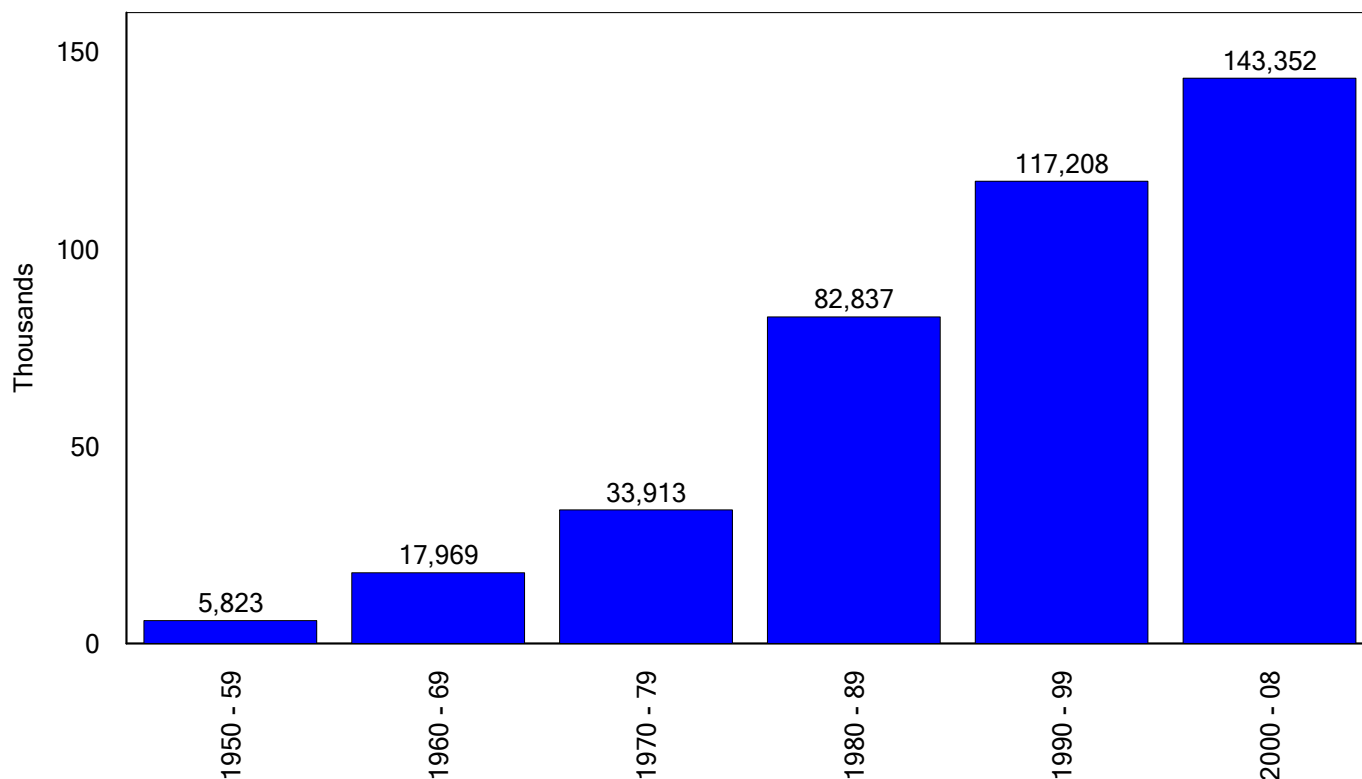
The Peruvian population of the United States increased steadily between 1980 and 2008. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were a little over 70,000 Peruvians living in the U.S. in 1980 and over 550,000 in 2008.¹ (See figure 1). Migration from Peru increased in each decade and there are no indications that migration has slowed or will diminish in the future. More Peruvian migrants arrived after 2000 than during the 1980s or 1990s. (See figure 2).

Figure 1
Peruvian Population of the United States, 1940 - 2008



¹ Unless otherwise noted all data in this report were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Samples for the national censuses of 1900, through 2000 and the American Community Survey 2008 as organized and made available by Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0 [Machine-readable database].

Figure 2
Estimates of Peruvian Migration to the United States by Decade, 1950 - 2008



Although the number of Peruvians who were born in the United States increased steadily in absolute numbers, ongoing migration from Peru meant that the Peruvian-born percentage of all Peruvians did not decline significantly between 1980 and 2008. In 1980 about 78% of the total Peruvian population was born in Peru; by 2008 this had declined slightly to 73%. (See figure 3). Since there are no indications of a waning of migration from Peru, and it may be anticipated that the number of Peruvian migrants will continue to increase in the future, it is likely that the overwhelming demographic predominance of the foreign-born will continue among the Peruvian population of the U.S.

Between 1980 and 2008 the settlement patterns of Peruvians in the United States changed significantly. In 1980 about 38% of all Peruvians in the United States lived in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, but this declined gradually to 2008 when nearly 28% were living in these three states. (See figure 4). Over the same period the proportion of all Peruvians living in California, which was 28% in 1980, fell to 17% in 2008. Florida experienced the largest increase, from 9% of the total Peruvian population in 1980 to 19% in 2008. (See figure 5 and table 1 for these data).

The sex distribution of Peruvians continued to be fairly equitable, especially among immigrants to the U.S. There was near parity, of course, in the ratio of males to females among domestic-born Peruvians in 2008. About 53% of all foreign-born Peruvians living in the U.S. were females, 47% were males. This indicates that migration from Peru was fairly balanced by sex and these data also suggest that family migration may have been an important part of the migratory process. (See figure 6).

Figure 3
Birthplace of Peruvian Population of the United States, 1980 - 2008

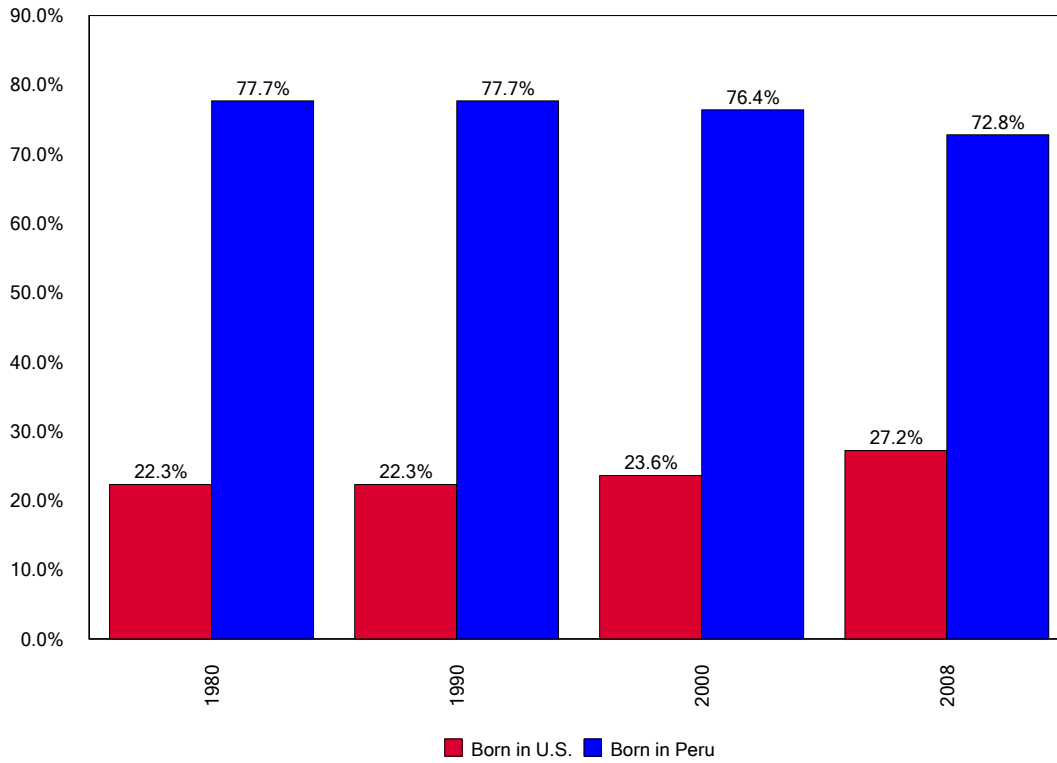


Figure 4
Percentage of Peruvian Population of the United States Living in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, 1980 - 2008

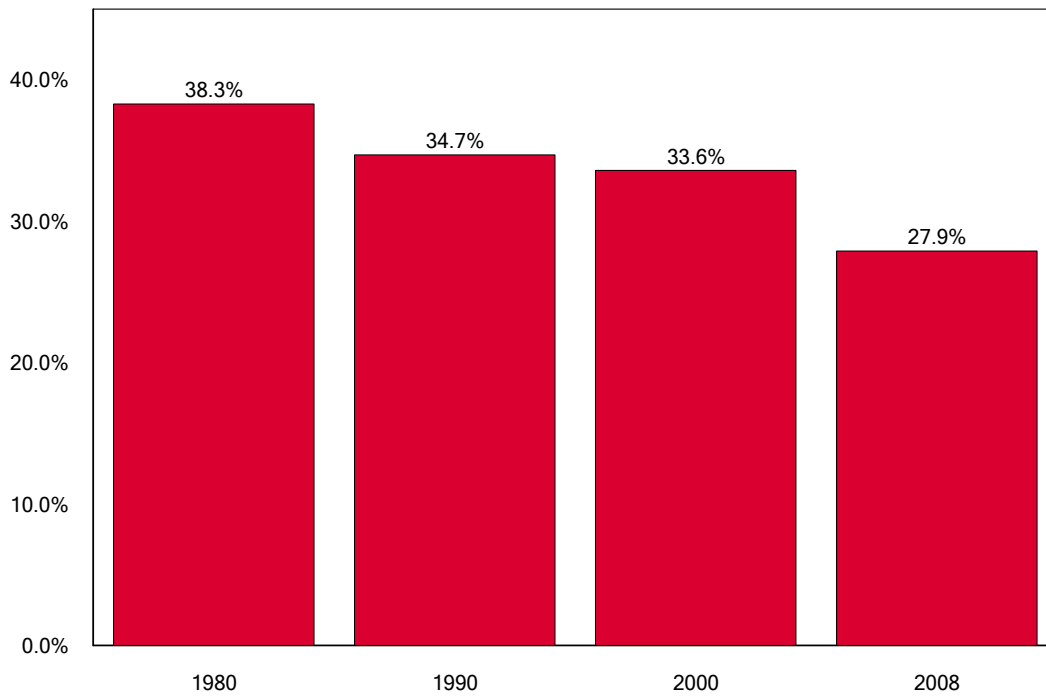


Table 1
Peruvian Population by Largest States of Settlement, 1980 - 2008
(in order of largest concentrations in 2008)

State	1980		1990		2000		2008	
	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total
Florida	5,982	8.5%	26,762	14.6%	64,969	18.4%	107,094	19.4%
California	19,873	28.2%	47,599	26.0%	71,042	20.1%	93,571	17.0%
New Jersey	7,510	10.7%	24,901	13.6%	54,429	15.4%	70,767	12.8%
New York	17,286	24.6%	34,028	18.6%	56,675	16.1%	67,976	12.3%
Texas	2,581	3.7%	6,801	3.7%	12,499	3.5%	29,563	5.4%
Virginia	2,340	3.3%	5,607	3.1%	16,236	4.6%	28,662	5.2%
Connecticut	2,180	3.1%	4,721	2.6%	7,521	2.1%	14,976	2.7%
Maryland	1,561	2.2%	5,705	3.1%	11,144	3.2%	14,270	2.6%
Illinois	2,920	4.1%	5,703	3.1%	7,760	2.2%	14,016	2.5%
Georgia	605	0.9%	1,679	0.9%	4,611	1.3%	13,042	2.4%
Massachusetts	720	1.0%	3,365	1.8%	4,216	1.2%	11,023	2.0%
Others	6,827	9.7%	16,475	9.0%	41,698	11.8%	86,273	15.7%
Total	70,385	100.0%	183,346	100.0%	352,800	100.0%	551,233	100.0%

Figure 5
Percentage of Peruvian Population of the United States Living in Florida, California, New Jersey, New York, and Texas, 1980 - 2008

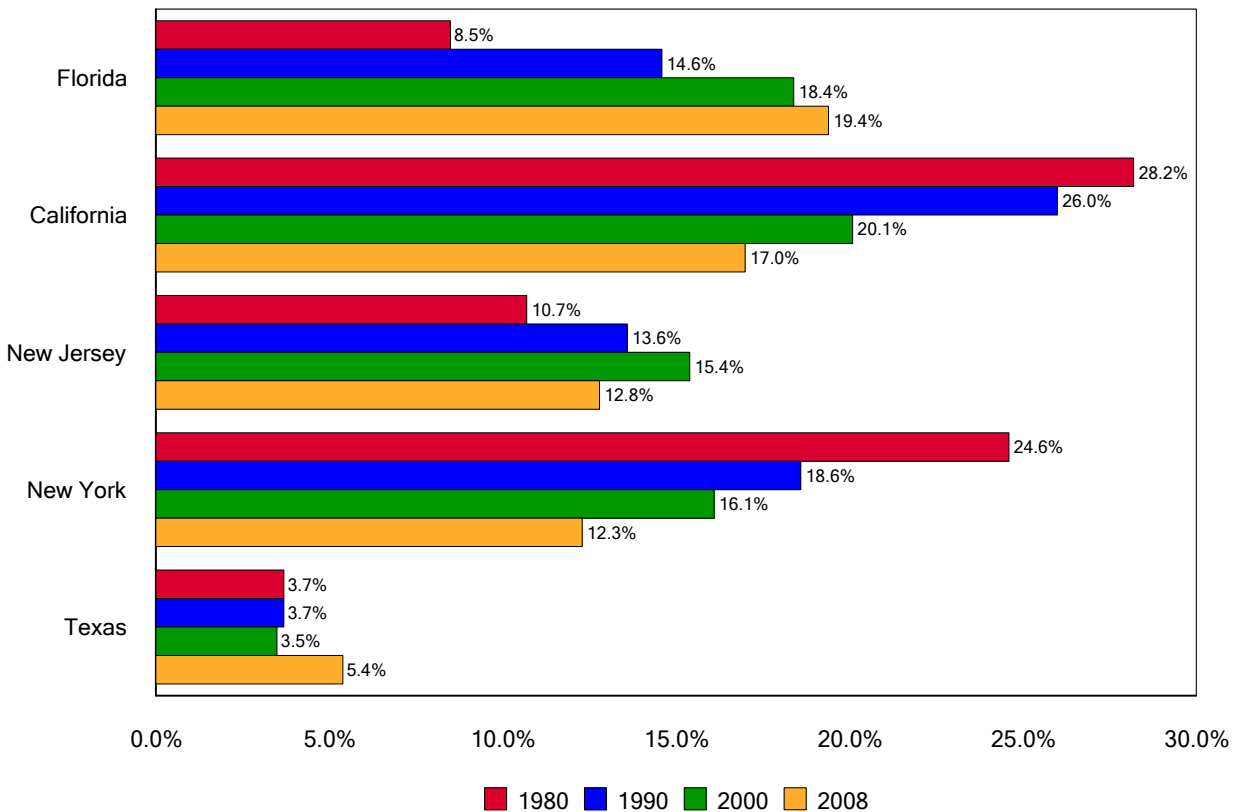
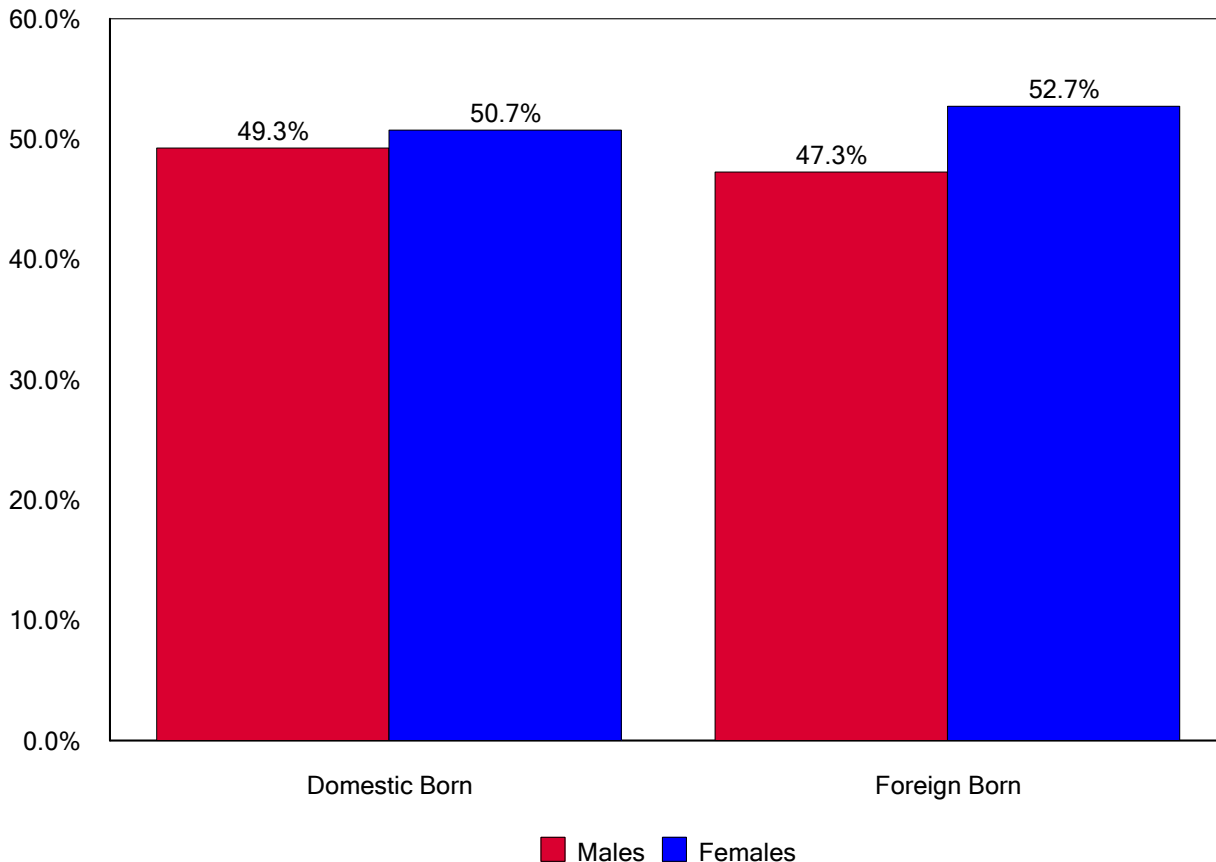


Figure 6
Sex Distribution of Peruvian Population of the United States by Nativity, 2008



The age structure of Peruvians born in the U.S. demonstrate the classic patterns of a population with a fairly high birth rate. This was characterized by a heavy concentration of children under the age of 20. Close to 70% of all domestic-born Peruvians were 19 years of age and under in 2008. (See figure 7). The foreign-born Peruvian population had a heavy concentration of people, both males and females, in the working-age categories. Close to 54% of all foreign-born Peruvians living in the U.S. in 2008 were between 20 and 49 years of age. (See figure 8). Because of the fact that nearly three-quarters of all Peruvians in the U.S. were foreign-born in 2008, there was a clustering of the total Peruvian population in the working age categories as indicated in figure 9.

Figure 7
Age Pyramid Peruvian Domestic-Born Population, 2008
(in percentages of total population)

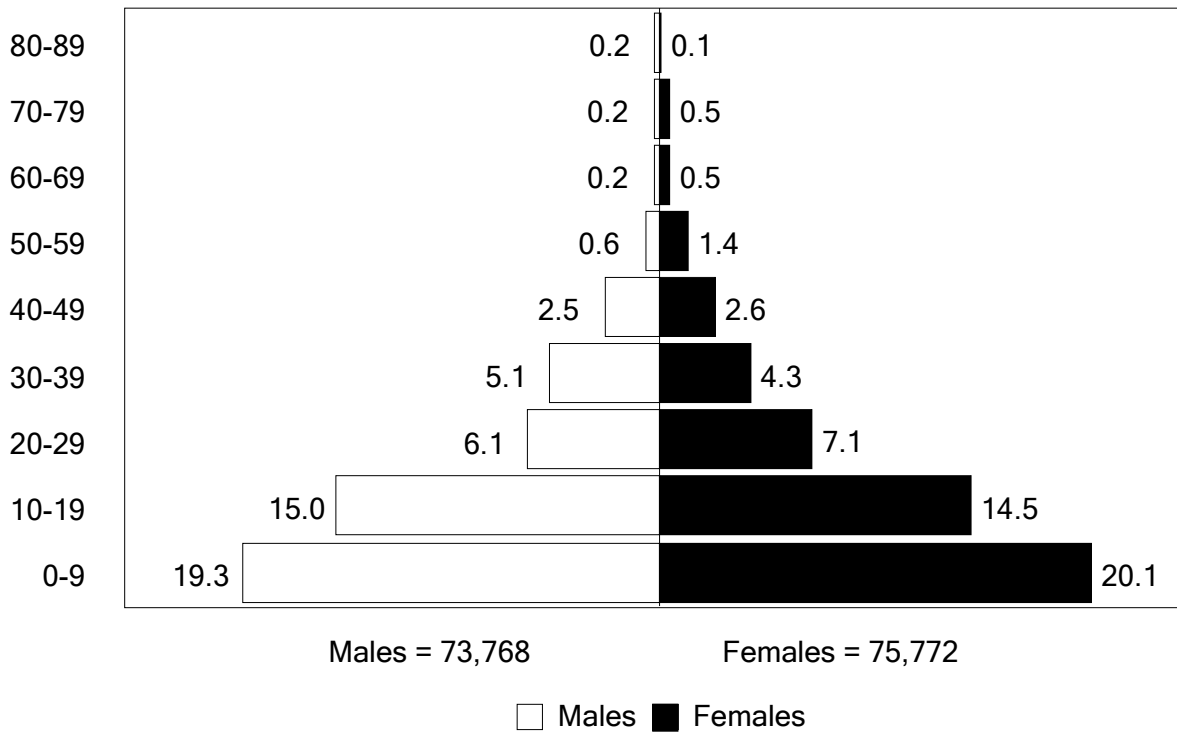


Figure 8
Age Pyramid Peruvian Foreign-Born Population, 2008
(in percentages of total population)

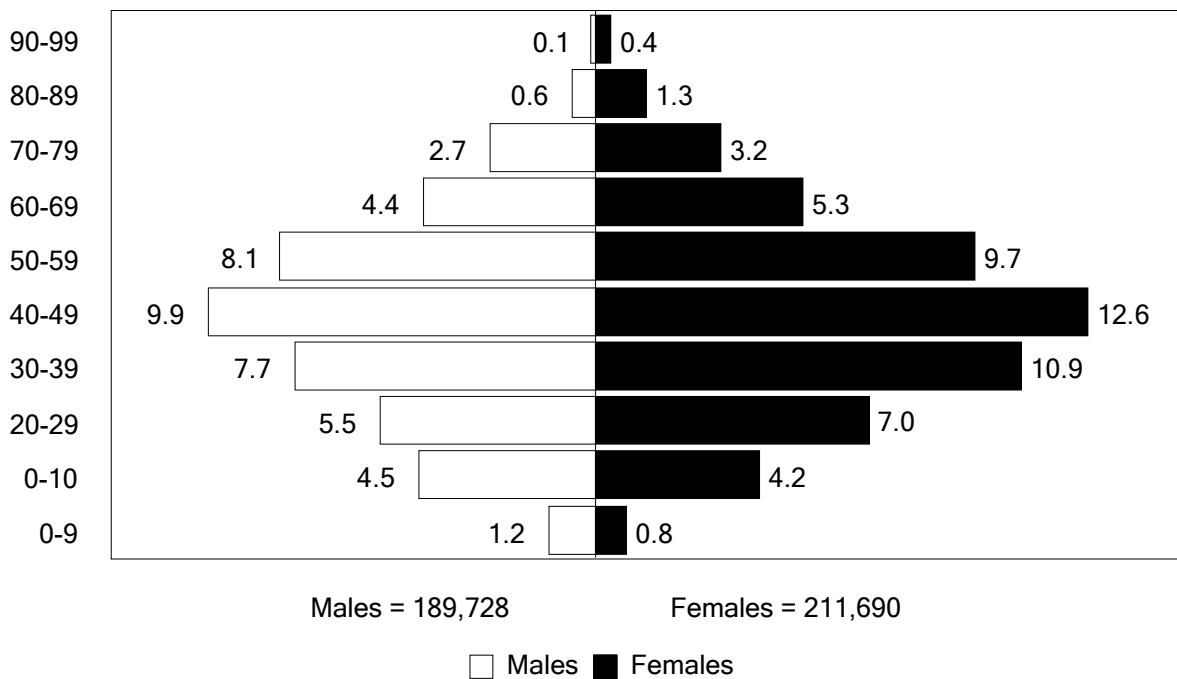
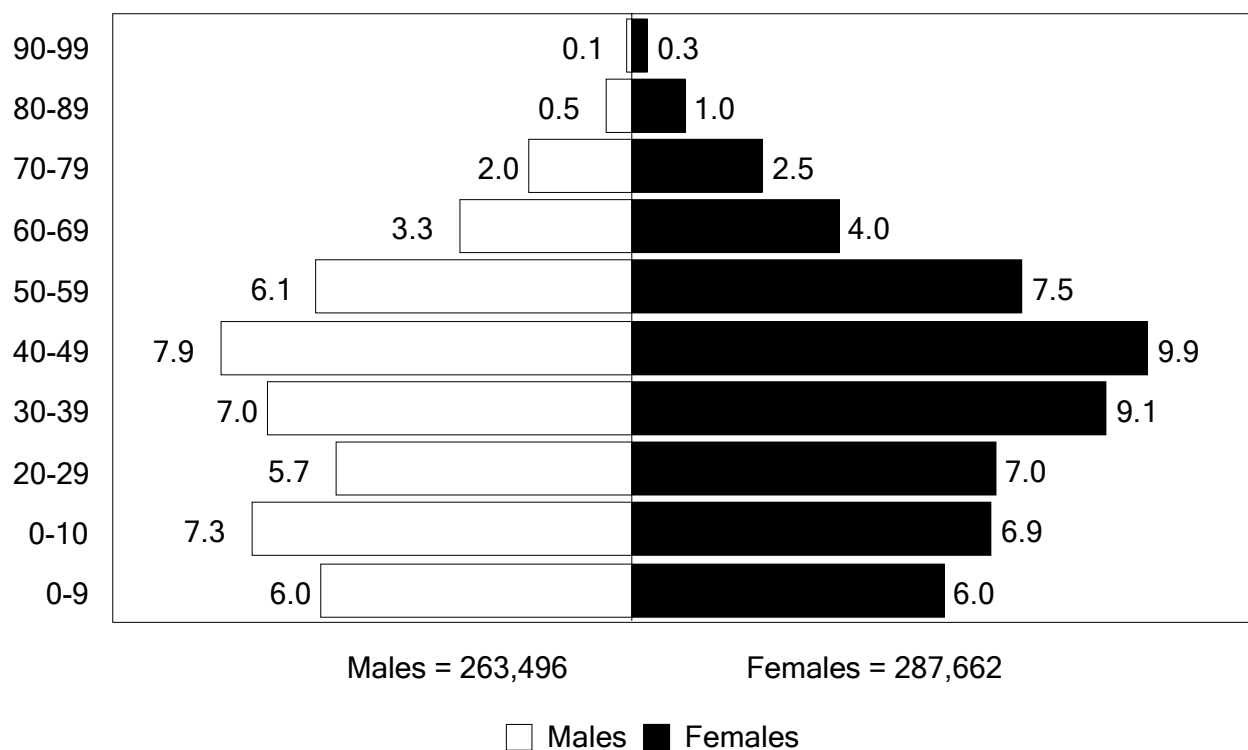


Figure 9
Age Pyramid Total Peruvian Population, 2008
(in percentages of total population)



Income

The median household incomes of Peruvians in the United States increased steadily between 1980 and 2008 (in inflation-adjusted dollars), although there was stagnation and a slight decline between 2000 and 2008 which may have been linked to the U.S. economic downturn after 2006. However, Peruvian median household income in 2008 was among the highest among the most numerous Latino national subgroups in the U.S. and was only surpassed by Asians, non-Hispanic whites, and Colombians. (See figures 10 and 11).

There is evidence of increasing prosperity among Peruvian households in the U.S. First, the percentage of households in the poorest socioeconomic strata, those earning under \$20,000 annually, declined from 12% to 8% of all households between 1980 and 2008. Second, the percentage of all Peruvian households earning over \$75,000 yearly rose from 26% in 1980 to nearly 40% in 2008. Finally, at the highest income-earning levels, Peruvian households earning more than \$100,000 annually increased from 13% of all households in 1980 to 26% in 2008. (See figure 12).

As was the case with other race/ethnic groups and Latino national subgroups in the United States, there was an increasing concentration of income among the wealthiest Peruvian households between 1980 and 2008. Households earning more than \$75,000 controlled about half of all income derived by all Peruvian households in 1980, but this increased to 70% of all income in 2008. Peruvian households earning more than \$100,000 controlled 31% of all income in 1980 and 56% in 2008. Again, this progressive concentration of wealth was not unique to Peruvians, but a generalized phenomenon within U.S. society. (See figure 13 and table 2 for complete data).

Figure 10
 Median Household Income Among Peruvians, 1980 - 2008
 (in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)

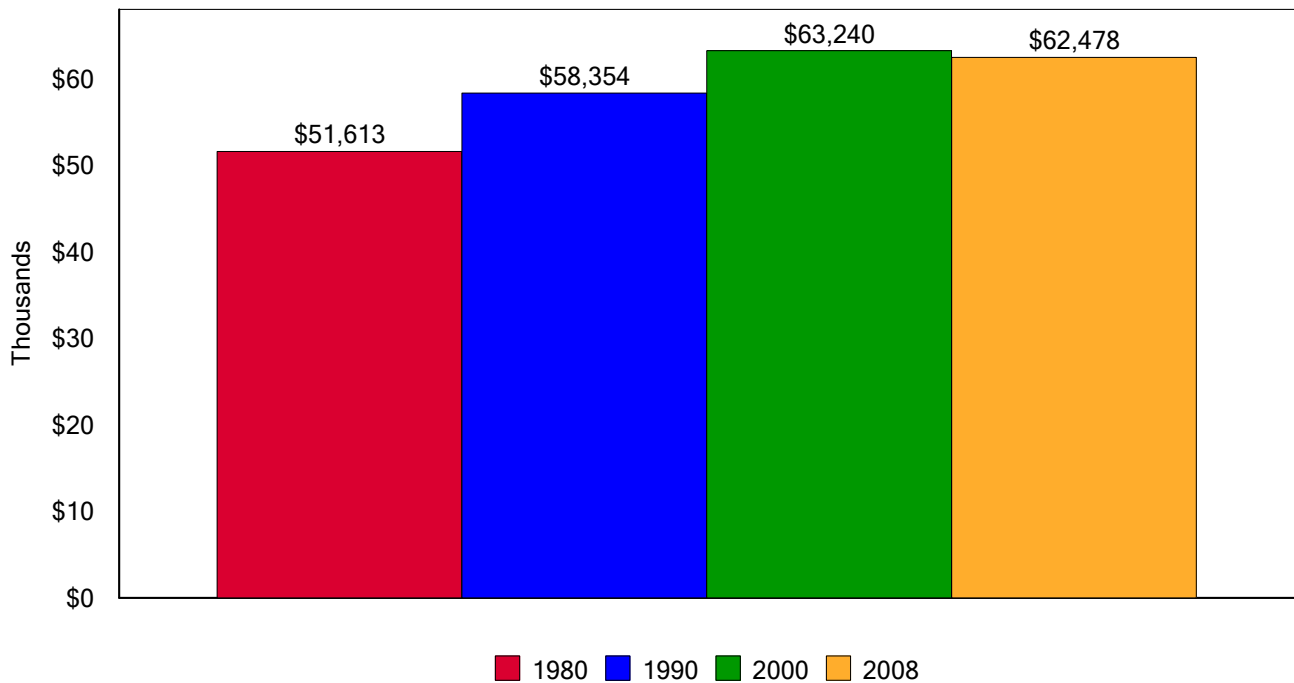


Figure 11
 Median Household Income of Peruvians Compared with other Race/Ethnic Groups
 and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008

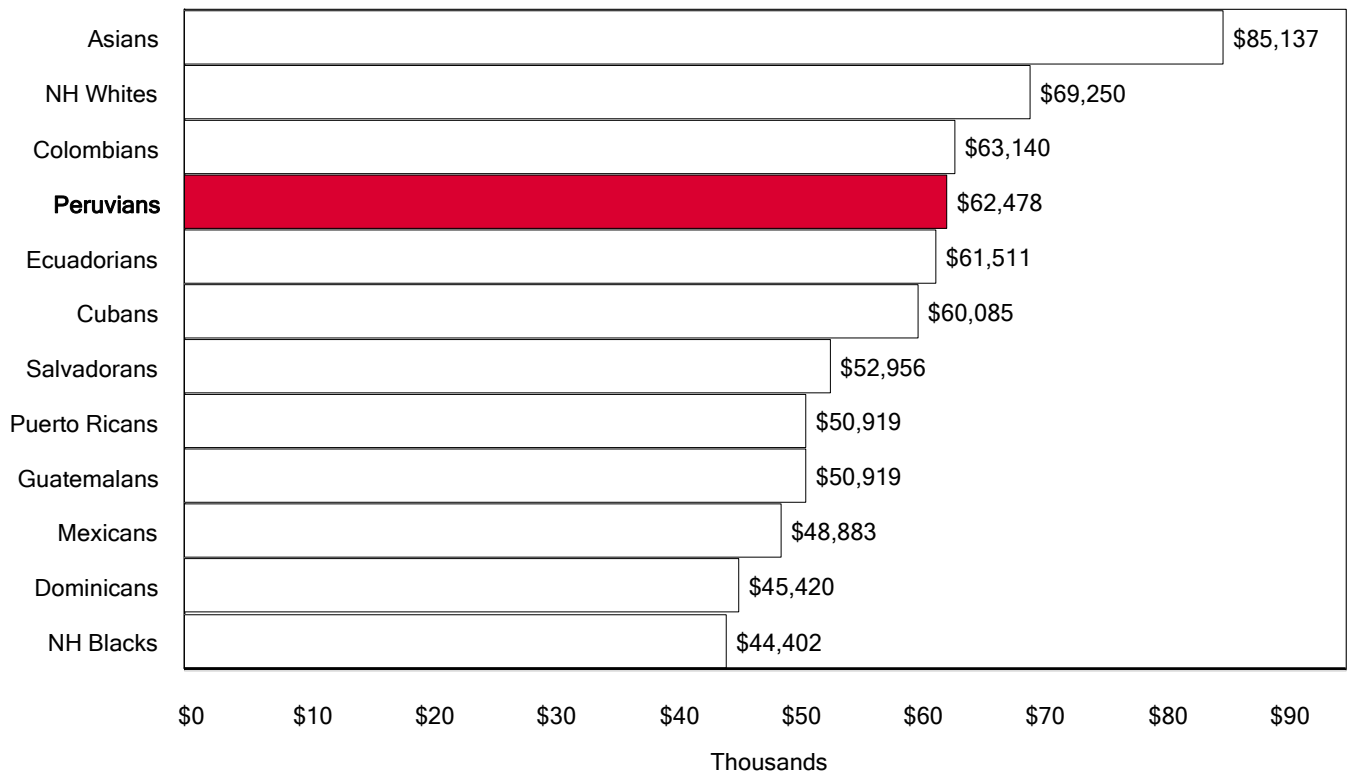


Figure 12
 Percentage of Peruvian Households Earning Less than \$20,000, More than \$75,000,
 More than \$100,000, 1980 - 2008 (in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)

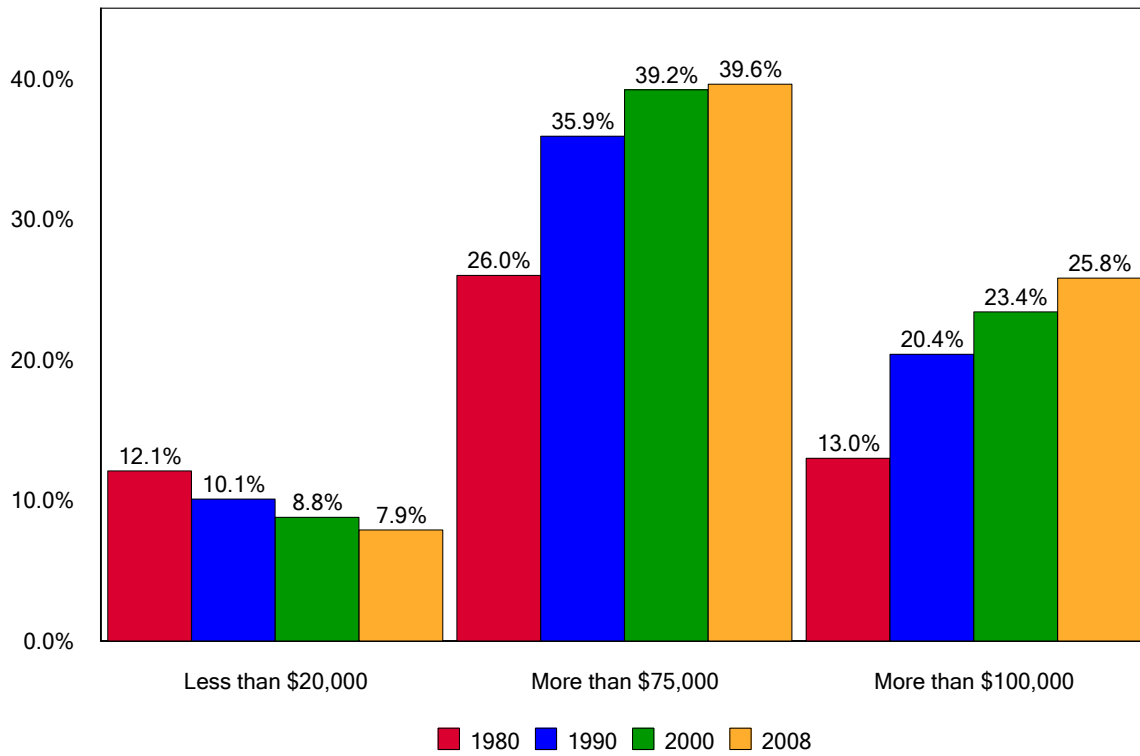


Figure 13
 Percentage of Total Household Income Controlled by Peruvian Households Earning More than \$75,000,
 and more than \$100,000, 1980 - 2008 (in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)

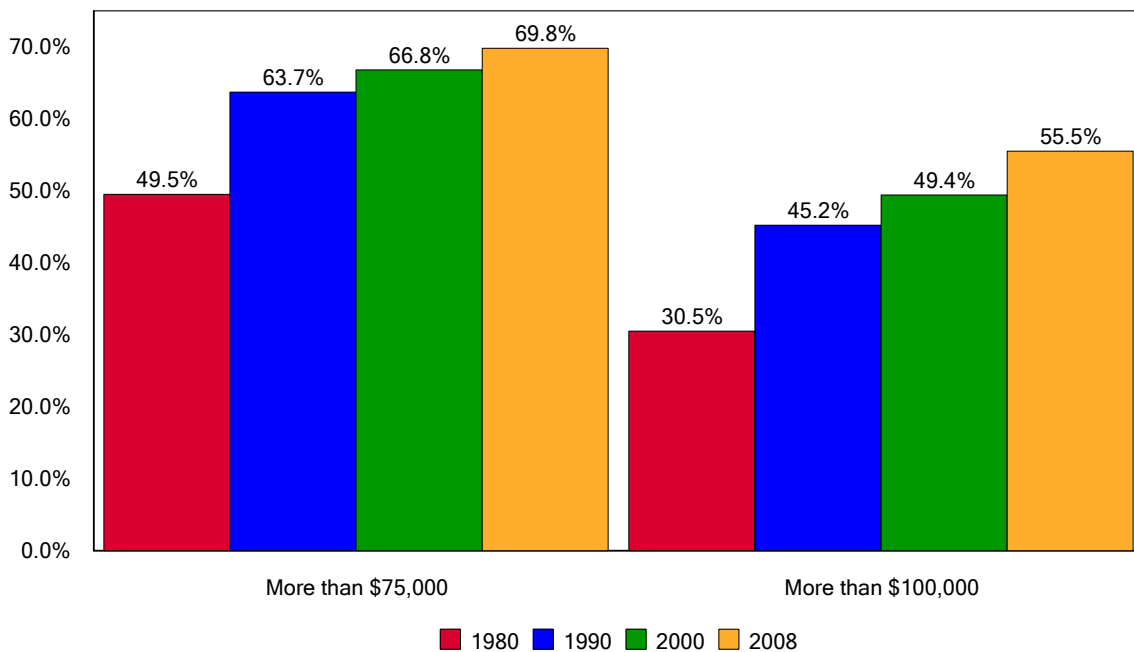


Table 2
Household Income Structure Among Peruvian Households, 1980 - 2008
(in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)

	1980		1990		2000		2008	
	% of Income	% of Households	% of Income	% of Households	% of Income	% of Households	% of Income	% of Households
Less than 10,000	0.4%	4.1%	0.3%	3.5%	0.2%	2.6%	0.2%	2.2%
10,000-19,999	2.0%	7.9%	1.4%	6.6%	1.2%	6.2%	1.0%	5.7%
20,000-29,999	5.6%	13.1%	3.4%	9.7%	2.5%	7.7%	2.7%	9.0%
30,000-39,999	7.4%	12.4%	5.3%	10.9%	4.3%	9.7%	4.7%	11.4%
40,000-49,999	8.4%	11.0%	6.7%	10.9%	6.2%	10.8%	4.7%	8.9%
50,000-74,999	26.6%	25.4%	19.2%	22.6%	18.8%	23.9%	17.0%	23.2%
75,000-99,999	19.0%	13.0%	18.5%	15.5%	17.4%	15.9%	14.2%	13.8%
100,000 - 199,999	30.5%	13.0%	30.2%	16.7%	32.2%	19.1%	31.4%	19.9%
200,000+	0.0%	0.0%	15.0%	3.7%	17.2%	4.3%	24.1%	6.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Poverty

The Peruvian population of the United States not only had relatively high median household incomes, but in comparative perspective Peruvians also had the lowest poverty rates among all other racial/ethnic groups and Latino national subgroups in the U.S. The poverty rate was about 10% of the total Peruvian population in 2008, which was exactly the same as the poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites. (See figure 14).

These poverty rates declined steadily between 1980 and 2008 for both foreign and domestic-born Peruvians and by sex. The overall poverty rate for all Peruvians in 1980 was 14% and in 2008 it was 10.3%. (See figure 15). Peruvian women had slightly higher poverty rates (11.3%) than Peruvian men (9%) in 2008, although this represented a decline for both sexes from 1980. These data are found in figure 16.

Figure 14
 Percentage of Peruvians living in Poverty compared with other Race/Ethnic Groups
 and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008

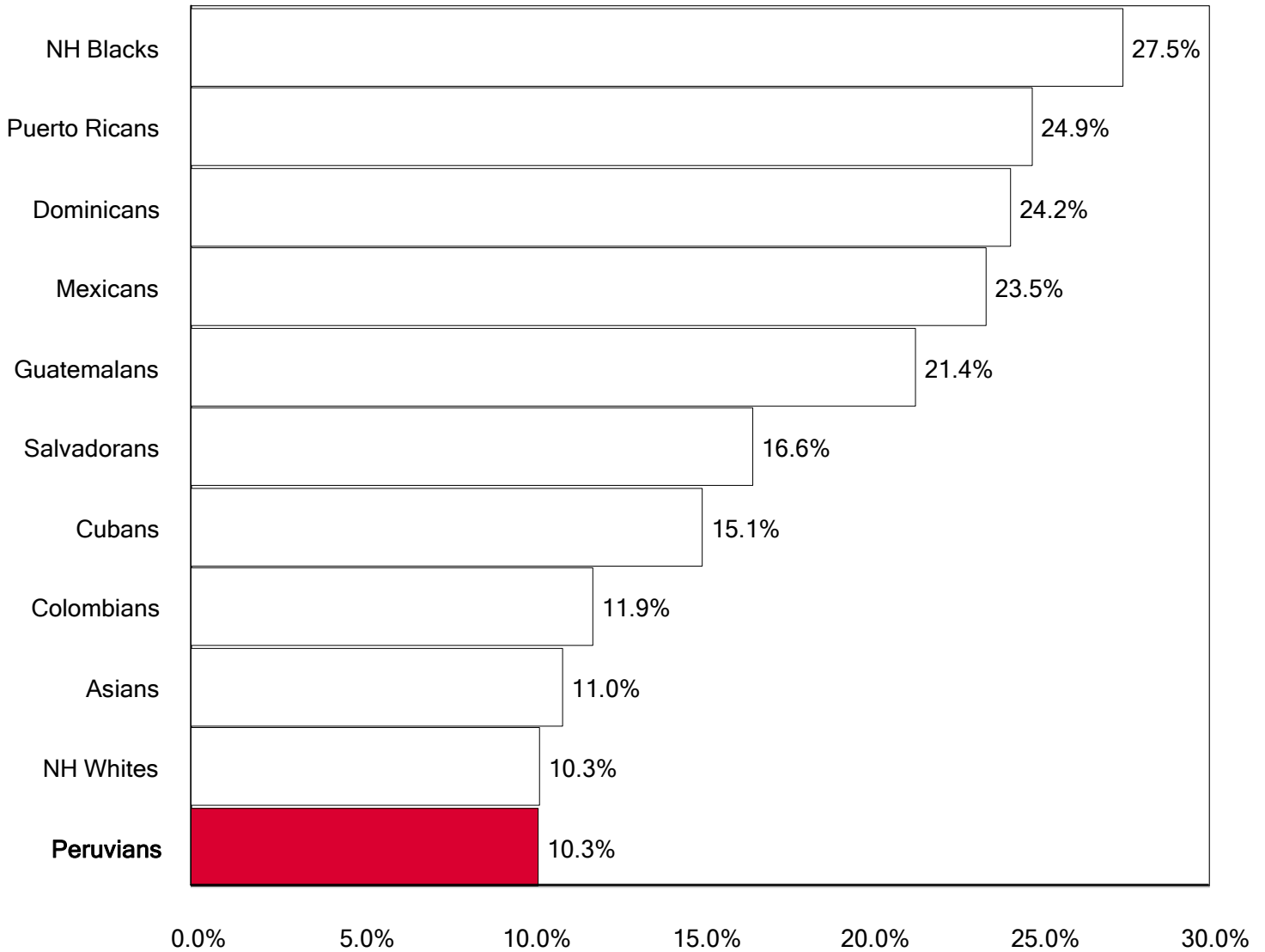


Figure 15
Percentage of Peruvians Living in Poverty by Nativity, 1980 - 2008
(in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)

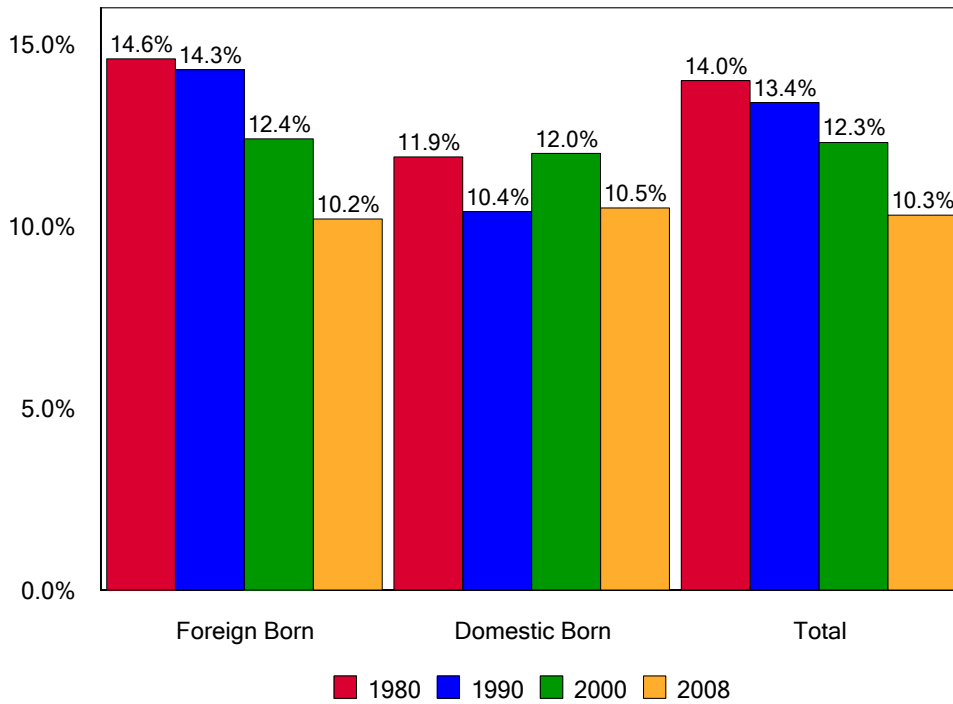
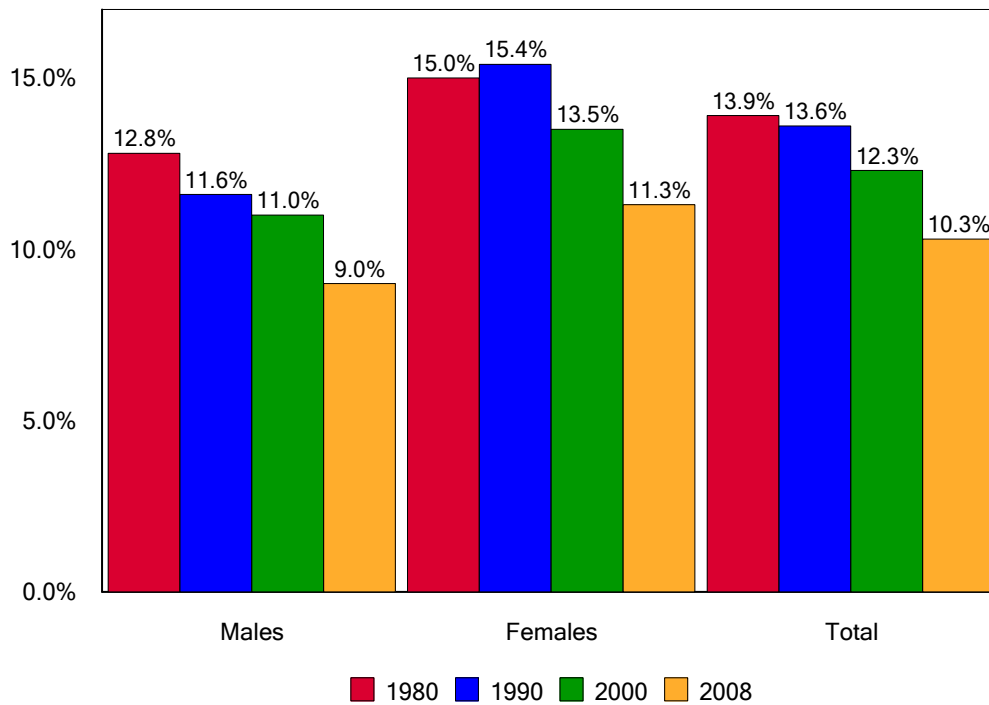


Figure 16
Percentage of Peruvians Living in Poverty by Sex, 1980 - 2008
(in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars)



Education

Peruvian adults living in the U.S., whether domestic or foreign-born, male or female, had extraordinarily high levels of educational attainment in 2008 and there had been constant improvements since 1980. Among all Peruvians 25 years of age and older, about 23% had not graduated high school in 1980, but this dropped to 11% by 2008, one of the lowest non-high school graduation rates in the United States.

Over the same period of time the college graduation rate increased impressively from 20% of all adult Peruvians in 1980 to 32% in 2008 which was a higher college graduation rate than found among non-Hispanic whites, and third in rank order behind Asians and Colombians. Among domestic-born Peruvian men and women the college graduation rate was higher than among any other racial and ethnic group in the United States. In 2008 an astounding 52% of domestic-born Peruvian women 25 years of age and older had graduated from college with B.A. degrees and the corresponding figure for domestic-born males was 42%. Clearly, acquiring a college education is a major priority among the Peruvian population of the United States. These data are summarized in figures 17 through 19.

As was the case among all other demographic groups in the United States, median household income was closely tied to educational attainment levels. It has been pointed out that Peruvians had relatively high median household incomes in the U.S. and this is clearly because of the extraordinarily impressive educational attainment levels which have been achieved by Peruvians between 1980 and 2008. (See figure 20 for 2008 data).

Figure 17
 Percentage of Peruvians who did not Graduate High School or Achieved a B.A. Degree or Higher by Sex, Population 25 Years of Age or Older, 1980 - 2008

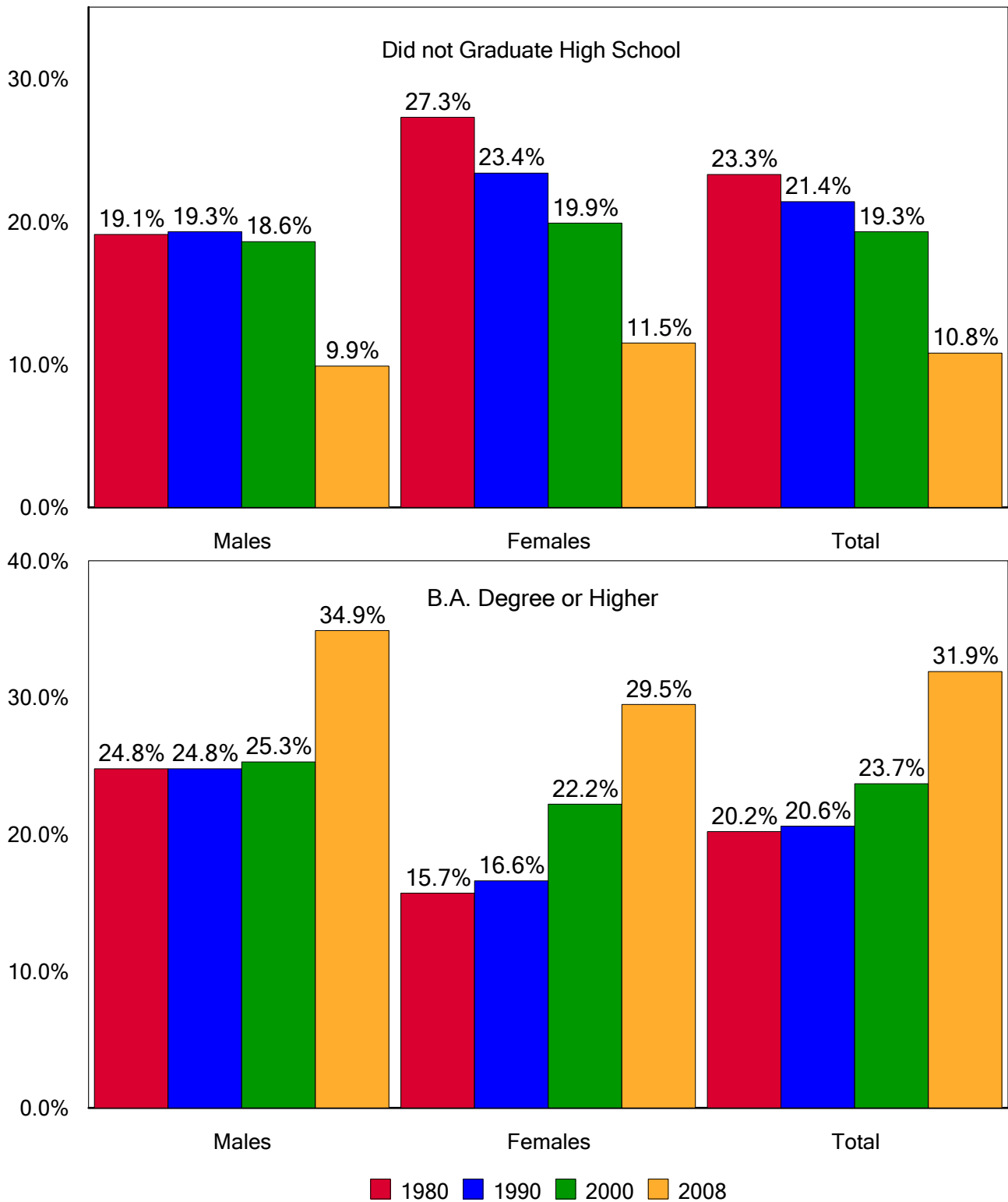


Figure 18
 Percentage of Peruvians who did not Graduate High School or Achieved a B.A. Degree or Higher by Nativity and Sex for Population 25 Years of Age and Older, 1980 - 2008

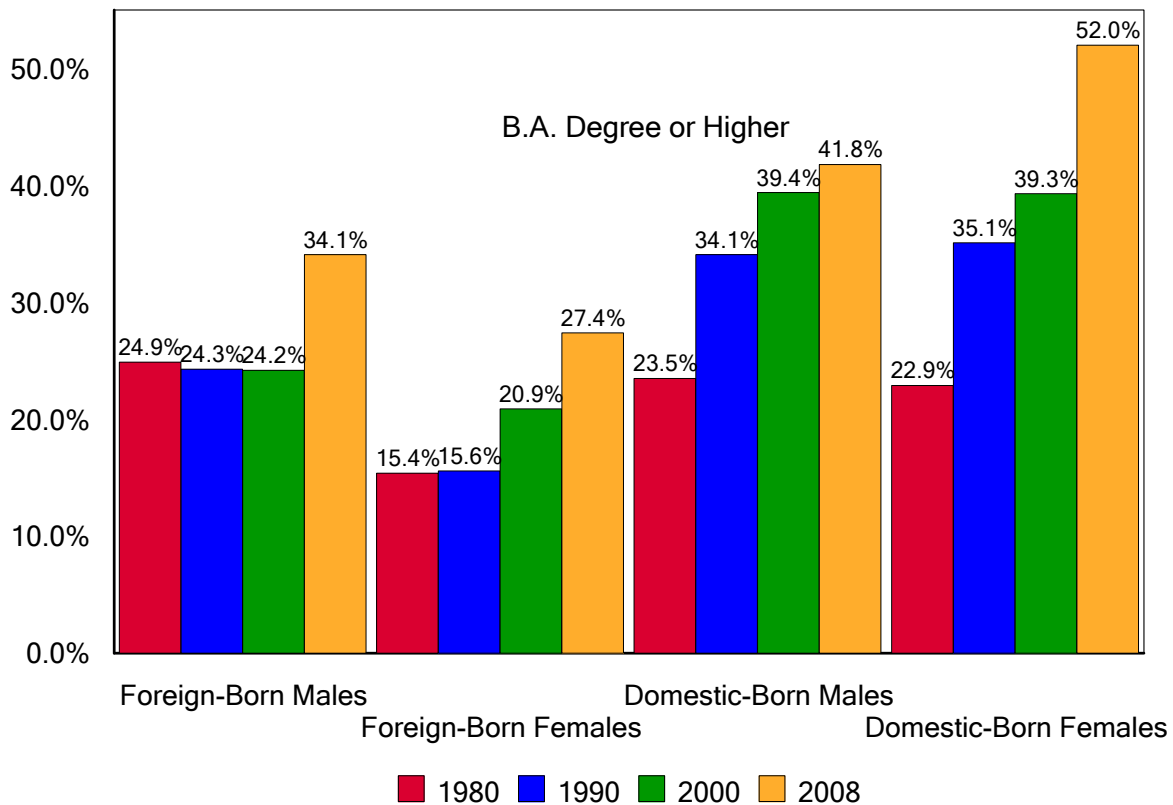
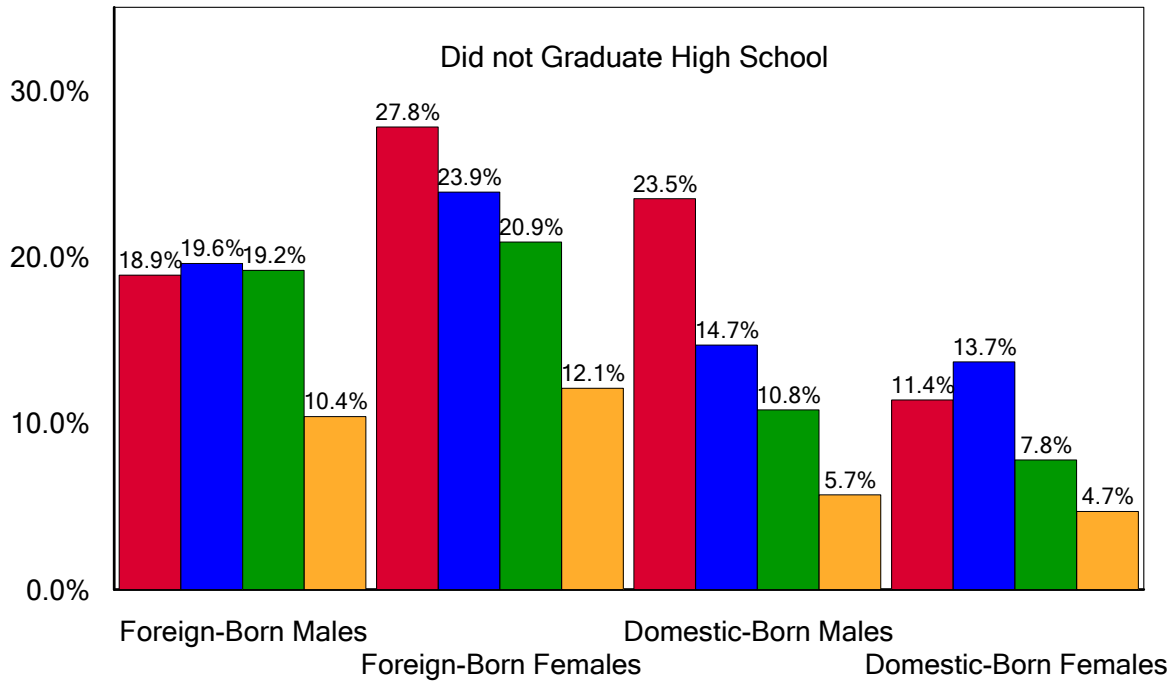


Figure 19
 Percentage of Peruvians who did not Graduate High School or Achieved a B.A. Degree or Higher Compared with Major Race/Ethnic Groups and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008

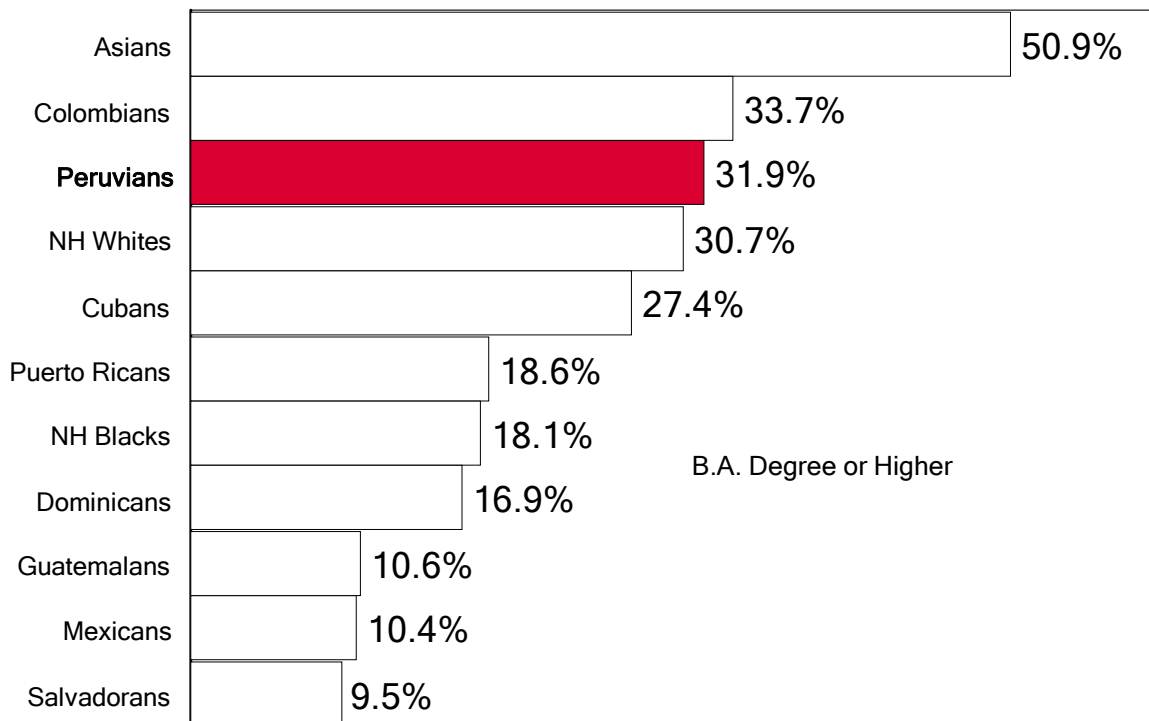
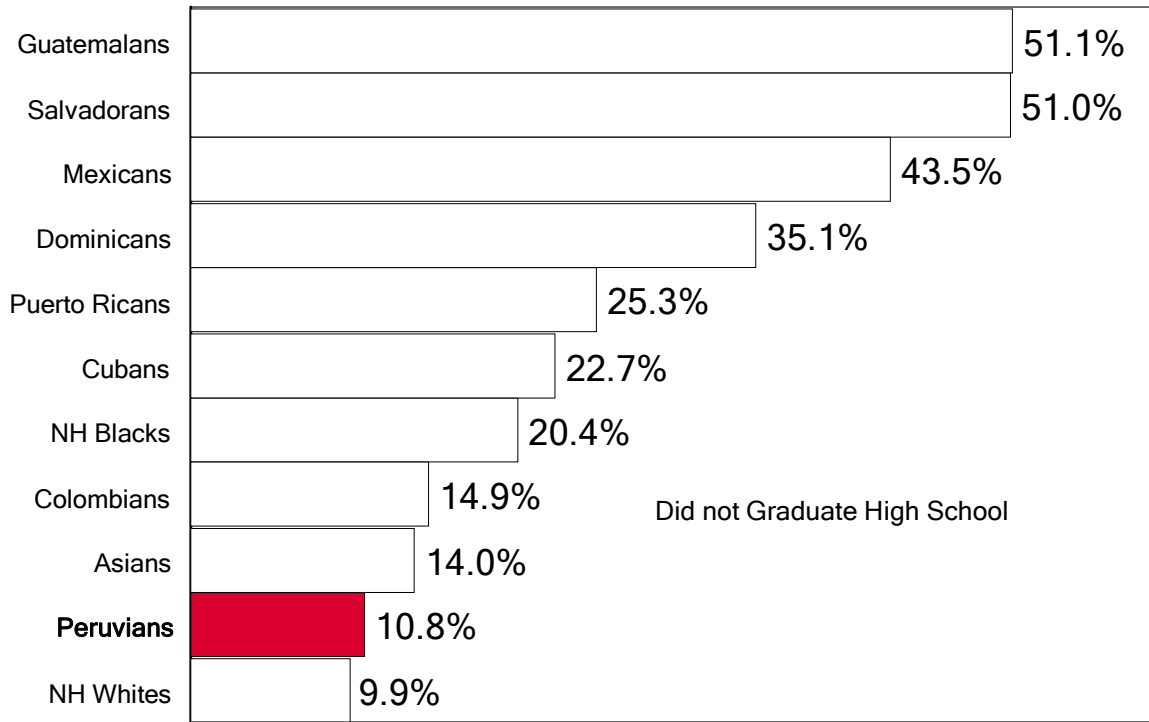
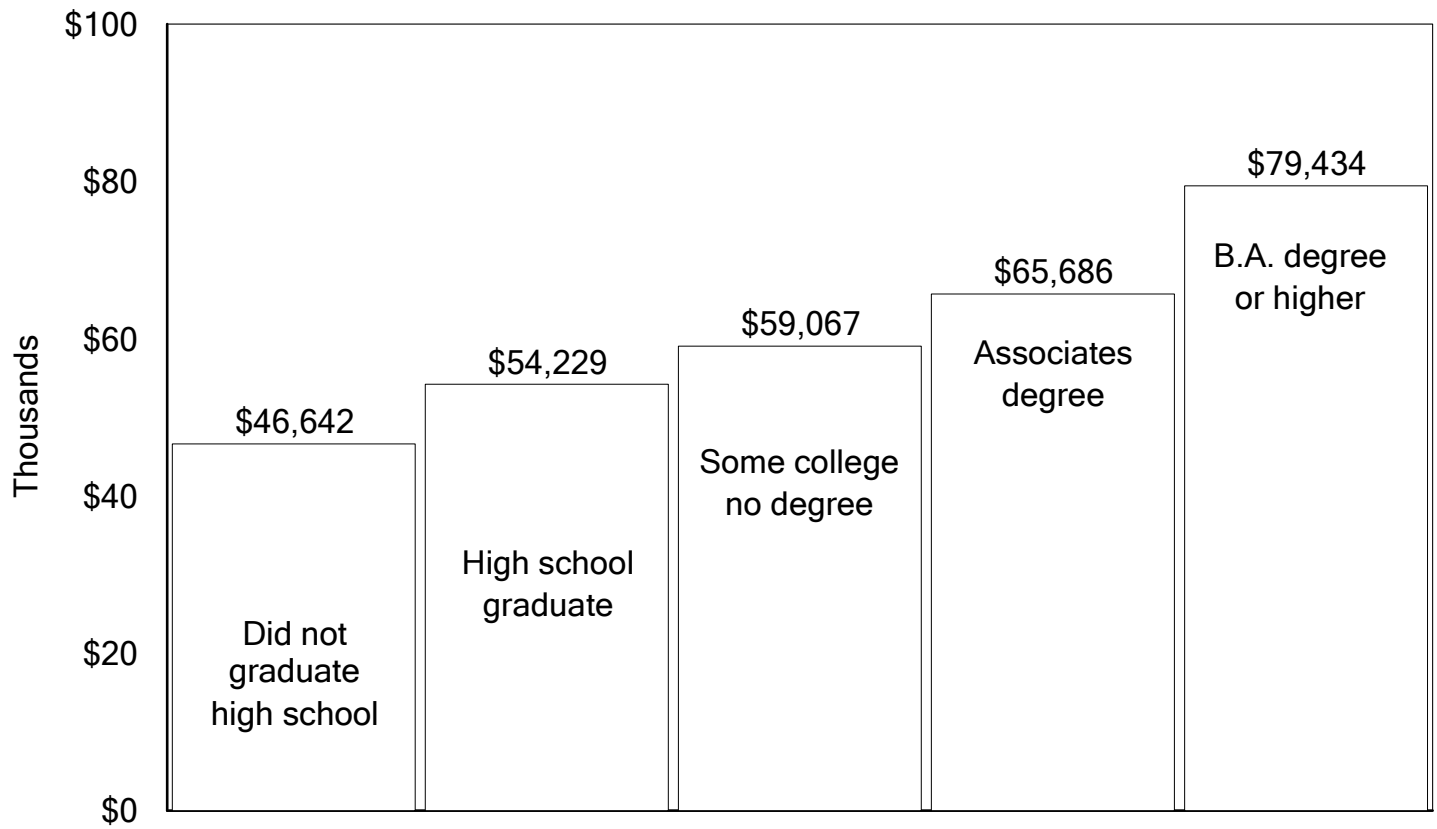


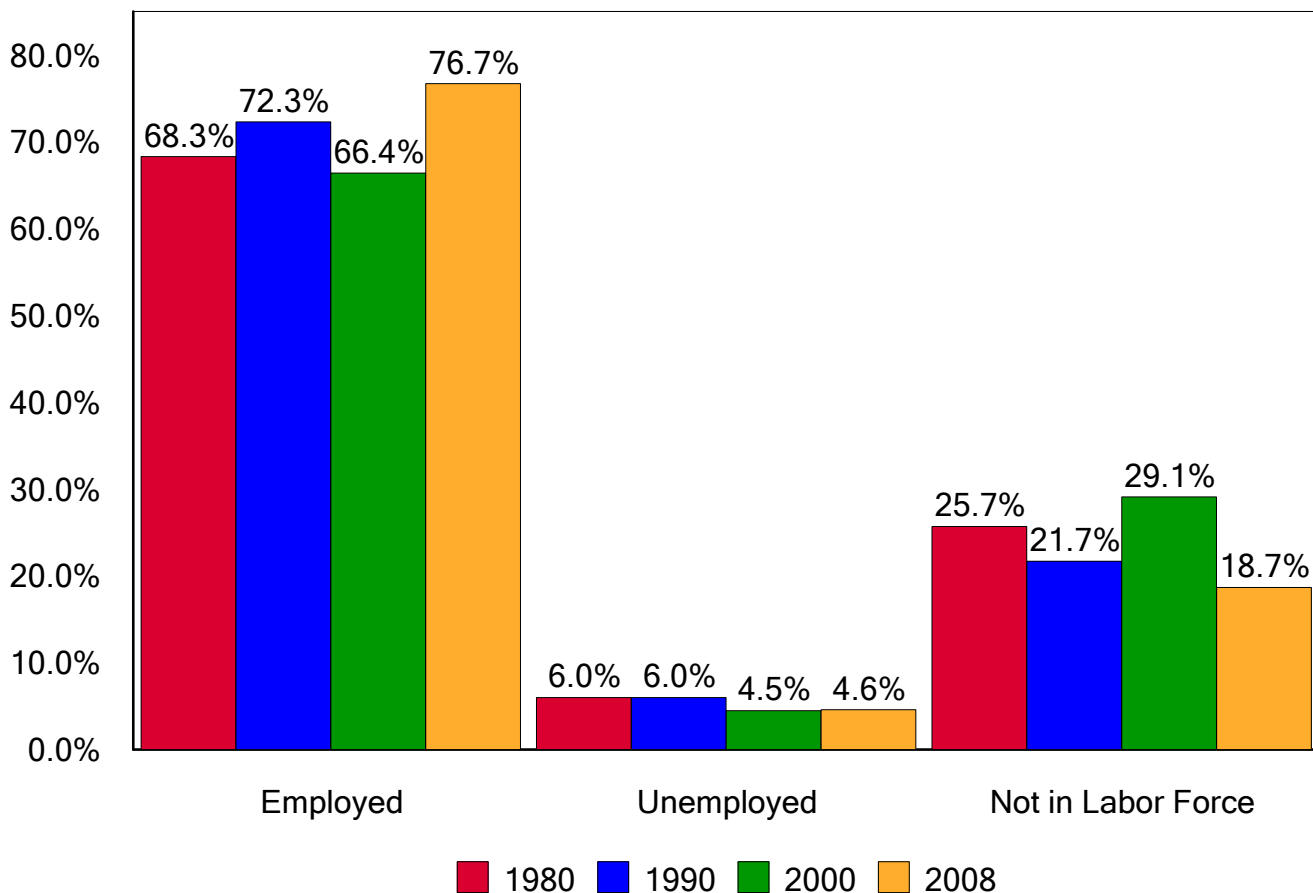
Figure 20
Median Household Income by Educational Attainment Level Among
Peruvians in the United States, 2008



Employment and Unemployment

Peruvians in the U.S. between 16 and 60 years of age had very low unemployment rates in 2008 – 4.6% – which was a decline from 6% in 1980. Unemployment rates only measure individuals who are actively seeking work. Two other useful measures of labor market conditions should be examined: the employment rate and the ‘not-in-the-labor force’ rate, which means those who were not actively seeking employment for whatever reason. The employment rate for all Peruvians aged 16 – 60 was 68% in 1980 and this rose to 77% by 2008. Over the same period the ‘not in the labor force’ rate fell from 26% to 19%. (See figure 21). Clearly Peruvians in the U.S. became more progressively integrated into the work force as more immigrants arrived after 1980 with the objective of seeking employment.

Figure 21
 Employment and Unemployment among Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008
 Population Ages 16 - 60



There were some differences in labor market conditions by nativity and sex. Foreign-born Peruvian males between ages 16 – 60 had much higher employment rates than domestic-born men in the same age categories in all years between 1980 and 2008. This is consistent with the observation that migrants came to the U.S. with the objective of seeking employment. By 2008 86% of all men of working ages born in Peru were working compared with 70% among U.S.-born Peruvian males. The differential among women was not as great: some 72% of Peruvian-born women were employed in 2008 compared with 70% of Peruvian women between ages 16 and 60 who were born in the U.S.. (See figure 22).

In 2008 Peruvian employment rates were the highest in comparative perspective when measured against all other race/ethnic groups in the United States and among the major Latino national sub-groups in the nation. (See figure 23). The Peruvian population also had one of the lowest unemployment rates and ‘not in the labor force’ rates. (See figures 24 and 25).

Figure 22
Employment Rates for Peruvians by Sex and Nativity, 1980 - 2008
Population Ages 16 - 60

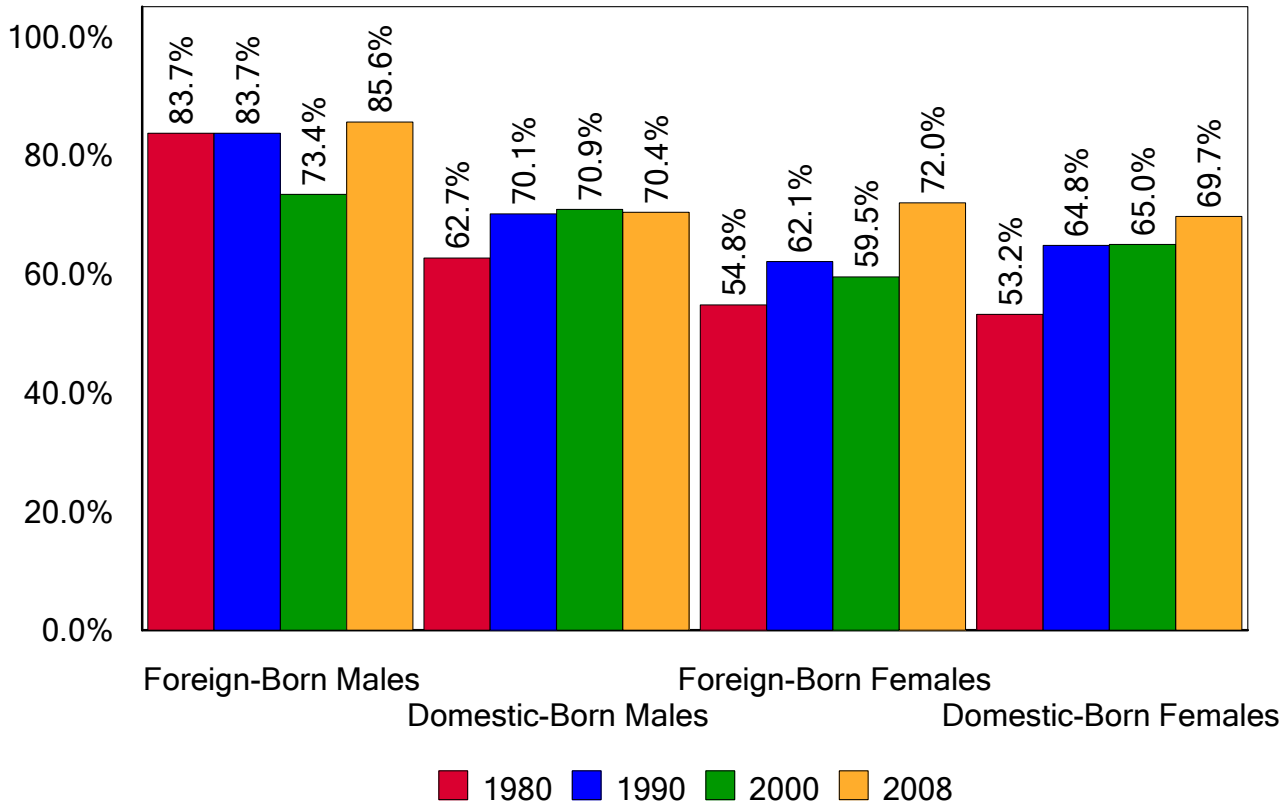


Figure 23
 Employment Rates among Peruvians in the United States compared with Race/Ethnic Groups and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008 (Population Ages 16 - 60)

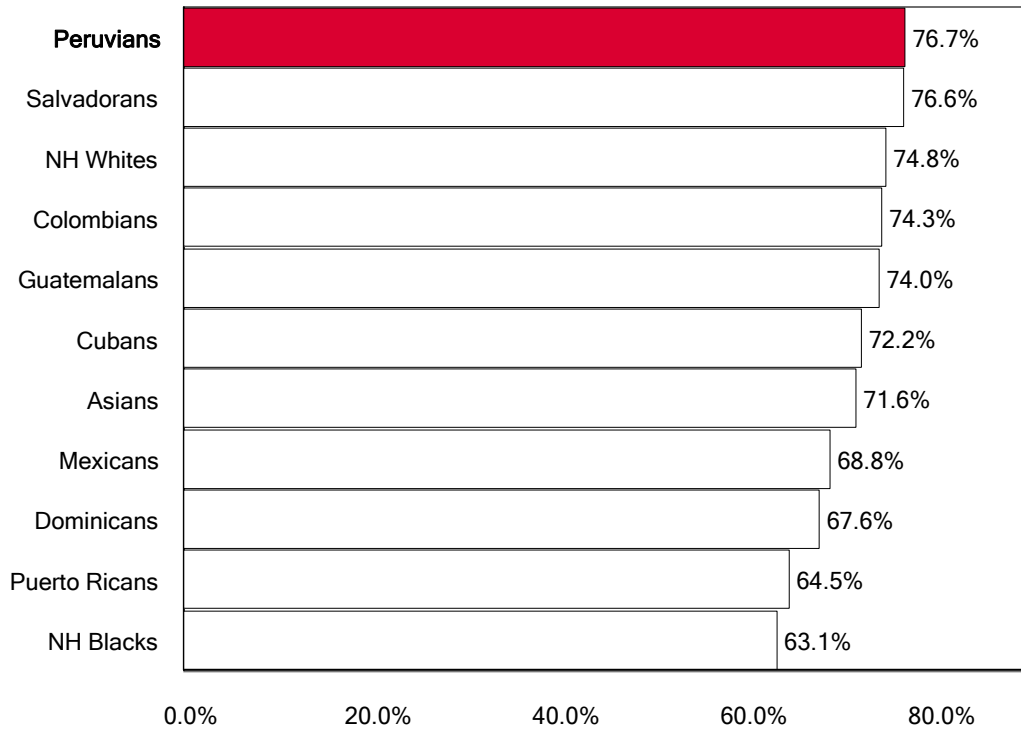


Figure 24
 Unemployment Rates among Peruvians in the United States compared with Race/Ethnic Groups and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008 (Population Ages 16 - 60)

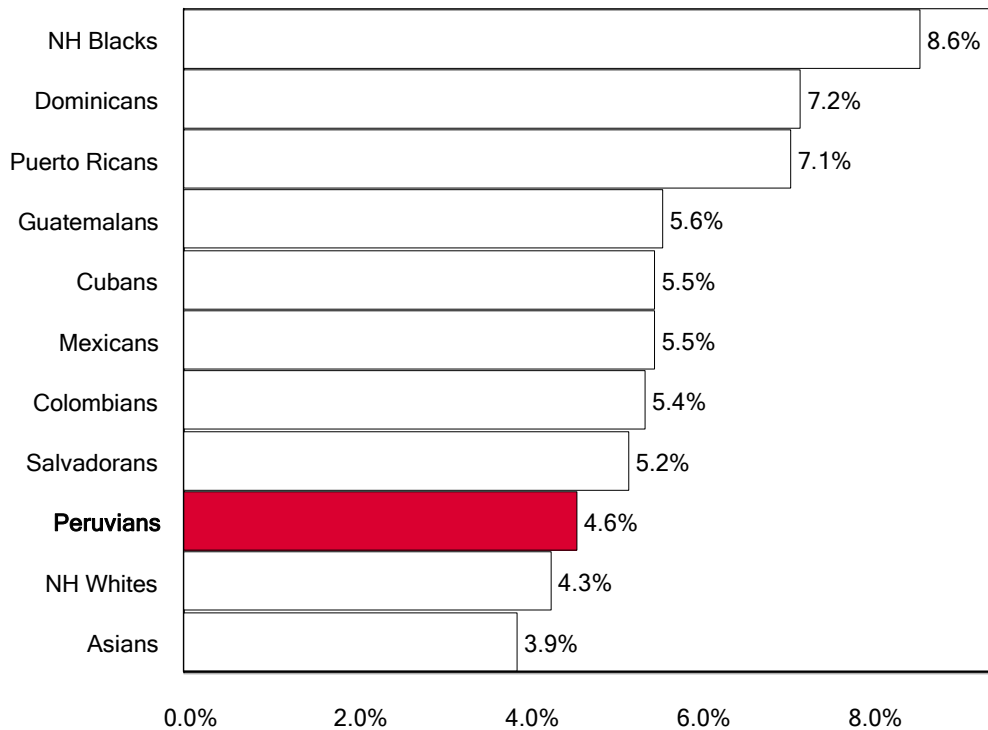
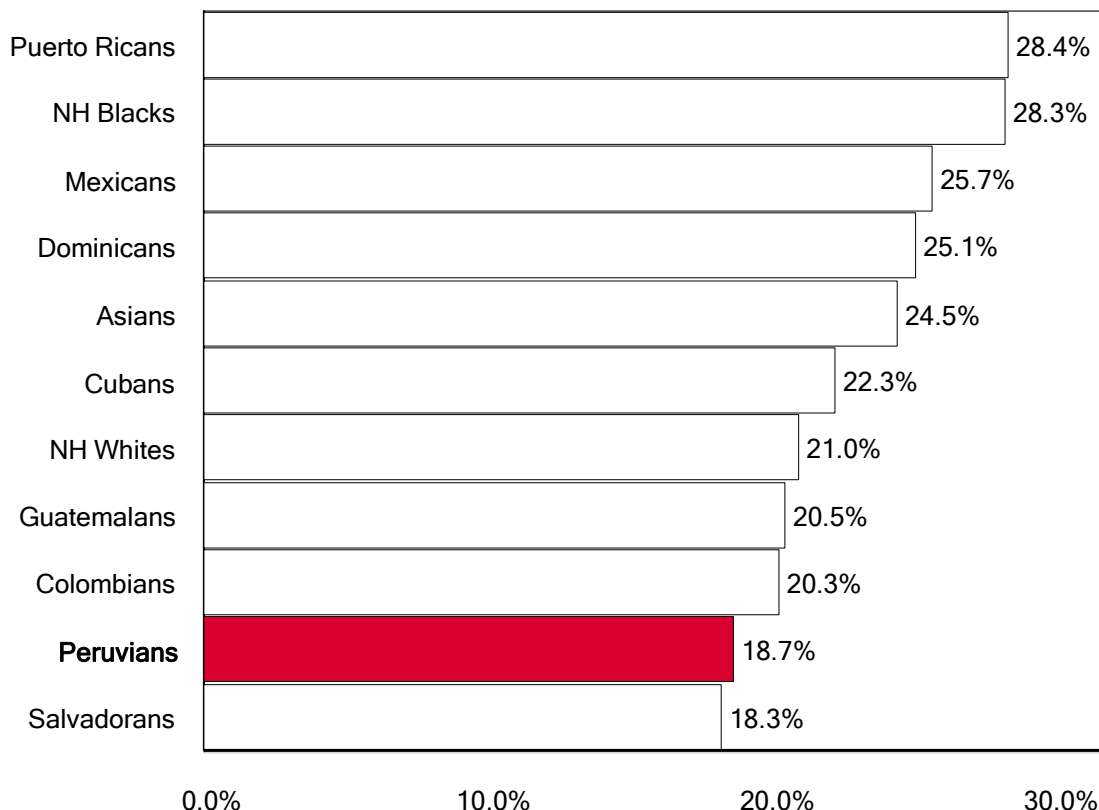


Figure 25
 Not in the Labor Force Rates among Peruvians in the United States compared with Race/Ethnic Groups and Largest Latino National Subgroups, 2008 (Population Ages 16 - 60)



English Language Abilities

Whether foreign or domestic-born, Peruvians demonstrated very competent English language abilities, and this is consistent with the high educational attainment levels found among the Peruvian population of the U.S. Even in 1980, some 80% of all Peruvians in the U.S. reported speaking English exclusively, very well, or well. This rose slightly to 82% in 2008. (See figure 26). As to be expected nearly all Peruvians born and raised in the U.S. had nearly complete English competence. But it is impressive that there were very high rates of English language proficiency among foreign-born Peruvians as well. In 1980 about 76% of all foreign-born Peruvians reported good English-language abilities, and this was about the same in 2008 at 77%. (See figure 27).

Yet, bilingualism was an important part of Peruvian culture in the U.S. as the dominant language spoken at home was Spanish, although there were expected differences between the domestic and foreign born. In 2008 about 85% of all Peruvians spoke Spanish at home. The rate was 93% among the foreign-born. It is important to note the growth of a domestic-born Peruvian culture in the U.S. between 1980 and 2008 with changing linguistic preferences. In 1980 about 70% of all domestic-born Peruvians spoke Spanish at home, as they in all likelihood lived with their Spanish-speaking parents. By 2008 however, this figure had fallen to 59%. Thus, although Spanish was still the dominant language spoken at home even by domestic-born Peruvians, there was an increasing tendency to speak English at home (41% of all domestic-born Peruvians). These data are summarized in figures 28 and 29.

Figure 26
English Language Abilities among Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008
Population Ages 5 and Older

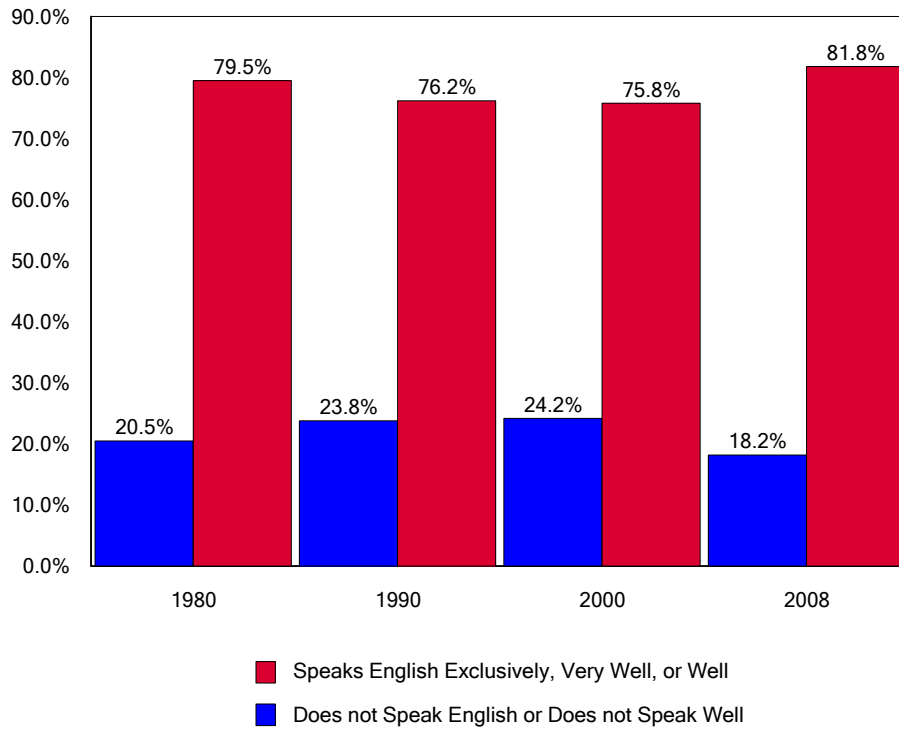


Figure 27
English Language Abilities among Foreign-Born Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008
Population Ages 5 and Older

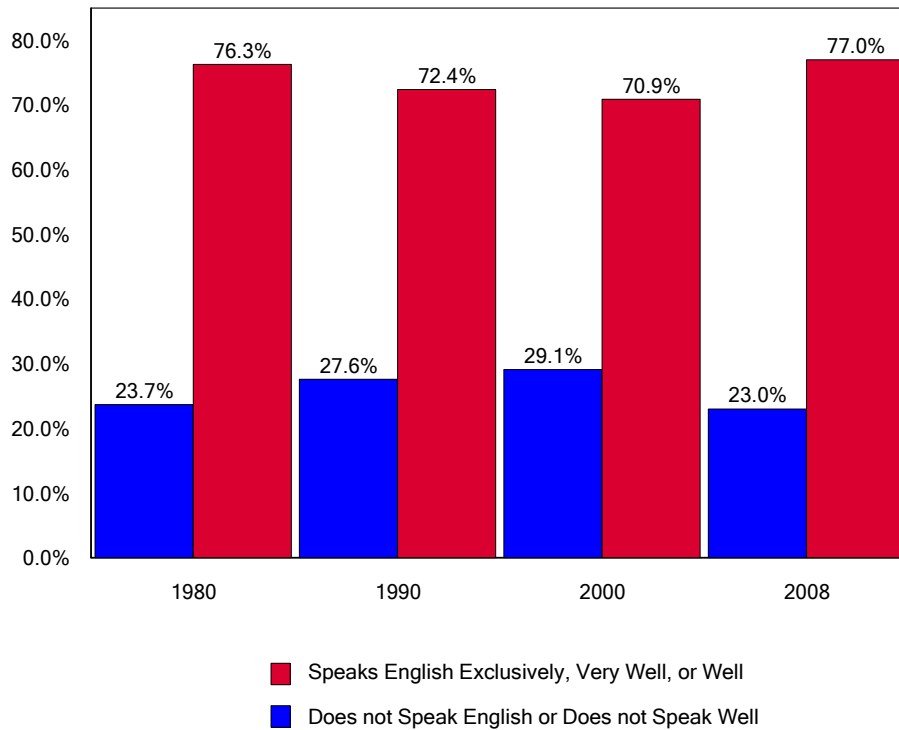


Figure 28
Language Spoken at Home by Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008
Population Ages 5 and Older

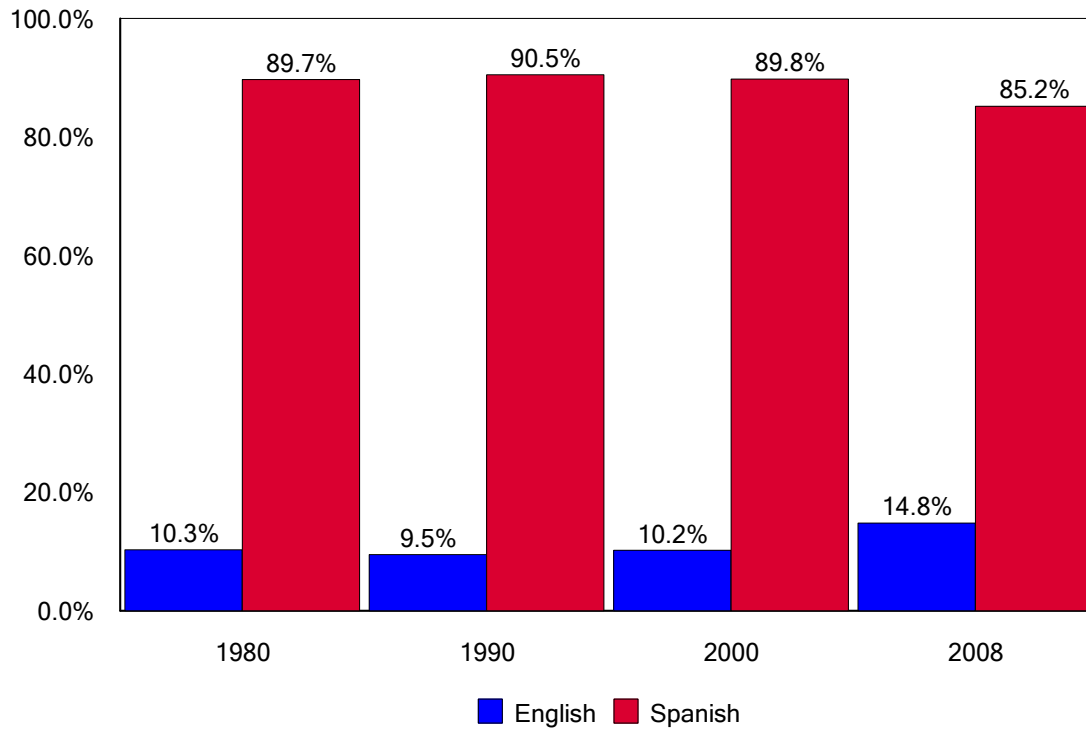
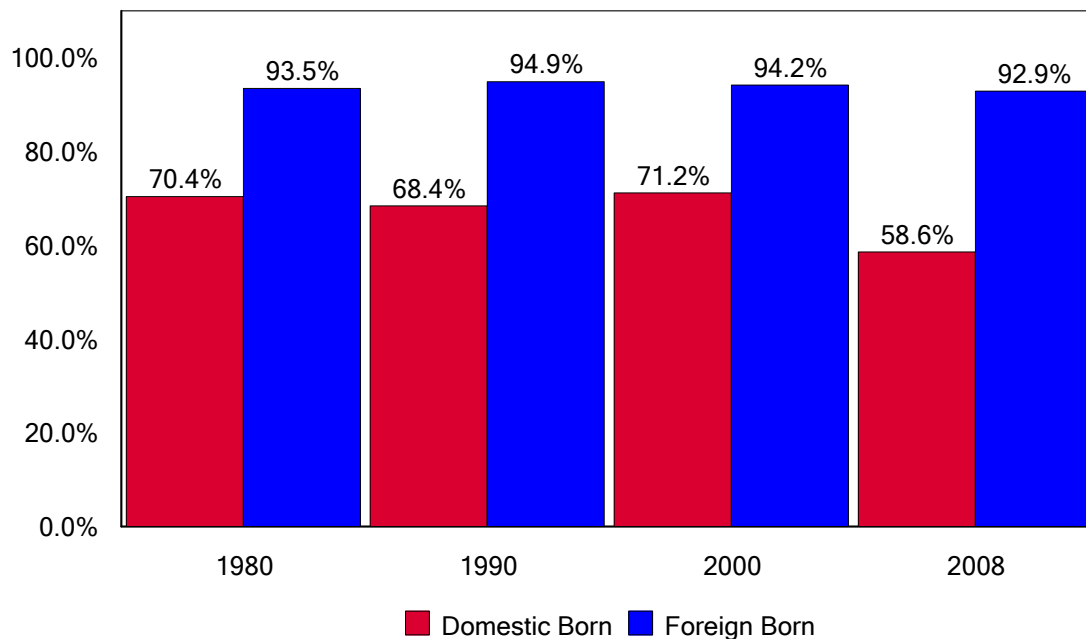


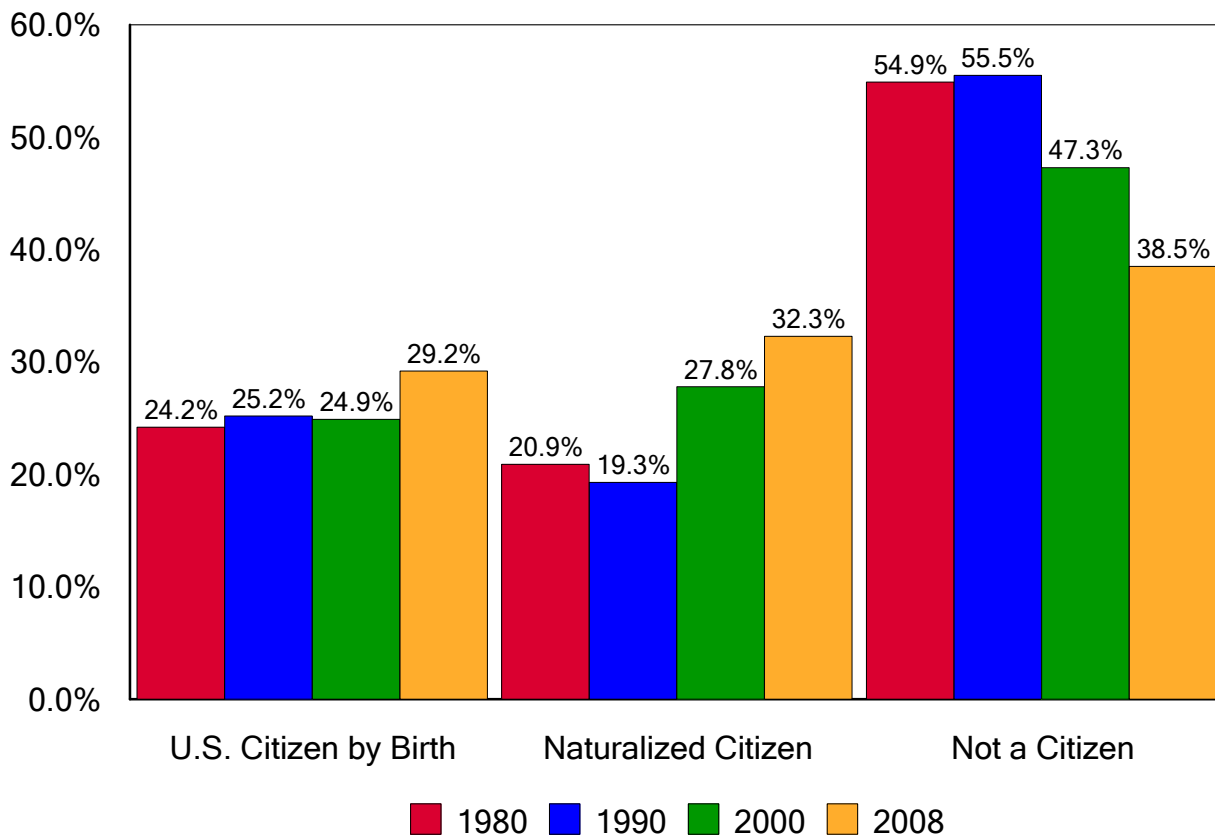
Figure 29
Percentage of Peruvians who Spoke Spanish at Home in the United States
by Nativity, 1980 - 2008 (Population Ages 5 and Older)



Citizenship

Because of naturalization among foreign-born Peruvians, the citizenship rate increased significantly between 1980 and 2008. In 1980 about 55% of all Peruvians in the U.S. were not citizens and only 21% were naturalized. By 2008 nearly 62% of the Peruvian population were citizens of the U.S. About 29% were domestic-born and 32% were naturalized. (See figure 30).

Figure 30
Citizenship Status for Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008



Race

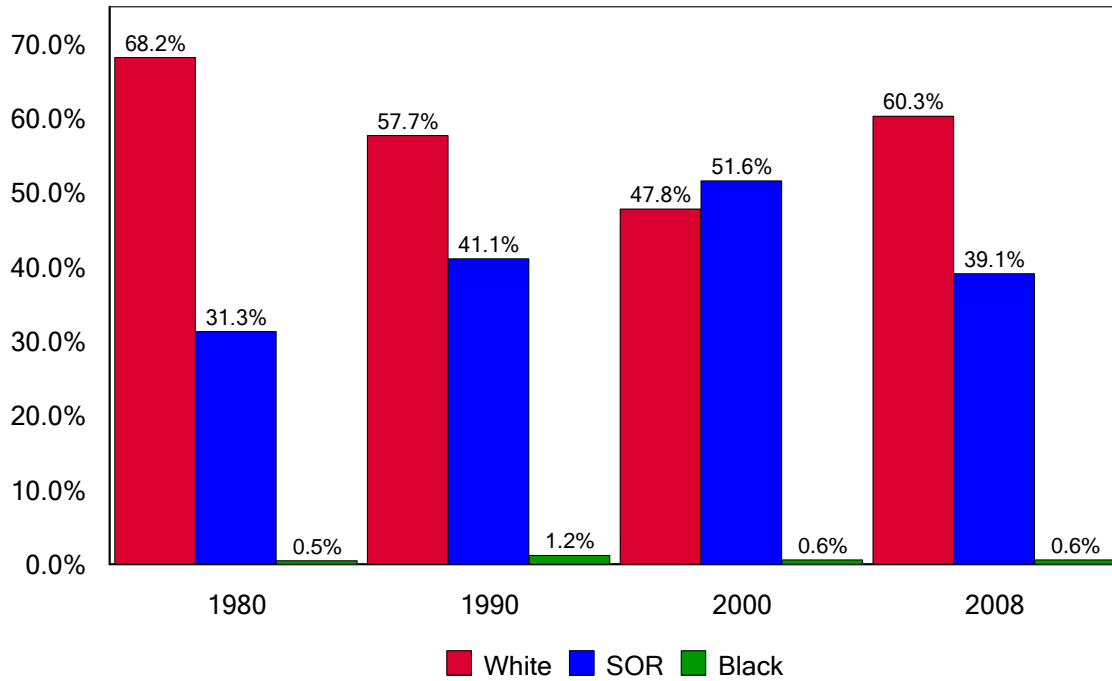
The issue of race is a complex one for Latin American and Caribbean-origin populations in the United States because of different racial conceptualizations compared with the black/white dualism which has long been present in the United States. This is very different from the complex patterns of race mixture in the region in which there are a multiplicity of racial classifications, rather than the simplistic two-pole concept prevalent in the U.S. The issue is further complicated by the way in which data are gathered on race by the U.S. Census Bureau, which fundamentally is based on self-declaration rather than actual skin color or any other objective criteria. Racial self-declarations may have little to do with actual racial realities, but rather peoples' perceptions of themselves. These issues are further complicated by erroneous notions that the term 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' represents a race, which they do not. Nevertheless, since the Census Bureau does measure race it is useful to report its findings even if these are more an expression of how people conceive of themselves, rather than an objective observation of skin color or race.

Basically, Peruvians have increasingly considered themselves to be 'Of Some Other Race' rather than 'white' as was the case in 1980. Although there have been fluctuations in these self conceptions from census year to census year, it is evident that more and more Peruvians in the U.S. consider themselves not to be white, although the 'white' self-declaration continues to be the dominant. In 1980 68% of all Peruvians declared themselves to be white; 31% to be of 'some other race.' By 2008 some 39% considered themselves to be 'of some other race' while 60% self declared as white. Very few Peruvians declared themselves to be black, or of African descent. (See figure 31).

There was a greater propensity for Peruvians born in the U.S. to declare themselves as white, although the differential diminished considerably by 2008 when 64% of domestic-born and 59% of foreign-born Peruvians declared themselves to be white. Foreign-born Peruvians also had higher rates of self-declarations as of 'some other race.' (See figures 32 and 33 for these data).

Yet race does seem to matter, although marginally, when socioeconomic indicators are examined. Those who self declared as white had higher median household incomes than the other racial categories, although not overwhelmingly so. (See figure 34). Yet, about the same percentage of Peruvians lived in poverty (about 10%) whether they self declared as white or some other race. (See figure 35). Additionally a marginally higher percentage of white Peruvians graduated college (33%) than Peruvians of some other race (30%). It is conspicuous that of Peruvians who self-declared as 'black' only 6.7% reported achieving a B.A. degree or higher in 2008. (See figures 35 and 36).

Figure 31
Racial Self-Declarations among Peruvians in the United States, 1980 - 2008



Note: SOR means "Some Other Race"

Figure 32
Peruvians in the United States who Self Declared as White by Nativity, 1980 - 2008

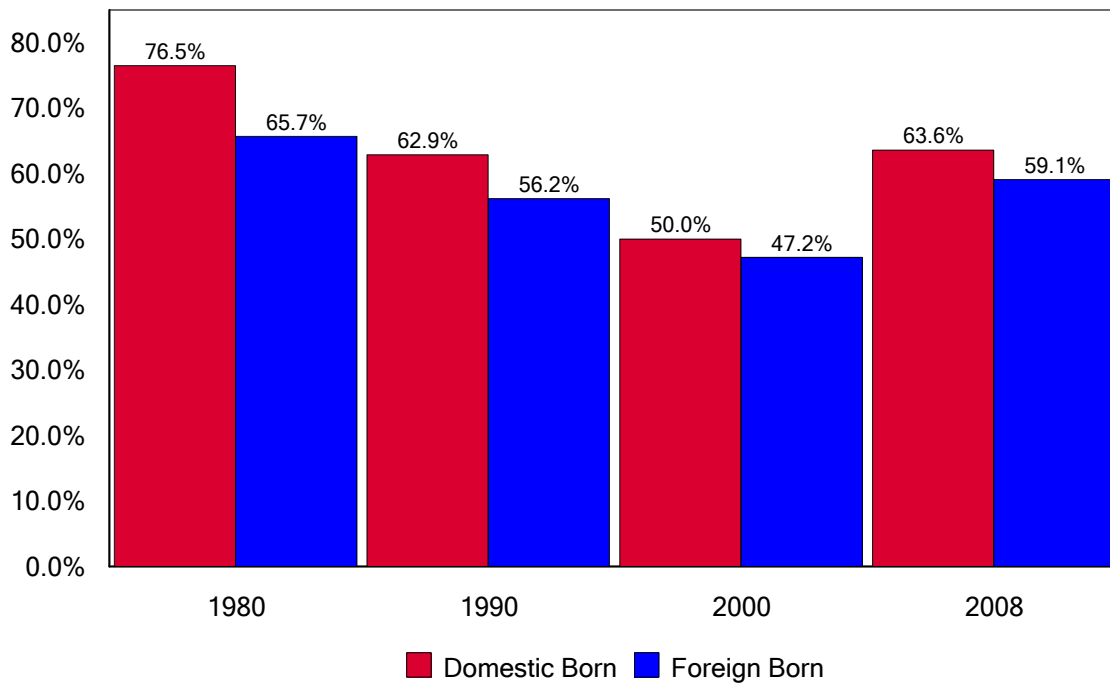


Figure 33
Peruvians in the United States who Self Declared as "Some Other Race" by Nativity 1980 - 2008

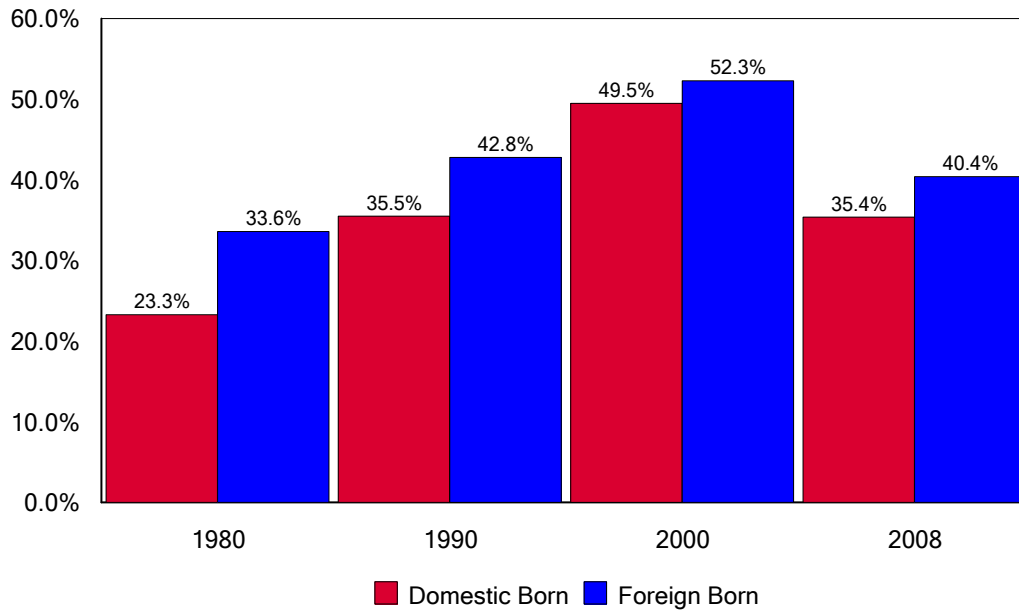
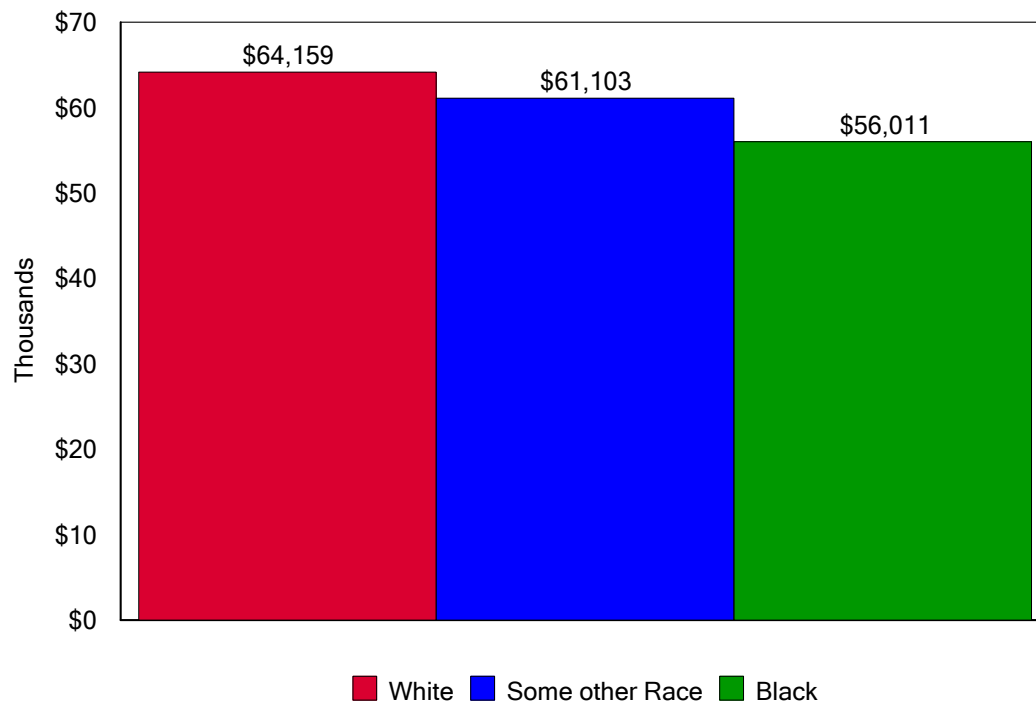
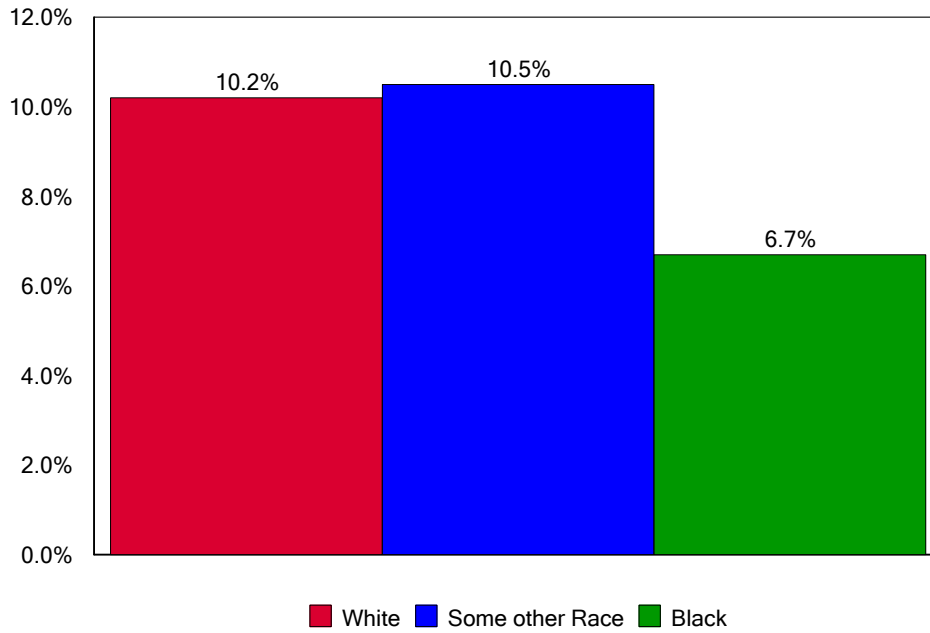


Figure 34
Median Household Income by Race Among Peruvians in the United States, 2008



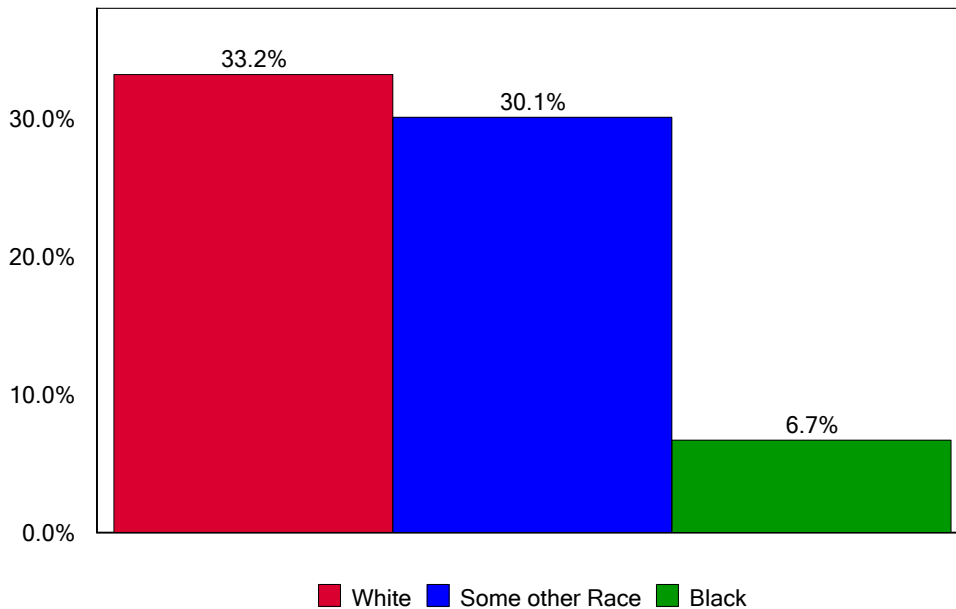
Note: The sample size for Peruvians who declared themselves to be 'black' is very small making the data not statistically reliable.

Figure 35
Percentage of Peruvians Living in Poverty by Race, 2008



Note: The sample size for Peruvians who declared themselves to be 'black' is very small making the data not statistically reliable.

Figure 36
Percentage of Peruvians Ages 25 and Over with a B.A. Degree or Higher by Race, 2008



Note: The sample size for Peruvians who declared themselves to be 'black' is very small making the data not statistically reliable.

Marriage Patterns

In their marriage patterns Peruvian household heads preferred to marry other Peruvians or other Latinos rather than non-Hispanic whites or blacks. Yet, there were important differences by sex. In 2008 about 65% of all Peruvian male household heads were married to other Peruvians while 50% of Peruvian female household heads married other Peruvians. With respect to marrying other Latinos, however, there were few differences. In 2008 about 18% of Peruvian male and 19% of Peruvian female household heads were married to non-Peruvian Latinos. The major differential was with respect to marriage patterns by sex to non-Hispanic whites. In 2008 16% of Peruvian male household heads were married to non-Hispanic whites compared with 31% of Peruvian female household heads. These data are summarized in figures 37 through 40.

Figure 37
 Percentage of Peruvian Household Heads Married to Other Peruvians by Sex
 1980 - 2008

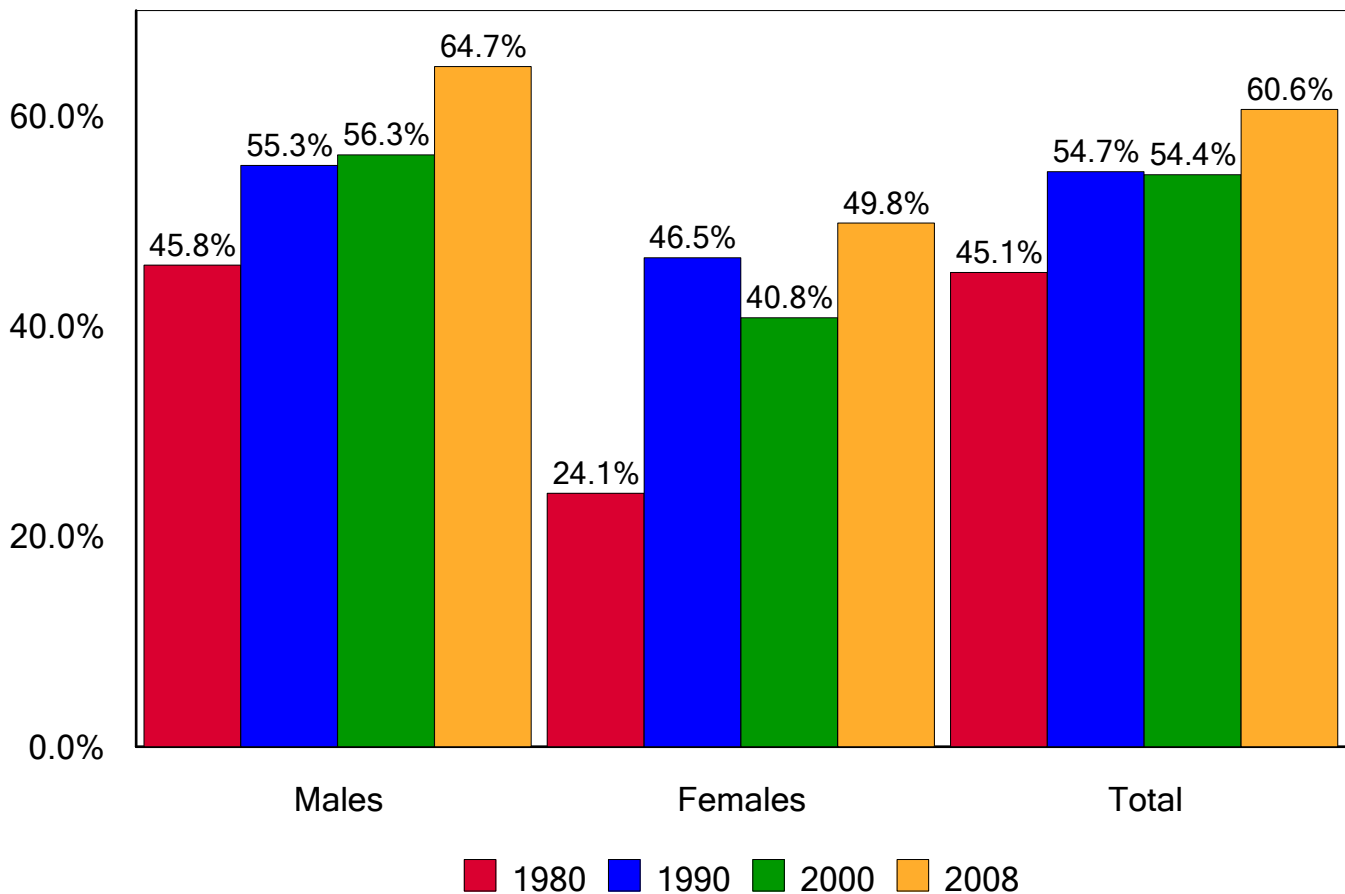


Figure 38
Percentage of Peruvian Household Heads Married to Latinos who were not Peruvians by Sex, 1980 - 2008

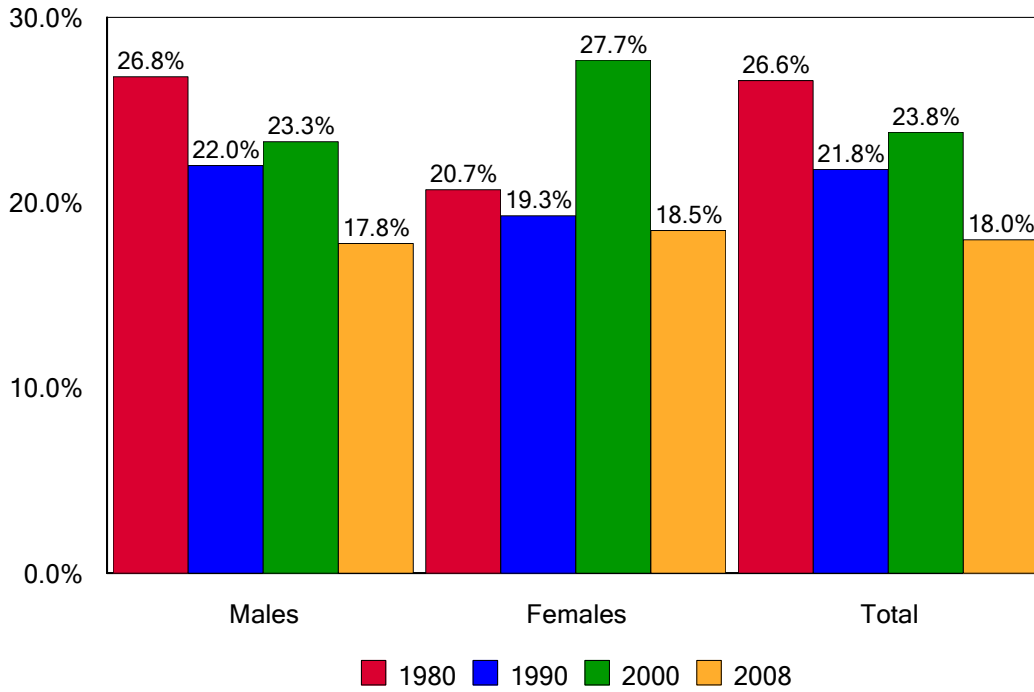


Figure 39
Percentage of Peruvian Household Heads Married to Latinos including Peruvians by Sex, 1980 - 2008

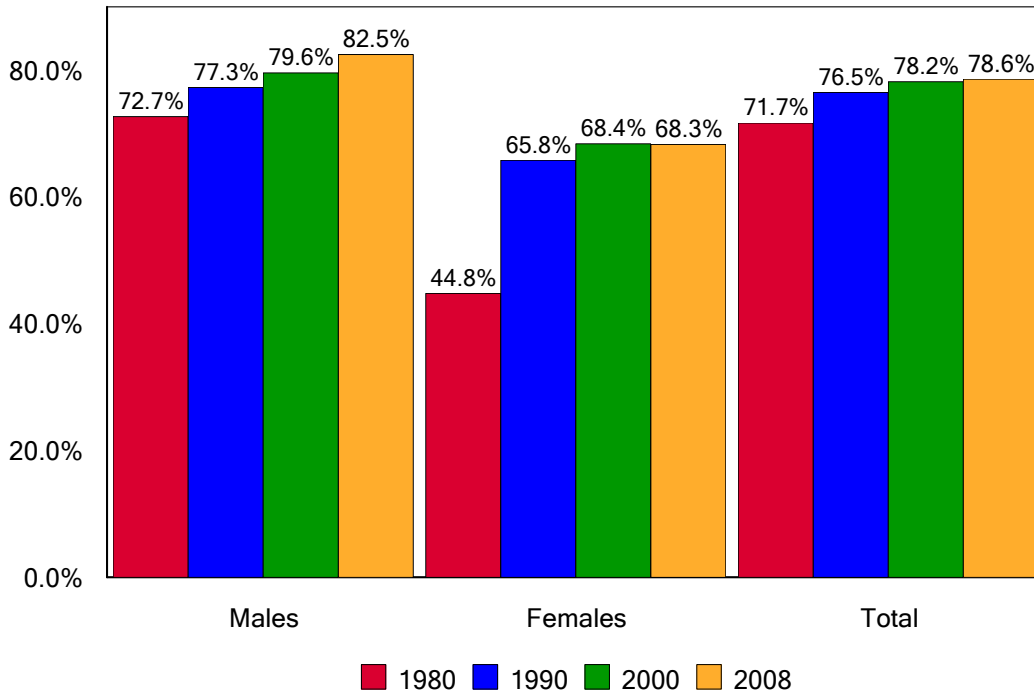
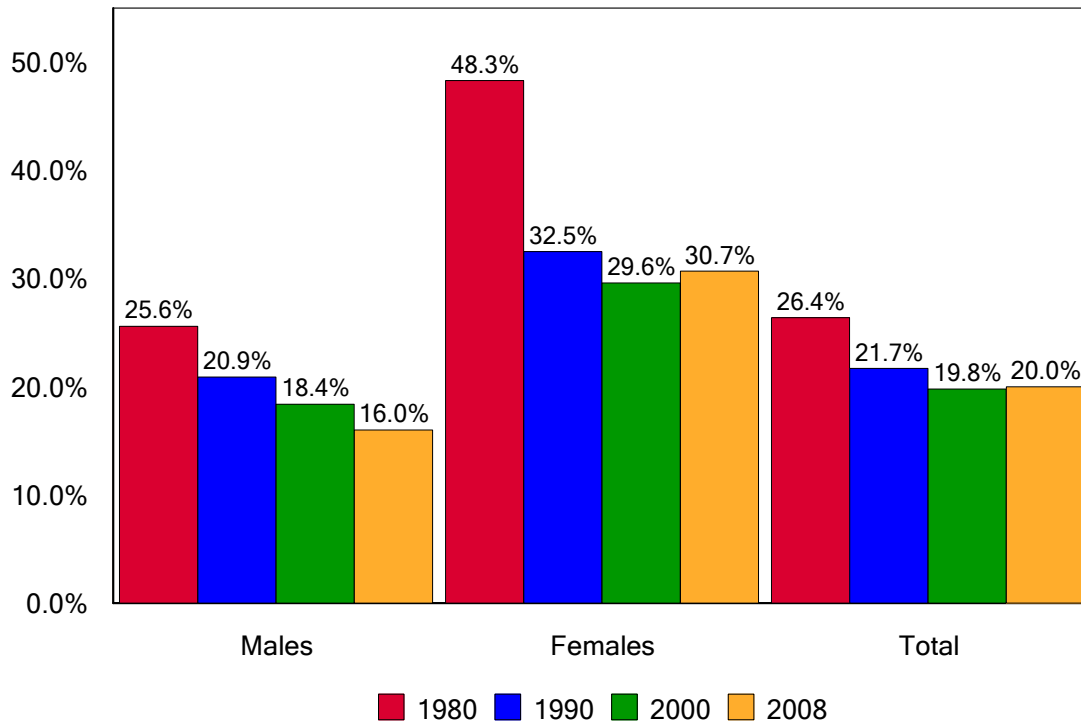


Figure 40
Percentage of Peruvian Household Heads Married to Non-Hispanic Whites
by Sex, 1980 - 2008



Summary

- The Peruvian population of the U.S. increased dramatically between 1980 and 2008 from about 70,000 to over 550,000 people.
- Migration increased in each decade and there is no reason to believe that migration from Peru will decrease in the near future.
- Because of this continued migration the foreign-born sector of the Peruvian population has not diminished proportionally, despite the increase in the U.S.-born population of Peruvian origin in absolute numbers.
- The percentage of Peruvians living in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut has decreased between 1980 and 2008. Peruvians living in California have also decreased in relative terms, while Florida has become a major state of Peruvian settlement.
- Peruvians have relatively high median household incomes compared with other race/ethnic groups in the U.S. and other Latino national subgroups. These incomes have improved since 1980 in inflation-adjusted dollars.

- While income remains very concentrated among wealthier Peruvian households, the percentage of high-income earning Peruvian households has increased substantially between 1980 and 2008.
- Peruvians have the lowest poverty rates in the U.S. when compared with other race/ethnic groups and other Latino nationalities.
- The previously noted favorable socioeconomic indicators – median household income and poverty – are linked to the extraordinarily impressive educational attainment accomplishments of the adult Peruvian population. A greater percentage of adult Peruvians had graduated college than non-Hispanic whites in 2008.
- Peruvians of working age demonstrated very low unemployment rates, very low ‘not in the labor force’ rates, and very high labor participation rates.
- A large portion of the Peruvian population, both domestic and foreign-born, demonstrated high levels of English-language proficiency. Nevertheless, Spanish was the dominant language spoken at home.
- Over time since 1980 more Peruvians who were born abroad became naturalized citizens and the citizenship rate rose continually to 2008.
- On the complex issue of race, more Peruvians declared themselves to be of some other race in 2008 than in previous census years, although a majority self declared as white.
- There were no major socioeconomic differences between Peruvians declaring themselves to be white or some other race. A very small percentage of Peruvians self-declared as black.
- Peruvian household heads preferred to marry other Peruvians, or other Latinos. Nevertheless, domestic-born Peruvian female household heads increasingly married non-Hispanic whites.