



CRITICAL FINDINGS AND POLICY BRIEF

Latinas: Socioeconomic Changes Among Hispanic Women in the United States, 1990 - 2014 Educational Attainment, Household Income, and Poverty

For the last two decades, Latinas have boasted consistently higher voter registration and participation rates than their male counterparts nationwide. One possible explanation for this trend is that Latino females generally have higher educational attainment rates than Latino males. However, despite being better educated, Latinas make less money and have higher rates of poverty. This report examines trends in Latina educational attainment, median household income, and poverty rates between 1990 and 2014 with a special emphasis on household heads.

Latinas have had higher voter registration rates than Hispanic males in every presidential election between 1992 and 2012.

- Latinas accounted for between 53% and 55% of the total Latino population, which voted in those elections.
- Approximately 60% to 62% of all eligible Latina voters were registered to vote in those elections, compared with 52% to 57% of the eligible male Latino electorate.
- Latinas voted at higher rates because of their higher voter registration rates, approximately 49% to 52% of eligible women voters went to the polls compared with 43% to 46% of the Latino male electorate.

Latinas experienced steady improvement in educational attainment between 1990 and 2014, particularly in rates of college graduation.

- In 1990, 8.5% of all Latinas 25 years of age and older had achieved a B.A. degree or higher. This increased to 16% in 2014.
- Over the same period Latinas who had not graduated from high school declined from 50.3% of all adults to 32.9% of Latinas 25 years of age and older -- still a shockingly high rate.
- Among the largest Latino nationalities, Cuban female household heads had the highest college-graduation rates at 29.4%, followed by Mexican Latina household heads at 11.9% and Salvadorans at 10%.

Quite significantly, a greater share of Latino households were headed by women between 1990 and 2014.

- In 1990, 30.2% of all Latino households were headed by women.
- This number soared to 48% in 2010 and 49% in 2014.

Household income levels were directly related to educational attainment levels for all Latino household heads, male and female.

- In 2014 all Latino household heads earning a B.A. or higher had median household incomes of \$82,214; \$58,479 with an Associate's Degree; \$51,772 if they had attended some college; \$41,208 if they had graduated high school; and \$31,174 if they weren't high school graduates.
- However, at every educational attainment level Latina household heads earned less than male Latino household heads in 2014

Poverty rates among all Latinos were high, but they were higher among Latinas and did not change significantly between 1990 and 2014.

- In 1990 27% of all Latinas lived in poverty compared with 23% of males.
- By 2014 the Latina poverty rate had hardly declined and stood at 26% compared with 21% among males.

The difference in poverty rates between male and female Latino household heads was striking.

- In 1990, an extraordinarily high 40% of all Latina household heads lived in poverty compared with 17% of Latino household heads.
- By 2014, Latina household head poverty rates were still very high at 30%, and although this was a significant decline from 1990, they were still much higher than all Latino male household head poverty rates, which were 17%.

CLACLS Recommendations:

These findings reflect the hardening of social stratification within Latino communities. There has been progress to be certain, but there are still major difficulties faced by poorer Latinas and Latinos as well. The proverbial glass of socioeconomic 'success' has been both half full and half empty.

When income and poverty rates are examined, it is very clear that: 1) income is closely connected to educational attainment levels; and 2) Latinas, even those who have graduated college, earned significantly less than men between 1990 and 2014. This is linked to two factors: the lack of equal pay for equal work, and the fact that a greater portion of Latinas do not work out of the home as their work is largely unpaid domestic labor.

Organizations working with Latino groups would do well to recognize the need for equal-pay-for-equal-work-laws in the United States. One of the reasons that Latina household heads had lower incomes was in all likelihood linked to a lack of such laws. Another is clearly connected to employment data, which indicate that Latina heads of households had significantly higher 'out of the workforce' rates than males. Poverty continues to be a dreadful problem in Latino communities across the United States. Latinas are clearly poorer than Latinos and this is in all likelihood related to the fact that so many Latinas are not employed outside of the domestic work they perform at home. Until higher rates of college graduation are achieved by both sexes, these problems can be expected to remain central to the Latina and Latino experience.

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[CNN en Español](#) and the [Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies](#) (CLACLS) at the [Graduate Center](#), City University of New York (CUNY), have partnered to provide an exclusive focus on Latino voters in America, the fastest growing minority voting bloc that could play an instrumental role in determining the next President of the United States. Through rigorous academic research generated by CLACLS' Latino Data Project, CNN en Español will broadcast detailed reports about Latinos in the American elections over several multi-media platforms geared toward Spanish-speaking audiences around the world, including 4 million U.S. households. CLACLS website: <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu> CNNE website: <http://cnnspanol.cnn.com>