

Policy Briefings

Beyond the Label: The Growth and Diversity of the Hispanic Population

Message from

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Greetings! I would like to take this time to introduce the Metropolitan Center's bimonthly publication, *Policy Briefings*, which covers an array of issues relevant to decision-making in South Florida.

The Florida International University Metropolitan Center is an applied social science research institute committed to providing cutting-edge solutions to issues faced by policy-makers with a focus on economic development, planning and performance improvement.

The 2010 Decennial Census revealed that Hispanics comprise 16 percent or the largest minority group in the American population. In this first issue of *Policy Briefings*, we seek to go beyond the "Hispanic label" by analyzing the general growth of the Hispanic population and its diversification. More specifically, we analyze the difference in human capital and educational attainment of the fastest growing Hispanic groups.

For this issue, we relied on the Census definition of Hispanic which was gauged with a question asking residents to identify themselves as Hispanic or not Hispanic. The question asks residents to identify their country of origin and lists several nationalities including Spaniard.

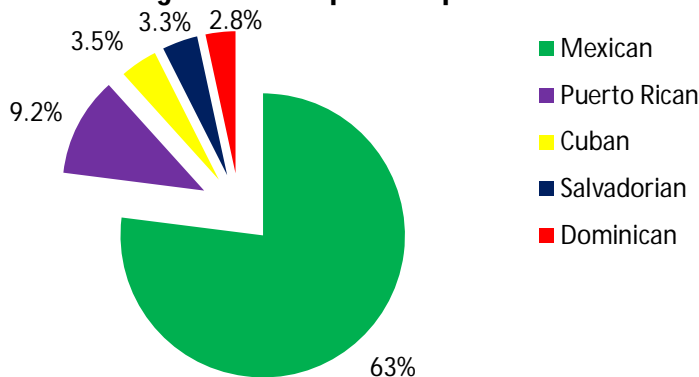
Hispanics in the United States

The growth of the Hispanic population accounted for over half of the 27.3 million total increase in the population of the United States during the past decade. While the population of the US increased by 9.7 percent to 308.7 million, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent to 50 million.¹ Hispanics are now the largest minority group comprising 16 percent of the total population of the US. As the Hispanic population in the US continues to grow, it has also become increasingly diverse culturally, socially and economically. This growing diversity has real economic, social and political implications that challenge traditional mindsets regarding the so-called "Hispanic label."

Although the number of Hispanics increased across all states and the District of Columbia, their growth was particularly evident in the South where Hispanics increased by 57 percent and in the Midwest where their number grew by 49 percent. The majority of Hispanics continued to be concentrated in traditional strongholds like California, Texas and Florida. In fact, Hispanics now comprise the majority in 82 counties, of which 51 are in Texas.²

Numbering 31.8 million in 2010, Mexicans continue to be the largest Hispanic group in the country. Mexicans now comprise 63 percent of the Hispanic population, followed by Puerto Ricans who at 4.6 million represent 9 percent of the total. The Cuban population grew slightly to 1.8 million and now comprises 3.5 percent of the total.

Figure 1: Largest Hispanic Groups by Total Percentage of U.S. Hispanic Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

The continued growth of the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban communities has been accompanied by the even larger growth of the other Hispanic groups. The 2000-2010 immigration wave included an increased number of Spaniards, Central and South Americans. (Figure 2) The growth of these new groups of Hispanics, which comprise only 10 percent of the Hispanic population in the United States, could have implications on American immigration and education in the future.³

¹ "The Hispanic Population: 2010," United States Census Bureau, 2011, Sharon R Ennis, Merarys Rios-Vargas and Nora G. Albert.

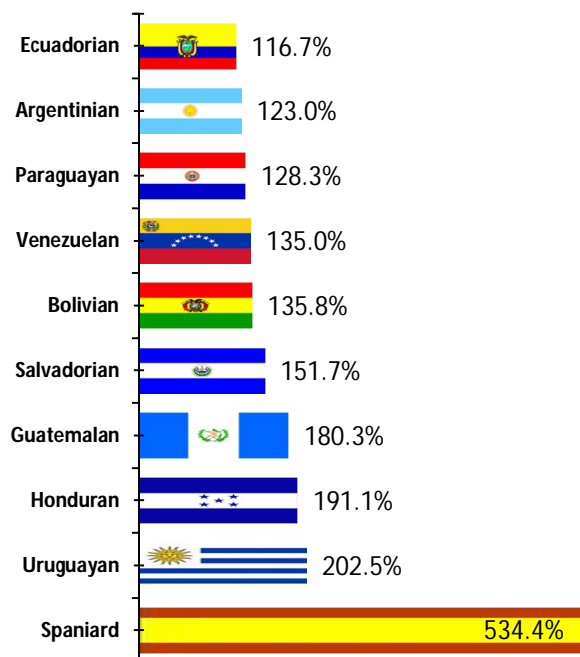
² "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

³ "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

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Figure 2: Fastest Growing Hispanic Groups by Nationality, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

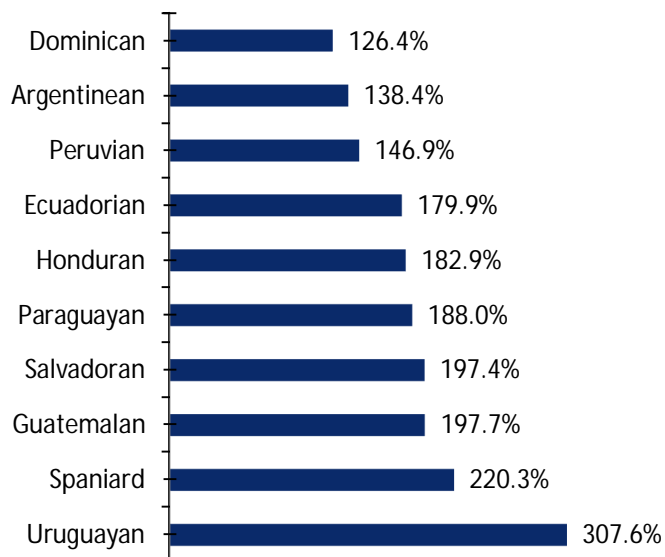
Hispanics in Florida

Florida Hispanics make up 8 percent (4.2 million) of the U.S. Hispanic population. Between 2000 and 2010 Florida's Hispanic population increased by 57 percent, well above the 18 percent overall growth of Florida's population during the decade. By 2010 Hispanics in Florida comprised 22.5 percent of the state's population, an increase of almost six percent from 2000. Not only has the number of Hispanics changed, but the country of origin of the largest Hispanic groups has also shifted. In 2000, Cubans were the largest Hispanic group comprising 5.2 percent of total population in Florida, followed by Puerto Ricans and Mexicans (5.3 percent). In 2010, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans together made up 7.8 percent of Florida's population surpassing Cubans who constituted 6.4 percent of the state population. In fact, the growth in Puerto Ricans was so large that in 2010 they made up 365,000 of the state's 1.5 million new Hispanic residents.⁴

⁴ "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

According to the most recent U.S. Census data available on Florida's smaller Hispanic populations, the fastest growing Hispanics in the State were Uruguayans, Spaniards and Guatemalans.⁵

Figure 3: Fastest Growing Hispanics in Florida by Country of Origin, 2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000 & American Community Survey, 2009

The Hispanic population of Miami-Dade County continues to grow. The 2010 Census reported that the Hispanic population increased by 65 percent. Hispanics now comprised 57.3 percent of the total population with Cubans continuing to be the largest Hispanic group (50.4 percent). However, the fastest growing Hispanic groups in Miami-Dade County were Central Americans (particularly Hondurans) and South Americans (particularly Uruguayans). Interestingly, Spaniards in Miami-Dade County also grew but by a much smaller percentage than their statewide and nationwide growth indicating that Spaniards are primarily located in non-Hispanic majority counties of Florida.⁶

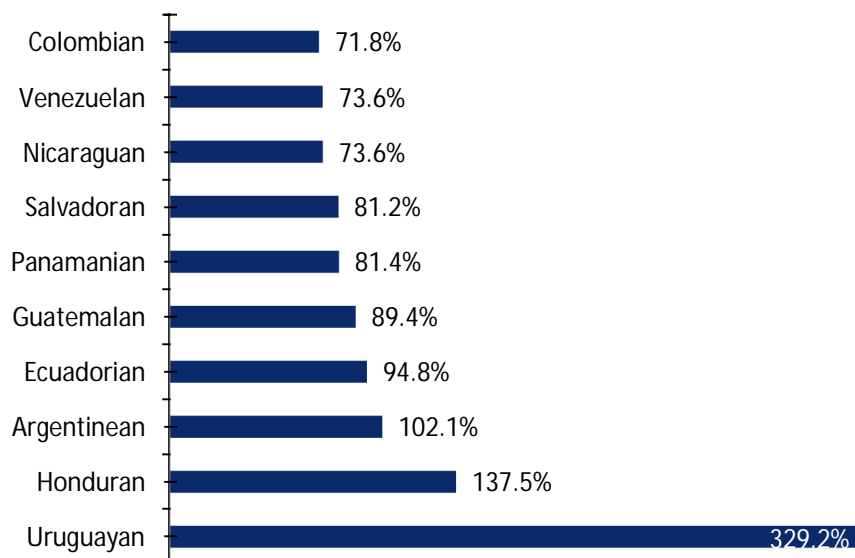
⁵ "2000 & 2010 Decennial Census." [United States Census Bureau](#), 2011.

⁶ "The Hispanic Population: 2010"

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Figure 4: Fastest Growing Hispanics in Miami-Dade County by Country of Origin, 2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000 & American Community Survey, 2009

The increasing number and diversity of Hispanics has real political, educational and human capital implications for individual states and the nation as a whole. Hispanics will have a powerful impact on national elections given their large numbers and the concentration and political clout of some groups in states with large numbers of Electoral College Votes. In fact, Florida is projected to increase its Electoral College votes to twenty-nine. The general population growth, especially the growth in Hispanics, has led to several other states gaining electoral votes including Texas, Arizona, Nevada, South Carolina and Utah.⁷ The growing diversity of Hispanic groups has human capital implications that could impact the United States labor market. In fact, Hispanics from the fastest growing nationalities have historically higher levels of educational attainment than Hispanics in the United States as a whole. For example, the percentage of Spaniards, Uruguayans and Argentinians with university degrees is double the percentage of Hispanics overall in the United States with Bachelor's degrees.

By way of contrast, historically only 7.5 percent of Mexicans in the United States have a college degree. Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the United States have higher proportions of high school and college graduates than the overall Hispanic population. Similarly, the growing Hispanic population is diverse not only in nationality but in levels of educational attainment. In fact, Hispanics from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have lower levels of both high school and college graduates than the nation's average for Hispanics. In sum, these findings point to the need to go beyond the Hispanic label and focus on the diversity within the Hispanic community.

⁷ "Apportionment of the US House of Representatives Based on the 2010 Census." United States Census Bureau, 2011.