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The Nation's Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth

Nearly half of U.S.-born Latinos are younger than 18

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A Note on Terminology

The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this report.

The terms “whites,” “blacks” and “Asians” are used to refer to single-race, non-Hispanic components of their populations.

Unless otherwise noted, “U.S. born” refers to persons born in the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories and those born in other countries to parents at least one of whom was a U.S. citizen. “Foreign born” refers to persons born outside of the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories to parents who were not U.S. citizens. The terms “foreign born” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably.

“Speaking English proficiently” or “English proficiency” refers to those who speak only English at home or those who speak a language other than English at home and indicate they speak English “very well,” the highest response category on a four-point scale of English speaking ability. Those who do not speak English proficiently include those who speak a language other than English at home and indicate they do not speak English or indicate they speak English “well” or “not well.” This information is self-reported in the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

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The Nation's Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth

Nearly half of U.S.-born Latinos are younger than 18

BY Eileen Patten

Hispanics are the youngest major racial or ethnic group in the United States. About one-third, or 17.9 million, of the nation's Hispanic population is younger than 18, and about a quarter, or 14.6 million, of all Hispanics are Millennials (ages 18 to 33 in 2014), according to a [Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau](#).

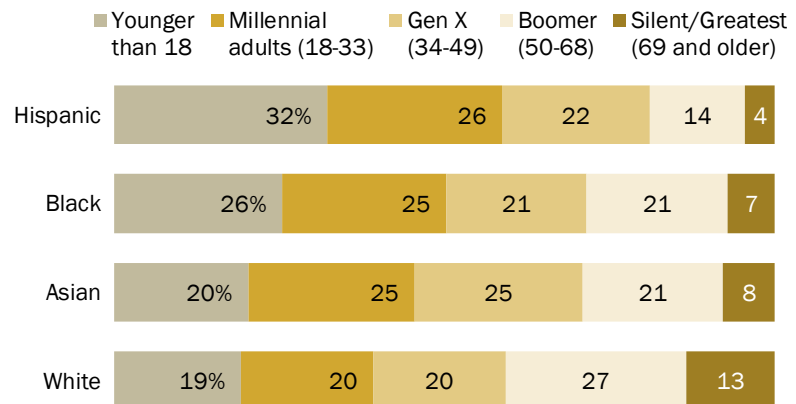
Altogether, nearly six-in-ten Hispanics are Millennials or younger.

By comparison, half of the black population and 46% of the U.S. Asian population are Millennials or younger.¹ Among whites, the nation's oldest racial group, only about four-in-ten are Millennials or younger (39%).

The nation's Latino population has long been one of its youngest. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the median age of Hispanics – 28 years – was well below that of the major racial groups and has been so [since at least the 1980s](#). But as with the nation's population overall, the Hispanic population's median age has steadily risen since the 1980s, from 22 then to 28 in 2014, a significant change though still the smallest increase in median age among any major racial or ethnic group during that time period. For example, the median age among whites was 43 in 2014, up 12 years since 1980. Among Asians, the median age in 2014 was 36, up eight years since 1980. And for blacks, the median age has risen nine years since 1980 to 33 in 2014.

¹ Throughout this report, combined shares are calculated using unrounded figures and so may differ slightly from the sum of the rounded estimates in the table accompanying the text, as is the case here with the shares of blacks and Asians who are Millennial or younger.

Nearly six-in-ten Hispanics are Millennials or younger



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only those who are single race and not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS).
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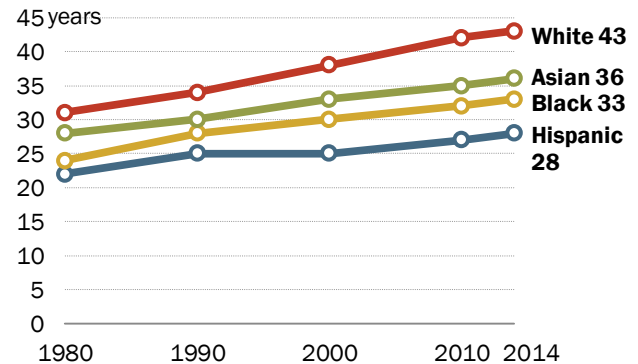
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Looked at another way, the share of the Hispanic population under the age of 18 has decreased somewhat since 1980. Back in 1980, 40% of the nation's 14.8 million Latinos were under age 18, while among white non-Hispanics, that share was 26%. In 1990, 35% of the then 21.8 million Latinos living in the U.S. were under 18. That share remained stable through 2000, but had dropped to 32% as of 2014. Meanwhile, among whites, the share under age 18 stood at 19% in 2014.

For the nation's Hispanic population, youth is a defining characteristic. For example, among Hispanic eligible voters, 44% are Millennial Hispanics – [the single largest cohort of Hispanic eligible voters](#).² And among the nation's Millennials, Hispanics are a greater share than they are among all American adults

Hispanics are the nation's youngest major racial/ethnic group

Median age



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only those who are single race and not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 and 2014 American Community Surveys and 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses (IPUMS).

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The Generations Defined

The Millennial Generation

Born: 1981 to 1996*

Age of adults in 2014: 18 to 33

Generation X

Born: 1965 to 1980

Age in 2014: 34 to 49

The Baby Boom Generation

Born: 1946 to 1964

Age in 2014: 50 to 68

The Silent Generation

Born 1928 to 1945

Age in 2014: 69 to 86

The Greatest Generation

Born: Before 1928

Age in 2014: 87 and older

* The youngest Millennials are in their teens. No chronological endpoint has been set for this group.

– Hispanics make up 21% of all U.S. Millennials versus 15% of all adults in 2014.

² Eligible voters are defined as persons ages 18 and older who are U.S. citizens.

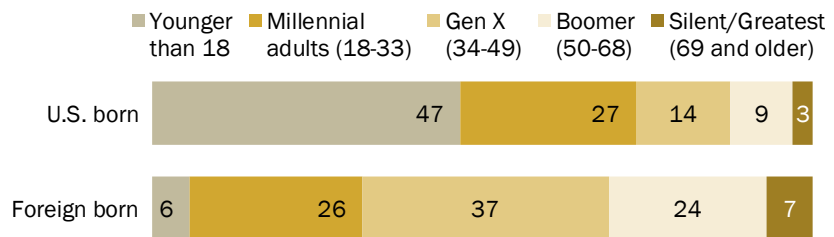
Within the Hispanic adult population, Millennials stand out in a number of ways from older Hispanics, according to the Pew Research Center analysis. Millennials are currently much less likely to be immigrants and are more likely to speak English proficiently. They are also more likely than older generations to be of Mexican origin, reflecting the youth of the Mexican-origin population in the U.S.

Nearly half of U.S.-born Latinos are younger than 18

The disproportionately young profile of Latinos in the U.S. is driven by the overwhelming youth of U.S.-born Hispanics. With a median age of 19, nearly half (47%) of U.S.-born Latinos are younger than 18. This is similar to the youth share among the nation's other major racial or ethnic group with a large immigrant population – U.S.-born Asians, of whom 49% are younger than 18. By comparison, just 27% of U.S.-born blacks and 20% of U.S.-born whites are younger than 18.

Nearly three-quarters of U.S.-born Hispanics are Millennials or younger

% among Hispanics



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "The Nation's Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth"

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The current immigration wave, mostly from Latin America and Asia, has brought [59 million immigrants](#) to the U.S. over the last 50 years and peaked in the early 2000s. About half of today's U.S.-born Latinos (47%) and 80% of today's U.S.-born Asians are the children of immigrants, many of whom came during this recent wave, which helps to explain the striking youth numbers for these groups.³

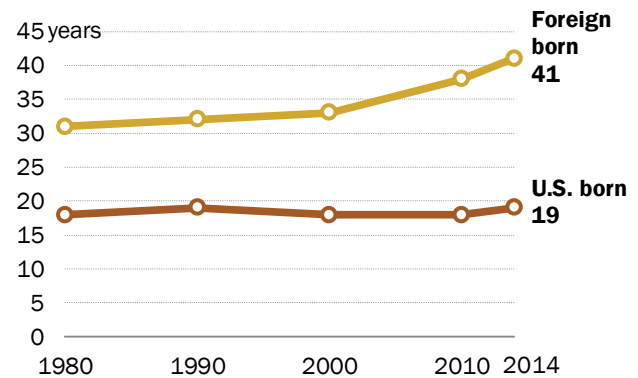
Among the country's Latinos, the immigrant and U.S.-born populations have very different age patterns. [Few immigrants arrive as children](#). As a result, just 6% of immigrant Latinos are younger than 18. Most immigrants arrive as working-age adults. Some 26% of Latino immigrants in 2014 were Millennials and a 37% plurality were Gen Xers (ages 34 to 49). Another quarter of foreign-born Latinos (24%) were Boomers (ages 50 to 68).

³ Due to data limitations (i.e., availability of parental birthplace variables), this analysis is based on 2014 Current Population Survey data, rather than the American Community Survey.

The median age among foreign-born Latinos is more than 20 years older than that of U.S.-born Latinos (41 and 19, respectively). While the median age of foreign-born Latinos has risen dramatically over the past three decades (from 31 years in 1980), the median age of U.S.-born Latinos has not changed significantly. Much of this change in the median age among foreign-born Latinos reflects the [slowdown in migration from Latin America](#) that has occurred since 2007. Without a new, large wave of younger immigrants, those Latino immigrants who remain in the U.S. have aged, pushing up the group's median age.

Median age of immigrant Hispanics is more than 20 years higher than that of U.S.-born Hispanics

Median age



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 and 2014 American Community Surveys and 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses (IPUMS).

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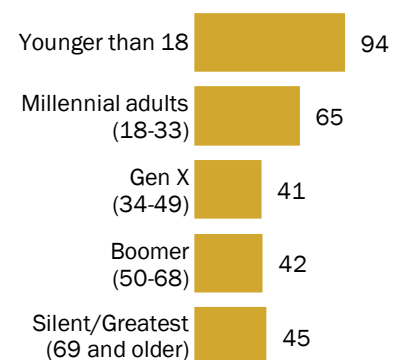
Young Hispanics are more likely to be U.S. born than older generations – at least for now

Because so few children come to the U.S. as immigrants, young Hispanics are overwhelmingly U.S. born. Among children younger than 18, 94% are U.S. born, and about two-thirds of Hispanic Millennials (65%) were born in the U.S. This compares with about four-in-ten Gen Xers, Boomers and older adults who are U.S. born.

Millennials are currently in the prime age range for immigration, and new Millennial immigrants will likely shift the balance and reduce the U.S.-born share of Hispanic Millennials. This process will accelerate once U.S.-born teenagers coming of age are no longer counted as joining the Millennial generation, instead becoming their own post-Millennial generation. Once this shift occurs, it will leave

In 2014, about two-thirds of Hispanic Millennials are U.S. born

% U.S. born among Hispanics



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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immigration as the sole source of growth for the Millennial generational group going forward.

This pattern of change is evident among older generations of Hispanics. For example, in 1980, when Baby Boomers were the age that Millennials are now, 65% were U.S. born.⁴ The U.S.-born share among Hispanic Boomers decreased steadily throughout the beginning of their adult lives, but as the generation approached middle age it leveled off, and it stood at 42% in 2014.

For Gen Xers, who came of age during a period of high immigration, the pattern holds, but is not quite as stark. In 1998, when they were ages 18 to 33, half of Hispanic Gen Xers were U.S. born, compared with a 41% U.S.-born share when they were ages 34 to 49 in 2014.

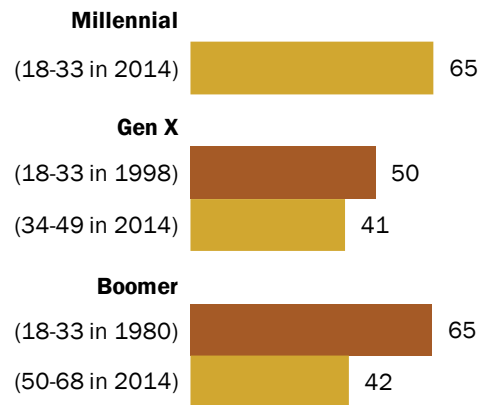
The U.S.-born share among Hispanic Millennials has already decreased as they have entered adulthood and more immigrant Millennials have begun arriving in the U.S. In 2000, when today's Millennial adults were ages 4 to 19, 81% were U.S. born, compared with 65% today.

More than a quarter of Hispanic Millennials speak only English at home

With a higher U.S.-born share comes a larger share who are proficient in English. About three-quarters of Hispanic Millennials are proficient English speakers – that is, they either speak only English at home (28%) or speak a language other than English at home, but speak English “very well” (48%). Some 19% of Hispanic Millennials speak English less than very well and just 5% do not speak English at all.

When older generations were ages 18 to 33, they had higher U.S.-born shares than they have now

% U.S. born among Hispanics in the year that each generation was ages 18 to 33



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey, 1998 March Current Population Survey and 1980 decennial census (IPUMS).

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⁴ Boomers were ages 16 to 34 in 1980. To compare this generation to Millennials, only those ages 18 to 33 were included in this analysis.

By comparison, about half or less of older generations of Hispanics are proficient English speakers. Some 55% of Gen Xers and 52% of Boomer Hispanics speak only English at home or speak English very well. Among the oldest Hispanics, those in the Silent or Greatest generation, just 43% are proficient English speakers and 22% do not speak English at all.

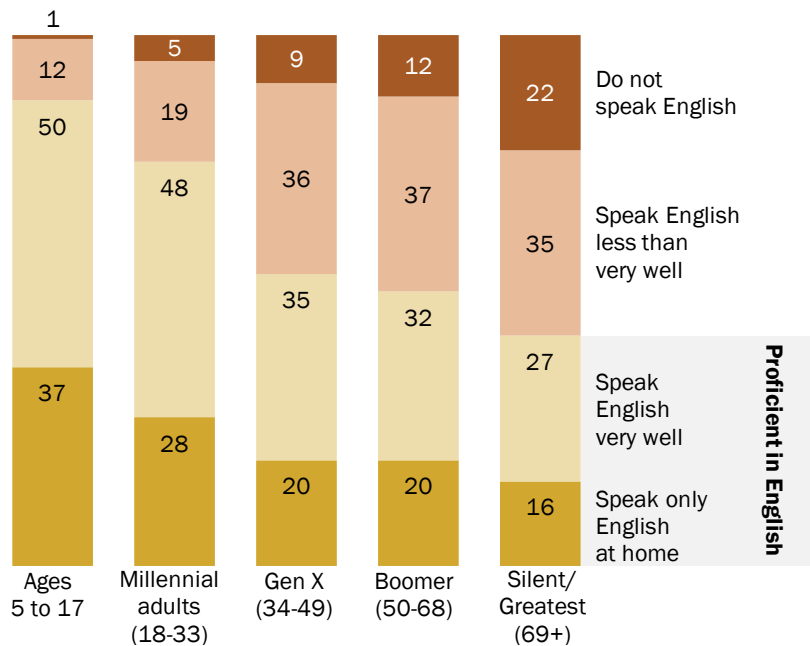
Among Hispanics ages 5 to 17, nearly all of whom are U.S. born, 88% are proficient English speakers, including 37% who speak only English at home and 50% who speak another language at home but speak English very well.

While English language proficiency is more common

among younger generations of Hispanics, speaking Spanish in the home is less common. Overall, some 62% of Hispanics ages 5 to 17 and 72% of Hispanic Millennials speak Spanish at home. By comparison, eight-in-ten or more Hispanic Gen Xers (80%), Boomers (80%) and Silent or Greatest generation adults (83%) speak Spanish in their homes. As a result, the share of all Hispanics who speak Spanish at home has [started to decline](#), and the use of English only in the home has increased.

About three-quarters of Hispanic Millennials are proficient in English

% among Hispanics



Note: Respondents are asked if they speak a language besides English at home. If they answer yes, they are asked how well they speak English. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "The Nation's Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth"

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When it comes to young Hispanics who are born outside the U.S. or on the island of Puerto Rico, English language proficiency is somewhat lower and the share speaking Spanish in their homes is much higher.⁵

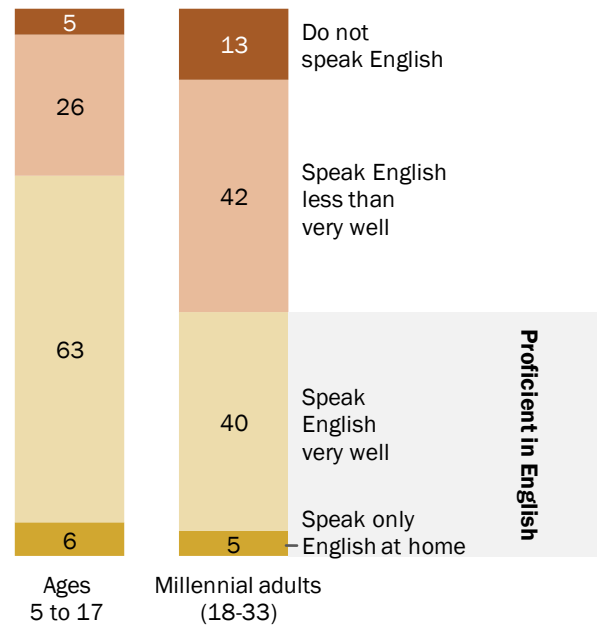
Among Hispanics who are foreign born or born in Puerto Rico, 70% of children older than 5 and 45% of Millennials are English proficient. By comparison, some 89% of Hispanic children and 94% of Hispanic Millennials who are born on the U.S. mainland speak English proficiently.

Still, young Hispanics born outside the U.S. – and especially those who are younger than 18 – are more likely than their older counterparts to be proficient in English. About three-in-ten Hispanic Gen Xers (32%) and Boomers (30%) born outside the U.S. mainland speak English proficiently, and just 24% of Silent or Greatest generation adults do.

Fewer than 10% of Millennial or younger Hispanics born outside the U.S. mainland speak only English in their homes, with more than nine-in-ten of each group speaking only Spanish or a combination of Spanish and English in their homes. These are similar to the shares among older Hispanics born outside the U.S. mainland. But among mainland-born Hispanics who are Millennials or younger, about four-in-ten speak only English in their homes, with roughly six-in-ten speaking Spanish at home.

Young Hispanics born in Puerto Rico or abroad are less proficient in English than their U.S.-born counterparts

% among Hispanics who are foreign born or born in Puerto Rico



Note: Respondents are asked if they speak a language besides English at home. If they answer yes, they are asked how well they speak English.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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⁵ 9% of Hispanic children ages 5 to 17 and 37% of Hispanic Millennials are foreign born or born in Puerto Rico.

Younger Hispanic groups have more Mexicans in their populations

Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic Millennials are of Mexican origin. Some 16% are of Caribbean Hispanic origin groups, including 9% who are Puerto Rican. One-in-ten are of Central American origin, including 4% who are Salvadoran. And 6% are of South American origin, including 2% who are Colombian.

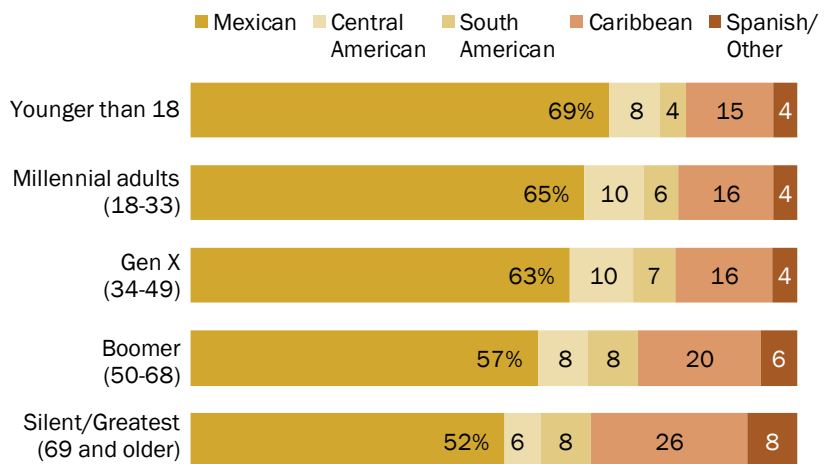
The share of Hispanic Millennials who are of Mexican origin is higher than the share that is Mexican among Boomers (57%) and older Hispanic adults (52%). Among Gen Xers, a similar share (63%) is Mexican. Among Hispanics younger than 18, almost seven-in-ten (69%) are Mexican.

The share of Hispanics who are of Caribbean origin is lower among younger generational groups than older groups. Only about one-in-six youths, Millennials

and Gen Xers have a Caribbean origin, compared with 20% of Boomers and 26% of older adults in the Silent or Greatest generations. This is largely due to a smaller share of Cubans among younger Hispanics. For example, among Silent and Greatest generation Hispanics, fully 11% are of Cuban origin, compared with just 3% among Millennial adults.

Accompanying this report is a statistical portrait of the nations' Hispanic population. Also accompanying this report is a statistical portrait of the nations' [foreign-born population](#). Both are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey downloaded from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) and feature detailed characteristics of both populations at the national level, as well as state population totals. Topics covered include age, citizenship, origin, language proficiency, living arrangements, marital status, fertility, schooling, health insurance coverage and employment. In addition, statistical profiles of the Hispanic population in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 are [available](#) and statistical profiles of the

Younger Hispanics are more likely to be Mexican



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS).
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foreign-born population in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 are [available](#), documenting trends on key demographic and economic measures among both groups.

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Acknowledgments

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