

Race Divides Hispanics, Report Says

Integration and Income Vary With Skin Color

By Darryl Fears

Washington Post Staff Writer

Monday, July 14, 2003; Page A03

White and black Hispanics -- as well as Hispanics who say that they are "some other race" - work different jobs, earn different levels of pay and reside in segregated neighborhoods based on the shade of their skin, according to a report released today by the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research at the State University of New York in Albany.

The report, "How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans," follows the recent declaration by Census officials that Hispanics, who can be of any race, have become the nation's largest ethnic minority. Its authors and others who examine the U.S. Hispanic population said it was the first to look at how the group is divided along the color line.

Latinos who described themselves as white on the 2000 Census had the highest incomes and lowest rates of unemployment and poverty, and they tended to live near communities of non-Latino whites, said the report, which analyzed Census figures nationwide. Nearly 50 percent of Latinos who filed a Census report said they were white, according to the center's report.

The 2.7 percent of Latinos who described themselves as black, most of them from the Caribbean, had lower incomes and higher rates of poverty than the other groups -- despite having a higher level of education.

Among Latinos who described themselves as "some other race," earnings and levels of poverty and unemployment fell between black and white members of their ethnic group. About 47 percent of Latinos said on Census forms that they are "some other race," according to the report.

"The point of the report," said John R. Logan, the report's lead researcher, "is that if we take seriously the way people talk about their race, and the reality of their lives, we find that there are real distinctions between white and black Latinos and Hispanics who say they are some other race."

White Hispanics, the report said, have more economic power: Their median household income is \$39,900, about \$5,000 more than the median income of black Hispanic households and about \$2,500 more than Hispanics who say they are some other race.

But black Hispanics are better-educated: They average nearly 12 years of education, compared with 11 for white Hispanics and 10 for the "other race" group. Despite their education, black Hispanics have 12 percent unemployment, compared with 8 percent for white Hispanics and about 10 percent for Hispanics who say they are neither race.

Logan said black Hispanics are intermarrying with blacks at a rate much higher than white Hispanics with white non-Hispanics and Hispanics of some other race with any other ethnic or racial group.

Nearly half of children who are defined as black Hispanic have one parent who is black but not Hispanic. By comparison, a much smaller fraction of white Hispanic children -- 20 percent -- have a parent who is white but not Hispanic.

Hispanic children who are of some other race are the most likely of the three groups to have two parents who share that category. About 10 percent have a parent who is not Hispanic, and only 6 percent have a parent who is black Hispanic or white Hispanic.

In the average metropolitan neighborhood where white Hispanics live, there are hardly any residents who are black Hispanic, the study found. The same is true in neighborhoods populated by Hispanics who say they are neither white nor black.

— **Special Report** —
• [Census 2000](#)

 [E-Mail This Article](#)
 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)
 [Permission to Republish](#)
 [Subscribe to The Post](#)

Lisa Navarette, a spokeswoman for the National Council of La Raza, a Washington-based Latino civil rights organization and think tank, said the report shows "what we've been saying all along: that Latinos who come to the U.S. are affected by how Americans view race."

In their nations of origin, Latinos have far more racial categories than the United States has. Within families, siblings have widely varying racial characteristics, and mestizo or Indian heritage is prevalent in white and black families, further blurring the color line.

About 97 percent of all people who declared on the Census that they are "some other race" were Latino. They range from light-complexioned to dark.

Some Latino activists say it doesn't matter how they see themselves.

"Latinos who come here to the United States have to choose," said Navarette, who is Cuban and white. "There's the Cuban example, where recent white and black arrivals from Cuba who lived next to each other in their home country came to Miami. They had to choose between so-called white areas for those who were lighter, while black people wind up in black neighborhoods like Liberty City."

But Roberto Suro, director of the Pew Hispanic Center, was not willing to draw quick conclusions based on the new report. While it is important, he said, it is only a first step toward understanding how Hispanics mix racially.

"What they've done is interesting work, but there's a ton of questions that you have to ask," Suro said. "They've come up with a very definitive statement: Race counts. But it doesn't count for Hispanics the way it does other Americans. If they did this 100 years ago, you would find that whites of Italian descent and whites of Irish descent lived in clusters. Was it their race or was it their nationality?"

Suro believes that Hispanics might separate themselves by nationality rather than skin color. He said the largest segments of black Latinos -- Puerto Ricans and Dominicans -- are concentrated in different areas in New York.

The highest concentrations of white Hispanics are Cubans in Miami and Mexicans in San Antonio, the report found. Hispanics who said they are "some other race" are largely found in Texas, New York, California and, to some degree, Washington, D.C.

Yvette Modestin, a Boston emergency services director for a women's shelter who is Panamanian and black, said the reason for the separation is obvious. "It boils down to the old issue of race and color," she said. "White Latinos are able to adapt to the environment, based on whiteness. But black and brown Latinos have more obstacles."

© 2003 The Washington Post Company



News Home Page

- **Nation**
- National Security
- Science
- Courts
- Columns
- Search the States
- Special Reports
- Photo Galleries
- Live Online
- Nation Index
- World**
- Metro**

Business
Technology
Sports
Style
Education
Travel
Health
Real Estate
Home & Garden
Food
Live Online
Opinion
Weather
Weekly Sections
News Digest
Classifieds
Print Edition
Archives
Site Index
Help / Feedback

Toolbox
[On the Web](#)
[Census Information](#)
[Federal Crime Data](#)
[Economy by Region](#)
[Stateline.org](#)