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Issue Brief: Latinos and Social Welfare

Key Words:

Food Stamps, Medicaid, Unemployment Rate, Latino, Undocumented, Poverty

Description:

Social welfare is the minimum standard of living for a citizen in the United States. Latinos are the fastest-growing population in the U.S. and government safety nets, like social welfare, are in place so that in tough economic times, citizens do not fall into poverty. The Latino-American population receives higher rates of welfare benefits; however, there is a much larger underlying problem as to why a significant portion of this community needs such benefits.

Key Points:

- 15.7% of welfare recipients are Latino
- Latinos are 17% of the total U.S. population
- Income per capita for Latinos is half of Whites
- Poverty rate of Latino population is 23.5%
- 24.3% of Latinos lacked health insurance

Issue Brief:

According to the U.S. Census, the Latino population in the United States is one of the fastest growing populations. (This data does not represent the number of Latinos who reside in the United States illegally; however, both documented and undocumented

Latinos rely on social welfare.) In the United States, the Latino poverty rate is greatly skewed toward Latino-Americans and African-Americans. As of 2011, only 10% of Whites were on welfare, the least of all races, next were Asians with 12.1%, 26.7% for Latinos, and finally Blacks with 27.5%. Although Blacks still have a slightly higher percentage than Latinos, the Latino population has been growing more and more rapidly through the years, and the percentage of Latinos on welfare is expected to increase. It is estimated that as of 2012, the United States was spending almost 950 billion on welfare programs. Food stamps are the largest means-tested welfare programs in the country with roughly 46 million Americans receiving food stamps each month.

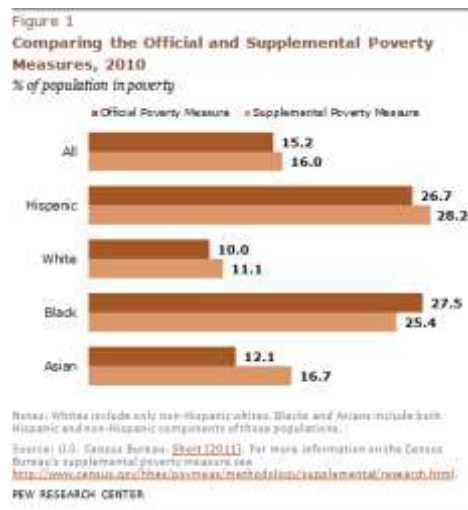


Table 1
U.S. Poverty Rate by Different Poverty Measures, 2010
% of population in poverty

	Official poverty measure	Supplemental poverty measure	Percentage point difference
All	15.2	16.0	0.8
Age			
Younger than 18	22.5	18.2	-4.3
18 to 64	13.7	15.2	1.6
65 and older	9.0	15.9	6.9
Race and Ethnicity			
Hispanic	26.7	28.2	1.5
White	10.0	11.1	1.0
Black	27.5	25.4	-2.1
Asian	12.1	16.7	4.6
Nativity			
Native born	14.5	14.7	0.1
Foreign born	20.0	25.5	5.6
Naturalized citizen	11.4	16.8	5.5
Not a citizen	26.7	32.4	5.6
Residence			
Inside MSAs	15.0	16.6	1.7
Outside MSAs	16.6	12.8	-3.8

Notes: Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Blacks and Asians include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic components of those populations. MSA: Metropolitan Statistical Area. Percentage point differences may not sum to totals because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [Shart \(2011\)](http://www.census.gov/hhes/cpi/data/income/supplemental/). For more information on the Census Bureau's supplemental poverty measure see <http://www.census.gov/hhes/cpi/data/income/supplemental/research.html>.
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One of the main reasons as to why the Latino welfare rate is high is due to a high unemployment rate among Latinos and low incomes. This is troubling not only because many Latinos are unemployed, but also many that do aren't making enough to rise above the poverty line. As of 2013, the net worth of Latino households in the U.S. had fallen from \$16,000 in 2010 to \$13,700. Considering that the average net worth of a white household is much greater at \$141,900, this shows that it is not a coincidence but a systemic failure to provide for Latino-Americans. The Latino population does not just

originate from one or two other nations, but there is a vast ethnic diversity among Latino-Americans. Mexicans are the majority, followed by, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Colombians, and many other nations. It is difficult to accurately depict the struggles of the Latino-American population when in fact it is made up of a diverse group of people. It is also important to note that the Latino populations settle mainly in the Western and Southwestern regions of the United States. Los Angeles has the highest concentration of Latino-Americans in the United States, followed closely by New York and Texas.

There are many underlying factors that contribute to the Latino population struggling in the United States. One of the biggest problems that Latinos face is the language barrier and a low level of education. It is difficult for the rising numbers of the Latino population to advance themselves and become less reliant on the United States welfare system. Instead, the rising Latino population continues to become more strenuous on the American Welfare system. Mexico alone accounts for over 11 million immigrants as of 2013. Of this population of immigrants, 70 percent of that 11 million has integrated into the United States labor force. This data supports the idea that the Latino population, although large, is attempting to contribute to the U.S. labor force and become constructive citizens. However, they are already at a disadvantage because of a system of safety nets that is struggling to support them. Because of the large disparity of welfare distribution among Latinos compared to other races, more programs must be created that not only create, but foster education, careers not just jobs, and provide easier routes to citizenship or legal documentation. The welfare system must stop being used as a small means survival, but a system that provides solutions and stability.

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