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Issue Brief: Latino Immigration Status

Key Terms:

Latino, Hispanic, Immigration, Unauthorized Immigration, Latin America, Central America, Caribbean, Naturalized Citizen, Push or Pull Immigration

Summary:

This issue brief outlines the status of Latino Immigration by objectively delineating the fastest growing minority in the United States. The brief also includes the sentiments of US residents of Hispanic origin regarding immigration of their racial/ethnic group.

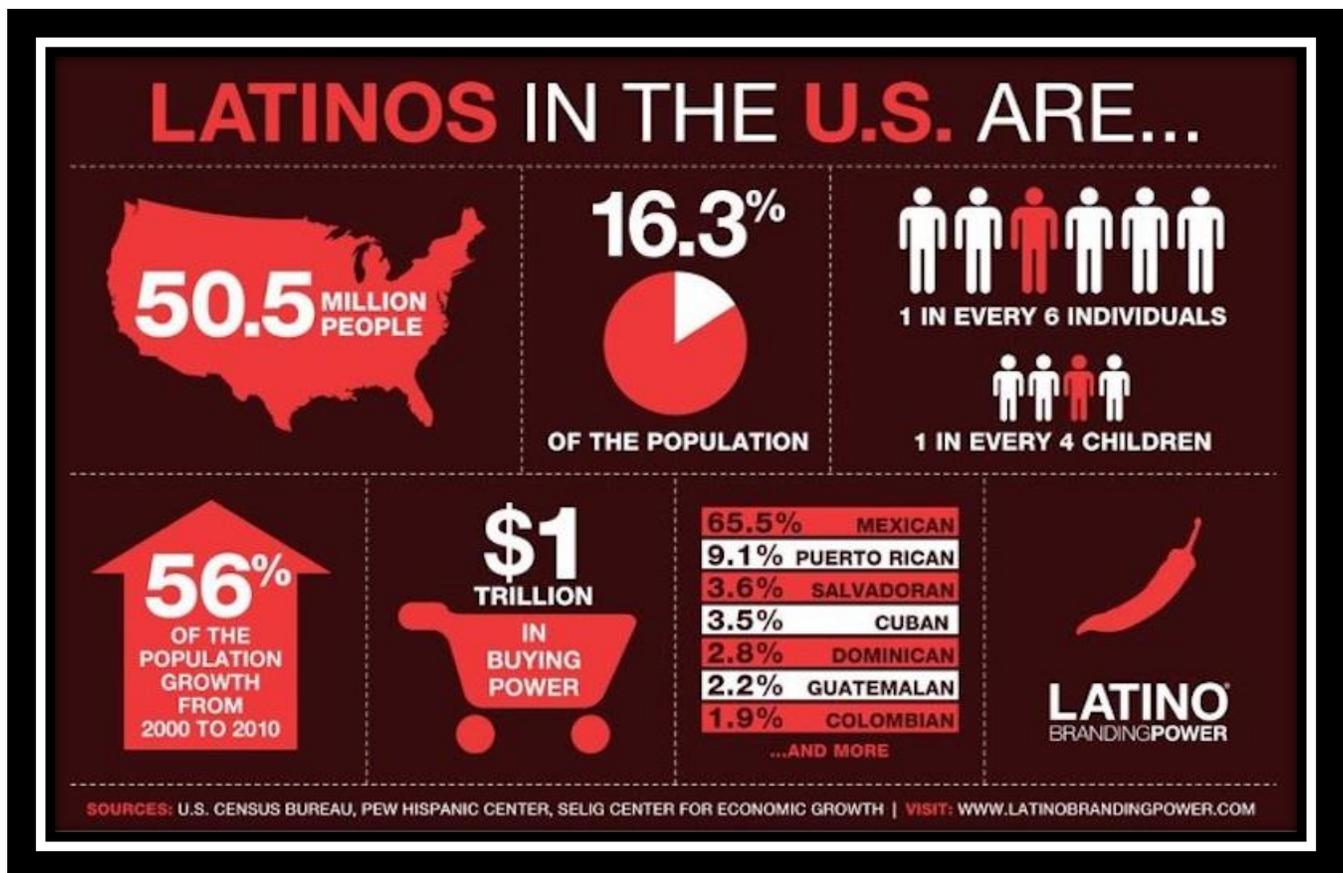
Key Points:

- Hispanic and Latino are defined differently by distinct sources. However, the U.S. Census Bureau does not draw distinctions between Latinos and Hispanics.
- 53% of US foreign born residents originate in Latin America making this population the fastest growing minority.
- There are around 11 million unauthorized immigrants residing in the United States, more than half of these individuals originate from Mexico.
- While a majority of Latino Residents of the U.S. agree that unauthorized immigration is immoral, most do not support discriminatory laws targeting such immigrants.

Latino Defined:

Merriam-Webster defines the noun Latino as one who is a native or inhabitant of Latin America or an individual of Latin-American origin residing in the United States. A slate.com article published during the appointment of Judge Sonia Sotomayor summarizes the distinction between being Hispanic and Latino. The article reads, "Hispanic is an English word that originally referred to people from Spain and eventually expanded to include the populations of

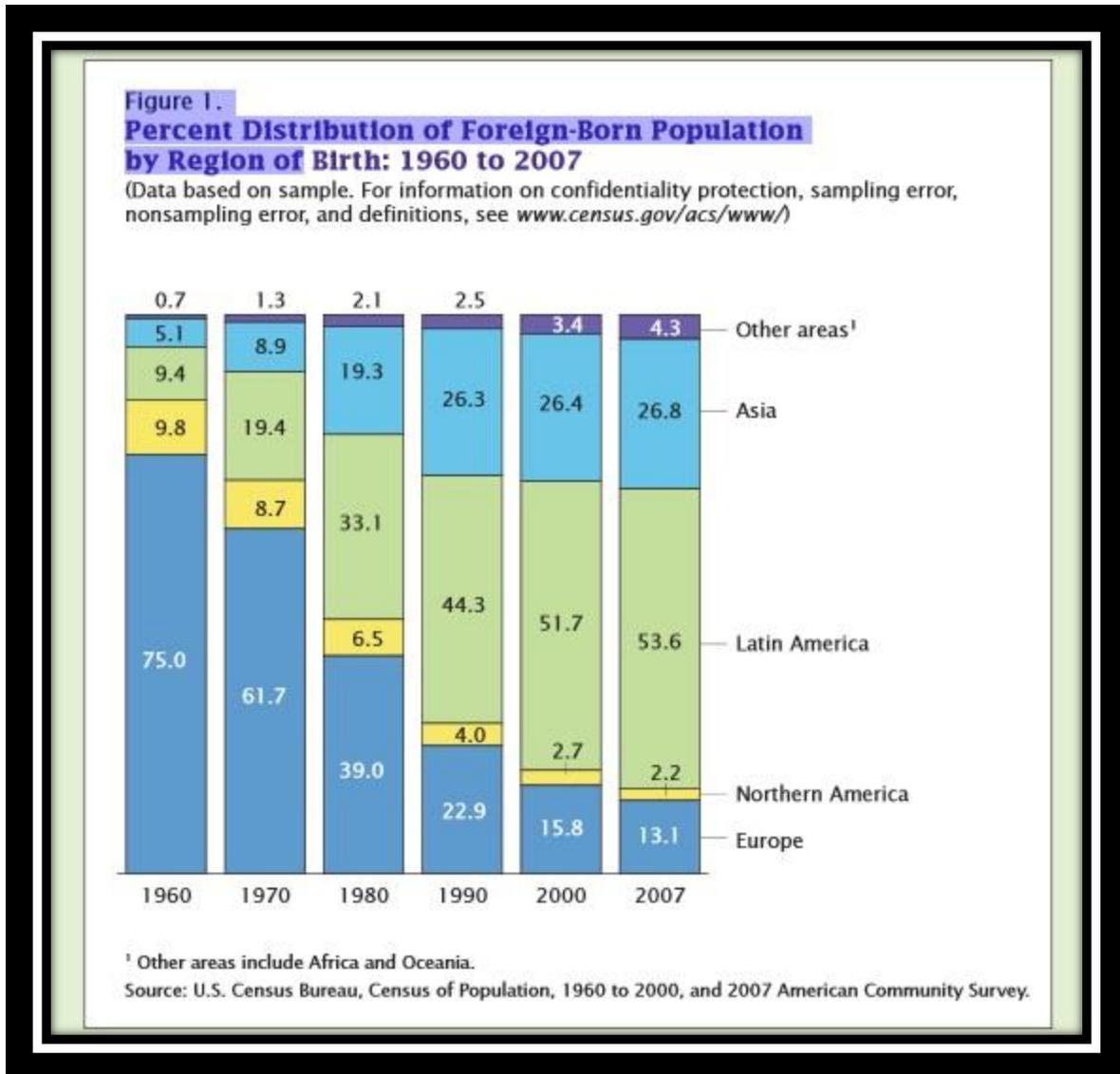
its colonies in South and Central America.” In contrast, the piece explains, “*Latino* is a Spanish word [...] that refers to people with roots in Latin America and generally excludes the Iberian Peninsula” (slate.com). Nevertheless, the U.S. Census Bureau does not make a distinction between the terms Hispanic and Latino. It delineates Hispanics and Latinos as persons who trace their origin or ancestry to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish-speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures (census.gov). For the purposes of this brief, the words Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably. There is no point of contention when it comes to the fact that the Latino/Hispanic population is the largest and fastest growing minority in the United States.



Hispanic Immigration:

The 2010 Census results counted 309.3 million people residing within the US, including the 40.0 million foreign born residents. Out of all foreign born residents, 53% or 21.2 million originated from Latin America. Of the immigrants from Latin America, 70% or almost 15 million were from Central America, while 18% were from the Caribbean and the remaining 13% were from South America. From the complete population from Latin America, Mexican immigrants accounted for 55%. Cuban immigrants, on the other hand, represented the largest faction of the Caribbean population at 30% while Colombian immigrants boasted the largest share of the foreign born persons from South America at 23% (census.gov).

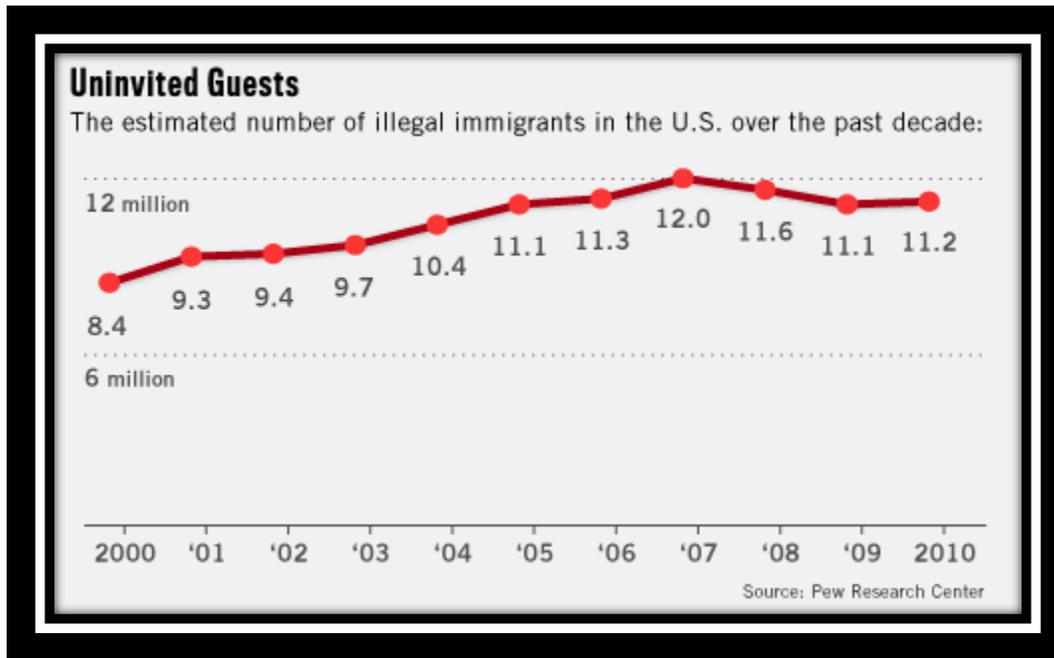
The Census data also displays the number of individuals from each region in Latin America who have gone through the process of naturalization in the United States. The varying percentages can be attributed to issues such as political and economic situations in different countries which result in either push or pull immigration. In 2010, 32% of the foreign-born population from Latin America was naturalized citizens. The foreign-born population from Central America had the lowest percentage naturalized of all regions at merely 24%. Of the individuals who originated in the Caribbean, 54% were naturalized citizens, while about 44% from South America were also naturalized citizens. The counties with the lowest number of such citizens were Mexico and Honduras. According to the census data, 23 % of the Mexican population and 21% of the Honduran population were naturalized citizens.



Unauthorized Immigration:

The Pew Hispanic Center approximates that there were 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2011. This number is less than the 12 million estimated to have been in the U.S. in 2007 due to a decrease in immigrants from Mexico, the main source of U.S. immigration. In 2010, 58% of unauthorized immigrants originated from Mexico. Also, during that year, 1 million of all unauthorized immigrant were minors. There were also 4.5 million U.S. born children whose parents were unauthorized. Census data from 2010 shows that nearly two-

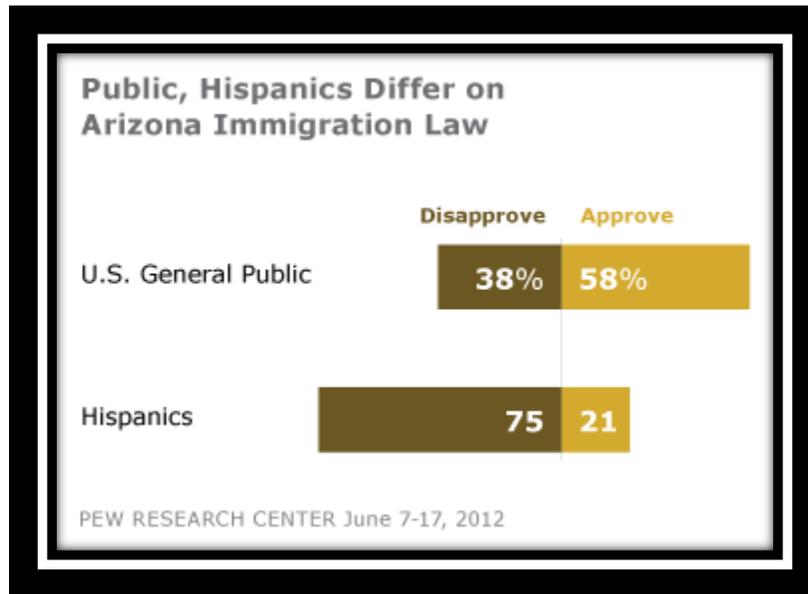
thirds of unauthorized immigrants have resided in the U.S. for at least 10 years and 46% of that population was the parents of minor children. Unauthorized immigrants comprised 25% of farm worker population.



Resident Latino Sentiments on Immigration :

Latinos residing in the United do not always feel the same way about immigration. A PEW study shows that 81% of this population believes that unauthorized immigration is wrong but that undocumented individuals should not be deported. Out of these individuals, 53% agree that unauthorized immigrants should be obligated to pay a fine. A larger percentage of Latinos, 86 % support a path to citizenship if undocumented immigrants pass background checks, pay a fine and have jobs. When it comes to the perceived impact that unauthorized immigrants have on the Hispanic population as a whole, Latinos are almost split in three factions. Twenty-nine percent of Hispanics think the impact has been positive, 31% say it's been negative, and 30% say it's made no difference. In the wake discriminatory laws such as Arizona's SB1070, these

numbers are very different from what they were even three years ago. Seventy-five percent of Latinos disapprove of such bills and almost an equal amount, 78%, say that the 14th amendment, which guarantees American citizenship to anyone born here, should not be challenged (PEW).



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