

Latinas* in the U.S.: Social Issues

While educational opportunities are expanding for Latinas, there is still a long way to go

- ◆ Among Latino students ages 5-17, 71% speak a language other than English at home—primarily Spanish.^{3,5} Also, among Latino students ages 5-17, 23% report difficulty speaking English.³
- ◆ In 2002, Latinas ages 18-24 were more likely not to have completed high school than White or Black young women (26%, 11%, 13% respectively).³ (See Figure 1.)
- ◆ In 2003, Latino high school students were underrepresented in advanced high school course work. Based on a recent report, 26% of Latinos completed advanced mathematics coursework compared to 30% for Black students and 45% for White students.⁷ (See also Figure 2.)
- ◆ In 2004, over half (58%) of the Latino population over the age of 25 had a high school diploma or more, whereas 85% of the general population over the age of 25 had a high school diploma or more.⁴
- ◆ In 2004, slightly more Latinas (28%) than Latinos (27%) had only a high school diploma. Latinas also were more likely than Latinos to have some level of higher education (31% vs. 29%).⁴ (See also Figure 3.)
- ◆ Among the Latino population 25 and older, Latinos with roots in Spain and South America were most likely to have at least a high school diploma (77% and 76%, respectively). Latinos with roots in Mexico and Central America were least likely to have a high school diploma (46% each).⁶
- ◆ Latinos with roots in Spain and South America were most likely to have at least a bachelor's degree (30% and 25%), and Latinos with roots in Mexico and Central America were least likely to complete higher education (7.5% and 9.5%).⁶

Figure 1: Percent of young women ages 18-24 who had not completed high school.³

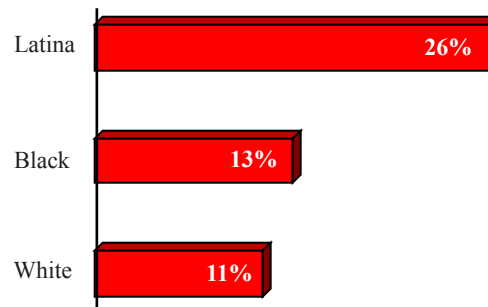


Figure 2: Percent of students taking advanced-level high school courses.⁷

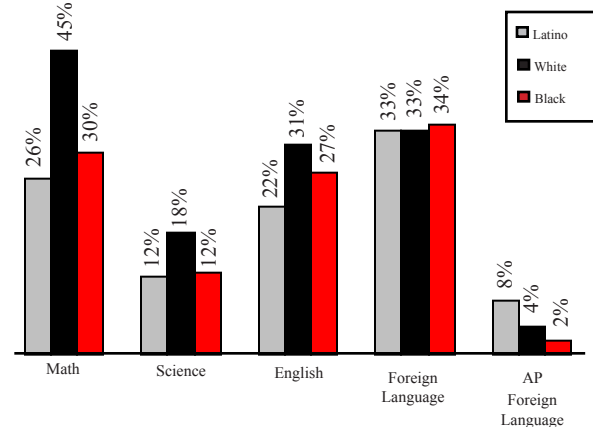
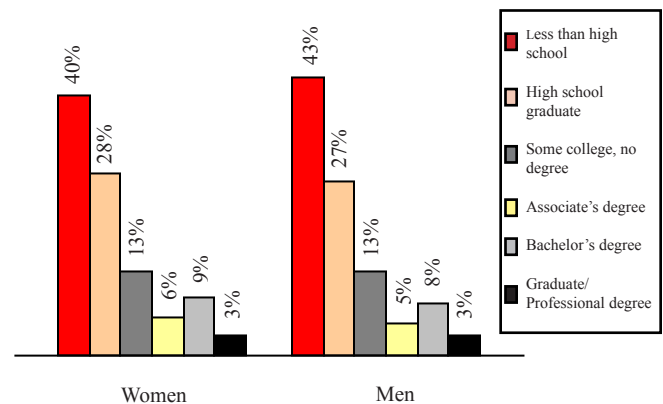


Figure 3: Educational attainment among Latino women and men age 25 and over, by sex.⁴



*Girls Incorporated® has chosen to adopt the U.S. Federal Government's definition of Latino. They define a "Hispanic or Latino as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Thus, Hispanics [or Latinos] may be any race."⁵ The government equates Hispanic and Latino for all government documents. We have chosen to use Latino/a consistently throughout the publications of the Girls Inc. Latina Initiative.

Latinas are in the workforce, but still underrepresented compared to Latinos and to men in the general population

- ◆ Nearly as many Latina women 16 and older were in the labor force in 2000 as in the general population for women (53% and 58%, respectively).⁶ Of all Latino men 16 and older, 69% were in the labor force compared to 71% of men in the general population.⁶
- ◆ A larger percentage of Latinas with roots in South America (59%) were working in the labor force in 2000 than any other Latina group. Latinas with roots in Cuba were the least likely among Latinas to work (49%).⁶
- ◆ More than one third of Latinas 16 and older are in sales or office jobs (35%).⁶ Latina women were more likely than Latino men to have managerial or professional jobs (23% vs. 15% respectively).⁶

Wage inequality also exists between Latino women and men

- ◆ In 1999, the median family income for all households in the U.S. was \$50,046, whereas the Latino household median income was \$34,397.5 Families with roots in Spain actually earned more than the national median (\$53,002), while families with roots in the Dominican Republic earned slightly more than half that (\$28,729).⁶ (See also Table 1.)
- ◆ The wage gap in earnings between Latino men and women was much smaller than the wage gap among all workers: men in the general U.S. population had a median income of \$41,194, while women made \$31,374. However, Latina women earned \$24,030, only \$2,719 less than Latino men.⁵

Latinos continue to be underrepresented in the media as subjects, journalists, and actors

- ◆ Stories of Latino interest are underrepresented in the news: in 2004, stories centrally and exclusively focused on Latinos constituted only 0.7% of the total news coverage on the major news networks.^{**} In the 10 year history of the *ñ Report*, coverage about Latinos has made up less than 1% of the total news coverage.²

- ◆ Almost two thirds (65%) of news stories about Latinos covered only four topics: immigration (34%), human-interest stories (12%), homeland security (10%), and elections and politics (9%).²
- ◆ Four of the six Latino journalists who covered Latino stories on the major news networks in 2004 were women.²
- ◆ Latinas represented only 6% of all roles on television or in theater/feature productions in 2004.¹ (See also Table 2.)

Table 1: Highest and lowest median income of Latinas ages 15 and over in the U.S. by country of origin. (Median income for all women: \$28,135).⁶

Highest median income (Latinas)	Lowest median income (Latinas)
Spain \$31,641	Dominican Republic \$20,874
Argentina \$30,983	Nicaragua \$20,337
Chile \$27,153	Honduras \$17,499
Uruguay \$27,490	Guatemala \$17,207
Panama \$27,490	El Salvador \$17,181

Table 2: Percentage of total roles for which Latinas were cast, by type of production and type of role.¹

	All Productions	Theatrical/Feature Productions	Television Productions
Lead Roles	5.7%	5.5%	5.7%
Supporting Roles	6.1%	5.4%	6.3%
Total	5.9%	5.4%	6%

^{**}The major news networks mentioned in the report are ABC, NBC, CNN, and CBS.



References

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For more information on Latinas, see these Girls Incorporated® Resource Lists and Fact Sheets:

- ◆ **Latinas in the U.S.: Demographics**
- ◆ **Latinas in the U.S.: Health and Other Issues**
- ◆ **Latina Resources for Girls**
- ◆ **Latina Resources for Parents and Families**
- ◆ **Latina Resources for Youth Workers**

In response to requests from affiliates and as a result of monitoring service trends, Girls Inc. is implementing an initiative to address the strengths and needs of Latinas ages 6 to 18, with the goals of increasing the number of Latina girls served by Girls Incorporated affiliates and increasing the sensitivity to Latinas in all Girls Inc. efforts.

Girls Incorporated® is a nonprofit organization in the United States and Canada that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status in the US since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls and their communities through research-based programs and advocacy that empower girls to reach their full potential and to understand, value, and assert their rights.

Girls Inc. programs focus on science, math, and technology, health and sexuality, economic and financial literacy, sports skills, leadership and advocacy, and media literacy for girls ages 6 to 18 throughout the United States and in Canada. While our goal is to reach all girls, we recognize that girls in at-risk communities have an even greater need for our programs. Of those we serve, 76 percent are girls of color and 70 percent come from families earning \$25,000 or less. More than half are from single-parent households, most of which are headed by women.

Girls Inc. in 2004 reached nearly 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational products. Guided by our vision of empowered girls and an equitable society, Girls Inc. is committed to reaching millions more girls through its programs and public education efforts.

The National Resource Center (NRC) is the organization's research, program development, national services, and training site. Research and evaluation conducted by the NRC provide the foundation for Girls Inc. programs. The NRC also responds to requests for information on girls' issues and distributes Girls Inc. publications.

Girls Inc. informs policy makers about girls' needs locally and nationally. The organization educates the media about critical issues facing girls. In addition, the organization teaches girls how to advocate for themselves and their communities, using their voices to promote positive change.

Girls Inc. leadership focuses on developing innovative ways to leverage our most valuable asset – acknowledged expertise as the nation's premiere program provider and advocate for girls. Our leaders include Janice L. Warne, Chair of the National Board; Joyce M. Roché, President and CEO; and Donna Brace Ogilvie, Distinguished Chair.

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