

THE LATINX POPULATION IN GREATER HOUSTON

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THE LATINX POPULATION IN GREATER HOUSTON

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present an analysis of the Latinx population in Greater Houston, a nine-county metropolitan area (Harris, Montgomery, Liberty, Chambers, Galveston, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Waller, and Austin counties). The report analyses the most recent data from the American Community Survey and the Bureau of Labor Statistics to help stakeholders gain a greater understanding of the socioeconomic and demographics of the Latino population.

The report is divided into six parts covering nativity and citizenship status, time spent in the U.S., education, work, and household economic characteristics and poverty status paying particular attention to the Latino population, both native-and-foreign born as well as to other racial groups.

The Latinx population comprises approximately 37% of the total population in the region, and while the non-Hispanic white population is aging, the Latino population is one of the youngest demographic groups in the region. A majority of U.S.-born Latinos are under the age of 15, while a majority of Latina and Latino immigrants are on average between 25 and 64 years of age, the most productive years in a person's work-cycle. Historically Greater Houston has been a hub receiving thousands of migrants coming from Latin America; however, in recent years, the number of migrants making Houston their home has been decreasing. In 2017 the proportion of Latinos that were foreign-born declined by three percentage points from 2010 (43% to 40%); moreover those Latinos that are coming to the region hold higher levels of education than their predecessors.

Although Latinos still lag in educational attainment in comparison to other demographic groups, there is a significant improvement in comparison to foreign-born Latinos. Latinos make up 35% of the employed population, and the foreign-born have low rates of unemployment relative to other groups and are the second group most likely to be self-employed after non-Hispanic whites. Latinx represent 62% of the labor force in construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, 47% of service occupations, and 45% of production and transportation occupations.

In Greater Houston, 58% of native-born Latinos and 53% of foreign-born Latinos own the home in which they live with median home values of \$120,000 and \$110,000, respectively. Latino households contribute close to \$56,000 in housing, healthcare, food, education, transportation, and entertainment expenditures, amounting to over \$ 980 million per year in these rubrics alone.

A very small proportion of Latino households receives income from public assistance (6%), while around 15% receive nutrition assistance in comparison to 21% of non-Hispanic black households and 19% of foreign-born Latinos usually due to the presence of U.S.-born children.

As the educational achievement, homeownership rates, and the incorporation of young Latinx into the labor market increases, Latino's contribution to the economic, social, and cultural life of the Greater Houston Region will only augment. There are still several challenges that lie ahead, however. Educational opportunities from middle school to higher education remain a top policy priority due to the growth of the Latino population in the region. A well-educated workforce is paramount to sustain the economic growth of the region as well as to allow all low-income families in the Greater Houston Region to improve their socioeconomic situation.

The Latinx¹ Immigrant Population in the Houston Metropolitan Area: 201-2017

The state of Texas is the second-largest recipient of international migrants in the U.S. and has the second-largest Latino population in the country, surpassed only by California. In 2017, 17% of the Texas population was born abroad, up from 16.4 in 2010 (Migration Policy Institute [MPI] n.d.; White et al. 2015). About two-thirds of these immigrants come from Latin America (MPI n.d.). Houston is the most diverse metropolitan area in the United States. Over the last several decades flows of immigrants from Latin America and Asia have contributed to the population growth and overall diversity of the Houston metropolitan area (Capps, Fix, and Nwosu 2015). In the first decade of the 2000s, the rate of immigration to the Houston metropolitan area was almost twice the national rate, and the group that saw the most significant growth is Latinx (Capps et al. 2015; Mejia 2017). Given the relevance of the Latinx population for the future of the region, it is vital to learn more about the make-up of the Latinx population in the past decade, as well as their potential to contribute to the economic future of Houston.

The main objective of this report is to present an analysis of the composition, educational attainment, employment, and socioeconomic status of the foreign-born² and native-born Latinx immigrant population in the Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)³ from 2010-2017. Besides, exploring changes over this period, this report also compares Houston Latinx to non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic African Americans⁴, and Asians⁵ in the region.⁶

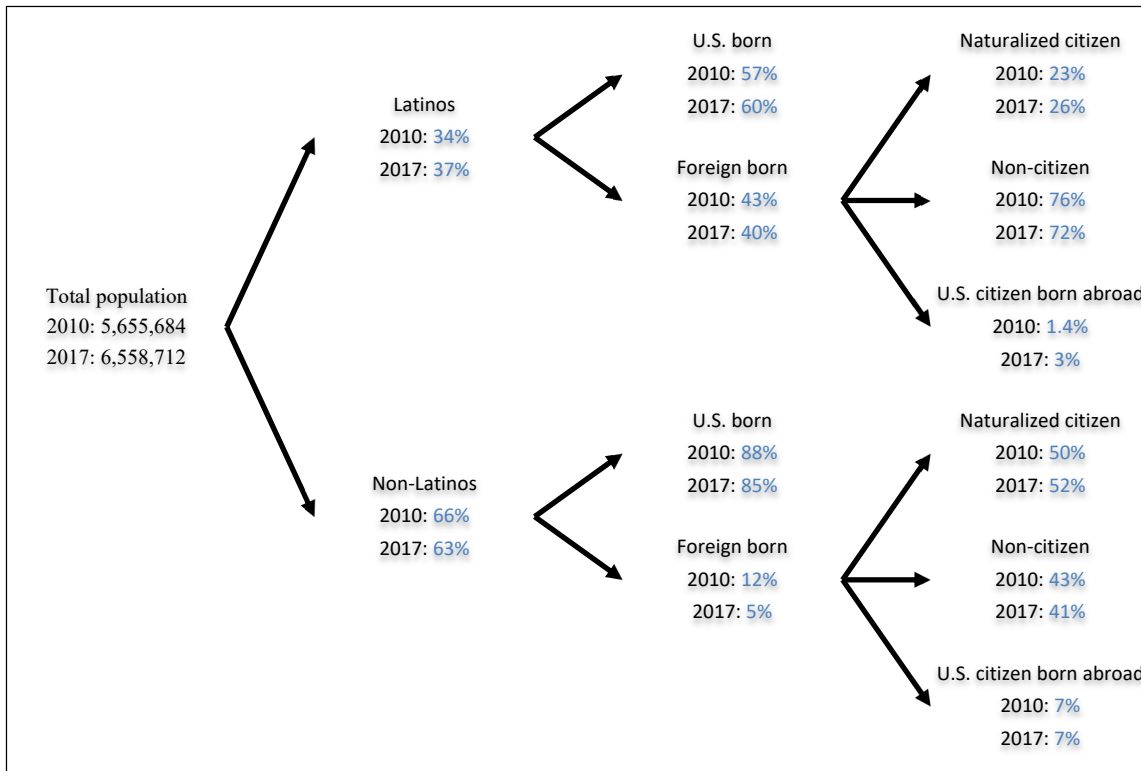
Population Counts by Nativity and Citizenship Status: 2010 to 2017

Figure 1 shows the counts and proportions of the Houston MSA population by origin, nativity status, and citizenship between 2010 and 2017. Within this period, the total population of Houston MSA grew by almost 16%. Overall, the composition of the Houston MSA population is about 38% non-Hispanic white, 17% non-Hispanic black, 22% are U.S.-born Latino, 15% are foreign-born Latino, 2% are U.S.-born Asians, and 5% are U.S.-born Asians (ACS 2013-2017).

In 2010, Latinos represented 34% of the population of Houston's MSA, and by 2017, this proportion increased to 37%. Figure 1 also shows that the proportion of the Latino population that is U.S.-born increased to 60% in 2017 from 57% in 2010, while the proportion of foreign-born Latinos decreased to 40%, of which around 72% are non-citizens, while 26% have naturalized. In contrast, 72% of Asians in Houston are foreign-born.⁷

In 2010 the top 5 countries of origin for Latino immigrants in Houston were Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Guatemala. In 2017 the same countries made up most of the Latino immigrant population in the Houston region, though Guatemala became the fourth country of origin and Colombia the fifth. In 2017 Mexicans made up 66% of foreign-born Latinos, down from 71% in 2010. In contrast, during the same period, the proportion of Salvadorans increased from 11% to 12%, Hondurans from four percent to 5.6% and Guatemalans from 2.8% to 3.6%

Figure 1: Houston Population - 2010-2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

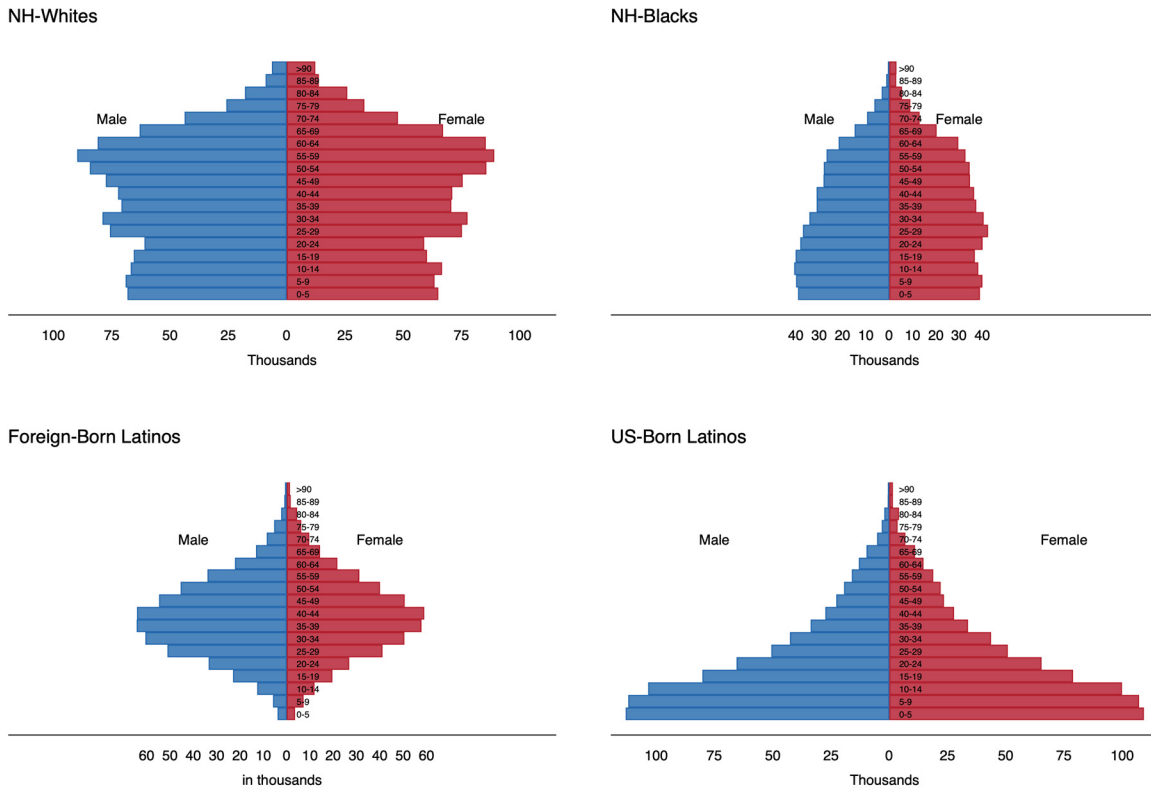
Age and Sex Distribution

Figures 2 and 3 compare the age and sex composition of Latinos in Houston’s MSA relative to other racial groups and nativity status.

Figure 2 depicts the population pyramids for non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, foreign-born Latinos, and U.S.-born Latinos. Each bar corresponds to a different 5-year age group, with the red bars representing women, and the blue bars representing men in thousands. The bars are presented at the same scale to demonstrate the relative size of these groups across age groups and sex categories.

When compared to the other groups, we can see that the foreign-born Latino population clusters around the most productive years, which is typical for immigrant populations who arrive in the country in search of economic opportunities. In contrast, most U.S.-born Latinos are under the age of 15 and likely the children of foreign-born immigrants. In contrast to U.S. born Latinos, the number of young people among both non-Hispanic whites and blacks is either decreasing or remaining stable. If this trend remains, the children of Latino immigrants will represent a significant proportion of Houston’s MSA labor force in the future.

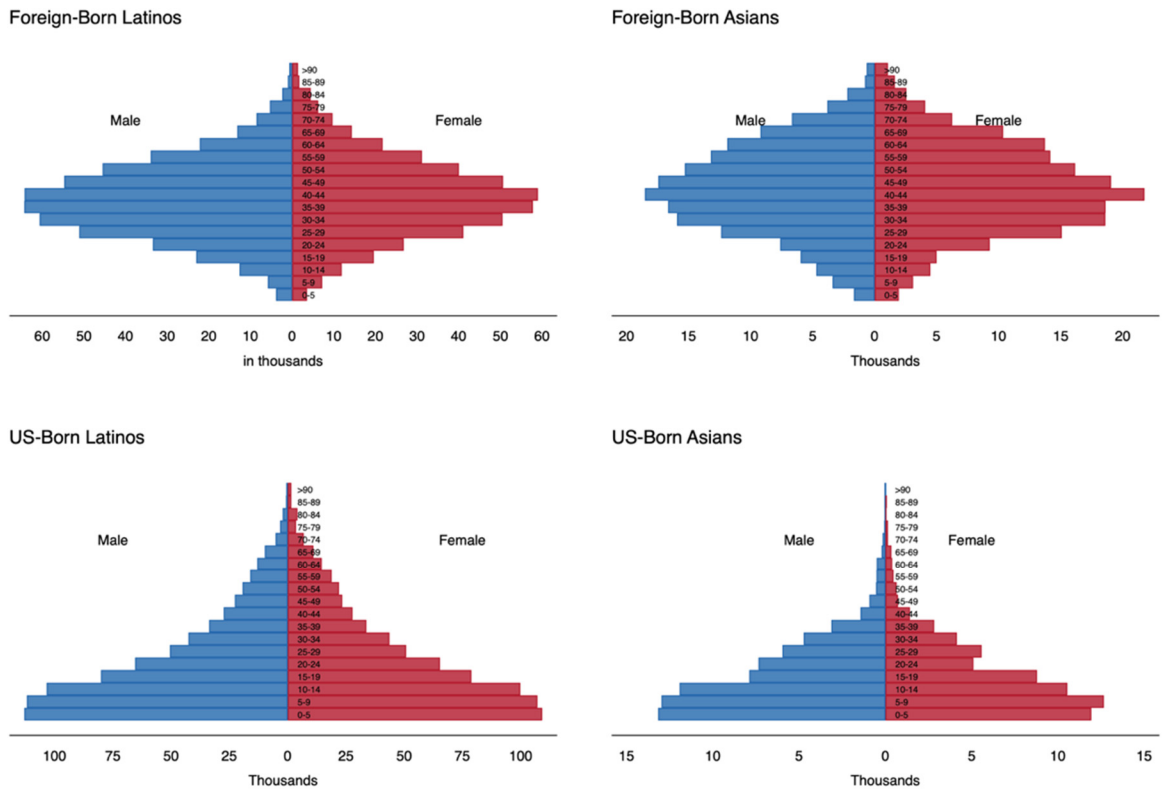
Figure 2: Age and Sex Distribution by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Figure 3 shows the population pyramids for Latinos and Asians by nativity status in the Houston MSA.⁸ It is worth noting that the Asian population of the Houston MSA is about one-fifth of the Latino population. In this graph, we can see that both of these groups follow the expected pattern for immigrant populations clustering in the most productive ages of the life cycle, although foreign-born Asians appear to have an older component. Also, the U.S.-born populations are predominantly young and show significant potential to contribute to the future make-up of the local labor market in the region.

Figure 3: Age and Sex Distribution for Latinx and Asians by Nativity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

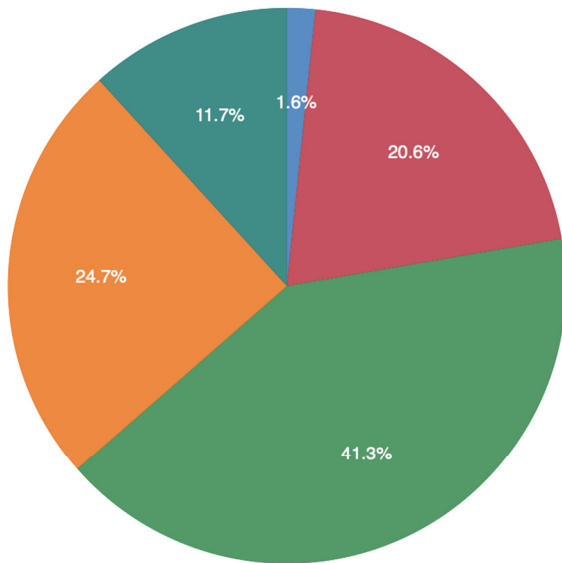
Time Spent in the U.S. and Citizenship Status

Figure 4 presents the distribution of the period of arrival and length of residence in the U.S. for foreign-born Latinos in the Houston MSA for 2017. Most Latino immigrants currently in the region arrived before 2001, with two-out-of-five arriving between 1987 and 2001. Moreover, about one-quarter came to the U.S. in the first decade of the twenty-first century, while only 12 percent arrived in the years after 2010. Around 14% of Latinos in Houston's MSA have lived in the country for less than five years, while more than half have been in the country for 15 years or longer, including almost 40%, who have lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

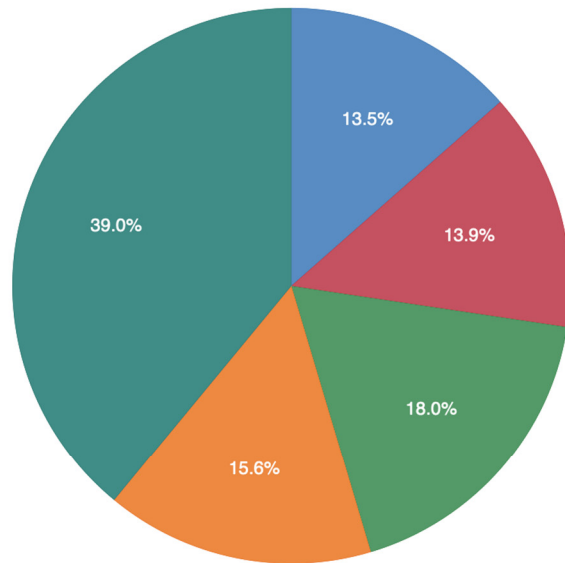
Time spent in the U.S. is also associated with increased assimilation/incorporation into mainstream society. Proof of assimilation/incorporation is highlighted by the increasing number of Latino immigrants who speak English over time (Figure 5). Although a third of recently arrived Latinos do not speak English, and only two-fifths of recent Latino immigrants speak English better than well, Latinos are likely to learn English as they spend more time in the country. Among those who have lived in the U.S. for more than ten years, almost half speak English well or better. Only 14% of Latinos who have lived in the U.S. longer than 20 years do not speak English, and more than 60% speak English at least well. The longer Latino immigrants live in the U.S., the larger the proportion who speak only English or speak it very well or as their only language.

Figure 4: Period of Arrival and Time Spent in the U.S. among Foreign-Born Latinx- 2017

Period of Arrival



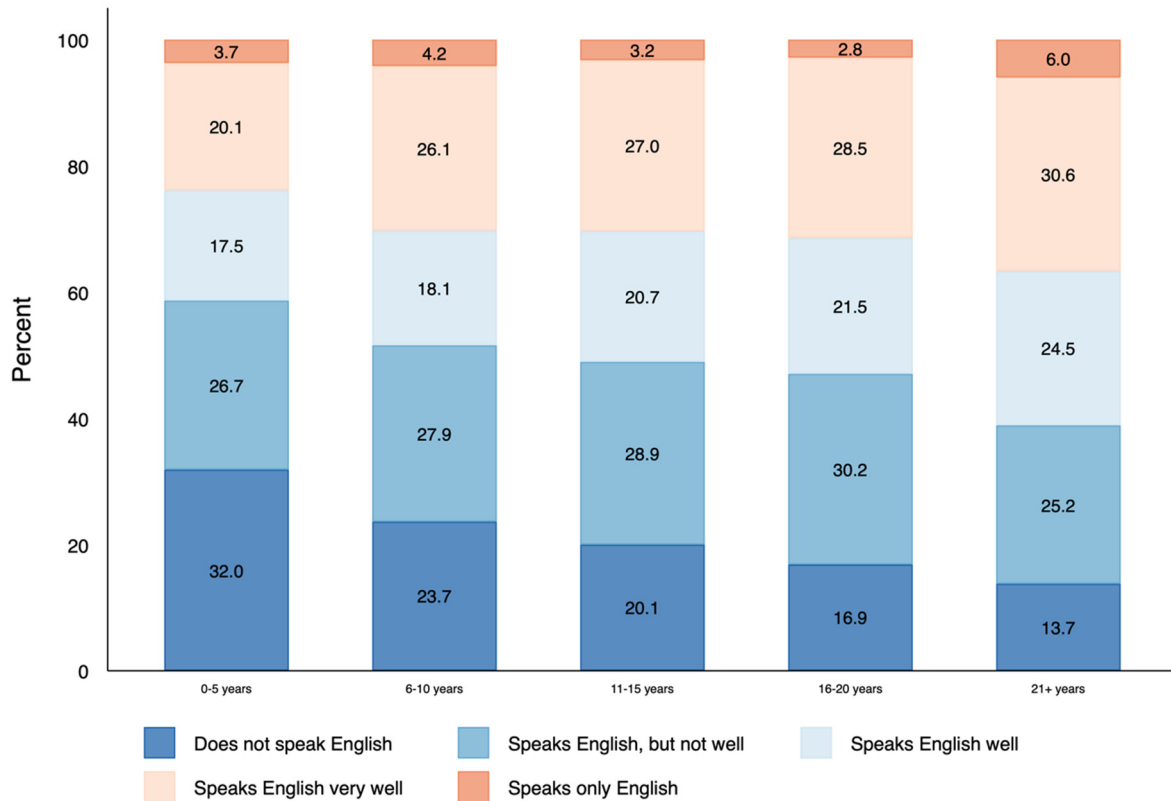
Length of Residence in the U.S.



■ Before 1965
 ■ 1965-1986
 ■ 1987-2001
 ■ 2002-2010
 ■ 2011-2017
 ■ 0-5 years
 ■ 6-10 years
 ■ 11-15 years
 ■ 16-20 years
 ■ 21+ years

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Figure 5: English Proficiency Among Foreign-Born Latinx - 2017



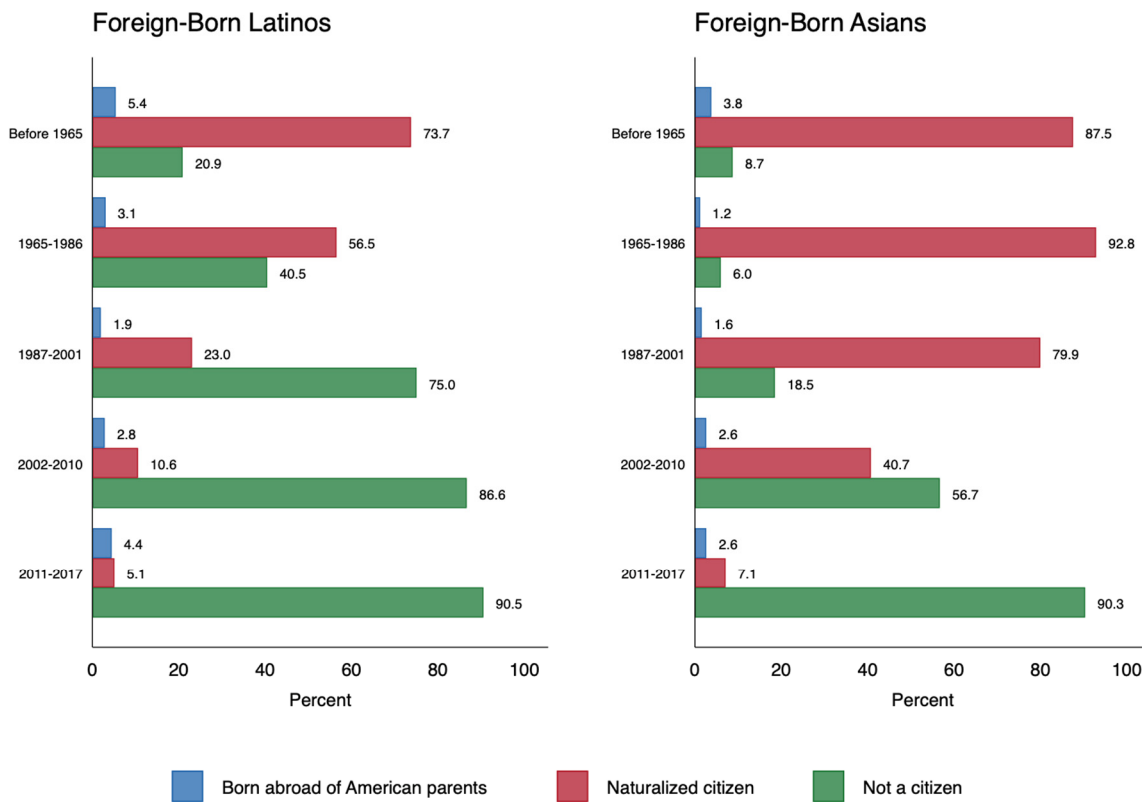
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Over time, many Latinos have become naturalized U.S. Citizens, among those who arrived in the country before 1965, 74% are U.S. citizens; however, this proportion diminishes among those who arrived more recently (Figure 6). Latinos who arrived in the U.S. after 1987 are mostly non-citizens, either Legal Permanent Residents or undocumented.

In contrast, naturalization rates among foreign-born Asians tend to be higher. The majority of Asian immigrants to the region who arrived in the country before 2001 are U.S. citizens, while 41% of those who arrived in the first decade of the 2000s are citizens. Though 90% of those who arrived after 2011 are not U.S. citizens, just as with Latinos.

An explanation for the low rates of naturalization among Latinos is due to in addition to immigrant status barriers, Latino immigrants who are Legal Permanent Residents face additional barriers to naturalization that include lack of access to legal assistance and preparation for citizenship exams, as well as the costs associated with naturalization fees (Capps et al. 2015; Hainmueller et al. 2018). Promoting naturalization has a positive impact on cities; research finds that naturalization increases rates of homeownership, earnings, and tax revenue (Enchautegui and Giannarelli 2015).

**Figure 6: Citizenship Status by Period of Arrival in the U.S.
Foreign-Born Latinx and Asians - 2017**

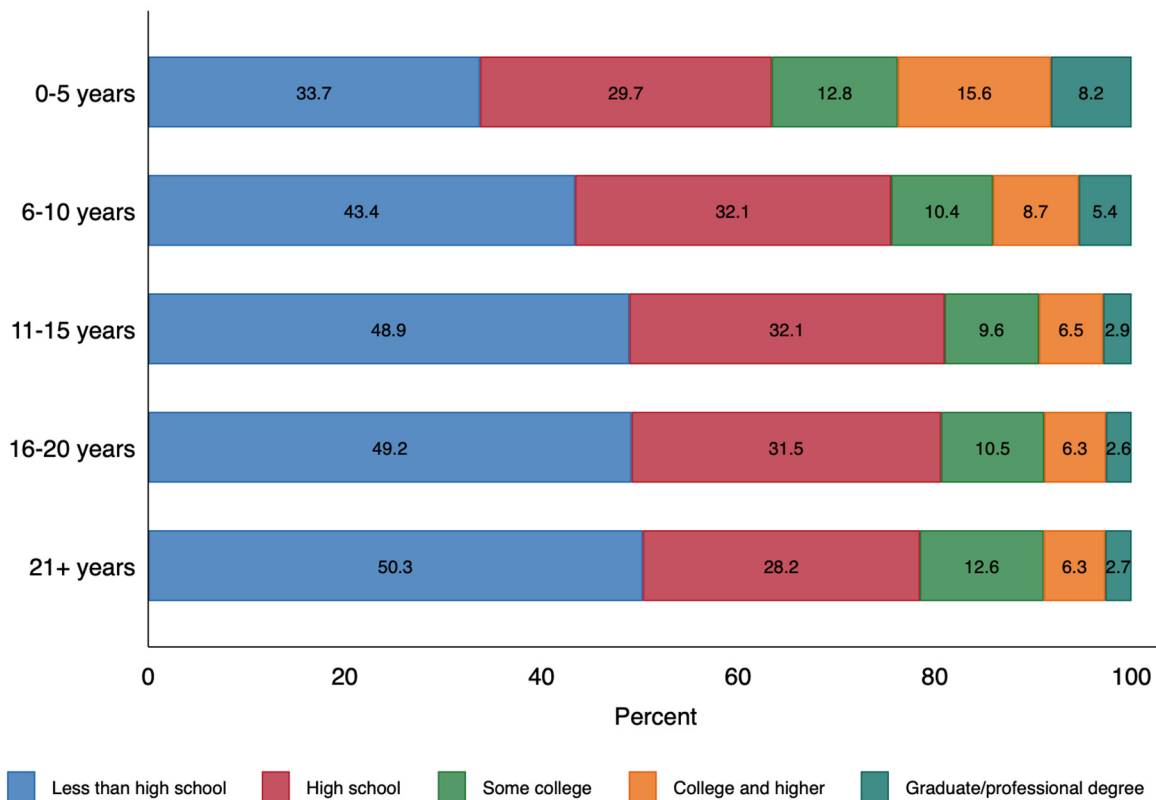


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Education

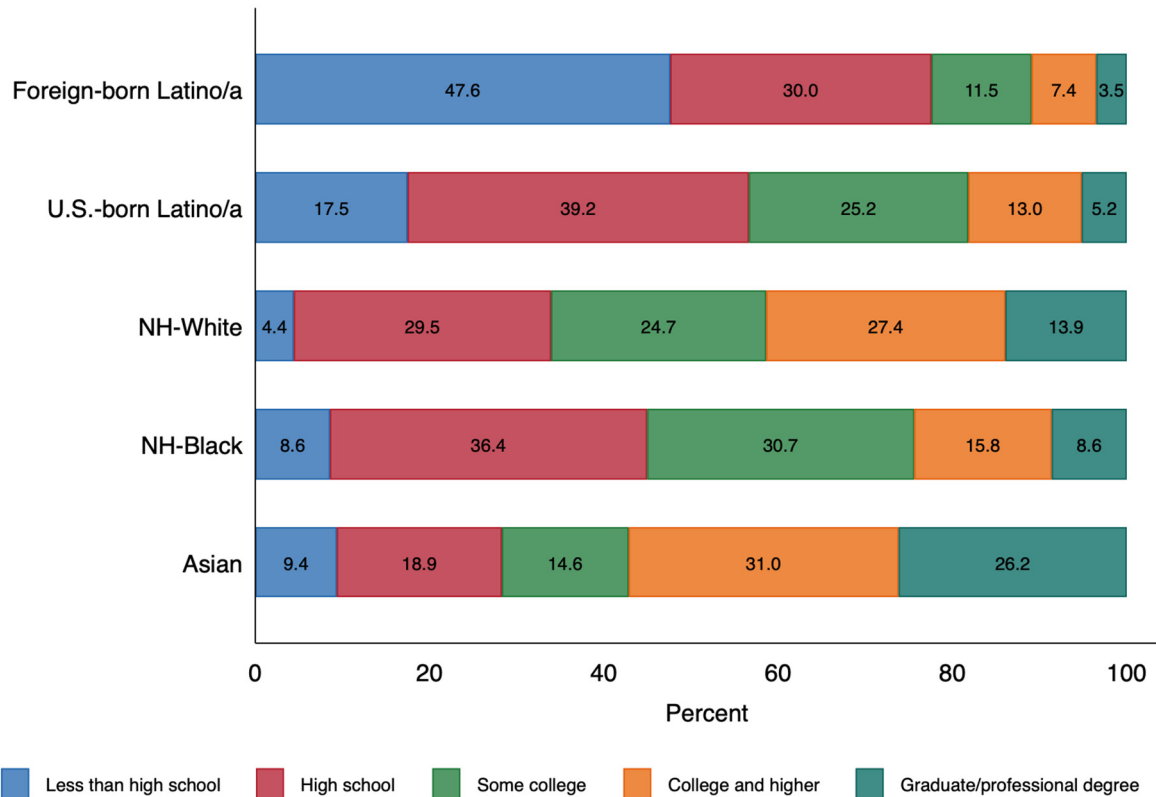
In this section, we explore how Latinos compare in terms of educational outcomes by nativity, length of residence in the U.S., and race and ethnicity.¹ Figure 7 shows the educational attainment of foreign-born Latino adults, by time spent living in the country. The main trend we observe is that more recently arrived Latino immigrants are more educated. Among those who have been in the U.S. for more than ten years, the combined proportion of Latinx immigrants with a high school education or less is almost 80%. In contrast, among recent arrivals, there is an increase in the proportion of immigrants with a college education or higher. The proportion of Latino immigrants with college degrees has almost doubled among those who arrived in the last five years, and the proportion of Latino immigrants with graduate and professional degrees has also grown over time. This is an important finding that underscores that the Houston's region economy is attracting more highly qualified immigrants over time. A greater number of immigrants with higher education increases the availability of highly skilled workers in the local labor market, which makes Houston an attractive city for industries that require a more educated workforce.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment of Foreign-Born Latino Adults by Length of Residence in the U.S. - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Figure 8: Educational Attainment of Adults by Race and Ethnicity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

When comparing Latinos to other ethnic and racial groups, we see significant contrasts; foreign-born Latinos are among the least educated in the population, though, in contrast, U.S.-born Latinos have significantly improved their educational attainment. Overall, Asians, followed by non-Hispanic Whites, are the most educated groups in the population (Figure 8). The increase in the educational attainment of U.S.-born Latinos relative to their foreign-born counterparts is a good illustration of the potential for socioeconomic assimilation and mobility of immigrants in the Houston region.

This, in tandem with an increase in the proportion of Latinos with higher education among recent immigrants, shows the potential for significant contributions of this group to the Greater Houston's economy. Latinos with higher education are more likely to occupy high skilled jobs, have higher earnings, and more significant contributions to the local economy over time (Orrenius and Zavodny 2013). To understand the prospects for the economic contribution of Latinxs in Houston, we also need to explore their integration into the local labor market.

Work

Generally, research on the impact of immigrants on the labor market agrees that immigrants integrate rapidly into the U.S. economy and have high rates of participation in the labor market (Orrenius and Zavodny 2013). The contribution of Latinos to the Greater Houston labor market is sizeable. Foreign-born Latinos represent close to 15% of the total population in the region, but they represent almost 20% of the working-age population and the employed population. All Latinos, regardless of nativity, represent approximately 36% of the working-age population in the city, and 35% of the population employed (Table 1).

Table 1: Latinx' Share of the Houston MSA Labor Market - 2017

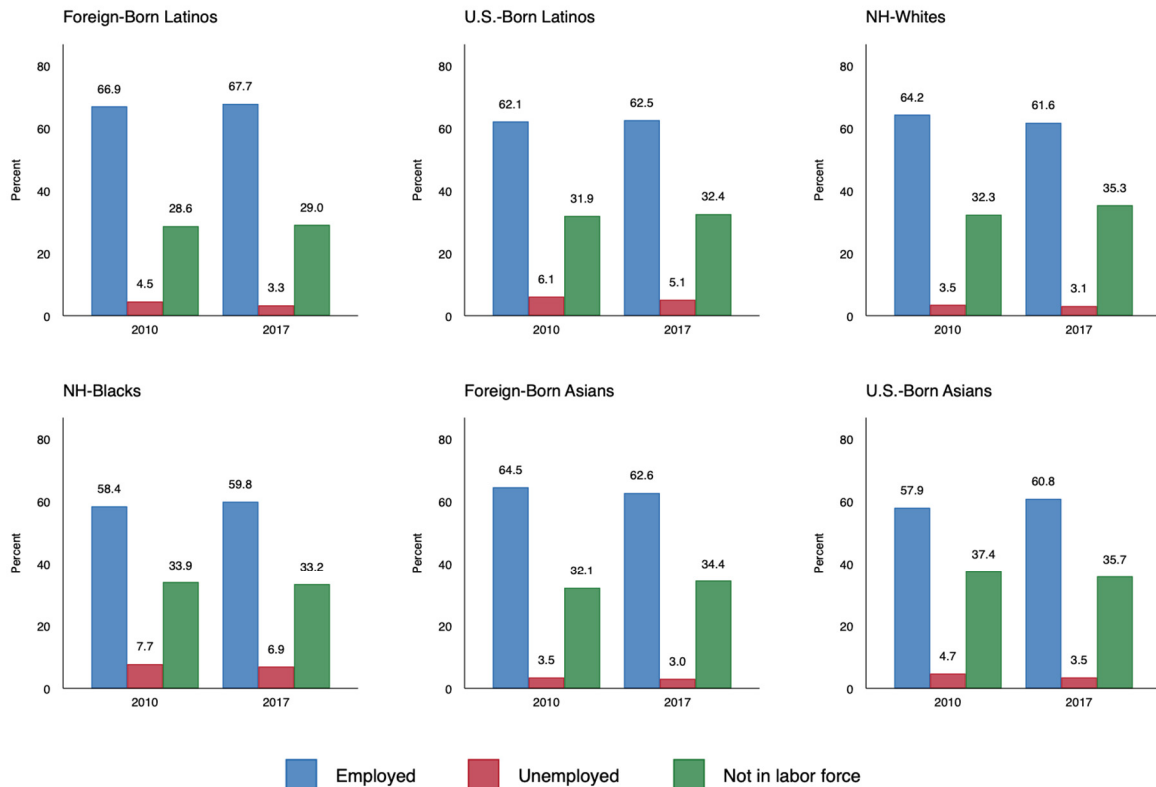
	<i>All Latinos</i>	<i>Foreign-born Latinos</i>
<i>Percent of the total population</i>	36.8%	14.8%
<i>Percent working age (16-64)</i>	36.1%	19.6%
<i>Percent employed</i>	35.0%	19.8%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Employment Status

Among adults in the sample, Foreign-born Latinos are most likely to be active in the labor market. Non-Hispanic Whites and foreign-born Asians are the least likely to be unemployed, followed by foreign-born Latinos. Non-Hispanic blacks in Houston have the highest levels of unemployment, though levels of unemployment have gone down between 2010 and 2017, particularly among Latinos (Figure 9). Compared to other groups, foreign-born Latinos have higher rates of employment, low rates of unemployment, and lower proportions out of the labor force.¹⁰ This combined with figures above on the large proportions of Latinos in working ages, as well as their significant share of the Houston Labor Market, illustrates the great potential and contribution of Latinos to the economy of the region.

Figure 9: Employment Status by Race and Ethnicity - 2017

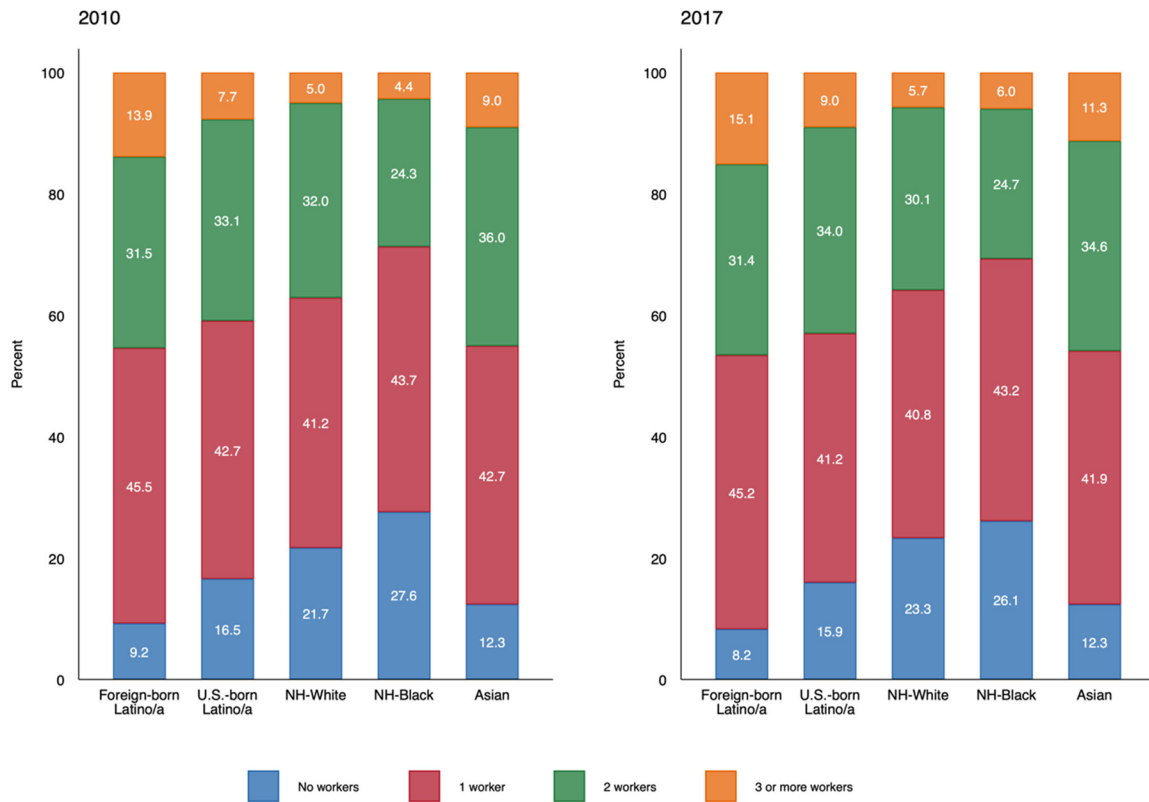


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA
 Note: Age 16 and older

Employment Status

The Number of workers in the household increased between 2010 and 2017. Foreign-born Latino households have the highest number of workers per household. Most households had at least one worker, with Asians and U.S.-born Latinos being the most likely to have two workers at home. Households with three or more workers in the family are more frequent among foreign-born Latinos (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Number of Workers in the Household by Race and Ethnicity
2010-2017



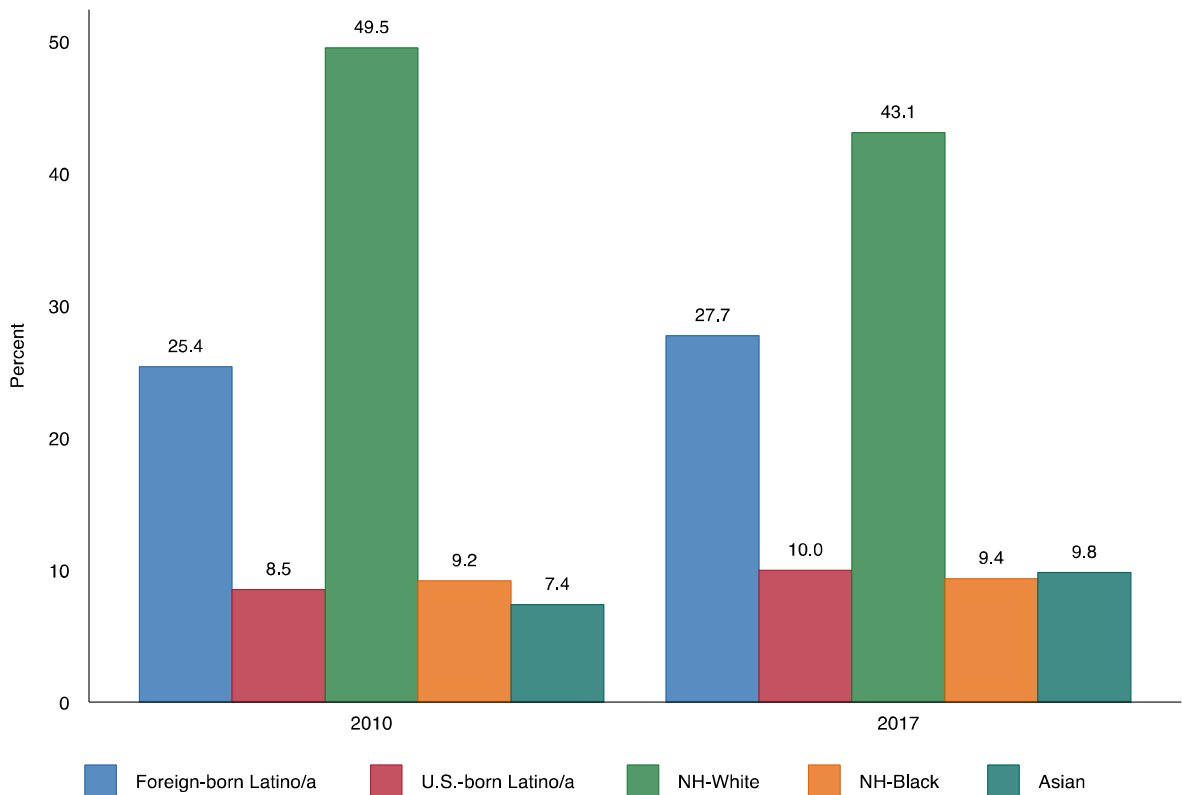
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship

About ten percent of workers in Houston identified as self-employed in 2010 and 2017. Most self-employed workers are non-Hispanic Whites, and the second group most likely to be self-employed are foreign-born Latinos. Between 2010 and 2017, the proportion of Latino workers who declared being self-employed increased, particularly among the foreign-born.

In 2010 a half of self-employed workers were non-Hispanic whites, while one quarter were foreign-born Latinos, in comparison, by 2017, 43% of self-employed workers self-identified as non-Hispanic white, and almost 28% were foreign-born Latinos, while 10% were U.S. born Latinos (Figure 11). These figures are essential to gauge the contributions of Latinx immigrants to the local economy and their impact on entrepreneurial activities.

Figure 11: Distribution of Race and Ethnicity Among Entrepreneurs



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA
Note: Age 16 and older who are self-employed

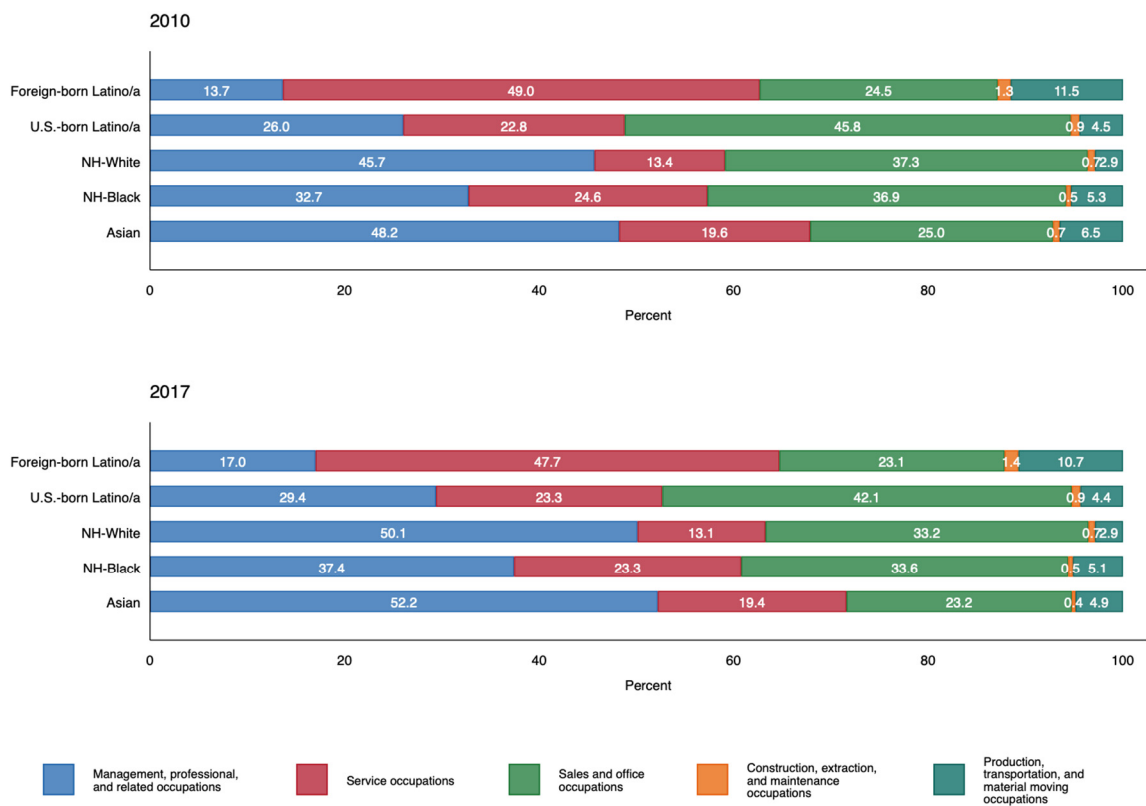
Occupation by Gender and Year

Figures 12 and 13 compare occupational categories by race, ethnicity, and nativity for 2010 and 2017 for men and women, respectively. Occupations are classified in five major groups based on the major groups in the American Community Survey classification (IPUMS-USA), these include, 1) managerial and professional occupations, 2) service occupations, 3) sales and office occupations, 4) construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, and 5) production and transportation occupations.

Among women, we see that foreign-born Latinas have the smallest proportion in professional and managerial occupations and are overrepresented in service sector occupations. On the other hand, U.S.-born Latinas are most likely to be working in sales and office occupations and have the second-lowest proportion in professional occupations. Non-Hispanic white and Asian women are overrepresented in professional and managerial occupations.

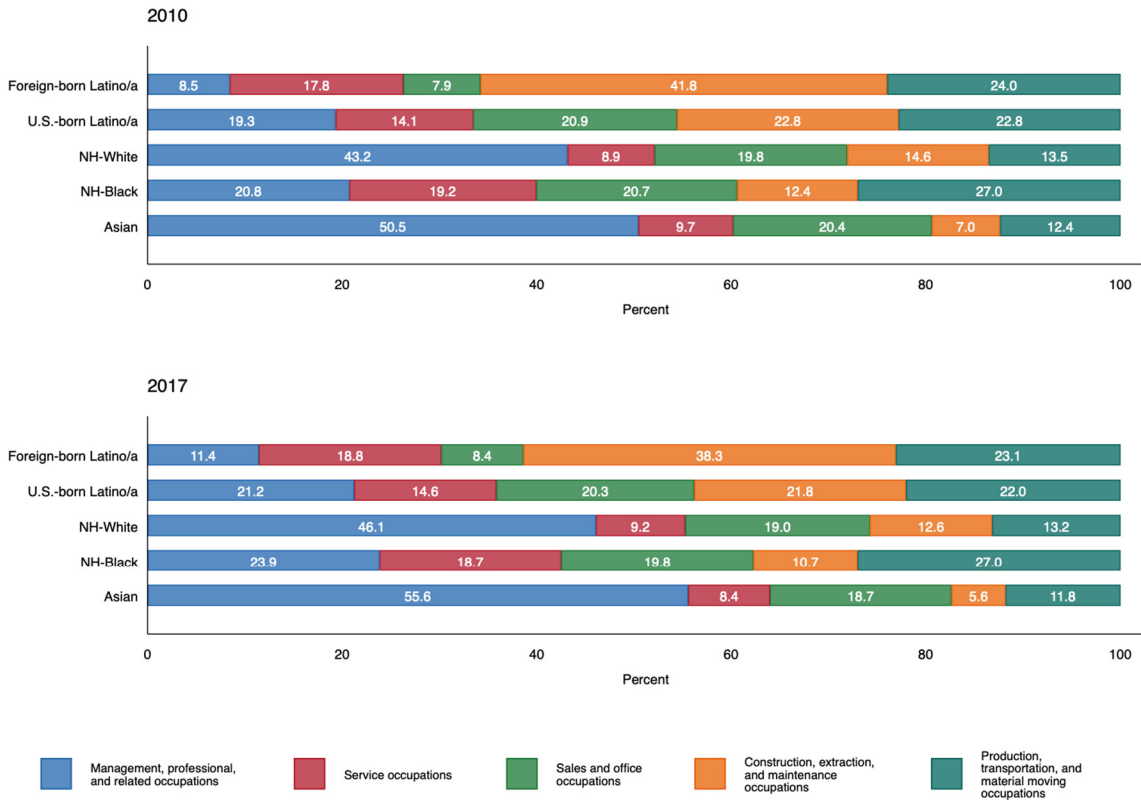
In contrast to their female counterparts, foreign-born Latino men are most likely to be in manual occupations, such as construction, maintenance, and production occupations. A smaller share of them is represented in professional and managerial occupations, though the share has increased in the 2010-2017 period. Asian and non-Hispanic white men are most likely to be represented in professional and managerial occupations in the Houston MSA, while non-Hispanic blacks and Latinos are clustered around manual and production jobs at a higher rate. Overall, the occupational status of Latinos has improved over time, and as the proportion of Latinos with higher levels of education increase, we may expect changes in the share among more skilled occupations.

Figure 12: Women’s Occupation by Race, Ethnicity, Nativity, and Year



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

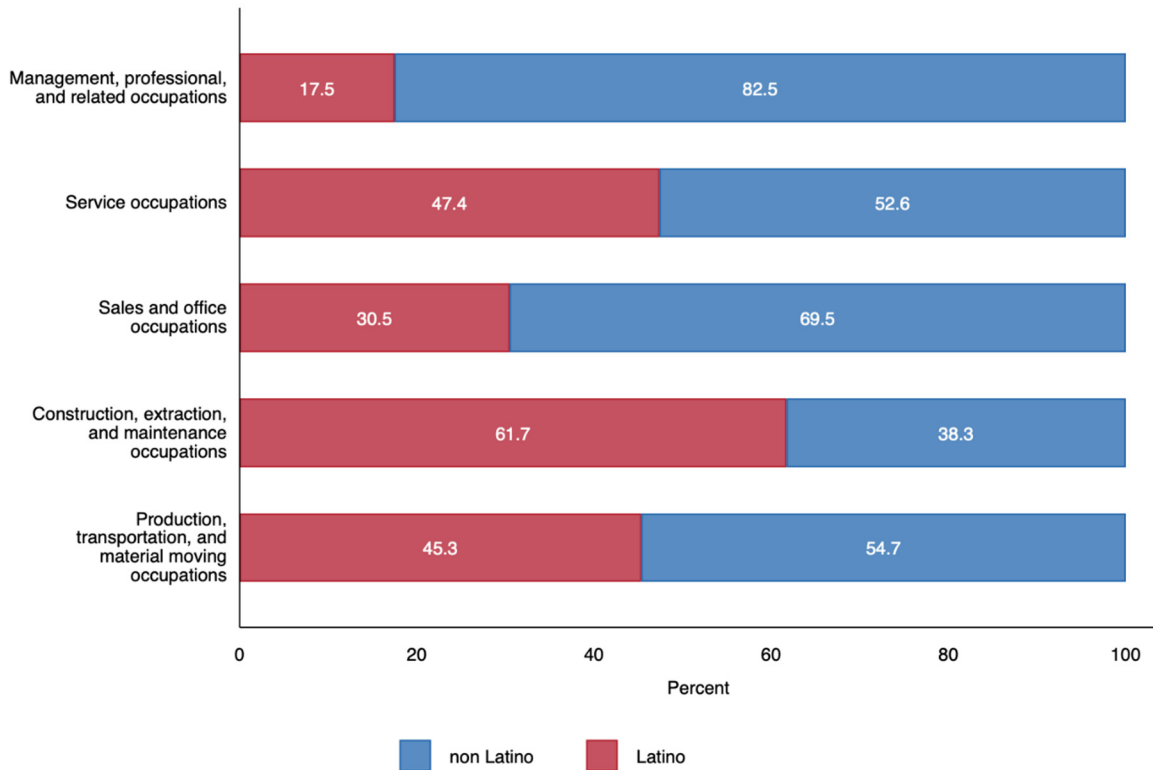
Figure 13: Men's Occupation by Race, Ethnicity, Nativity, and Year



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Latinos in the Houston MSA make up an important proportion of the labor force in some areas of the labor market. To show the relative contribution of Latinos to specific areas of the economy, Figure 14 presents the proportion of Latinos in each occupational category. Latinos represent 62% of the labor force in construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations. Followed by 47% in service occupations, and 45% in production and transportation occupations. The two categories where Latinos are less represented are sales and office occupations (30%), and management and professional occupations (18%).

Figure 14: Proportion of Latinos Across Occupational Categories - 2017



Household Income and Socioeconomic Status

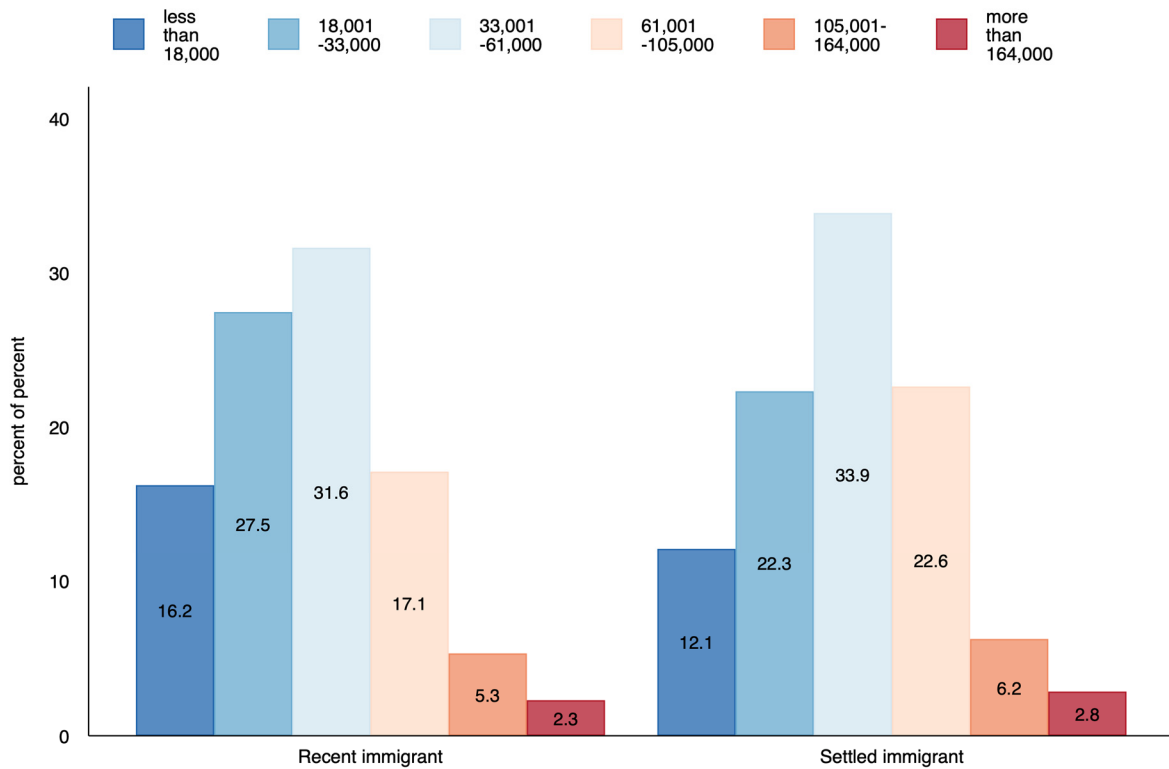
To compare the income of Latinos to other groups in Houston’s MSA, we present households’ income percentile distribution. The graphs below are labeled with the specific amount of dollars each category represents, and these are adjusted to represent constant dollars in 2010 and 2017, respectively.¹¹

Household Income among Recent and Settled Latinx Immigrants

Figures 15 and 16 show the distribution of income for foreign-born Latinos by whether they are recent immigrants who have been in the country up to 10 years or settled immigrants who have spent more than ten years in the U.S. Across both years, we see that most immigrants are in the middle category of income, but settled immigrants tend to have a higher share in higher income brackets, while recent immigrants tend to cluster more around lower-income categories.

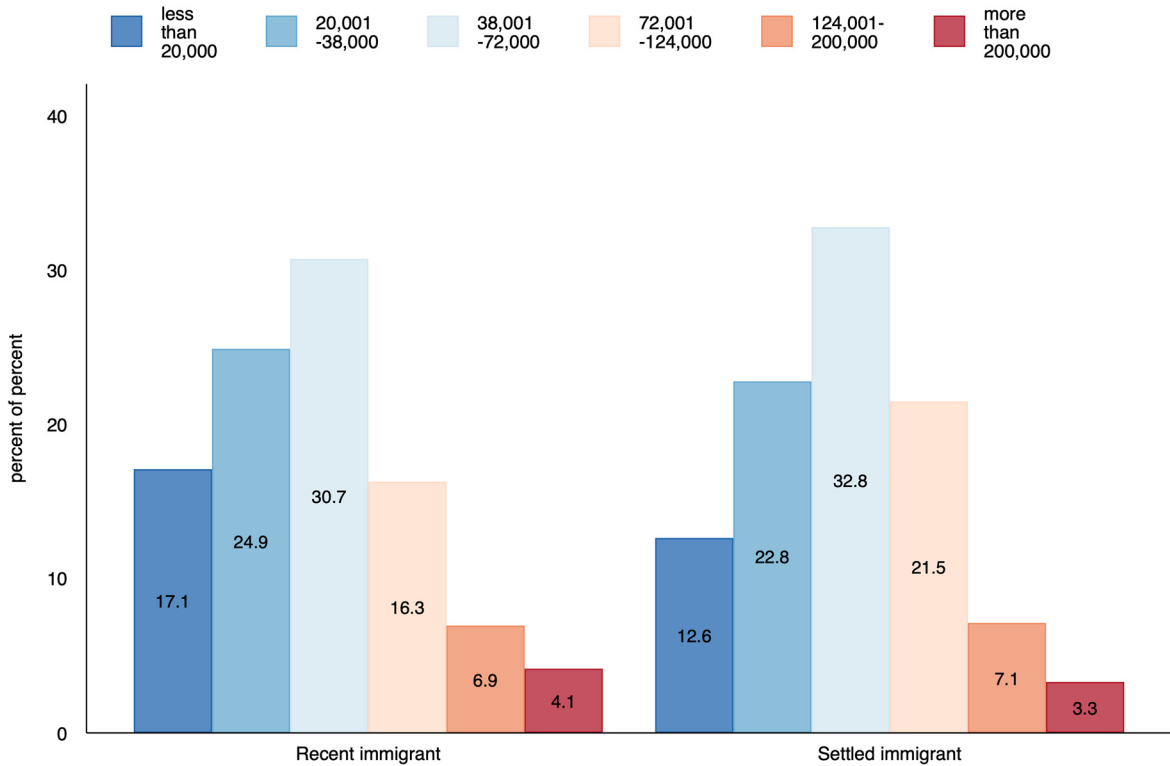
An interesting trend resulting from the data and consistent with the figures above, where in recent years, the proportion of Latinx immigrants with higher education increased is that in 2017, there is a slight increase in the percentage of recent immigrants in the top income category, which may be related to changes in the patterns of recent migration that may include more highly skilled immigrants and more business-oriented migration.

Figure 15: Household Income Distribution Among Settled and Recent Foreign-Born Latinx Immigrants - 2010



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010, IPUMS-USA
 Note: Settled immigrants have been in the U.S. for more than 10 years
 Adjusted to 2010 dollars

Figure 16: Household Income Distribution Among Settled and Recent Foreign-Born Latinx Immigrants - 2017

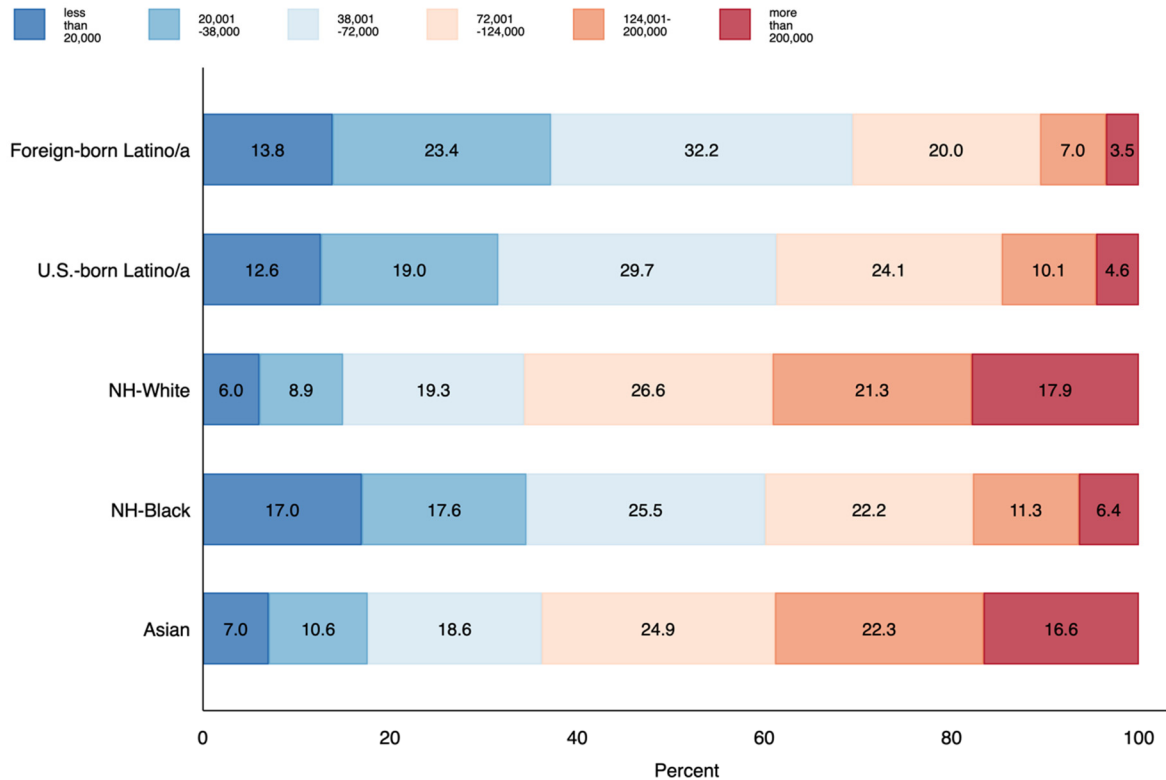


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2017, IPUMS-USA
 Note: Settled immigrants have been in the U.S. for more than 10 years
 Adjusted to 2017 dollars

Household Income and Socioeconomic Status

When we compare income across race and ethnic groups, important differences arise (Figure 17). Non-Hispanic whites and Asians are more likely to be in higher income brackets, particularly above the 75th and 90th percentiles, while higher proportions of Latinos and non-Hispanic blacks are represented in the bottom 10% of the income distribution. In general, U.S.-born Latinos follow a similar pattern than non-Hispanic blacks, whereas the income distribution of Asians is the most similar to that of non-Hispanic whites.

Figure 17: Household Income Distribution by Race and Ethnicity - 2017

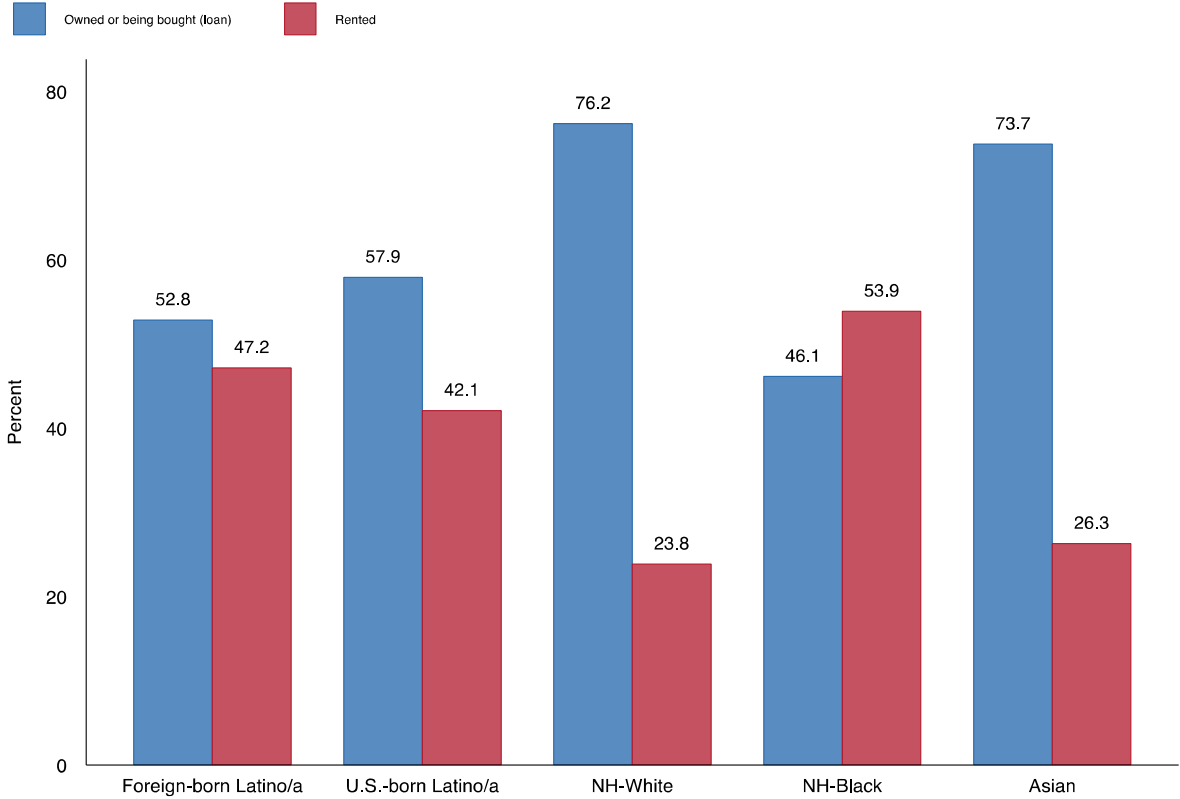


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Homeownership and Home Values

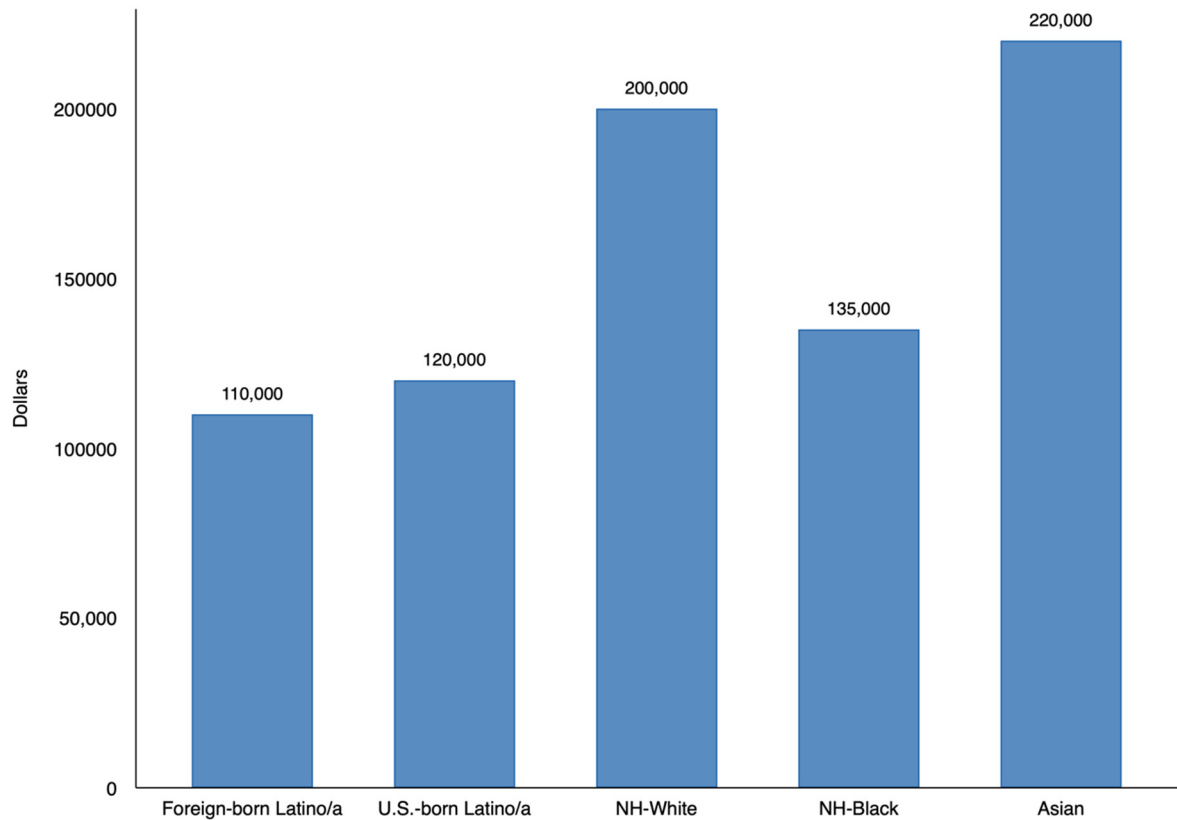
Figure 18 shows the proportion of homeownership by race, ethnicity, and nativity for 2017. We find that non-Hispanic whites and Asians are more likely to be homeowners, followed by 58% of U.S.-born Latinos, and 53% of foreign-born Latinos. The group with lower rates of homeownership are non-Hispanic blacks. When comparing the median home value across groups, we see that Asian and NH-white homeowners own the priciest homes. The median home value for Latinos ranges from 110,000 and 120,000 dollars for foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos, respectively. Although non-Hispanic blacks have lower rates of homeownership, the median value of their homes is higher than that of Latinos (Figure 19).

Figure 18: Proportion of Homeowners by Race and Ethnicity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Figure 19: Median Home Values by Race and Ethnicity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Household Expenditures

Hispanics' contribution to the region's economy is substantial. Latinx buying power in the region, that is, the total personal income available for spending, is over \$54 billion (Murillo, 2018). Estimating with great precision Hispanic's annual income and expenditures for the region, however, is difficult since there are no geographically bound representative surveys (Humphreys, 2018). The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) is perhaps the best tool available to produce expenditure estimates with some variability for Latino and non-Latino households of Greater Houston. The CE focus on a subset of household expenditures that represent the costs of goods and services acquired during the period of the survey (2013-2017 for this report) and excludes purchases related to business purposes. The major expenditure categories reported here are housing, healthcare, food, education, transportation, and entertainment.

Table 2 presents the mean annual household expenditures¹² for Latinos and non-Latino households.¹³ The mean total annual expenditure of Latinx households is close to \$56,000, non-Latinx spend almost \$13,000 more a year, on average. The largest expenditure category for both groups is housing, where Latinx households spend over \$17,000 a year on average, which is \$5,000 below the housing expenditure of non-Latinos.

Non-Latinx households outspend Latinx households in most categories, except for transportation and food consumption. The contribution of Latinx households, in this sample, to the Greater Houston economy is sizeable amounting to over \$980 million per year

Table 2: Mean Annual Household Expenditures by Type and Ethnicity

	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Non-Latinos</i>
<i>Total</i>	\$55,602.93	\$68,228.58
<i>Housing</i>	\$17,250.76	\$22,420.13
<i>Health care</i>	\$2,762.67	\$4,807.46
<i>Food</i>	\$9,844.95	\$9,392.66
<i>Education</i>	\$695.74	\$1,731.29
<i>Transportation</i>	\$13,285.67	\$12,426.41
<i>Entertainment</i>	\$1,696.60	\$1,805.19

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey 2013-2017, Houston MSA

Notes: Weighted data. Constant 2017 dollars.

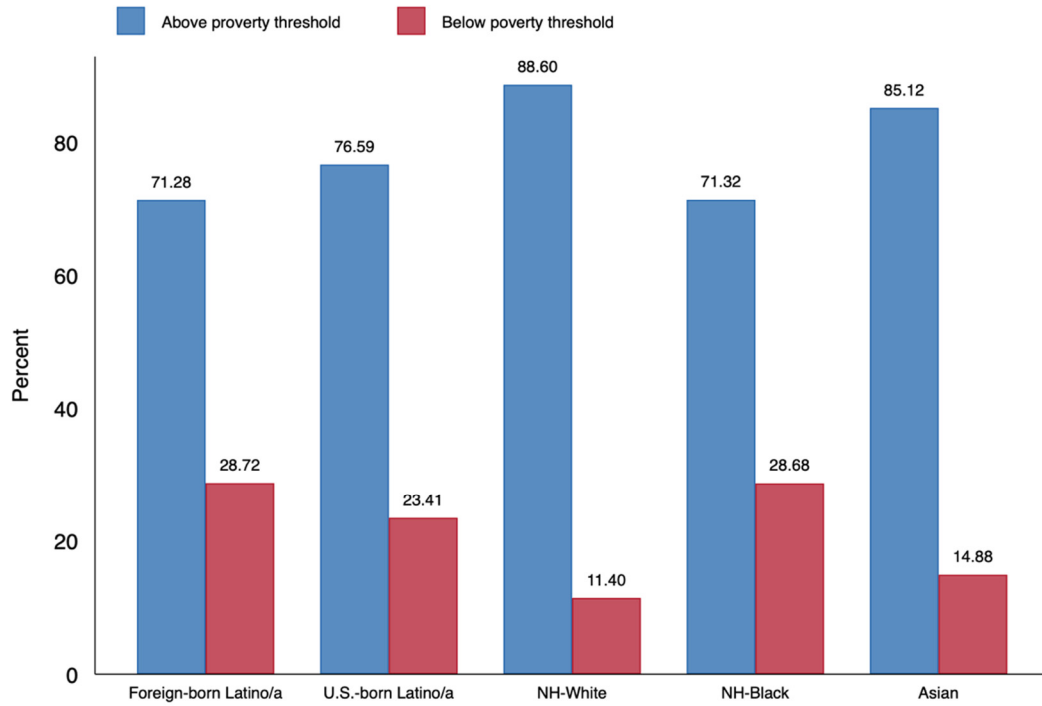
Poverty Status and Public Assistance

Households Living in Poverty

In this section, the report focuses on the rates of poverty in the Houston MSA by race and immigration status, as well as on public assistance and household composition.

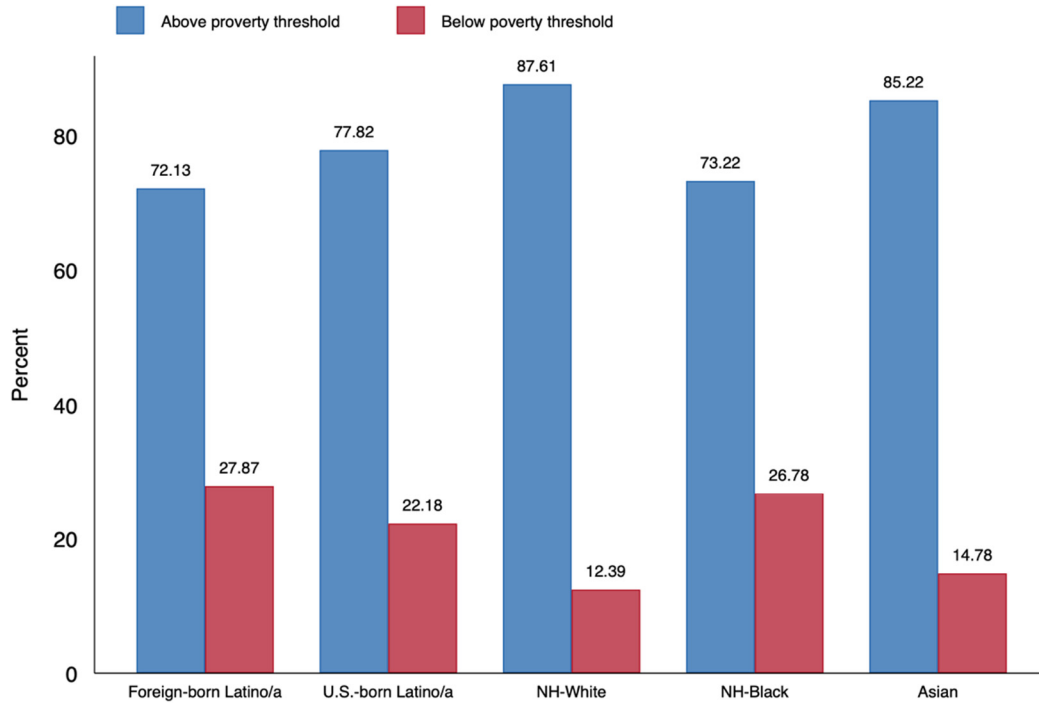
Between 2010 and 2017, there was a reduction in the proportion of households under the poverty threshold.¹⁴ The poverty threshold is estimated by using households' income and family structure information, here if household's income fall below 100% of the poverty threshold as estimated by IPUMS, it is considered to be below the poverty threshold, in other words, it is considered to live in poverty. Foreign-born Latino and non-Hispanic Black households experienced the highest proportion of poor households, followed by U.S.-born Latinos. Asians and non-Hispanic Whites had the lowest proportions of households living below the poverty threshold in the period 2010-2017 (Figures 20 and 21).

Figure 20: Households Living in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity - 2010



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010, IPUMS-USA

Figure 21: Households Living in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Households Receiving Public Assistance¹⁵

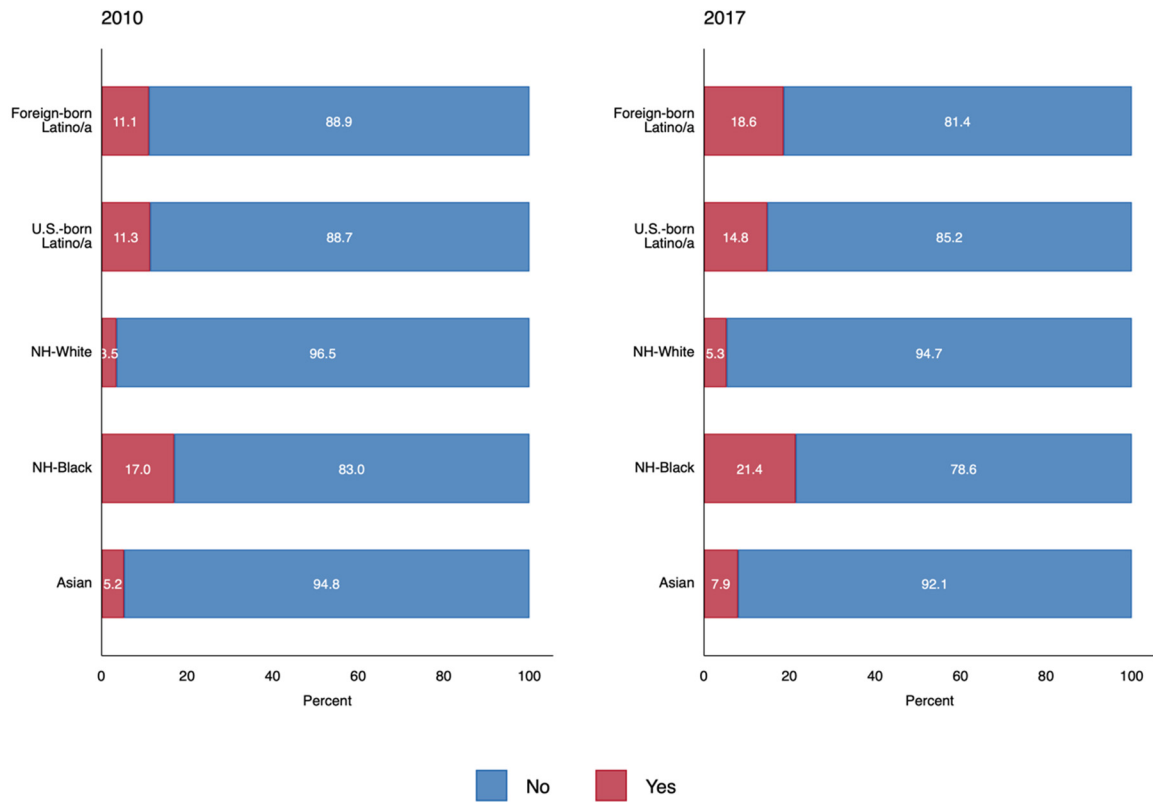
Figure 22 shows the proportion of households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)¹⁶ by race and ethnicity from 2010 to 2017. In 2010 non-Hispanic black households had the highest proportion of SNAP receipt (17%); about 11% of Latino households received assistance in 2010, and only 3.5% of non-Hispanic white households did. In 2017 we observed an increase in public assistance receipt, though non-Hispanic blacks maintain the largest share (21%), followed by foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos. Besides receiving benefits from SNAP, households can be eligible to receive income from other public assistance programs (e.g., SSI, TANF, AFDC, ADC).¹⁷ Figure 23 shows the percent of households receiving income from public assistance sources by race, ethnicity, and year. Non-Hispanic black households are the most likely to receive one or more of these sources of income. Households headed by foreign-born Latinos were the least likely to receive income from public assistance sources, only two percent in 2010 and three percent in 2017 did.

Five percent of U.S.-born Latino households in 2010 and six percent in 2017 received income from public assistance sources. Assistance receipt among immigrants is often related to lower-income and to the assistance they receive for U.S.-born children (Orrenius and Zavodny 2013).

Regarding the dollar amount of public assistance per household, Table 3 presents the mean income from public assistance received in the previous year by race and ethnicity. Throughout this period, we see that foreign-born Latino households not only have the lowest prevalence of public assistance income receipts but that those who do, receive the lowest amount across groups. On average, the largest amount received per household goes to non-Hispanic white households, followed by non-Hispanic black households.

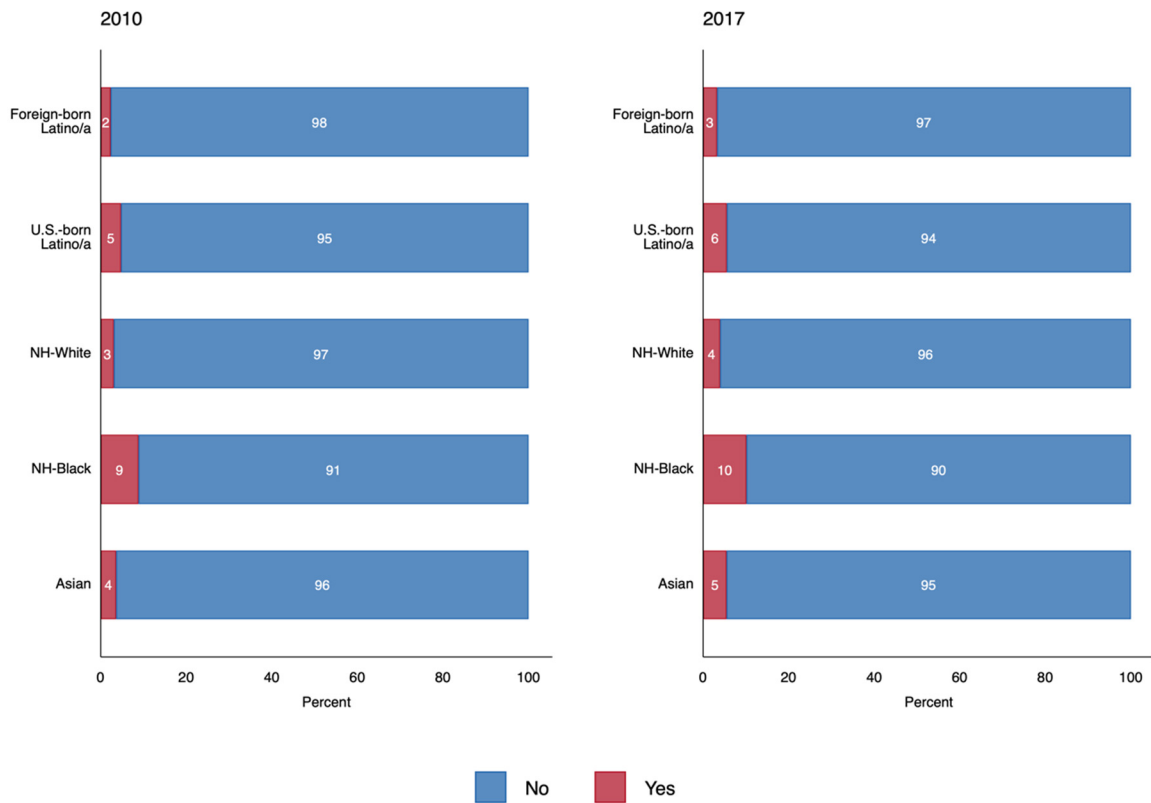


Figure 22: Percent of Households Receiving Nutrition Assistance by Race, Ethnicity, and Year



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Figure 23: Percent of Households Receiving Income from Public Assistance by Race, Ethnicity, and Year



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA

Table 3: Mean Income from Public Assistance Sources by Race, Ethnicity and Year

	2010	2017
<i>Foreign-born Latinos</i>	\$6,521.4	\$8,394.7
<i>U.S.-born Latinos</i>	\$7,100.3	\$9,702.9
<i>Non-Hispanic Whites</i>	\$8,578.8	\$10,362.5
<i>Non-Hispanic Blacks</i>	\$7,404.7	\$9,485.2
<i>Asians</i>	\$6,849.6	\$8,573.6

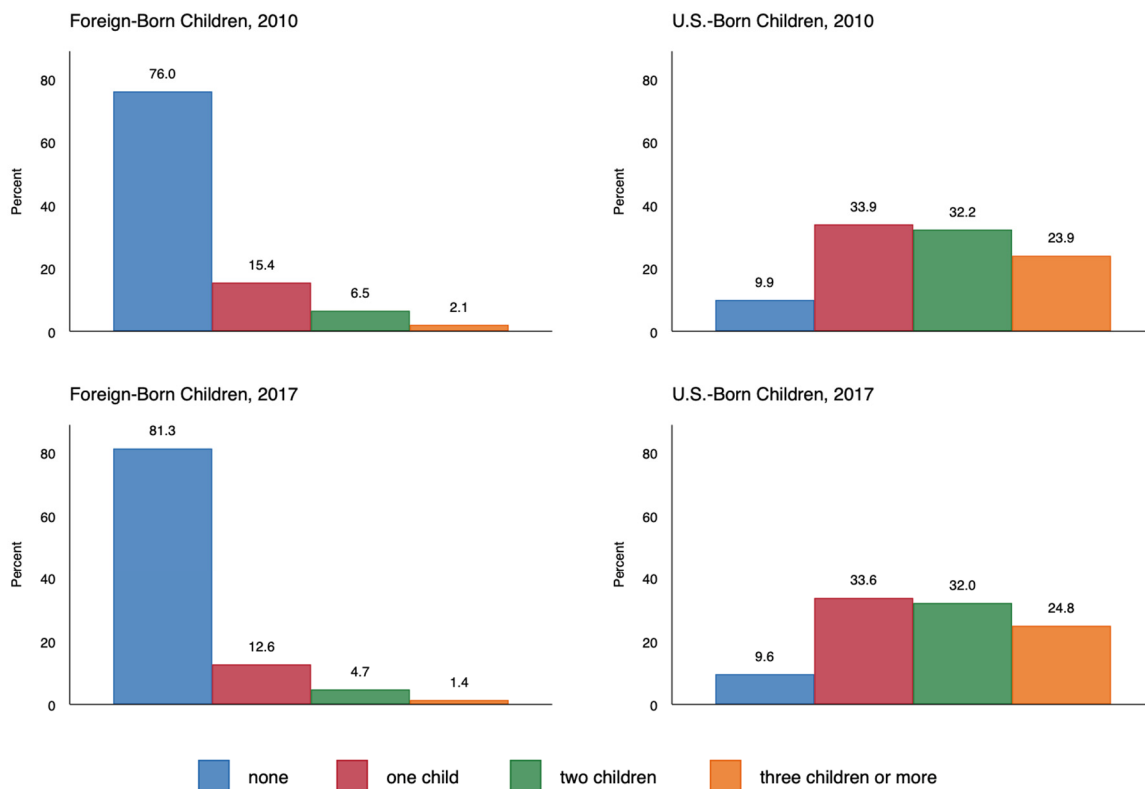
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA. Weighted data.

Note: Among those receiving income from welfare in the previous year

An important factor to consider when analyzing public assistance receipts is whether or not there are children in the household, and if these children are U.S.-born and thus eligible for benefits. Figure 24 depicts the number of children in the household by nativity status in foreign-born Latino households. The trends are similar across years, most households headed by foreign-born Latinx, have mostly U.S.-born children in the home. Between 2010 and 2017, the proportions are similar across categories, save a couple of exceptions. More households have no foreign-born children, and the proportion of households that have three or more U.S. born children increased in 2017.

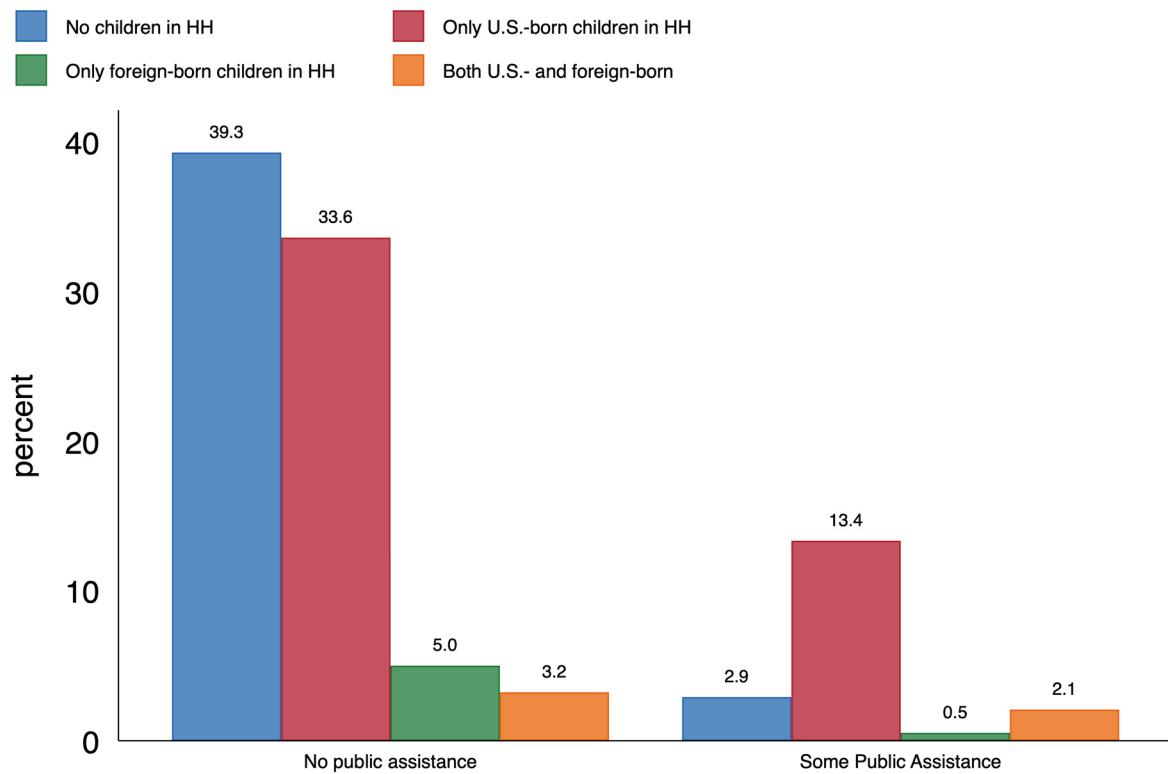
Furthermore, comparing the number of children in the home and whether or not they receive public assistance, it is clear that among foreign-born Latino households, those receiving public assistance are the minority, and that public assistance receipt is related to having U.S.-born children in the home (Figure 25).

Figure 24: Number of Children Living in Foreign-Born Latinx Households by Nativity and Year



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA
Among households with children

Figure 25: Receipt of Public Assistance by the Number and Nativity Status of the Children in Foreign-Born Latino Households - 2017



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017, IPUMS-USA
Includes receiving food stamps or income from welfare

Conclusion

Texas is the second-largest recipient of immigrants in the country and has the second largest population of Latinos by population size. Greater Houston is one of the most diverse areas in the country. This report highlights the central role that Latinos play in the economic life of the region.

Like many other immigrant groups, immigrants from Latin America come to the region in search of economic opportunity and a safe environment to raise their families. The majority of foreign-born Latinos in Houston's MSA are in the most productive ages, which amplifies their contribution to the local labor market and the economy. Latino adults in the labor force have lower rates of unemployment and significantly contribute to essential areas of the economy, like construction, services, and manufacture. Foreign-born Latinos represent one-fifth of the labor market, and all Latinx, regardless of nativity, represent over one-third of the regional labor market.

Latinx who came to the U.S. in the past several decades had lower levels of education than more recent Latinx immigrants arriving in the Houston region. Over the past decade, the number of Latino immigrants with higher levels of education has grown. This is relevant to future assessments of the composition of Latinx workers in Greater Houston and speaks to the growing ability of the region to employ more skilled workers. Besides the growth in the number of educated Latino immigrants to Houston, U.S.-born Latinos are younger and are already showing higher levels of education than those born abroad, so that the contribution of Latinos to more skilled occupations is only likely to increase in decades to come. It is essential that all stakeholders in the region, whether governmental or private entities take advantage of their qualifications by integrating them into commensurate occupations.

Although recent immigrants have lower income and rates of homeownership than long-term immigrants and natives, their situation has improved between 2010 and 2017, and more recent immigrants are represented in higher-income categories. Besides their earnings and labor force participation, Latinos contribute to the local economy through their investment in homes and by injecting money into the economy through their expenditures. As the educational attainment and occupational status of younger generations of Latinos increase over the next decades, we can expect that their contributions to the local economy will be higher in decades to come.

Besides the economic potential of Latinos in Houston, some challenges remain. After non-Hispanic black households, Latino households have the highest prevalence of poverty. Despite higher levels of poverty relative to non-Hispanic whites and Asians, Latino families have low rates of public assistance receipt and receive the smallest amounts of income from these sources. The presence of U.S. born children in Latino households is an important reason why these families are receiving public assistance. Increasing economic opportunities for Latinos should contribute to further decreasing the proportion of households who rely on public assistance.

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Endnotes

¹ The term Latinx, Latino, Latina, Latinos, and Hispanic are used interchangeably through this report to denote people who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino in the U.S. Census data.

² Apart from U.S. citizenship status, the U.S. Census does not collect any information about immigration documentation status, making it impossible for this report to include differences across immigration status, including undocumented status. This is an important caveat to consider when interpreting the results from this report.

³ The Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Harris, Montgomery, Liberty, Chambers, Galveston, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Waller, and Austin counties.

⁴ Other racial groups identified by the Census include Native Americans and Pacific Islanders as well as mixed race individuals. Furthermore, the groups non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks include only U.S. born individuals. Due to their relative size and for ease of interpretation, this report focuses only on the four major groups mentioned above.

⁵ In some of our analysis we further subdivide Asians into native and foreign-born, because as the largest group of immigrants in Houston after Latinos, Asians serve as a good point of reference to contextualize the experiences of Latinos in the city

⁶ This report uses data from two 5-year files of the American Community Survey, the 2006-2010 and 2013-2017 public use microdata files, both were obtained from IPUMS-USA (Ruggles et al. 2019). The 2013-2017 data file is the most recent 5-year microdata file available when this report was prepared. Public use micro data from the 2018 ACS became available during the preparation of this report, however, to take advantage of a larger sample size the 5-year file was preferred. For the sake of simplicity, these data will be referred to by the last year in the period throughout this report. So that, for instance, references to 2010 data pertain to the 2006-2010 ACS 5-year file. Furthermore, whenever relevant, this report will contrast changes in population trends between these periods, and when no significant changes have been found, data from 2017 will be presented.

⁷ According to the Census Bureau, count estimates generated using the public use microdata (PUMS) files differ slightly from the tabulated estimates published on the Bureau's webpage. "These differences are due to the fact that the PUMS files include only about two-thirds of the cases that were used to produce estimates on data.census.gov, as well as additional PUMS edits." For this reason, Figure 1 only provides population counts for the total population in 2010 and 2017, and the rest of the indicators provided are percentages, which have been appropriately weighted. For more information on the use of ACS PUMS see: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/pums/about.html> and https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/acs/acs_general_handbook_2018.pdf

⁸ In this case, the axis is modified to present both graphs in a comparable size for ease of interpretation across age groups

⁹ For these comparisons we select adults ages 25 and older because they are more likely to have already completed their education. This analysis represents data from 2017.

¹⁰ Those who are not in the labor force include people who are unable to work, do housework, or attend school. These may include young people attending school after age 16 and elderly people.

¹¹ In this report, household income is classified into categories according to the particular distribution in each year. These categories are broken down to represent categories that range between the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles in the income distribution for each year. Graphs are labeled with the specific amount of dollars each category represents in that particular year.

¹² According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey, household expenditures consist of the costs of goods and services acquired during the period of the survey by the consumer units (households) in the CE survey. These exclude purchases related to business purposes, the major expenditures categories collected by the CE survey are food, housing, apparel and services, transportation, healthcare, entertainment, and other expenditures.

¹³These figures are estimated using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Expenditure Survey Public-use Microdata (CE PUMD) for the 2013-2017 period. We pooled expenditure data for each quarter in these years and selected information for the Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area to maximize the sample size available for the Houston MSA. Given the small number of observations in the CE PUMD for the MSA in each year, using single year estimations is likely to result in high variability, and pooling several years helps mitigate the problem. Pooling all quarters in the five-year period results in 2,864 observations. In addition, to maximize the information available and the accuracy of estimations, the analysis compares across two demographic categories only, Latinos and non-Latinos, and focuses on major expenditure categories. Finally, all estimates are produced using survey design procedures to properly weight the sample. Ultimately, these figures serve as an illustration of the relative economic contributions of Latinos in Houston, although they do represent a relatively small sample of the city population and of the CE PUMD data, and thus, should be taken with caution. The dollar amounts are expressed in constant 2017 dollars. For additional information on the Consumer Expenditure Survey and its methodology see: <https://www.bls.gov/cex/>.

¹⁴ The family income poverty thresholds used in the ACS data are established by the Social Security Administration. Whether an individual falls below the poverty line depends not only on total family income, but also on family size, number of children in the family, and whether the household head is over the age of 65. IPUMS-USA creates a poverty indicator using income and family structure information that expresses family income as a percentage of the poverty thresholds. In this report, if family income falls below 100% of the poverty threshold the household is considered to live in poverty. For more information on the poverty measure see: <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/poverty.shtml>.

¹⁵ For more information on the different public assistance programs available and eligibility requirements, see: <https://www.usa.gov/benefits>.

¹⁶ SNAP eligibility criteria vary by state. Federal eligibility rules dictate that applicant net income should be no higher than 100% of the federal poverty line, and households also face asset limits. Texas applies a \$5,000 limit on SNAP household assets. In Texas the gross income test is 165% of poverty, from there the state screens applicants to determine if basic expenses decrease net income enough to qualify them for SNAP (Houston SNAP Task Force 2018). In FY2017, the average SNAP benefit in Texas was \$123 a month (n.d. Kaiser Family Foundation). For more on Texas SNAP eligibility see: <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1348>.

¹⁷ Income from welfare indicators may include: 1) Federal or state Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to elderly, blind, or disabled persons with low incomes. 2) Benefits received from a variety of state and federal programs including, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), Welfare or welfare to work, General Assistance, General Relief, Emergency Assistance, and Diversion Payments. The ACS questionnaire wording changes over the years depending on the applicability of different programs. For more on the ACS questionnaire see the U.S. Census Questionnaire Archive (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.2017.html>) and IPUMS-USA's harmonized variable codebooks (<https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/group>).

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