

Is a Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative Relevant to the Hispanic/Latino Community?

Consider the following demographic and social realities for U.S. Hispanics:

Population Growth

- The **Hispanic population in the U.S. increased 57.9% between 1990 and 2000**, while the White population declined 2.6% and the Black population increased only 13.3%. Hispanics constitute 12.6% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF1 data set)
- **As of 2002, Hispanics constituted the largest minority group in the U.S., at 13.4% of the total population.** In 1996, the U.S. Census Bureau projected that Hispanics would constitute over 15% of the population in 2010. By 2020, the proportion is expected to rise to 17.0% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2002; <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natsum-T5.html>)
- **A significant portion of growth in the Hispanic population is due to immigration:** the immigration rate for Hispanics was higher than that of other groups between 1990 and 1996, with an estimated average of 15.1 immigrants for every 1,000 Hispanic persons per year, compared to 3.1 immigrants for all persons. **Of Hispanics living in the U.S. in 1996, 55.8% had been born in the U.S., while 38.4% were immigrants.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fertility of American Women, June Current Population Survey, 1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates Program, Population Division; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical abstract of the United States 1997.)

Population Demographics

- **Hispanics as a group are much younger overall than other groups.** The median age of the Hispanic population is 25.8 years, compared with 30.2 for Blacks and 37.7 for Whites. The median age of Whites is nearly 50% higher than that of Hispanics. Moreover, in 2000, **more than one-third (35.7%) of Hispanics were less than 18 years old.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Resident Population Estimates of the U.S. by Race, Hispanic Origin: May 2000.)

Out-of-wedlock birth rates

- **Hispanics have a high fertility rate.** The fertility or birth rate for Hispanic women was 96.0 per 1000 women in 2000, compared with 69.1 for Blacks and 57.7 for Whites. (National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol 51, No 12, August 4, 2003)
- **Hispanic women have a high rate of out of wedlock birthrate and statistics indicate that the rate is only increasing.** 43.5% of all Hispanic births were to unmarried Hispanic women in 2002. While the unmarried birth rate among Blacks dropped dramatically between 1995 and 2002, it grew by 3 percentage points among Hispanics during the same time period. (Births: Final data 2002, National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol 52, No 10, 2003.)

- The rate of pregnancy for all groups decreased between 1990 and 1999, but the **drop in the Hispanic teen birth rate (-12.5%) was less than half of the reduction in the Black teen birth rate (-29.9%)**. (National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol 52, No 7, Oct 31, 2003.)

Education attainment & drop out rates

- In 2000, **Hispanics constituted 38.6% of all dropouts, despite being only 12.6% of the population** – they are over three times more likely to dropout than their number would indicate. In 2000, only 64% of Hispanics had completed high school. (www.childstats.gov) (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/droppub_2001/Figs.asp, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, SF1)
- **Hispanic dropout rates are very high for recent immigrants: 44.2%**. For first-generation immigrants (children of the foreign born), the dropout rate drops significantly to 14.6%, still higher than the national average of 10.9%. Even Hispanics who have been in the U.S. for generations have a higher-than-average dropout rate. (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/droppub_2001/Figs.asp)
- **Perhaps as a result of low educational attainment, Hispanic families are nearly 200% more likely to live in poverty than White families**. In 1999, nearly one quarter of Hispanic families (22.8%) lived in poverty. Furthermore, 30.3% of Hispanic children aged 0-18 lived in poverty in 1999. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, SF3 data)

Cultural values and trends

- **Hispanics as a group display a high commitment to marriage**. In 1995, 61% of Hispanic women age 15-44 had been married at some point in their lives, compared with 43.1% of Black women. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Advance Data, No.23, May 31, 2001; NSFG, 1995)
- **Cohabitation is also less common among Hispanics than other groups**. In 1995, 73% of Hispanic women had never cohabitated, compared with 58% of White women. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Advance Data, No.23, May 31, 2001; NSFG, 1995)

In summary, the Hispanic population in the U.S. is large and growing quickly. Many U.S. Hispanics are faced with poor educational outcomes and higher than average rates of poverty, and out-of wedlock births. The significant growth of the Hispanic population is in large part due to immigration, and immigrants inevitably face significant barriers to building healthy marriages, families and communities. This data raises important questions and highlights several potential point of intervention.