
Hispanics, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income

by Patricia P. Martin

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Summary

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that Hispanics are the country's largest and fastest growing minority, representing about 14.4 percent of the population in 2005 (Census Bureau 2006b). By 2050, Hispanics will account for an estimated 24.4 percent of the population—or 1 in every 4 persons in the United States (Census Bureau 2004, Table 1a). The Hispanic population tends to be younger than the overall population and currently represents a relatively small but growing fraction of the Social Security beneficiary population. The representation of Hispanics in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, however, approximates that of their representation in the overall population.

This article compares the Hispanic population with the overall population along several dimensions, with a particular focus on the Social Security beneficiary and SSI recipient populations. Data are drawn mainly from the 2005 Public Use Microdata Sample of the American Community Survey (ACS PUMS), a relatively new data source with a rich set of economic and demographic variables. Fully implemented nationwide for the first time in 2005, the ACS became the largest household survey in the United States with a sample of almost 3 million addresses.

The analysis using the ACS finds that the Hispanic population is significantly different from the general population, particularly in the

areas of age distribution, educational attainment, and economic well-being. Compared with the general population, the Hispanic segment is younger and is characterized by lower levels of educational attainment and a higher rate of poverty. The Hispanic Social Security beneficiary population also differs significantly from the general beneficiary population in the same areas. In contrast, the Hispanic and general SSI populations are more comparable with regard to age and economic status and differ significantly only with regard to education.

Introduction

Hispanics constitute an important, growing, and changing demographic subgroup of beneficiaries of the retirement, survivor, and disability programs under Social Security. Today, only about 6 percent of Social Security beneficiaries aged 62 or older are Hispanic, but according to projections by the Social Security Administration's MINT (Modeling Income in the Near Term) model that figure will exceed 15 percent by 2050.¹ Hispanics tend to be younger than the overall population (Ramirez 2004, 4), and by 2050 they may represent an even larger fraction of younger beneficiaries (for example, those under age 62). The Hispanic beneficiary population is not only growing, but its composition is changing. As a result of immigration trends, future Hispanic beneficiary populations will probably reflect a smaller percentage of persons tracing their

ancestry to the Caribbean and larger percentages with Mexican and Central American ancestry.²

Hispanics are also an important subgroup of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. SSI is a means-tested program for disabled and elderly persons who have limited income and assets. It is administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) but is distinct from the Social Security program. Social Security is financed by payroll taxes and is paid to eligible persons who are lawfully residing in the United States. By contrast, the SSI program is financed by general funds of the U.S. Treasury and restricts payments to U.S. citizens and certain groups of qualified aliens. SSI is available to persons in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and some U.S. territories but, importantly, not Puerto Rico. Most states provide a supplement to the federal benefit. Among persons aged 15 or older, Hispanics represent an estimated 13.0 percent of the SSI population. That figure matches the estimated percentage of Hispanics in the overall population in the same age group (13.0 percent).

The 2005 American Community Survey

Because Hispanics represent a growing subgroup of Social Security beneficiaries and a sizable fraction of SSI recipients, policymakers are showing a greater interest in their well-being.³ To provide a clearer picture of these populations, this article uses the American Community Survey (ACS), which was developed by the U.S. Census Bureau to replace data collected on the long form of the decennial census. Researchers can access detailed ACS data on income, race and ethnicity, and other economic and demographic variables through the survey's Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), which in 2005 contained data representing about 1.3 million households (Census Bureau 2006c).⁴ This study used the public-use version of the 2005 ACS PUMS.⁵ Future Social Security research may be able to use ACS data matched to SSA's administrative records (see Haines and Greenberg 2005, 5).⁶

Surveys vary, to some extent, in the wording of questions used to ascertain Hispanic origin. In the ACS, the origin of each person in the household is determined by an affirmative response to the following question: "Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?" Respondents are given five choices:

- No
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican

- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino

Those in the last category are asked to specify a place of origin. People in this category are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic or identify themselves generally as Spanish, Spanish American, Hispanic, Hispano, Latino, and so on (Census Bureau 2006a, 40). The Census Bureau notes that origin can be viewed as "heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors" (Census Bureau 2006a, 40). Hispanics may be of any race.

The ACS includes persons who indicated that the United States was their usual place of residence at the time of the survey. This group includes the foreign-born population, which is made up of naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (immigrants), temporary migrants (for example, foreign students), humanitarian migrants (for example, refugees), and unauthorized migrants (people illegally present in the United States) (Census Bureau 2006a, 31).

The ACS does not ask about immigration status, and thus one cannot decompose the foreign-born population into the various component groups. For that reason, results for Hispanics presented in this article are based on the entire resident Hispanic population and are not restricted to certain groups such as citizens and lawful permanent residents. Note, however, that regardless of a survey's design, certain groups are less likely to be represented in federal surveys. For example, some analysts believe that the net undercount of unauthorized residents in the 2000 Census was much higher than that for foreign-born individuals residing in the country legally—10 percent compared with 2.5 percent (Immigration and Naturalization Service 2003).

Only persons residing in housing units in the 50 states and the District of Columbia were included in the 2005 ACS.⁷ Future files will also include persons in group quarters such as college dormitories, prisons, barracks, shelters, and nursing homes. In 2000, less than 3 percent of the total population resided in group quarters (Census Bureau 2001).

This article

- presents background information on the size, composition, and growth of the Hispanic population using data from a variety of sources;

- provides information from the 2005 ACS PUMS on the Hispanic Social Security beneficiary population and the overall Social Security population;
- provides information on SSI recipients; and
- discusses the findings and policy implications.

Comparisons involving the 2005 ACS PUMS data have been statistically tested using replicate weights provided by the Census Bureau. Unless otherwise indicated, all comparisons are statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

Background on the Hispanic Population in the United States

This section presents an overview of the Hispanic population in the United States—where they come from, who they are, and their participation in the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs.

Growth of the U.S. Hispanic Population

Hispanics now represent the largest ethnic minority subgroup in the United States, and their numbers are projected to increase because of continued immigration and a birth rate that outpaces that of non-Hispanic blacks and whites.⁸ The U.S. Census Bureau reports that about 42.7 million Hispanics lived in the United States in 2005 (Chart 1), representing roughly 14.4 percent of the U.S. population. By 2050, Hispanics are projected to number over 100 million and account for 24.4 percent of the population (Census Bureau 2004, Table 1a).

Compared with the growth of the total U.S. population, growth of the Hispanic population was over five times greater between 1980 and 1990, over four times greater between 1990 and 2000, and almost four times greater between 2000 and 2005 (Chart 1).

Between 1980 and 1990, the Hispanic population grew by 53 percent, (Census Bureau 1993), compared with growth of only 10 percent for the total U.S. population (Census Bureau 2002). Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population grew by 59 percent (Census Bureau 1993, 2006b) compared with 13 percent growth for the total U.S. population (Census Bureau 2002). Between 2000 and 2005, the Hispanic population grew by 20 percent, and the U.S. population grew by 5 percent (Census Bureau 2006b).

Country of Origin

More than three-quarters of U.S. Hispanics report being of Central American, primarily Mexican,

descent (Chart 2). According to ACS data, the population of Mexico accounted for 26.7 percent of the total population in all Spanish-speaking countries, but the percentage of Hispanics in the United States who reported Mexican origin, or descent, was 2.6 times higher (69.3 percent), as shown in Table 1.⁹ Also, the U.S. Hispanic population of Mexican origin (26.8 million) is about one-fourth the size of the population of Mexico (107.0 million). These statistics reflect the role that Mexico has played in shaping the Hispanic population in the United States. Furthermore, this role has grown in the past few decades. In 1970, only 56.5 percent of Hispanics reported Mexican origin (Gibson and Jung 2005), excluding the “Other Spanish” category.

Large numbers of U.S. Hispanics report Caribbean origin: those of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican descent make up some of the largest Hispanic groups in the United States. Other large Hispanic groups include those of Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Colombian descent.

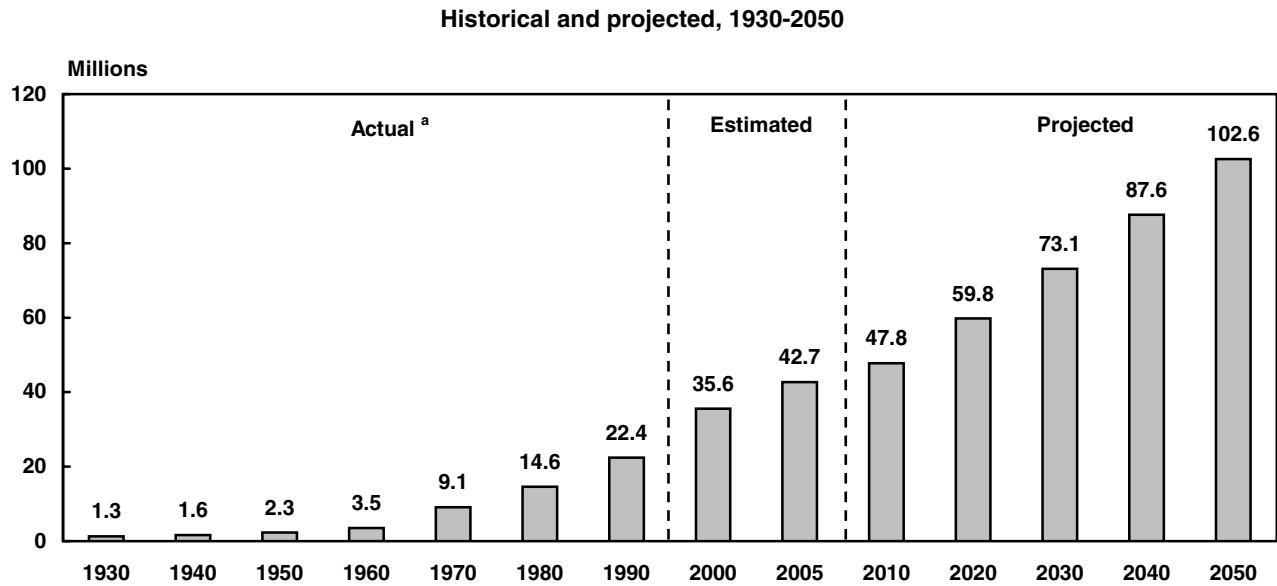
Characteristics of U.S. Hispanics

This section presents a snapshot of the demographic, economic, and other characteristics of the Hispanic population in the U.S. today and compares them with those of the overall U.S. population (Table 2).

Age and Marital Status. Hispanics tend to be younger than the general U.S. population. Almost 30 percent of Hispanics were under age 15 in 2005, compared with about 21 percent of the total population (Chart 3). Forty-six percent of Hispanics were under age 25, compared with 35 percent of the total population. In 2005, the median age for Hispanics was 27.2 years, compared with 36.4 years for the total population.¹⁰ In addition, about one-half of non-Hispanic whites were older than 40.¹¹ Almost 15 percent of the total population was aged 62 or older, compared with only 6.5 percent of the Hispanic population. In part because Hispanics tend to be younger, they are less likely to be married—almost 36 percent of Hispanics were married, compared with more than 42 percent of the total population.

Education. Another difference between Hispanics and the general population is their lower level of educational attainment. About 41 percent of Hispanics aged 25 or older did not have a high school diploma in 2005, compared with 16 percent of the total population. In addition, only about 12 percent of Hispanics had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 27 percent of the overall population.

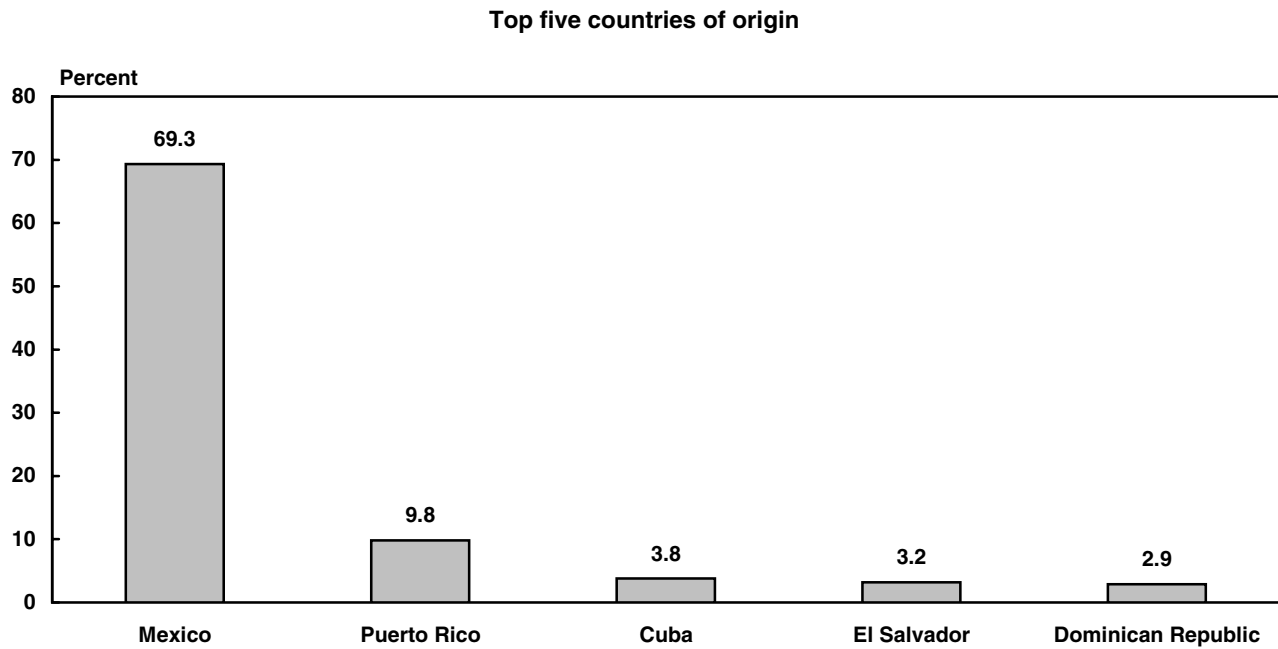
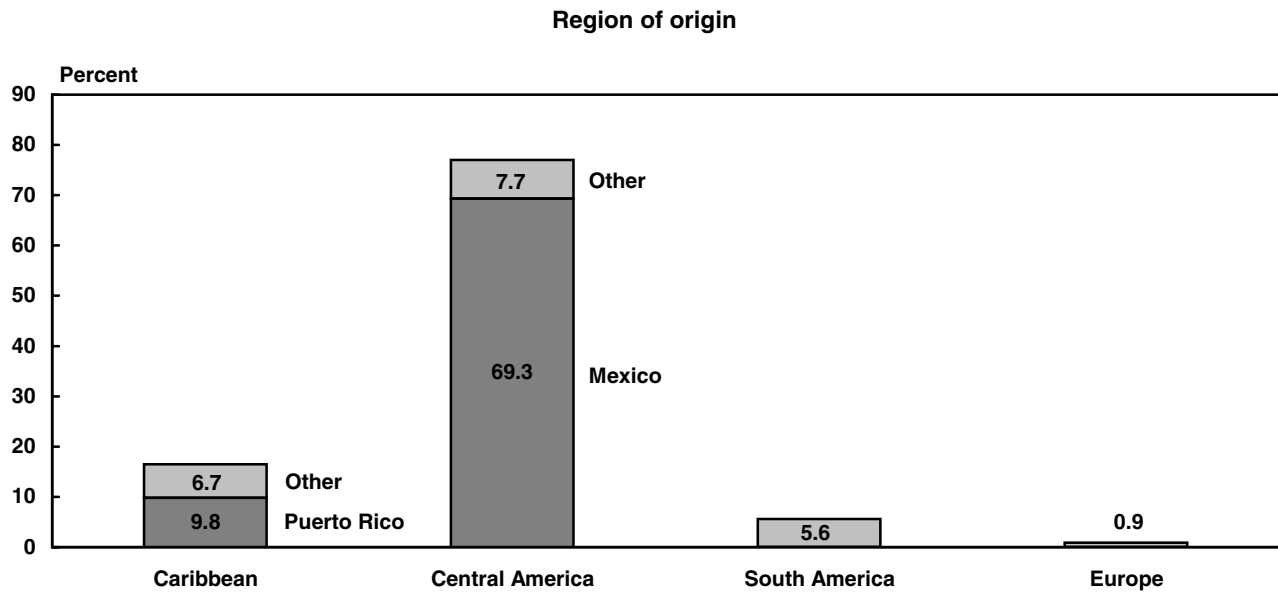
Chart 1.
Growth of U.S. Hispanics and the total U.S. population



SOURCE: Actual data (1930-1990) are from Census Bureau (1993). Estimates (2000 and 2005) are from Census Bureau (2006b, Table 4). Projections (2010-2050) are from Census Bureau (2004, Table 1a).

a. Data for 1930 include only "Mexicans," data for 1940 include persons of "Spanish mother tongue," and data for 1950 and 1960 include persons of "Spanish surname." Data for Hispanic origin of any race was not collected in 1950 and 1960 by the U.S. Census.

Chart 2.
Origin of U.S. Hispanics, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

Table 1.
Proportion of Hispanics in Spanish-speaking countries and the United States,
by region and country of origin, 2005

Region and country of origin	Hispanic population in Spanish-speaking countries		Hispanic population in the United States ^a		
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total	Ratio relative to all countries of origin combined
Total	401,333,000	100.0	38,651,397	100.0	...
Caribbean					
Cuba	11,269,000	2.8	1,461,574	3.8	1.35
Dominican Republic	8,895,000	2.2	1,118,265	2.9	1.31
Puerto Rico ^b	3,955,000	1.0	3,781,317	9.8	9.93
Central America					
Costa Rica	4,327,000	1.1	108,164	0.3	0.26
El Salvador	6,881,000	1.7	1,239,640	3.2	1.87
Guatemala	12,599,000	3.1	758,898	2.0	0.63
Honduras	7,205,000	1.8	459,653	1.2	0.66
Mexico	107,029,000	26.7	26,781,547	69.3	2.60
Nicaragua	5,487,000	1.4	281,167	0.7	0.53
Panama	3,232,000	0.8	136,375	0.4	0.44
South America					
Argentina	38,747,000	9.7	185,678	0.5	0.05
Bolivia	9,182,000	2.3	65,582	0.2	0.07
Chile	16,295,000	4.1	102,911	0.3	0.07
Colombia	45,600,000	11.4	730,510	1.9	0.17
Ecuador	13,228,000	3.3	436,409	1.1	0.34
Paraguay	6,158,000	1.5	15,084	0	0.03
Peru	27,968,000	7.0	412,349	1.1	0.15
Uruguay	3,463,000	0.9	50,921	0.1	0.15
Venezuela	26,749,000	6.7	164,903	0.4	0.06
Europe					
Spain	43,064,000	10.7	360,450	0.9	0.09

SOURCES: Data on the Hispanic population in Spanish-speaking countries are from United Nations (2005). Data on the Hispanic population in the United States are from the 2005 American Community Survey, Table B03001.

NOTE: ... = not applicable.

- a. Data exclude U.S. Hispanics who do not report a specific country of origin. Out of 41,870,703 Hispanics in the United States, 3,219,306 (about 8 percent of the total) could not be classified by country of origin. These data are based on a table from the Census Bureau that uses the full American Community Survey, not the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.
- b. The population count of Puerto Ricans from the American Community Survey includes only those interviewed in the United States, excluding Puerto Rico.

Table 2.
Characteristics of U.S. Hispanics and the total U.S. population, 2005

Characteristic	All U.S. Hispanics		Total U.S. population (including Hispanics)	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
Demographic characteristics				
Total	41,926,302	100.0	288,398,819	100.0
Sex				
Male	21,507,031	51.3	141,363,811	49.0
Female	20,419,271	48.7	147,035,008	51.0
Age				
Under 15	12,356,973	29.5	60,614,922	21.0
15–24	6,897,734	16.5	38,853,331	13.5
25–61	19,938,489	47.6	146,637,237	50.8
62–74	1,831,864	4.4	25,852,442	9.0
75–84	716,964	1.7	12,479,794	4.3
85 or older	184,278	0.4	3,961,093	1.4
Marital status				
Married	14,928,199	35.6	121,593,813	42.2
Widowed	987,864	2.4	13,727,274	4.8
Divorced	2,235,707	5.3	23,277,197	8.1
Separated	1,152,994	2.8	5,058,319	1.8
Never married or younger than age 15	22,621,538	54.0	124,742,216	43.3
Educational attainment of persons aged 25 or older ^a				
Total	22,671,595	100.0	188,930,566	100.0
No high school diploma	9,188,480	40.5	29,780,738	15.8
High school graduate only	6,121,196	27.0	55,907,093	29.6
Some college but no degree	3,420,196	15.1	37,922,764	20.1
Associate's degree	1,157,135	5.1	13,942,268	7.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	2,784,588	12.3	51,377,703	27.2
Earnings of persons aged 16 or older ^b				
Total	20,710,142	100.0	156,958,710	100.0
\$1–16,628	8,838,310	42.7	51,538,084	32.8
\$16,629–36,952	7,667,731	37.0	49,617,246	31.6
\$36,953–59,124	2,669,334	12.9	29,485,724	18.8
\$59,125–89,999	1,041,185	5.0	15,616,269	9.9
\$90,000 or more	493,582	2.4	10,701,387	6.8
Poverty among persons aged 15 or older ^c				
Total	41,650,181	100.0	287,268,896	100.0
Below 100%	9,402,750	22.6	38,413,266	13.4
100% to 124%	3,328,123	8.0	12,732,863	4.4
125% to 149%	3,087,906	7.4	12,668,023	4.4
150% or above	25,831,402	62.0	223,454,744	77.8

(Continued)

Table 2.
Continued

Characteristic	All U.S. Hispanics		Total U.S. population (including Hispanics)	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
Disability status of persons aged 5 or older ^d				
Total	37,364,167	100.0	268,086,256	100.0
With disability	4,063,347	10.9	39,708,398	14.8
Without disability	33,300,820	89.1	228,377,858	85.2
Citizenship and nativity				
Total	41,926,302	100.0	288,398,819	100.0
U.S. citizenship				
U.S. citizen	29,779,953	71.0	267,562,787	92.8
Not U.S. citizen	12,146,349	29.0	20,836,032	7.2
Nativity				
U.S.-born ^e	25,085,528	59.8	252,629,216	87.6
Not U.S.-born	16,840,774	40.2	35,769,603	12.4
Language of persons aged 5 or older ^f				
Total	37,364,167	100.0	268,086,256	100.0
Ability to speak English				
English speaker ^g	28,202,438	75.5	255,282,118	95.2
Non-English speaker	9,161,729	24.5	12,804,138	4.8
Language spoken at home				
Only English	8,080,214	21.6	216,078,959	80.6
Other language ^h	29,283,953	78.4	52,007,297	19.4

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

NOTE: . . . = not applicable.

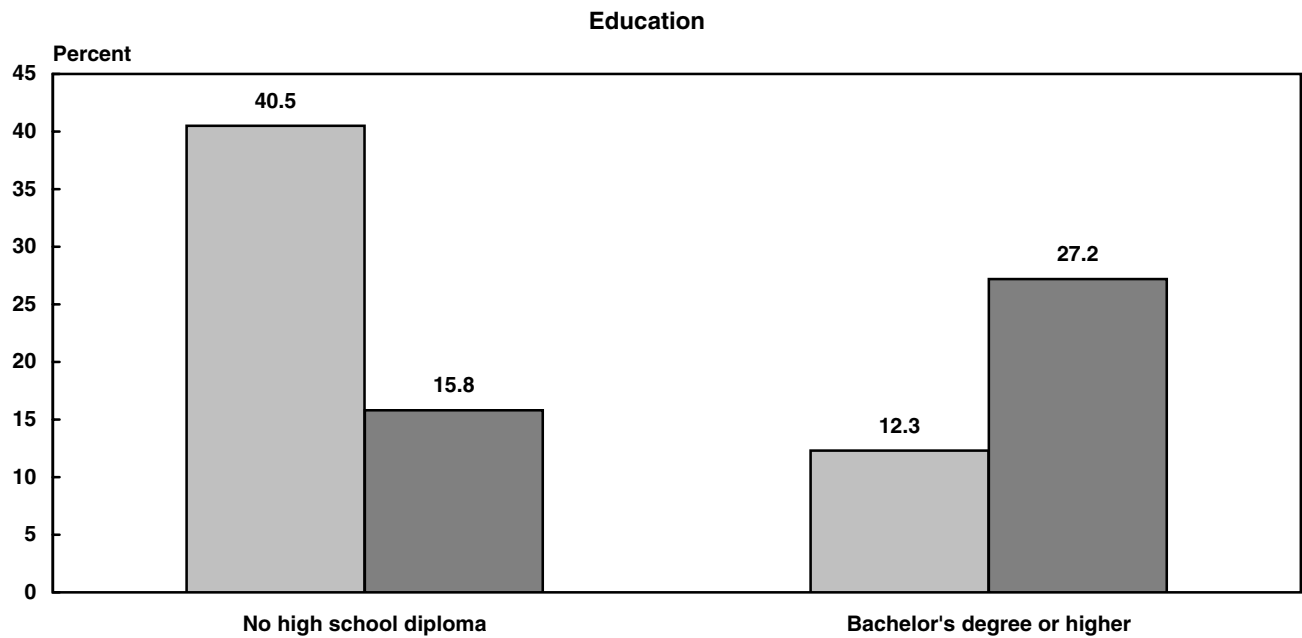
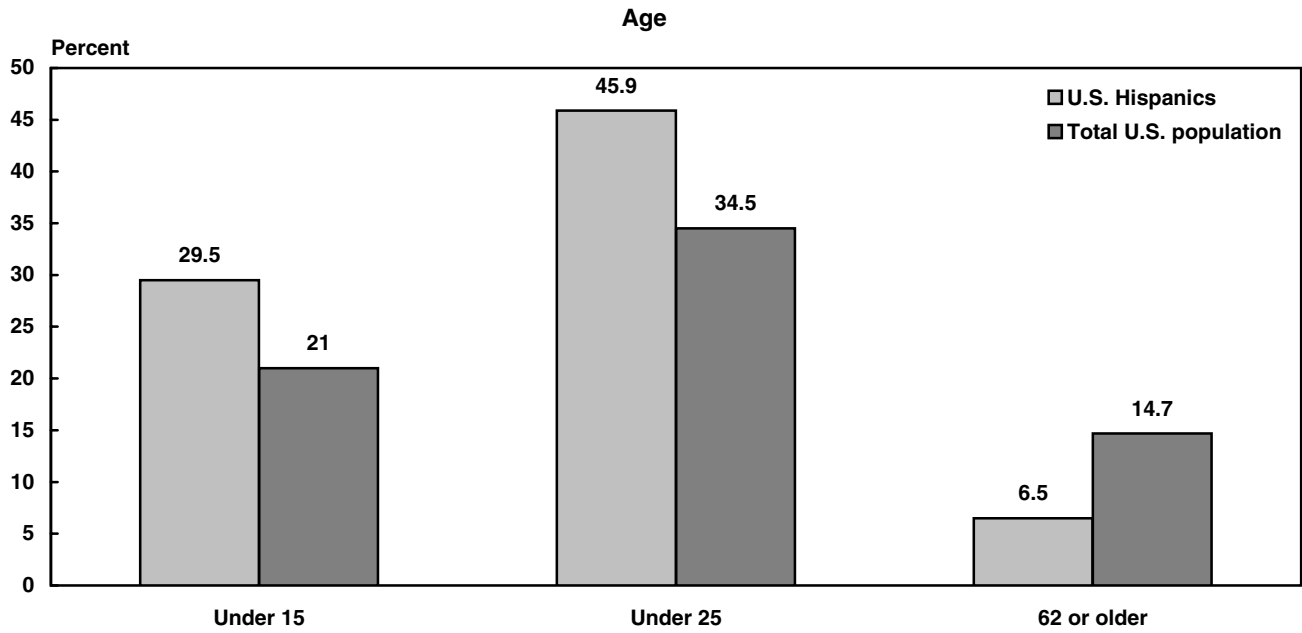
- a. Educational attainment is restricted by author to persons aged 25 or older.
- b. Data exclude persons younger than age 16, who are not asked their earnings by the Census Bureau, and persons with zero or negative earnings.

The 2005 national average wage was \$36,952.54. Persons earning 45 percent of the average wage (\$16,629) are low earners, and those earning 160 percent of the average wage (\$59,125) are high earners. These figures and the maximum taxable earnings under Social Security (\$90,000 in 2005) were used to define the earnings' cutoffs.

See Table 3 for additional earnings data.

- c. The Census Bureau does not measure poverty status for unrelated individuals younger than age 15.
- d. The Census Bureau does not measure disability status for persons younger than age 5.
- e. U.S.-born includes persons born in the United States, those born abroad to U.S. parents, and those born in Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands according to the Census Bureau.
- f. The Census Bureau does not measure ability to speak English for persons younger than age 5.
- g. Defined here as a person who speaks only English at home or who speaks English well or very well in addition to speaking another language at home.
- h. The person speaks another language in addition to or in place of English.

Chart 3.
Characteristics of U.S. Hispanics and the total U.S. population, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 2 in this article.

Economic Status. For illustrative purposes, the Office of the Chief Actuary at the Social Security Administration defines low, medium, and high earners. For 2005, a steady low earner was defined as someone earning less than \$16,629 annually. The figures for medium and high earners were \$36,953 and \$59,125.¹² These figures and the maximum taxable earnings under Social Security (\$90,000 in 2005) were used to define some of the earnings cutoffs in Table 2. Approximately 43 percent of Hispanics aged 16 or older were steady low earners—earning less than \$16,629 annually—compared with 33 percent of the total population (Table 2).

As shown in Table 3, average, or mean, annual earnings were also lower for Hispanics (about \$25,836) than for the overall population (\$37,070).¹³ Only in the youngest group—those aged 16–24—were annual mean earnings higher for Hispanics than for the total U.S. population. For Hispanics aged 16 or older with positive earnings, the lowest quartile earned up to

\$10,300, and the highest quartile earned more than \$33,000. For the total population, the lowest quartile earned up to \$12,000, and the highest quartile earned more than \$47,000. Lower levels of education and a younger population may offer partial explanations of the relatively low earnings among Hispanics.

Individual earnings are an important determinant of eventual retirement income because Social Security benefits, pensions, and savings are all linked to earnings, but current economic status can be more directly assessed using the poverty standard. An individual is considered poor if the family’s total income is less than the appropriate poverty threshold for the family. Hispanics of all ages were 1.7 times as likely as the total population (22.6 percent versus 13.4 percent) to be living below the federal poverty level, defined as below 100 percent of the poverty level (Chart 4). Similar results were found when using measures of “near” poverty (125 percent but below 150 percent of poverty).

Table 3.
Economic status of U.S. Hispanics and the total U.S. population, 2005

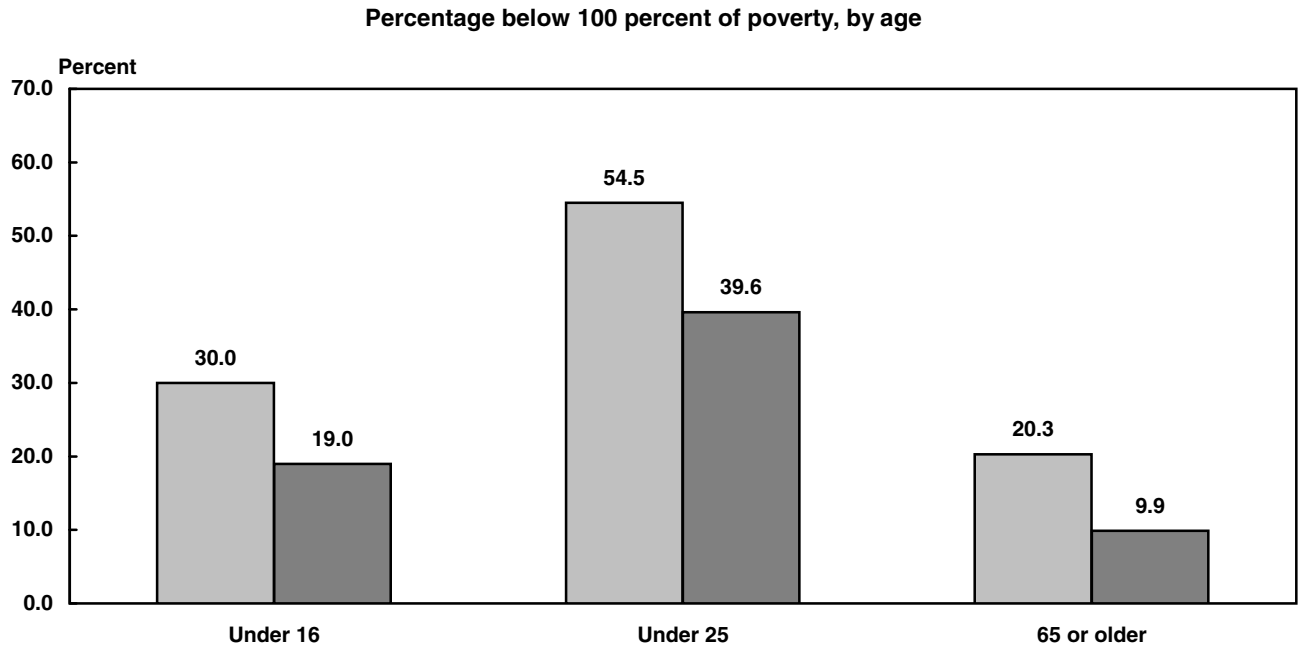
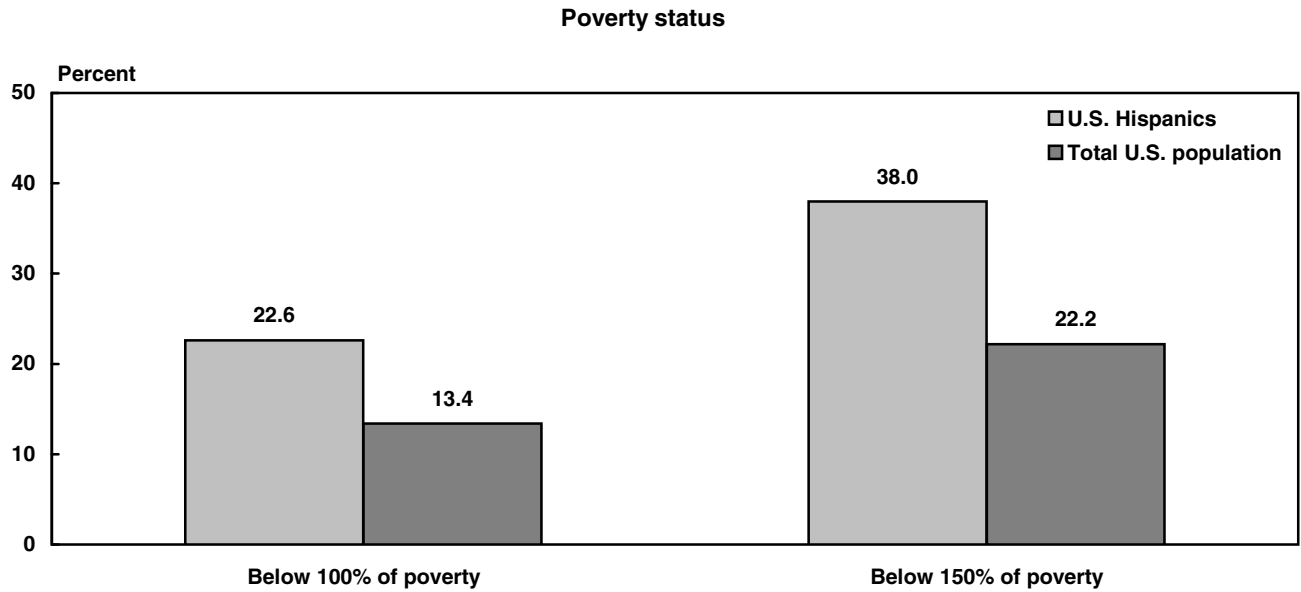
	All U.S. Hispanics	Total U.S. population
	<i>Earnings^a (dollars)</i>	
Total	25,836	37,070
Annual mean earnings, by age		
16–24	12,235	11,504
25–34	25,160	32,756
35–44	31,164	44,442
45–54	32,980	47,673
55–64	31,143	45,749
65 or older	23,065	29,247
Monthly mean earnings	2,153	3,089
Distribution, by earnings quartile ^b		
First	10,300	12,000
Second	20,000	26,900
Third	33,000	47,000
	<i>Percentage below 100% of poverty level, by age</i>	
Under 16	30.0	19.0
16–24	24.5	20.6
25–34	20.2	13.3
35–44	17.5	10.3
45–54	14.1	8.4
55–64	15.9	8.7
65 or older	20.3	9.9

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

a. Data exclude persons younger than 16, who are not asked their earnings by the Census Bureau, and persons with zero or negative earnings.

b. Computation of earnings quartiles excludes persons with zero or negative earnings.

Chart 4.
Poverty among U.S. Hispanics and the total U.S. population, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 2 in this article.

NOTE: The Census Bureau does not measure poverty status for unrelated individuals younger than age 15.

Disability Status. According to the ACS definition of disability, Hispanics were less likely to be disabled than were individuals in the total population (10.9 percent compared to 14.8 percent), which may reflect the fact that Hispanics tend to be younger than the overall population.¹⁴

Citizenship, Nativity, and Language. The large majority of Hispanics residing in the United States (71.0 percent) are U.S. citizens.¹⁵ A majority (59.8 percent) are native born. More than three in four Hispanics are able to speak English, although close to one in five speak only English at home. Not surprisingly, these figures are different than those for the overall population, where more than four in five speak only English at home.

Hispanics Receiving Social Security and SSI

This analysis also compared selected characteristics of Hispanics receiving Social Security or SSI and compared them with other segments of the U.S. population: all U.S. Hispanics, Hispanic nonbeneficiaries, all beneficiaries, and all SSI recipients. The comparisons focus on persons aged 15 or older.¹⁶

Hispanic Beneficiaries and All Hispanics

According to the ACS, about 8 percent of all Hispanics aged 15 or older were beneficiaries of Social Security (Table 4). Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries were older relative to the overall Hispanic population (Chart 5) and more likely to be female and widowed. The incidence of poverty among the overall Hispanic population was similar to that of the subset receiving Social Security (about 20 percent). However, there are some important differences in terms of origin or descent. The beneficiary population has a larger percentage of Hispanics in the overall Caribbean group (Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Dominican Republic) and in the Spanish-descent group and smaller percentages of persons of Mexican, Central American, and South American origin.

The vast majority of Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries (about 87 percent) were U.S. citizens. In addition, a sizable majority (about 67 percent) spoke English, and more than half (57 percent) were born in the United States.

About 2 percent of all Hispanics aged 15 or older received SSI. Compared with all Hispanics and with Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries, SSI recipients had less education and were much more likely to have low income (relative to the poverty standard). The results on poverty are not surprising, because SSI is

designed to assist persons with limited income and resources. SSI recipients were also far more likely to report a disability (93.1 percent) than were all Hispanics (12.3 percent).¹⁷ A majority of SSI recipients of Hispanic origin were U.S. citizens (83.1 percent), were able to speak English (59.0 percent), and were born in the United States (61.1 percent). The relatively high level of U.S. citizenship stems from SSI restrictions on citizenship and qualified alien status.

Hispanic Beneficiaries and Nonbeneficiaries

The economic status of Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries aged 15 or older, by origin, is shown in Table 5 and compared with that of Hispanic nonbeneficiaries. For the largest group of Hispanics—those of Mexican descent—beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries had similar levels of income (relative to the poverty threshold). Among persons of Mexican descent, the percentage below poverty was slightly lower for beneficiaries than for nonbeneficiaries (18.4 percent versus 20.8 percent), and the percentage with income above 150 percent of poverty for both groups was about 63 percent.

Some groups, however, had noticeable differences between beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries. For example, among Hispanics of Cuban origin, nonbeneficiaries had relatively high economic status: the percentage with income below 150 percent of poverty (about 23 percent) was roughly half the percentage for beneficiaries of the same origin (about 42 percent). The general pattern observed with Hispanics of Cuban descent was also observed, but to a lesser extent, among those of Puerto Rican descent: 31 percent of nonbeneficiaries had income below 150 percent of the poverty level, compared with about 45 percent of beneficiaries.

Persons of Dominican origin, whether Social Security beneficiaries or nonbeneficiaries, represent the largest proportion of Hispanics living below the federal poverty level. Among beneficiaries, more than one in three were poor, and a majority (56.0 percent) had income below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Nonbeneficiaries were somewhat better off but still had a relatively high poverty rate (23.6 percent).

Individuals who trace their origin to Spain, regardless of benefit status, were among the most likely to have income above 150 percent of the federal poverty level. About 73 percent of beneficiaries and 80 percent of nonbeneficiaries of Spanish origin had income above this threshold.

Table 4.
Characteristics of Hispanics receiving Social Security and Supplemental Security Income
and all U.S. Hispanics, 2005 ^a

Characteristic	Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries		Hispanic Supplemental Security Income recipients		All U.S. Hispanics	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
Demographic characteristics of persons aged 15 or older						
Total	2,485,175	100.0	657,247	100.0	29,569,329	100.0
Sex						
Male	1,102,569	44.4	250,208	38.1	15,168,030	51.3
Female	1,382,606	55.6	407,039	61.9	14,401,299	48.7
Age						
15–24	77,829	3.1	39,924	6.1	6,897,734	23.3
25–61	457,940	18.4	333,552	50.7	19,938,489	67.4
62–74	1,212,935	48.8	153,303	23.3	1,831,864	6.2
75–84	592,177	23.8	92,216	14.0	716,964	2.4
85 or older	144,294	5.8	38,252	5.8	184,278	0.6
Marital status						
Married	1,282,832	51.6	185,376	28.2	14,928,199	50.5
Widowed	561,925	22.6	118,658	18.1	987,864	3.3
Divorced	286,905	11.5	112,369	17.1	2,235,707	7.6
Separated	95,484	3.8	53,469	8.1	1,152,994	3.9
Never married or younger than	258,029	10.4	187,375	28.5	10,264,565	34.7
Educational attainment of persons aged 25 or older ^b						
Total	2,407,346	100.0	617,323	100.0	22,671,595	100.0
No high school diploma	1,361,279	56.5	411,783	66.7	9,188,480	40.5
High school graduate only	554,944	23.1	124,573	20.2	6,121,196	27.0
Some college but no degree	254,212	10.6	49,398	8.0	3,420,196	15.1
Associate's degree	64,063	2.7	13,561	2.2	1,157,135	5.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	172,848	7.2	18,008	2.9	2,784,588	12.3
Poverty among persons aged 15 or older ^c						
Total	2,485,175	100.0	657,247	100.0	29,569,329	100.0
Below 100%	504,220	20.3	283,992	43.2	5,766,509	19.5
100% to 124%	240,839	9.7	81,716	12.4	2,191,804	7.4
125% to 149%	205,188	8.3	51,049	7.8	2,082,998	7.0
150% or above	1,534,928	61.8	240,490	36.6	19,528,018	66.0
Disability status of persons aged 15 or older						
Total	2,485,175	100.0	657,247	100.0	29,569,329	100.0
With disability	1,176,828	47.4	611,811	93.1	3,637,695	12.3
Without disability	1,308,347	52.6	45,436	6.9	25,931,634	87.7

(Continued)

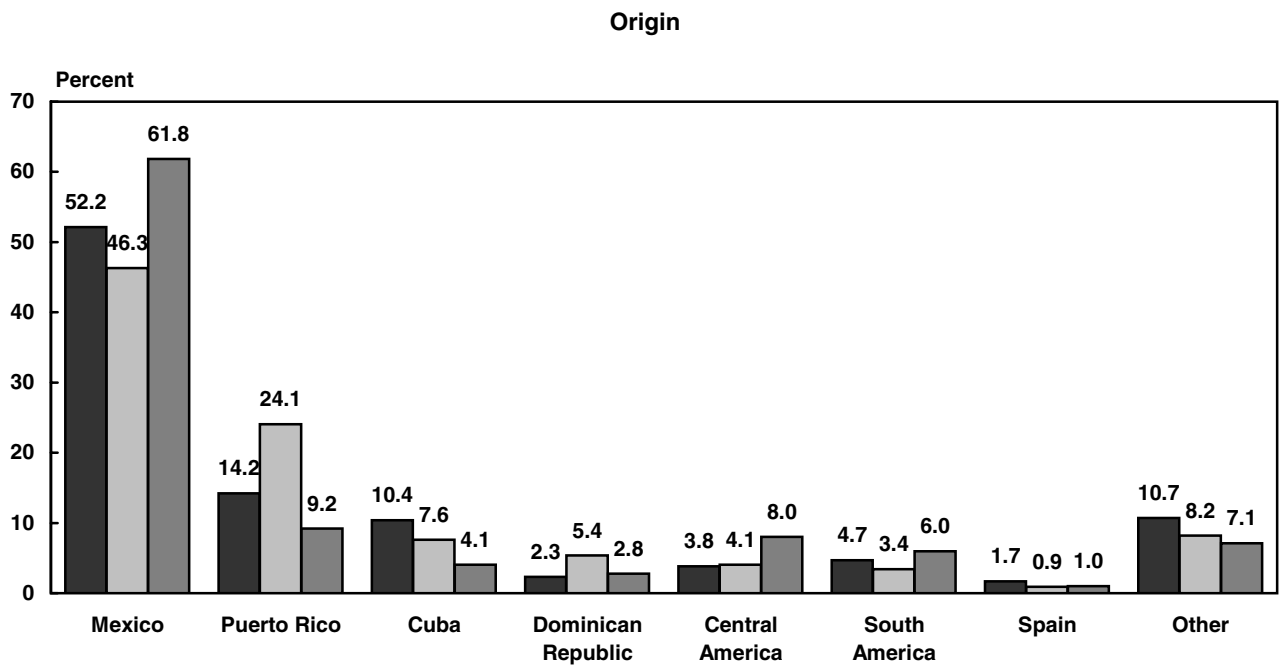
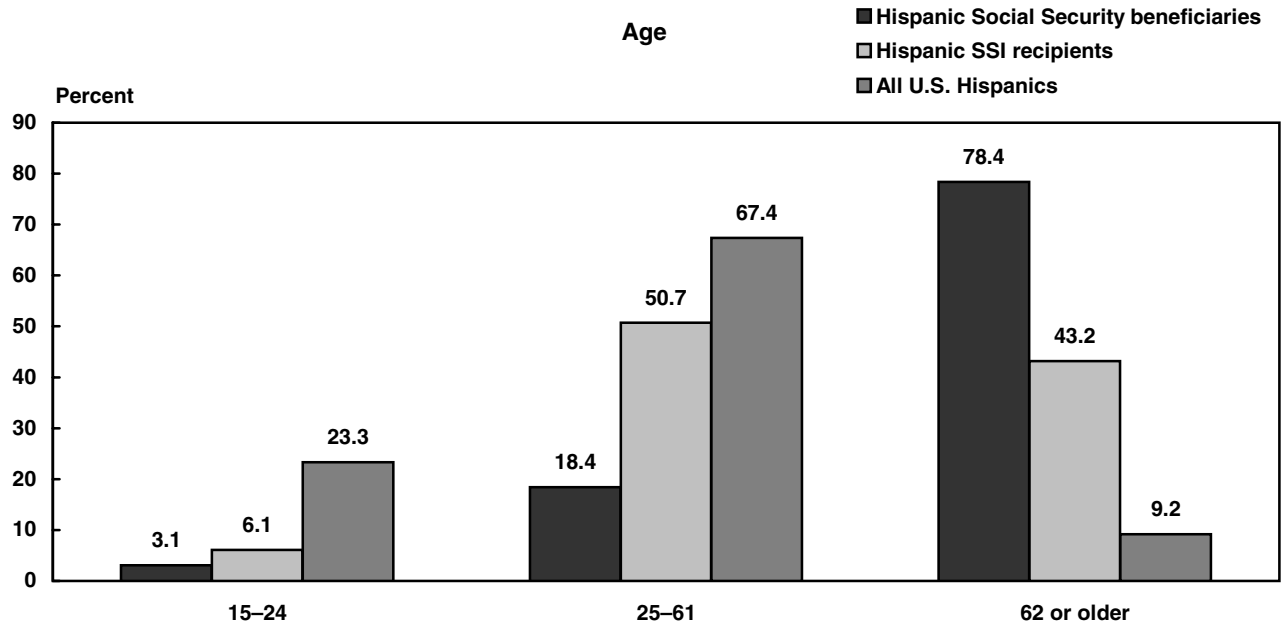
Table 4.
Continued

Characteristic	Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries		Hispanic Supplemental Security Income recipients		All U.S. Hispanics	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
<i>Citizenship and nativity of persons aged 15 or older</i>						
Total	2,485,175	100.0	657,247	100.0	29,569,329	100.0
U.S. citizenship						
U.S. citizen	2,155,535	86.7	546,446	83.1	18,488,928	62.5
Not U.S. citizen	329,640	13.3	110,801	16.9	11,080,401	37.5
Nativity						
U.S.-born ^d	1,420,806	57.2	401,275	61.1	13,905,099	47.0
Not U.S.-born	1,064,369	42.8	255,972	38.9	15,664,230	53.0
<i>Language of persons aged 15 or older</i>						
Ability to speak English ^e						
English speaker	1,676,925	67.5	387,454	59.0	20,964,108	70.9
Non-English speaker	808,250	32.5	269,793	41.0	8,605,221	29.1
Language spoken at home ^f						
Only English	424,140	17.1	119,714	18.2	5,627,634	19.0
Other	2,061,035	82.9	537,533	81.8	23,941,695	81.0
<i>Origin of persons aged 15 or older</i>						
Total	2,485,175	100.0	657,247	100.0	29,569,329	100.0
Mexican	1,296,088	52.2	304,271	46.3	18,288,427	61.8
Puerto Rican	353,615	14.2	158,268	24.1	2,720,218	9.2
Cuban	258,233	10.4	50,086	7.6	1,204,868	4.1
Dominican	58,189	2.3	35,339	5.4	823,877	2.8
Central American	94,992	3.8	26,629	4.1	2,372,395	8.0
South American	116,302	4.7	22,533	3.4	1,767,620	6.0
Spaniard	42,163	1.7	6,115	0.9	292,622	1.0
Other	265,593	10.7	54,006	8.2	2,099,302	7.1

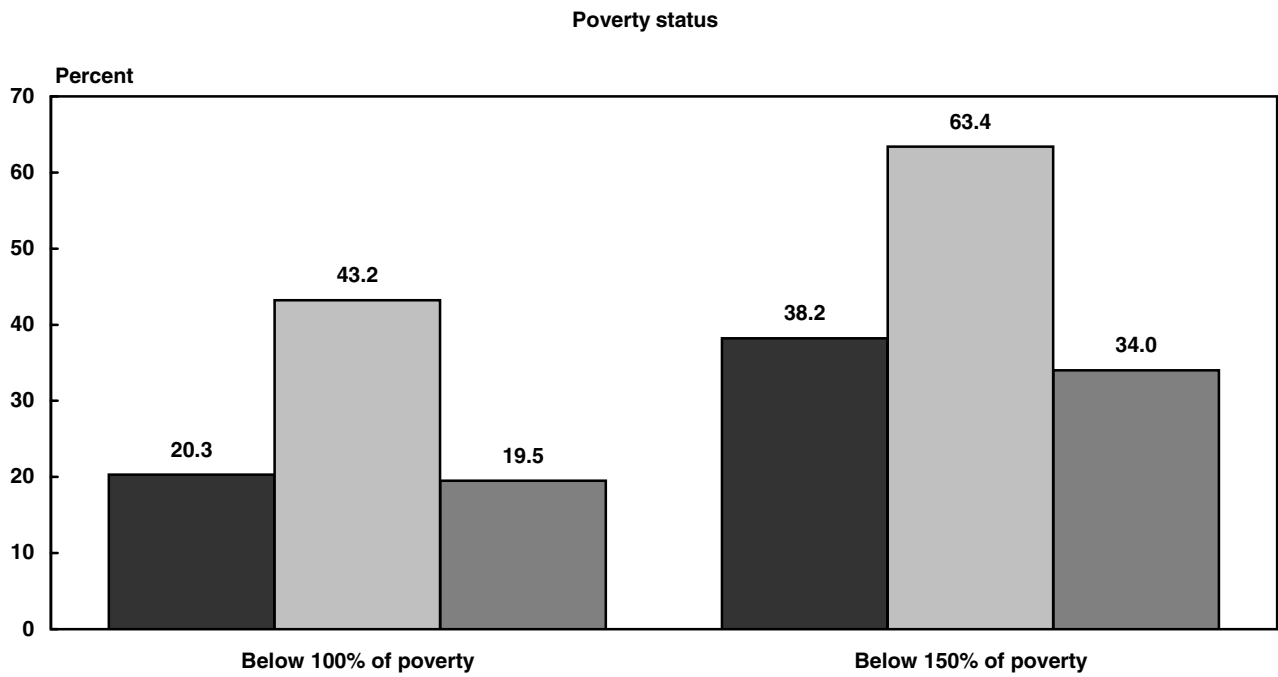
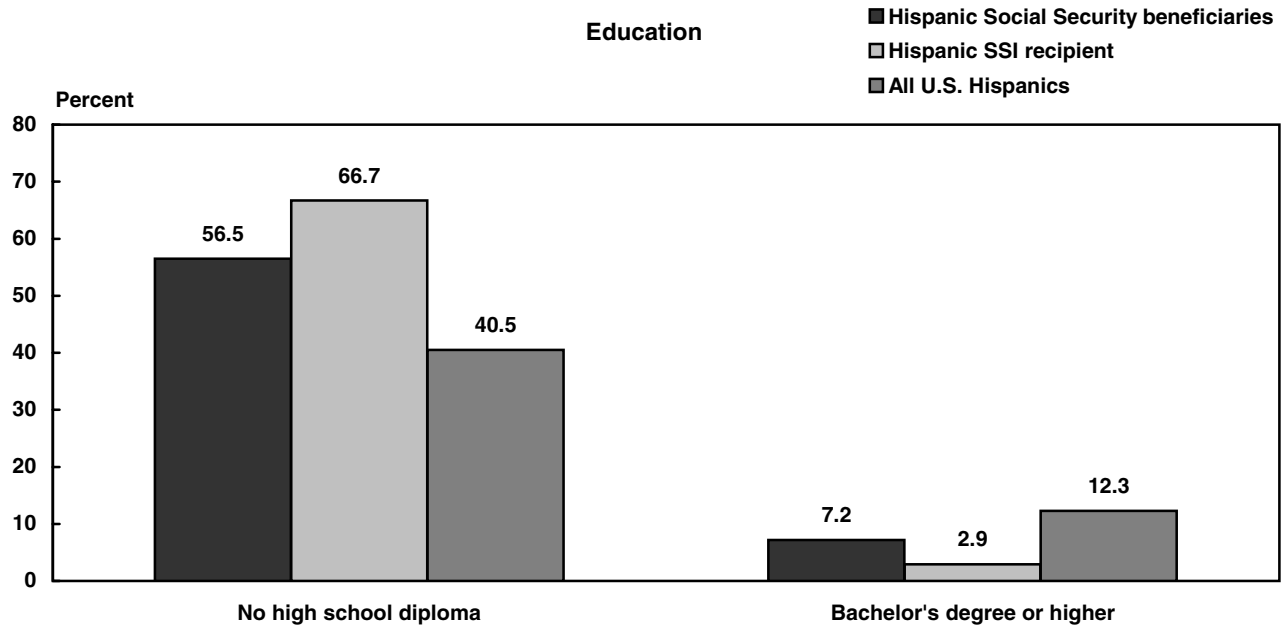
SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

- a. The 2005 ACS PUMS do not provide beneficiary and recipient information for persons under age 15.
- b. Educational attainment is restricted by author to persons aged 25 or older.
- c. The Census Bureau does not measure poverty status for unrelated individuals younger than age 15.
- d. U.S.-born includes persons born in the United States, those born abroad to U.S. parents, and those born in Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands according to the Census Bureau.
- e. Defined here as a person who speaks only English at home or who speaks English well or very well in addition to speaking another language at home.
- f. The person speaks another language in addition to or in place of English.

Chart 5.
Characteristics of U.S. Hispanics and those receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income, 2005



**Chart 5.
Continued**



SOURCE: 2005 Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 4 in this article.

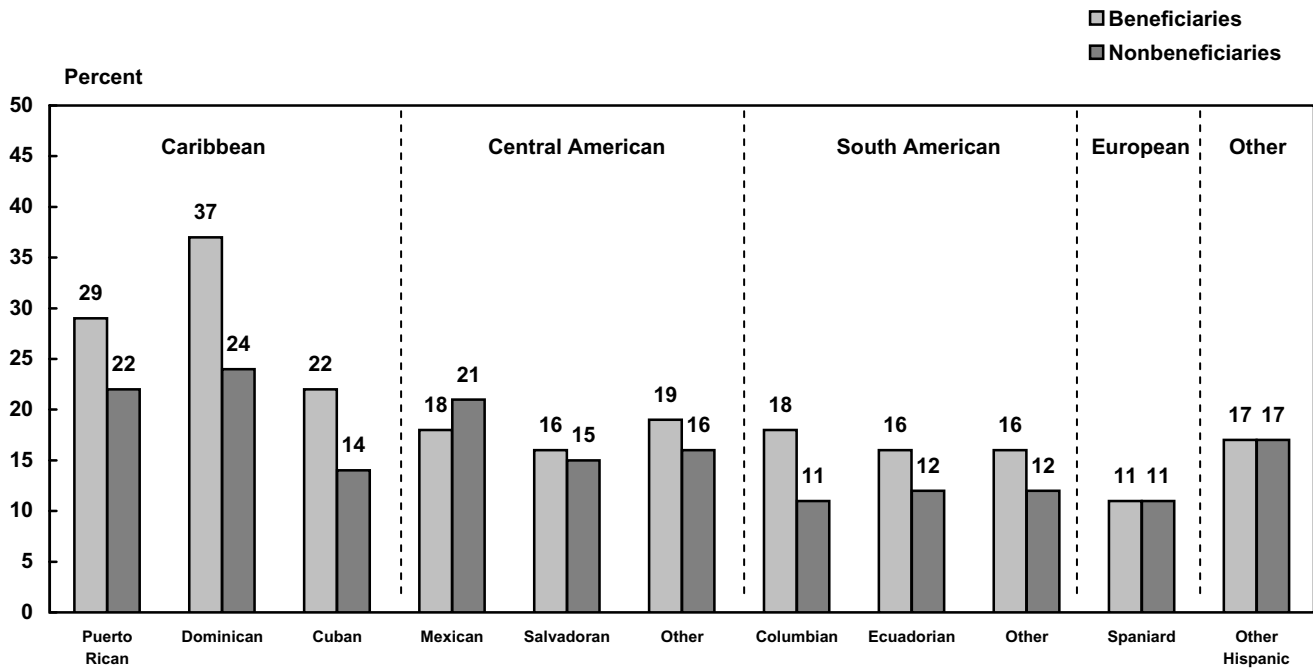
Table 5.
Poverty among Hispanic beneficiaries of Social Security and Hispanic nonbeneficiaries aged 15 or older,
by region and country of origin, 2005

Region and country of origin	All		Below 100% of poverty		100% to 124%		125% to 149%		150% or above	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Beneficiaries										
Total	2,485,175	100.0	504,220	20.3	240,839	9.7	205,188	8.3	1,534,928	61.8
Mexican	1,296,088	100.0	237,959	18.4	127,845	9.9	113,056	8.7	817,228	63.1
Caribbean										
Puerto Rican	353,615	100.0	100,787	28.5	31,379	8.9	26,278	7.4	195,171	55.2
Cuban	258,233	100.0	57,367	22.2	29,816	11.5	21,353	8.3	149,697	58.0
Dominican	58,189	100.0	21,720	37.3	5,622	9.7	5,257	9.0	25,590	44.0
Central American										
Salvadoran	26,003	100.0	4,082	15.7	2,246	8.6	2,701	10.4	16,974	65.3
Guatemalan	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Other	68,989	100.0	12,965	18.8	7,330	10.6	3,067	4.4	45,627	66.1
South American										
Colombian	40,197	100.0	7,202	17.9	3,076	7.7	3,225	8.0	26,694	66.4
Ecuadorian	21,426	100.0	3,418	16.0	791	3.7	1,965	9.2	15,252	71.2
Peruvian	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Other	54,679	100.0	8,704	15.9	4,001	7.3	3,687	6.7	38,287	70.0
European										
Spaniard	42,163	100.0	4,726	11.2	4,743	11.2	1,914	4.5	30,780	73.0
Other Hispanic	265,593	100.0	45,290	17.1	23,990	9.0	22,685	8.5	173,628	65.4
Nonbeneficiaries										
Total	27,084,154	100.0	5,262,289	19.4	1,950,965	7.2	1,877,810	6.9	17,993,090	66.4
Mexican	16,992,339	100.0	3,538,930	20.8	1,352,760	8.0	1,321,040	7.8	10,779,609	63.4
Caribbean										
Puerto Rican	2,366,603	100.0	510,244	21.6	125,366	5.3	98,272	4.2	1,632,721	69.0
Cuban	946,635	100.0	133,084	14.1	49,828	5.3	35,256	3.7	728,467	77.0
Dominican	765,688	100.0	180,612	23.6	55,692	7.3	50,796	6.6	478,588	62.5
Central American										
Salvadoran	913,152	100.0	135,968	14.9	67,122	7.4	77,061	8.4	633,001	69.3
Guatemalan	569,385	100.0	112,321	19.7	55,927	9.8	43,515	7.6	357,622	62.8
Other	794,866	100.0	130,391	16.4	54,037	6.8	54,412	6.8	556,026	70.0
South American										
Colombian	528,932	100.0	56,945	10.8	26,404	5.0	25,666	4.9	419,917	79.4
Ecuadorian	318,343	100.0	38,382	12.1	18,565	5.8	19,215	6.0	242,181	76.1
Peruvian	315,042	100.0	29,882	9.5	17,990	5.7	24,566	7.8	242,604	77.0
Other	489,001	100.0	60,583	12.4	20,795	4.3	18,786	3.8	388,837	79.5
European										
Spaniard	250,459	100.0	28,340	11.3	9,869	3.9	11,408	4.6	200,842	80.2
Other Hispanic	1,833,709	100.0	306,607	16.7	96,610	5.3	97,817	5.3	1,332,675	72.7

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

a. Numbers too few to list.

Chart 6.
Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries below 100 percent of the poverty level, by region and country of origin, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 5 in this article.

The incidence of poverty in the Hispanic community varies by ethnic origin, as discussed above, but there is no striking pattern (Chart 6). Among the largest group of Hispanics (those of Mexican descent), beneficiaries had a lower incidence of poverty than nonbeneficiaries. For some other groups, the estimated percentages were close. This result suggests that Social Security benefit receipt is not uniformly associated with declines in economic status.

Hispanic Social Security Beneficiaries and All Beneficiaries

Hispanics aged 15 or older have lower average Social Security benefits than do their counterparts among all beneficiaries (Table 6). Their mean annual Social Security benefit in 2005 was about \$8,056, compared with about \$9,900 for all beneficiaries. Twenty-five percent of Hispanic beneficiaries received up to \$4,900 in annual benefits. By comparison, for the overall beneficiary population, the 25th percentile cutoff occurred at \$6,100.

Social Security benefits are based on earnings in covered employment. As noted in Table 2, Hispanics had lower relative earnings than the overall U.S. population, which will translate into lower average ben-

efits. Note, however, that Social Security's benefit formula provides higher replacement rates (benefits as a percentage of preretirement earnings) for people with low lifetime earnings. This feature helps persons who consistently earn low wages or who have partial careers under the Social Security program and have not accrued the minimum of 40 quarters of coverage under Social Security to be eligible for retirement benefits. Thus, although benefits received by Hispanics tend to be lower than those for the overall population, they probably replace a higher percentage of their preretirement earnings.

Hispanic beneficiaries were nearly twice as likely as all beneficiaries to be living below the federal poverty level—20.3 percent versus 10.7 percent (see Chart 7 and Table 7, which presents selected characteristics of Hispanic beneficiaries and all beneficiaries). They were also 1.8 times as likely as the overall Social Security population to have income below 125 percent of the poverty level and 1.6 times as likely to have income below 150 percent of the poverty level. Recall that the relatively low economic status of Hispanics was also apparent among persons of working age (see Table 2). In other words, Hispanics do not necessarily suffer sharp drops in well-being at retirement; rather,

Table 6.
Social Security benefits of Hispanic beneficiaries and all beneficiaries, 2005 (in dollars)

Benefit amount	Hispanic beneficiaries	All beneficiaries
Mean Social Security benefit		
Annual	8,056	9,879
Monthly	671	823
Distribution, by benefit quartile		
First	4,900	6,100
Second	7,200	9,600
Third	10,800	13,000

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

their well-being in retirement may reflect factors that also exist during their working years.

Educational attainment is a major determinant of labor market earnings and, ultimately, retirement income. It is therefore useful to highlight the data on educational attainment from Table 7. Nearly three-fifths (56.5 percent) of Hispanic beneficiaries never completed high school, compared with slightly more than one-fourth (26.3 percent) of beneficiaries overall. Hispanic beneficiaries were less than half as likely as the overall group to have completed a bachelor's degree (7.2 percent versus 17.1 percent).

Hispanic beneficiaries tend to be younger than other beneficiaries. Three percent of Hispanic beneficiaries are in the 15–24 age range compared with 1.7 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries. Among those aged 62 or older, Hispanics had about 8 percentage points fewer older beneficiaries—78.4 percent compared with 86.6 percent.

With regard to race, about 85 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries were white alone, compared with 64.0 percent of Hispanic beneficiaries. The second largest racial group of Social Security beneficiaries (9.4 percent) was black alone. Among Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries, the second largest group was composed of those of “Some other race alone” (30.4 percent).¹⁸

Hispanic SSI Recipients and All Recipients

The study also looked at the same selected demographics of Hispanic SSI recipients and compared them with those of all SSI recipients aged 15 or older (Table 8). The two populations were similar with regard to some key variables, namely, sex, age distributions, marital status, and poverty status. For example, regardless of Hispanic status, SSI recipients had similar high rates of poverty—above 40 percent (Chart 8). The

two populations differ, however, in terms of education. About 67 percent of Hispanic beneficiaries had no high school diploma, compared with 45 percent of the general SSI population. Finally, annual payments received by Hispanics were about 8 percent lower than those received by the overall SSI population—\$5,944 versus \$6,420 (Table 9).

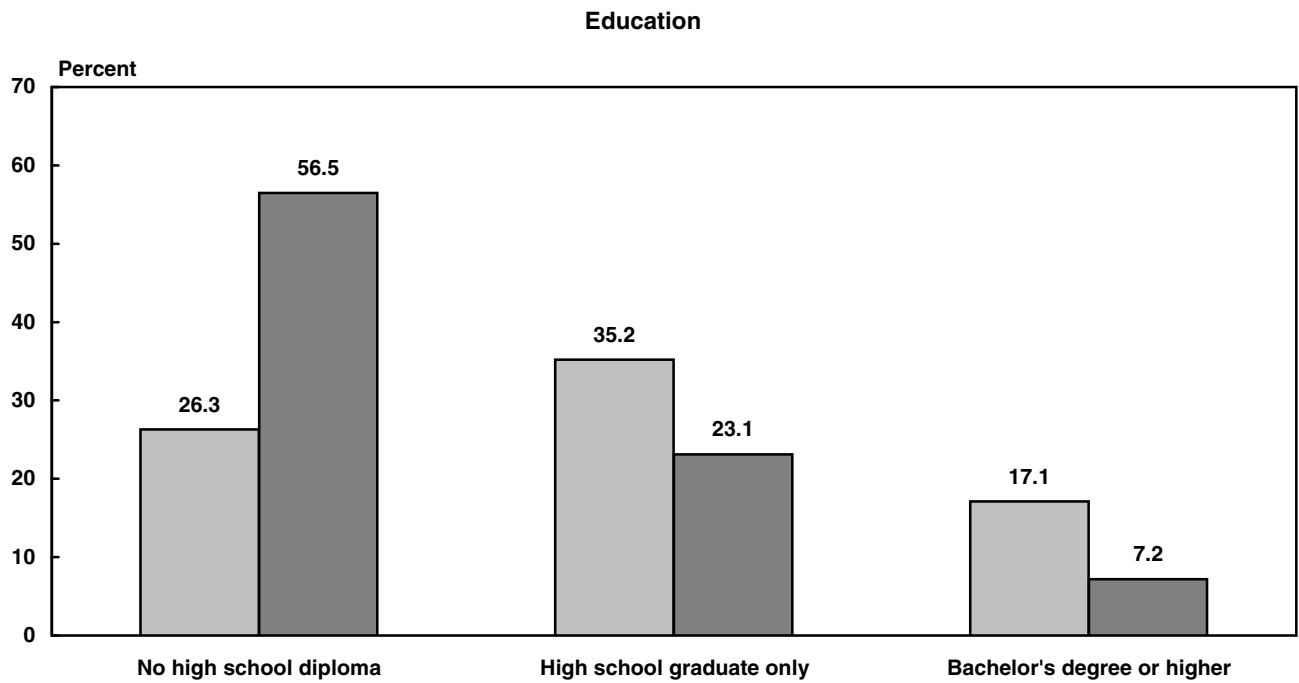
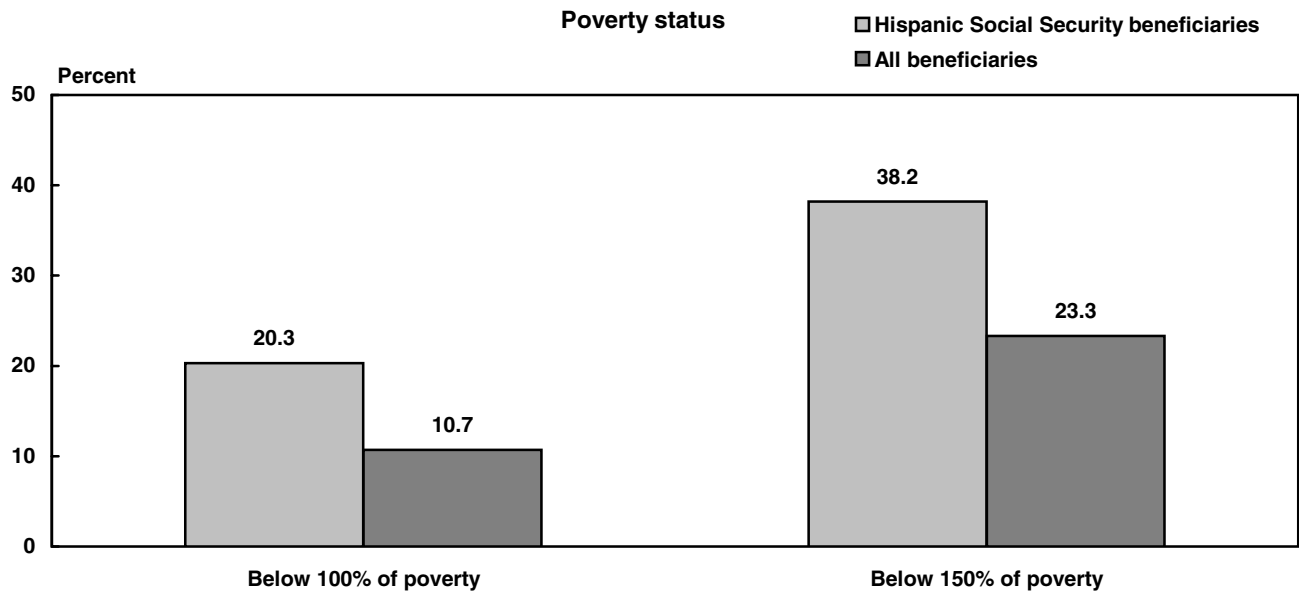
Policy Implications and Future Research

The demographic and economic differences among the Hispanic population underscore the importance of including more detailed and precise information about Hispanics in any analysis of the Social Security program, including analyses involving the financial status of the program and the effects of various policy options.

This article documents not only the demographic and economic characteristics of the Hispanic population in the United States but also similar characteristics of the growing and changing subgroups of Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients compared with their general populations. It is important, therefore, for policymakers to consider whether the program's structure will provide adequate benefits to future beneficiary populations and to understand factors that influence economic well-being among Hispanics. For future study, it would be interesting to repeat these analyses for subgroups of the Hispanic population (such as the foreign-born population).

News reports and even scholarly studies tend to lump Hispanics into one group. Yet this article reveals a remarkable diversity within the Hispanic community, and policymakers may therefore wish to pay special attention to certain subgroups within the Hispanic community. For example, the incidence of poverty among Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries varies

Chart 7.
Poverty status and education of Hispanic Social Security beneficiaries and all beneficiaries, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 7 in this article.

Table 7.
Characteristics of Hispanic beneficiaries of Social Security and all beneficiaries, 2005^a

Characteristic	Hispanic beneficiaries		All beneficiaries	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
<i>Demographic characteristics of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
Sex				
Male	1,102,569	44.4	17,610,175	43.8
Female	1,382,606	55.6	22,552,498	56.2
Age				
15–24	77,829	3.1	662,934	1.7
25–61	457,940	18.4	4,719,388	11.8
62–74	1,212,935	48.8	19,689,798	49.0
75–84	592,177	23.8	11,452,945	28.5
85 or older	144,294	5.8	3,637,608	9.1
Marital status				
Married	1,282,832	51.6	22,011,219	54.8
Widowed	561,925	22.6	10,403,905	25.9
Divorced	286,905	11.5	4,184,446	10.4
Separated	95,484	3.8	592,560	1.5
Never married or younger than age 15	258,029	10.4	2,970,543	7.4
<i>Educational attainment of persons aged 25 or older^b</i>				
Total	2,407,346	100.0	39,499,739	100.0
No high school diploma	1,361,279	56.5	10,372,664	26.3
High school graduate only	554,944	23.1	13,916,488	35.2
Some college but no degree	254,212	10.6	6,906,004	17.5
Associate's degree	64,063	2.7	1,565,198	4.0
Bachelor's degree or higher	172,848	7.2	6,739,385	17.1
<i>Poverty among persons aged 15 or older^c</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
Below 100%	504,220	20.3	4,285,977	10.7
100% to 124%	240,839	9.7	2,509,942	6.2
125% to 149%	205,188	8.3	2,561,446	6.4
150% or above	1,534,928	61.8	30,805,308	76.7

(Continued)

Table 7.
Continued

Characteristic	Hispanic beneficiaries		All beneficiaries	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
<i>Disability status of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
With disability	1,176,828	47.4	17,499,870	43.6
Without disability	1,308,347	52.6	22,662,803	56.4
<i>Citizenship and nativity of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
U.S. citizenship				
U.S. citizen	2,155,535	86.7	39,400,143	98.1
Not U.S. citizen	329,640	13.3	762,530	1.9
Nativity				
U.S.-born ^d	1,420,806	57.2	36,644,520	91.2
Not U.S.-born	1,064,369	42.8	3,518,153	8.8
<i>Language of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
Ability to speak English ^e				
English speaker	1,676,925	67.5	38,782,809	96.6
Non-English speaker	808,250	32.5	1,379,864	3.4
Language spoken at home				
Only English	424,140	17.1	35,412,572	88.2
Other language ^f	2,061,035	82.9	4,750,101	11.8
<i>Race of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	2,485,175	100.0	40,162,673	100.0
White alone	1,591,736	64.0	34,103,524	84.9
Black or African American alone	40,630	1.6	3,757,786	9.4
American Indian or Alaska native	21,285	0.9	235,432	0.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	8,818	0.4	906,278	2.3
Some other race alone	754,727	30.4	791,137	2.0
Two or more major race groups	67,979	2.7	368,516	0.9

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

- a. The 2005 ACS PUMS does not provide beneficiary and recipient information for persons under age 15.
- b. Educational attainment is restricted by author to persons aged 25 or older.
- c. The Census Bureau does not measure poverty status for unrelated individuals younger than age 15.
- d. U.S.-born includes persons born in the United States, those born abroad to U.S. parents, and those born in Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands according to the Census Bureau.
- e. Defined here as a person who speaks only English at home or who speaks English well or very well in addition to speaking another language at home.
- f. The person speaks another language in addition to or in place of English.

Table 8.
Characteristics of Hispanic recipients of Supplemental Security Income and all recipients, 2005^a

Characteristic	Hispanic recipients		All recipients	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
Demographic characteristics of persons aged 15 or older				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
Sex				
Male	250,208	38.1	2,044,069	40.6
Female	407,039	61.9	2,995,113	59.4
Age				
15–24	39,924	6.1	331,208	6.6
25–61	333,552	50.7	2,972,993	59.0
62–74	153,303	23.3	950,828	18.9
75–84	92,216	14.0	551,292	10.9
85 or older	38,252	5.8	232,861	4.6
Marital status				
Married	185,376	28.2	1,363,911	27.1
Widowed	118,658	18.1	791,912	15.7
Divorced	112,369	17.1	1,023,119	20.3
Separated	53,469	8.1	304,374	6.0
Never married	187,375	28.5	1,555,866	30.9
Educational attainment of persons aged 25 or older^b				
Total	617,323	100.0	4,707,974	100.0
No high school diploma	411,783	66.7	2,138,290	45.4
High school graduate only	124,573	20.2	1,446,977	30.7
Some college but no degree	49,398	8.0	640,514	13.6
Associate's degree	13,561	2.2	173,697	3.7
Bachelor's degree or higher	18,008	2.9	308,496	6.6
Poverty among persons aged 15 or older^c				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
Below 100%	283,992	43.2	2,052,513	40.7
100% to 124%	81,716	12.4	535,052	10.6
125% to 149%	51,049	7.8	388,064	7.7
150% or above	240,490	36.6	2,063,553	41.0

(Continued)

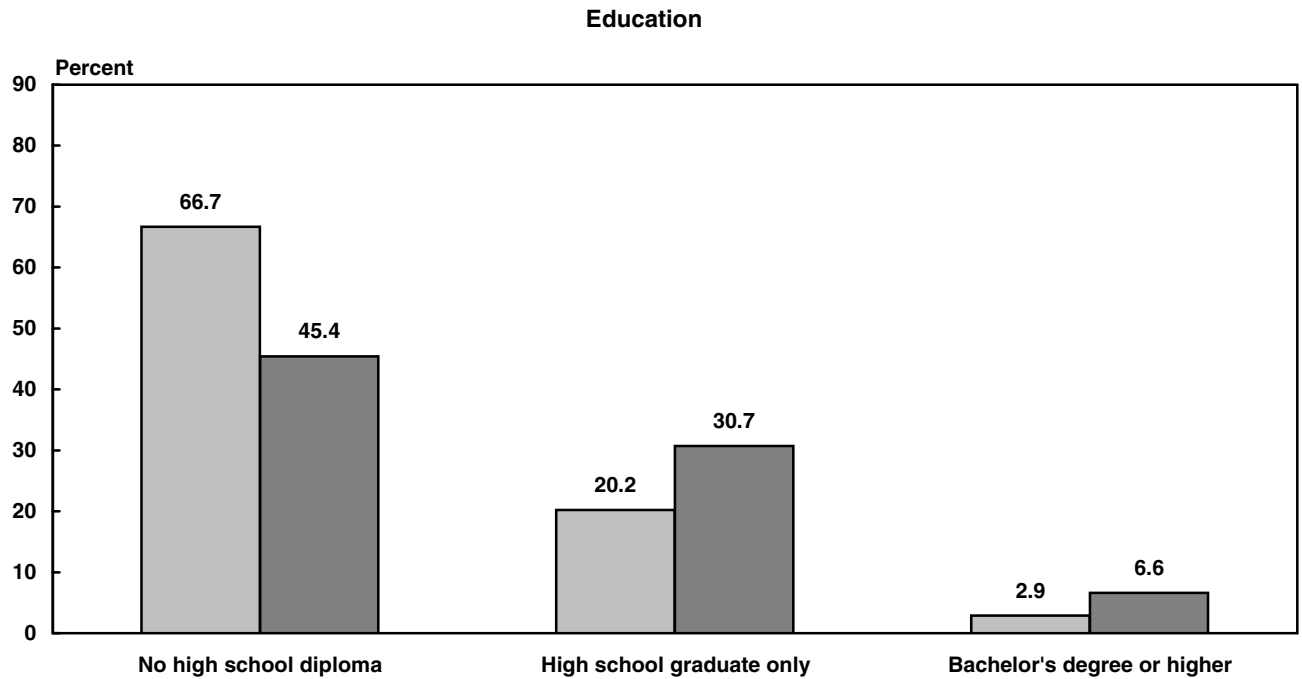
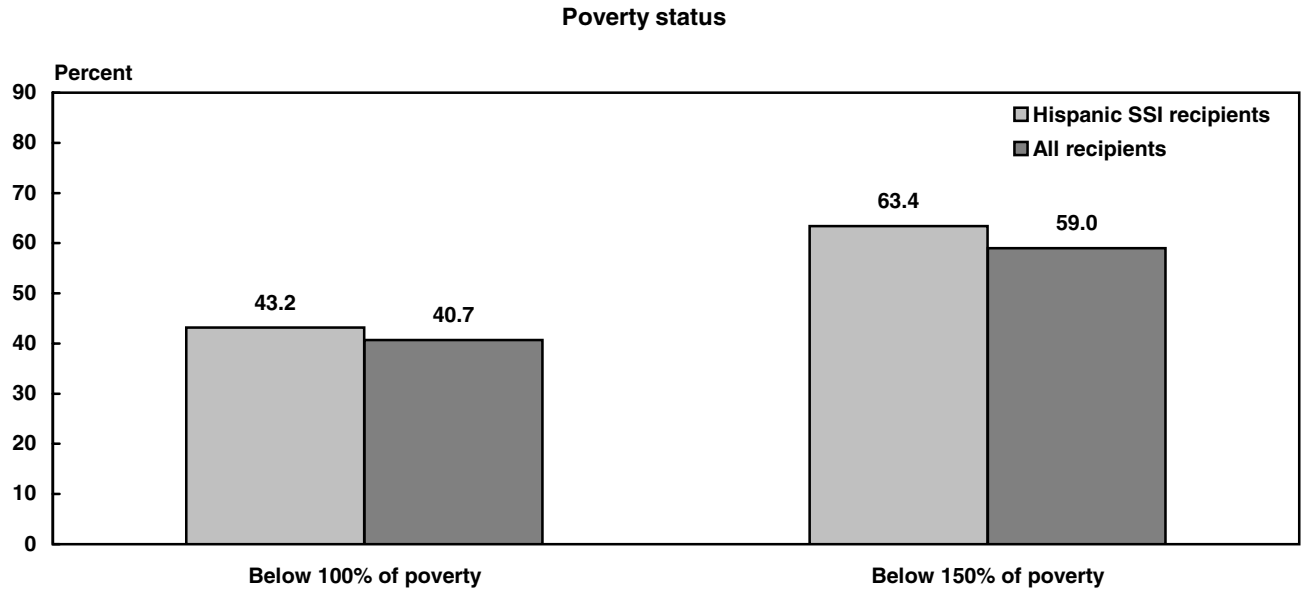
Table 8.
Continued

Characteristic	Hispanic recipients		All recipients	
	Number	As a percentage of total	Number	As a percentage of total
<i>Disability status of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
With disability	611,811	93.1	4,718,101	93.6
Without disability	45,436	6.9	321,081	6.4
<i>Citizenship and nativity of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
U.S. citizenship				
U.S. citizen	546,446	83.1	4,810,331	95.5
Not U.S. citizen	110,801	16.9	228,851	4.5
Nativity				
U.S.-born ^d	401,275	61.1	4,326,677	85.9
Not U.S. -born	255,972	38.9	712,505	14.1
<i>Language of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
Ability to speak English ^e				
English speaker	387,454	59.0	4,482,766	89.0
Non-English speaker	269,793	41.0	556,416	11.0
Language spoken at home				
Only English	119,714	18.2	3,987,513	79.1
Other language ^f	537,533	81.8	1,051,669	20.9
<i>Race of persons aged 15 or older</i>				
Total	657,247	100.0	5,039,182	100.0
White alone	344,955	52.5	3,231,517	64.1
Black or African American alone	13,460	2.0	1,125,967	22.3
American Indian or Alaska native	9,084	1.4	77,774	1.5
Asian or Pacific Islander	2,847	0.4	228,476	4.5
Some other race alone	264,856	40.3	275,541	5.5
Two or more major race groups	22,045	3.4	99,907	2.0

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

- a. The 2005 ACS PUMS does not provide beneficiary and recipient information for persons under age 15.
- b. Educational attainment is restricted by author to persons aged 25 or older.
- c. The Census Bureau does not measure poverty status for unrelated individuals younger than age 15.
- d. U.S.-born includes persons born in the United States, those born abroad to U.S. parents, and those born in Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands according to the Census Bureau.
- e. Defined here as a person who speaks only English at home or who speaks English well or very well in addition to speaking another language at home.
- f. The person speaks another language in addition to or in place of English.

Chart 8.
Poverty status and education of Hispanic Supplemental Security Income recipients and all recipients aged 15 or older, 2005



SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample. See also Table 8 in this article.

Table 9.
Supplemental Security Income payments of Hispanic recipients and all recipients, 2005 (in dollars)

	Hispanic recipients	All recipients
Mean SSI payment		
Annual	5,944	6,420
Monthly	495	535
Distribution, by payment quartile		
First	3,600	4,000
Second	6,000	6,400
Third	7,200	7,500

SOURCE: 2005 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

by ethnic origin. The findings suggest that country of origin is a strong predictor of economic well-being among U.S. Hispanics. Beneficiaries, as a rule, are not consistently worse (or better) off than nonbeneficiaries. This finding suggests that retirement (or, more specifically, Social Security benefit receipt) is not uniformly associated with declines in economic status. Quantifying the diversity across Hispanic groups may aid forecasts of the effects of various program policy options.

The analyses in this article shed some light on the relationship of U.S. Hispanics to Social Security. For instance, the relatively low earnings of Hispanics are of significance to a special aspect of the program: the Social Security benefit formula replaces a higher percentage of preretirement earnings for persons with lower lifetime earnings. Moreover, some Social Secu-

rity reform proposals contain provisions that specifically target augmented benefits to low lifetime earners.

This article, however, contains a cautionary tale regarding retirement policy. The overall economic well-being of Hispanics during their working years and retirement is largely dependent on their success in the labor market, which in turn is strongly related to educational attainment. Thus, a focus only on retirement policy will not address the underlying issues associated with well-being among Hispanics.

Finally, over time the Social Security program will become increasingly important to Hispanics. As today's relatively young Hispanic population ages, more Hispanics will become eligible for the retirement, disability, and survivor benefits available under Social Security.

Notes

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¹ The 6 percent figure is derived from ACS tabulations in Table 7 of this article, and the 15 percent figure is based on unpublished tabulations from the MINT model (see Smith, Cashin, and Favreault [2005] for a description of MINT projection methods).

² Population growth has varied by Hispanic group. For example, the population of Mexican descent grew by 54.4 percent between 1980 and 1990, compared with 35.4 percent and 30.0 percent for those of Puerto Rican and Cuban descent. Also, the 1980s witnessed a substantial increase in immigrants from Central America (Census Bureau 1993).

³ Data from the public-use files of the March 2001–2005 Income Supplement to the Current Population Survey indicate that the percentage of Social Security beneficiaries aged 15 or older who are Hispanic has been growing in recent years—from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 6.1 percent in 2004 (Social Security Administration 2001, 2005, Table 3.C8). Data from the same source also indicate a growing percentage of Hispanic SSI recipients.

⁴ See <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/index.htm> for basic information about the survey, including the questionnaire and data collection procedures. Refer to http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/acs_cpspovcompreport.pdf for more detail about how the ACS survey differs from other government surveys, such as the Current Population Survey.

⁵ The PUMS was released September 11, 2006, with corrected replicate weights for statistical testing. The PUMS data are a subset of the full ACS sample (Census 2006c).

⁶ Matched administrative records can be used to improve information from the survey. Research indicates that some survey respondents are confused about sources of income (for example, some respondents confuse SSI income with Social Security income and vice versa). See Sears and Rupp (2003) for a fuller discussion of this and other issues related to the accuracy of survey data.

⁷ The population counts of Puerto Ricans in the tables in this article include only persons interviewed in the United States as part of the American Community Survey. This article excludes information on residents of Puerto Rico that is collected as part of the Puerto Rico Community Survey. That survey, which began in 2005, may be used in future work on Hispanics by SSA researchers.

⁸ Downs (2003) notes that Hispanic women had the highest fertility rate in 2002 among all race and origin groups.

⁹ The data reported here and in Table 1 illustrate patterns of origin, but they do not measure immigration status. For example, a person who reports Mexican descent may be an immigrant or a person born in the United States. Also note that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens.

¹⁰ Statistics on median age from the 2005 ACS are available at the American FactFinder site maintained by the Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Tables B01002 Median Age by Sex (Total Population) and B01002I Median Age by Sex (Hispanic or Latino).

¹¹ See Table B01002H, Median Age by Sex (White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino) at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

¹² The dollar values for steady low, medium, and high earners in a given year are determined by applying factors (0.45, 1.0, and 1.6) to the year's average wage (computed for SSA program purposes). For 2005, that average wage was \$36,952.94, which is close to the average wage tabulated in the ACS (\$37,069.81).

¹³ Because the overall populations in Table 2 encompass a broad age range, some statistics (earnings and poverty) are also presented for narrower age ranges.

¹⁴ The ACS classifies individuals as disabled on the basis of whether they report sensory, physical, mental, self-care, go-outside-home, or work disabilities. Persons aged 16–64 are classified as disabled if they report at least one of these six types of disability. The go-outside-home and work disabilities questions are not used to assess persons aged 65 or older, and the questions about go-outside-home disability are not used to assess persons aged 5–15.

¹⁵ In the ACS, respondents are considered U.S. citizens if they indicated “they were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (such as Guam), or abroad of American (U.S. citizen) parent or parents” or indicated “they were U.S. citizens through naturalization” (Census Bureau 2006a, 31).

¹⁶ The 2005 ACS PUMS does not provide beneficiary and recipient information for persons under age 15. ACS data also do not allow for detailed analysis by beneficiary or recipient type. In addition to retirement benefits, Social Security provides disability, spouse, survivor, and child benefits. SSI provides payments to eligible blind, disabled, and aged persons.

¹⁷ The ACS definition of disability is not intended to match the definition of disability used in the Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance programs. Rather, its use in this article is to simply illustrate the prevalence of self-reported health problems in various populations.

¹⁸ The ACS lists White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and “Some Other Race” race categories. Persons who select “Some Other Race” are asked to write in the race. The write in entries include general responses such as “interracial,” as well as responses related to origin (for example, “Mexican”).

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