

H | C O D E



The Hispanic Perception Study **2020**



“

The Hispanic community is incredibly powerful, and we are dedicated to leading the movement to help change Hispanic perceptions.

”

Claudia Romo-Edelman
Founder, We Are All Human

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WHY A STUDY ON PERCEPTION?



Hispanics are the biggest minority group within the United States. And yet despite promising figures on economic development, demographic growth, and more, this community feels undervalued, underrepresented, and misperceived (Hispanic Sentiment Study, 2018). These sentiments ultimately affect how Hispanics see themselves in society and the workplace as well as impact their behavior. Additionally, because of a lack of understanding and familiarity with the Hispanic community, various ethnic and racial groups often have a negatively biased (or prejudicial) point of view

towards U.S. Hispanics in many aspects.

Literature on prejudice among social groups identifies the source of prejudice as different forms of fear. In the case of the “other,” people tend to have a “fear of the unknown, a fear of the unfamiliar” and “if fear is the father of prejudice, ignorance is its grandfather”¹. As a result, it is logical to deduce that increased knowledge resulting from increased contact with a particular community will significantly reduce prejudice levels².

Therefore, recognizing the way the Hispanic community is currently perceived by themselves and non-Hispanics is imperative to informing and bringing a greater understanding of this group. In an effort to further familiarity and change negatively biased perceptions, We Are All Human in partnership with H Code conducted the Hispanic Perception Study, looking into the perceptions, misconceptions, expectations, and realities about the community throughout the United States across its various ethnic and racial groups.

By means of this report, American society and the business community are given an unparalleled opportunity to deepen their understanding about this important demographic and to be better equipped to face future political, social, and economic trends. Through this study, the Hispanic community and its allies will inform strategies to fight stereotypes, misconceptions, and other relevant issues so that every Hispanic is seen, heard, and valued.

In order to thoroughly understand the different factors influencing perception of Hispanics, the following sections were analyzed:

- Demographics
- Societal insights
- Culture, discrimination, and language issues
- Representation, depictions, and interactions
- Sources of information
- Political landscape

¹ Stephan and Stephan, “Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice”

² Gordon Allport, “The Nature of Prejudice”

METHODOLOGY

- Quantitative online survey, conducted in English and Spanish
- Conducted nationwide
- 19' length of each interview
- Fieldwork conducted from August 5th to August 20th, 2020
- 2183 total interviews
 - 1128 among U.S. Hispanic respondents
 - 1055 among U.S. general population respondents
- All respondents between 18 and 65 years old

SAMPLE COMPOSITION - HISPANIC RESPONDENTS

- 54% Female, 46% Male
- Highest represented countries of origin: Mexico 46%; Puerto Rico 13%; Cuba 6%
- Highest represented states: California 19%; Florida 16%; Texas 15%
- Household Income: <\$50K 42%; \$50K-\$100K 21%; >\$100K 24%
- Age: 24% 18 to 24; 32% 25 to 34; 22% 35 to 44; 11% 45 to 54; 9% 55 to 64

SAMPLE COMPOSITION - GENERAL RESPONDENTS

- 52% Female, 47% Male
- Highest represented states: Florida 9%; California 8%; New York 8%
- Household Income: <\$50K 44%; \$50K-\$100K 29%; >\$100 K 20%
- Age: 17% 18-24; 22% 25-34; 19% 35-44; 15% 45-54; 18% 55-64
- Ethnicity: 60% White; 16% African American; 9% Asian American; 6% U.S. Hispanic; 2% American Indian or Native of Hawaii

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HISPANICS AS PEOPLE.
POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS.



1/ They are **well liked**, described as “good people,” “hard-workers,” “trustworthy,” “responsible,” “smart,” “proud,” “good at cooking and dancing,” “family-oriented,” “friendly,” and “happy”.

2/ They are **trusted**: most groups would trust them with their most prized possessions, e.g., white Americans would trust them with their own children (62%), their pets (61%), and their homes (54%).

3/ An overwhelming 75% of respondents see them as smart **contributors** who have made a **positive impact** to American society and its economy, work, culture, food, and sports.

- At the same time, 75% in our sample believe Hispanics are not a threat to the American way of life, but a welcome contribution to its richness.

4/ They hold **potential** for upward mobility.

- More than 85% of respondents believe Hispanics participate in leadership positions such as elected office or management roles, when they actually only make up 1% of both local and elected officials and 4% of senior management jobs.
- Hispanics are accurately considered to be concentrated in the middle class and having mostly a High School education level.
- Both white Americans and Hispanics believe Latinos have the potential to advance into high-skilled jobs and sectors, such as technology, engineering, business, health, and industrial.
- 75% of all respondents perceive 2nd generation Hispanics, who comprise 46% of all Latinos in the U.S. and are fully English proficient, to be more educated and successful than their parents and most likely to advance in the social mobility ladder.

HISPANICS AS A COMMUNITY. MISPERCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES.



AGE

- Less than 10% of all respondents accurately estimated how young the Hispanic population really is. In the U.S., 32% of Hispanics are younger than 18 years of age and 58% are younger than 33 (according to the Pew Research Center).
- The age and youth of the U.S. Hispanic community is noteworthy and drastically underestimated. In the coming years, this community will become increasingly important due to their youthfulness in comparison to the rest of the U.S. population.

PLACE OF BIRTH AND LEGAL STATUS

The importance of Hispanics as active participants in American society and the democratic process is greatly underestimated:

- Perception of undocumented Hispanics is vastly overestimated, as most people believe that over 70% of Hispanics are illegally in the country.
- In fact, only 13.4% of Latinos in the U.S. are undocumented, while 86.6% are U.S. citizens or legal residents, according to Pew Research Center.
- Most respondents believe only between 50% and 60% of Latinos are eligible to vote, while in reality as many as 84% are registered to vote.

HISPANIC WOMEN

- Despite the exceptional contributions made by hard-working and intelligent Latinas in many fields and their impact on the creation and growth of myriad small businesses, non-Hispanics only define Latinas using physical stereotypes such as being beautiful, sexy, and loud.
- Conversely, Hispanics have a more holistic view of women, noting their strength of character, intelligence, hard-work, and entrepreneurship – an integral part of the identity of Latinas – while at the same time highly appreciating their physical attributes.

KEY FINDINGS



DEMOGRAPHICS

This is a key component in understanding possible contrasts between perception and reality when it comes to the size and composition of the Hispanic community in the United States.

Most Hispanics are, in fact, documented.

PERCEPTION



Most groups believe only 20-30% of Hispanics are legally in the U.S.

REALITY



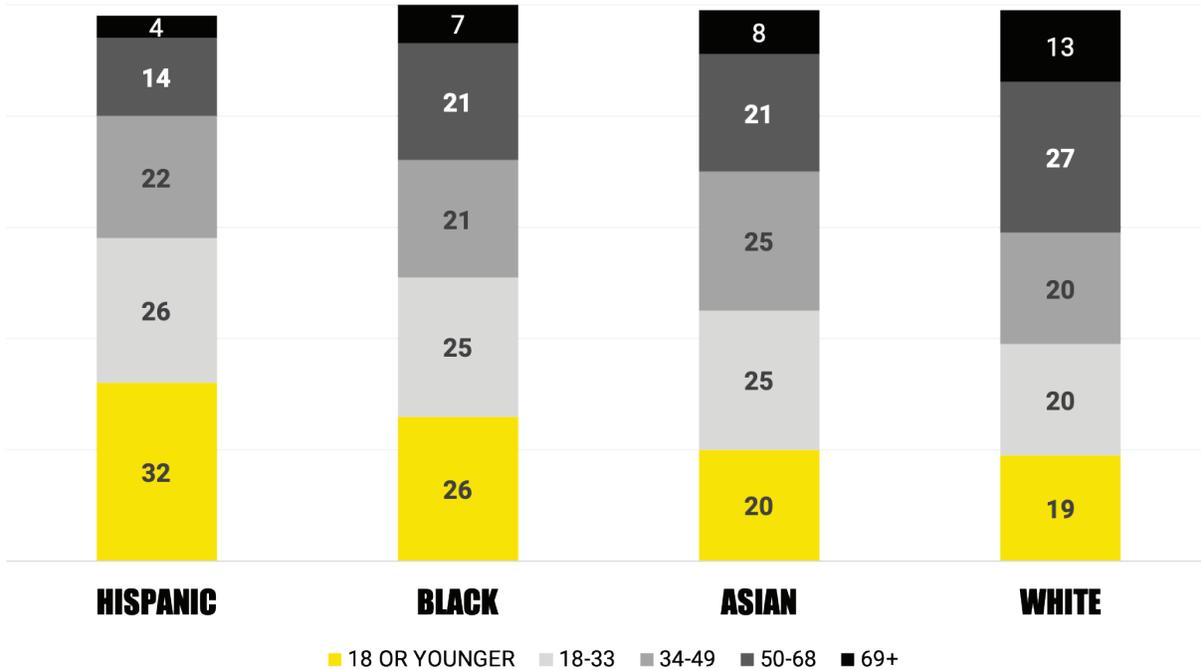
In reality, only 13.4% of U.S. Hispanics are undocumented

While most groups believe that the ratio of U.S. Hispanics to foreign born Hispanics is 6:4, the real ratio is 8:2. While most groups perceive that only 20-30% of Hispanics are legally in the country, the reality is significantly different. Out of the 60.7 million of Hispanics estimated in 2020, 86.6% are either citizens or legal residents in the United States, while only 13.4% are classified as undocumented. White Americans show the closest perception to reality as they estimate the number of undocumented Hispanics to be between 10 to 20% of this cohort.

People do not realize how young Hispanics are.

Everyone, including Hispanics, overestimate the actual age of this cohort: White Americans believe that 78% of Hispanics are aged between 25 and 44 years and Hispanics assign 71% to that age range. In actuality, 58% of Hispanics are younger than 33 years of age and 32% of them are younger than 18 (Pew Research Center).

HISPANICS ARE THE YOUNGEST MAJOR RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES



Pew Research Center

Hispanics are increasingly educated.

When asked about the education level of Hispanics, most groups correctly perceived high school as the highest level of education achieved by them, with 58% of white Americans assigning this educational level to Latinos.

According to the most recent figures, 59% of those Latinos older than 25 years old have completed a high school education and there is an increasing 25% who have achieved some college education.

However, in an interesting example of self-underestimation, 17% of Hispanics believe the educational level of their community to be concentrated on Middle School, with only 10% of white Americans believing so.

SOCIETAL INSIGHTS

Here we acknowledge the way Hispanic contributions to the U.S. are perceived by the general population, at present, and in the future.

Hispanics are perceived as having a positive impact.

Over 75% of respondents overwhelmingly believed that Hispanics have made a **positive impact** in the United States, including their overall contributions to the American economy, perceiving Latinos as the most positively impactful group next to Asian Americans. Connected to that, the strongest words associated with the impact of Hispanics are around work, culture, jobs, food, and sports (mainly soccer and baseball).

Hispanics are ambivalently perceived.

When asked about characteristics that define the perception of Hispanics across all groups, the following results were obtained:

- Positive: hard workers, family-oriented, and happy. These features were mostly utilized to describe Hispanics that respondents stated they know and with whom they have a personal or professional experience.
- Negative: illegal, criminals, and part of gangs. These features were more popular among respondents that have not had a personal or professional experience with Hispanics but have been exposed to the media.

POSITIVE PERCEPTION



NEGATIVE PERCEPTION



Hispanics are trusted.

Perception of Hispanics overall is affected by a very apparent cognitive dissonance: while most groups would trust Hispanics with their most prized possessions, i.e., their own children, pets, and homes (62%, 61%, and 54% of white Americans report so), negative stereotypes of Latinos still find their place with 52%, 20%, and 22% of all respondents associating undocumented, criminal, and part of gangs with Hispanics respectively.

Hispanics think they can move on to other industries while other groups don't share this view.

Hispanics are accurately considered to be concentrated in the middle class and mostly perceived to work in the construction and restaurant/food industries, which corresponds with reality according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Neither Hispanics nor white Americans see Latinos as excluded from high-skilled jobs, with Hispanics envisioning potential

fields of works for their community, such as transportation, retail, accommodation, health, business, among others.

Hispanics embody the American Dream.

U.S. born Hispanics are overwhelmingly perceived as more successful than their parents, particularly those who are 1st generation as they left their countries of origin in search of better opportunities limited to low-paying industries and occupations. In contrast, their children have encountered better access to education which in turn permits better job opportunities and an increasing household income.

Hispanic underrepresentation in leadership positions is not known.

Almost 90% of all respondents, including Hispanics, significantly overestimate the participation of Hispanics in leadership positions. Perception of Hispanics as elected officials or in managerial roles also tends to be overestimated.

However, despite their increasing share of the U.S. population and positive contributions to all aspects in the U.S., Hispanics only make up 1% of both local and elected officials and 4% of senior management roles.

CULTURE, DISCRIMINATION, AND LANGUAGE ISSUES

This section describes the overall perception of Hispanic culture by the general population, including sentiment towards assimilation, discrimination, and Spanish-language usage in public.

The proportion of Mexican American population is underestimated.

The general perception is that only 20-40% of Hispanics are of **Mexican origin**, although 62%, amounting to 37.6M in 2020, of Hispanics in the U.S. are from Mexico.

Hispanic cultural contribution is positively perceived.

Hispanics are strong believers in the need to assimilate, and along with African Americans, they are the most likely to believe Latinos **have assimilated well or very well**.

It was broadly shared among respondents that Hispanics are not seen as destroyers of the American way of life by bringing their own culture. White Americans and Hispanics are the most likely to believe Latino culture to be a contribution rather than a threat to the American way of life.

REPRESENTATION, DEPICTION, AND INTERACTION

This section aims at understanding how the general population feels about the way Hispanics are represented and depicted in the media and public opinion in general, vis-à-vis their own way of acknowledging Latinos.

Differentiating features.

When asked how respondents would know whether a person is of Hispanic origin, people mostly believe the accent when speaking

English is the best identifier. Additionally, facial features are considered another good way of telling if someone is Hispanic.

However, both can be misleading, especially since most 2nd and further generation Hispanics are adamant about losing or speaking without a Hispanic accent. Certain facial features are also not common among all Hispanics as the community is incredibly diverse and comprises different racial groups.

Hispanics defined in words.

In terms of **sentiment**, overall Hispanics are perceived as being **good at cooking** and **dancing** as well as being **hard-working, family-oriented, happy, responsible, smart, and proud**. At the same time, Latinas are described as **beautiful, sexy, and loud**. Unfortunately, no associations beyond appearance were ascribed to Hispanic women by respondents.

When asked to **provide positive words** associated with Hispanics, most ethnic groups agreed upon **hard-working, friendly, and good people**. Most of the time respondents said they had **no negative words** to associate with Hispanics. Nevertheless, when prompted to choose three negative words, the descriptors chosen are **illegal, lazy, and criminal**, once again resonating stereotypes formed by current political and media narratives.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS



There are three dissonant dimensions in the way U.S. Hispanics are perceived by all groups in our study.

As people, Hispanics are overwhelmingly perceived in a positive manner. Five main characteristics define this positive perception of Latinos:

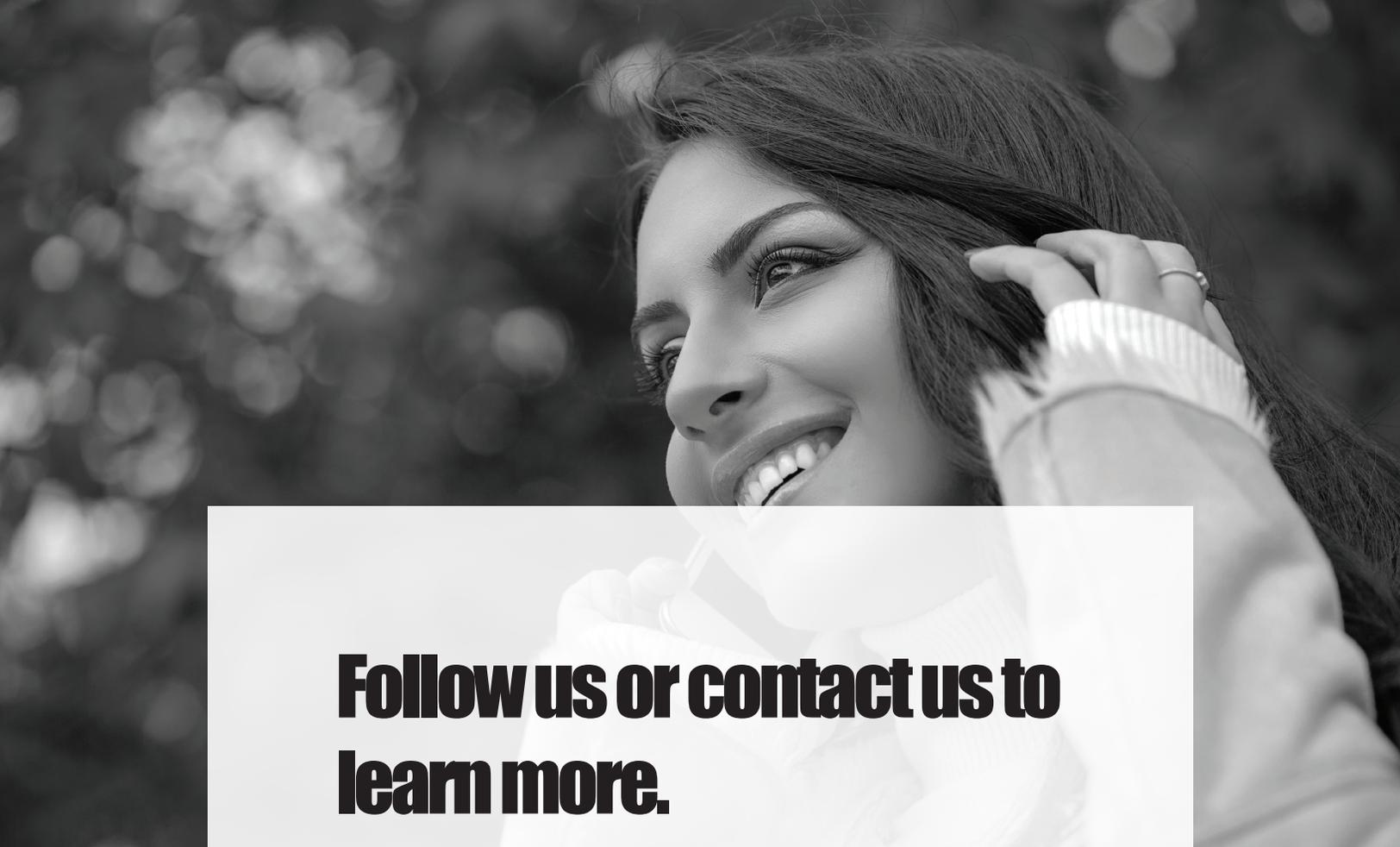
- Liked
- Trusted
- Smart contributors to American society, economy and culture
- Holding strong potential for upward mobility
- Are proficient English speakers

As a community, perception of Hispanics is overshadowed by the dominant public opinion issue of **immigration**, which leads to an apparent underestimation of their collective power, impact, and true potential. The areas where this misperception is manifested are:

- Age: The youth of the Hispanic community is not accurately perceived
- Place of birth and Legal status: Most respondents, including Hispanics, dramatically underestimate the number of Latinos that are documented in the country, as the vast majority of them are documented and registered to vote

Latinas as a group are only defined by their appealing physical features, thus not getting the credit they deserve as exceptional contributors to society.

By means of this study and by identifying these relevant patterns and sources, we can conclude the importance of increasing awareness and familiarity with this powerful community. As a result of the Hispanic Perception Study, the Hispanic community and its allies will find themselves in a better position to inform themselves and others and reduce misconceptions in a positive and impactful way. We Are All Human and H Code remain dedicated to improving the understanding of Hispanics by changing perception of the community as a whole and of Latinas in particular.



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learn more.**

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