Profile of Hispanic Culture

Overview

The U.S. Hispanic population is highly diverse, geographically dispersed, and one of the fastest growing population segments in the country.

Among the largest subgroups of this population are Hispanics who trace their roots to Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. Distinctions within these subgroups can be identified based on country of origin, place of residence, language variants, degree of acculturation, and other self-identified factors.

Despite these cultural distinctions, the Latino population shares several cultural similarities, including the importance of respect, family values, deterministic beliefs (fatalismo), and communication style.

It is important to identify the degree of such similarities and differences among Hispanics subgroups when creating a strategy to effectively communicate with them about health issues.

Cultural Similarities

**Family values, such as familismo, are an integral part of the Latino culture.** (Llapur, 2003)

A majority of Hispanics identify as practicing religion. They exhibit strong faith and belief systems. About two-thirds specifically identify as Roman Catholic. (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008)

42% of Hispanics are more likely to retain information from sources that depict information in creative ways and use the latest technological advancements. (AHAA: A Voice of Hispanic Marketing, 2010)

**Fatalismo:** Also known as determinism from God. It is a cultural commonality among Hispanics due to the religious traditions acquired from Catholicism. Fatalismo blends into other aspects of Hispanics’ lives and influences their beliefs surrounding health and cause of illness.

**Familismo:** placing the multigenerational, informal extended family at the center of the culture.

Latinos are younger than the non-Hispanic U.S. population: 27.2 years versus 39.7 years. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)

3.1% of Latinos are 65 years and older. (American Community Survey, 2011)
Cultural Differences

Subgroups are dispersed throughout specific areas of the country. Within these regional pockets of Hispanic subgroups are unique cultural attributes that are influenced by environmental, socioeconomic, political, and other similar factors.

61% of all Mexicans in the U.S. live in either California or Texas.  
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)

At 52%, Puerto Ricans account for the largest Hispanic subgroup in New York and the northeastern part of the country. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012)

Salvadorans are the largest Hispanic subgroup in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)

65% of Cubans live in Florida, which making them the largest Hispanic subgroup in the state. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012)

Other Factors

Migration patterns among certain subgroups. Certain Latin American subgroups have had waves of migration from their countries before or after the 1990s.

English speaking capabilities differ among subgroups. 35% of U.S. Latinos report having difficulties speaking or understanding English.

Education levels also vary among Hispanic subgroups. 13% of all U.S. Hispanics report having obtained at least a bachelor’s degree.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012

Conclusion

U.S. Hispanics are a highly diverse and regionally dispersed population. As the research reflects, Latinos face several challenges to obtaining greater financial stability, housing security, and overall health. Additionally, Hispanics often encounter one-dimensional stereotypes of their cultures and traditions, which can make other barriers more difficult to overcome.

Ultimately, understanding the similarities and differences of this diverse population is crucial in order for organizations to deliver their message effectively and provide a higher quality of care for Latinos across the country.

For additional information about the National Hispanic SMP program please contact us 1-866-488-7679 or at nhsmp@nhcoa.org.