

Overview

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic poverty rate continued its recent trend and declined between 1998 and 1999 and is now at its lowest recorded level since 1978. Despite the recent drop, however, Latinos are still three times more likely than White non-Hispanics to be poor. Hispanic children, in particular, are significantly affected by poverty. In addition, Hispanic part-time workers, specifically Latinas and minority women across the board, remain disproportionately poor. Given the demographic growth of the U.S. Latino population and its youthfulness, the persistence of high poverty for Latino families and children is one of the nation's greatest economic policy challenges.

Hispanic Poverty

- ◆ **The poverty rate for Hispanics has declined significantly since 1998, but remains high.** In 1999, the Hispanic poverty rate decreased to 22.8% from 25.6% in 1998. In comparison, the Black poverty rate dropped to 23.6% from 26.1%, while the White non-Hispanic poverty rate declined from 8.2% to 7.7% during the same time period.
- ◆ **The Hispanic poverty rate is at its lowest level in two decades.** In 1999, about one-quarter of Latinos (22.8%) were poor, the lowest poverty rate since 1978 (21.6%).
- ◆ **Hispanic full-time, year-round workers continue to be more likely than any other group to be considered "working poor."** In 1999, 7.0% of Hispanic full-time, year-round workers were poor, compared to 1.6% and 4.4% of similar non-Hispanic White and Black workers, respectively.
- ◆ **Poverty for Hispanic part-time workers has remained steady and is twice the rate for non-Hispanic Whites and lower than that of Blacks.** Latino part-time workers in 1999 had a poverty rate of 23.9%. In comparison, Black part-time workers had a higher poverty rate of 36.9%, while similar non-Hispanic Whites had a poverty rate of 9.6%.

Hispanic Family Poverty

- ◆ **Poverty for Hispanic families has decreased significantly in recent years but remains high.** In 1999, the Hispanic family poverty rate fell to 20.2%, a 20 year low from its peak of 27.8% in 1994. In comparison, the 1999 and 1994 overall U.S. family poverty rate was 9.3% and 11.6%, respectively.
- ◆ **Hispanic families remain among the poorest of American families.** In 1999, one out of five Hispanic families was poor (20.2%). Similarly, the Black family poverty rate was 21.9%, while White non-Hispanic families had a poverty rate of 5.5%.
- ◆ **Poverty remains high for Hispanic families with children.** The poverty rate for Hispanic families with children dropped from its highest level of 34.3% in 1993 to 25.0% in 1999, its lowest level since 1983 (21.1%). However, despite this recent decline, poverty for Latino

families with children is almost as high as the rate for Black families with children (28.9%), and more than triple the rate for White non-Hispanic families with children (8.0%).

- ◆ Although the poverty rate of Hispanic married-couple families declined between 1994 and 1999, they are still twice as likely as Black married-couple families, and more than four times as likely as White non-Hispanic married-couple families to be poor. In 1999, the poverty rate for Latino married-couple families was 14.2%, dropping from its peak of 19.5% in 1994. In comparison, in 1999, the poverty rates for Black and White non-Hispanic married-couple families were 7.1% and 3.3%, respectively.
- ◆ While poverty among Hispanic female-headed families is at its lowest level in a decade, Hispanic single-mother families are still more likely to be poor than comparable non-Hispanic White families. In 1999, almost two in five (38.8%) Hispanic female-headed families were poor, compared to 1989 when nearly half (47.5%) were poor. Similarly, the 1999 poverty rate for Black female-headed families was 39.3% (in 1989, their poverty rate was 46.5%), comparable to that of Latinos. Even so, in 1999, non-Hispanic White female-headed families had a significantly lower poverty rate (18.6%) than Hispanics or Blacks.

Hispanic Child Poverty

- ◆ In spite of declines since 1990, a significant proportion of Hispanic and Black children continues to be poor. In 1999, about three in ten (30.3%) Hispanic children and about one-third (33.1%) of Black children were poor, a decrease of 8.1 and 11.7 percentage points since 1990. In comparison, in 1999, 9.4% of White non-Hispanic children were poor, a decline of 2.9 percentage points since 1990.
- ◆ Child poverty is highest for Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, lowest for Cubans. In 1998, more than two-fifths (43.5%) of Puerto Rican and more than one-third (35.4%) of Mexican children were poor. By comparison, more than one-fourth (26.6%) of Central and South American children, and more than one-sixth (16.4%) of Cuban children under the age of 18 were poor.

Hispanic Subgroup Poverty

- ◆ Puerto Ricans have the highest poverty rate of all Hispanic subgroups. In 1998, (30.9%) of Puerto Ricans lived below the poverty line, followed by Mexicans (27.1%), Central and South Americans (19.9%) , and Cubans (13.6%).
- ◆ Among Hispanic families, Puerto Ricans are the most likely to be poor. One in four (26.7%) Puerto Rican families were poor in 1998. By comparison, almost one-quarter (24.4%) of Mexican families, fewer than one in five (18.5%) Central and South American families, and one in nine (11.0%) Cuban families were poor in 1998.

Sources

- ◆ *Poverty in the United States: 1999*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- ◆ *Hispanic Population of the United States, Current Population Survey-March 1999*, Detailed Tables, U.S. Bureau of the Census.