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CSS Study Shows that NYC's Increasing Latino Youth Population Face Significant Education and Employment Challenges

New Report Says Special Attention Should Be Given

A new policy brief by the Community Service Society (CSS), "Latino Youth In New York City: School, Work, and Income Trends for New York's Largest Group of Young People," argues that it is time to pay special attention to Latino young people, who make up the largest share of the New York City population between the ages of 16 and 24.

"The Latino community in New York City is becoming the new majority with Latino youth shaping the ethnic landscape in our city," said David R. Jones, President and CEO of CSS. "Our report illustrates why it is essential to have a new public conversation about the Latino experience in New York City and why policies, programs and services must reflect their educational, employment and social needs."

The report analyzes data showing that Latino youth have the lowest school enrollment of any ethnicity, and young Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, the two largest Latino sub-groups, have extremely low rates of employment. Puerto Rican youth, in particular, stand out as having alarmingly high rates of disconnection from school and work.

The report presents data that Latino youth are largely English-speaking – 85 percent speak the language well or very well – so investing in solutions to assist these young people will require approaches other than English Language Learner (ELL) efforts. "This report shows that we need to start discussions about targeted policy investments in Latino young people that go far beyond ELL classes in schools," added Juan Cartagena, Vice President for Advocacy at CSS.

The report looks at different national origins among Latino youth, describes the different school, work, and poverty trends within the population, and argues against using a broad brush to describe Latino young people.

A greater percentage of Latino youth live in poor and near-poor households than any other racial group. According to Lazar Treschan, Director of Youth Policy at CSS and author of the report argues that "we need to address the fact that Latino young people live in poor or near-poor households at nearly twice the rate of white youth. This study shows that our City is not adequately preparing the largest portion of its future workforce to contribute to our economy and civic infrastructure."

Last year, CSS, under the direction of Juan Cartagena, began developing a policy agenda to address Latino concerns in New York City. Two Latino forums, led by Cartagena, entitled *“Barriers to Latino Engagement in NYC Economy: Lessons Learned from CSS Research”* and the second conference, *“Building Community: Latino Political and Civic Engagement,”* began exploring affordable housing, health care disparities, deficits in educational opportunity, immigrants and overall engagement for New York’s growing Latino community. The results from the forums led to a Latino policy agenda, including a closer look at the diversity and issues associated with various Latino groups. Jones said, “When we looked deeper at different national origins among Latino youth, we saw differences that caution us against using a broad brush to describe the population. The report details some of the different dynamics among different national groups within the Latino youth community, which are essential to developing a policy agenda.”

Citywide, there are more than 150,000 youth between the ages of 16 -24, who remain disconnected from work and school. A large majority of these young people are Latino or African-American.

Key data points from “New York City’s Future Looks Latino: Latino Youth in New York City.”

- Only 55 percent of native-born Puerto Ricans attend school in New York City, significantly below the rates for any other native-born Latino youth nationalities, and lower than black youth (61%).
- Latinos born here have the highest percentage of individuals without a high school or equivalent diploma at 34 percent, more than black young people (29%), and far exceeding the rates of whites (10%) and Asians (7%). Far more blacks (42%) and Latinos (38%) leave school with no more than a high school diploma than whites (25%) or Asians (18%).
- Young Puerto Rican males show rates of non-engagement in school or work that are far greater than their male Latino peers. When we add the number of unemployed to the number of disconnected, we find that one in four (24.6%) Puerto Rican males are out of school and out of work. This figure is higher than that of black male youth (23.7%), who often receive attention as the population with the greatest barriers to success, and triple that of white male youth.
- Latino youth live in households with the highest rates of poverty. Twenty-eight percent of Latino youth households are poor (under 100% of FPL), and 56 percent are “low income” (either poor or “near poor,” under 200% of FPL). By comparison, 44 percent of black and Asian youth live in low-income households.

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For 165 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation’s largest city.