



Latinos In Hennepin County



In recent years, a stream of new Latino residents has flowed into Hennepin County made up of people from many different races, nationalities, political and economic backgrounds.¹ Nationally, Latinos are gaining power both politically and economically.

Over the past decade Latinos have come to Hennepin County in search of better work and educational opportunities, to reunite with family members, to have a better quality of life and a safer, healthier environment in which to raise their families.² Now, more than ever, government agencies need to understand this new community, the strengths it brings and the barriers to its success as all signs point to continued growth.

*The Latino population grew by **225.1 percent** between 1990 and 2000.*

*In Hennepin County, Latinos make up **4.1 percent** of the total population, however Latino children make up **9.0 percent** of all children.*

*The median age of the Latino population was **24.1 years** in 2000, almost 11 years younger than the median age of the total population in Hennepin County.*

U.S. Immigration Trends from Latin America

The influx of Latinos is not just a Hennepin County phenomenon. Latino immigration is shifting population and cultural dynamics across the nation.³

- Latinos have surpassed African-Americans as the largest minority group in the United States.⁴
- In Nebraska, one out of every eight children born is Latino.⁵ In 2001, approximately one of every 14 children born in Minnesota and approximately one of every eight children born in Hennepin County was Latino.⁶
- Dominicans have surpassed Puerto Ricans as the largest Latino group in New York and Cuban-Americans are longer the dominant nationality among Latinos in Miami.⁷
- The major U.S. political parties are recognizing that the burgeoning Latino community is a political force to contend with. During the 2000 presidential election both parties actively sought the Latino vote. In addition, in May 2002 the National Republican Party launched Abriendo Caminos (Forging New Paths), a Web site and Spanish-language television news magazine, to communicate with Latinos about political issues and initiatives.⁸

Several characteristics of recent Latin American immigration to the United States are unique.

- 1. Economic restructuring, and sociocultural changes taking place in the Americas, virtually ensure that Latino immigration will be a long-term phenomenon.⁹*
- 2. Various unilateral efforts, such as border control, will not by themselves change the current immigration momentum.*
- 3. Latin American immigrants are in the United States to stay, a trend that is different from previous eras of immigration.¹⁰*

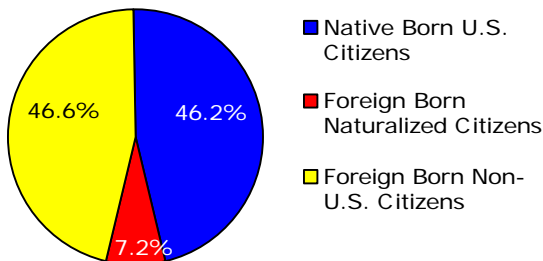




Population Trends in Hennepin County

- Between 1980 and 2000, the total Latino population increased by 466 percent. It grew from less than 1 percent of the total population (0.8 percent), to 4.1 percent.¹¹
- Census 2000 counted 45,439 Hispanic/Latino individuals living in Hennepin County.¹²
- Almost half, 46.2 percent, of all Latinos living in Hennepin County were born in the United States.¹³

Citizenship Status of Latinos in Hennepin County, 2000



Source: Census 2000

- Among residents born in Latin America and now living in Hennepin County, almost three-quarters were born in Central America (including México).¹⁴

Foreign Born Population Born in Latin America, Hennepin County, 2000

	Total	Percent
Total Latin America:	26,994	100%
Caribbean:	1,530	5.7%
Barbados	46	0.2%
Cuba	267	1.0%
Dominican Republic	138	0.5%
Haiti	83	0.3%
Jamaica	553	2.0%
Trinidad and Tobago	240	0.9%
Other Caribbean	203	0.8%
Central America:	19,721	73.1%
Mexico	17,681	65.5%
Other Central America:	2,040	7.6%
Costa Rica	125	0.5%
El Salvador	813	3.0%
Guatemala	624	2.3%
Honduras	251	0.9%
Nicaragua	104	0.4%
Panama	113	0.4%
Other Central America	10	0.0%
South America:	5,743	21.3%
Argentina	281	1.0%
Bolivia	217	0.8%
Brazil	281	1.0%
Chile	130	0.5%
Colombia	628	2.3%
Ecuador	2,165	8.0%
Guyana	1,206	4.5%
Peru	364	1.3%
Venezuela	161	0.6%
Other South America	310	1.1%

Source: Census 2000

South Minneapolis Neighborhoods "Ports of Entry"

Since 1980, the Latino community in Minneapolis has increased in size by 523 percent.¹⁵

Phillips and Whittier neighborhoods are described as "ports of entry" for Latinos.¹⁶ In 2000, 17.0 percent of the Latino population in Hennepin County -- or approximately one of every five Latinos -- lived in two neighborhoods in South Minneapolis.¹⁷

Neighborhoods in South Minneapolis have experienced an influx of Mexican immigrants. Northeast Minneapolis' Central and University neighborhoods have a growing Ecuadorian and Peruvian community, and a cluster of Salvadorans have settled in Richfield.¹⁸



27th Street and Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis

Suburban Hennepin County

In 1999, 43.5 percent of Hennepin County's Latinos lived in the suburbs.¹⁹ By 2000, that number had dropped to a little more than one-third of the Latino population.

Large migrations of Latinos to "port of entry" Minneapolis communities during the 1990s have offset the percent of Latinos in suburban Hennepin County. It is likely that the number of Latinos in Minneapolis will shift as second and third generation Latinos move into the suburbs.²⁰

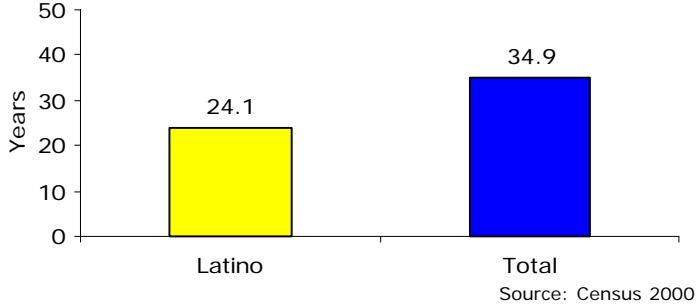




Age

Latinos are younger than the total population. Recent immigration has brought many young Latinos to Hennepin County looking for work and to raise their children in a safe environment.

Median Age, Hennepin County, 2000

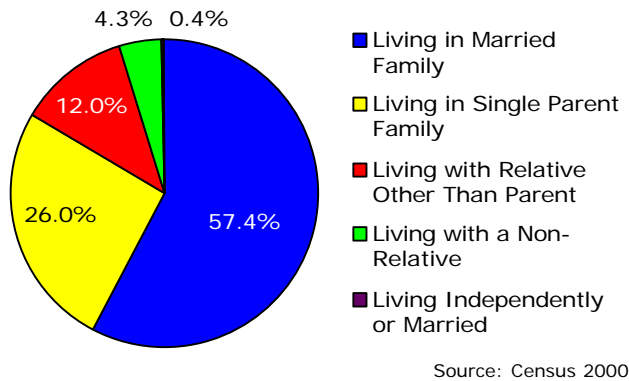


These new, young residents have the potential to augment the labor force as baby-boomers retire over the next several years, if resources are dedicated to enhancing their skills and education.

Children and Families

A majority of Latino children (57.4 percent) live with both their parents. Thirty-eight percent of Latino children live with one parent or another relative.²¹ This may be due, in part, to immigration patterns in which a few family members migrate initially, with others following at a later date.

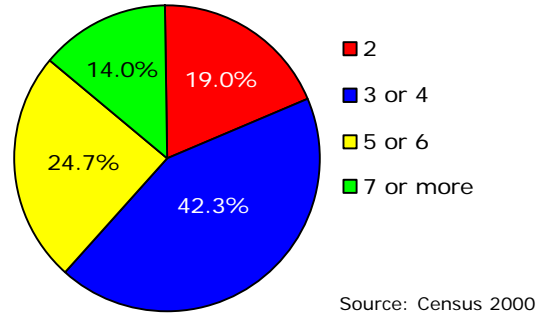
Household Type for Latino Children under 18 in Hennepin County, 2000



In Hennepin County, the average size of a Latino family is 3.9 persons, compared with 3.1 for the total population.²²

Latino families in Hennepin County vary in size. While Latinos are more likely to live in multigenerational homes, 61.3 percent have a family size of four or fewer members.²³

Family Size as a Percent of All Latino Families, Hennepin County, 2000





Income

Income in the Latino community varies. While some are doing very well, others aren't faring as well.²⁴

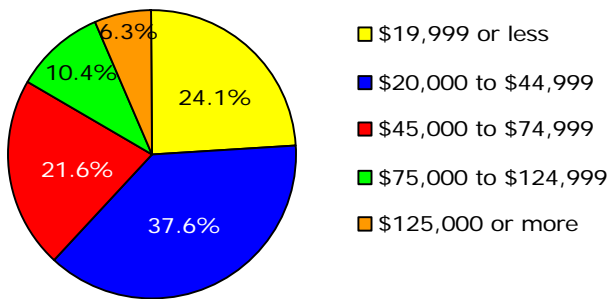
Individuals

- Per capita income for Latino individuals in 1999 was \$13,183, compared with \$28,789 for the total population.

Families

- The median family income for families with a householder who is Latino in 1999 was \$35,657.
- Almost one-quarter had an income of less than \$20,000 in 1999.
- Approximately one-sixth of families earned \$75,000 or more in 1999.

Family Income with Latino Householder, Hennepin County, 1999



Source: Census 2000

Households

- The median household income for Latino householders was \$37,054 in 1999.

Key Strengths of the Hennepin County Latino Community

Entrepreneurialism

"In the Latino Community, most entrepreneurial residents are more orientated to commerce than social services, and so are far more likely to start a business than an organization."²⁵

Latino immigrants have enlivened the small business community. Nicollet Avenue is now home to Latino supermarkets, restaurants, music and clothing stores. El Mercado Central on Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue in South Minneapolis has given its home community an economic boost (see below).

Mercado Central is a member-owned cooperative of Latino businesses. Designed by its members to recreate a traditional Latin American market, the Mercado offers a variety of fresh and prepared foods, imported art, music, handicrafts and more. The Mercado also functions as a small business incubator.

The vision for Mercado Central was developed over a three-year period by Latino graduates of the Neighborhood Development Center, Inc. (NDC) Spanish language training classes, offered in partnership with Whittier CDC/Interfaith Action (Minneapolis) and Riverview Economic Development Association (St. Paul).

As increasing numbers of Latinos completed NDC's training, they recognized a shared need for commercial space. In January 1997, a core group of business owners incorporated as a cooperative and Mercado Central was born.

For the next two years, NDC worked collaboratively with the Mercado Board, Whittier CDC, Interfaith Action and Project for Pride in Living to develop the cooperative, train and finance the businesses, rehabilitate and design the facility, and develop operations and marketing plans. The hard work came to fruition on July 31, 1999 with a three-day grand-opening celebration attended by 5,000 people.

NDC continues to support the Mercado by providing incubator services to the 49 tenant businesses. The incubator is now at 100 percent occupancy, with a waiting list of many Latino business owners interested in joining the project. The Mercado has been recognized nationally as a model of cooperation between the community, non-profits and government agencies. Cities in other areas are now trying to implement similar cooperative developments.²⁶



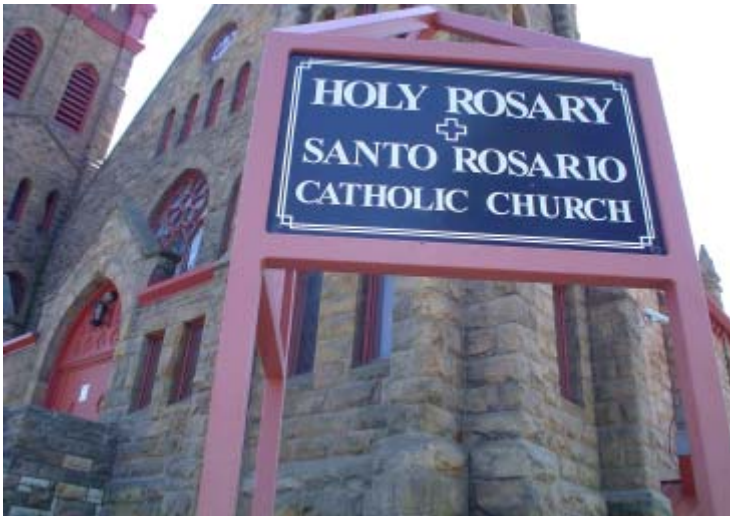


Community Support Systems and Networking

When Latino focus group participants were asked what or who helped them when they came to Minneapolis, many spoke of their families, the ability to work and support from Latino social service organizations and churches serving the community.²⁷

Many churches in Hennepin County now deliver masses and services in Spanish. Churches also provide a doorway into the Latino community for researchers in search of interview subjects and focus group participants.²⁸

Although the growing Latino population has resulted in an increase in the number of Latino nonprofit organizations, Latino organizations remain the lowest in number per capita when compared with other organizations in Minnesota. In 1997, there was one organization per 2,035 Latinos in Minnesota, compared with one organization per 1,000 Minnesota residents overall.^{29, 30}

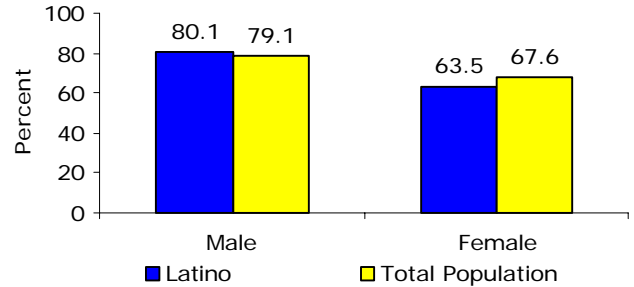


Santo Rosario, founded by European immigrants 125 years ago, was on the verge of being closed down a decade ago as the congregation had aged and many parishioners had passed away. The rapidly growing Latino population has reinvigorated the church and today several thousand attend services, delivered in Spanish and English, each week. In addition, the church hosts ESL, sewing and computer classes and has a social worker on-site to assist parishioners. "We've come full circle," says Joe McDermott, the church's maintenance engineer for more than 20 years. "Immigrants started this church 125 years ago and now immigrants have saved it."

Self-Reliance

Latinos participate in the labor force at a rate that is consistent with that of the total population.

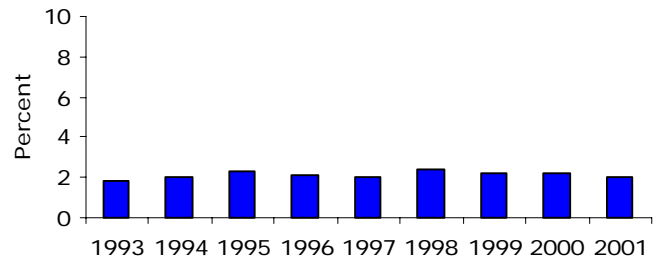
Percent Age 16 and Over Active in Labor Force by Gender, Hennepin County, 2000



Source: Census 2000

Even though Latinos make up 3.6 percent of the total Hennepin County population age 18 and over, in 2000 they comprised just 2.2 percent of all MFIP clients.³¹ This number has remained low, even with the influx of new immigrants during the 1990s.

Latinos Age 18 and Up as a Percent of the Total MFIP Population, Hennepin County, 1993-2001



Source: Hennepin County Economic Assistance Department

Latina women who were born in the United States and who speak English are more likely to struggle with self-reliance.

Fuerza Unida,³² a community-based initiative led by Casa de Esperanza,³³ conducted a study of 107 Latina women on St. Paul's East Side. The findings conclude that Latina women who were born in the U.S. and speak English were less likely to have the support of a partner and less likely to turn to friends and family for help, but more likely to earn less money, to receive MFIP, to rate their quality of life as lower, and to turn to government or social services for assistance.





Key Challenges for the Hennepin County Latino Community

When Latinos are asked about the issues and problems that make life more difficult in Minneapolis, their responses include language barriers, the stress of a fast paced life, the climate, immigration, transportation, competition, loneliness and discrimination.³⁴ Other stressors include domestic abuse and its connection to immigration issues, health care coverage and poverty.

Immigration Status

Latinos are reluctant to access government services for themselves or their children due to a general fear and distrust of "la migra," or immigration authorities.³⁵

Domestic abuse is of particular concern in the Latino community as it relates to immigration status. It is common for abusers to threaten their partner, who is dependent on them for continued legal residency, with reporting them to immigration. This type of domestic abuse is so common that legislation was created in 1994 under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that allows abused spouses and their children to file for residency or citizenship apart from their abuser.³⁶

Domestic Violence and Immigration Law

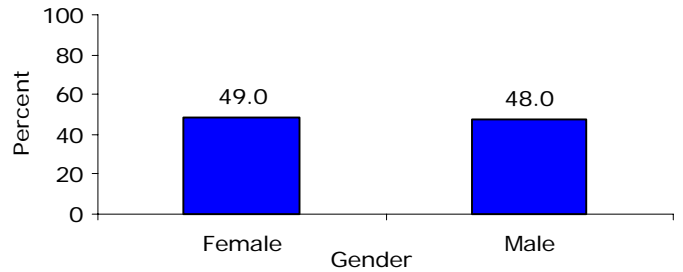
The early 1990s saw a growing recognition among lawmakers of the devastating affects immigration law and procedure had on immigrant victims of domestic violence. The first piece of legislation that recognized domestic violence as a problem experienced by immigrants dependent on their abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident spouses for legal immigration status was the "battered spouse waiver" (INA § 216(c)(4), 8 U.S.C. § 1186a(c)(4) (2001)

In 1993, The House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary found that domestic battery problems are "terribly exacerbated in marriages where one spouse is not a citizen and the non-citizens' legal status depends on his or her marriage to the abuser," because it places control entirely in the hands of the citizen or lawful permanent resident. To combat this problem, Congress enacted special protections for immigrants abused by their citizen or lawful permanent resident spouses or parents in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA, 1994). VAWA contains provisions that limit the ability of the abuser to use immigration laws to threaten and control their immigrant spouse or children.³⁷

Education/English as a Second Language

In 2000, less than half of all Latino students graduated high school in four years.³⁸ Language is a barrier to school success for students who do not speak English, and financial hardship can also take its toll on academic performance.

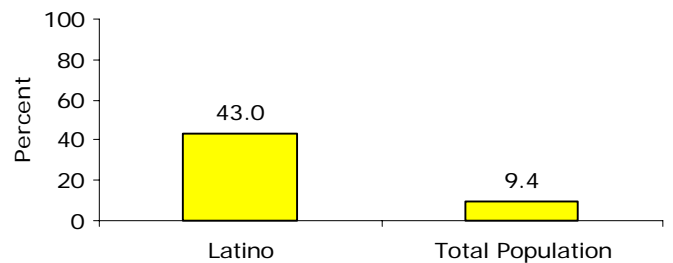
Percent of Latino High School Completion Within Four Years in Hennepin County Public Schools by Gender, Class of 2000



Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning

Almost half (43.0 percent) of the Hennepin County Latino population age 25 and over is lacking a high school diploma or GED. This is a rate that is almost five times greater than the total population. However, even though many Latinos lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, 18.0 percent of Latinos living in Hennepin County have a bachelor's, graduate or other professional degree.³⁹

Percent of Adults Age 25 and Over With Less Than a High School Diploma or Equivalent, Hennepin County, 2000



Source: Census 2000





Adult Latino immigrants repeatedly express a need for additional English as a Second Language (ESL) education. They acknowledge the need for English skills in the workplace and notice the disparity between their English skills and those of their children.⁴⁰

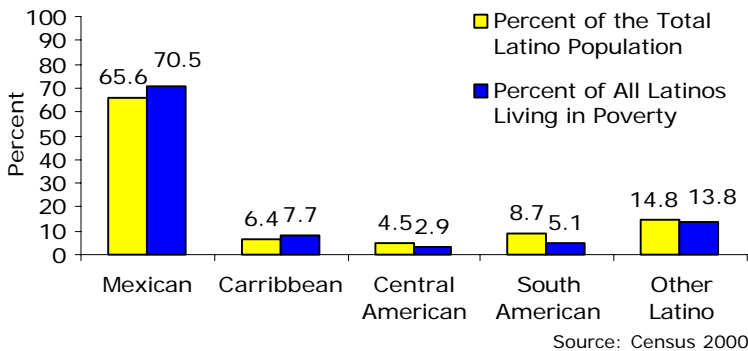
Poverty

Although some Latinos in Hennepin County have opened their own small businesses, others are still struggling to meet their basic needs in low-paying jobs. In general, Latino families are more likely to live in poverty than the overall population.⁴¹

- In 1999, 16.9 percent of Latino families lived below the poverty threshold, compared with 5.0 percent of the total population of families.
- In Hennepin County in 1999, 20.4 percent of Latinos lived below the poverty threshold, compared with 8.3 percent of the total population.

Among Latinos living in poverty, disparities exist depending on the country of origin. Latinos from Mexico are more likely to be living in poverty than Latinos from Central America and South America (see chart below).

Percent of Latinos Living in Poverty Compared With Percent of Total Latino Population by Nationality, Hennepin County, 2000



Health Care Coverage

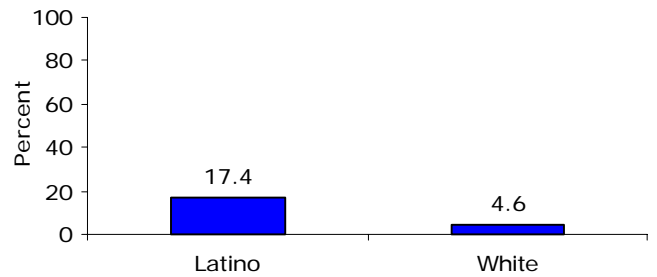
Obtaining health care coverage is a challenge for the Latino community. Many new immigrants arrive without health insurance and are employed in jobs that do not offer health insurance or, if insurance is offered, it is too expensive.

In 2001, the Minnesota Health Access Survey found that, "Hispanics have a higher rate of private coverage (in Minnesota) but are significantly less likely than blacks and American Indians to be enrolled in public programs, perhaps because of language barriers or issues of trust."⁴³

For many Latino immigrants, the U.S. health care system is difficult to maneuver, the concept of health insurance and the role of public programs is confusing, the cost of coverage is high and fear exists related to immigration status.⁴⁴

Many Latino focus group participants know about county public assistance programs (for health care coverage), but say that the county system is so large and has so many staff members that they don't know who to contact. Often times, even when they know where to go for help they find that many county employees do not speak Spanish, making communication difficult and uncomfortable. A high level of frustration was expressed with answering machines and voicemail, both of which are intimidating and burdensome for someone with Spanish-only language skills.⁴²

Percent of Residents Uninsured at Some Point in Time, Minnesota, 2001

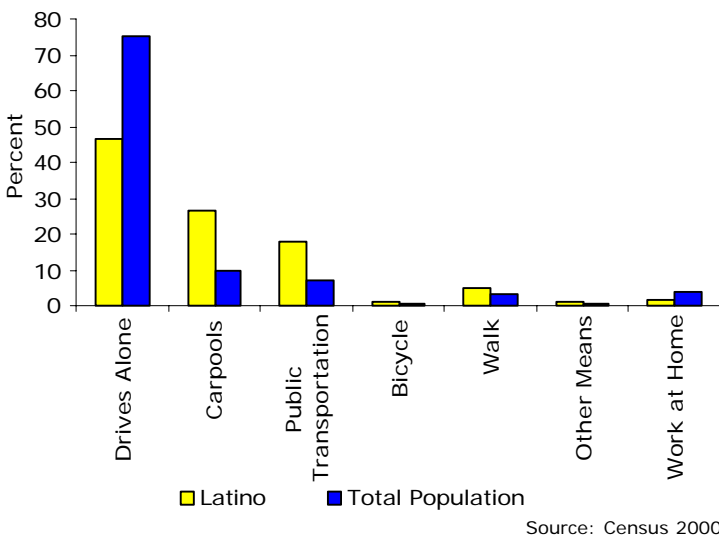




Transportation

Members of the Latino community, particularly recent immigrants, struggle to fulfill work and family commitments due to a lack of transportation.⁴⁵ According to Census 2000, 20.1 percent of Latino households do not own a vehicle, compared with 8.2 percent of white households. Latinos are almost twice as likely to walk to work than the general public and are more likely to carpool or use public transportation.⁴⁶

Means of Transportation to Work for Workers 16 Years and Older, Hennepin County, 2000



Conclusion

Latinos have brought an entrepreneurial spirit, strong family values and a deep-seated work ethic to Hennepin County. Most Latinos come in search of a better future for themselves and their families. They have enriched our community by establishing businesses and organizations that celebrate their diverse heritage and support self-reliance. Even though the community has many strengths and some are able to succeed, the evidence shows that others are struggling to make ends meet.

By supporting efforts to reduce the barriers to success faced by Latino residents, Hennepin County can demonstrate its commitment to enhancing the health, safety and quality-of-life of all its residents.

There are many ways the county could choose to do this including:

- Support efforts to make immigration processes and procedures more customer-friendly.
- Support efforts to disseminate VAWA information to battered immigrant women and children.
- Partner with programs in the Latino community designed to provide work skills and training in order to prepare this young community to enter the labor force as many baby-boomers retire.
- Support programs designed to incubate small businesses in our community.
- Partner with the Minnesota Literacy Council and other English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to ensure greater availability of ESL classes.
- Ensure that the Latino community has access to county services by providing program information in Spanish. The county could also strengthen its partnerships with Latino non-profit organizations in order to provide an environment in which Latino residents feel comfortable requesting services.



Left: No parking in a South Minneapolis alley.
Below: A bus stop at Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue.





Endnotes

1. The term Latino describes people who are inhabitants of Latin America or persons of Latin American origin living in the United States. For the purposes of this report, the term Latino includes those of Latin American descent who are recent immigrants, immigrants who have lived in Hennepin County or other parts of the country for many years, permanent residents, and naturalized and native-born U.S. citizens. While this report addresses issues that all Hennepin County Latino residents face, much of the existing research focuses on the experiences of recent Latino immigrants; therefore some of the information in this report may pertain specifically to the challenges recent arrivals face.
2. Hispanic Advocacy for Community Empowerment through Research (HACER). (1998). Realidades Latinas: Una Comunidad Vibrante Emerge en el Sure de Minneapolis/Latino Realities: A Vibrant Community Emerges in South Minneapolis. Minneapolis, MN: HACER
3. Suárez-Orozco, M. M. & Pérez, M. (2002). Latinos in the 21st Century. Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, 14, 49-75.
4. U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2000). Census 2000. Data from the American FactFinder database: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
5. The Changing Dynamics of Black and Latino Politics. (2002). Forum Event, Institute of Politics, Harvard University, 12 February 2002. Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, 14, 5 - 15.
6. Minnesota Department of Health. (2002). County Health Tables. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/profiles2002/>.
7. Suárez-Orozco & Pérez. (2002).
8. The Changing Dynamics of Black and Latino Politics. (2002).
9. In the 1980s, new waves of immigrants began to enter the United States from war-plagued countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Recent political instability in South America is increasing the number of immigrants to the United States from Venezuela, Columbia and Argentina.
10. Mexican Americans are immigrating with their families and staying in the United States, a trend that differs dramatically from the 1950s and 1960s when the U.S. government admitted Mexican men during the summers to work in the fields of the Midwest on the condition that they return to Mexico after the work was finished.
11. Census 2000
12. Because of migratory patterns and legal issues related to immigration it is possible that the Census is an underestimate of Latinos.
13. Census 2000
14. Residents born in Latin America includes individuals whose ethnicity is not Latino but were born in a Latin American country.
15. Census 2000
16. HACER. (1998).
17. Census 2000
18. HACER. (1998).
19. Census 2000
20. HACER. (1998).
21. Census 2000
22. Census 2000
23. Census 2000
24. Census 2000
25. Carrizales, P., Ortega, J. C., Ahmad, S. & Pratt, J. (2001). Minnesota Latino Nonprofit Economy Report. Minneapolis, MN: HACER
26. Neighborhood Development Center, Inc. (NDC). Online information about Mercado Central: <http://www.windndc.org/ndc/mercado.html>.
27. HACER. (1998).
28. For example: Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER), Casa de Esperanza Fuerza Unida Project and so forth.
29. This also compares with one organization per 1,138 African American/African persons, one organization per 670 Asian Americans, and one organization per 738 American Indians.
30. Carrizales, P., Ortega, J. C., Ahmad, S. & Pratt, J. (2001).
31. Census 2000; Hennepin County Economic Assistance Department





Endnotes

32. The goal of the Fuerza Unida project is to create an environment where all Latinas have their basic needs met, are supported in their efforts to maintain a strong family and raise healthy children, have the opportunity to create and participate in interpersonal and community connections, have the opportunity to develop their strengths and skills, and are supported in following their dreams.
33. Casa de Esperanza is a local 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to mobilize Latinas and Latino communities to end domestic violence, <http://www.casadeesperanza.org/>.
34. HACER. (1998).
35. Smaida, S. A., Blewett, L. A., Carrizales, P. J., Fuentes, C. & Robert, R. A. (2002). Disparities in Health Access: Voices from Minnesota's Latino Community. Minneapolis, MN: HACER; Fuerza Unida. (2000). A Community Planning Process to Support Latinas and their Families in South Minneapolis. St. Paul, MN: Casa de Esperanza; and HACER. (1998).
36. Shetty, S., & Kaguyutan, J. (2002). Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence: Cultural Challenges and Available Legal Protections. VAWNet - National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/vawnet/arimmigrant/arimmigrant.html>.
37. Shetty, S., & Kaguyutan, J. (2002).
38. Data Center, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, 4-year completion study
39. Census 2000
40. Fuerza Unida. (to be published 2003). Preliminary Findings from Conversations with Latinas on Saint Paul's East Side. St. Paul, MN: Casa de Esperanza; Fuerza Unida. (2000); and HACER. (1998).
41. Census 2000
42. Smaida et al. (2002).
43. Gildemeister, S., Sonier, J. & Todd-Malmlov, A. (2002). Minnesota's Uninsured: Findings from the 2001 Health Access Survey. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Department of Health, Health Economics Program & School of Public Health, University of Minnesota.
44. Smaida et al. (2002).
45. Fuerza Unida. (to be published 2003); Fuerza Unida. (2000); and HACER. (1998)
46. Census 2000

Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

Mike Opat, 1st District, Chair
Mark Stenglein, 2nd District
Gail Dorfman, 3rd District
Peter McLaughlin, 4th District
Randy Johnson, 5th District
Linda Koblick, 6th District
Penny Steele, 7th District

County Administration

Sandra L. Vargas, County Administrator
Richard P. Johnson, Deputy County Administrator

Office of Planning & Development

Cheri Merritt, Acting Director
Misty Lee Heggeness, Principal Planning Analyst
Jerome Driessen, Principal Planning Analyst
Kelly Clausen, Senior Information Writer



**Hennepin County
Office of Planning and
Development**