

# NEW YORK CITY'S FUTURE LOOKS LATINO.

## POLICY BRIEF

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### LATINO YOUTH IN NEW YORK CITY

School, Work, and Income Trends for New York's Largest Group of Young People

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October 2010

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By Lazar Treschan



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**The Community Service Society of New York (CSS)** is an informed, independent, and unwavering voice for positive action that serves the needs of our constituents: the 2 in 5 New Yorkers who live on poverty's front line. CSS draws on a 165-year history of excellence in using research, advocacy, litigation, and innovative program models to shape actionable policy solutions that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers.

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### **Acknowledgements**

Various individuals contributed to this report. The author owes thanks to:

Alia Winters, for editing and producing the report, with the assistance of Allan Goldfarb and Damian Voerg;

Santa Soriano, for conducting a valuable review of relevant literature;

Juan Cartagena, David Jason Fischer, Peter Kleinbard, and Michelle Holder, who provided important feedback on drafts of the report.

## FOREWORD

Young people between the ages of 16 and 24, who we call youth or young adults, are an important but often overlooked demographic in social policy considerations.

Much of policy focuses on children or adults, but 16- to 24-year-olds are at a key transitional phase of their lives and deserve special attention. Most people make their most important educational decisions during these years, and studies show that having a successful labor market experience by age 25 is an important predictor of one’s chances of future economic success.

In recent years, CSS research has helped to focus media and policy attention on African Americans, particularly males, by documenting joblessness and economic hardship that approached crisis levels in this community. Now, new indicators point to the need for a new public conversation about the experience of Latinos. For example, the 2009 edition of *The Unheard Third*, our annual survey of low-income New Yorkers, revealed that Latinos suffered disproportionately high rates of job loss and wage reductions

during the recent recession. Other recent CSS research has revealed further troubling disparities for this group, such as a lack of access to health insurance and low levels of workplace benefits, including paid sick days.

**Latinos now number 2.3 million in New York City and make up the largest share of the population under age 25.**

This report marks the first in a series that will examine Latinos, who now number 2.3 million in New York City and make up the largest share of the population under age 25. But whereas much of the analysis of Latinos looks at the group monolithically, this work examines the diversity of and differences within the population. There are important cultural, economic, and even linguistic distinctions among the people we broadly describe as “Latino.” This is a group that defies generalizations, and by looking more closely at this population, we believe that we can identify important new directions for social policy.

—David R. Jones, Esq., President and CEO,  
and Juan Cartagena, General Counsel and  
Vice President for Advocacy

### Inside this report:

Foreword .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Background and Methodology.....	5
Demographics of Latino Youth.....	5
School and Work.....	7
Income and Poverty .....	11
New Considerations for Policy.....	12

## Executive Summary

This report examines the education, work, and poverty rates of Latino youth in New York City. Young people who identify as Hispanic are the largest single ethnic group among 16 through 24 year-olds in our city. Although many share similar characteristics, they are also an extremely diverse group. Public policy makers will benefit from an analysis of this population that takes into account the differences of the nationalities among Latino youth, as we seek to ensure that they have opportunities to succeed and contribute to their communities and our city at large.

- New York City's future looks Latino. Whites are by far the largest share of adults in the city (age 25+), but Latinos make up the largest group of New Yorkers among youth (ages 16–24) and children (under 16). As such, we need to pay special attention to the well-being of young Latinos.
- Latino youth are largely English-speaking. Most Latino youth were born in New York City, and an overwhelming share (85 percent) speaks English well or very well. Among large Latino groups, only Mexicans, who are just 13 percent of the city's Latino youth population, have a high share of immigrants and a low share of English speakers. Since relatively few Mexican young people enroll in school, school-based English Language Learner (ELL) programming should not be the predominant policy concern for Latino youth.
- Latinos have the lowest school enrollment rates and educational attainment of any racial or ethnic group in New York City. Much of this is due to Mexican immigrants, who come to New York with little education and do not enroll in school when they arrive. However, Puerto Ricans, who are overwhelmingly native-born, also stand out for having low school enrollment and educational achievement.
- Employment is high among Latino youth, but mostly due to the large share of Mexican immigrants in the

workforce. Employment is extremely weak for other Latino young adults. This is particularly alarming given Latinos' low rates of school enrollment. One might be less concerned about low employment if school enrollment was high, but this is not the case for Puerto Rican and, to a lesser extent, Dominican young people.

## **Puerto Ricans, particularly males, emerge as the most disadvantaged youth group in New York City, with rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment lower than any comparable group, including young black males.**

- A greater percentage of Latino youth live in poor and near-poor households than any other racial group. Fifty-six percent of Latino young people live in households with incomes less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This compares to just 30 percent of white youth and 44 percent of black young people. Among Latinos, Puerto Ricans have the highest rates of poverty, while other groups cluster in near-poor households (those earning between 100 and 200 percent of FPL).
- Puerto Ricans, particularly males, emerge as the most disadvantaged youth group in New York City, with rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment lower than any other comparable group, including young black males. Similarly, Puerto Rican women show more challenges than other female youth. In the past, this finding may have been obscured by research that groups Latino youth into one broad category. It is time to pay specific attention to the plight of Puerto Rican youth in New York City.

## Background and Methodology

### Background

The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) has conducted a range of research into the school and labor market outcomes for young adults in New York City. Most of this work has looked broadly at the population of 16- through 24-year-olds, with an eye toward those who have been unsuccessful at connecting to school or the labor market. In our previous studies about youth, we have often noted that youth of Latino backgrounds have had some of the lowest rates of school enrollment and labor market success.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, we often hear contrary information, particularly about the high labor market participation of Latinos, particularly immigrants. But Latinos are a diverse group; policy discussions that do not consider the differences among Latino young people obscure significant considerations for policy making.<sup>2</sup>

This report examines the dynamics among different sub-groups within the population of Latino young people in New York City.<sup>3</sup> The analysis in this report is largely descriptive, and focuses on illustrating trends rather than seeking to explain them. Subsequent publications by CSS will do more to examine the reasons for these dynamics and how New York City might address them.

### Methodology

This report uses data from the American Community Survey (ACS), an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS replaces the “long form” of the Decennial Census, and uses a similar methodology, selecting a sample of the population from which generalizations can be extrapolated using weights that are assigned to different groups based on their known proportion to the general population. In order to conduct robust analysis of subgroups within the ACS sample, it is preferable to pool more than one year of data. Such analysis also discounts year-to-year fluctuations. This report uses a merged sample from 2006, 2007, and 2008.

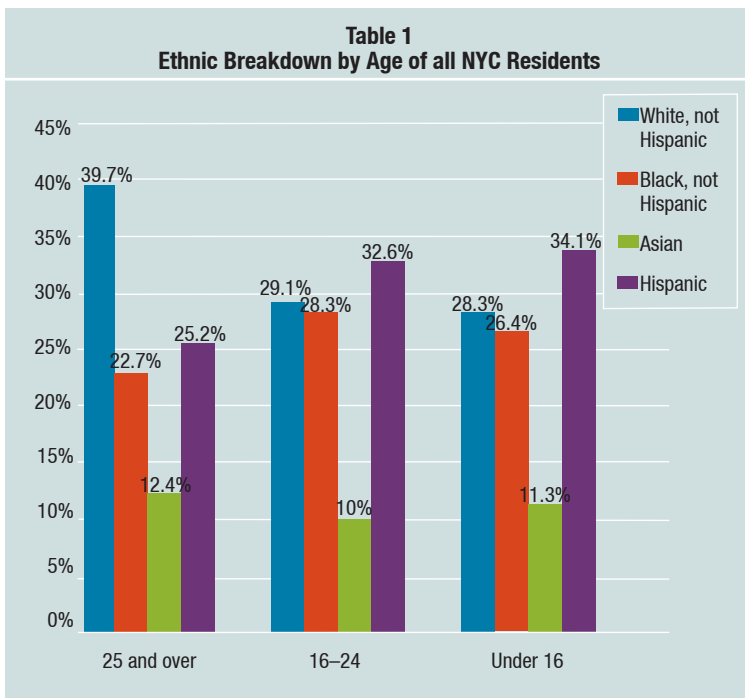
This report focuses on individuals between the ages of 16 and 24, using the terms “youth,” “young adults,”

and “young people” interchangeably to describe them. This report also uses the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” interchangeably. On the ACS, the Census Bureau asks respondents to state their race. Respondents are then asked a separate question, “Are you Hispanic?” This reports labels all those who answer “Yes” to that question, regardless of their answer to the race question (White, Black, etc.), as Latino/Hispanic. Respondents are later asked by the Census to provide up to two nationalities of their ethnic origin. This report uses the first Latino nationality they mention (be it in their first or second response) as their ethnic origin.<sup>4</sup>

## Demographics of Latino Youth

### New York City’s Future Looks Latino

As an overall share of the entire population, Hispanics are the second-largest racial/ethnic group in New York City. With 2,290,007 individuals, they make up 27.6 percent of the entire city population, second behind whites, who are the largest racial group at 35.6 percent. These dynamics change significantly when we examine different age groups. Table 1 shows racial/ethnic sub-populations by age groupings. Of those ages 25 and



older, whites are the most dominant group, with 39.7 percent of the population; Latinos (25.2%), blacks (22.7%), and Asians (12.4%) are well behind. Among 16 to 24 year-olds, however, the picture is very different, with Latinos making up 32.6 percent of the age group, ahead of whites (29.1%), blacks (28.3%), and Asians (10%). Of those under age 16, Latinos (34.1%) are an even larger share, ahead of whites (28.3%), blacks (26.4%), and Asians (11.3%).

Latinos make up the largest portion of the age groups of children (under 16 years of age) and youth (ages 16 through 24), where their 33 percent share includes approximately 327,000 individuals. This report will focus on this group of 327,000 Latino young people ages 16 through 24. Given their demographic prominence within their age cohort, their well-being is especially important; they are the largest share of youth and children. Although New York City does receive a disproportionate share of in-migration from educated whites in their twenties, Latinos will still be an increasing share of the next generations of adults.

**Backgrounds within Latino Youth**

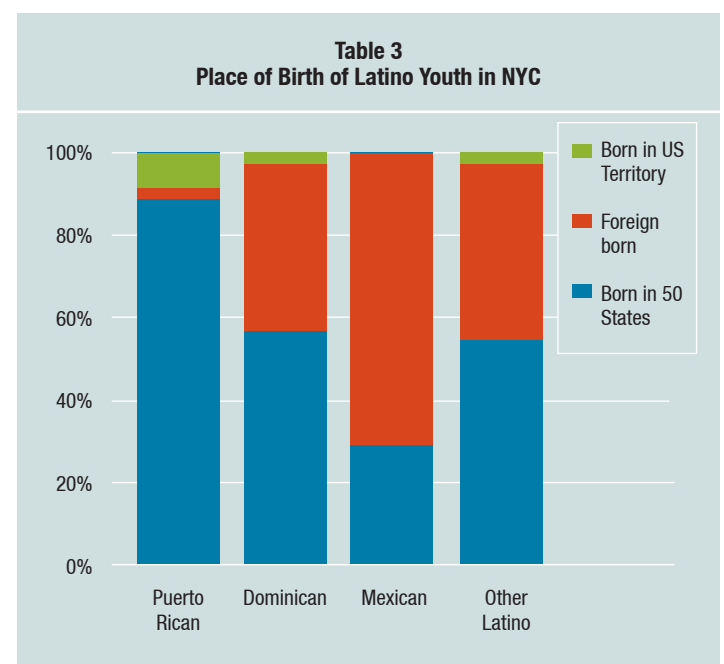
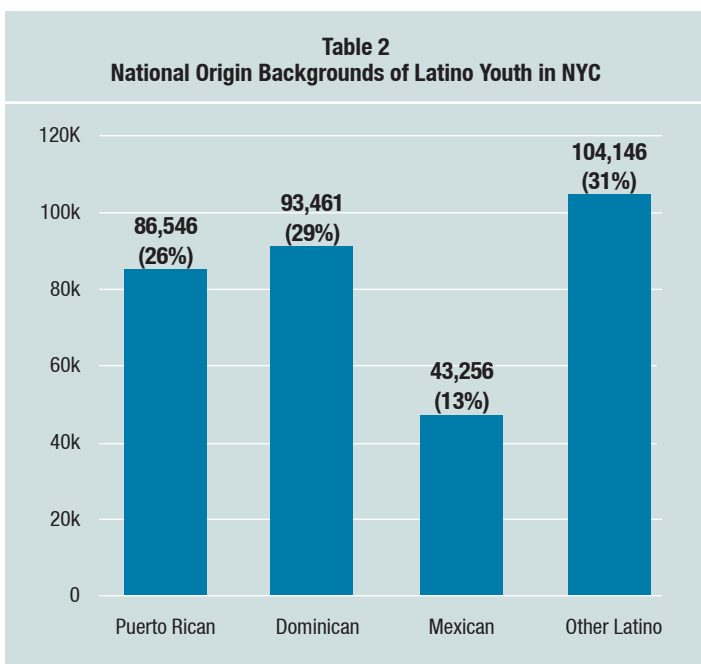
Latinos are diverse. Young people who self-identify as “Hispanic” to the U.S. Census Bureau report a range of different national origins, be they native- or foreign-born. For the

purposes of analysis, this report divides Latino youth into four groups based on their national origins: Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexicans, and all Other Latinos as a catch-all category. Table 2 categorizes the backgrounds of Latino youth ages 16 through 24.

The largest group of Latino young people in New York City identify as Dominican (29%), with Puerto Ricans (26%) not far behind. Mexicans are the third largest group (13%). Other Latinos make up 31 percent, of which the largest groups are Ecuadorians (8 percent of all Latino youth) and Colombians (3 percent of all Latino youth), with many other nationalities comprising less than 2 percent of the entire Latino youth population.

**Nativity**

Most Latino youth in New York City were born in the mainland United States. In total, 64 percent of Latino youth were born in the 50 states or a U.S. territorial holding (mostly Puerto Rico). Overwhelmingly, most Puerto Rican youth in New York City were born in the 50 states, with only 8.4 percent born on the island of Puerto Rico. A majority of Dominican (57%) and Other Latino youth (56%) were also born in the United States. Only Mexican youth are more likely to have been born abroad (72%), as shown in Table 3.



As a result of these high nativity rates, most Latino youth (particularly non-Mexicans) are fluent in the English language. Eighty-five percent of Latino young people report strong proficiency in English (18 percent say they speak only English, 56 percent say they speak it very well, and 12 percent say they speak it well). Only 15 percent of Latino youth report not being able to speak English well (5 percent report no English language ability, 10 percent report very limited proficiency), and this is concentrated among Mexicans and Ecuadorians. There are approximately 50,000 Latino young people (15 percent of 327,000) in New York City who would benefit from the development of English language skills, but English-language ability does not appear to be an overriding concern for most Latino youth.

### School and Work

This report now focuses on school enrollment, educational attainment, and labor market participation. The period between the ages of 16 through 24 is when most young people make the final steps in their education to gain the academic and career-related skills they need to prepare themselves to successfully enter the workforce. Educational attainment is one of the strongest predictors of success in the labor market and lifetimes earnings.<sup>5</sup> Educational attainment is also strongly linked to a range of non-economic outcomes, such as improved health, marriage and family stability, and civic participation.<sup>6</sup>

Table 4 shows rates of school enrollment for all 16- through 24-year-olds in New York City, separated by foreign- and native-born young people. Since many immigrants come here to work, they are not always a relevant comparison with native-born young people. When looking at immigrant youth, it is clear that school enrollment is a significantly lower priority for Latino immigrants, whose school enrollment rates (35%) are far below any other immigrant group, and well below that of native-born Latino youth (62%). When we compare only native-born young people, Latinos are just ahead of black youth in terms of school enrollment; but both groups attend school less than native-born whites (67%) and far less than native-born Asians.

Interesting differences appear in comparisons between Latino youth, as shown in Table 5.

Young immigrants from Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia (the latter two groups dominate the Other Latino category) appear to come to New York City for reasons other than attending school. Among the native-born population, we begin to see important divergence. Whereas native-born Dominicans, Mexicans, and Other Latinos all attend school at very similar rates, native-born Puerto Ricans are a significant outlier. 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 as Table 4 showed, lower than black youth, the ethnic group with the lowest school enrollment (61%).

School Enrollment	White	Black	Asian	All Latino
Foreign Born*	68.3%	59.4%	69.1%	34.9%
Native	66.9%	60.9%	79.1%	61.9%

\*In these and other tables, foreign born includes only those individuals born outside any U.S. state or territory.

School Enrollment	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Mexican	Other Latino
Foreign Born	84.8%*	50.0%	13.4%	36.1%
Native	55.1%	68.2%	66.8%	65.0%

\*The foreign-born Puerto Rican youth population (i.e., those born outside the 50 states and Puerto Rico) is extremely small (n=1,600).

Table 6, below, shows the highest level of education attained by all 16- through 24-year-olds in New York City who are not attending school. Again, this table separates native- from foreign-born young people. When we look at immigrant youth, we find that Latino newcomers are much less likely to be educated than white, black, or Asian newcomers. A much higher share of Latino youth immigrate here with less than a high school diploma, and far fewer have college degrees. There appears to be a strong need for programs to build the basic skills of Latino youth and put them on track for a GED diploma, which can open the doors to college and careers.<sup>7</sup>

When we look at native-born youth, we see that 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%). On the high end of the education spectrum, Latinos (10%) and blacks (9%) are far behind white and Asian native-born youth in the attainment of a bachelor’s or higher degree. Latino youth, even the native-born population, are the lowest-educated group of young people in New York City, with just 28 percent having obtained

education past a high school diploma. Far too few Latinos are graduating high school, and very small numbers of Latino youth attain post-secondary education. This is troubling data, given the range of research that connects educational attainment to long-term economic success.<sup>8</sup>

Looking across nationalities, we again see that Latino youth do not act uniformly. Table 7 examines educational rates by nationality and gender.

Mexicans males have, by far, the lowest levels of education—but, as we will see when we examine employment rates, this does not stop them from working. As we have suggested, most Mexican youth appear to be recent immigrants seeking immediate work. As such, their lack of education does not speak to failures of our K–12 educational system, but rather points to opportunities for our adult education programs to build their skills and abilities to further contribute to our workforce and work their way into jobs above the entry level.

Puerto Rican young people, however, who are not immigrants—all are citizens by birth and more than 90 percent were born on the mainland United States—stand out for having high rates without a high school diploma, while Dominican youth have the lowest proportions of those without

**Table 6**  
**Educational Attainment for 16–24 Year-Olds Not Enrolled in School in NYC**

	Highest Level Attained	White	Black	Asian	Latino
<b>Foreign-born</b>	Less Than HS	15.3%	23.0%	22.0%	44.4%
	HSD/GED only	33.0%	44.2%	30.5%	38.0%
	Some college	19.4%	22.3%	20.2%	12.9%
	BA or higher	32.3%	10.4%	27.3%	4.8%
		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Native-born</b>	Less Than HS	10.0%	29.2%	6.7%	33.9%
	HSD/GED only	25.3%	42.3%	18.0%	38.0%
	Some college	18.4%	19.3%	18.4%	18.4%
	BA or higher	46.3%	9.2%	56.9%	9.7%
		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



a high school diploma. The differences between the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities’ high school rates raise questions about the effectiveness of schools in Puerto Rican versus Dominican neighborhoods.

Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Other Latinos have similar college-going rates; but these are still far below those of any other racial group, when we revisit Table 6. Young female Latinas are much more likely than young Latino males to go to and graduate from college, across Latino youth nationalities. Dominican young women, 36 percent of whom achieve at least some college-level study, represent a promising outlier. Nevertheless, the relatively low rates of college-level education among Latinos raise concerning questions.

Decision making about school enrollment and educational attainment is often linked to choices about work; many young people seek immediate income to support themselves and their families instead of remaining in school. Table 8 presents school enrollment along with labor force participation for all races of young people in New York City.

The first row of the table shows that Latino youth, at 28 percent, are far more likely to be employed than other groups. This increased employment, however, does not fully account for the fact that Latinos are also far less likely to be

in school. The second and third rows show that unemployment<sup>10</sup> is also high for Latinos (5.9%), and that, along with blacks, they have the highest rates of being “disconnected”—both out of school and out of the labor force (13.7%). When we sum the rates of unemployment and disconnection,<sup>11</sup> we find that nearly one in five (19.6%) Latino youth are neither in school, nor working. This is similar to black youth (20.5%) but compares very poorly with whites (8.9%) and Asians (9%), for whom fewer than one in eleven young people are not engaged in school or work.

16–24 Years Old	White	Black	Asian	All Latino
Not in School, Employed	23.9%	18.9%	17.8%	28.2%
Not in School, Unemployed	2.5%	6.7%	1.7%	5.9%
Not in School, Not in Labor Force (“DY”)	6.4%	13.8%	7.3%	13.7%
In School	67.2%	60.6%	73.1%	52.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

	Highest Level Attained	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Mexican	Other Latino
<b>Males</b>	Less Than HS	41.9%	36.7%	52.6%	40.4%
	HSD/GED only	36.6%	41.5%	39.3%	38.0%
	Some college	16.6%	15.6%	5.7%	15.6%
	BA or higher	4.9%	6.2%	2.4%	5.9%
		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Females</b>	Less Than HS	32.4%	29.9%	29.9%	32.8%
	HSD/GED only	40.8%	34.1%	35.4%	36.4%
	Some college	17.4%	25.6%	7.7%	19.0%
	BA or higher	9.3%	10.5%	7.5%	11.7%
		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Looking within Latino youth, we again find important differences. Table 9 presents school enrollment and labor force participation for young Latinos.

The first row confirms that Mexican males, most of whom are immigrants, are primarily interested in work. Their rate of employment (68.1%) is far higher than any other group, which helps to explain their low school enrollment. Relatively few Mexicans are unemployed; it appears that young Mexicans seeking work have greater ease in finding it. Young Mexican females have the highest rates of disconnection (33.9%), but this may be explained by cultural issues about gender roles and/or act as a counterbalance to the high employment rates of Mexican young men. It may be that young Mexican women are out of school and work voluntarily, in order to care for young children

Dominicans are the young people most likely to be in school, particularly females, who show very high school enrollment rates (64.6%). Dominican young women are the most “connected” group, with only 14.7 percent not engaged in school or work. Other Latino young people are less likely to be in school than Dominicans, but more likely to be employed. On the whole, Dominicans and Other Latinos show similar rates of engagement in either school or work (with more Dominican young people in school, and more Other Latinos in work).

The major outliers in terms of engagement are Puerto Rican young people. Puerto Ricans are the least likely to be employed and most likely to be unable to find work when they actively seek it (unemployed). Most significantly, far more Puerto Ricans are disconnected—both out of school and out of the labor force—than any other group. 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 (24.1%) 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 well over twice that of white male youth (9.5%).<sup>12</sup>

When we examine school and work rates among Latino youth and young adults, it is easier to develop hypotheses for the dynamics that we see among Mexican young people, who are mostly immigrants, and may be focused on work rather than school (particularly males). And given that so many Mexican young men work, the high rates of Mexican female disconnection may be due to voluntary reasons of family caregiver responsibilities in families where the males are working. Less clear are the reasons that Puerto Rican young people, particularly males, show such high rates of disconnection in comparison to other Latino groups, such as Dominicans.

**Table 9**  
**School Enrollment and Labor Force Participation for Latino Youth in NYC**

	Highest Level Attained	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Mexican	Other Latino	Total
<b>Males</b>	Not in School, Employed	21.2%	28.0%	68.1%	35.8%	25.7%
	Not in School, Unemployed	7.4%	6.6%	3.4%	7.2%	5.5%
	Not in School, Not in Labor Force	16.7%	9.3%	8.0%	8.5%	10.5%
	In School	54.7%	56.1%	20.5%	48.4%	58.4%
<b>Females</b>	Not in School, Employed	19.5%	20.8%	22.7%	23.0%	20.9%
	Not in School, Unemployed	6.2%	5.3%	4.3%	4.9%	3.9%
	Not in School, Not in Labor Force	18.7%	9.4%	33.9%	15.8%	11.6%
	In School	55.5%	64.6%	39.0%	56.3%	63.6%

## Income and Poverty

Latino youth live in households with the highest rates of poverty. Using the thresholds established by the U.S. Census Bureau, 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. White youth are much more likely to live in moderate-income (201–400% of FPL) or higher-income (over 401%) households.<sup>13</sup>

Among Latino youth, we again see important differences. Puerto Rican youth have the highest rates of poverty, with 33.4 percent of their households having incomes under the Federal Poverty Level. Other Latinos have the lowest rates of household poverty, at 22 percent.

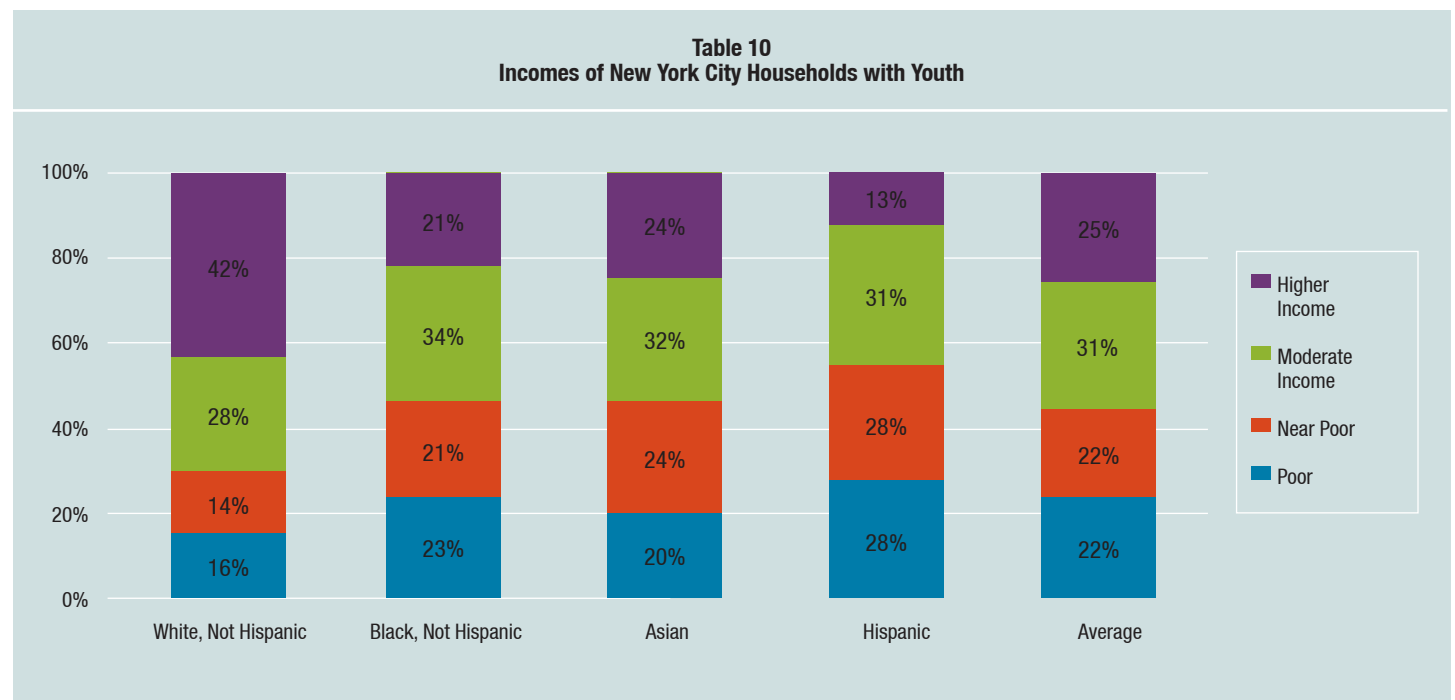
The rates for the near poor—those living just above the poverty line, in households earning from 100 to 200 percent of FPL—differ significantly. Rates of near-poverty in Mexican (36.7%), Dominican (31.1%), and Other Latino (26.3%) households significantly exceed those of Puerto Ricans

(22%). Rates for moderate-income households (201–400% of poverty) are fairly similar, but Puerto Ricans (16.3%) and Other Latinos (17.9%) have higher percentages of households with high incomes (over 400% of poverty).

When we look at the distribution of income levels across each group, we see some interesting dynamics. The column that represents Mexicans may be easiest to explain. Their relatively high rates of employment keep Mexican households out of poverty, where they have the lowest share of

**Table 11**  
**Poverty Rates of Households with Latino Youth**

	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Mexican	Other Latino
<b>Poor</b>	33.4%	29.3%	27.4%	22.2%
<b>Near Poor</b>	22.0%	31.1%	36.7%	26.3%
<b>Moderate Income</b>	28.3%	31.2%	29.2%	33.7%
<b>Higher Income</b>	16.3%	8.4%	6.7%	17.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



any group, but many households appear to be in low-wage jobs with incomes under 200 percent of the poverty line. Some Mexicans are in moderate income-paying jobs, with very few earning high wages.

The column that represents Dominicans is largely even through the Poor, Near Poor, and Moderate Income categories. Other Latinos have a distribution that steadily increases as income categories rise—there are more of them in the Moderate Income category than any other, which is somewhat surprising, given that their levels of educational attainment are not relatively high.

Puerto Ricans show a very distinct distribution across the first three income categories. Puerto Ricans have the highest rates of households with poverty incomes, then show a major dip with the fewest near-poverty incomes. Their share then shifts upward sharply in the Moderate Income category, and Puerto Ricans also have far more Higher Income households than Dominicans or Mexicans. This significant variation in Puerto Rican household incomes raises interesting questions. It may be that Puerto Rican communities, which have been in New York longer than any other Latino group, are less socio-economically diverse than newer immigrant groups, who tend to show more diversity in their local neighborhoods. Moderate-income Puerto Ricans may live in communities with stronger schools, healthcare access, and other supports, whereas neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor Puerto Ricans are marked by greater conditions of poverty and weaker community institutions.

This final finding may allow us to hypothesize that there are no racial, ethnic or other substantive differences among nationalities, but rather that Latino subgroups appear different in our data because of the conditions of their community institutions and the impacts of concentrated poverty.

## **New Considerations for Policy**

As the largest group of young people in New York City, Latino youth are a population that deserves policy attention. If migration patterns do not radically change the ethnic makeup of New York City, Latinos will eventually be the largest share of adults. Looked at broadly, Latino youth have the overall lowest rates of school enrollment and educational attainment, and native-born Latinos fare very poorly in the labor market.

While it is important to understand their key commonalities, Latinos are a diverse ethnic group, and we see divergent stories among the major sub-populations of Latino young adults that have potentially significant implications for policy:

- Dominican young people, the largest sub-group of Latino youth, do relatively well in terms of school, work, and poverty when compared with Puerto Ricans and other Latino youth, but poorly when compared with whites and Asians. Dominican young people, particularly young women, do show particularly strong outcomes in terms of attending college, a gateway to the middle class. We should explore and encourage these pathways.
- Puerto Ricans face the greatest challenges of all youth sub-groups, despite the fact that they are overwhelmingly born within New York City. Puerto Rican youth have lower rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and alarmingly higher rates of disconnection and poverty than other native-born Latino youth. Puerto Rican males have rates of inactivity in school and work that exceed those of black male youth, a population that receives more public policy discussion. We need to think about what targeted social policy efforts might help this group. A subsequent study of where young Puerto Ricans live might examine the effectiveness of the institutions in those communities, including schools, healthcare, and other supports.

- Mexican young people are not easily comparable to any other Latino youth group. Mexican young adults are largely an immigrant population that comes to New York seeking employment. Despite lower rates of educational attainment than any other group, Mexican youth are able to find work, and these jobs appear to help keep their households from falling below the federal poverty line. However, households in which young Mexicans live largely have near-poverty incomes, which likely lead to vulnerability and many financial hardships. It will be important to see if young Mexicans' high rates of employment lead to asset accumulation, as has been the case with some other immigrant groups in previous generations.
- Other Latinos, who are largely comprised of South and Central Americans, show promising tendencies in terms of household incomes. Despite rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment that do not stand out as particularly strong, they have some of the lowest rates of household poverty and the highest shares of moderate-income households. This may be related to social networks or other assets within their communities.

This data presents clear relationships between poverty and participation in school and work. Puerto Rican households face greater poverty, and young people from these households have lower rates of school and work participation. A bigger question is whether poverty is impacting school and work rates, or the reverse, although it is possible that these dynamics affect one another, thus snowballing each of these challenges. Further analysis might examine the geographies of these communities, and the relationships between the quality of institutions and availability of supportive services—schools, healthcare, social services—available in them.

In the meantime, we must target social policy interventions on Latino youth, and the sub-groups within them. As this data shows, the challenges Latino young people face in terms of school enrollment and educational attainment will

not be solved just with better English Language Learner (ELL) programs; overwhelmingly, Latino young people are strong English speakers.

**Looked at broadly, Latino youth have the overall lowest rates of school enrollment and educational attainment of any New York City ethnic group, and native-born Latinos fare very poorly in the labor market.**

This report suggests several intriguing areas for further analysis by researchers and attention by policy makers. In particular, these data suggest that New York City needs to make a concerted effort to understand the challenges that stand in the way of success for Puerto Rican youth, particularly males. This sub-group of young people is the most poorly positioned for a successful transition to adulthood.

## Notes

1. Previous CSS reports in these areas include: Mark Levitan, *Out of School, Out of Work... Out of Luck?*, 2005; Mark Levitan, *A Crisis of Black Male Unemployment*, 2003; Lazar Treschan and Christine Molnar, *Out of Focus: A Snapshot of Services to Reconnect Youth to Education and Employment*, 2008; and Lazar Treschan and David Jason Fischer, *From Basic Skills to Better Futures: Generating Economic Dividends for New York City*, 2009.
2. CSS conducted a brief review of existing literature related to issues facing Latino youth in New York City. The bulk of this work examines the performance of Latino students in public schools, including: Brian Mascaro, “Latino Dropout and Graduation Rates in New York State,” Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, 2010; Anthony De Jesus and Daniel W. Vasquez, “Exploring the Education Profile and Pipeline for Latinos in New York State,” Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, 2007; and Clive R. Belfield “The Economic Consequences of Inadequate Education for the Puerto Rican Population in the United States,” Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, 2005. In “Education, Immigration and the Future of Latinos in the United States”, *Journal of Latino Studies*, volume 5, number 2, 2006, New York University professor Pedro Noguera explores the differences between first- and second-generation Latino youth, describing that immigrant youth are often described as being more motivated and disciplined than Latino youth born locally, who are often described as more of an at-risk population.
3. This report does not examine or discuss issues relating to immigration policy. As our data shows, an overwhelming majority of Latino youth in New York City was born here, and has full citizenship benefits.
4. For example, someone who answered “Black” for race, “Yes” for Hispanic, “Argentina” as their first nationality, and “Dominican Republic” as their second nationality would be tabulated in this report as Hispanic (not as Black) and Argentine (not as Dominican).
5. Jennifer Day and Eric Newburger, “The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings,” United States Census Bureau, 2002.
6. David Cutler, Adriana Lleras-Muney, “Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence,” National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006; Andrew Sum, “The Deterioration in the Young Adult Labor Market in the U.S. and the Adverse Consequences for Marriage, Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing, Young Family Well-Being and Children: Does Anybody Care?,” Northeastern University, 2008.
7. Treschan and Fischer.
8. Day and Newburger.
9. The “Not in School, Unemployed” figures in Tables 8 and 9 do not represent all unemployed individuals, as additional unemployed individuals are counted within the “In School” rows of the tables.
10. Unemployment is defined as describing individuals who do not have a job but have actively sought work (such as responding to job postings or contacting employers) in the past four weeks.
11. Disconnection is defined as being not enrolled in school, not employed, nor actively seeking work (unemployed).
12. These rates are not depicted in a chart. For all male youth, the rates “not in school, unemployed” added to the rates of “not in school, not in labor force” are as follows: white males, 9.5%; black males, 23.7%; Asian males, 9.2%; all Latinos, 17.2%.
13. Moderate Incomes are those between 200-400 percent, and Higher Incomes 400 percent or greater than the Federal Poverty Line.

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