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A Profile of the Linguistic Status among Latinos in the United States between 1980 and 2014

Karen Okigbo

Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies

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A Profile of the Linguistic Status among Latinos in the United States between 1980 and 2014

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Latino Data Project – Report 71 – June 2016

The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu>

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Executive Summary

This report examines trends in linguistic status – Spanish monolingual, English monolingual, or bilingual – among Latinos between 1980 and 2014 using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.¹ It explores trends in Latino linguistic status by sex, age, nativity, and among the five largest Latino national subgroups. This report also examines the relation between linguistic status and the following outcomes: educational attainment, median yearly income, employment status, usual hours worked, and poverty status.²

In this report, linguistic status is defined using three categories: Spanish monolingual, English monolingual, and bilingual. An individual is considered bilingual if they speak English and either Spanish or Portuguese. Likewise, an individual is considered Spanish monolingual if they only speak either Spanish or Portuguese, and an individual is considered English monolingual if they only speak English.

The data highlighted three key trends. First, **the highest percentage of Latinos in the United States were bilingual**, and that finding remained stable between 1980 (67%) and 2014 (66%). Second, **Latinos who were Spanish monolingual had substantially lower levels of educational attainment** than bilingual Latinos and Latinos who were English monolingual. Third, despite being older, **Latinos who were Spanish monolingual had lower median personal incomes and higher poverty rates** than bilingual Latinos and Latinos who were English monolingual.

Between 1980 and 2014, approximately two-thirds of Latinos in the United States were bilingual. The Latino population aged in all three linguistic status groups. Among bilingual and English monolingual Latinos, there were no substantial sex differences in linguistic status. Females were a larger proportion (57%) of the Spanish monolingual population in 2014.

Individuals who were Spanish monolingual had worse educational and economic outcomes than their bilingual and English monolingual counterparts. This trend may be due to the fact that in 2014, approximately 94% of Spanish monolinguals were foreign-born. Latinos who were English monolingual had higher levels of educational attainment and marginally higher median personal income than bilingual Latinos.

In 2014, Spanish monolingual Latinos had the highest rate of full-time employment (79%) of the three linguistic status groups. Full-time employment rates among Latinos did not vary by linguistic status between 1980 and 2014.

¹ This study uses the American Community Survey PUMS (Public Use Microdata Series) data for all years considered here released by the Census Bureau and reorganized for public use by the Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, IPUMSusa, (<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/index.shtml>). See Public Use Microdata Series Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

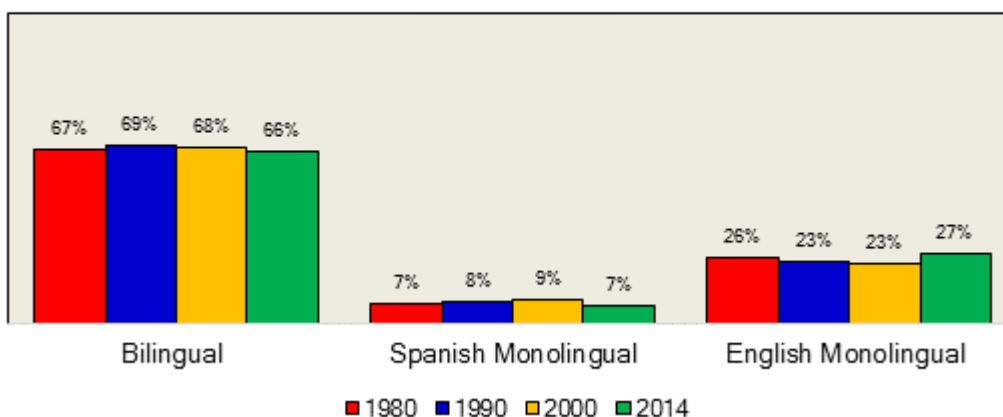
² Educational attainment was computed for those Latinos age 25 and older, and the remaining outcomes of income, employment status, usual hours worked, and poverty status were computed for those Latinos between the ages of 16 and 64. All income data is in 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars.

Among the five largest Latino national subgroups, the greatest percentage of each respective group's population were bilingual. In 2014, 66% of Mexicans were bilingual, 7% were Spanish monolingual and 27% were English monolingual. Puerto Ricans had the lowest percentage of bilingual Latinos (58% in 2014) and the highest percentage of English monolingual Latinos (40% in 2014). Conversely, Salvadorans had the highest percentage of bilingual Latinos (78% in 2014) and the lowest percentage of English monolingual Latinos (12% in 2014). Approximately two-thirds of Cubans (65%) and three-quarters of Dominicans (76%) were bilingual in 2014.

Linguistic Status among Latinos in the United States

Between 1980 and 2014 there was no change in the proportions of Latinos who were Spanish monolingual, English monolingual, or bilingual in the United States – approximately two-thirds of Latinos were bilingual in each year. Spanish monolingual Latinos made up the lowest proportion of the Latino population at 7% in both 1980 and 2014. In 1980, 26% of the Latino population were English monolingual, and that percentage was stable at 27% in 2014. (See figure 1).

Figure 1
Linguistic Status among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014



Linguistic status by Sex

Among bilingual and English monolingual Latinos there were no substantial sex differences in linguistic status between 1980 and 2014. In 2014, 51% of bilingual Latinos were male and 49% were female. Likewise, 52% of English monolingual Latinos were male and 48% were female in 2014.

In contrast, females were a larger proportion of the Spanish monolingual population. In 1980, 59% of Spanish monolingual Latinos were female while 41% were male. That trend remained stable over time, as 57% of Spanish monolingual Latinos were female in 2014 while 43% were male. This notable sex difference in the Spanish monolingual rate could reflect the sex differences in occupation. Historically, males predominately occupied construction, maintenance, and transportation occupations while females worked in service occupations.³ Positions within domestic or service industries could have given females less opportunities to interact with individuals who speak English. (See figure 2 and table 1).

³ See “The ‘Mommy Tax’ and ‘Daddy Bonus’: Parenthood and Personal Income in the United States between 1990 and 2010,” by Justine Calcagno, released by the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies (2014). Retrieved from <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu/files/2014/10/Parenthood-and-Income-United-States-1990-2010-FINAL.pdf>

Figure 2
Linguistic Status by Sex among Latinos
United States, 2014

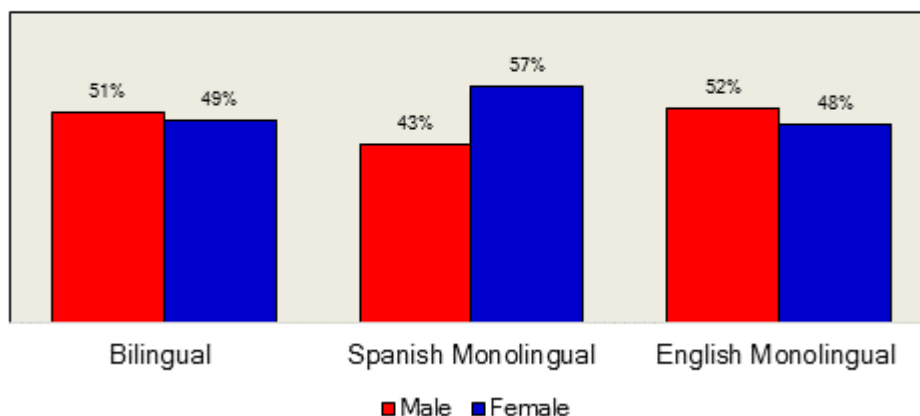


Table 1
Linguistic Status by Sex among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

Linguistic Status	Sex	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Male	50%	52%	52%	51%
	Female	50%	48%	48%	49%
Spanish Monolingual	Male	41%	45%	47%	43%
	Female	59%	55%	53%	57%
English Monolingual	Male	51%	52%	51%	52%
	Female	49%	48%	49%	48%

Linguistic Status by Nativity

Among bilingual Latinos, 67% were domestic-born and 33% were foreign-born in 1980. However, between 1990 and 2014 approximately one-half of bilingual Latinos were domestic-born.

In 1980, about one-quarter (25%) of Spanish monolingual Latinos were domestic-born while 75% were foreign-born. In 2014, however, the percentage of Spanish monolinguals who were domestic-born decreased dramatically to 6%, and 94% of Spanish monolingual Latinos were foreign-born. (See figure 3).

In stark contrast, most English monolingual Latinos were domestic-born between 1980 (92%) and 2014 (91%). Conversely, the proportion of English monolingual Latinos who were foreign-born was 8% in 1980 and 9% in 2014.

See table 2 for additional data on the linguistic status among Latinos by nativity.

Figure 3
Linguistic Status by Nativity among Latinos
United States, 2014

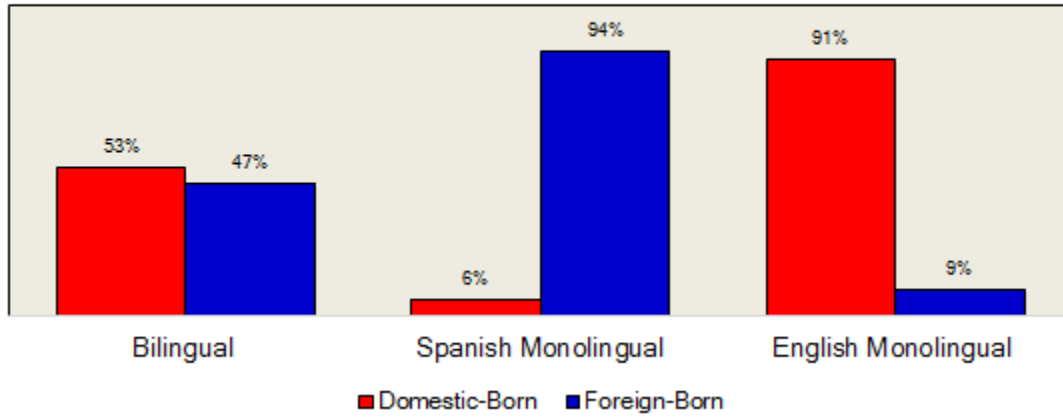


Table 2
Linguistic Status by Nativity among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

Linguistic Status	Nativity	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Domestic-Born	67%	51%	51%	53%
	Foreign-Born	33%	49%	49%	47%
Spanish Monolingual	Domestic-Born	25%	11%	7%	6%
	Foreign-Born	75%	89%	93%	94%
English Monolingual	Domestic-Born	92%	88%	86%	91%
	Foreign-Born	8%	12%	14%	9%

Linguistic Status by Age

Between 1980 and 2014, the Latino population aged in all three linguistic groups. This trend reflects the overall aging population in the United States.

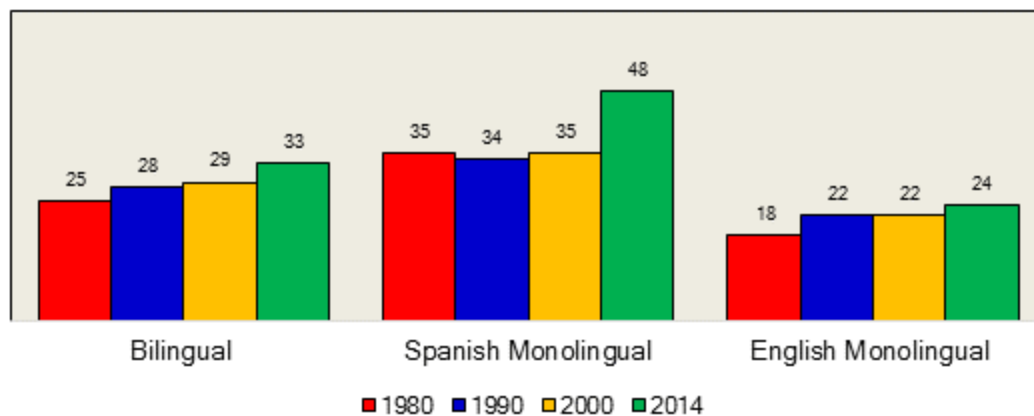
In 1980, the median age for bilingual Latinos was 25. The median age increased to 28 in 1990, 29 in 2000, and 33 in 2014. (See figure 4).

Spanish monolinguals were older than the other two linguistic groups. The median age for Spanish monolingual Latinos was around 35 between 1980 and 2000. However, in 2014, it increased markedly to 48. This notable increase between 2000 and 2014 could reflect the fact that the median age of naturalized Latino citizens also increased during this time period.⁴

The median age of English monolingual Latinos was 18 in 1980, 22 in both 1990 and 2000, and increased to 24 in 2014.

Additional data on linguistic status and age are found in the statistical appendix.

Figure 4
Linguistic Status by Median Age among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014



⁴ See "A Profile of Latino Citizenship in the United States: Demographic, Educational and Economic Trends between 1990 and 2013," by Karen Okigbo, a forthcoming report that will be released by the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies (2016).

Linguistic Status among the Five Largest Latino National Subgroups

Among the five largest Latino national subgroups, the greatest percentage of each respective group's population were bilingual. (See figure 5).

In 1980, approximately two-thirds or 67% of the Mexican population were bilingual. That percentage remained stable over time, as 66% of the Mexican population were bilingual in 2014. In 2014, 7% of Mexicans were Spanish monolingual and 27% were English monolingual.

The Puerto Rican population presents a different profile compared to the Latino population overall. In 1980, more than three-quarters (78%) of Puerto Ricans were bilingual. However, that percentage markedly decreased to 58% in 2014. During the same period, the percentage of English monolingual Puerto Ricans increased from 17% in 1980 to 40% in 2014. Puerto Ricans thus had the lowest percentage of bilinguals and highest percentage of English monolinguals in 2014. The percentage of Spanish monolingual Puerto Ricans decreased between 1980 (5%) and 2014 (2%).

Salvadorans had the highest percentage of bilingual Latinos between 1980 (80%) and 2014 (79%). The percentage of Salvadorans that were English monolingual increased from 4% in 1980 to 11% in 2014. Approximately 10% of Salvadorans were Spanish monolingual in 2014.⁵

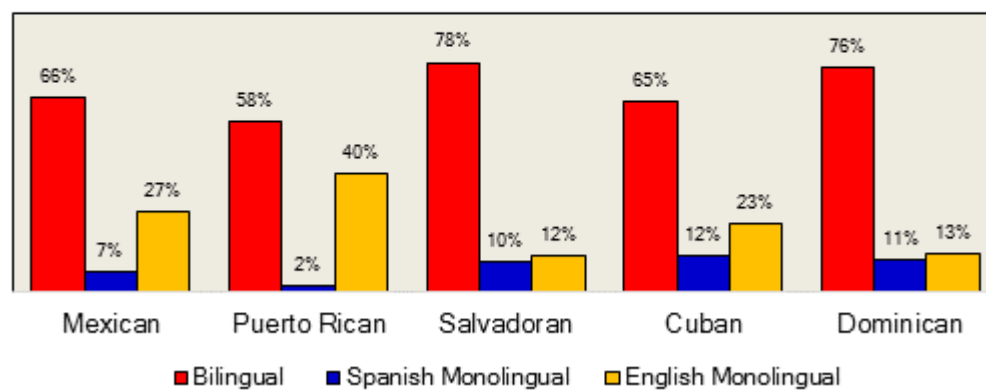
The percentage of Cubans that were bilingual decreased from 83% in 1980 to 65% in 2014. In 1980, 10% of Cubans were Spanish monolingual, which increased in 2014 (12%). Less than 10% of Cubans were English monolingual in 1980, however, the percentage of English monolingual Cubans rose to 23% by 2014.

Approximately three-quarters of Dominicans were bilingual between 1980 (75%) and 2014 (76%). However, the percentage of Spanish monolingual Dominicans steadily decreased from 21% in 1980 to 11% in 2014. During that period, the percentage of English monolingual Dominicans increased from 4% in 1980 to 13% in 2014.

See table 3 for data on linguistic status among the five largest Latino national subgroups in each year considered in this report.

⁵ In 1980, Colombians were one of the five largest Latino national subgroups, rather than Salvadorans. For consistency, this study reports on the five largest Latino national subgroups in the United States as of 2014.

Figure 5
Linguistic Status among the Five Largest
Latino National Subgroups
United States, 2014



*Note: In 1980, Colombians were one of the five Latino national subgroups instead of Salvadorans

Table 3
Linguistic Status among the Five Largest
Latino National Subgroups
United States, 1980 - 2014

Latino Subgroups	Linguistic Status	1980	1990	2000	2014
Mexican	Bilingual	67%	67%	64%	66%
	Spanish Monolingual	8%	8%	8%	7%
	English Monolingual	25%	25%	28%	27%
Puerto Rican	Bilingual	78%	78%	77%	58%
	Spanish Monolingual	5%	5%	3%	2%
	English Monolingual	16%	17%	20%	40%
Salvadoran*	Bilingual	80%	81%	80%	79%
	Spanish Monolingual	16%	9%	15%	10%
	English Monolingual	4%	10%	5%	11%
Cuban	Bilingual	75%	83%	75%	65%
	Spanish Monolingual	15%	10%	13%	12%
	English Monolingual	10%	7%	12%	23%
Dominican	Bilingual	75%	75%	79%	77%
	Spanish Monolingual	21%	21%	14%	9%
	English Monolingual	4%	4%	7%	13%

*Note: In

1980, Colombians were one of the five Latino national subgroups instead of Salvadorans

The Impact of Linguistic Status on Educational Attainment

Spanish monolingual Latinos had the lowest levels of educational attainment while Latinos who were English monolingual had the highest levels of educational attainment between 1990 and 2014.⁶ (See figure 6).

Educational attainment among Latinos who were Spanish monolingual improved at the level of high school graduation between 1990 and 2014. In 1990, 86% of Latinos who were Spanish monolingual did not graduate high school. That non-graduation rate decreased to 75% in 2014. Attainment of high school degrees rose from 8% in 1990 to 17% in 2014. Only 2% of Latinos who were Spanish monolingual earned a Bachelor's or higher in 1990, and that percentage was stable at 3% in 2014. The overall low levels of educational attainment could reflect the fact that most Spanish monolinguals were

⁶ In this report, educational attainment was computed for those age 25 or older between 1990 and 2014. Complete data on the educational attainment level of BA or Higher was unavailable in the 1980 American Community Survey PUMS (Public Use Microdata Series) data released by the Census Bureau.

foreign-born (94% in 2014), and foreign-born individuals tend to have lower levels of education. Moreover, most of American education system is conducted in English.

Latinos who were English monolingual had the highest levels of educational attainment, and those levels improved between 1990 and 2014. The proportion of English monolingual Latinos who did not graduate high school decreased from 22% in 1990 to 9% in 2014. In 1990, 21% of Latinos who were English monolingual attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. That percentage increased to 30% in 2014. This trend is likely a reflection of the fact that almost all Latinos who were English monolingual were domestic-born (91% in 2014), and therefore likely to have more opportunities to pursue higher education within the American education system.

Among Latinos who were bilingual, educational attainment improved between 1990 and 2014. In 1990, about one-half of bilingual Latinos (46%) did not graduate from high school. However, this percentage decreased to a 32% non-graduation rate in 2014. Approximately 28% of bilingual Latinos graduated high school in 2014. The percentage of bilingual Latinos who attained Bachelor's degrees or higher increased from 12% in 1990 to 16% in 2014.

Table 4 presents data on linguistic status and educational attainment among Latinos in each year considered in this report.

Figure 6
Linguistic Status by Level of Educational Attainment
among Latinos, Age 25+
United States, 2014

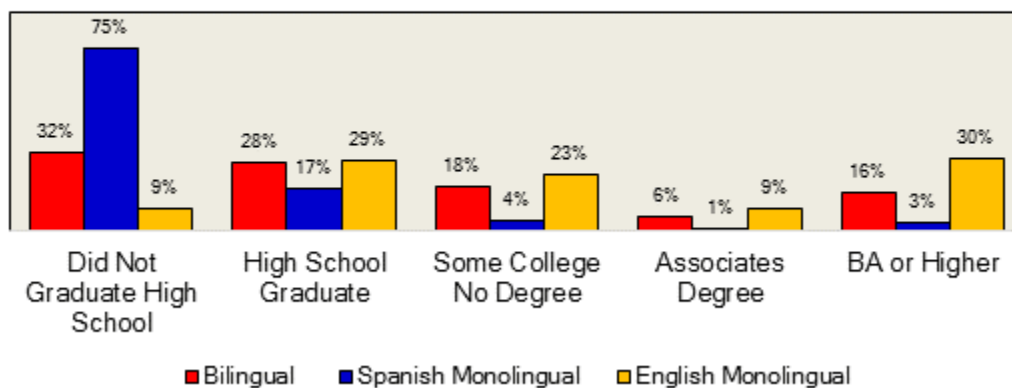


Table 4
Linguistic Status by Level of Educational Attainment among Latinos, Age 25+
United States, 1990 - 2014

Linguistic Status	Educational Attainment	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Did Not Graduate High School	46%	42%	32%
	High School Graduate	22%	23%	28%
	Some College, No Degree	15%	17%	18%
	Associates Degree	6%	5%	6%
	BA or Higher	12%	14%	16%
Spanish Monolingual	Did Not Graduate High School	86%	83%	75%
	High School Graduate	8%	10%	17%
	Some College, No Degree	3%	3%	4%
	Associates Degree	1%	1%	1%
	BA or Higher	2%	2%	3%
English Monolingual	Did Not Graduate High School	22%	16%	9%
	High School Graduate	32%	30%	29%
	Some College, No Degree	19%	22%	23%
	Associates Degree	6%	7%	9%
	BA or Higher	21%	25%	30%

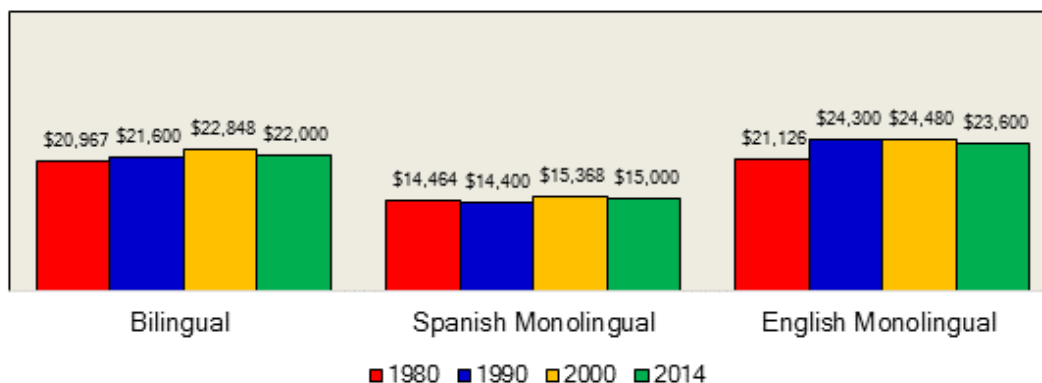
Impact of Linguistic Status on the Personal Income

In 1980, the median personal income was \$20,967 among bilingual Latinos. That number increased to \$21,600 in 1990, \$22,848 in 2000, and \$22,000 in 2014.⁷ The median personal income among Latinos who were Spanish monolingual in 1980 was \$14,464, and was unchanged between 1980 and 2014 (\$15,000). Among English monolingual Latinos, the median personal income in 1980 was \$21,126 and increased to \$24,300 in 1990 and \$24,480 in 2000. In 2014, English monolingual Latinos earned \$23,600 in yearly median personal income. (See figure 7).

Comparing across the three linguistic status groups, English monolingual Latinos had the highest median personal incomes between 1980 and 2014, followed closely by bilingual Latinos. Median personal incomes among Spanish monolingual Latinos were considerably lower than both of the other two linguistic groups. This finding indicates that an inability to speak any English may be related to lower levels of personal income. Furthermore, this result could also reflect the fact that Latinos who were Spanish monolingual had substantially lower levels of educational attainment than bilingual and English monolingual Latinos.

Additional data on linguistic status and median personal income are found in the statistical appendix.

Figure 7
Linguistic Status by Median Personal Income among Latinos, Age 16 - 64
United States, 1980 - 2014



⁷ Throughout this report, income was calculated using 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars for those between the ages of 16 and 64.

The Impact of Linguistic Status on Employment Status

Overall, most Latinos were employed between 1980 and 2014. However, Latinos who were Spanish monolingual had the lowest employment rates.

In 1980, 62% of bilingual Latinos were employed. That percentage increased to 65% in 1990, decreased to 60% in 2000. About 67% of bilinguals were employed in 2014. In 1980, 6% of bilingual Latinos were unemployed and that percentage remained steady over time. One-third (33%) of bilingual Latinos were not in the labor force in 1980, and that percentage declined to 27% in 2014. (See figure 8 and table 5).

Among Latinos who were Spanish monolingual, the employment rate in 1980 was 50%. That percentage increased to 58% in 2014. In 1980, 7% of Spanish monolingual Latinos were unemployed. That percentage climbed to 11% in 1990, but decreased to 7% in 2000. About 6% of Spanish monolinguals were unemployed in 2014. In 1980, 43% of Spanish monolingual Latinos were not in the labor force. In 2014, that percentage declined to 36%.

The employment rate among English monolingual Latinos was 63% in 1980 and increased to 65% in 2014. Less than 10% of English monolingual Latinos were unemployed between 1980 (6%) and 2014 (7%). However, 31% of English monolingual Latinos were not in the labor force in 1980, which dropped to 28% in 2014.

Figure 8
Linguistic Status by Employment Status
among Latinos, Age 16 - 64
United States, 2014

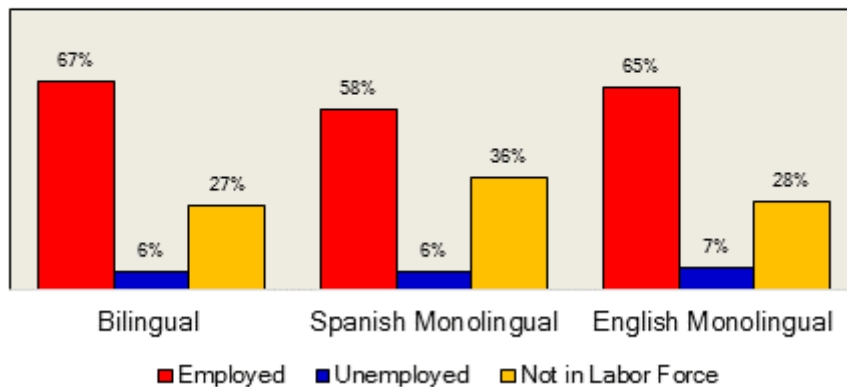


Table 5
Linguistic Status by Employment Status among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

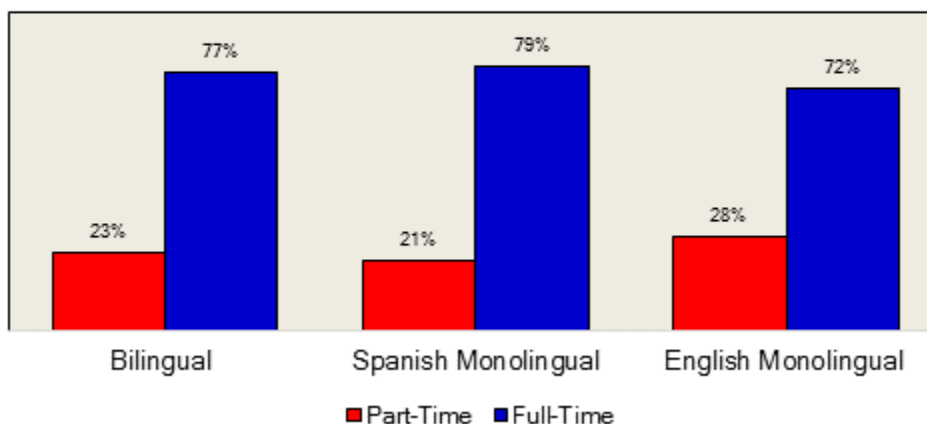
Linguistic Status	Employment Status	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Employed	62%	65%	60%	67%
	Unemployed	6%	7%	6%	6%
	Not in Labor Force	33%	28%	34%	27%
Spanish Monolingual	Employed	50%	54%	48%	58%
	Unemployed	7%	11%	7%	6%
	Not in Labor Force	43%	36%	45%	36%
English Monolingual	Employed	63%	68%	63%	65%
	Unemployed	6%	7%	6%	7%
	Not in Labor Force	31%	26%	31%	28%

The Impact of Linguistic Status on Hours Worked per Week

Large proportions of employed Latinos worked full-time regardless of linguistic status between 1980 and 2014.⁸ (See figure 9 and table 6).

The percentage of employed bilingual Latinos who worked full-time declined from 83% in 1980 to 77% in 2014. Among Latinos who were Spanish monolingual, 88% worked full-time in 1980. In 2014, that percentage dropped to 79%. Latinos who were English monolingual had the lowest percentages of those that worked full-time. Approximately 77% of Latinos who were English monolingual worked full-time in 1980, and that percentage decreased to 72% in 2014.

Figure 9
Linguistic Status by Hours Worked per Week
among Latinos, Age 16 - 64
United States, 2014



⁸ Full-time employment status means that the individual works 35 hours per week or more.

Table 6
Linguistic Status by Hours Worked per Week among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

Linguistic Status	Hours Worked	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Part-Time	17%	17%	17%	23%
	Full-Time	83%	83%	83%	77%
Spanish Monolingual	Part-Time	12%	14%	13%	21%
	Full-Time	88%	86%	87%	79%
English Monolingual	Part-Time	23%	23%	22%	28%
	Full-Time	77%	77%	78%	72%

The Impact of Linguistic Status on Poverty Status

The poverty rates among each respective linguistic status group were stable between 1980 and 2014. In 1980, 19% of bilingual Latinos were living in poverty while 81% were not in poverty. In 2014, the poverty rate among bilinguals was 20%, with 80% living above the poverty line. (See figure 10 and table 7).

More than one-third (34%) of the Spanish monolingual Latinos lived in poverty between 1980 and 2014. This poverty rate was notably higher than the poverty rate among bilingual and English monolingual Latinos. This difference could reflect the lower levels of educational attainment, lower median personal incomes, and foreign-born profile of Spanish monolingual Latinos.

Approximately 14% of the Latinos who were English monolingual lived in poverty 1980. In 2014, that percentage had slightly increased to 16%.

Figure 10
Linguistic Status by Poverty Status among Latinos, Age 16 - 64
United States, 2014

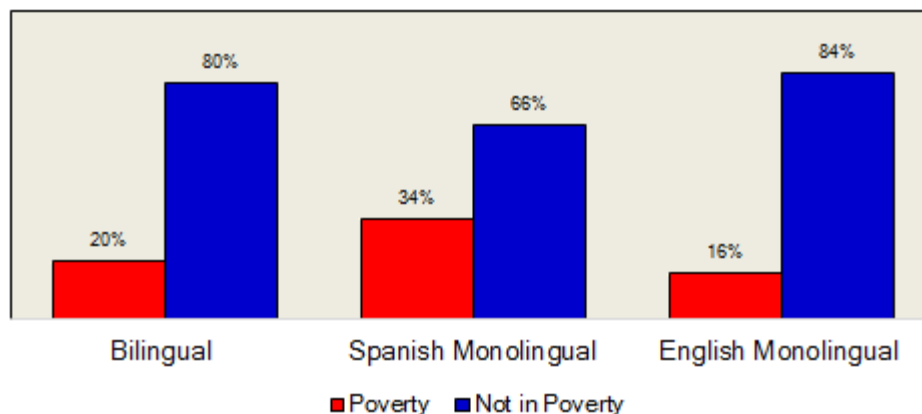


Table 7
Linguistic Status by Poverty Status among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

Linguistic Status	Poverty Status	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	Poverty	19%	20%	19%	20%
	Not in Poverty	81%	80%	81%	80%
Spanish Monolingual	Poverty	34%	35%	34%	34%
	Not in Poverty	66%	65%	66%	66%
English Monolingual	Poverty	14%	14%	16%	16%
	Not in Poverty	86%	86%	84%	84%

Conclusion

This report compared demographic and socio-economic profiles of Latinos who were bilingual, English monolingual, and Spanish monolingual between 1980 and 2014. It explored trends in linguistic status by sex, age, and nativity, as well as among the five largest Latino national subgroups. In addition, this report also studied the impact of linguistic status on educational, economic, and occupational outcomes.

As noted, the data highlighted three key trends. First, most Latinos in the United States were bilingual between 1980 (67%) and 2014 (66%). Second, Latinos who were Spanish monolingual had substantially lower levels of educational attainment than bilingual Latinos and Latinos who were English monolingual. Third, Spanish monolingual Latinos had lower median personal incomes and higher poverty rates than bilingual and English monolingual Latinos. These poorer educational and economic outcomes among Spanish monolinguals could be a reflection of their foreign-born status, because foreign-born individuals typically arrive in the United States with lower levels of educational attainment, and thus work in occupations that require less education and pay lower wages.

One interesting interpretation from this study relates to the relationship between linguistic status and educational attainment. Although the United States is largely seen as an immigrant nation, the markedly lower levels of educational attainment for Latinos who were Spanish monolingual suggests that being domestic-born is a prerequisite for scholastic achievement.

Spanish monolingual Latinos may be penalized in terms of educational and economic mobility. The comparatively lower rates of employment among Spanish monolingual Latinos (58% in 2014) suggests that a lack of English language skills is prohibitive to finding employment. Therefore, programs that assist or support the acquisition of English language skills for recent immigrants could serve as a pathway for higher educational and economic outcomes.

Statistical Appendix

Table 8
Linguistic Status among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	67%	69%	68%	66%
Spanish Monolingual	7%	8%	9%	7%
English Monolingual	26%	23%	23%	27%

Table 9
Linguistic Status by Median Age among Latinos
United States, 1980 - 2014

	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	25	28	29	33
Spanish Monolingual	35	34	35	48
English Monolingual	18	22	22	24

Table 10
Linguistic Status by Median Personal Income among Latinos, Age 16 - 64
United States, 1980 - 2014

	1980	1990	2000	2014
Bilingual	\$ 20,967	\$ 21,600	\$ 22,848	\$ 22,000
Spanish Monolingual	\$ 14,464	\$ 14,400	\$ 15,368	\$ 15,000
English Monolingual	\$ 21,126	\$ 24,300	\$ 24,480	\$ 23,600