

Latino Poverty in U.S. Counties: From the Great Recession to the Post-Pandemic

We obtained data from the 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for U.S. counties to examine the relationship between demographic and socioeconomic factors related to the Latino poverty rate. For this part of the analysis, the dependent variable is the percentage of Latino families in poverty with the major family structure and human capital variables being the percentage of families headed by females without a husband present, the percentage of persons 25 and older who have a bachelor's degree or higher, and the percentage of persons 16 to 64 years of age who are working. We also include four control variables: 1) percentage of Latinos who are less than 18 years of age, 2) percentage of Latinos who are foreign-born, 3) the USDA rural-urban continuum which ranges from the most urban with a value of "1" which represent metropolitan counties in metropolitan areas of 1 million population or more to "9" which represent nonmetropolitan counties with an urban population of fewer than 5,000, not adjacent to a metro area (the higher the value, the greater the level of rurality), and 4) three dummy variables representing region of residence (Midwest, South, and West with Northeast representing the comparison group). In order to have greater accuracy in the variables used in the analysis, we limit the analysis to counties with 250 or more Latino families with the same cutoff point use for the comparative analysis involving Blacks and Whites. Ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression is used to conduct the analysis.

The descriptive analysis shows similar trends as those observed at the individual level above. The average poverty rate across the 1,501 counties with 250 or more Latino families is 16.9 percent, twice as high as the poverty rate of Whites and somewhat higher than that of Blacks (Table 1). Across the counties, Latinos tend to be relatively young with an average of more than one-third of the population being less than 18 years of age and slightly more than one-

fourth being foreign-born. On average, approximately one-sixth of county residents are Latino compared with 19 percent for Blacks and 75 percent for Whites, more than one-fifth of Latino families and headed by women without a spouse, and Latinos 25 and older have the lowest level of education with 17 percent, on average, having a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, Latinos and Whites have relatively high levels of employment. Finally, Whites are more likely to be living in rural areas compared with Latinos and Whites.

Table 1 Characteristics of Counties Related to Poverty Rates and Selected Demographic and Socioeconomic Attributes by Race/Ethnic Groups, 2022.

Characteristics	Latino	Black	White
Pct. families in poverty	16.9	20.5	7.8
Pct. population 0-17	34.3	23.4	19.3
Pct. foreign-born	26.5	6.7	1.3
Pct. of population in specific race (Latino, Black, White)	16.2	18.9	75.3
Pct. families headed by females no spouse	22.1	41.2	13.1
Pct. persons 25 and older with bachelor's degree or higher	17.3	18.1	25.9
Pct. persons 16-64 employed	68.4	60.1	69.5
Rurality code	3.63	3.51	5.18
Number of counties with 250 or more families	1,501	1,309	3,056

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Public Use File (U.S. Census Bureau 2023).

We now examine the relationship between the Latino poverty rate and the family structure and human capital factors for U.S. counties. The variables used in the analysis account for 30.3 percent of the variation in the Latino poverty rates across the 1,501 counties with 250 or more Latino families (Table 2). The results show that family structure and human capital factors are significantly related to the Latino poverty rate. Counties where single women account for a higher percentage of all families have significantly higher poverty rates while those with greater employment among persons 16 to 64 years of age and those where persons 25 and older have a

higher percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher have lower poverty rates. In addition, the results show that counties where children less than 18 years of age and where foreign-born persons account for a larger percentage of the population have higher poverty rates. Moreover, counties located in the South have a higher rate of poverty compared with those located in the Northeast. Finally, the Latino relative size is not significantly related to the poverty rate. Examination of the standardized betas show that the percentage of families headed by single women ($\beta = 0.333$) and the employment rate among persons 16 to 64 years of age ($\beta = 0.304$) are most strongly related to the Latino poverty rate.

Table 2 Results of the OLS multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the poverty rate and selected family structure and human capital variables in counties by race/ethnic group, 2022.

Characteristics	Latino b	Black b	White b
Intercept	17.846 **	13.596 **	14.088 **
Pct. families headed by females no spouse	0.347 **	0.284 **	0.303 **
Pct. persons 25+ with bachelor's degree or higher	-0.063 *	-0.148 **	-0.042 **
Pct. persons 16-64 employed	-0.355 **	-0.267 **	-0.229 **
Pct. population 0-17	0.377 **	0.515 **	0.168 **
Pct. foreign-born	0.056 **	-0.025	0.035
Pct. race/ethnic relative size	-0.018	-0.033 *	0.022 **
Rurality code	0.322 **	0.505 **	0.238 **
Midwest	0.781	2.229 *	0.459 *
South	2.680 **	0.606	0.968 **
West	-0.480	1.624	0.496 *
Adjusted R-square	0.303	0.478	0.583
Number of counties with 250 or more families	1,501	1,309	3,056

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Public Use File (U.S. Census Bureau 2023).

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

** Statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Further analysis will involve years from 2008 to 2021.