



Advancing **all** women. It's just good business.



# **LATINAS IN CORPORATE AMERICA**

## **A FOOT IN TWO WORLDS: ELEVATING THE LATINA EXPERIENCE**



# OVERVIEW

The Network of Executive Women (NEW), focused on advancing all women, is investigating how women of color experience their workplaces. The findings are meant to help companies improve the hiring, retention and promotion of women of color. Our latest report, in collaboration with Latinarrific, covers the Latina community.

But first, some background. In 2018, NEW embarked on a research series looking at the hiring, retention and promotion of women in the workplace. NEW's first leadership study, [The Female Leadership Crisis](#),<sup>1</sup> looked at the promotion and retention rates for women in the workplace. We found women are making gains in equality through middle management. But at the senior leadership levels, women are heading for the exits at an alarming rate for four main reasons: bias, isolation, too little flexibility from companies and lack of transition support. This scenario plays out for Latina women as well.

Diverse companies perform better, according to study after study. Companies in the top 25th percentile for gender-diverse executive teams are 21% more likely to experience above-average profits, according to a McKinsey & Company report.<sup>2</sup>

The report<sup>3</sup> shows that moving beyond gender to other forms of diversity means profitable numbers increase even more. Companies with more culturally and ethnically diverse executive teams are 33% more likely to see better-than-average profits. At the board of directors level, more ethnically and culturally diverse companies were 43% more likely to see above-average profits, showing a significant correlation between diversity and performance.

Ensuring Latinas are part of this diverse mix makes sense, as Hispanic buying power is on the rise and is expected to reach US \$1.7 trillion by 2020.<sup>4</sup> And Hispanics are looking for products and services that reflect their experience; in a report by PwC,<sup>4</sup> the majority of first-, second- and third-generation Hispanics said they were drawn to content that reflects their culture.<sup>5</sup>

As NEW dug deeper into diverse talent, looking at how women of color are experiencing the workplace, we uncovered insights on Asian, Black and Latina women in our 2018 report, [Advancing All Women](#).<sup>6</sup> Similar to women overall, women of color are advancing through middle management, but in senior leadership ranks, women of color numbers drop even more sharply than women overall.



As we looked at a wide body of research and continued our conversations with women, we realized two things:

1. Companies are increasing their diversity & inclusion (D&I) spend; they spent roughly \$8 billion per year on diversity training in the United States alone.<sup>7</sup> A 2019 survey of 234 companies in the S&P 500 found that 63% of diversity professionals had been appointed or promoted to their roles during the past three years.<sup>8</sup> Companies are making progress at the middle manager and below levels, but still show sparse pipelines of women of color for senior leadership positions.

2. The advice available for companies on how to help drive the attraction and retention of women of color has historically been very generic, yet their career development needs are very diverse. A one-size-fits-all approach won't cut it.

It is in that spirit that we delve more deeply into the Latina community in this report, the first of a series on women of color. Through focus groups where women were encouraged to tell their stories, we dove into the issues that make Latinas' employee experience so different from the mainstream.

We went in with two overarching questions to answer: **How are women of color experiencing the workplace within their social identity groups? And how can companies help improve the hiring, retention, and promotion of women of color?**

# CREATING A POSITIVE LATINA WORK EXPERIENCE

Discussing any ethnic group as a whole is challenging. Within any one group is a heterogeneous set of experiences, worldviews and backgrounds. What one Latina experiences may not reflect the experiences of another.

As a result, findings indicate trends, not absolutes. This report represents the broad experiences that the majority of our participants shared, then distilled into key insights to help leaders identify, promote and retain Latina talent. But know that each Latina's journey is unique and may not reflect the findings of our study.

Major factors that differentiated participants in our study were the socio-economic status of a Latina's family, what generation a Latina is in the United States, and their country or culture of origin.

These are not mutually exclusive categories. Some of our participants or their parents grew up affluent in their country of origin, but then had to rebuild their lives when they immigrated to the United States. Others moved to the United States to seek greater financial opportunity that was not afforded to them in their home countries. For those who were educated and affluent in their home country, building status and wealth for future generations was easier than it was for those whose parents grew up in poverty.

Our goal is to help leaders better understand the nuances and drivers of Latina career advancement and to look at Latinas as individuals, so they can build a more robust talent development plan, addressing the isolation and bias that our Latina participants described.

**53%**

of Latinas say that executive presence at their company conforms to traditionally white, male standards.<sup>9</sup>

Workplace programs to combat bias and change culture are meant to help foster a better Latina experience but, in reality, many corporate cultures still struggle with people who are different from their historical norm.

The breadth of Latinas' unique experiences and cultures means that companies will need to take flexible approaches to development and promotion. Socio-economic factors, culture/country of origin, generation in the U.S. (first, second, third, etc.) and other factors all play a role in the career development needs of Latinas.

What follows is our findings from the focus groups, as well as recommendations on how to help craft a positive Latina employee experience and move diversity into leadership ranks.

“ For chunks of my upbringing, I resented having one foot in the world of my cultural heritage and one foot in the American experiment but my career helped me deeply appreciate it. Straddling both worlds gave me such a unique lens on what it means to carry different perspectives as a result of different life experiences. It helped me see and grow people for what they could be instead of molding them into a bootleg version of myself. My culture released me from the false presumption that there was one right path. ”

**-Karla Monterroso**

CEO, Code2040 (Fast Company, October 15, 2018)



**Because without inclusion, diversity walks out the door.**

## **STRADDLING TWO WORLDS**

Many of the Latinas we interviewed don't feel they fit easily into the typical corporate culture in the United States. And while this could be celebrated—their differences adding strength—recent insight from the Network of Executive Women's Latina members shows that instead, it's being quashed in far too many companies.

In focus groups with mid-level and C-suite Latina leaders, NEW heard similar themes from all participants. The current standard for everything from promotability to executive presence is based on white male norms.

It does not account for Latin culture in general, let alone the nuances Latinas bring from their varied cultures. And it fails to address the Latina employee experience, which is a far cry from the typical employee experience. These women have generally succeeded despite their corporate culture, not because of it.

Companies who can tailor their D&I approach, embracing the unique strengths Latinas bring based on their cultures and perspectives, not only score a win for employee experience but also for the business growth diversity has proven to bring.

# LATINAS IN THE UNITED STATES: A SNAPSHOT



**31** MEAN AGE



**42%** PERCENT MARRIED



**3.23** AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE



**\$65,064** AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME



**34%** FOREIGN BORN



**66%** U.S. BORN



**10%** SHARE OF POPULATION WITH AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME OF \$50,000+



**80%** ENGLISH SPOKEN WELL OR VERY WELL



**16%** BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

## The Culture Conundrum: Collectivism vs. Individualism

Many Latinas are raised in a collectivist culture. In these cultures, common goals trump individual pursuits, the good of the group is more important than what any one member desires, and selflessness rules. Latinas are praised by their parents and other authority figures in Latin culture for being generous and helpful, as well as for respecting their elders and other authority figures. When a Latina woman enters the very individualistic culture of U.S. businesses—cultures where assertiveness, independence and appropriate “push-back” are valued—it can be confusing both for her and her manager. In many instances, Latinas are paired with a white, U.S.-centric manager who assumes the same values and baseline for good performance.

It’s not uncommon for Latinas to experience problems with their managers, through no fault of their own. Some Latinas’ reluctance to self-promote, their support for the end-result versus individual accomplishments, their hesitation to challenge an authority figure such as their boss—all can be misconstrued. Unless managers and senior leaders are educated on cultural differences, that trend will continue.

Instead of being coached on how to turn those behaviors into strengths, complementing them with what their corporate culture values, they can be penalized for them. Many very qualified Latinas are overlooked for promotions or fast-tracking because their team spirit and cultural values may make them look less “hungry” or personally qualified for advancement. This occurs despite their very real qualifications and desire to move into new roles of responsibility.

Beyond simply educating managers, companies need to provide deliberate training on cultural sensitivities, addressing where their corporate culture and employees’ cultures of origins can blend into a collective formula for success.



# CULTURE COUNTS

No culture can be summed up in just a few attributes. Latinas are rich, diverse women, not stereotypes. Yet, many of our focus group participants described performance feedback from their non-Latin bosses about things that could be considered cultural traits rather than more tangible things like business performance. Instead of celebrating the key elements that make Latinas different, managers often counseled against those traits, instead of considering them key strengths.

Being sensitive to cultural traits is a key component of inclusivity. Yet many Latinas we spoke with said they felt an unspoken message: Be yourself at work, as long as it conforms to our mainstream culture. The attributes that set them apart from their white male counterparts were usually the ones pinpointed as areas for change.

Embracing these traits and their heritage is hard in most corporate cultures, said participants. Most have experienced prejudice and discrimination for being different, speaking a different language, having an accent, not having a degree from “the right school” or living in “the right area.” Yet, there’s hope. Latina participants hired by companies that value bicultural and bilingual talent say they have been able to retain their cultural values and feel valued at work — even helping others advance in the corporation.

We found Millennial and Gen Z Latinas swim more comfortably in bicultural waters than their older counterparts, a finding also supported by [NEW’s 2019 Gen Z research](#).<sup>10</sup> And some corporate cultures embrace biculturalism more successfully than others, so experiences varies by company. In some companies, Latinas were pigeonholed into roles focusing solely on the Hispanic market.

## The issues most Latinas are struggling with boil down to a few key areas:

**“Latina-ness” vs. reserve.** “As an engineer with a consumer packaged goods company, it is not acceptable to bring your culture with you. If you want to move up, you have to be emotionless. Put on a poker face and speak in one tone.” So said a Latina executive, describing how her “Latina-ness” is “too much” for her corporate culture. From gestures to attire, Latinas are told they are “too colorful” or “too expressive” and asked to “tone it down.” The poker face this engineer describes is in direct contrast to the use of hands and passionate expression most Latinas learned as essential to communication. The group described being perceived as having a “Latin temper,” being a drama queen and being overly sensitive—all while trying to discern what their coworkers’ neutral expressions meant in meetings or interactions.

**76%**  
of Latinos (women and men) repress parts of their personas at work.<sup>11</sup>

**Personalismo vs. “too familiar.”** In Latin culture, people place great emphasis on personal relationships. Personalismo is a “formal friendliness” that sometimes goes beyond the American norm of friendliness at work. Latinas tend to value personal relationships over status, material gain and their institutional relationships. Being friendly, open and physically close is natural for most Latinas, but it can be misunderstood by coworkers from less open cultures. One focus group participant recalled being called out by her team lead, who told her she should not touch or get physically close to a senior-level female executive who was also Latina. She did not feel comfortable explaining to this non-Hispanic team lead that when conducting business in Latin cultures, these are common ways to connect personally and respectfully with someone.

**Prioritizing family vs. “whatever it takes.”** Many Latinas come from families where their parents worked hard to provide them opportunities in America. And while they want to be similar positive role models for their children, they place a significant emphasis on spending time together as a family—something corporate America says it values, but does not accommodate well. Alternatively, some Latinas come from moneyed and privileged families with lots of household help and need to adjust to live a more spartan life in the United States as they work to re-establish themselves.

Our focus group explained the reluctance of Latinas to enroll their children in daycare, citing trusted family members or “adopted” family members like close friends and nannies as the preferred caregivers.

**Latinas make time with their families a high priority.**



Many Latinas do not view institutional daycare in the same way as so many non-Latina-American women do. Ideally, a working Latina prefers to have her children at home with one loving provider. They also make time with their families a high priority. For all women, not just Latinas, being able to accommodate these values at work is critical for their success in striking the right work/life balance.

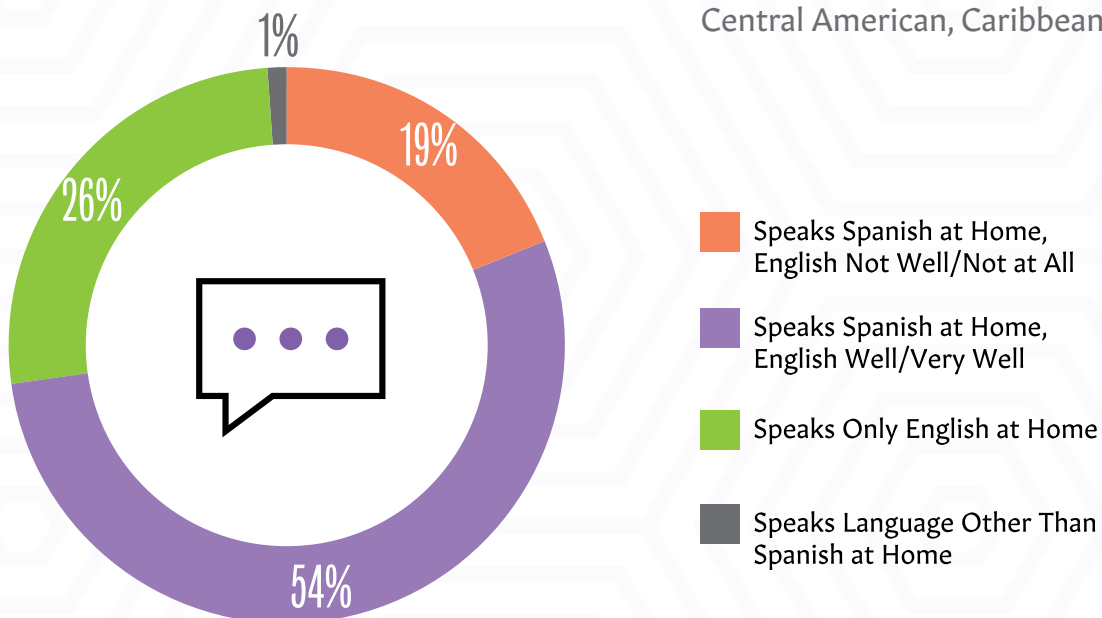
Some Latinas are also coping with machismo and little help at home, which can hamper their success or cause the breakup of their marriage. Others may be feeling pressure from their relatives to get married and have a family, and in more traditional settings, this comes with added family pressure about stepping back from career growth. Even Latinas that come from privileged families in other countries usually must accommodate a change in lifestyle in the United States, having less domestic help. This puts more of the burden for childcare on parents and, in particular, Latina mothers.

**Perception of time.** Many Latin cultures take a more relaxed approach to time than traditional U.S. business culture. This more laid-back approach sometimes leads to the “mañana” stereotype, the idea that Latinas put things off until tomorrow rather than addressing them proactively and head-on today. Tardiness should not be assumed as a lack of commitment, but expectations can be made clear so that regardless of culture, all employees know what is expected regarding punctuality and deadlines.

Stereotyping should be avoided at all costs. Managers and coworkers should be taught to avoid the bias that stereotyping creates. Every person acts differently, according to personal values and priorities—and company culture will impact the actions of employees of any ethnicity. Many Latinas adopt their company’s values for time orientation, remaining punctual because it is expected that all employees will be, or simply because it is a personal value.

**Language.** Not only do many Latinas have to contend with language differences with native English speakers, they also deal with the many regional varieties of the Spanish language—including Mexican, Spanish, South American, Central American, Caribbean and more.

**BILINGUAL AND DIVERSE  
(HISPANIC FEMALES, LANGUAGE)**



Source: The Nielsen Company’s Latina 2.0 report, 2017

# WHAT THE LATINA EXPERIENCE LOOKS LIKE

Several factors are hindering Latinas from having an optimal employee experience, or even just the employee experience their non-Latin male counterparts are having.

## Bias

Bias is detrimentally impacting the Latina work experience. It's a tricky subject to tackle, however, because bias can be conscious or unconscious. For example, there's the "I got mine" bias described by some of our participants. They translated it to an attitude from some higher-ups, sometimes from senior level Latinas, as: "I got to where I am and I am not going to let you come in."

Some of our focus group participants described being disparaged not only for their English, but sometimes for their regional accent or dialect, by other Latinas. Some said there is an assumption (sometimes an unconscious bias) by executives that their accent indicated a lack of intelligence.

Interestingly, a report<sup>12</sup> showed that while 73% of Latinas speak Spanish at home, 80% say they speak English "well" or "very well." An accent should denote nothing more than just that— an accent.

*"The first 10 years, I tried not to be Latina. I did a lot of advocacy for women and gays, but I didn't advocate for Latinas. Couldn't bring all the flags out at once."*

**–Focus group participant**

Some of the Latinas felt that their managers made assumptions that they do not want to advance. Our participants found this one particularly puzzling because most were raised by hard-working parents who instilled that same work ethic in their children. In fact, more than half (52%) of Latinas say their goal is to make it to the top of their profession. Our participants felt they were able to take on a variety of responsibilities and roles and that they showed up consistently with integrity and reliability to get the job done.

## In search of social collateral

Latinas' natural respect for authority, due to their upbringing, can hinder their careers. It can hinder their confidence, making them unwilling to ask for help or deserved promotions. The Latina executives we talked to mentioned early intervention as key to reversing unhealthy patterns. Being coached on finding a seat at the table and understanding the corporate political landscape helped them immensely. They overcame their fears, expressed interest in higher positions and often found advancement, rather than believing they didn't have the right "pedigree."

Doing so meant overcoming hurdles. Many learned how not to be just seen, but truly heard—a challenge in a "You're not like me" culture. It meant ensuring when they were given the work, they were also given the credit for it when completed well. But that credit helped earn them the social collateral they needed to be respected and promoted.

## Mastering the corporate cultural script

The Latinas we talked to said they had to learn code switching to master the corporate cultural script. Code switching meant adapting their work personas to the culture they were in, keeping their more natural persona at home. While not how they think it should be, they all acknowledged doing it—from fashion and expressiveness to facial expressions and physical proximity. And the amount they had to do varied by locale. For instance, in Miami, work fashion is more colorful and “Latinesque,” versus in the corporate enclaves of the East Coast. Some are able to retain their authentic selves without too much self-editing, though. As one participant put it: “I am unique because I kept my identity: I am not your typical engineer. I present wearing heels, dresses, with long hair and wearing makeup. My Latina femininity worked for me and it doesn’t affect my performance.”

*“I once heard a conversation from my supervisor that he was going to hire another person who happened to be a white male, because he had the right pedigree. I never understood what that meant, as I thought pedigrees were for dogs. The word ‘pedigree’ has always stuck with me since then, because pedigree is something you can’t alter.”*

**–Focus group participant**

*“An executive not too long ago called me a ‘feisty Latina.’ It took me aback because of the context: how it was said, when it was said. It was meant to be derogatory. I’m hardly ever speechless, but I didn’t know how to respond. I was in a state of shock.”*

**–Raquel Tamez, CEO, The Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers**

But mastering the corporate cultural script involved more than just dress and facial expressions—language played a key role. Multiple Latina executives spoke of learning to stop apologizing. They explained that when a Latina apologizes in the workplace, it is to foster mutual respect and trust. But in traditional American corporate cultures, that apology is perceived as incompetence and weakness. One executive told us: “Early on in my career, at a senior-level position, I apologized to my peer for not being prepared for his sales presentation meeting. Word got out and my career down-spiraled from there.”

On the flip side, they also needed to challenge language from their bosses that they did not agree with, overcoming their issues with quietly accepting authority. When told “You’re not qualified yet” in an instance where they were, they needed to speak up for themselves and prove why that was not the case. Our group agreed that their level of acculturation (first generation, second generation or beyond) greatly impacted their learning curve.

## Emotional intelligence

The Latinas' we spoke with believe emotional intelligence (EQ) within their own culture is high. In traditional corporate culture, it is tested. One Latina spoke of her EQ as an advantage when speaking with employees who are not college-educated: "Speaking in 'plain' terms means finding a way to relate and communicate effectively and simply—not using high terms—to connect with an employee at a lower pay rate—say, a technician. It helps you better connect because you're using plain language. It's taking highly technical, complex information and distilling it down for easy comprehension. It's showing empathy for the floor worker and putting the conversation at a level he or she is comfortable with."

Our group also said facial expressions tested EQ on both sides of the equation—for them and their coworkers. "I was asked, 'What is the crisis?' due to my facial expression." There was no crisis—she was just involved in what she was focused on. In contrast, Latinas often wonder at what their white coworkers are thinking or feeling: "Is he bored, interested, thinking this is irrelevant? I can't tell."

*"Don't mistake politeness for lack of strength."*

**–Sonia Sotomayor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice**

**Latina executives born in other countries say they had the added issues of not only having to learn English, but also learning to adapt to a foreign country while facing discrimination and judgment for simply being who they were. In effect, they were "triple outsiders"—women, Hispanic, and not born in the United States.**



## Respecting cultural heritage without pigeonholing

Being recognized as a Latina but not pigeonholed because of it shouldn't be hard. But for some participants, it has been.

One focus group participant recalled working at a grocery chain. She noticed the stores didn't carry Hispanic food. She worked up the courage to identify this as a missed business opportunity to her manager, even bringing in her own grocery shopping receipt and two bags of grocery items she bought weekly elsewhere.

That courageous conversation earned her a promotion and she built out the Hispanic product section for her employer. After success in this role for many years, she asked for a transfer to gain experience in another area. She did not get it, which made her realize she had been pigeonholed into the Hispanic market team.

She moved on to another company that valued her diverse background and experience, one that allowed her to move into non-Hispanic markets and build her category experience.

# HOW LATINAS ARE TRYING TO SHAPE THEIR EXPERIENCE

## Mentors and sponsors

A mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor who can provide perspective on role and career. A sponsor is the person who is connected within the organization and uses that power to help make a mapped career journey happen. Latinas in our focus groups said they had multiple mentors but sponsors were few and far between; some hadn't had any sponsors. C-level participants had a balance of both. Not surprisingly, we heard comments such as: "All my mentors and sponsors have been non-Latino." This reinforces the fact Latinas are looking at top organizational leadership that lacks Latinas. Many Latinas told us what they lack at work, they found elsewhere, joining associations or non-profits for networking and leadership experience. Some hired coaches, sought advanced education and generally sought the skill sets required to advance. But then they find avenues to give back and pay it forward for those still rising in the ranks, in their companies and communities.

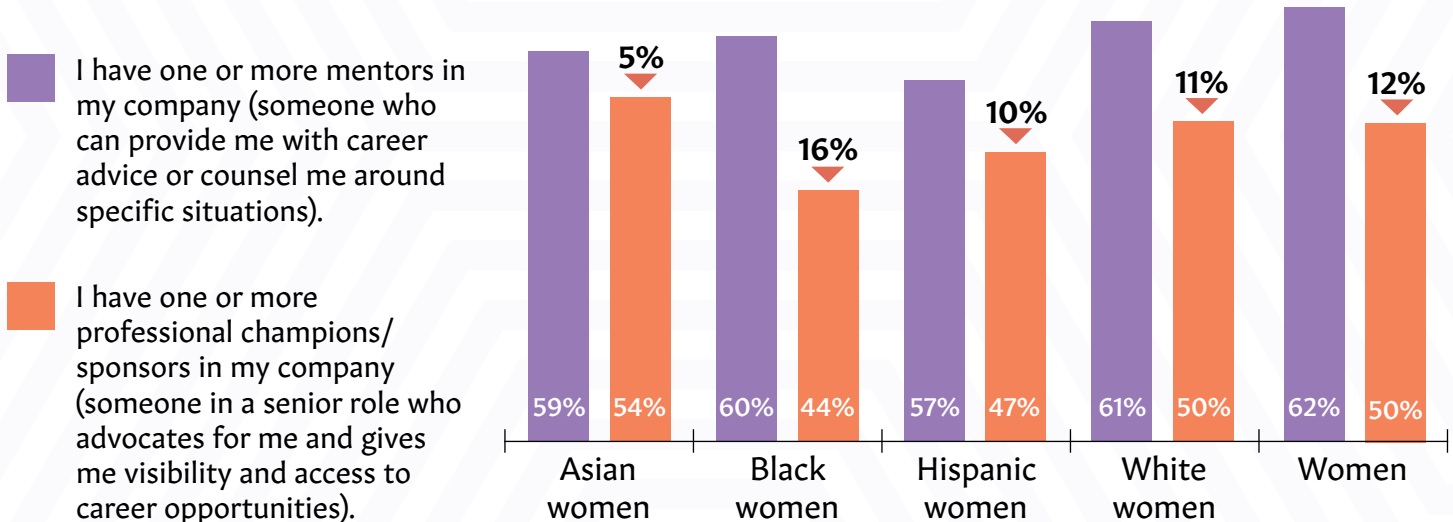
## What drives Latinas to succeed at work

Many of our focus group participants cited humble beginnings as a driver toward success. They started life in poverty or a low-income family, with parents who worked long hours at jobs that were anything but corporate and comfortable.

**52%**  
of Latinas say their goal is to make it to the top of their profession.<sup>12</sup>

As one participant shared: "I strive for success to honor my mother who struggled, worked so hard and was tired, but did everything she could to make our lives better." A large number were raised by single working mothers due to divorce. Paternal abandonment and death were also common. Grandparents and other family members stepped in to fill the void and help with childcare.

## MENTORING AND SPONSORING OF WOMEN OF COLOR



Source: Mercer survey of NEW members and participating company employees



Pride in family and the value of hard work/doing a good job were instilled from a young age. Our participants cited those factors as key to driving them in their careers.

The adversity they experienced makes them good at breaking large endeavors into pieces, setting goals and consistent objectives for all. Give them a tough assignment and—well, they feel it's no tougher than what many have already been through. They are clear and focused about getting it done. They may do so differently than their traditional white male counterparts, making it home for dinner more often or taking a couple of hours to visit their child's classroom. But that's part of the diversity and value they bring to the table—a balanced approach.

### **Deciding what to keep**

Our participants cited time and time again having to observe a culture at work that was quite different from the culture they come from—and deciding what to mimic in terms of new behaviors, vs. what to keep from their own heritage. From cool reserve to a “poker face,” standoffish management versus inclusion, these women choose each day who to be at work.

Many are choosing to keep the best of their culture, caring about their employees' welfare, making time for family, establishing more personal connections with colleagues. All mentioned the added stress of having to constantly recalibrate to fit in while coping with the same work pressures their non-Latina coworkers do. They needed to cover the basics—learning how to talk, dress, react and act—where others didn't.



*“If you are Latino in spirit, background, you name it, but you don't bring that forward fully to who you are as a professional, as an innovator—it's like giving up on your superpower and not using it at all. You're giving up on your own potential.”*

**–Liliana Gil Valletta**

*Cofounder & CEO, CulturIntel and CIEN+  
(Hispanic Executive, June 17, 2019)*



## Major learning areas were:



**How to dress for business**



**How to highlight their achievements and accomplishments so they are considered for promotions—and how to express interest in an upward career path**



**How to confidently speak and present**



**For some, learning the nuances of the English language, as well as new customs and culture**



**How much personal information to share**



**How and when to ask for help**



**Navigating and respecting personal space, as Latin and non-Hispanic cultures differ on this boundary**

**If Latinas can keep their cultural attributes, and learn how to best leverage these strengths without losing them, it's the best of both worlds.**

# WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO

Two key things are holding Latinas back—the lack of an inclusive culture and lack of sponsorship. While the lack of sponsorship is true for most women, it is even worse for Latina women because of the absence of Latinas in senior level positions. To combat this situation, we suggest a few key strategies that companies can employ.

## **Develop true cultural competence and inclusive leadership**

According to a report<sup>13</sup> inclusive leaders are:

1. Treating people and groups fairly, based on their unique characteristics, rather than on stereotypes.
2. Personalizing individuals. Understanding and valuing the uniqueness of diverse others while also accepting them as members of the group.
3. Leveraging the thinking of diverse groups for smarter ideation and decision-making that reduces the risk of being blindsided by something that a diverse team would have known about and flagged potential risks.

Companies need to make employees aware of the critical cultural elements for any culture—not just Latin culture—and how these elements can impact how an employee shows up to work. This approach includes continuing unconscious bias training and ongoing curriculum for leaders at all levels, but blanket training is not enough. Building the empathy and emotional intelligence of managers helps build better relationships with all employees, but especially multicultural ones.

And, managers should understand how they might have to tailor their career development approach for different employees. For example, if there is a Latina employee who is talented, but shies away from self-promotion and speaking up, she needs to be invited to speak up and helped to overcome self-doubt.

Companies hire Latinas for the unique traits they bring, but then coach them to assimilate. Those companies that can help celebrate differences, and identify how those differences are making a positive business impact, will win with Latina talent.



## **Sponsor, don't just mentor**

Many of NEW's Latina focus group participants attributed part of their success to having a sponsor—usually a white male or female. Latinas need to be able to look up and see people who look like them in the C-suite and on the board of directors. At the beginning of 2019, no Latinas were at the helm of Fortune 500 companies.<sup>14</sup> The only way this will change is if companies start deliverable interventions to help attract, develop and retain Latina talent.

Companies also need to institute more formal sponsorship programs that educate leaders on how to be good sponsors, highlighting the successes of sponsored Latinas throughout the company.

Latinas need to be educated on the differences between mentorship and sponsorship, how to identify and best leverage mentors and how to attract the attention of sponsors.

## **Be deliberate about Latina talent**

**Accountability.** Leaders need to be held accountable for diversity and, more importantly, inclusion. A gap still exists between what companies are saying and the actions that are taking place. To truly change behavior, companies must put accountability measures into place that are tied to performance reviews and, ultimately, leader compensation. Investment in Latinas, and any diverse group for that matter, also needs to be deliberate and targeted to specific segments of the employee population. It is not enough to invest in women—each diverse group of women has its own needs and advances in the talent won't be made without targeted programs and specific focus.

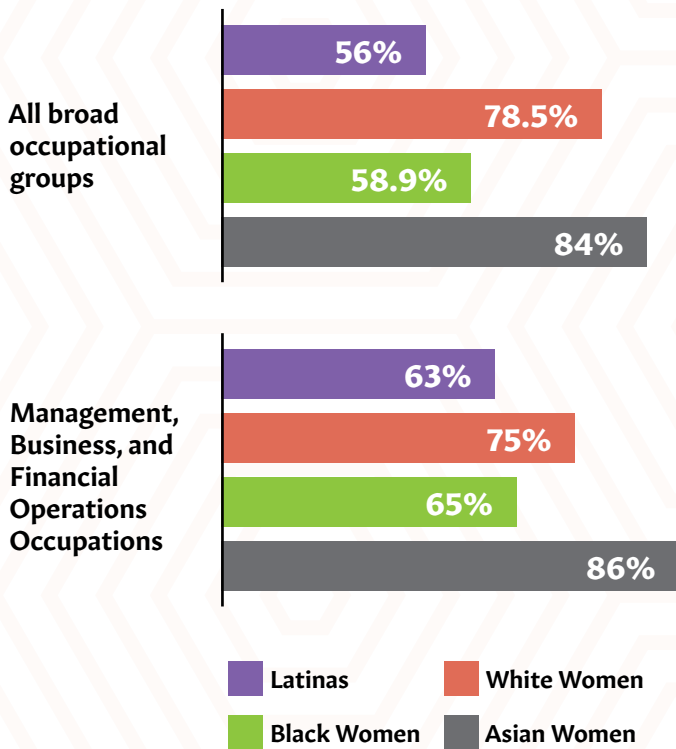
**Hiring.** There is a prevalent, but false, assumption that companies lack the Latina talent to develop Latinas into senior level leaders. That assumption usually stems from a faulty talent pipeline. Often candidates for positions come through a leader's professional network, and those networks typically reflect the homogeneity of the leader. Companies must hold their leaders accountable to ensure that interview slates are diverse. The authors of "Autentico: The Definitive Guide to Latino Success" (Dr. Robert Rodriguez and Andrés Tomás Tapia) suggest companies need to differentiate between the various Latina talent pools and segmented markets in ways that are as rigorous and sophisticated as those for marketing campaigns. Then they need to pursue those talent pools in a more methodical approach.

**Promotion.** Ensure Latina talent is in the pipeline for succession planning. Managers need to be more proactive in assessing the capabilities and interest of Latina women, particularly because some candidates with potential may not express it to their managers. Leaders should be intentional about selecting Latinas for stretch assignments and encouraging them to take those assignments.

Latinas need to be given direct, open, transparent, actionable feedback, just like any other employee. Companies need to be clear on what factors for job success look like; much of the feedback our focus group received coached Latinas to suppress cultural elements that are not critical to job success. Many of our interviewees also said that their companies brought in external candidates for roles they felt they were qualified for, but they did not receive the feedback on why an internal Latina candidate was not selected.

**Equal pay.** Over the past few years, there has been intense focus on the pay gap between men and women, with emphasis on women of color.

**Latinas fare the worst in pay equity<sup>15</sup>**



As companies are hiring Latinas, they need to be cognizant of the pay gap and should ensure that Latinas are receiving equitable offers. Hiring managers need to keep in mind that Latinas may have not received equal pay at previous jobs and may be going into a new job at a pay disadvantage. Latinas may also not feel comfortable asking and negotiating salaries during a job offer or a promotion because of cultural norms and it is incumbent upon the company to be sure that Latinas are offered equal pay for the position.

**Retention.** Understand the talent journey experience for Latinas, from the hiring process and onboarding to the daily work experience and talent management processes. This understanding is crucial to identifying any systemic barriers Latinas may face. After identifying them, leaders need to work actively to change or remove barriers, ensuring leadership buy-in from the top down to help model desired behaviors and appropriate changes.

**Leverage in-house Latina talent**

Actively promote participation of employees of all backgrounds in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or Business Resource Groups (BRGs). Encourage senior leaders to become executive sponsors of these groups and ensure the groups are being leveraged for business purposes. For example, when looking at new products or services for the Latina market, involve Latina ERGs/BRGs in the process. Encourage senior-level Latina talent to be involved in these groups as well.

Tapping into and optimizing ERGs and BRGs means eliminating any unspoken stigma associated with them. At some companies, being associated with an affinity group is considered “ruffling feathers” or taking away from a focus on “real” work. But if leaders set the tone, ERGs and BRGs can be very powerful for employees and company practices.

**Companies that can help celebrate differences and identify how those differences are making a positive business impact will win with Latina talent.**

# BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The Latina executives we talked to did not describe having a foot in two worlds as a positive experience. They know it should be, but corporate America has some road to travel to develop the true inclusivity that can make it so.

Leaders who fit the mainstream norm need to evolve to the conclusion we began this paper with, one from Latina CEO Karla Monterroso: “Straddling both worlds...helped me see and grow people for what they could be instead of molding them into a bootleg version of myself. My culture released me from the false presumption that there was one right path.”

But companies cannot leave leaders to evolve on their own. They must coach and instill a culture of accountability for diversity and inclusion. It’s not just the right thing to do—it’s an essential competitive capability in today’s multicultural landscape.

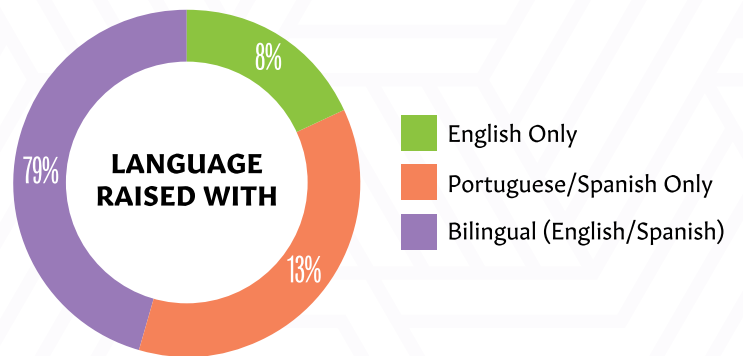
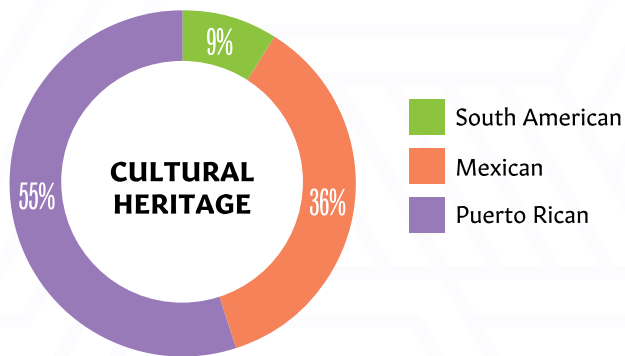
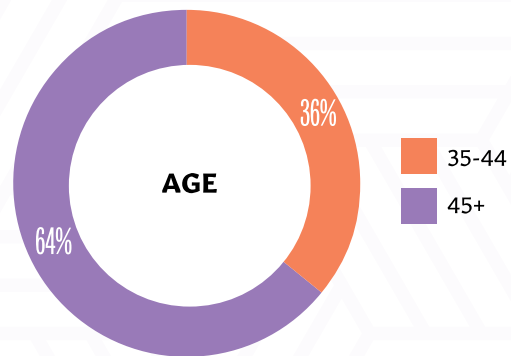
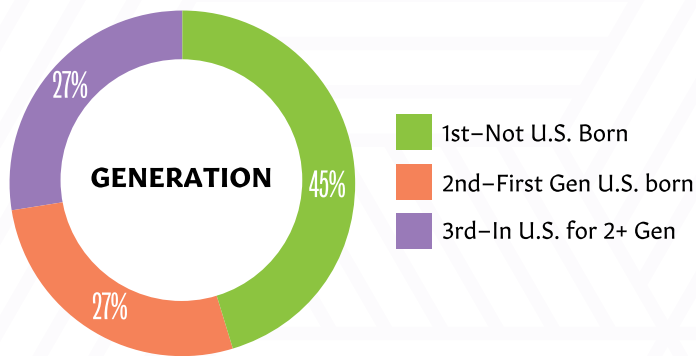
**It’s time for companies to celebrate the richness Latinas bring. With a foot in two worlds, they have twice as much to offer.**



# THE NEW LATINA FOCUS GROUP

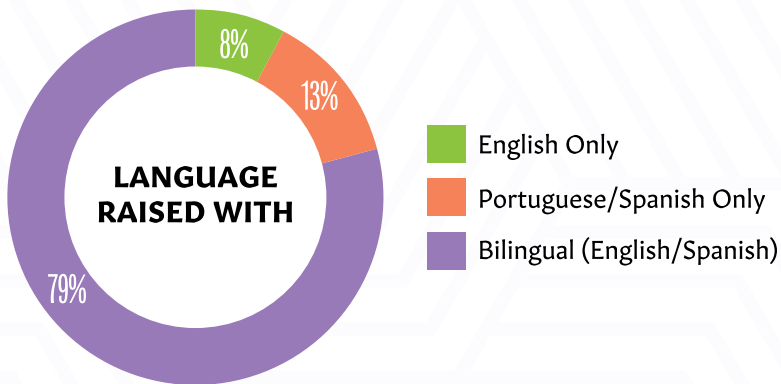
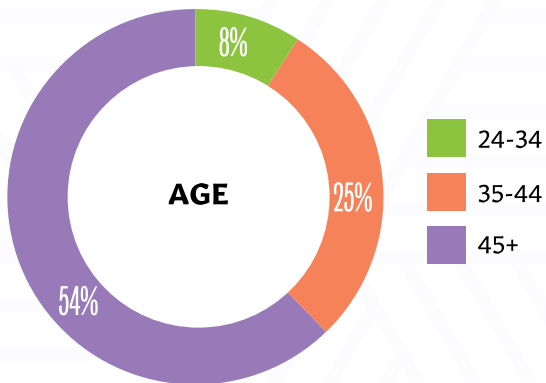
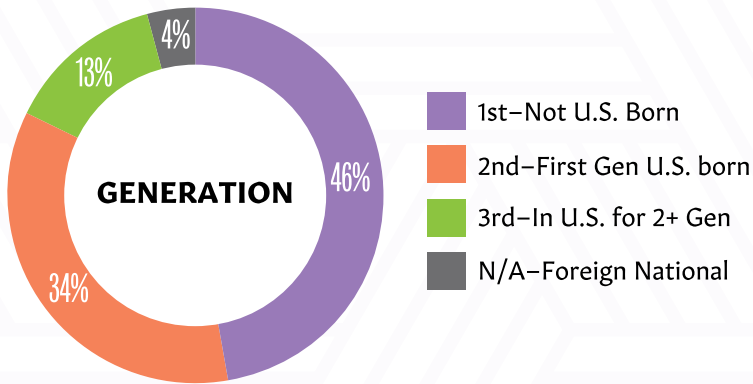
Our Latina focus group varied from the U.S. “norm,” in that we spoke mainly with mid-level and senior executives in corporate America. A bit about them:

## 11 SENIOR-LEVEL LATINA EXECUTIVES:

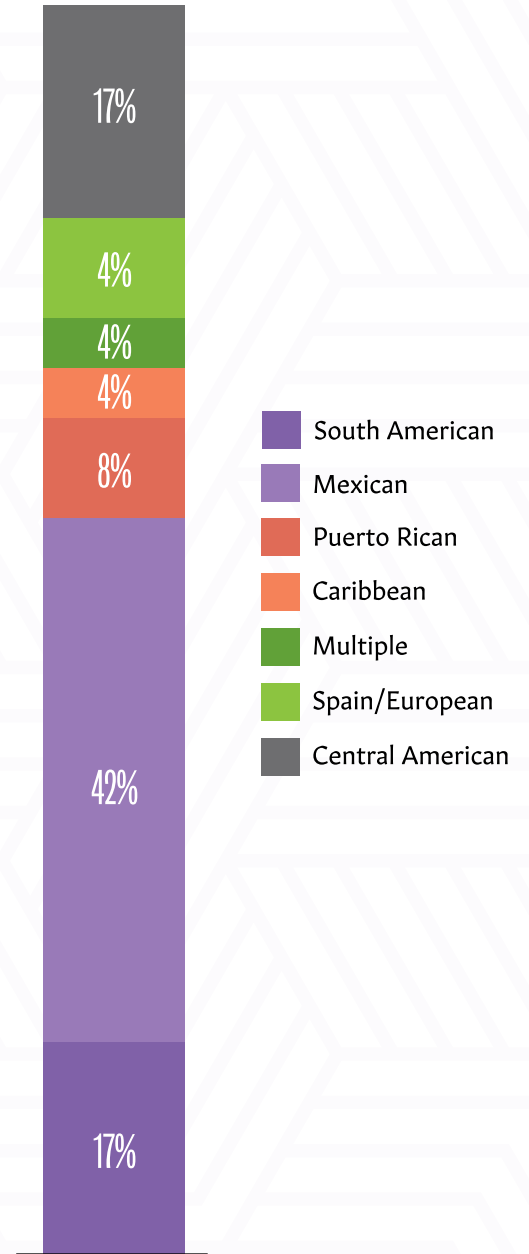




## 25 MID-LEVEL LATINA EXECUTIVES



### CULTURAL HERITAGE



# LATINAS IN THE UNITED STATES: A SNAPSHOT

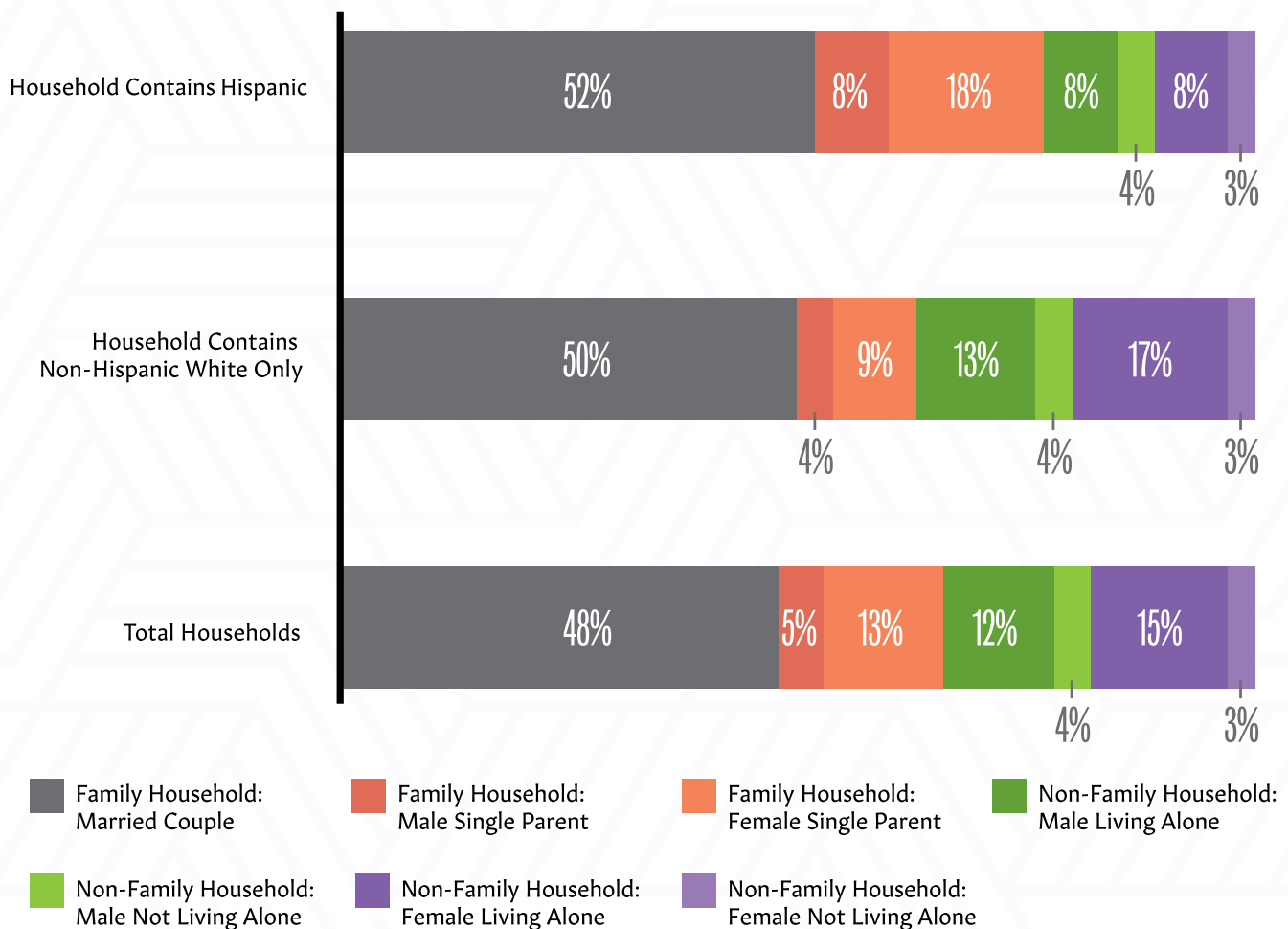
## She's her own boss

The total number of female majority-owned firms grew 27% during the last five-year period, but Latina female majority-owned firms grew in number by more than 682,000, or 87%, during the same period.

## And she's also the boss at home

Matriarchal households run by Latinas are on the rise.

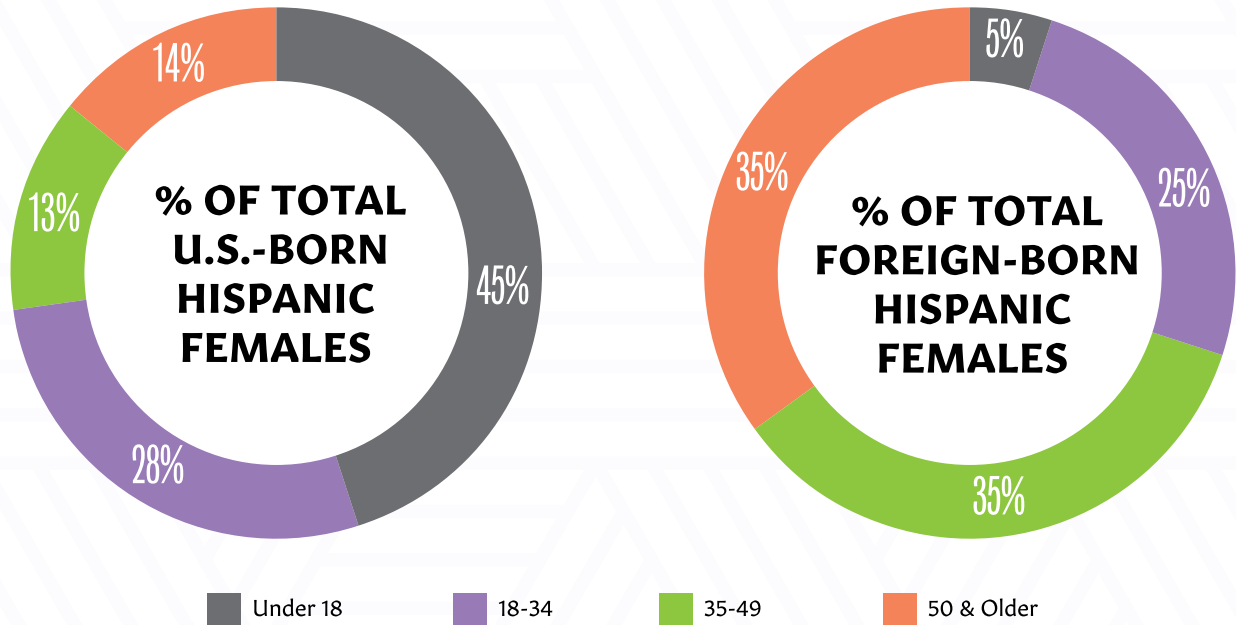
### HISPANIC HOUSEHOLDS INCLUDE MORE SINGLE FEMALE PARENTS (HOUSEHOLD TYPE)



## Increasingly born here

There are now 28 million Latinas living in the United States (17% of the total U.S. female population and 9% of the total U.S. population) and 77% of their growth over that 10-year span came not from immigration, but from Latina girls born in the United States. A full 25% of all U.S. females under the age of 18 are now Latina.

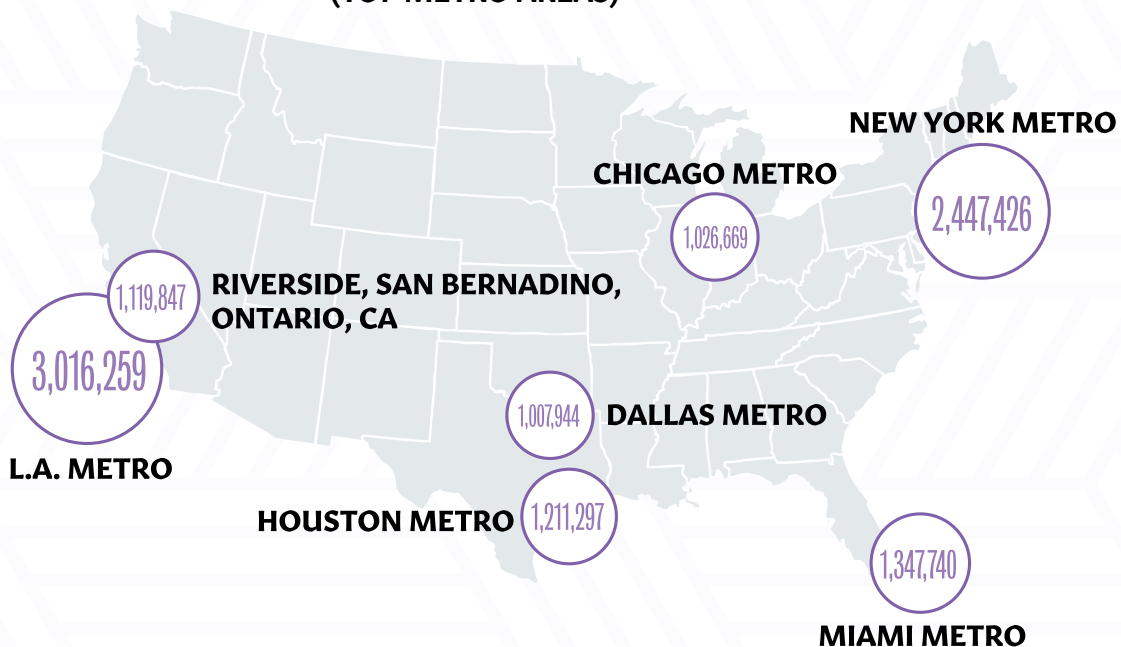
### HISPANIC FEMALES (AGE BY NATIVITY)



## Concentrated in major metro areas

While Latinas live in many areas of the United States, the highest concentrations are in major metropolitan areas, from New York and Chicago to Miami, Houston and Los Angeles.

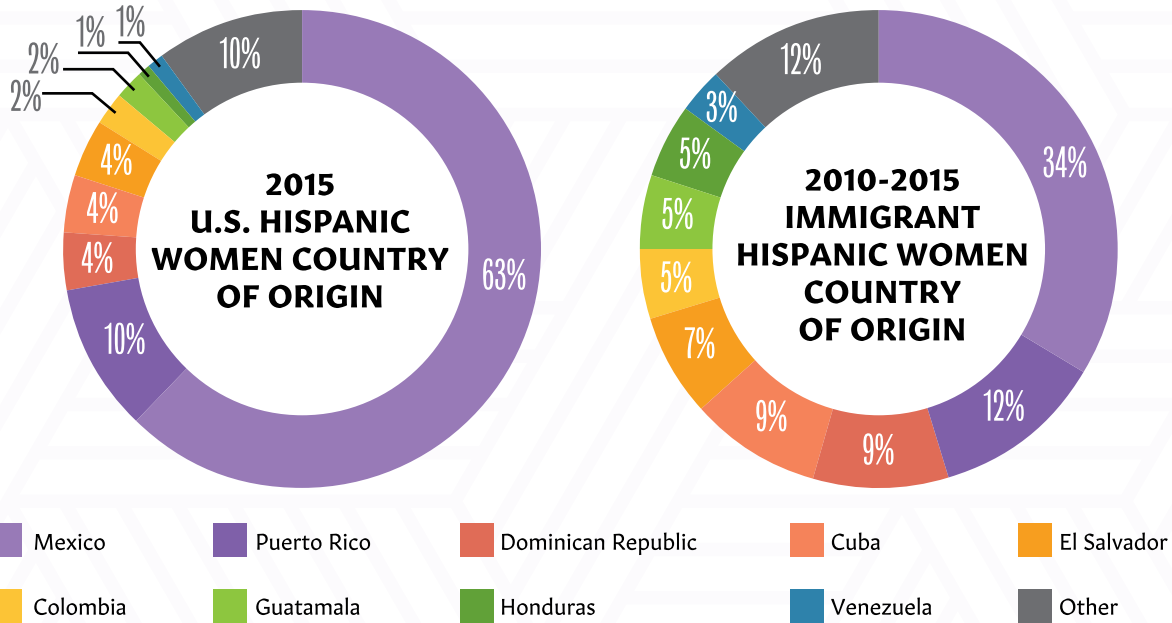
### HISPANIC FEMALE POPULATION (TOP METRO AREAS)



## Multicultural

While a majority of Latinas in the United States currently are of Mexican heritage, many other cultures are represented, from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic to Cuba and Colombia.

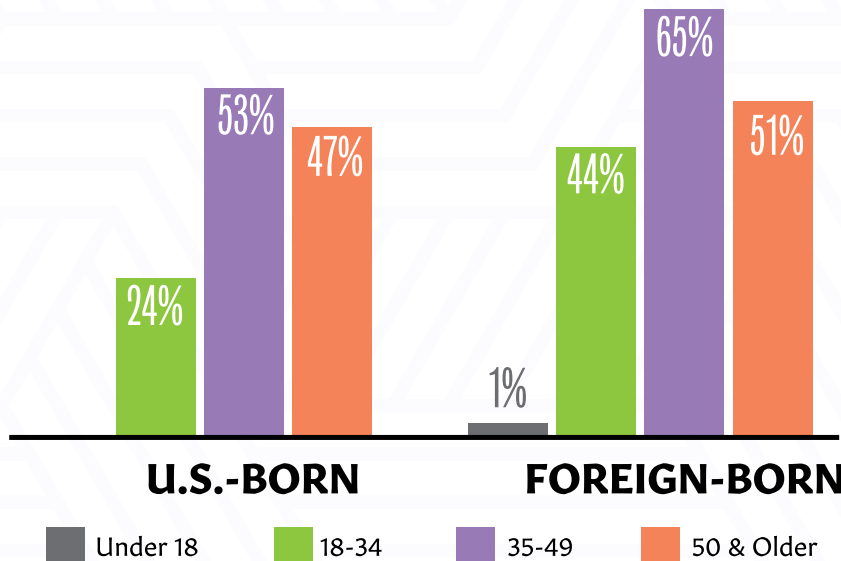
**U.S. LATINAS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**  
(HISPANIC FEMALE ORIGINS)



## Independent

U.S.-born Hispanic women are less likely to get married than their foreign-born counterparts, with 50% of U.S.-born Hispanic women over the age of 18 having never been married, as compared to only 25% of those who are foreign-born. Overall, 30% of Hispanic Millennial women are married, a number that was at 45% a decade prior.

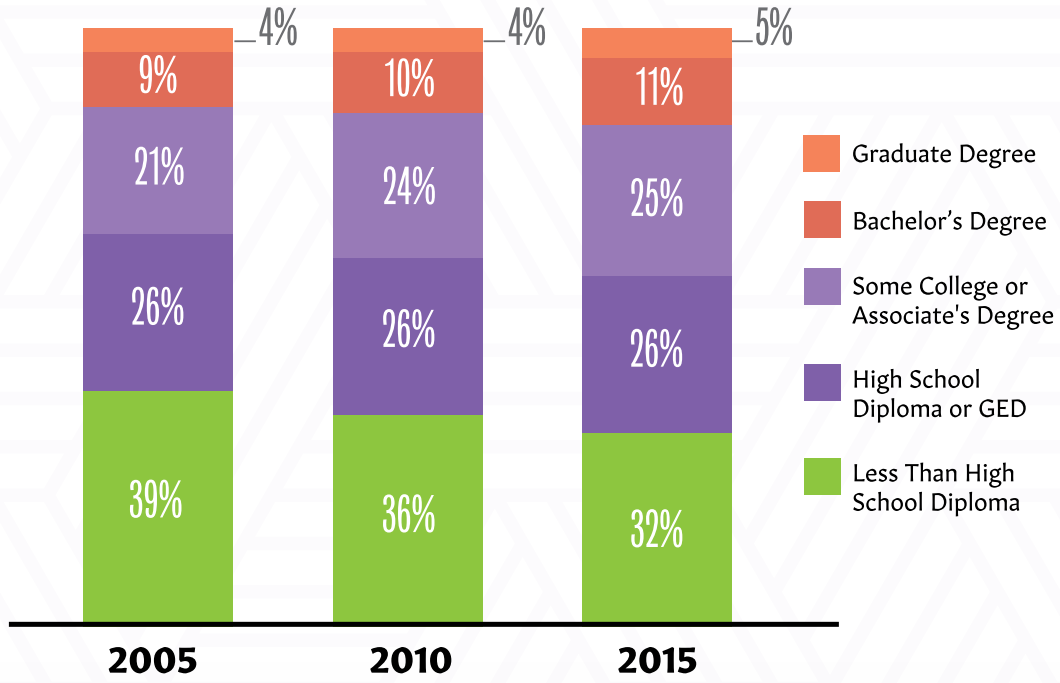
**U.S.-BORN LATINAS MORE LIKELY TO DELAY MARRIAGE**  
(MARRIED HISPANIC WOMEN, BY NATIVITY AND AGE)



## Degrees on the rise

While almost one-third of Latinas in the United States still lack a high school diploma, the number of undergraduate and graduate degrees is increasing slowly over time.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ON THE RISE (HISPANIC FEMALE EDUCATION, 2005-2015)



## ABOUT NEW

Founded in 2001, the Network of Executive Women represents nearly 13,000 members, 925 companies, 100 corporate sponsors and 22 regions in the U.S. and Canada advancing all women and building business. For more information about NEW and its learning programs, events, content and insights, visit [newonline.org](http://newonline.org). Connect with us on social media @newnational.

## ABOUT LATINARRIFIC

Latinarrific is a 360° marketing solution to assist companies and organizations effectively reach the U.S. Hispanic market via Latinas and their families. The Latinarrific marketing and merchandising platform is the integrated solution for the Hispanic market. Latinarrific helps the American Latina solve her challenges through educational, inspirational and aspirational courses, events, storytelling, video programming and through product education coupons and samplings. Latinarrific helps CMOs use their resources to more cost effectively engage with the Latina market. Latinarrific's multicultural team conducts qualitative market research, database development, Listen2Learn workshops and creates customized programs to effect change in diversity and inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.newonline.org/crisis>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karstenstrauss/2018/01/25/more-evidence-that-company-diversity-leads-to-better-profits/#16903ec71bc7>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industry/entertainment-media/publications/consumer-intelligence-series/assets/pwc-emc-hispanics-report.pdf#page=21>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/251438/hispanics-buying-power-in-the-us/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.newonline.org/sites/default/files/files/NEW\\_AdvancingAllWomen.pdf](https://www.newonline.org/sites/default/files/files/NEW_AdvancingAllWomen.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://time.com/5696943/diversity-business/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/10/u-s-latinos-feel-they-cant-be-themselves-at-work>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.newonline.org/genz>

<sup>11</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/10/u-s-latinos-feel-they-cant-be-themselves-at-work>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2017/latina-2-0>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.axios.com/fortune-500-no-women-of-color-ceos-3d42619c-967b-47d2-b94c-659527b22ee3.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-occupation-2018>