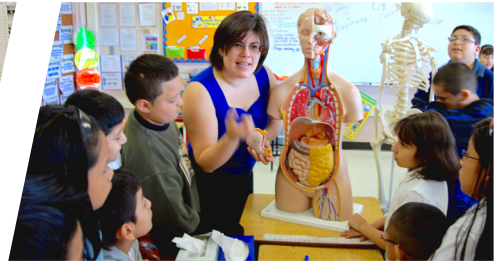


# SOL

STATISTICS ON LATINOS  
BY LATINO POLICY FORUM



PHOTOS: OLGA LOPEZ

## Equity for All: Harnessing the Momentum A Community Perspective of Latino Contributions to the Betterment of Illinois

Ten years ago, the Latino Policy Forum was given a mandate to shine a guiding light for the Latino community and be a bold, cooperative, important voice for Illinois Latinos. Its leaders were committed to examining the landscape, taking the long view and making a lasting impact. The Forum has done so with a large degree of success.

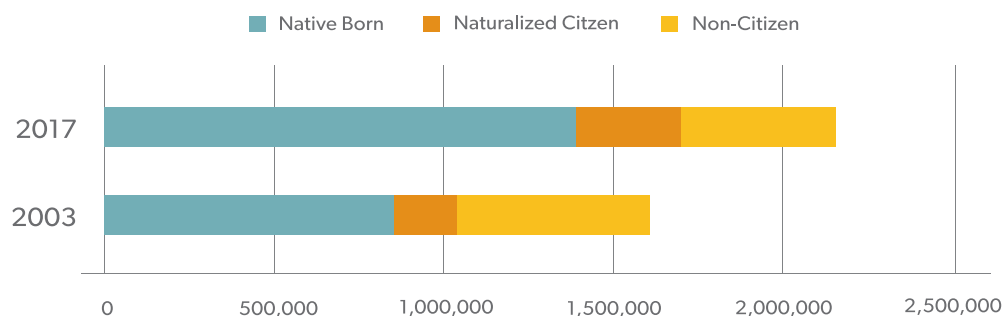
In order to develop its policy agenda and improve the lives and opportunities for Latinos and all of Illinois, the Forum actively engages nearly 100 organizations as Acuerdo members in the areas of Housing, Early Childhood Education, Immigration, and the broader Latino Agenda. Additionally, it has been privileged to enhance leadership through its Multicultural Leadership Academy, which brings together African American and Latino community activists to unite voices and power in the region.

In 2003, about 13 percent of residents were Latino and about 53 percent of the adults were citizens. Today, 17 percent of residents are Latino and seven out of every ten adults are citizens. The Latino population in Illinois, like that across the nation, is a powerful economic, political, and social group. Its contributions are a driver of economic vitality.

Population growth is necessary for economic and social development and stability. Between 2000 and 2016 the Latino population grew by 40 percent while the state's overall population grew by only 3 percent. However, the latter number is due not to general growth but rather to Latinos. In short, without Latinos Illinois would have experienced population decline.

The chart below indicates that most of this growth is due to the increase of those born in the United States.

**Number of Latinos in Illinois Who are Native Born, Naturalized Citizens, and Non-Citizens, 2003; 2017**



Between 2003 and 2017, the population growth among Latinos in Illinois was driven by native born Latinos, and growth due to immigration was slowed

## LATINOS IN ILLINOIS

The story of Latinos in Illinois is characterized by paradoxes.

Since increased educational attainment has long been a priority for the Forum and the Latino community, it is heartening to see significant gains in the rate of college completion. Much credit and congratulations are due to children, young adults, and parents because between 2000 and 2016 there was a 156 percent increase in the number of Latinos in Illinois earning at least a 4-year college degree.

### Education Paradox for Latinos Living in Illinois, 2000; 2016

**2000** 9% or about 68,000 Latinos in Illinois earned at least a Bachelor's degree

**2016** 14% or about 175,000 Latinos in Illinois earned at least a Bachelor's degree

*In 16 years the number of Latinos in Illinois earning at least a 4 year college degree more than doubled, a 156% increase*

*Yet in spite of this impressive accomplishment, at 14% Latinos have the lowest college completion rate for any racial or ethnic group in Illinois*

The area of education is an important economic predictor. For example, there were about 175,000 Latinos living in Illinois in 2016 who had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. However, we also find that today about three-quarters of Latino 4th graders are reading below grade level. This indicator is troubling as reading at grade level in the 4th grade is a strong predictor of academic success and the likelihood that a child will graduate from high school. It is also important to note that with respect to high school completion, there has been an increase, yet 22 percent still do not graduate on time.

While the Latino population in Illinois is growing, so too is the number of Latino households earning more than \$75,000 per year; this is a strong indication of educational, economic, and entrepreneurial success. However, at the same time we are witnessing these successes, we also find that 17 percent are living below the federal poverty level, and that Latinos have the lowest per capita income among all groups.

When it comes to Latino children the picture is troubling, in spite of the overall economic gains. Between 2007 and 2016, they represented the largest increase both in the number and percent of children living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, increasing from 346,000 to 394,000. This is all the more striking because there was a decline in the number of children among other racial/ethnic groups living in low income households.

Although the growing number of Latinos living in poverty is unacceptable, as well as not being good for the state, we must highlight that their purchasing power is significant. The Selig Center at the University of Georgia tracks buying power by race and ethnicity. In 2017, they reported the Latino buying power in Illinois was \$54,536,000 or 9.1 percent of the buying power in Illinois. This represents an increase of approximately 37 percent from 2010 and is a major contributor to jobs, tax revenue, and overall quality of life.

Like all racial and ethnic groups, Latino home ownership, probably the most important vehicle for wealth accumulation, declined due to the home mortgage and housing crisis. However, Latino home ownership is on the upswing. In 2016, 51 percent of their households were owner occupied.

### Income Paradox for Latinos Living in Illinois, 2016

**\$18,400**

Per Capita Income for Latinos Living in Illinois  
*(This is the lowest rate for any racial or ethnic group in the state)*

**32%**

Percent of Latino Households with an Annual Household Income Greater than \$75,000  
*(This is a 78% increase from 2000 and the largest percent increase for any racial or ethnic group in Illinois)*

Increases in home ownership speak to the ability of Latinos to accumulate wealth, create strong sustainable communities, and succeed in the labor force. In fact, Latinos are responsible for all of the State’s labor force growth between 2000 and 2016. During this time, the Illinois labor force increased by 437,738 or 7 percent and the Latino labor force increased by 437,727 or 67 percent.

Political power in Illinois is noteworthy because despite the large number of Latinos eligible to vote in 2016 (over 1 million), 634,000 were registered to vote and 83 percent of them voted, which demonstrates that once registered, they are engaged and go to the polls on election day. However, ballot box power could be increased if the gap between those eligible and registered was narrowed.

For many Latinos, there are substantial improvements in educational attainment, annual household incomes, purchasing power, and ballot box power. At the same time, there are growing rates of poverty, a need for more to vote, and an unacceptably high number of Latinos not acquiring the education needed to successfully compete in a 21st Century economy.

These data underscore that the success of Latinos are important contributions to the overall social and economic strength of the state.

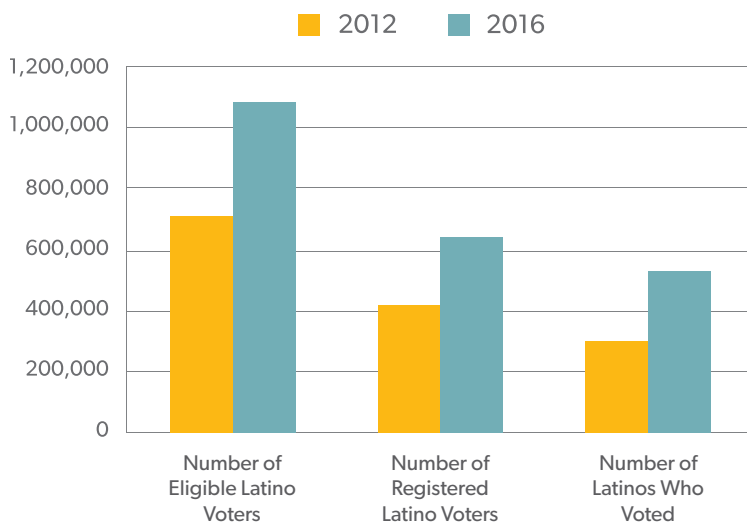
## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LATINO POLICY FORUM

The current challenges of the political, economic, and social landscape require that the Forum’s mandate of the last 10 years continue.

The Forum, which evolved from Latinos United, published its seminal policy brief “An American Agenda from a Latino Perspective.” This publication established a vision for Latino civic participation in the Chicago region. Its findings and recommendations resulted from a series of community meetings Latinos United convened in 2006-2007 with civic leaders, religious organizations, business, elected officials and community activists.

For its 10th anniversary, the Forum reached out across communities in Illinois again and conducted 15 roundtable “plática” discussions with hundreds of community, nonprofit and civic leaders. Their feedback revealed that the problems facing the Latino community specifically and the State of Illinois generally are similar. Solving these problems is necessary to enhance both the viability of Illinois and of the Latino community. The findings hold true that making the Latino community stronger is good for the state overall, and what improves Illinois also strengthens the Latino community.

**Latino Voting Data, Illinois, 2012; 2016**



Between 2012 and 2016, there was an increase of 232,000 votes cast by Latinos in Illinois

In 2012, 71% of registered Latinos in Illinois voted; in 2016, 83% of registered Latinos in Illinois voted

Results from live polling done during the pláticas include:

- 78 percent of Latino leaders in Illinois tell us that teachers need to be better trained in order to meet the educational needs of children whose first language is not English.
- 92 percent of Latino leaders note that the fear or threat of ICE raids act to deter Latinos from seeking needed services including health care and educational assistance.
- Access to affordable housing is a concern that Latinos leaders want State of Illinois officials to address.

The plática survey results also indicate that participating in civic and community life is important. Participants indicated that they donate their time and/or money to a variety of organizations or groups, including schools, churches, political groups but the largest number of respondents (42 percent) indicated that when they are able to volunteer time or provide money it is to community-based organizations with 24 percent noting that the community-based organizations they choose to support are Latino focused.

The feedback gathered in 2018 will continue to galvanize the Forum's mission and dedication to remain resolute in the face of new and growing challenges stemming from the current social and political climate.

The Forum will continue to create successful social change through coalition building, advocacy and analysis. The Forum will also continue to build a foundation for equity, justice and economic prosperity for Latinos. By catalyzing policy change, the Forum will improve educational outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies and strengthen community leadership. Cooperative work across racial, ethnic, political, and economic lines affirms the organizational belief that a stronger Latino community results in a stronger Illinois.

### LEARN MORE

See the following documents at  
[www.latinopolicyforum.org/publications](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org/publications):

Sol: Education 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Sol: Housing 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Sol: Immigration 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Sol: Latino Agenda 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Sol: Leadership Academy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Plática Summary and PowerPoint Data

Latino Policy Forum Founders Reflection

*\*All data cited in this publication may be found at  
[www.latinopolicyforum.org/publications/demographicoverview](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org/publications/demographicoverview)*

### ABOUT SOL

SOL is a series of periodic policy briefs that combines data with insightful analysis from the Latino Policy Forum. The series will provide a unique snapshot of the growth, influence and challenges of the local Latino community, for use by community leaders, urban planners, elected officials, journalists, and anyone interested in building a shared future for all of Illinois.

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