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Latinos in the Suburbs: Challenges & Opportunities

A new report seeks to understand where Latinos live, what challenges and barriers they confront, and what opportunities are available to them.

CHICAGO – [*Latinos in the Suburbs: Challenges & Opportunities*](#), a new analysis from The Latino Policy Forum, The Metropolitan Planning Council, and UIC's Great Cities Institute, is an in-depth analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing Latinos living in suburban communities. The report's findings were made public at an event at Elgin Community College on August 24th. It vividly tells the paradoxical story of Latinos in the suburbs, namely: Latinos are at the center of suburban macro-level economic and social growth and strength, but at the same time, the socioeconomic vitality contributed by Latinos has yet to be fully reflected in the lives of many Latinos. The report showcases both specific contributions by Latinos and challenges confronting Latinos living in the suburbs. The contributions include Latinos having the highest labor force participation rates, the fastest-growing consumer spending power, and driving homeownership rates. At the same time, they are the racial/ethnic group with the lowest per capita income and have the largest percentage of workers earning less than \$15 per hour.

Sylvia Puente, President and CEO of the Latino Policy Forum, notes: “This project is unique in painting a picture of the successes and contributions Latinos are making to the socioeconomic fabric of the suburbs while, at the same time, illustrating the challenges Latinos face in securing their own socioeconomic well-being and stability. For example, 6 in 10 Latinos live in high or very hardship suburbs, and X in 10 live in low-hardship suburbs. This report provides a framework and suggests necessary first steps for Latinos to see the socioeconomic benefits that confer on others in their lives.”

“This report makes clear that Latinos play a crucial role in our region's health and vitality,” said Daniel Cooper, Senior Director of Research, Metropolitan Planning Council. “The Latino population is growing faster in the suburbs than anywhere else in the state. We need to ensure that this growth brings health, opportunity, and political voice and representation for the diverse Latino families in our region.”

“This report adds to the growing recognition of the importance of Latinos to the Chicagoland economy as employees, homeowners, consumers, and more,” said Teresa Cordova, Director of the Great Cities Institute, UIC. “We learn from applying the Great Cities Institute Hardship Index that the growing opportunities for Latinos in the suburbs are also accompanied by needs that require policy attention.”

This story underscores the need to develop and implement policies to address Latinos' challenges and inequities in the suburbs. This effort will require a concerted effort at the regional, county, and municipal levels to prioritize and grapple with the central challenges highlighted in this report.

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