

LATINO AMERICANS

Stereotypes versus Statistics, Grades 9 – 12 (Recommended as follow-up to *Who Are Latinos?* lesson)

Lesson Overview

There are many preconceptions and stereotypes about Latinos and how they have come to the United States. In this activity, students will examine some of the myths and compare these to actual demographic data. After completing reflective writing on the experience of being stereotyped, students will review current studies and graphs from the Pew Research Center and Latino Decisions to contrast assumptions with realities.

Grade Level: 9 – 12+

Time: At least 2 class periods

Materials

- **Stereotypes versus Statistics Organizer**
- Web access to view or print studies from Pew and Latino Decisions:
 - [The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes Towards Latinos](#)
 - [Hispanics in the U.S.](#)
 - [The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups](#)
 - [Hispanic High School Graduates](#)
 - [Latinos by Geography](#)
 - [Hispanic Population Trends](#)

Learning Objectives

- Reflect on personal experiences of stereotyping.
- Identify common stereotypes of Latinos, using current social science research.
- Compare and contrast these stereotypes, actual statistics on citizenship, language, nation of origin and other variables.
- Synthesize and share findings.

Lesson Procedure

Pre-Activity:

Have you ever been judged unfairly because of how you look, the way you speak or the type of name you have? How does it feel? Is it fair or unfair? Has anyone ever made assumptions about you because of your age, your ethnicity or your gender?

Write your responses to these questions and share in small groups. Discuss and define the term “stereotype.”

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES, GRADES 9 – 12

Part I: Examining Stereotypes (GRADES 9 – 12)

Prompt: *“Who are Latinos? In this activity, you will study a recent poll that examines attitudes about Latinos, particularly through the media. Next, you’ll examine actual data on the Latino population of the United States. Your job: to sort out the myths and the stereotypes from the realities. Latinos, like many other groups, face stereotypes (assumptions, generalizations and judgments). While we are often aware of stereotypes in an informal way, social scientists document such attitudes and what fuels them.”*

Read pages 1 – 6 of [The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes Towards Latinos](#). Discuss the following questions in small groups. Choose a recorder to chart your responses to share with the entire class.

- In reviewing the study, describe three to four of the key findings identified by the researchers.
- What types of methods did the researchers use to measure attitudes about Latinos?
- List some of the positive and negative stereotypes associated with Latinos, according to the study.
- What type of assumptions do some non-Hispanics make about Latino Americans when it comes to the legality of their residence in the United States? How is this demonstrated in the case of Sebastien de la Cruz? Cite examples.
- What are the TV and film roles most associated with Latinos? What effect does this have on perceptions of Latinos, according to the researchers?
- How does language make a difference when it comes to terms like “illegal alien” versus “undocumented immigrant”?
- Does your personal experience of Latino stereotypes and media roles reflect or challenge the findings of the study? Explain.

Part II: Statistics versus Stereotypes (GRADES 9 – 12)

Now that you have explored research on stereotypes, contrast this information with actual statistics by reviewing the Pew Center infographic, [Hispanics in the U.S.](#), and its reports, [The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups](#) and [Hispanic High School Graduates](#). You’ll work in small groups to examine these reports. Each group will elect a presenter to share your findings with the rest of the class. You’ll need to take notes from each group for your final project.

Group 1: Overview

Review the infographic, [Hispanics in the U.S.](#), and pages 3 – 4 of [The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups](#).

- How can we better understand the details of the umbrella terms “Hispanic” or “Latino”?
- Are the majority of this group foreign-born immigrants or native-born citizens?
- “Latino” and “Hispanic” can be catch-all terms for Americans who trace their ancestry to many different countries and cultures. What are some of the largest subgroups? Where do they trace their ancestry?
- What regions of the United States are home to significant Hispanic populations? (Note that regions with the highest numbers may not be the regions with the highest population growth.) For more info see [Latinos by Geography](#).

Group 2: Changes since 2000

Read pages 5 – 6 of *The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups*.

- How has this population changed between 2000 and 2010?
- Which group is on the rise: Hispanic immigrants or native-born Hispanics?
- How is the economic downturn of the late 2000s reflected in the data?
- What is the current trend with regard to education?

Group 3: Age, Nativity and Education

Review pages 7 – 8 of *The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups* and pages 4 – 5 of *Hispanic High School Graduates*.

- Latinos have a larger percentage of foreign-born compared to the overall population, but what percentage of Latinos is native-born?
- Of Hispanic subgroups, there are two where the majority are native-born U.S. citizens. What are those two groups?
- In terms of age, how does the Hispanic population compare with the overall population of the United States? What does this mean for the future?
- Though inequities still present challenges for Latinos in the area of education, what good news can be found in the graphs from *Hispanic High School Graduates*?

Group 4: English Proficiency & Citizenship

Review pages 9 – 10 of *The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups*.

- What percentage of U.S. Latinos is proficient in English?
- Use this [graph](#) to see English proficiency levels for Latino youth (majority of the population) versus older adults. How and why might these numbers differ?
- While there are stereotypes of Latinos as foreigners, what are the actual numbers with regard to Hispanic citizenship?
- Why is the percentage of Puerto Ricans who are citizens so much higher than other Hispanic groups?

Group 5: Economics and Healthcare

Review pages 11 – 12 of *The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups*.

- How does the average income of Latinos compare to that of the average for U.S. residents overall?
- Are Hispanics more or less likely to live in poverty compared to the population overall?
- What would you describe as the greatest economic challenge for Hispanics?
- Why might the question of healthcare be a lively topic for this population?

Part III: Putting the Pieces Together

Use the **Stereotypes versus Statistics Organizer** (one per student) to compare and contrast the myths and realities.

How do the demographics line up against the stereotypes? Here are some common stereotypes. You may wish to address others.

- “Latinos are mostly foreign-born and often lack legal residence status in the U.S.”
- “Hispanics are less educated.”
- “Latinos are more likely to be on welfare.”
- “They don’t want to learn English.”

Part IV: Optional Closing Project

As a blogger for a prominent news site, you receive a call from your editor early one morning: a well-known politician was on national TV the night before describing Latinos with a lot of stereotypical language. Your editor wants you to write a piece sorting out Latino stereotypes from actual statistics. You can present your write-up in paragraph form (as if it were a blog), through a PowerPoint or using prezi.com.

Stereotypes versus Statistics Organizer

Latinos, like many other groups, face stereotypes (assumptions, generalizations and judgments). While we are often aware of stereotypes in an informal way, social scientists document such attitudes and what fuels them. Use the research assigned to you to complete the following graph.

STEREOTYPE	ACTUAL STATISTICS	REFLECTION
“Most Latinos are immigrants, born in another country, not the U.S.”		
“A high number of Latinos are in the U.S. illegally, without proper documentation.”		
“They don’t want to learn or use English.”		
“Latinos are less educated.”		

Stereotypical statements adapted from the study [The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes Towards Latinos](#), Latino Decisions, 2012.