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Centering Black Latinidad: A Profile of the U.S. Afro-Latinx Population and Complex Inequalities

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# Centering Black Latinidad:

A Profile of the U.S.  
Afro-Latinx Population  
and Complex Inequalities

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The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders), and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present, and emerging.

## ABOUT LPPI

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.

## DISCLAIMER

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the University of California, Los Angeles, as a whole. The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report.





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**Based on this dataset, we define Afro-Latinxs as those individuals who identify as of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and also identify as racially Black in any combination, either Black alone or Black and one or more additional races.**



## Executive Summary

For many Afro-Latinxs, the simultaneity of phenotype, culture, parent's birthplace, and language create a unique experience relegated to the margins of "Latinidad" and "Blackness."<sup>1</sup> The term Afro-Latinx most often refers to people of visible or self-proclaimed African descent from Latin America and the Caribbean, whether they currently live in the Caribbean, the Americas, or elsewhere. As Flores and Jiménez Román write, "[Afro-Latinxs] are the group that typically falls between the cracks of prevailing classifications, and yet at the same time stands to serve as the most significant bridge across a growing, and increasingly ominous, social divide."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the unique situatedness of Afro-Latinxs and their substantial growth rate over the last decade,<sup>3</sup> few studies have attempted to quantify<sup>4</sup> and center their lived experiences using Census Bureau data.<sup>5</sup> In this brief, we use the 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata to analyze the U.S. Afro-Latinx population, including their unique trends in education, employment, and homeownership.

Based on this dataset, we define Afro-Latinxs as those individuals who identify as of Hispanic or Latino<sup>6</sup> ethnicity and also identify as racially Black in any combination, either Black alone or Black and one or more additional races.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, we take an intersectional approach to better understand how inequalities may remain invisible when we assume all Latinx people occupy the same racial status. Specifically, we examine inequalities in education, poverty, and homeownership for Black and non-Black Latinxs.<sup>8</sup>

The terms Afro-Latino/a/e/x/@,<sup>9</sup> African Latino/a/e/x/@, Black Latino/a/e/x/@,<sup>10</sup> Latinegro/a/e/@,<sup>11</sup> and others are all used to understand Afro-Latinidad as a realm of experience—to be both ethnically Latino and racially Black.<sup>12</sup> For this analysis, we use the term "Afro-Latinx" to interchangeably refer to the above groups.



Building on the work of scholars Michelle Holder and Alan Aja,<sup>13</sup> Christine Tamir,<sup>14</sup> Ana González-Barrera,<sup>15</sup> Juan Flores and Miriam Jiménez Román,<sup>16</sup> Tanya Katerí Hernández,<sup>17</sup> Howard Hogan,<sup>18</sup> and John R. Logan<sup>19</sup>—among many others<sup>20</sup>—we find that:

- In 2019, there were 2.2 million Afro-Latinxs in the United States, a 121% increase from 2000 to 2019. Afro-Latinxs grew at almost twice the rate of non-Black Latinos over the same period.
- Afro-Latinxs are younger than non-Black Latinos. The median age of Afro-Latinxs is 21, which is 8 years younger than the median for non-Black Latinos.
- The Afro-Latinx community generally lives along the Atlantic coast and in major East Coast cities, including Boston, MA, Virginia Beach, VA, and Pittsburgh, PA. New York City, NY, is home to the largest Afro-Latinx Population.
- Afro-Latinxs have higher education levels than non-Black Latinos: 26% of Afro-Latinas completed a college degree, compared to 18% of non-Black Latinas. Similarly, 20% of Afro-Latinos completed a bachelor's degree or more, compared to 15% of non-Black Latino men.<sup>21</sup>
- Afro-Latinxs have higher poverty rates compared to non-Black Latinos. Afro-Latinxs had a poverty rate of 23% in 2019, compared to 20% of the overall U.S. population.
- Although Afro-Latinxs have low homeownership rates compared to other groups (40.6% for Afro-Latinxs vs. 54% for non-Black Latinos), those who own have higher home values than non-Black Latinos and the U.S. overall.



Despite Afro-Latinxs' higher educational attainment rates and labor market participation, they experience anti-Blackness in the economy and society.<sup>22</sup> Their outcomes, especially in household incomes and homeownership, are tied to those of the non-Hispanic Black community.<sup>23</sup> As Michelle Holder and Alan Aja powerfully write, "Blackness (or anti-Blackness) not only matters but is constant, persistent, and determinant in economic outcomes for Afro-descendant groups, whether native or foreign-born."<sup>24</sup>

Researchers and policymakers must deepen their understanding of the nuances and simultaneity of race, ethnicity, and ancestry, as well as their relationship to social inequalities.<sup>25</sup> Being Black and Latino are not mutually exclusive. Ameliorating the difficulties Afro-Latinxs experience in society—whether in housing, lending systems,<sup>26</sup> the labor force,<sup>27</sup> or health systems<sup>28</sup>—begins with recognizing how their position in society shapes their experiences of inequality, especially when compared to non-Black Latinos. The need to understand how Afro-Latinx experiences differ from non-Black Latinos will only grow in priority for legislators as more Afro-Latinxs enter voting age and shape policy and election outcomes.

This analysis also highlights the limitations of racial self-identification currently implemented by the Census Bureau. The concept of "race" includes how we think of ourselves and how others perceive us, and this social status shapes lived experiences and outcomes. Rather than flatten distinctions between groups, researchers should provide survey respondents with enough questions—perhaps including questions on "perceived" or "street" race<sup>29</sup>—to understand their social position. If we assume that all Latinos are racialized the same way or only provide data on aggregate Latino outcomes, many inequalities will remain invisible.

Despite these limitations, quantitative researchers can work creatively within survey constraints to tell stories that break monolithic narratives. Scholars studying the Latino community must also commit to ongoing critical reflection about who is at the center and who is on the margins of narratives around Latinidad and to "mapping the margins"<sup>30</sup>—highlighting the experiences of relegated communities and detailing within-group differences.

Latinos—and Latinidad—are not a monolith, and Afro-Latinidad is Latinidad. To be in Latino solidarity is to recognize how the lived experiences of Latinos differ by characteristics such as race,

gender, ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, citizenship status, disability, and class. The ability to be critically conscious of one's social location in systems of power at both individual and structural levels is the first step toward building bridges of understanding with others with different experiences. Flexible solidarity<sup>31</sup> toward liberation means centering the margins by advocating for groups such as Afro-Latinxs who experience a triple consciousness,<sup>32</sup> reflected in many of the outcomes illustrated in this report.





# Introduction

**“Afro-Latinos occupy a crucial place in contemporary racial and ethnic relations in the United States and internationally. They are the group that typically falls between the cracks of prevailing classifications, and yet at the same time stands to serve as the most significant bridge across a growing, and increasingly ominous, social divide.”** — Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores<sup>33</sup>

For many Afro-Latinxs, the simultaneity of phenotype, culture, parent’s birthplace, and language create a unique experience relegated to the margins of “Latinidad” and “Blackness.” The term Afro-Latinx most often refers to people of visible or self-proclaimed African descent from Latin America and the Caribbean, whether they currently live in the Caribbean, the Americas, or elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the unique situatedness of Afro-Latinxs and their substantial growth rate over the last decade,<sup>35</sup> few studies have attempted

to quantify<sup>36</sup> and center their lived experiences using Census Bureau data.<sup>37</sup> In this brief, we use the 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata to analyze the U.S. Afro-Latinx population, including their unique trends in educational attainment, employment, and homeownership, among other indicators.



# Data Challenges

Counting the Afro-Latinx population in the United States is a complex and challenging endeavor. Administrative data sources do not capture the nuances of lived experiences, and predetermined questions and categories can never fully capture one's identity. For example, according to Pew Research, nearly 30% of self-identified Afro-Latinxs also identify as white, and one in seven do not identify as Latino.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, the estimated size of the Afro-Latinx population in the United States varies widely depending on the question format and data source, and especially how respondents are asked about their self-identification. In the previously mentioned study, for instance, Pew Research used an original survey to estimate the size of the Afro-Latinx population. Specifically, survey respondents were asked, "Do you consider yourself to be Afro-Latino, Afro-Latina or Afro-Caribbean, or not?" Based on the responses to this question, Pew Research estimates the Afro-Latinx population to be roughly 6 million.<sup>39</sup>

Notably, this question format did not mention race<sup>40</sup> or ancestry<sup>41</sup> but asked respondents whether they considered themselves Afro-Latinx. This question format did not allow researchers to discern whether survey respondents would indicate a Black racial identity if the word "race" was included.

In contrast, the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) first asks whether a respondent identifies as being of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin" and then asks about their race based on five categories. Respondents cannot choose "Other" as race, although they can make multiple selections.<sup>42</sup> As a result, according to the CPS, there are an estimated 3 million Afro-Latinxs in the United States,<sup>43</sup> and almost four million when multiracial Afro-Latinxs are included.<sup>44</sup>

The discrepancies between publicly available data and the results of the Pew Research survey indicate that the total size of the Black Latinx population depends on the question format. For example, if the U.S. Office of Management and Budget defined "Black" as anyone racialized as Black due to physical characteristics—such

as skin color, facial features, and hair texture—regardless of their ancestry or place of birth, the estimated Afro-Latinx population would likely be larger.

As such, current Census Bureau datasets likely undercount the Afro-Latinx population. Many phenotypically Black Latinxs do not identify as such because Census definitions of "Black" exclude Blackness from Latinidad. On the other hand, survey questions that do not specify whether they are asking about race or ancestry may result in data that overestimates the size of the Afro-Latinx population. Ancestry, race, ethnicity, and national origin are all conceptually and analytically distinct terms that require separate questions. If respondents are unclear whether they are being asked if they are of the Black race or African ancestry, the resulting data will also be ambiguous.



# Methodology

Despite these difficulties, publicly available data can still provide nuanced perspectives on the particular strengths and challenges of the Afro-Latinx community. This data brief uses the 2015-2019 5-year ACS<sup>45</sup> microdata to generate weighted statistics on the U.S. Afro-Latino population.<sup>46</sup> In asking respondents about their identity, the ACS largely follows the same paradigm as the CPS but offers the option to select “some other race” or write in an answer.<sup>47</sup>

We use the 2015-2019 ACS microdata due to changes in the survey questionnaire implemented in 2020. These changes include listing national origins and ethnicities under a given race box and reclassifying many groups as “two or more races.”<sup>48</sup> Due to these changes, 2020 data on Latinos by race is not directly comparable with the preceding years.<sup>49</sup>

Following the Pew Research Center’s work using Census Bureau datasets,<sup>50</sup> using the ACS data, we define Afro-Latinxs as those who self-identify as Latino in the Hispanic ethnicity question and racially Black in the separate race question.<sup>51</sup> The terms Afro-Latino/a/e/x/@,<sup>52</sup> African Latino/a/e/x/@, Black Latino/a/e/x/@,<sup>53</sup> Latinegro/a/e/@,<sup>54</sup> and others are used to understand Afro-Latinidad as a category of experience of Latinidad—to be both ethnically Latino and racially Black.<sup>55</sup> For this analysis, we use the term “Afro-Latinx” to interchangeably refer to the above groups.

Building on the work of scholars Michelle Holder and Alan Aja,<sup>56</sup> Christine Tamir,<sup>57</sup> Ana González-Barrera,<sup>58</sup> Juan Flores and Miriam Jiménez Román,<sup>59</sup> Tanya Katerí Hernández,<sup>60</sup> Howard Hogan,<sup>61</sup> and John R. Logan<sup>62</sup>—among many others<sup>63</sup>—we provide an updated data profile of Afro-Latinxs using the ACS.

We look at the basic demographics of Afro-Latinxs in the U.S., including where they live, their educational attainment, and their economic outcomes. Additionally, we take an intersectional approach to better understand how social inequalities may remain invisible when we assume all Latinx people occupy the same racial status:

“We caution that ‘Latino/Latina’ as a social construct must be problematized, that is complicated by differences in national origin, citizenship, race, class, and ethnicity and by the confluence of these factors. An intersectional approach acknowledges these differences and seeks to reveal and understand how they shape experience. When we use the term Latinas, it is not as a unitary term that homogenizes distinctive groups, but as a term of implicit solidarity with other U.S. groups with a Spanish colonial history and genealogical, political, cultural and ethnic ties to Latin America.”<sup>64</sup>

To this end, we examine inequalities in education, poverty, and homeownership for Black and non-Black Latinx.



# Critical Self-Reflexivity

**“Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other....People use intersectionality as an analytic tool to solve problems that they or others around them face.” – Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge<sup>65</sup>**

In applying an intersectional approach to inequalities within the Latino community, we want to be transparent about our realms of experience and intersectional social positions in power systems. These systems include but are not limited to, race, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship. As researchers pursuing social justice and a policy agenda centered on dignity and opportunity for and by communities of color, we acknowledge that our social locations and experience of privilege and oppression shape our values, thoughts, lived experiences, ethical and political commitments.

To this end, we are committed to ongoing critical self-reflection about our social locations in systems of inequality, oppression, and resistance and how these have shaped our beliefs, ways of learning, and meaning-making. We provide our own backgrounds and social locations to clearly show where the positions we are collectively writing from.





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**Dr. Rodrigo Domínguez-Villegas** is the inaugural director of research at UCLA LPPI. Dr. Domínguez-Villegas is a queer Latino scholar who grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in Mexico City.

**Jie Zong**, MPA, is a senior research analyst at UCLA LPPI. Her first language is Mandarin. Having been in the United States for over ten years, Jie is an immigrant from China and now resides in Orange County, California.

**Dr. Nancy López** is a Black Latina who was born in New York City. She was raised in public housing in the 1970s and 1980s. She is the daughter of Dominican immigrants who never had the opportunity to pursue schooling beyond the second grade and who gifted their children with Spanish as their first language and the commitment to fight for justice. Dr. López graduated from a de facto segregated large vocational public high school in New York City and participated in federally funded programs designed to create educational opportunities for marginalized communities (e.g., Head Start, Upward Bound, etc.).





# Findings

In 2019, there were 2.2 million Afro-Latinxs in the United States (Table 1),<sup>66</sup> nearly 1% of the total U.S. population.<sup>67</sup> As a share of the Latino population, Afro-Latinxs represent 4% of U.S. Latinos and

have doubled over the last two decades. From 2000 to 2019, the Afro-Latinx population in the United States grew by 120.8%, almost twice the growth rate for non-Black Latinos over the same period.

**Table 1: U.S. Latino Population by Race, 2000 to 2019**

Group	2000 – 2019	Change, 2000 to 2019
All Latinos	35.2M → 58.5M	66.1%
Non-Black Latinos	34.2M → 56.3M	64.6%
Afro-Latinxs	978K → 2.2M	120.8%

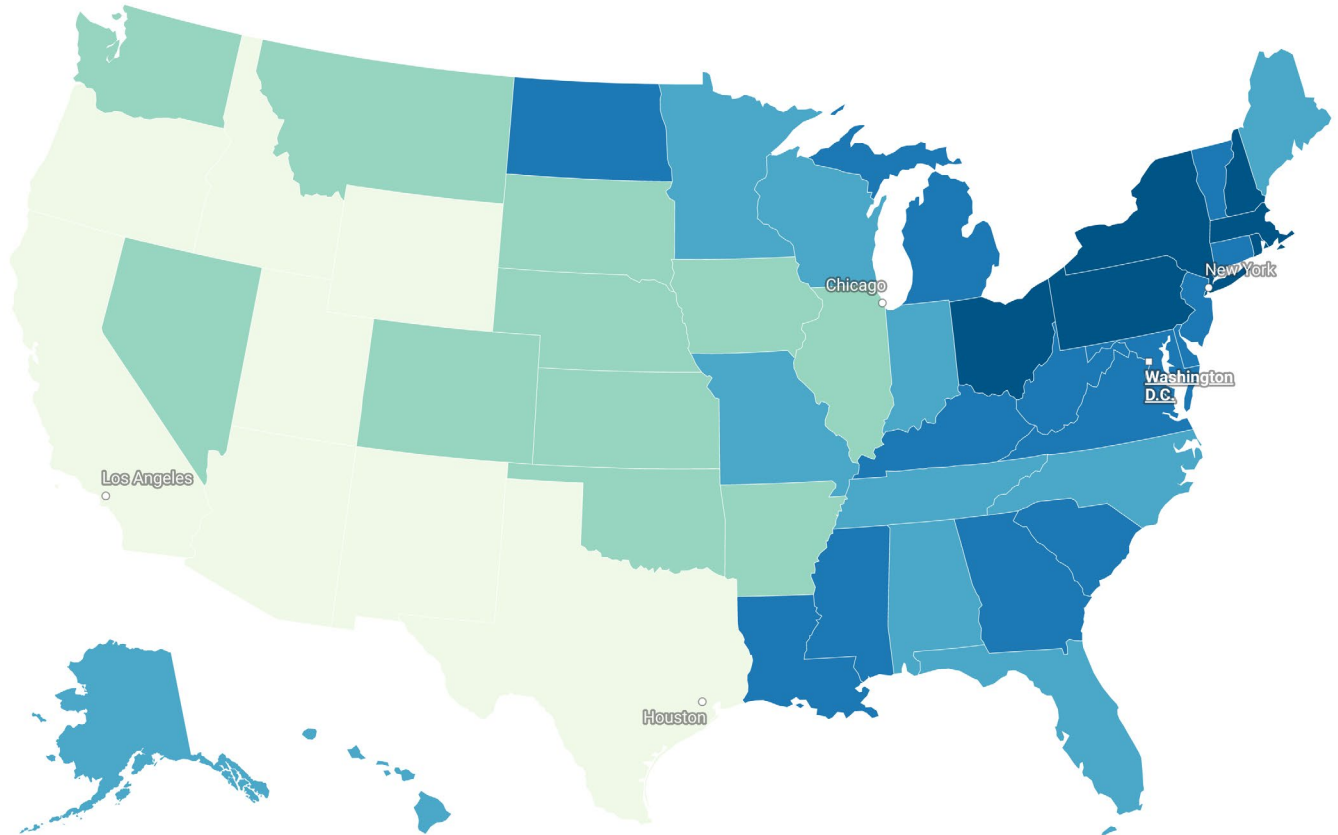
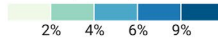
Sources: LPPI analysis of 2000 Census 5-Percent Public Use Microdata sample; 2010 Census 10-Percent Public Use Microdata Sample; and 2019 5-Year American Community Survey Public Use microdata file.  
 Note: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black, including multiracial Latinos.

While California and Texas have historically had the largest Latino populations, Afro-Latinxs are primarily concentrated along the Atlantic Seaboard (Figure 1). In Massachusetts, for instance, 13.2% of Latinos identify as Afro-Latinx, the highest share of any state. Pennsylvania (11.7%), New York (10.7%), Washington, DC (10.5%),

and New Hampshire (9.8%) round out the five states with the highest Afro-Latinx population shares. In absolute terms, the largest number of Afro-Latinxs live in New York (397,000), followed by California (237,000) and Florida (232,000).

**Figure 1: Afro-Latinxs as a Share of the Total Latino Population by State, 2019**

Afro-Latinxs, Percent of State Latino Population, 2019



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Note: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black, including multiracial Latinos.



Similar to the state-level findings, cities in the Northeast and along the East Coast have the greatest concentrations of Afro-Latinxs. Among large metropolitan statistical areas, Boston, MA, has the largest proportion of Afro-Latinxs at 15.3% of its Latino population (Table 2), followed by Virginia Beach, VA; Pittsburgh, PA; Rochester,

NY; and Buffalo, NY. Notably, cities with large proportions of self-identifying Afro-Latinx residents also tend to have large Black populations. In most cities presented here, the Black population share is larger than the Latino population share.<sup>68</sup>

**Table 2: Top 15 Large Metros by Afro-Latinx Concentrations, 2019**

	MSA	Afro-Latinx Population	Afro-Latinx Share of Latino Population	Black Population Share	Latino Population Share	Total Population
1	Boston, MA MSA	83K	15.3%	10.1%	11.1%	4,887,000
2	Virginia Beach, VA MSA	17K	14.8%	34.3%	6.9%	1,667,000
3	Pittsburgh, PA MSA	6K	14.6%	10%	1.8%	2,286,000
4	Rochester, NY MSA	11K	13.8%	12.7%	7.2%	1,107,000
5	Buffalo, NY MSA	7K	12.3%	13.7%	5%	1,130,000
6	Cleveland, OH MSA	14K	11.7%	21.6%	5.8%	2,057,000
7	Baltimore, MD MSA	17K	10.6%	31.4%	5.9%	2,747,000
8	Philadelphia, PA MSA	61K	10.4%	22.7%	9.6%	6,120,000
9	Hartford, CT MSA	17K	9.5%	13.2%	14.8%	1,208,000
10	New York, NY MSA	442K	9.1%	18.6%	24.4%	19,911,000
11	Providence, RI MSA	19K	9.1%	7.4%	12.7%	1,643,000
12	Richmond, VA MSA	7K	8.8%	32.1%	6.3%	1,272,000
13	Columbus, OH MSA	7K	8.1%	18.4%	4.3%	1,978,000
14	New Orleans, LA MSA	9K	8.1%	36.2%	8.8%	1,268,000
15	Atlanta, GA MSA	48K	7.6%	35.9%	10.8%	5,839,000

Source: LPPI analysis of 2015–2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: Large metros are metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) with a population greater than 1 million. The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black, including multiracial Latinos. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race and those who identify as Hispanic. The Latino population can be of any race.

Although Afro-Latinxs are a relatively small population within the United States, they are young. ACS microdata reveals the median age of Afro-Latinos to be 21, the youngest compared to all other groups presented here (Table 3). Afro-Latinxs have the lowest median age, the lowest share who are seniors (5%), and the largest proportion of children (43.1%) among all groups considered.

Furthermore, Afro-Latinxs are more likely to be born in the U.S. relative to other Latino groups. More than three-quarters (79.1%)

of Afro-Latinxs are U.S.-born citizens, compared to 64.5% of non-Black Latinos. As Michelle Holder and Alan Aja note, one potential factor at play is the ancestry of Afro-Latinos.<sup>69</sup> In 2019, one-third of Afro-Latinxs reported their primary ancestry as African-American<sup>70</sup> and previous research estimates that nearly half of Afro-Latinx children have one African-American parent.<sup>71</sup> Afro-Latinxs' youthfulness and nativity also suggest that their importance will only grow, especially as they enter voting age and shape the policy agendas of political actors.

**Table 3: Selected Characteristics for the Latino and Non-Latino Populations. 2019**

Group	Percent Female	Median Age	Percent Under 18	Percent Ages 18-64	Percent 65+	Percent Married	Percent U.S.-born	Percent that Speak Spanish
U.S. Overall	50.8%	38	22.6%	61.8%	15.6%	40.6%	86.2%	13.4%
<b>Non-Latinos</b>								
Black	52.1%	32	27.0%	62.3%	10.8%	25.2%	90.9%	1%
White	50.7%	43	18.9%	61.3%	19.8%	45.5%	96%	1%
<b>Latinos</b>								
All Latinos	49.5%	29	31.6%	61.3%	7.1%	33.9%	65%	71.5%
Afro-Latinxs	50.4%	21	43.1%	51.8%	5%	21%	79.1%	48.7%
Non-Black Latinos	49.5%	29	31.1%	61.7%	7.2%	34.4%	64.5%	72.3%

Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

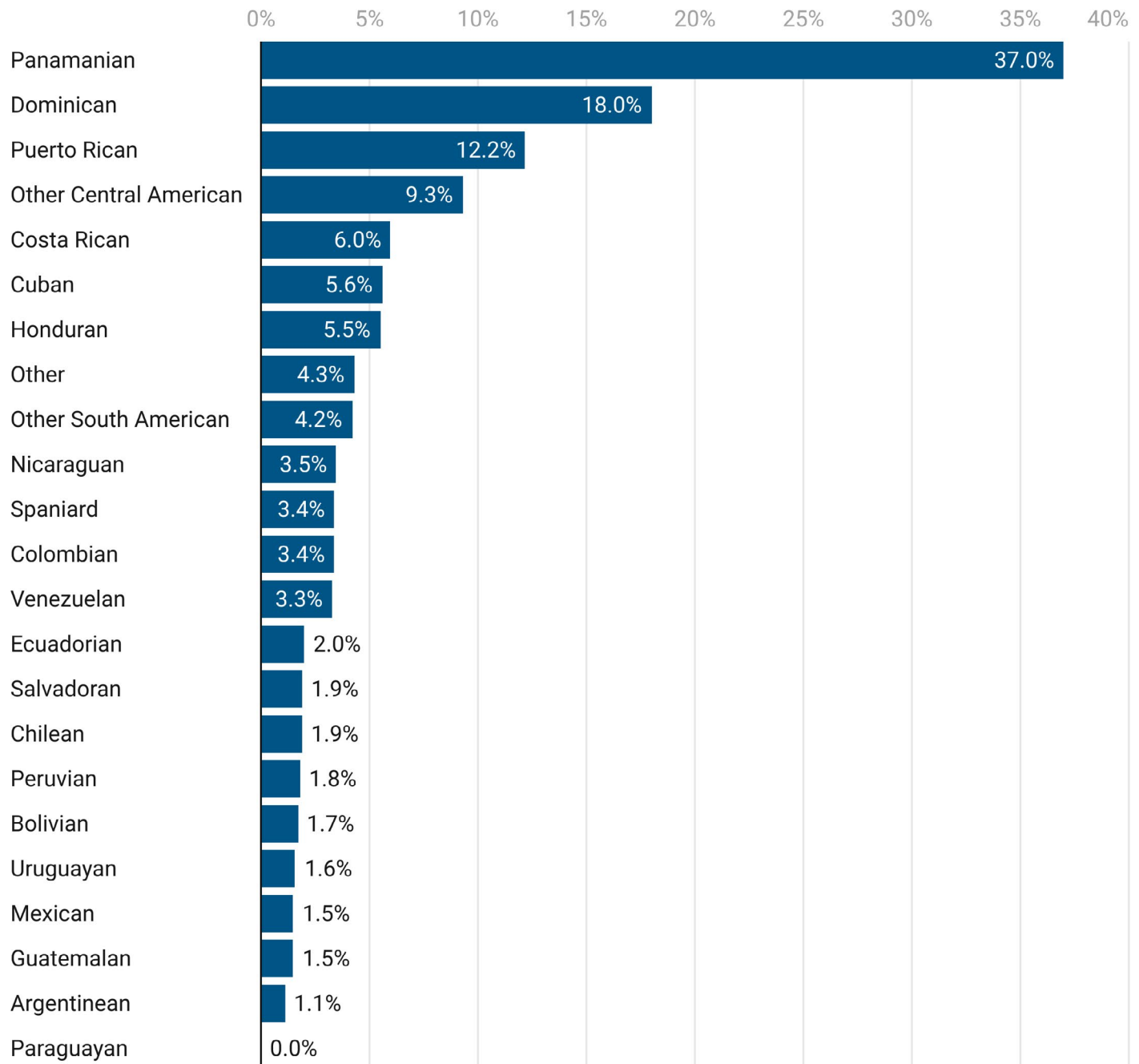
Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.



Looking at the composition of Latino descent groups, Panamanians are among the most likely to identify themselves as Afro-Latinx, with more than one-third self-identifying as Black and Latino (Figure 2). Similarly, almost one-fifth of Dominicans and more than one-tenth of Puerto Ricans identify as Afro-Latinx. The high proportions of

self-identifying Afro-Latinxs who trace their ancestry to Caribbean and Central American countries may reflect the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the presence of Afro-Indigenous groups such as the Garifuna in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.<sup>72</sup>

**Figure 2: Latino Descent Groups by Share of Afro-Latinx Self-Identification, 2019**



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015–2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

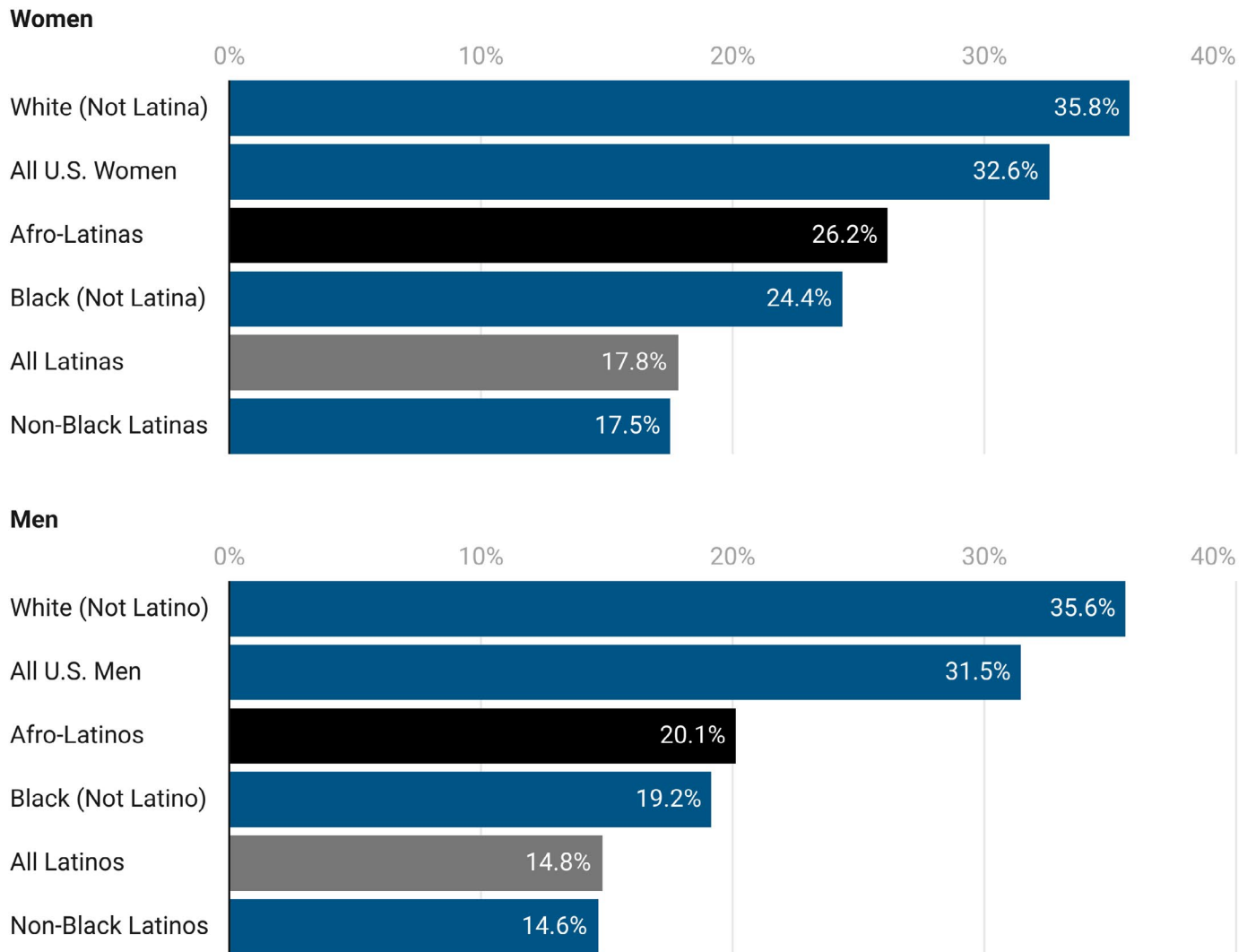
Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race.



Consistent with previous research,<sup>73</sup> Afro-Latinxs have higher education levels than other major racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, Afro-Latinos and Afro-Latinas were more likely to have completed a college education than other groups (Figure 3). When looking at educational attainment by gender, for instance, 26.2% of Afro-

Latinas completed a college degree, compared to just 17.5% of non-Black Latinas. Additionally, 20.1% of Afro-Latino men completed a bachelor's degree or more, compared to only 14.6% of non-Black Latinos.<sup>74</sup>

**Figure 3: Share of Population Ages 25 and Older with at Least a Bachelor's Degree by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, 2019**



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

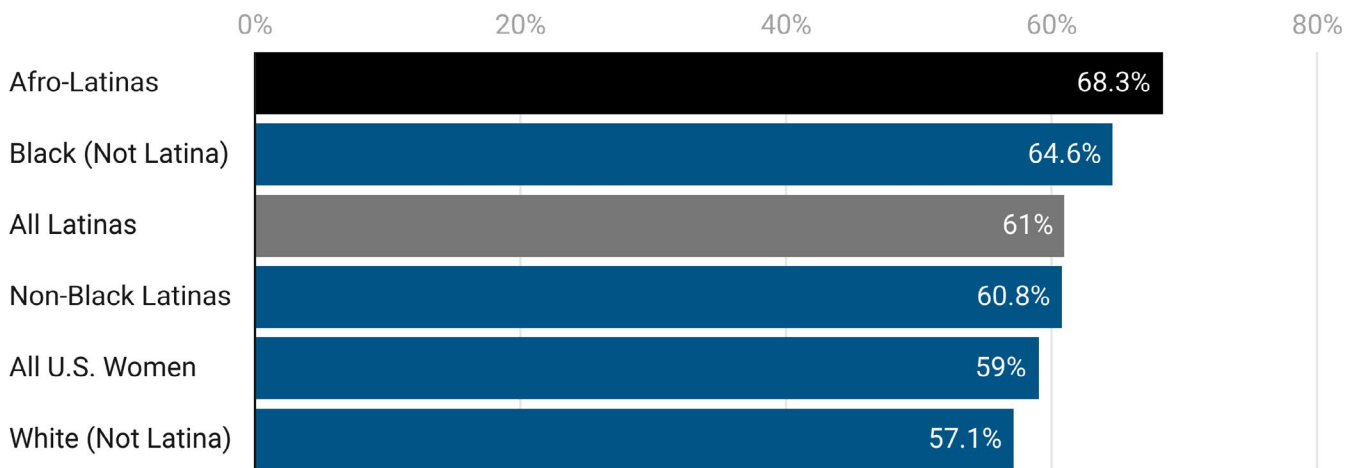
Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.

Similarly, Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos have high labor force participation levels (Figure 4). In 2019, Afro-Latinas had the highest labor force participation rate of all women observed here (68.3%), almost 8 percentage points higher than that of non-Black Latinas (60.8%) and 9 percentage points higher than the rate for women

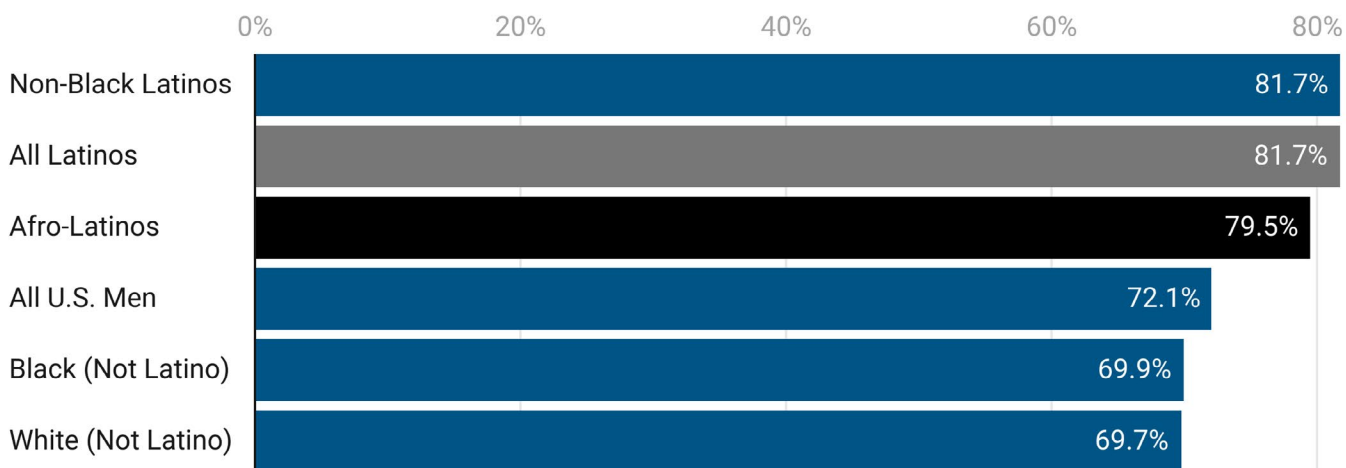
overall (59%). Relatedly, Afro-Latinos had a higher labor force participation rate than men overall (79.5% vs. 72.1%) but slightly lower than that of non-Black Latinos (81.7%).

**Figure 4: Labor Force Participation Rates for the Population Ages 25 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, 2019**

**Women**



**Men**



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015–2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

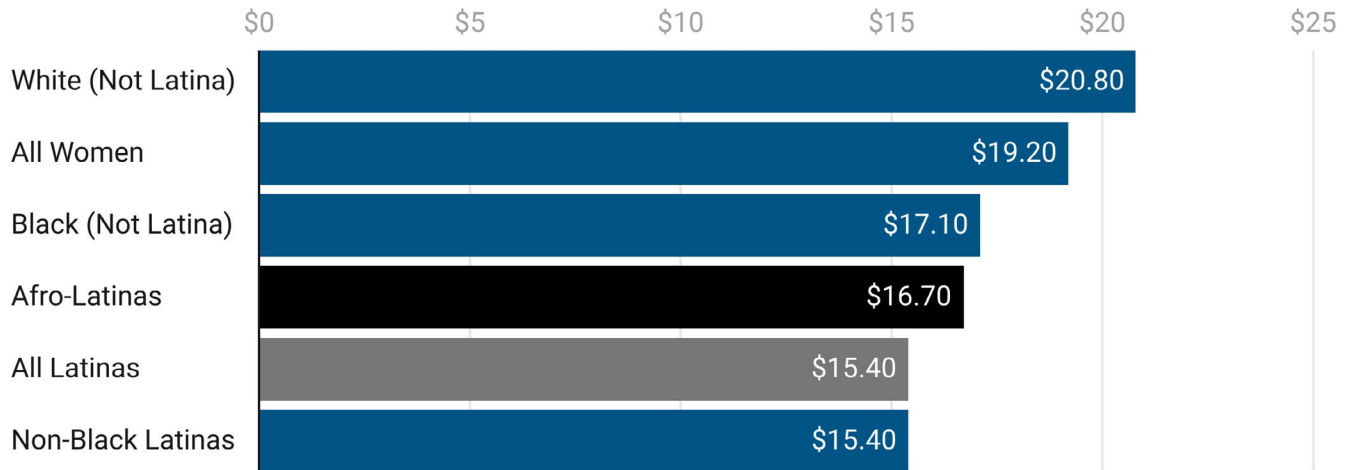
Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.

Turning to wages, both Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos have slightly higher wages than non-Black Latinas and Latinos (Figure 5). In 2019, for instance, Afro-Latinas averaged \$16.70 an hour, more than \$1 higher than the wage for non-Black Latinas (\$15.40). This wage difference was much smaller for Afro-Latinos, who only earned 50

cents more per hour than non-Black Latinos (\$18.80 vs. \$18.30).<sup>75</sup> Despite earning higher wages than their respective non-Black Latina/o groups, Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos earned less than the average U.S. worker in 2019.

**Figure 5: Median Hourly Wages for the Population Ages 25 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, 2019**

**Women**



**Men**



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

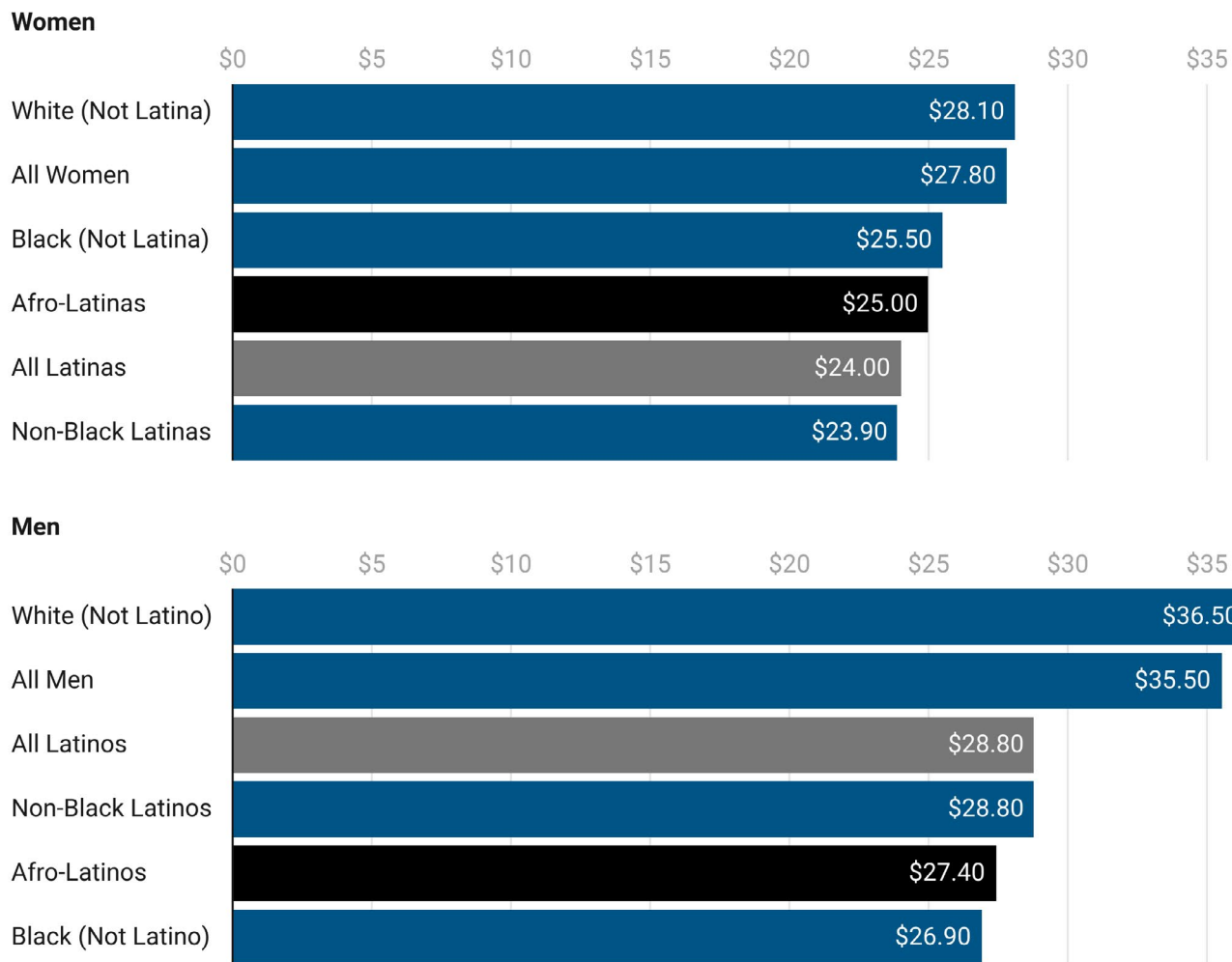
Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.



When we compare wages for workers who have completed a bachelor's degree, Afro-Latinas still earn slightly higher wages than non-Black Latinas (Figure 6). In 2019, college-educated Afro-Latinas averaged \$25 an hour, \$1 more than non-Black Latinas (\$23.90).<sup>76</sup>

However, the story does not hold for college-educated Afro-Latinos, who earn more than \$1 less on average than non-Black Latino men (\$27.40 vs. \$28.80, respectively).

**Figure 6: Median Hourly Wages for the Population Ages 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or More by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, 2019**



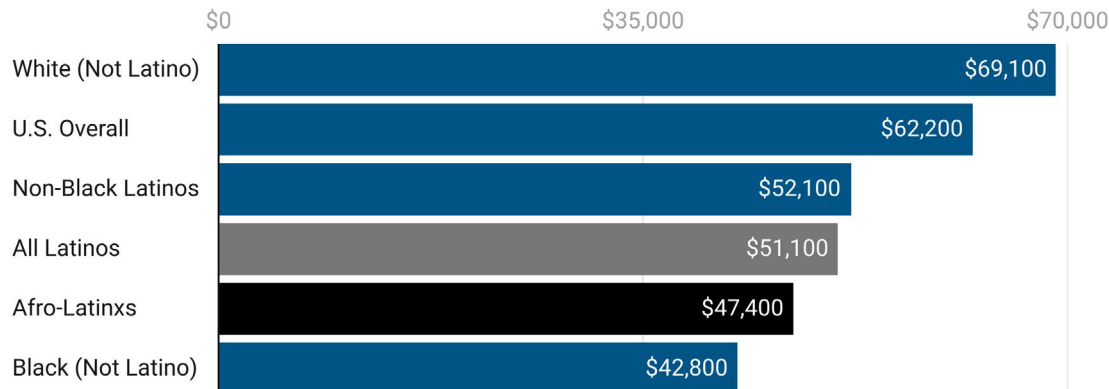
Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.

Similarly, Afro-Latinxs' household incomes and poverty rates do not reflect their educational attainment rates. Non-Latino Black and Afro-Latinx households have the lowest median incomes of the groups analyzed here. In 2019, Afro-Latinx households had a median

household income of \$47,400 (Figure 7), almost \$15,000 less than the U.S. median income and roughly \$5,000 less than non-Black Latino households.

**Figure 7: Median Household Incomes by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



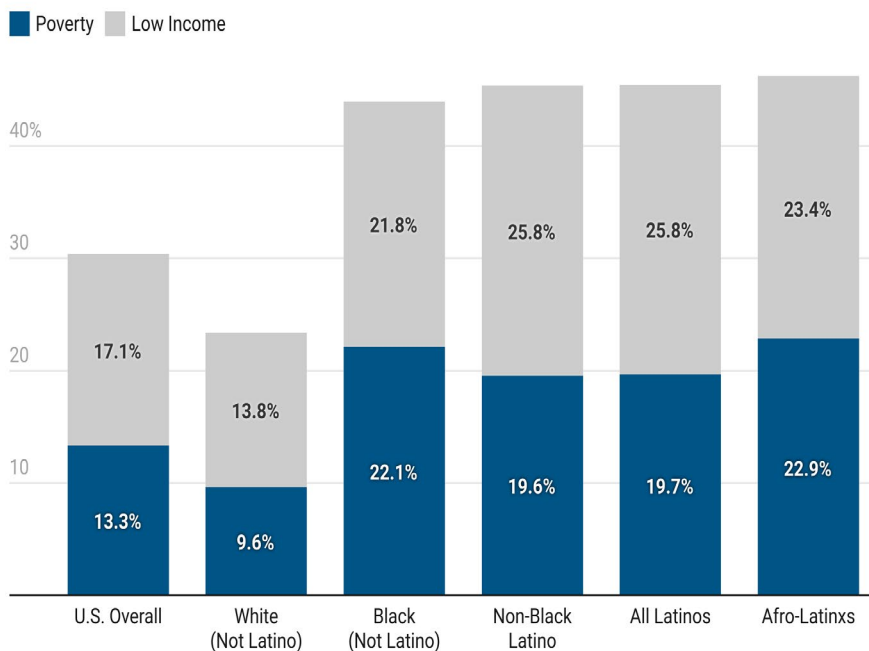
Source: LPPI analysis of 2015–2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.

In line with previous research, Afro-Latinxs also had the highest poverty rates compared to other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>77</sup> Afro-Latinxs had a poverty rate of 22.9% in 2019, with an additional 23.4% of Afro-Latinxs living in low-income conditions (Figure 8). Together, 46.2% of Afro-Latinxs live in poverty or low-income conditions, the highest share of all groups.

One factor that may affect household incomes and poverty rates is Afro-Latinxs' youthfulness. Afro-Latinxs have a median age of 21 and have a lower marriage rate than other groups (21%). As a result, Afro-Latinxs may have lower household incomes due to their lower number of multi-income households.

**Figure 8: Individual Poverty Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



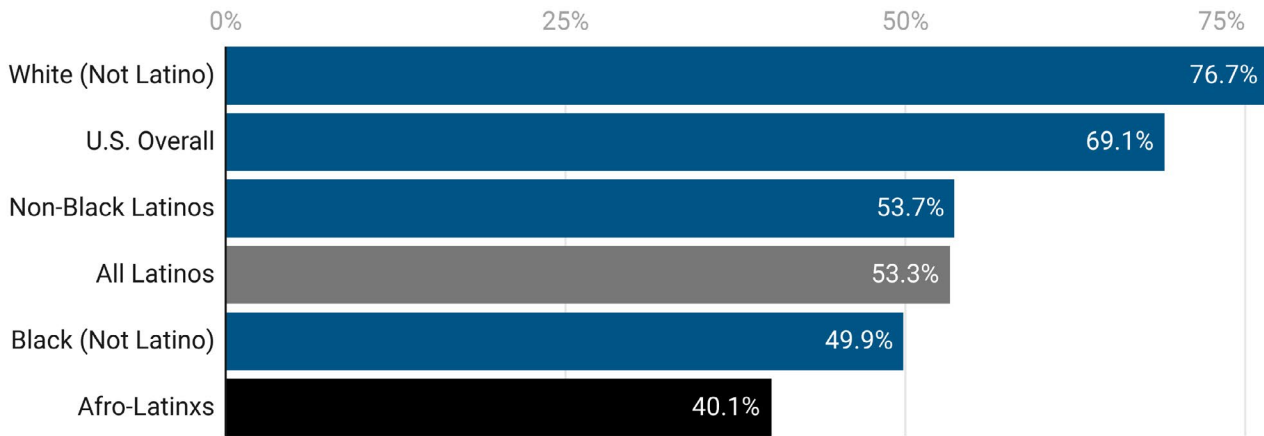
Source: LPPI analysis of 2015–2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. Poverty refers to individuals with family incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty line. Low-income individuals have family incomes between 101–200% of the federal poverty line.

Recent research has also demonstrated that Afro-Latinxs must navigate anti-Blackness, colorism, and discrimination in education and lending systems, especially when applying for home loans.<sup>78</sup> Afro-Latinx mortgage applicants, for instance, are more likely to experience denial or receive a high-cost loan than other Latino groups, but less likely than non-Latino Black applicants.<sup>79</sup> As a result of discriminatory lending practices, Afro-Latinxs are less likely to own a home.

Our analysis here reflects this finding. In 2019, Afro-Latinxs were the least likely to own their home compared to other major ethnic groups (Figure 9). Only 40.1% of Afro-Latinxs lived in an owned home, compared to 53.7% of non-Black Latinos and 69.1% of all Americans. However, Afro-Latinos' median home value was higher than average at \$210,000, compared to \$200,000 for non-Black Latinos and U.S. homeowners.<sup>80</sup>

**Figure 9: Individuals Ages 25 and Older Living in an Owned Home by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



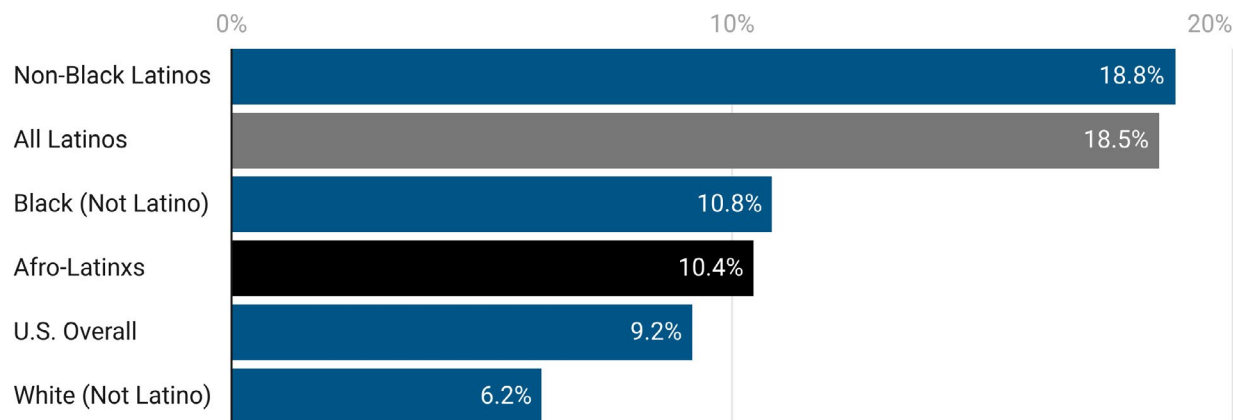
Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.

Regarding insurance coverage, Afro-Latinxs are among the groups most likely to have insurance, likely reflecting their youth, as children and teenagers generally have greater access to Medicaid.<sup>81</sup>

Only 10.4% of Afro-Latinxs are uninsured, compared to 18.8% of non-Black Latinos (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Uninsured Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



Source: LPPI analysis of 2015-2019 5-Year American Community Survey public use microdata.

Notes: The Afro-Latinx population includes Latino individuals who identify as Black alone or Black and any other race. The Black population includes individuals who identify as Black, including those who identify as more than one race. The Latino population can be of any race.



# Conclusion

The 2019 American Community Survey presents a complex picture of the Afro-Latinx community in the United States. Despite Afro-Latinxs' higher educational attainment rates and labor market participation compared to some groups, they experience anti-Blackness in the economy and society.<sup>82</sup> Their outcomes, especially in household incomes and homeownership, are tied to those of the non-Hispanic Black community.<sup>83</sup> As Michelle Holder and Alan Aja powerfully write, “Blackness (or anti-Blackness) not only matters but is constant, persistent, and determinant in economic outcomes for Afro-descendant groups, whether native or foreign-born.”<sup>84</sup>

Researchers and policymakers must deepen their understanding of the nuances and simultaneity of race, ethnicity, and ancestry, as well as their relationship to social inequalities.<sup>85</sup> Being Black and Latino are not mutually exclusive. Ameliorating the difficulties Afro-Latinxs experience in society—whether in housing, lending systems,<sup>86</sup> the labor force,<sup>87</sup> or healthcare systems<sup>88</sup>—begins with recognizing how their position in society shapes their experiences of inequality, especially when compared to non-Black Latinos. The need to understand how Afro-Latinx experiences differ from those of non-Black Latinos will only grow in priority for legislators as more Afro-Latinxs enter voting age and shape policy and election outcomes.

This analysis also highlights the limitations of racial self-identification currently implemented by the Census Bureau. The concept of “race” includes how we think of ourselves and how others perceive us, and this social status shapes lived experiences and outcomes.<sup>89</sup> Rather than flatten distinctions between groups, researchers should provide survey respondents with enough questions—perhaps including questions on “perceived” or “street” race<sup>90</sup>—to understand their social position. If we assume that all Latinos are racialized the same way or only provide data on aggregate Latino outcomes, many inequalities will remain invisible.

Even with the limitations of current datasets, however, quantitative researchers are responsible for working creatively within survey constraints to tell stories that break monolithic narratives. Scholars studying the Latino community must also commit to

ongoing critical reflection about who is at the center and who is at the margins of narratives around Latinidad and to “mapping the margins”<sup>91</sup>—highlighting the experiences of relegated communities and detailing within-group differences.

Latinos—and Latinidad—are not a monolith, and Afro-Latinidad is Latinidad. To be in Latino solidarity is to recognize how the lived experiences of Latinos differ by characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, citizenship status, disability, and class. The ability to be critically conscious of one’s social location in systems of power at both individual and structural levels is the first step toward building bridges of understanding with others with different experiences. Flexible solidarity<sup>92</sup> toward liberation means centering the margins by advocating for groups such as Afro-Latinxs who experience a triple consciousness,<sup>93</sup> reflected in many of the outcomes illustrated in this report.



# Endnotes

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- 4 Recent quantitative research includes Michelle Holder and Alan Aja's comprehensive study of the economic experience of Afro-Latinxs. See Michelle Holder and Alan Aja, *Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021).
- 5 Foundational qualitative studies of Afro-Latinxs include: Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (eds.), *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, July 2010) and Ginette E.B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
- 6 We use the term "Latino" to refer to the population that identifies as Hispanic and/or Latina/o/x/e/@.
- 7 This is also known as the "Black alone or in combination" population. Because the numbers reflect self-identified Afro-Latinos, these estimates likely understate the actual size of the Afro-Latinx population. See Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "About 6 Million U.S. Adults Identify as Afro-Latino," Pew Research Center, May 2, 2022, [available online](#).
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- 11 Lillian Comas-Díaz, "LatiNegra: Mental Health Issues of African Latinas," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 5, no. 3/4 (1994): 35-74, [available online](#).
- 12 Differences in definitions between "Black Latina" and "Afro-Latina," for instance, have become prominent among young Latinxs. For instance, someone who has an African-American parent and a non-Black Latinx parent may identify as a "Black Latinx" but not necessarily "Afro-Latinx." On the other hand, someone who has two Black Latinx parents may identify as "Afro-Latinx" but not necessarily as "Black Latinx." See, for example, @jchellestryingherbest, "African American Culture Mixed with Mexican Culture is Different than Black Mexican Culture," TikTok, February 10, 2023, [available online](#).
- 13 Holder and Aja, *Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy*.
- 14 Christine Tamir, *The Growing Diversity of Black America* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, March 2021), [available online](#).
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- 18 Howard Hogan, “Reporting of Race Among Hispanics: Analysis of ACS Data,” in *The Frontiers of Applied Demography, Applied Demography Series Vol. 9* (New York, NY: Springer Cham, 2017), [available online](#).
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- 21 These trends may not be representative of U.S.-born Black Latinos. Future research should investigate these trends by nativity.
- 22 Hernández, *Racial Innocence: Unmasking Latino Anti-Black Bias and the Struggle for Equality*. Yasmiyn Irizarry, Ellis P. Monk, and Ryon J. Cobb, “Race-Shifting in the United States: Latinxs, Skin Tone, and Ethnoracial Alignments,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* **9**, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 37-55, [available online](#); Logan, “How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans;” Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*.
- 23 LaVeist-Ramos et al., “Are Black Hispanics Black or Hispanic? Exploring Disparities at the Intersection of Race and Ethnicity.”
- 24 Michelle Holder and Alan A. Aja, “Chapter 1. Demographic and Historical Context” in *Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021).
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- 30 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* **43**, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-99, [available online](#).
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- 32 Flores and Jiménez Román, “Triple-Consciousness? Approaches to Afro-Latino Culture in the United States.”
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid; Franklin Franco, *Blacks, Mulattos, and the Dominican Nation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).
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- 37 Foundational qualitative studies of Afro-Latinxs include: Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (eds.), *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, July 2010) and Ginette E.B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
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- 41 I.e., recent or distant family background.
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- 51 This is also known as the “Black alone or in combination” population. Because the numbers reflect self-identified Afro-Latinos, these estimates likely understate the actual size of the Afro-Latinx population. See Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, “About 6 Million U.S. Adults Identify as Afro-Latino,” Pew Research Center, [available online](#).
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- 54 Comas-Díaz, “LatiNegra.”
- 55 Differences in definitions between “Black Latina” and “Afro-Latina,” for instance, have become prominent among young Latinxs. For instance, someone who has an African-American parent and a non-Black Latinx parent may identify as a “Black Latinx” but not necessarily Afro-Latinx. On the other hand, someone who has two Black Latinx parents may identify as “Afro-Latinx” but not necessarily as “Black Latinx.” See, for example, @jchellestryingherbest, “African American Culture Mixed with Mexican Culture Is Different than Black Mexican Culture,” TikTok, February 10, 2023, [available online](#).
- 56 Holder and Aja, *Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy*.
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- 58 Gonzalez-Barrera, “About 6 Million U.S. Adults Identify as Afro-Latino.”
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- 60 Hernández, ***Racial Innocence: Unmasking Latino Anti-Black Bias and the Struggle for Equality***.
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- 66 As noted above, these figures are based on the ACS 5-year data file, which likely underestimates the size of the Afro-Latino population. Estimates using the 2019 1-year file show the size of the Afro-Latinx population to be 2.4 million. Additionally, of these 2.2 million, 42% identify as multiracial.
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- 75 These trends may differ by nativity but this was outside the initial scope of this research project.
- 76 These trends may differ by nativity. Future research should investigate whether Afro-Latinas have higher wages due to differences in nativity. If more non-Black Latinas are immigrants, this could help explain the difference in wages between Black and non-Black Latinas.
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- 84 Holder and Aja, “Chapter 1. Demographic and Historical Context,” in ***Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy***.
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- 87 Holder and Aja, "Chapter 2. Income, Poverty, and Wealth among Afro-Latinxs," in ***Afro-Latinos in the U.S. Economy***.
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- 91 Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color."
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