



MYTH VERSUS FACT: LATINOS

There are many misconceptions about Latinos. Here we address some of the most common ones.

Myth: Undocumented Latino immigrants do not pay taxes.

Fact: *Although sources vary in their amounts, it is estimated that undocumented immigrants pay between \$90 and \$140 billion in federal, state, and local taxes each year. Immigrants also pay sales taxes and provide affordable labor for many of our nation's small and businesses.¹ The labor provided by immigrants means that goods and services are more affordable for consumers.*

Myth: Undocumented Latinos over-utilize public benefits.

Fact: *Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid, and many legal immigrants are not either. In fact, allowing some undocumented immigrants to work legally would financially benefit to the United States through reducing the deficit by about \$175 billion in the first 10 years.²*

Myth: Most undocumented Latinos cross the border illegally.

Fact: *Most immigrants are here legally (up to 75%). Of those who are not here legally, most entered the country legally and then let their visas expire. Undocumented immigrants are estimated to be less than 2% of the population.³*

Myth: Hispanics/Latinos are a single race.

Fact: *Being Hispanic or Latino is not a racial category. A Latino/Hispanic person can be White, Black, or even Asian. Being Latino or Hispanic usually refers to a cultural distinction or to those whose country of origin is in Latin America.⁴*

Myth: If a Latino person speaks another language other than English, it is always Spanish.

Fact: *Latinos can speak a variety of languages, as many people from Latin American countries speak a variety of Amerindian languages, Mayan dialects, European languages, Amazonian languages, and a variety of other indigenous languages depending on the country of origin.⁵ Some of the most common languages include Jamaican Creole, Mayan and Quechua.⁶*

Myth: If a Latino is religious, then they are always Catholic.

Fact: *It is a fact that Latinos as a group are highly religious, as more than 9 in 10 identify with a specific religion. However, not all Latinos are Catholic. When asked their religion, 68% of Latinos were Catholic, 20% were Protestant, 8% were non-religious, 3% were other Christians, 1% were other faiths, and 1% didn't know. In addition, individuals of the same religion may have differing views of their religion. For example, not all Catholics adhere to the same beliefs,⁷ for example, some may accept use of birth control even it is against the teachings of the church.*

¹ The Immigrant Learning Center; [Immigrants, Taxes, and the Use of Welfare](#)

² CNN Money; "5 Immigration Myths Debunked" <http://money.cnn.com/2014/11/20/news/economy/immigration-myths/>

³ Department of Homeland Security <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics/index.htm>

⁴ The Hispanic Myth: A Forum for Clarity About the Hispanic Identity; "Myth: Hispanics are a Single Race" <https://hispanicmyth.wordpress.com/>

⁵ Wikipedia. Hispanic. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic>

⁶ USA Today, What Languages do Latin Americans Speak? <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/languages-latin-americans-speak-22661.html>

⁷ Pew Forum: Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion. <http://pewforum.org/Changing-Faiths-Latinos-and-the-Transformation-of-American-Religion.aspx>

All links in this document are active as of April 30, 2015.