

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

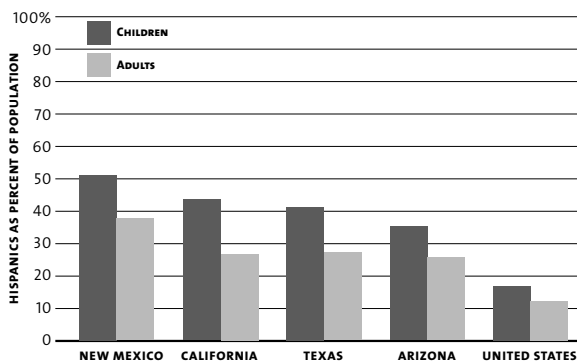
While hardly anyone is surprised these days by reports that America is becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, statistics still have the power to startle. Take the growth of Spanish-speaking residents. This growth is so dramatic in some parts of the country that it has become a major variable driving economic and social change. Among other things, it is creating opportunities for business – though exploiting them may also require previously monolingual Americans to become at least modestly conversant in Español.

Toy manufacturers, for example, upped their production of bilingual talking dolls (a switch converts them from English to Spanish). Univision is now available on local cable systems in small Old South communities, which long managed nicely on the usual mix of neutral American newscaster-speak and the local drawl. Disneyland now has a regular “Mickey Mambo Night,” replete with bilingual staff, to appeal to the Latino population surge in the once very white, very conservative Orange County, California.

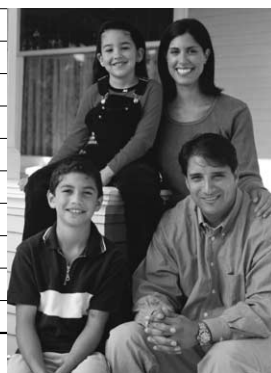
GEOGRAPHIC SPLITS

Some 10.5 percent of American residents now

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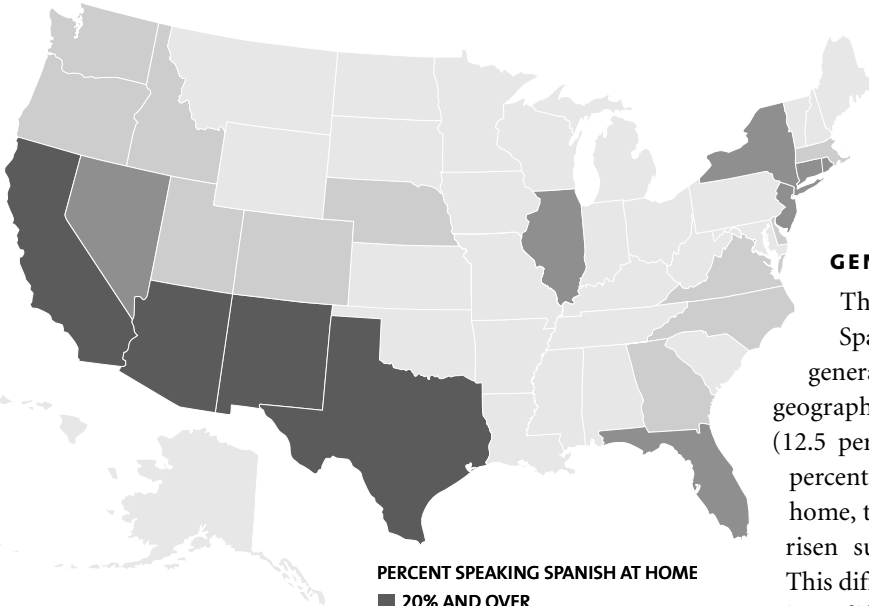
SOURCE (ALL): William H. Frey, Analysis of Census 2000 Supplementary Survey.



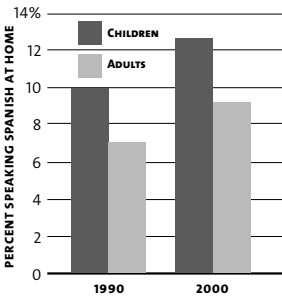
speak only Spanish at home, up from 7.5 percent in 1990. They tend to concentrate in regions that have sustained significant past and recent immigration from Latin America or the Caribbean. So it should be no shock to learn that California, Texas, Florida and New York are home to two-thirds of the country’s Spanish-only speakers. Throw in Illinois and New Jersey, and you’ve got three-quarters of them housed. By contrast, just one in 5,000 Spanish speakers lives in Vermont.

BRUCE SANDERS (ALL)

CHARTICLE



PERCENT SPEAKING SPANISH AT HOME
 ■ 20% AND OVER
 ■ 10% TO 20%
 ■ 5% TO 10%
 ■ UNDER 5%



This skewed distribution is equally evident in some cities. The new Census 2000 Supplementary Survey suggests that you can probably get along better in Spanish than English in Santa Ana (California), El Paso and Miami, where more than six of every 10 residents speak Spanish at home. And only-Spanish-at-home speakers make up at least a quarter of the population of 13 other large cities. Compare that to cities where Spanish has hardly made a dent – among them Cincinnati and

Pittsburgh, where only-Spanish-at-home constitutes 0.7 percent and 1.4 percent of their respective populations.

GENERATIONAL SPLITS

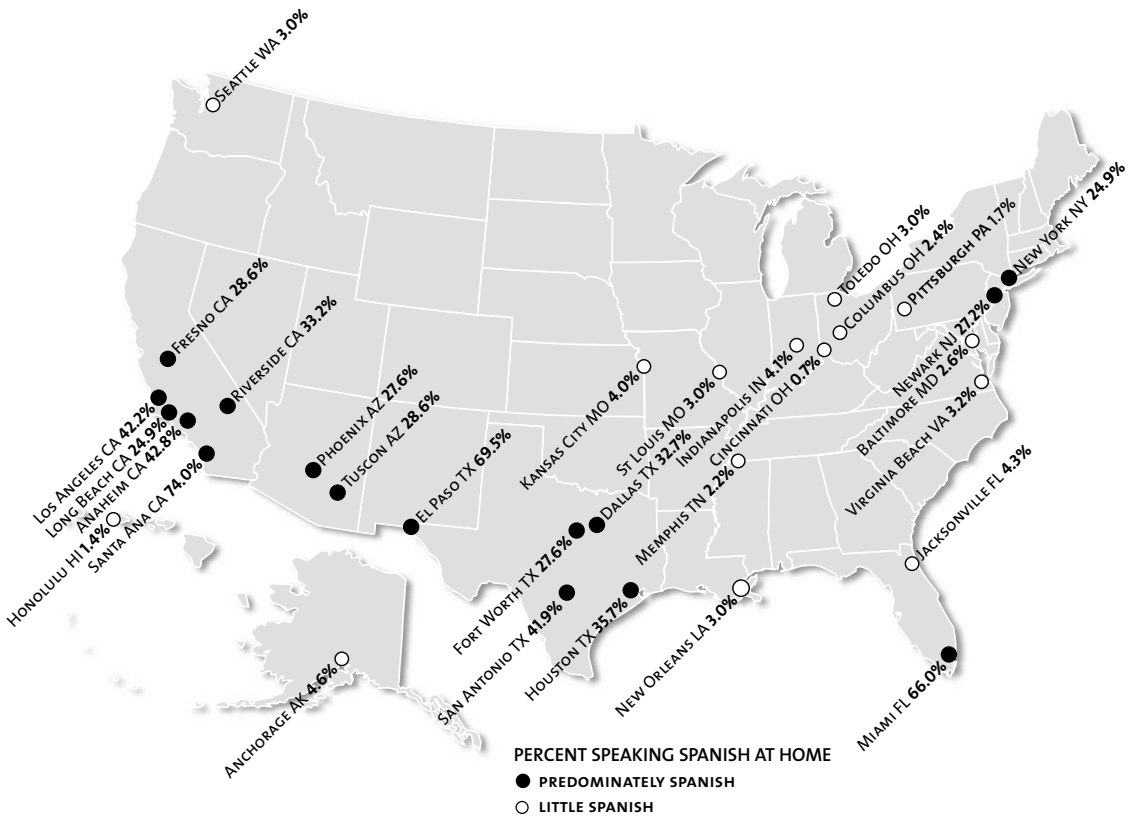
The concentration of Spanish speakers follows a generational divide as well as a geographic one. More children (12.5 percent) than adults (10.0 percent) speak only Spanish at home, though both figures have risen substantially since 1990. This difference is especially large in California, where a third of children fit this description, compared with less than a quarter for adults.

That’s because Latin American immigrants are generally young and are inclined to have large families. It’s common for children, even in the second and third generation, to speak Spanish at home with their parents while learning English in school. The new statistics bear this out; a higher proportion of school-age

children than adults are bilingual.

MAPPING THE FUTURE

In California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona a quarter or more of all school-age children speak Spanish at home. In eight other states, including Nevada, Florida, Illinois and the District of Columbia, more than one in 10 school-age children are in the category. The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey also documents the gradual spread of Spanish lan-



guage use to 11 additional states, including several in the Southeast, the Pacific and the Rocky Mountain West. While small in numbers, these children and their families will lead the demand for new consumer products and public services (notably schools) in communities that have little experience with Spanish language populations.

This wide diffusion of Spanish speakers will undoubtedly lead to changes in cultural amenities, as well as food and music in their communities. Yet, driven by sheer numbers, the major impact of Spanish will mostly be felt in the high concentration states over the next two decades. Prime

among these are New Mexico, California, Texas and Arizona. When young Spanish speakers reach maturity, their cultural and linguistic presence will loom even larger than its does today. Hence any business, community organization or politician striving to succeed will need to cope with the reality of bilingualism. **M**

