

8. Family, Fertility, Sexual Behaviors and Attitudes

Hispanics start having children at much younger ages than non-Hispanics. More than one-fourth (26%) of Hispanic females are mothers by the time they reach age 19, compared with 22% of blacks, 11% of whites and 6% of Asians. Among Hispanics, teen parenthood is most widespread in the immigrant generation. Some 26% of foreign-born females ages 18 and 19 have children, compared with 16% of the same age cohort of second-generation Hispanic females and 21% of third-generation Hispanic females.

Not only do Latinos have children at younger ages than non-Latinos, they also marry at younger ages. Some 15% of Latinos ages 16 to 25 are married, compared with 9% of non-Latinos in that age group. The higher marriage rate for Latinos is driven primarily by immigrant youths, 22% of whom are married. Marriage rates among native-born Latinos—10% for the second generation and 11% for the third generation—don't differ markedly from the rate for non-Latinos.

Despite their relatively high rate of teen parenthood, most Latino youths do not look favorably upon having children prior to age 20. Three-fourths (75%) say that the prevalence of teens having babies is not good for society, an opinion shared by 90% of the overall youth population in the U.S.

Nearly seven-in-ten Latino youths (69%) say that teen parenthood hinders the ability to achieve one's life goals. However, Latino youths are more inclined than other youths to favor parenthood at a relatively young age. Latinos say that the ideal age for a woman to have a child is 24, and for a man it is 25. Among all youths, these figures are 26 for a woman and 28 for a man.²⁶

Among young Latinos, there is only a small difference in the likelihood of having had sexual intercourse prior to age 20 by nativity. Nor does the likelihood of having engaged in teen sex differ between Latino youths and their older counterparts. However, Latino youths are far more likely than older Latinos to report that they engaged in sex prior to the age of 16.

When it comes to attitudes about teen sex (as distinct from behaviors), once again there are no significant differences by generation among young Latinos, but there are differences between younger and older Latinos. Latino youths are more tolerant of teen sex within a serious relationship or of teen sex that involves using protection; Latinos older than 25 are markedly less accepting of teen sexual activity no matter what the context.

²⁶ These estimates are medians of the ideal age provided by respondents.

Marriage and Living Arrangements

The living arrangements and family structures of Latino youths differ markedly from those of their non-Hispanic counterparts. Latinos marry at younger ages than other groups. Some 15% of Latino youths are married, compared with 9% of the non-Hispanic population (Table 8.1). The likelihood of living together is similar between the two groups—7% for Latinos and 8% for non-Latinos.

Table 8.1
Marital Status of Youths
(%)

Marital Status	NON-HISPANICS			HISPANICS			
	All	Whites	Blacks	All	First Generation	Second Generation	Third and Higher Generations
Married, spouse present or absent	9	11	5	15	22	10	11
Widowed, divorced or separated	2	2	2	2	3	2	3
Cohabiting	8	9	5	7	9	5	9
Never married and no partner	81	79	88	76	66	83	77

Notes: "Youths" refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. First generation refers to persons born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including those born in Puerto Rico. Second generation refers to persons born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent. Third and higher generations refers to persons born in the U.S. with both parents born in the U.S. Numbers may not total due to rounding.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the March 2009 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

Immigrant Latino youths have much higher rates of marriage than those who are native born, but there is little difference in marriage rates between the second and third generations. About two-in-ten (22%) Latino immigrant youths are married, a rate that is twice as high as the rates for native-born generations. Some 10% of the second generation and 11% of the third generation are married—rates that are comparable to non-Hispanic youths. The cohabitation rate is 9% for immigrants and the third generation, and 5% for the second generation.

While 61% of non-Hispanic youths live with their parents, this share drops to 57% among Latino youths (Table 8.2). However, Latinos are twice as likely as non-Hispanics to reside with a relative other than their parents, spouse or partner. While only 5% of non-Latinos are in this living arrangement, the share rises to 10% for Latinos, due entirely to the high proportion of immigrants living in this type of arrangement. Despite the fact that they are more likely to be married and have children, Hispanics are no more likely than non-Hispanics to be the head of household (or spouse or partner of the head of household); 27% of each group live in this type of arrangement.

The plurality of foreign-born Latino youths (34%) are the head of a household or the spouse of a head of household. Among the second generation, 20% are a head of household, or the spouse of one who is, and among the third generation, this share is 27%—the same as in the non-Hispanic youth population.

Immigrant Latino youths are far less likely than their native-born counterparts to be living in a home with their parents. More than one-third (38%) of the first generation are living with a parent, compared with 72% of second-generation Latino youths. Once again, the third generation mirrors the non-Latino population, with 61% living with a parent.

Though immigrants are less likely to be living with a parent, they are more likely than the second or third generations to be residing with relatives other than a parent or spouse. Some 16% of the first generation lives as such, while only 6% of the second generation and 7% of the third generation are living in this type of arrangement.

Most notable is the fact that immigrants are far more likely than their native-born counterparts to be living with nonrelatives. While 13% of immigrants are living with nonrelatives, only 2% of the second generation and 4% of the third generation fall into this category.

Living Arrangement	NON-HISPANICS			HISPANICS			
	All	Whites	Blacks	All	First Generation	Second Generation	Third and Higher Generations
With parents	61	61	63	57	38	72	61
Independently as head, spouse or partner	27	28	23	27	34	20	27
With other relatives	5	4	10	10	16	6	7
With other nonrelatives	7	8	4	6	13	2	4

Notes: "Youths" refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. First generation refers to persons born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including those born in Puerto Rico. Second generation refers to persons born in the U.S. with at least one first-generation parent. Third and higher generations refers to persons born in the U.S. with both parents born in the U.S. Numbers may not total due to rounding.
Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the March 2009 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

Fertility

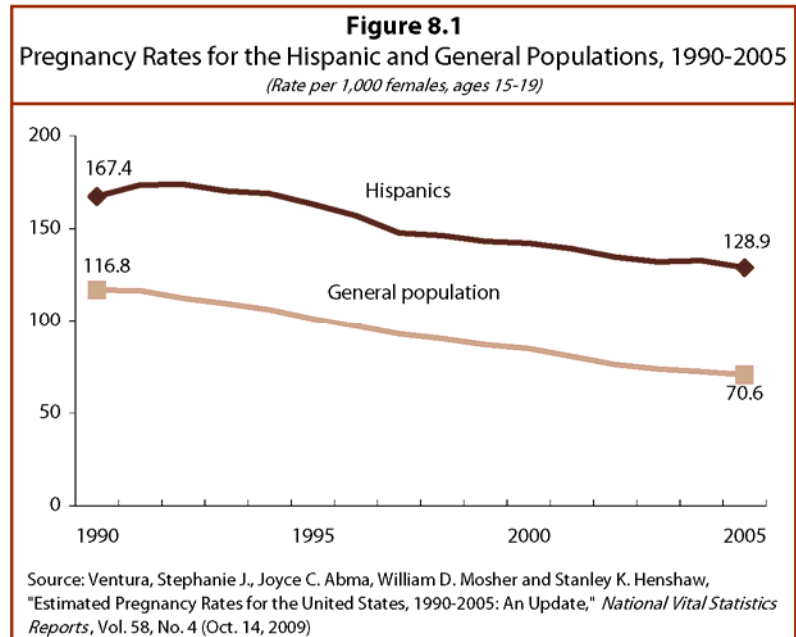
Hispanic females tend to have more children than their non-Hispanic counterparts and to start having children at younger ages. On average, Hispanic females give birth to just over three children. In comparison, black females are projected to have an average of 2.15 children, and for whites the number is 1.86.²⁷

The high fertility and youthful profile of Hispanic mothers is reflected in high birthrates for Hispanic females ages 16 to 25. In 2006, 140 of every 1,000

²⁷ Based on Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the National Center for Health Statistics' 2006 Natality Public Use File and the Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey.

Hispanic females in this age cohort gave birth—more than double the rate for white females in the same age group (60 births per 1,000) and markedly higher than the rate for black females (110 births per 1,000).²⁸ Immigrant Hispanic youths have particularly high levels of fertility; their annual birthrates are 50% higher than those of their native-born peers.²⁹

Despite sharp declines in recent decades, pregnancy rates³⁰ remain relatively high among Hispanic teens. In 2005, almost 129 of every 1,000 Hispanic females ages 15 to 19 experienced a pregnancy. In comparison, the number of similarly aged females in the general population experiencing pregnancies was almost half that: 71 of every 1,000. Between 1990 and 2005, there was a 23% decline in pregnancy rates among Hispanic females ages 15 to 19 and a 40% decline among all females ages 15 to 19 (Ventura, Abma, and Mosher, 2009).



The story is similar when examining births to teens (Figure 8.2).³¹ In 2007, 82 of every 1,000 Hispanic females ages 15 to 19 experienced a birth compared with 43 of every 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 in the general population. From 1990 to 2007, the rate of births to Hispanic females ages 15 to 19 declined by 18%. Among all females in that age group, there was a 29% decline (Hamilton, Martin, and Ventura, 2009).

²⁸ Based on Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the National Center for Health Statistics' 2006 Natality Public Use File and the Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey.

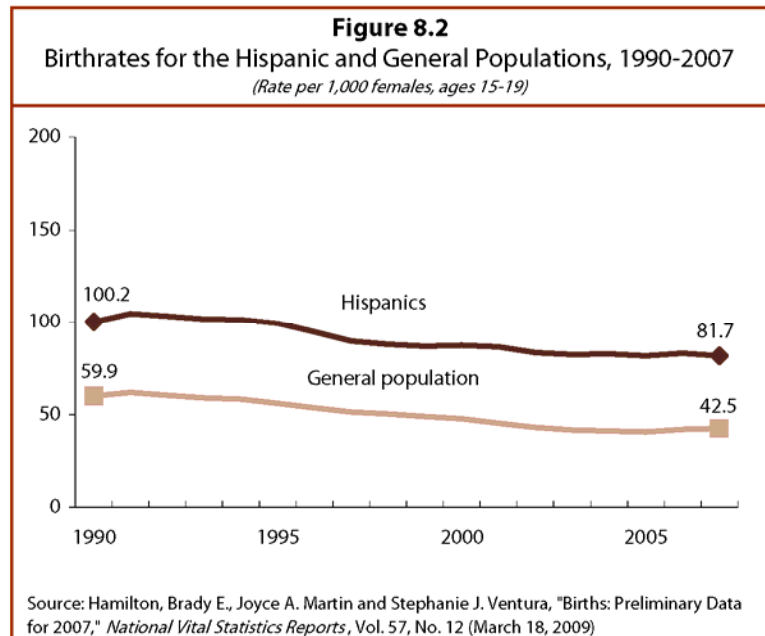
²⁹ Based on Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 American Community Surveys.

³⁰ The pregnancy rate is the number of pregnancies occurring in a given year in a given population divided by the number of women in that population, multiplied by 1,000.

³¹ The birth rate is the number of births occurring in a given year in a given population divided by the number of women in that population, multiplied by 1,000.

More than one-fourth (26%) of 19-year-old Hispanic females are already mothers.³² In comparison, 22% of 19-year-old black females have already had a child. Both of these rates are markedly higher than the 11% of 19-year-old white females who are mothers.

For Hispanic females, rates of teen motherhood are particularly high for immigrants. Among those ages 18 and 19, 26% of immigrants are mothers.³³ This share drops to 16% for the second generation and 21% for the third generation.

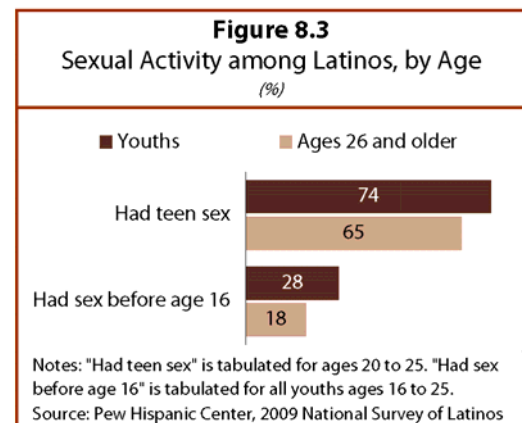


Sexual Behaviors and Attitudes

Sexual Activity

In the 2009 National Survey of Latinos sample of youths ages 16 to 25, 77% report that they have had sexual intercourse, and 28% say they had sex prior to turning 16.

Among respondents ages 20 to 25, some 74% report first having had sexual intercourse as a teen (Figure 8.3).³⁴ Some 65% of older Latinos report as much. However, older Latinos are less likely to report having sex at very young ages. Whereas 28% of Latino youths ages 16 to 25 report having had sex prior to the age of 16, this share falls to



³² Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2004, 2006 and 2008 Current Population Survey June Fertility Supplements. Note that these are underestimates of completed teen fertility, because some 19-year-olds will go on to give birth prior to reaching age 20.

³³ This sample includes ages 18 and 19 to elicit sample sizes large enough to analyze. Again, the results are underestimates of completed teen fertility.

³⁴ Anyone who had sex prior to age 20 is considered as having had sex as a teen, though in a few cases respondents first had sexual intercourse prior to becoming teenagers.

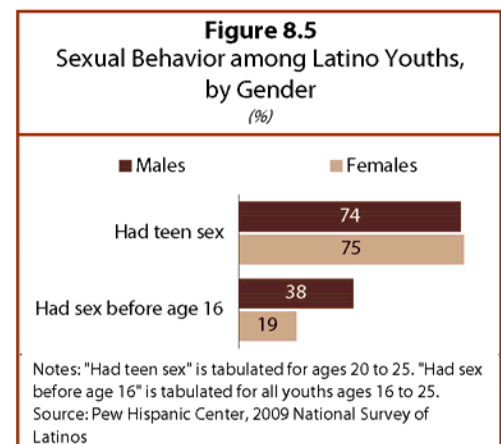
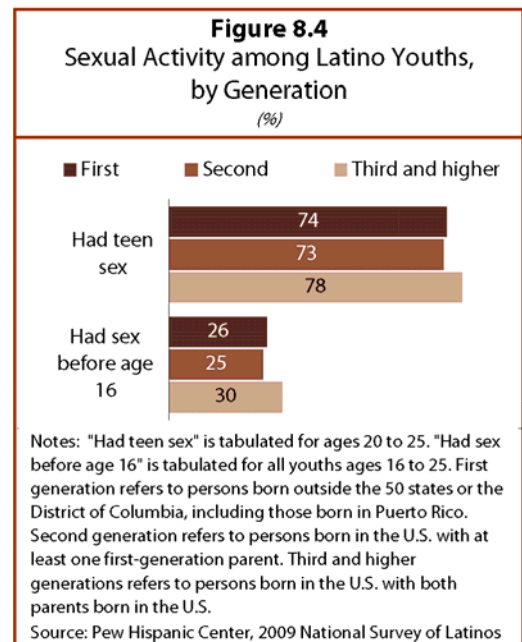
18% among older Latinos.

The likelihood of engaging in sexual intercourse is similar between Latino high school students and a nationally representative sample of students enrolled in high school. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s [2007 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) found that 48% of all high school students reported having had sexual intercourse. In comparison, 45% of the Latino high school students who participated in the Pew Hispanic Center survey report having had sexual intercourse.

Among Latinos ages 20 to 25, the 2009 National Survey of Latinos finds a small but not statistically significant difference between the native born and the foreign born in the probability of having had sex as a teenager. Some 74% of immigrants report having had sex as a teen, compared with 73% of the second generation and 78% of the third generation. A similar pattern holds when looking at the likelihood of first having had sex prior to age 16. Some 26% of Latino immigrant youths report doing so, in comparison with 25% in the second generation and 30% in the third generation.

Similar shares of male and female Hispanic youths report having had sex—78% for males, 75% for females. When the sample is limited to youths who have completed their teen years, there are no gender differences in reports of first having sex as a teenager—74% of males report this, as do 75% of females. The share of people first having sex at a very young age does vary by gender, however. While 38% of males report having first had sex prior to age 16, this number falls by half—to 19%—among Hispanic females.

Overall, 27% of survey respondents ages 20 to 25 report that they became a parent in their teenage years.³⁵ This number does not differ significantly from the rate among older Latino survey respondents, 23% of whom report having been a teen parent.



³⁵ Some 18% of those ages 16 to 25 report they became a parent in their teens.

Discussing Sex and Birth Control

Just over half of Latino youths (53%) report that their parents talked to them about sex when they were growing up. A smaller share—39%—report that their parents talked to them about birth control. In contrast, among Latinos older than 25, only 31% report that their parents discussed sex with them when they were growing up, and just one-fourth (25%) report that their parents discussed birth control.

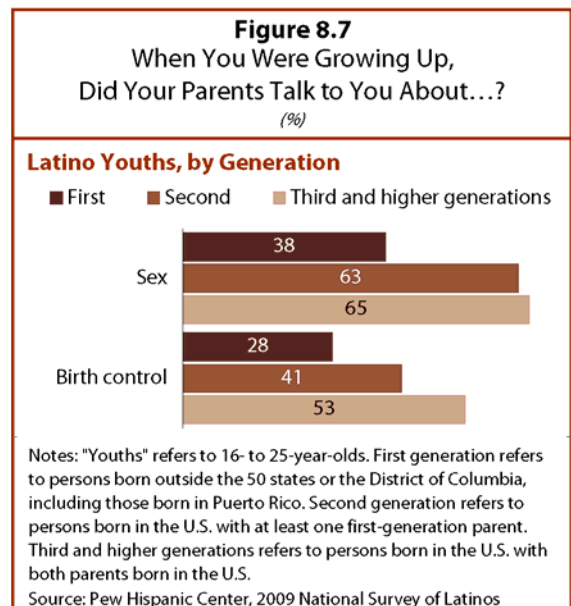
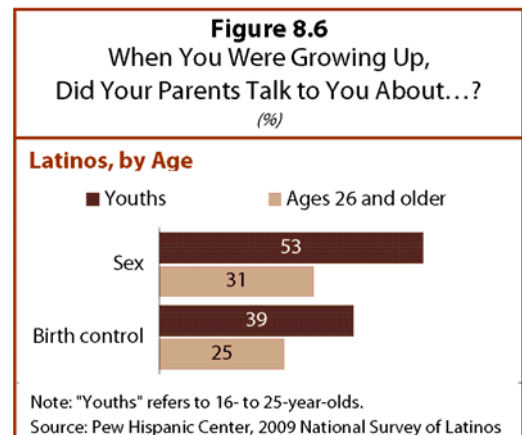
Immigrant youths are significantly less likely than their second- and third-generation counterparts to report ever discussing sex with their parents. Some 38% of immigrant youths report that their parents talked with them about sex when they were growing up, compared with 63% of second-generation youths and 65% of those in the third generation.

The likelihood of ever talking with parents about birth control increases significantly between the first and third generations. Among immigrant youths, 28% report discussing birth control with their parents. This number is 41% among the second generation, and then rises to 53% for third-generation Latino youths.

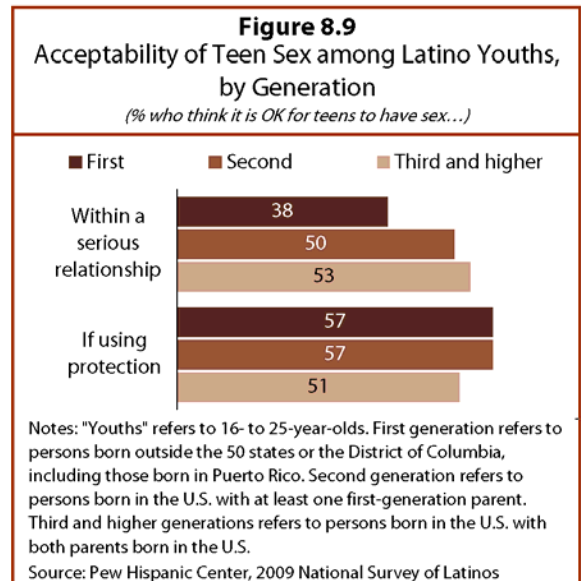
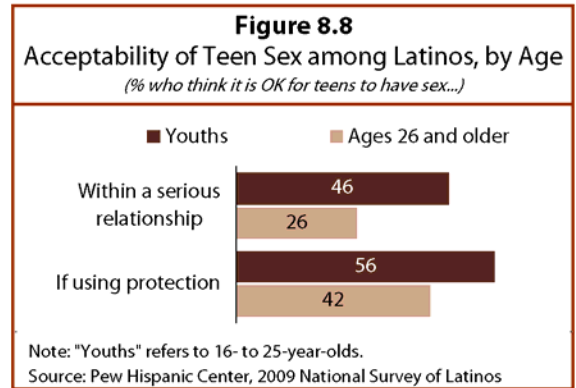
Attitudes Regarding Teen Sex

Latino youths are much more accepting of teen sex than are older Latinos. While about 46% of Latino youths agree or strongly agree with the idea that teen sex is OK if those involved are in a serious relationship, only 26% of older Latinos feel this way. And whereas more than half (56%) of Latino youths agree that it is OK for teens to have sex if they use protection, only 42% of older Latinos agree with the statement.

Among Latino youths who are immigrants, 38% agree or strongly agree that teen sex within a serious relationship is OK. This share is 50% among the second generation and 53% among the third generation. When it comes to teens having sex while using protection, the approval ratings among immigrants increase markedly. Some 57% of immigrant youths agree or strongly agree that it is OK to have sex as a teen if protection is used. This number is also 57% among the second generation and 51% among third-generation youths.



Female Hispanic youths are less likely than male Hispanic youths to approve of teen sex in either of these scenarios. While just over half (52%) of Hispanic males agree or strongly agree with the notion that teen sex is OK if two people are in a serious relationship, only 39% of Hispanic females feel that way. More than six-in-ten (63%) Hispanic males think teen sex is OK if the participants use protection, but this share drops to 48% among Hispanic females.



“A lot of...Hispanic girls just...get pregnant at a really young age and it makes it difficult for them ‘cause usually the father of the baby might not even stay with them.”

15-year-old Hispanic female

“I feel like Latino parents in general...and I don’t know if I’m just generalizing...but they’re not very straightforward with what sex can lead to and how you can practice safe sex. Its more like ‘Just don’t have sex!’”

20-year-old Hispanic female

“Everybody in that school, every girl, whether Hispanic, black whatever...they’re pregnant, either there’s a first child, second, third, fourth...they’re always pregnant, they’re around my age, 16, 17, there is a lot of pregnancy. It’s ridiculous.”

17-year-old Hispanic female

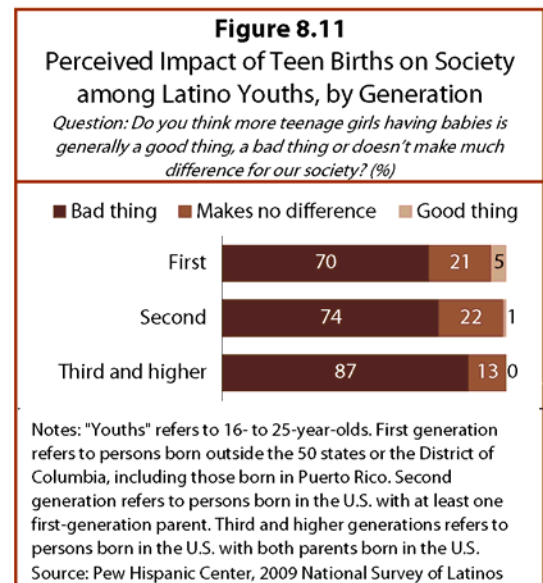
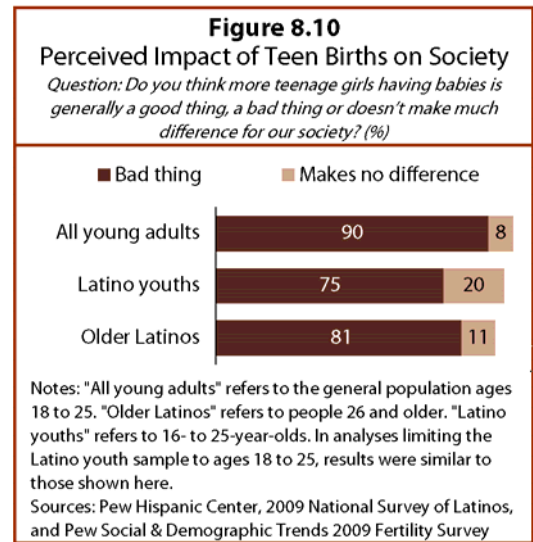
Attitudes Regarding Teen Parenthood

Three-quarters of Latino youths—75%—report that the prevalence of U.S. teens having babies is bad for society. An additional 20% think that it makes no difference, and 2% think teen parenthood is good for society. Among older Latinos, some 81% perceive an increase in teen births as problematic for society, and 11% think it makes no difference to society. In the general population, 90% of youths think that more teens having babies is bad for society, and 8% think that it makes no difference.³⁶

As far as the individual impact of teen parenthood, 69% of Latino youths believe that becoming a parent while still a teenager prevents people from reaching their goals in life, while 28% don't think this is the case.

Among foreign-born youths, 70% report that more teenagers having babies is a bad thing for society. This share is 74% among the second generation and 87% among the third generation. When queried about the perceived impact of teen parenthood on achieving one's goals, the pattern persists. Some 62% of immigrant youths think that becoming a teen parent prevents people from achieving their goals; 71% of the second generation and 78% of the third generation agree.

Attitudes regarding whether an increase in teen births is problematic for society do not differ by gender among Hispanic youths. Some 72% of males think teen births are a bad thing for society, and 23% think they don't make much of a difference. Among females, 78% think more teen births are bad for society and 17% think they don't make much of a difference. There are gender differences in perceptions of how teen parenthood affects individuals. While 63% of Hispanic females think becoming a teen parent prevents people from achieving their goals, this number is 74% among Hispanic males.



³⁶ Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from the Pew Social & Demographic Trends 2009 Fertility Survey. The sample for the general population includes people ages 18 to 25. In analyses limiting the 2009 National Survey of Latinos sample to ages 18 to 25, 75% said that more teen births were bad for society, and 19% said they made no difference.

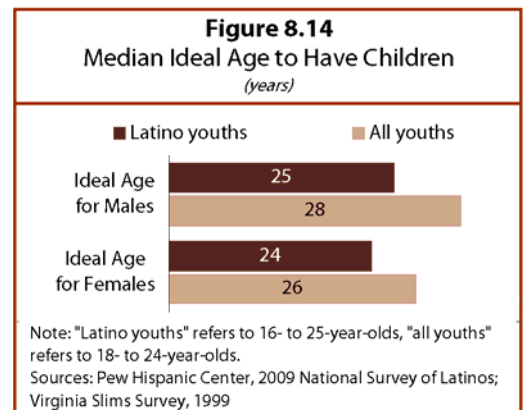
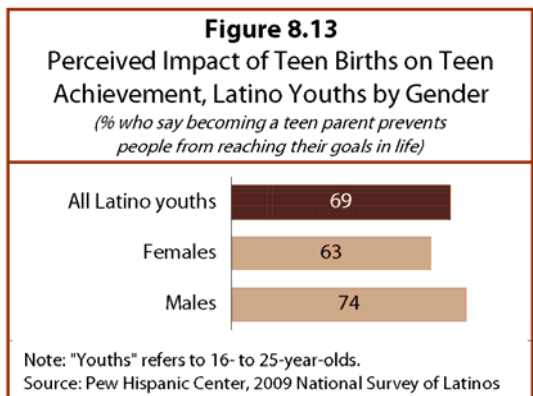
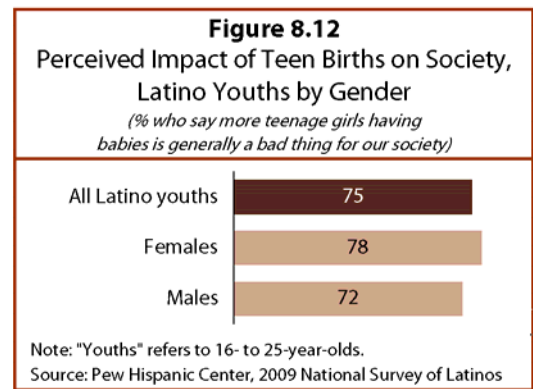
Some 56% of respondents ages 20 to 25 who became a parent as a teenager report that teen parenthood impedes achieving goals, compared with 72% of respondents in that age group who did not have this experience. Conversely, 39% of teen parents specifically state that teen parenthood does not limit the achievement of goals, compared with 26% of respondents who were not teen parents.

Ideal Age for Parenthood

The ideal age to become a parent, as perceived by Latino youths, is a few years younger than the ideal age perceived by youths in the general population. The median ideal age to become a mother is 24, according to Latino youths.

Looking at the data a bit differently, the plurality of Latino youths (46%) believe that the ideal time for a woman to have her first child is between ages 22 and 25. An additional 31% feel that having a child before age 22 is ideal for women, and 16% believe that having a first child after age 25 is ideal. In comparison, a 1999 survey³⁷ found that for youths in the general population, the ideal age for a woman to have a child was 26. Only 8% of youths in the general population thought the ideal age for a woman to have a baby was prior to age 22; 34% thought ages 22 to 25 were ideal; and about half—49%—thought that women should have their first child sometime after age 25.

Respondents to the Pew Hispanic Center survey believe that men should wait a bit longer than women to have their first child, though generally Latino youths still favor younger ages for fatherhood than do youths in the general population. The median ideal age for a man to have a child is 25, according to Latino youths, while according to youths in the general population, the ideal age is 28. Furthermore, more than one-in-five Latino youths (21%) think that



³⁷ 1999 Virginia Slims Survey; results shown only for respondents ages 18 to 24. In analyses limiting the Latino sample to ages 18 to 24, 31% thought the ideal age for a woman to have her first baby was younger than 22, 46% thought it was between 22 and 25, and 17% thought it was older than 25. Some 21% thought the ideal age for men to become a father was less than 22, 42% thought it was between 22 and 25, and 32% thought it was older than 25.

becoming a dad prior to age 22 is ideal, while only 5% of youths in the general population concur. The plurality of Latinos (44%) favor men becoming fathers between the ages of 22 and 25, compared with 22% of youths in the general population who consider that the ideal age. And finally, while 29% of Latino youths think men should wait until after age 25 to have a child, well over half (61%) of youths in the general population feel that way.