

LATINOS THROUGHOUT THE CITY: A SNAPSHOT OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Prepared by Jasney Cogua-Lopez, Lissette Aliaga-Linares and Lourdes Gouveia.

Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS), University of Nebraska at Omaha, December 2015

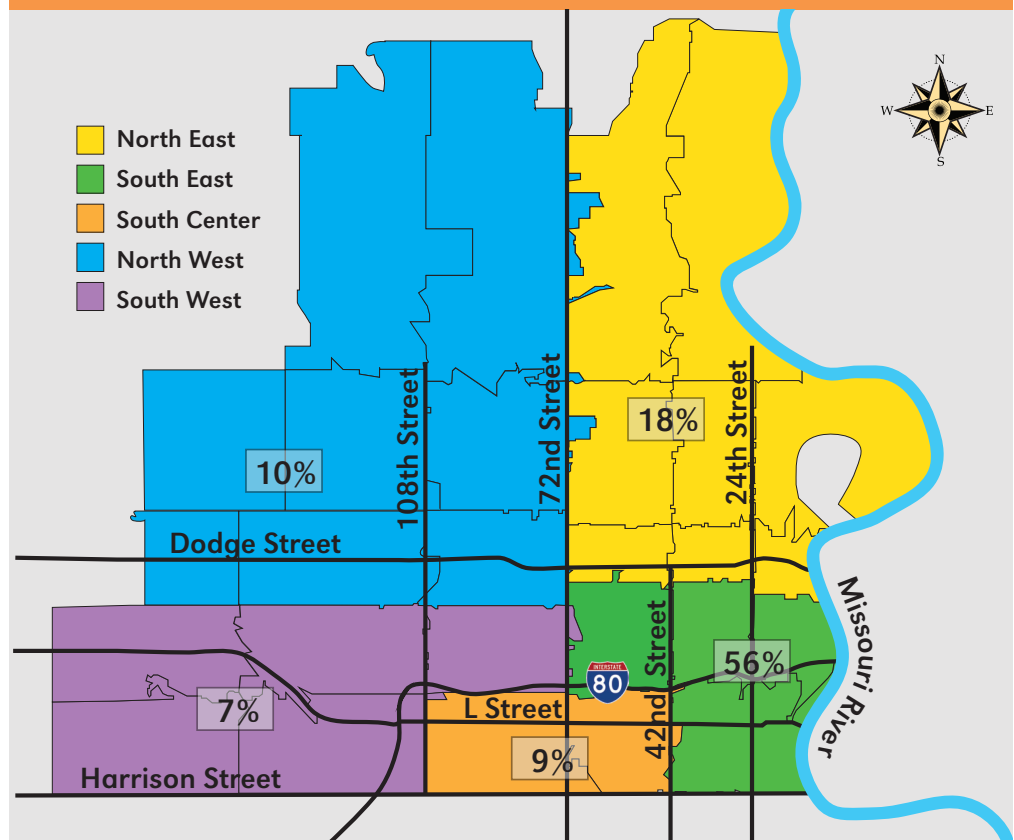
INTRODUCTION

It is commonplace for Omaha residents to equate the city's Latino population with "South Omaha," the section of town that has long-served as a gateway for successive waves of immigrants. Earlier, those immigrants hailed mainly from Europe, and, more recently, from Latin America.¹ While it is true that the majority of Latinos still live in that section of the city, they are neither the majority in any one of the zip codes that encompass South Omaha, nor are they absent from any other section of Omaha. In fact, they are found throughout the city and are slowly dispersing west and north.

Similar to all other population groups, Latinos are a heterogeneous population. Their profile is made up of U.S.-born and foreign-born individuals, and that includes families whose ancestors have ties to states and border areas that once belonged to Mexico. Latinos are also diverse according to social and economic characteristics. Predictably, Latinos with different socio-economic profiles tend to live in different sections of the city. Specifically, those Latinos (and non-Latinos) who live in zip codes located toward the western part of the city tend to be of a higher socio-economic status than those who live in zip codes located in the eastern, and to some extent the northern parts of the city.

This report focuses on the dispersion and diversity of Latinos across the city. It is important to make clear from the start that income, occupational and educational differences among Latinos are also found within each of the five sections of the city we have defined for the purposes of this analysis (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, the publicly available information from the U.S. Census Bureau does not allow us to conduct a more detailed analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of Latinos below the zip code level. This

Figure 1. Omaha's Latino Population Across the City's Five Residential Zip Code Groups.



The five clusters were determined using the U.S. Census Bureau's – 2009-2013 American Community Survey data and including the following zip codes:

North East: 68102, 68104, 68110, 68111, 68112, 68131, 68132, 68152
 South East: 68105, 68106, 68107, 68108
 South Center: 68117, 68127
 North West: 68114, 68116, 68118, 68122, 68134, 68142, 68154, 68164
 South West: 68124, 68130, 68135, 68137, 68144

Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau's 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

snapshot can only take us so far. A better understanding of Latinos' changing residential patterns, corresponding socio-economic differences, the forces behind these patterns, and the social, economic and political implications of these changing residential patterns requires more in-depth and longitudinal studies. Our hope is that this report contributes to what must be a continuing conversation about Latinos' standing and future prospects in the city's and the nation's social and economic structure.

For purposes of this snapshot, we grouped Omaha's 27 residential zip codes into five groups, each corresponding to the different sections of the city shown in Figure 1. We labeled these sections as follows: North East, South East, South Center, North West, and South West. Unless otherwise noted, the data for this report comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates at the five-digit zip code level.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Latinos in the five different sections of the city

As of 2013, Omaha's total population, residing in 27 residential zip codes, is 524,290. Latinos make up nearly 12% (59,727) of that total. While the majority of this Latino population (56%) continues to reside in South Omaha, or what we have designated as the South East, the presence of Latinos is increasingly felt across the city. Nearly 30% of Latinos now live in the northern sections of the city. Eighteen percent of those northern Latino neighbors are found in the North East, while 10% reside in the North West. The remainder of the Latino population lives west of South Omaha, in the South Center (9%) and the South West (7%). (See Figure 1.)

Age and sex composition of Latinos in Omaha

Omaha Latinos are a relatively young population with a median age of 24, 15 years below the median age of non-Hispanic Whites. One-third of Omaha Latinos (33%) fall between the prime working ages of 25 and 44 years of age. Importantly, more than a quarter of this population (26%) are children nine years of age or younger (see Figure 2). Unlike what occurs in the general population, Latino men outnumber women by a ratio of 1.2 to 1. Said differently, 53% of all Latinos in Omaha are men. By comparison, 51% of non-Hispanic Whites in Omaha are women.

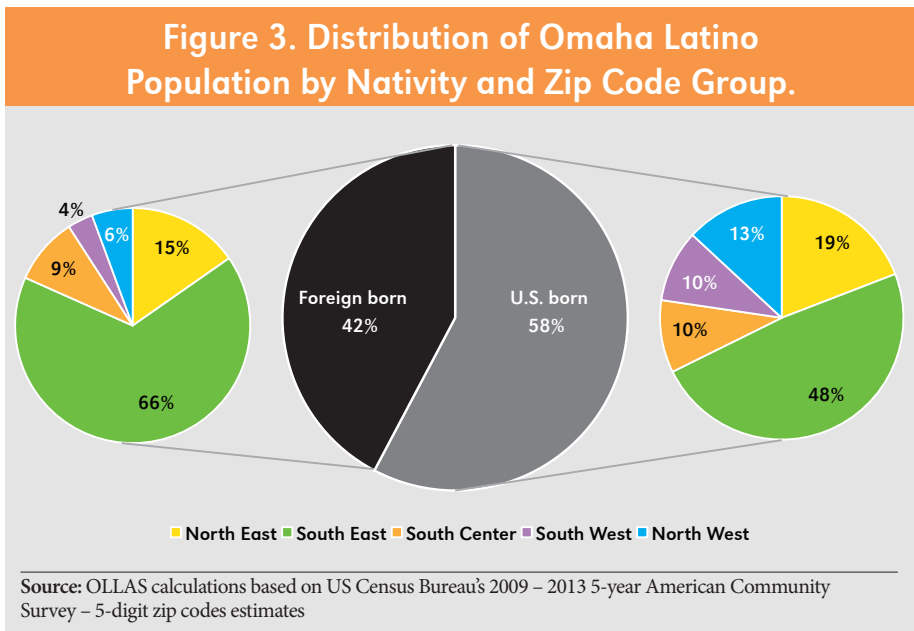
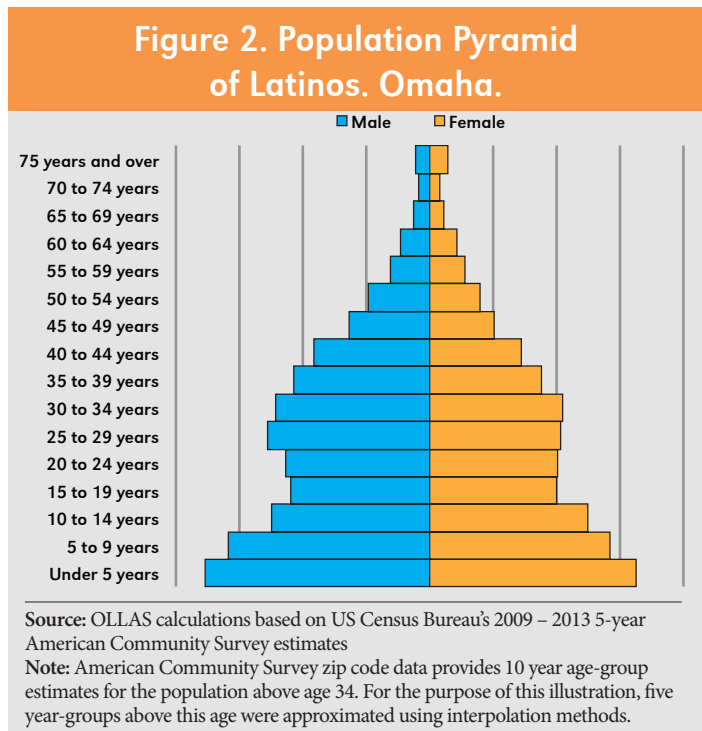


Table 1. Latinos by Specific Origin and Zip Code Group. Omaha.

Origin	North East	South East	South Center	South West	North West	Total
Latinos:	9%	37%	19%	4%	4%	-
Mexican	79%	84%	88%	70%	73%	81%
Caribbean	4%	2%	2%	7%	7%	3%
Central American	9%	12%	7%	8%	4%	10%
South American	3%	1%	1%	5%	9%	2%
Other Latino*	4%	1%	2%	10%	6%	3%

* Refers to people who reported their origin as "Hispanic," "Spanish," "Latino," or other variations of Hispanic general terms without identifying a specific country of origin in the Hispanic origin question of the Census.
 Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau's 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

Origins, citizenship and geographic distribution

The Latino population in Omaha is composed of newcomers and more established groups, some having been in the city for generations. Most (58%) were born in the U.S. Nearly two-thirds (67%) of those U.S.-born Latinos live in the East side of town. The remaining 33% is almost equally distributed in the other sections of the city. In contrast, 81% of foreign-born Latinos live in the eastern part of the city, while 9% live in the South Center, and 10% live in the West (see Figure 3). Only 21% of the foreign-born Latinos who live in Omaha have become naturalized citizens.

The Latino population in Omaha is also composed of people of different races and nationalities. Close to 48,000 (81%) Latinos in Omaha are of Mexican origin. This makes “Mexican,” by far, the single largest self-identified origin of Omaha’s Latinos. Central Americans constitute the next largest group, but they are less than one-eighth the size of the Mexican-origin population. Not surprisingly, people of Mexican origin constitute the majority of Latinos residing in every one of the five zip code groups identified in this report (see Table 1). However, there are clear differences in residential preferences according to national origin. For example, while representing only a small fraction of the total Latino population, the majority (54%) of South Americans reside in the western parts of town (see Figure 4).

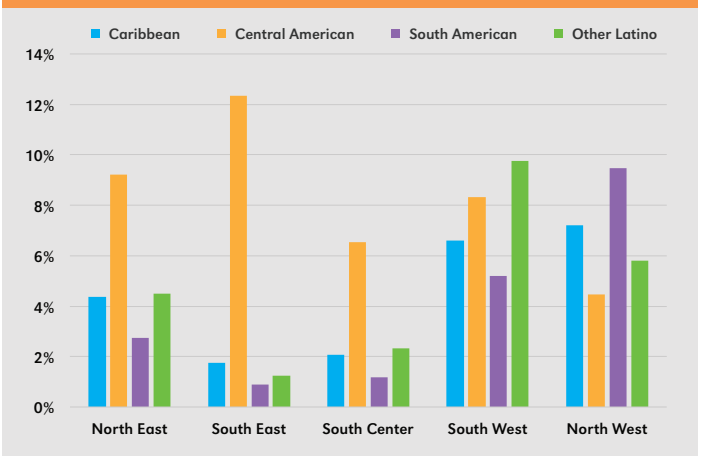
There are different rates of citizenship by place of residence as well. As Table 2 shows, the western parts of the city have the lowest proportions of foreign-born Latinos (between 21% and 24%) and of persons who are not U.S. citizens (between 13% and 16%). But the foreign-born naturalization rates do not vary widely across different sections of the city, ranging between 7 and 10%. True to its designation as an “immigrant gateway,” fully half of South Omaha’s Latino population is foreign born; the highest among the five sections of the city. Its naturalization rate also comes in highest, at 10 percentage points.

Educational differences across the city

Less than half (47 percent) of all Latinos in Omaha who are over the age of 25 have a high school degree.² Nationally, this figure is 64.7% (United States Congress, 2015). While newer generations of Latinos today are pursuing a college education in larger numbers, only 11% of those over the age of 25 have a bachelor’s degree or higher (see Figure 5).

Gender differences in educational attainment are notable. While 51 percent of Latina women in Omaha over the age of 25 have

Figure 4. Distribution of Non-Mexican Latinos by Zip Code Group and Origin. Omaha.



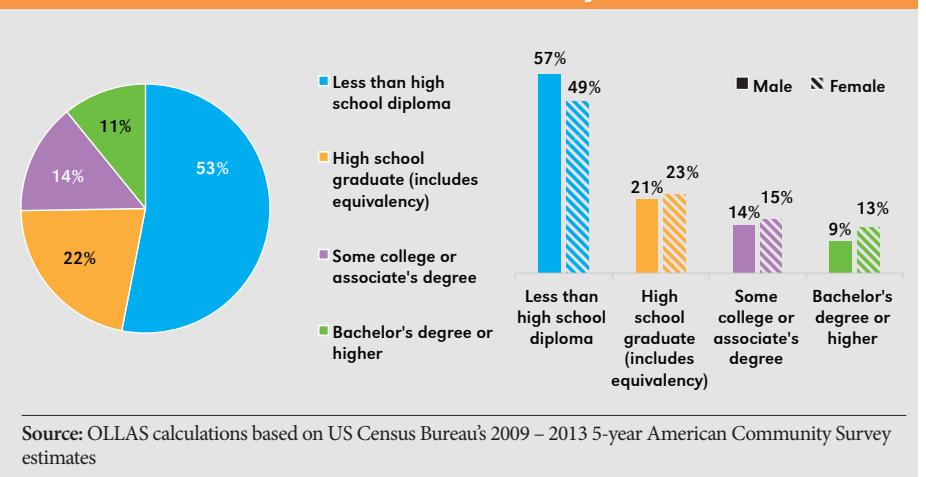
Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

Table 2. Latinos by Nativity and Citizenship Status by Zip Code Group. Omaha.

	North East	South East	South Center	South West	North West
U.S. born	63%	50%	59%	79%	76%
Foreign born	37%	50%	41%	21%	24%
Naturalized U.S. citizen	7%	10%	7%	8%	8%
Not a U.S. citizen	30%	40%	34%	13%	16%

Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

Figure 5. Educational Attainment for the Latino Population 25 Years and Over, Total and by Sex. Omaha.



Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey estimates

completed at least high school, only 44 percent of Latino men have done so. Thirteen percent of Latina women in this same age cohort have also obtained at least a bachelor’s degree compared to only nine percent of Latino men.

In total, there are about 7,000, or 25%, of Omaha Latinos over the age of 25 who have completed at least some college. Half of those

Latinos live in the Eastern part of the city and the other half in the West. A recurring focus of this report is that of highlighting the strong relationship that exists between residential patterns and a host of socio-economic indicators. Generally speaking, the farther west in the city Latinos live, the more socioeconomically advantaged they are. The pattern holds true for educational attainment as well, but only becomes clear when we switch our focus from absolute numbers to percentages. For example, we find considerably higher percentages of Latinos with at least some college living in the North West and South West parts of the city (60% and 58% respectively), than anywhere else in Omaha. In the South Central region, the proportion of Latinos who have completed similar levels of education drops to 25 percent, and that percentage falls even further, to 14 percent, among Latinos residing in the South East (South Omaha). Digging even deeper, we find that Latinos who live in the North West part of the city have finished at least a bachelor’s degree at rates that are astonishingly higher than those found among Latinos in the South East (35% versus 4%). Conversely, while the proportion of Latinos who lack a high school diploma in the West part of the city does not reach 20%, this figure climbs to 43% in the North East, 51% in the South Center, and 67% in the South East sections of Omaha (see Figure 6).

Language differences

Latinos are an increasingly bilingual population. The large majority (73%) reported speaking Spanish at home and a significant majority of those (64%) speak English “well” or “very well.” Only 26% are monolingual English speakers. And less than half of that percentage, about 11% of Latinos reported not speaking English at all, or are monolingual Spanish speakers (see Figure 7). This represents about 4,000 people, or less than 1% of Omaha’s total population of 524,290 inhabitants.

Consistent with other socio-economic indicators, those Latinos who live in the western part of Omaha report higher levels of English proficiency than those living in other sections of the city. As Table 3 shows, among those living in the South West and North West sections who reported speaking Spanish at home,

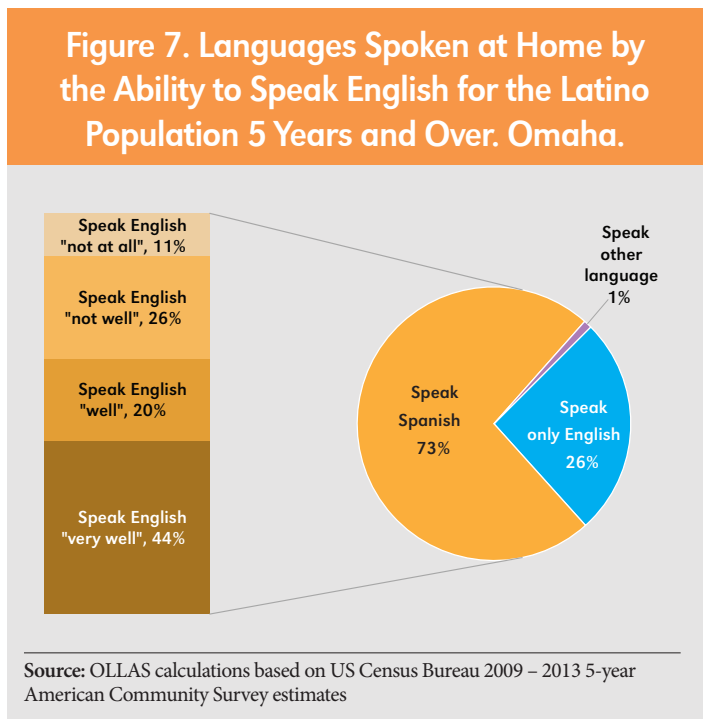
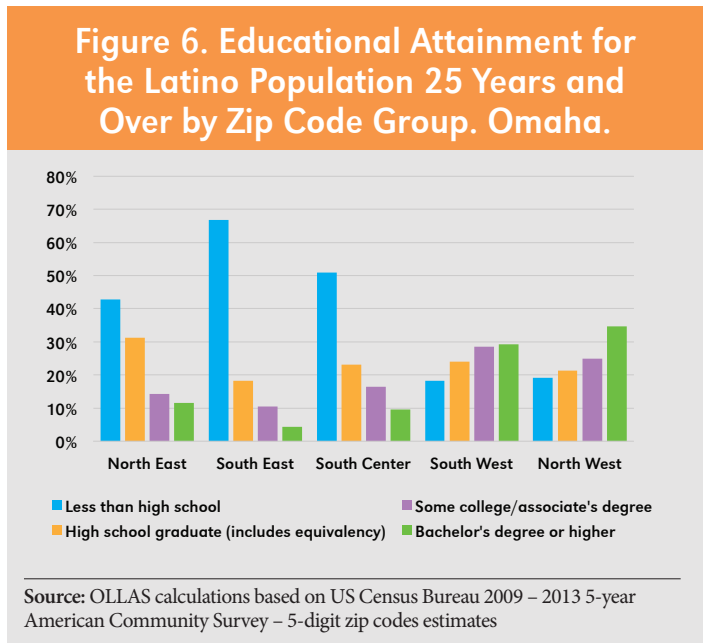


Table 3. Languages Spoken at Home by the Ability to Speak English for the Latino Population 5 Years and Over by Zip Code Group. Omaha.

Language spoken at home	North East	South East	South Center	South West	North West
Speak only English	30%	17%	27%	57%	57%
Speak other language	2%	4%	1%	1%	0%
Speak Spanish:	68%	79%	72%	43%	43%
Speak English “very well”	51%	35%	38%	66%	61%
Speak English “well”	24%	21%	33%	20%	14%
Speak English “not well”	20%	29%	19%	11%	20%
Speak English “not at all”	5%	15%	10%	4%	4%

Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

66% and 61% respectively also reported that they speak English “very well.” In contrast, among the 79% of Latinos living in the South East who speak Spanish at home, only 35% reported that they also speak English “very well.”

On the flipside, 57% of Latinos living in the North West and South West sections of the city speak “only” English, while a mere 17% in the South East reported being English-monolinguals.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS Household and Family Income³

Latinos suffer from considerable family and household income disparities. Median income for Latino families is \$37,074, or \$25,590 less than the median income of non-Latino families. At the household level, where non-family members typically bring in additional income, the gap is smaller but there is still more than a \$10,000 difference (see Table 4).

There is a strong relationship between family income and other indicators such as types of occupation, levels of education and English proficiency among Latinos and among Latinos living in different sections of the city. The median family income of Latinos living in the western part of the city is \$41,000 above the median family income of Latinos living in the Eastern part of the city. The smallest gap in family income levels between the West and other parts of the city, is found with the South Center region. However, we are still talking about a median family income that is \$33,000 below that of West Omaha Latinos. This pattern is evident for both family and household incomes (see Table 5).

Table 4. Median Family and Household Income in the Past 12 Months* for the Non-Latino and Latino Population. Omaha.

Income	Non- Latino	Latino
Median family income in the past 12 months	\$ 62,664	\$ 37,074
Median household income in the past 12 months	\$ 48,052	\$ 38,470

* in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars
Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey estimates

Table 5. Median Family and Household Income in the Past 12 Months* for the Latino Population by Zip Code Group. Omaha.

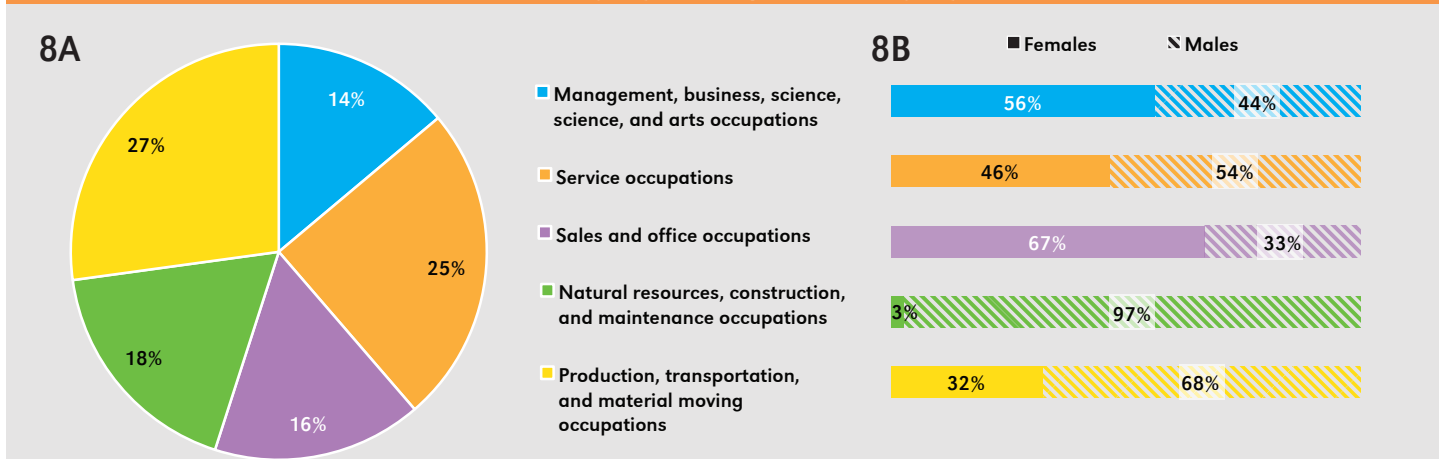
Income	North East	South East	South Center	South West	North West
Median family income in the past 12 months	\$ 29,465.38	\$ 35,965.00	\$ 41,430.50	\$ 72,821.20	\$ 74,847.43
Median household income in the past 12 months	\$ 34,443.13	\$ 36,712.00	\$ 41,106.00	\$ 75,793.20	\$ 63,473.13

* in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars
Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

Occupation

The majority (52%) of Latinos in Omaha are employed in just two, typically low-paying, occupational categories: production/transportation (27%) and services (25%) (see Figure 8A). There are significant gender differences by type of occupation as well. Latino men are highly represented in production, transportation and other labor-intensive jobs such as moving materials of all kinds. A total of 67% of laborers employed in this category are men and only about a third are women. The difference is most pronounced in construction and maintenance where 97% of the Latinos in that category are men. Higher proportions of Latina women are found in management and related job categories (56%), and in sales and office occupations (67%) (see Figure 8B).

Figure 8. Occupation for the Employed Latino Population 16 Years and Over, Total (8A) and by Gender (8B). Omaha.



Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau’s 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey estimates

Predictably, there is an inverse relationship between the area of the city where Latinos live and the quality of the jobs they tend to occupy. While over one-third (34%) of Latinos who live in West Omaha (both North West and South West) are employed in higher-paid management and professional occupations, only 11% of those who live in the North East, South East and South Center are employed in those types of occupations. Conversely, nearly one-third (29%) of Latinos who live in the East and South Center sections of the city are found in lower-paying occupations such as production and certain types of services, while less than one-sixth, or 16% of those who live in the West part of the city occupy such jobs (see Table 6).

Poverty⁴

The Latino population in Omaha experiences levels of poverty that are at least one and a half times those of the general population (28% vs. 17%). Place of residence matters. As Table 7 shows, the proportion of poor Latino households in the East side of town is two to three and a half times higher than the proportion found in other sections of the city. Note that Latinos in the North sections, be they East or West, also tend to have somewhat higher levels of poverty than those living in the South part of the city.

Gender matters here as well. Studies have consistently shown that female-headed families are more vulnerable to poverty (Hoynes et al., 2006; Snyder et al., 2006) than households where two income-earning parents are present. Twenty-eight percent

Table 6. Occupation for the Employed Latino Population 16 Years and Over by Zip Code Group. Omaha.

Occupation	North East	South East	South Center	North West	South West
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	12%	7%	15%	34%	34%
Service occupations	28%	25%	32%	17%	16%
Sales and office occupations	20%	13%	15%	24%	24%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	13%	24%	9%	10%	10%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	27%	31%	29%	15%	16%

Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau's 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

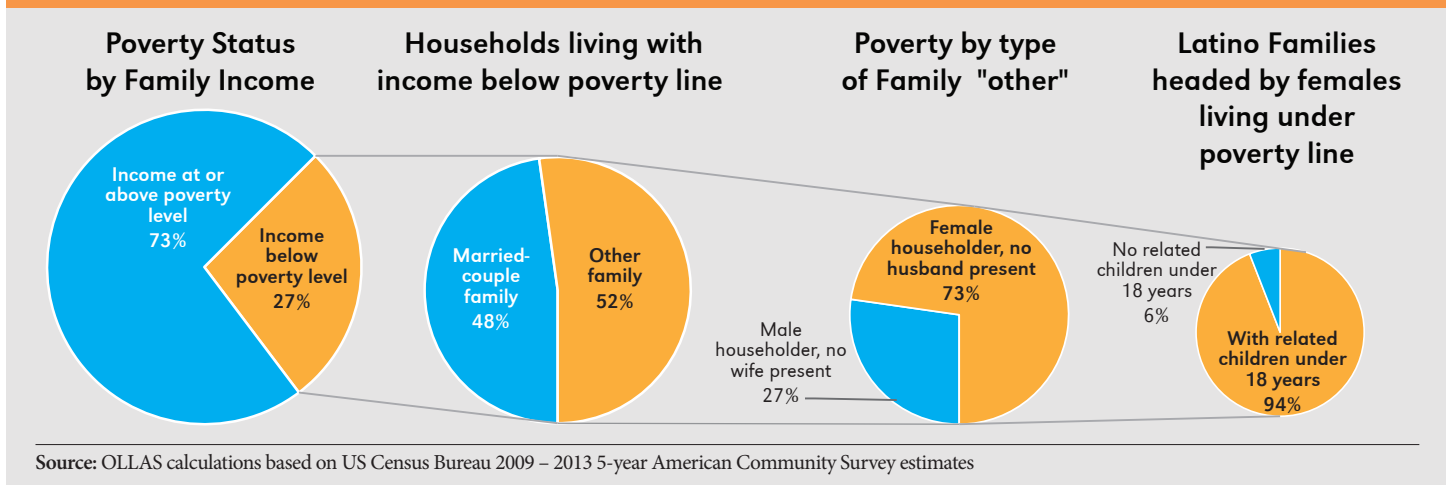
Table 7. Poverty Status of Latino Households in the Past 12 Months by Zip Code Group. Omaha.

Poverty	North East	South East	South Center	North West	South West
Income in the past 12 months below poverty level	43%	30%	16%	16%	12%

Source: OLLAS calculations based on US Census Bureau's 2009 – 2013 5-year American Community Survey – 5-digit zip codes estimates

of all Latino families in Omaha live under the official poverty line. Fifty-two percent of such families are headed by single parents and the overwhelming majority of those single-parent families (73%) are headed by women. Aggravating the poverty risk factors among these types of families is the fact that 94% of female-headed families have dependent children under 18 years of age (see Figure 10).

Figure 9. Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Latino Families by Family Type by Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years by Age of Related Children. Omaha.



FINAL THOUGHTS

This snapshot of Latinos across the city may reveal few surprises regarding the progressive spread of this population across the Omaha area or the idea that where Latinos live also tells us something about average income, poverty, citizenship status and occupation. Instead, the report's value is that we can document some of these trends with U.S. census data rather than having to rely on mere "hunches." Despite its limitations, the report also offers a baseline from which to continue to track changes in these trends and inform larger conversations about their meanings and implications in the coming years.⁵

True, the report also raises more questions than it can answer. One related set of questions has to do with the reasons for the spread of Latinos beyond South Omaha to other sections of the city: Is this trend mainly a reflection of Latinos' social mobility? Or does this trend reflect a need for more affordable or less-crowded housing, or the expansion of low-wage job markets or a desire for access to better schools? Or does it reflect something else altogether?

Another set of questions deals with the relationship between place and education: What are the projected changes in Latino educational achievement among Latino youngsters living in different parts of the city? Will the relationship between place of residence and educational attainment continue to be as strong in younger generations as it is for their parents? Will documented trends of increased college enrollment and high school graduation among younger Latinos effectively make such a relationship meaningless

in the future? If larger percentages of Latina women, when compared to Latino men, have higher levels of education and work at better-paying jobs, why are Latina women also more likely to live in poverty?

Place matters. However, different combinations of social, economic, cultural, physical and political features of a "place" can produce very different, and even counter-intuitive, outcomes. For example, South Omaha may appear as a "disadvantaged" section of the city when compared to other areas that have larger numbers of college graduates and of people working in better-paying occupations. However, South Omaha has the largest number of Latino small businesses in the city and sports a vibrant array of community organizations, tight social networks and culturally-rich educational institutions. Bilingualism is alive and well in South Omaha, while Spanish is dying in the western part of town where younger generations, often children of bilingual professionals, are rapidly assimilating into an English-only cultural environment. This cultural loss is significant, not only for monolingual professionals, but for the entire community and U.S. society whose global interdependency demands multilingual and multicultural proficiency (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

An emerging political climate that is fostering anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric as well as dwindling government investments in public services, education and safety nets are additional factors affecting the future of the Latino population in Omaha. These factors could exacerbate the economic and social differentiation trends described in this report and undermine the social cohesion and political stability of our communities and nation.



Latino children in South Omaha.

ENDNOTES

1. The area known as South Omaha was the center of the stockyard operations in the late 1800 and incorporated as a city in 1886. The remarkable growth of the city was based on the development of the meatpacking industry and the thousands of immigrant workers that it attracted primarily from southern and eastern Europe. The city of South Omaha was annexed by Omaha in 1915. After the closing of the stockyards and older meatpacking houses, and the exodus of the European meatpacking workers to other areas of the city in the 1970s, the Latino population has been consolidating its sociocultural and economic base in South Omaha (Gouveia et al. 2010). Today we still refer to the section of town that roughly corresponds to four zip codes (68105, 68106, 68107 and 68108) as “South Omaha”.
2. It is important to remember that the origin of Latino immigration in Omaha is a low-wage labor migration heavily recruited by the agrofood sector characterized by these low levels of education (Gouveia et al. 2010).
3. The U.S. Census Bureau’s definitions of income correspond to: a) Household Income which includes the income of the householder and all other individuals 15 years old and over in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not; b) Family income, which includes the income of all the persons in households who are related by blood, marriage or adoption.
4. Following the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). The poverty threshold for 2013 for a family of four is \$23,834.
5. In fact, this conversation began in earnest during a series of *conversatorios* (informed conversations), held earlier this year. For a final report produced by OLLAS, [click here](#) or go to <http://www.unomaha.edu/ollas/publications.php>.

REFERENCES

- Gouveia, Lourdes, et al. 2010. *The Omaha Site: Migrant Civil Society under Construction*, Reports on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement, No. 8. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. May.
- Hoynes, Hilary W., Marianne E Page and Ann Huff Stevens. 2006. “Poverty in America: Trends and Explanations.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20(1): 47-68.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press and Russell Sage Foundation.
- Snyder, Anastasia R., Diana K. McLaughlin, and Jill Findeis. 2006. “Household Composition and Poverty among Female-Headed Households with Children: Differences by Race and Residence.” *Rural Sociology* 71: 597-624.
- United States Congress. 2015. *The Economic State of the Latino Community in America*. Joint Economic Committee. October.

CITATION

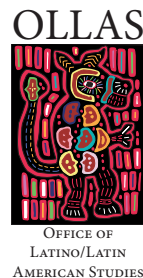
This publication should be cited as: Cogua-Lopez, Jasney, Lissette Aliaga-Linares and Lourdes Gouveia. 2015. *Latinos throughout the City: A Snapshot of Socio-demographic Differences in Omaha, Nebraska*. Omaha, NE: Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. December.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact the Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at 402-554-3835, unollas@unomaha.edu, or visit us online at unomaha.edu/ollas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to give special thanks to Yuriko Doku for her assistance in the elaboration of this report. Bob Nordyke for editing the final version of this report and Clare Maakestad for the layout.



Mammel Foundation

